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Nietzsche and Expressionism: The Neue Mensch in Kafka, Kaiser, and Strauss

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Nietzsche and Expressionism: The Neue Mensch in Kafka, Kaiser, and Strauss

Senior Project Submitted to
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and
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of Bard College

by
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Abbreviations

- ACE *The Anti-Christ*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- ACG *Der Antichrist*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- AZ *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- BT *Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- DH *Dawn of Humanity*, Kurt Pinthus
- DU “Das Urteil,” Franz Kafka
- EHE *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- EHG *Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- FW *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- GS *The Gay Science*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- GT *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- GME *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- GMG *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Friedrich Nietzsche
- MD *Menschheitsdämmerung*, Kurt Pinthus
- MM *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, Georg Kaiser
- SA *Salome*, Richard Strauss
- TZ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche

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Introduction

"I swear to you that in two years' time we shall have the whole world in convulsions. I am a destiny." – Friedrich Nietzsche¹

Nietzsche said these words to an admirer just weeks before collapsing in tears on the streets of Turin, after an attempt to save a beaten carriage horse. Though Nietzsche anticipated the world's coming "convulsions," after sinking into insanity, he was unaware of the extent to which his work penetrated Europe and the world. In 1914, as the First World War began, Nietzsche's works were often considered to have played a role in the unrest of the time; an English bookseller even called the war the "Euro-Nietzschean War" (Pierpont). And not only did Nietzschean thought spread throughout Europe, but copies of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*] were distributed among German troops. There was even a durable military edition; the book was given out alongside Goethe's *Faust* and the Bible (Pierpont). *Faust* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* were books which were used to inspire the troops and legitimize the war, works which, when misread, contained elements of heroism, patriotism, and expansionism.

Even before the First World War, in the early twentieth century, the German Expressionist movement was deeply informed by Nietzsche's thought. It was a movement that arose during a time of discontent, driven by the rebellion against bourgeois society and culture. Expressionist artists, poets, and authors held a strong wish for social change, even an apocalyptic wish. Nietzsche had set the stage for the Expressionists, whether this was intentional or simply interpreted. Douglas Kellner argues that Nietzsche had "anticipated the expressionist rebellions in his polemical attacks on bourgeois society and culture" (Kellner 8), and elaborates on the Expressionist fixation on Nietzsche: "Nietzsche attracted the Expressionists because they

¹ Diethel 100.

perceived in him a powerful critique of modern society and a call for self-transformation” (Kellner 9). There is perhaps no figure in Expressionist writing who draws our attention back to Nietzsche, or demands a Nietzschean analysis, more than the figure of the *Neue Mensch*. The *Neue Mensch*, or “the new human,” most commonly “the new man,”² is an Expressionist concept that is not clearly defined, but explored throughout the Expressionist movement – it is an adaptation of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*. The *Neue Mensch* is a character who breaks away, a character who distances him or herself from bourgeois society and fights against established moral codes. Thomas Anz names the *Neue Mensch* “an obsession of the 20th century” (Anz, “*Neue Mensch*”). He describes the *Neue Mensch* as “a hope, a promise that appears in all possible places in the cultural force fields of the twentieth century, in various variations and constellations” (Anz, “*Neue Mensch*”). Anz describes the *Neue Mensch* as “an empty formula, but one filled with longing, dreams, and desires of all kinds” (Anz, “*Neue Mensch*”). The *Neue Mensch* is a concept upon which the dreams and wishes of this disheartened society were poured, but a concept lacking a solution or formula.³

The *Neue Mensch* was the Expressionist ideal, and the answer to what the Expressionists found to be a stagnant and artificial society. And literature became the medium with which these authors could work through, and experiment with, the idea of the *Neue Mensch*. Kurt Pinthus published an anthology of German Expressionist poetry, which he named *Menschheitsdämmerung* [*Dawn of Humanity*] (1919). Pinthus’ title addresses the idea of an apocalyptic regeneration, a transformation; the word *Dämmerung* can be translated to both “dawn” and “dusk,” signifying both a deterioration and a renewal, an end and a beginning. The

² I translate “*Neue Mensch*” to “new man,” not in support of this male gendered term, simply because in the Expressionist era, the “*Neue Mensch*” is almost always a “new man.”

³ “Empty formula” is translated from the German “*Leerformel*.” *Leerformel* can also be thought of as an “empty vessel,” something that could be filled, or even a screen onto which one can project.

Neue Mensch would bring about this new beginning. Pinthus writes of the crucial role of the man in his anthology: “the human being can be saved only by the human being, not by the surrounding world. It is not institutions, inventions, derived laws that are essential and determining factor, but rather the human being!” (DH 33). He specifies that salvation cannot come from the outside, but “only from the strengths inside the human being” (DH 33). Pinthus is presenting man, the new man, as the catalyst for change, as an idealistic concept. Ernst Stadler’s poem “Der Spruch” [The Maxim] (1914), part of Pinthus’ *Menschheitsdämmerung*, is an example of the human as the answer to the speaker’s trivial and inauthentic world:

In an old book I came across a saying,
 It struck me like a blow and keeps on burning through my days:
 And when I give myself over to joyless pleasures,
 Exalt pretense, lies and games instead of essence,
 When I complaisantly deceive myself with facile thoughts,
 As if dark things were clear, as though life did not contain a thousand fiercely barricaded gates,
 And repeat words whose rage I never fully felt,
 And touch things whose being never stirred me,
 When a welcome dream strokes me with velvet hands,
 And day and reality escape from me,
 Alienated from the world, alien to my deepest self,
 Then the saying rises up before me: Human being, become true to your essence!
 (DH 220)

In einem alten Buche stieß ich auf ein Wort,
 Das traf mich wie ein Schlag und brennt durch meine Tage fort:
 Und wenn ich mich an trübe Lust vergebe,
 Schein, Lug und Spiel zu mir anstatt des Wesens hebe,
 Wenn ich gefällig mich mit raschem Sinn belüge,
 Als wäre Dunkles klar, als wenn nicht Leben tausend wild verschlossene Tore trüge,
 Und Worte widerspreche, deren Weite nie ich ausgefühlt,
 Und Dinge fasse, deren Sein mich niemals aufgewühlt,
 Wenn mich willkommner Traum mit Sammethänden streicht,
 Und Tag und Wirklichkeit von mir entweicht,
 Der Welt entfremdet, fremd dem tiefsten Ich,
 Dann steht das Wort mir auf: Mensch, werde wesentlich!
 (MD 196)

Stadler’s speaker details the meaninglessness and lack of genuine feeling in his life. He describes himself as “Alienated from the world” (DH 220) [Der Welt entfremdet] (MD 196). Life is

described as “lies and games” (DH 220) [Lug und Spiel] (MD 196). Stadler sees his life as a lie: “I complaisantly deceive myself with facile thoughts” (DH 220) [Wenn ich gefällig mich mit raschem Sinn belüge] (MD 196). Stadler writes of a lack of energy and inspiration, he writes of a surface level existence devoid of real emotion, and the need to go under and break out. The poem ends on an optimistic note, with the line: “Human being, become true to your essence!” (DH 220) [Mensch, werde wesentlich!] (MD 196). The German word “wesentlich” can be translated as “essential.” While the word “Wesen” means “entity” or “being,” as Stadler calls for man to become “wesentlich,” he is asking for man to become man, to become the ideal of the Neue Mensch, to leave behind the artificial form of humanity. Stadler’s poem presents the disillusionment of the era, alongside it the Neue Mensch as an ideal, and as a hopeful solution to that disillusionment.

Bringing Nietzsche into an analysis of these Expressionist works sheds light on the character of the Neue Mensch, and brings a new understanding to the Übermensch. There has been misuse of the idea of the Übermensch, especially by the Nazis. Nietzsche’s Übermensch was adopted by the Nazi state, though this was far from Nietzsche’s intent. Thomas Mann called it “the clumsiest of all misunderstandings” (Pierpont). I wish to present the Übermensch in the sense of the individual overcoming weakness.⁴ Nietzsche’s Übermensch is not an individual ruling over others, but rather an overcoming of slave morality, a process of self-transformation.

In Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Zarathustra attempts to teach people to become the Übermensch, one capable of overcoming conventional morality – an ongoing process of learning and becoming, a process in which one must fail, or go under, in order to go over.

⁴ In my writing I will use the German word Übermensch rather than other translations such as overman or superman, as the word “über” is essential to the project. I choose Übermensch, because “über” can be translated as above, but also across. I will present the word “über” in connection with “überwinden” which translates to “to overcome.”

Nietzsche, throughout *Also sprach Zarathustra*, presents man as being in constant motion, offering various metaphors, such as man as a bridge or tightrope. Nietzsche's Übermensch is an act of transformation, an act of becoming, one that his protagonist Zarathustra is debatably still working towards.

In the following chapters I will analyze three Expressionist works: Franz Kafka's short story "Das Urteil" ["The Judgment"] (1912), Georg Kaiser's play *Von morgens bis mitternachts* [*From Morning to Midnight*] (1916), and Richard Strauss' opera *Salome* [*Salome*] (1905). I will look at the transformative process of the Expressionist Neue Mensch in comparison to Nietzsche's Übermensch. Both the Neue Mensch and the Übermensch are difficult, cryptic, confusing, and contradictory ideas. By reading them side by side, we can understand them better. My hope is not to sketch or prove the relationship or the influence of Nietzsche upon Expressionism, but rather to develop a side-by-side reading in order to help illuminate both the Neue Mensch and the Übermensch.

Chapter 1. A Possible Transformation: Kafka's "Das Urteil"

In his short story "Von den Gleichnissen" ["On Parables"], Kafka directly addresses Nietzsche, writing of the process of going over: "When the sage says: 'Go over,' he does not mean that we should cross over to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us" (Kafka, *Stories* 506) [Wenn der Weise sagt: „Gehe hinüber“, so meint er nicht, daß man auf die andere Seite hinübergehen solle, was man immerhin noch leisten könnte, wenn das Ergebnis des Weges wert wäre, sondern er meint irgendein sagenhaftes Drüben, etwas, das wir nicht kennen] (Kafka, *Erzählungen* 359). Kafka's parable addresses the possibility of transforming by following the words of the wise, even the paradoxical command to "go over" (Kurz 138). Though Kafka says to go over, he does not specify where, saying simply a "fabulous yonder." Kafka is presenting a paradox similar to Nietzsche's, similar to Zarathustra's journey.

Kafka first discovered Nietzsche in Gymnasium and "remained faithful to Nietzsche's thinking until his death" (Kurz 138). Max Brod, Kafka's closest friend, and the publisher of Kafka's works after his death, is known for arguing against Nietzsche's influence on Kafka. Brod even called Nietzsche a "fraud," though Kafka defended Nietzsche against Brod's claim (Gray 53). Erich Heller was the first scholar to disagree with Brod on the matter, naming Nietzsche Kafka's "intellectual predecessor" (Kurz 138).

The extent to which Kafka adapted and modified Nietzsche's ideas, however, is still in question – in particular Kafka's version of the Übermensch. Kafka's take on the Expressionist Neue Mensch is both formed by, yet simultaneously contradictory to Nietzsche's Übermensch. In Ernst Stadler's poem, *Der Spruch*, Stadler presents an idealistic direction, a call for man to become something. Kafka grapples with this act of becoming, this "werde wesentlich." By

comparing Kafka's short story "Das Urteil," to *Also sprach Zarathustra* through the process of transformation, we can gain insight into both the Übermensch and the concept of the Neue Mensch. Not only is the Neue Mensch an allusive concept, but many Expressionist writers question whether one can even become this new person. Kafka's "Das Urteil" addresses this question. He presents both the old and the new, the bourgeois and the revolutionary, and questions whether the protagonist has transformed or simply followed the biddings of this old society.

Kafka's protagonist is a young man named Georg Bendemann. Georg is a merchant who spends much of his time writing letters to a friend in Russia, a way of escape from his mundane life and a pastime that he takes prides in. Georg describes the friend as "such a man"⁵ [einem solchen Manne] (DU 5), a distant person who is hard to keep in contact with. The friend is nameless, and his current situation is unclear. It is, however, undeniable that the friend is an important influence for both Georg and his father, with whom Georg has a strained relationship. Unlike this friend, Georg is following in his father's footsteps; he fits perfectly into the old bourgeois society. He is even successful in business: "but, the business developed unexpectedly well in the last two years" [aber hatte sich das Geschäft in diesen zwei Jahren ganz unerwartet entwickelt] (DU 7). Georg is newly engaged, yet does not seem to talk about his engagement. He is a merchant, yet he is not fulfilled by this, putting his energy instead into writing letters.

Georg does not want to inform the friend of his success in business: "Georg did not wish to write to his friend of his business success" [Georg aber hatte keine Lust gehabt, dem Freund von seinen geschäftlichen Erfolgen zu schreiben] (DU 7). He is also unsure of whether he should inform the friend of his engagement, something that solidifies his movement into the

⁵ The English translations of "Das Urteil" are my own.

bourgeoisie. Georg decides, however, to write to his friend: “I am engaged to the young lady Frieda Brandenfeld, a girl from an affluent family who established themselves here long after your departure, a family who you barely would have known” [Ich habe mich mit einem Fräulein Frieda Brandenfeld verlobt, einem Mädchen aus einer wohlhabenden Familie, die sich hier erst lange nach Deiner Abreise angesiedelt hat, die Du also kaum kennen dürftest] (DU 8). The first descriptive term that Georg uses is “wohlhabend,” meaning “affluent” and “educated.” This description shows Georg’s inability to move away from bourgeois criteria, and the lifestyle that he lives. Georg makes it clear that the friend does not know his fiancé, distancing the friend from this part of his life. By stressing the use of the word “you,” Georg makes his engagement seem of lesser importance – his focus is on the friend not the fiancé. The German word “Freund” differs from the English “friend,” as “Freund” is only used for close friends. Georg’s use of “du” is also very intimate, as acquaintances would be addressed with the formal “Sie.” Georg is a part of the old society, but he does not fully accept this. He longs for a different sort of life. The friend is living this life that Georg admires, he is a revolutionary - he moved to Russia and rejected the society that Georg lives in.

Georg’s fiancé says to him, “If you have friends like this, Georg, then you shouldn’t have gotten engaged at all” [Wenn du solche Freunde hast, Georg, hättest du dich überhaupt nicht verloben sollen] (DU 8), questioning Georg on his ideals – if he is wrapped up in this distant friend’s life as a revolutionary, then is he actually ready to live out the bourgeois life set up for him? Georg reassures her that this is what he wants, yet his thoughts quickly drift back to the friend. Rather than thinking of his fiancé, Georg says to himself, “I cannot cut a person out of myself who would be more suitable for the friendship than I am” [Ich kann nicht aus mir einen Menschen herausschneiden, der vielleicht für die Freundschaft mit ihm geeigneter wäre, als ich es

bin] (DU 8), pondering his compatibility with this friend. The phrase “herausschneiden,” or “cutting out,” is characteristic of Georg’s personality. He seems to adapt to his surroundings. Even when comparing himself to the revolutionary figure, Georg thinks in terms of shaping himself into this figure, forming himself into a different self.

Kafka’s friend is an important figure in Georg and the father’s life, as both characters admire the friend’s rejection of society. Both this friend and Georg are possible representations of the *Neue Mensch*. And even though Georg’s character originally embodies the old bourgeois society, the transformation that he undergoes is drastic and representative of the “*Wandlung*” or “transformation” of the *Neue Mensch*. It is the transformation itself that sets these characters apart from the stagnant bourgeoisie.

To better understand Georg’s transformation, along with the transformations that both the *Neue Mensch* and the *Übermensch* undergo, we must look at Nietzsche’s transformation of the “overman,” Walter Kaufman’s preferred translation. Nietzsche describes the human and process of becoming an *Übermensch* as something ongoing. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the idea of “going under” signifies, and is necessary for, a “going over:” “Like you, I must *go down* as the human beings say, to whom I want to descend” (TZ 3)⁶ [Ich muss, gleich dir, untergehen, wie die Menschen es nennen, zu denen ich hinab will] (AZ 4). Zarathustra is physically descending, but simultaneously continuing his journey. In this passage, Zarathustra is addressing the Sun, thus connecting his going under, his “*Untergang*,” to the setting of the sun, the sun which sets but also rises. The first chapter of *Zarathustra* ends with the phrase “Thus began Zarathustra’s going under” (TZ 3) [Also begann Zarathustras *Untergang*] (AZ 4). The German noun “*Untergang*” has multiple meanings: the literal “going down” or “descent;” “to set like the sun;” or “to be

⁶ The English translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is Adrian Del Caro’s translation.

destroyed.” This word embodies Nietzsche’s contradictory nature. Zarathustra’s going under is both his beginning and his end. Zarathustra’s going under is both part of the human’s ever ongoing transformation. Zarathustra goes “unter” to teach the “uber” man: “I love those who do not know how to live unless by going under, for they are the ones who cross over,” (TZ 7) [Ich liebe Die, welche nicht zu leben wissen, es sei denn als Untergehende, denn es sind die Hinübergehenden] (AZ 6). It is this transformation or metamorphosis that makes Zarathustra’s journey one of self discovery, and an account of Nietzsche’s view of humanity as the movement between animal and god, a going under to go over.

By looking at Kafka’s Georg as a representation of the Neue Mensch, and the Neue Mensch as an adaption of Nietzsche’s Übermensch, Georg’s process of transformation can be related to Nietzsche’s “going under.” In “Das Urteil.” Georg’s “going under” is his physical death. Yet his physical death can also be seen as Georg’s going over. As Georg dies, Georg is ridding himself of the old, ridding himself of the father who sentenced him to death by drowning. The old world must die in him for him to become new.

Kafka’s *Urteil* ends with Georg throwing himself off a bridge: “In this moment virtually unending traffic crossed the bridge” [In diesem Augenblick ging über die Brücke ein geradezu unendlicher Verkehr] (DU 17). This “unendlicher Verkehr” represents something ongoing, but also a sense of rebirth. The word “Verkehr” is defined as “traffic” and as “intercourse;” through this word, Kafka denotes the repetitive cycle of the world and the human. This suicide is a destruction of the old but can simultaneously be seen as a rebirth. And through this rebirth, Kafka’s Georg represents the Expressionist’s Neue Mensch.

Kafka’s word choice is relevant to the idea of rebirth. The son is sentenced by the father to death by drowning: “I condemn you now to a death of drowning” [Ich verurteile dich jetzt

zum Tode des Ertrinkens] (DU 16). The phrase “Tode des Ertrinkens” is not the standard or correct formulation of these words. The word “durch” should be used in place of “des.” Georg is sentenced to a death “by” or “of” drowning, not a death through drowning. This death sentence seems to be more figurative than literal. Kafka’s phrase translates to “death of drowning,” meaning that the water is not the instrument that brings about death. This brings up the notion of rebirth, the water must not be killing Georg, rather it is renewing him. Georg’s submersion into the water can also be seen as a baptism rather than a death. Perhaps the father’s order is for Georg to rid himself of this society, rather than death.

However, it is questionable as to whether Georg’s act of suicide is him carrying out a sentence, or if he is simply ridding himself of the old ways of life. As Georg throws himself off the bridge, he compares his act of jumping over the railing to that of a gymnast. He even mentions that his parents were proud of his gymnastics – reminiscing on the past. In the act of suicide, Georg says, “Dear parents, I have always loved you” [Liebe Eltern, ich habe euch doch immer geliebt] (DU 17). This statement shows Georg’s dedication to his parents. Georg’s father does not believe that Georg has mourned the death of his mother properly, and throughout the story, Georg does not prioritize the care of his father. Perhaps Georg’s sudden expression of love comes from guilt, guilt that he did not mourn his mother, guilt that his father fell dead at his feet. Nevertheless, if Georg is simply following his father’s orders, then he is not becoming a new person, and is simply following old morals.

Kafka’s word choice at the end of “Das Urteil” adds another element to the story: “He continued, with weakening hands, to hold onto the railing. Between the posts he spotted a bus that would easily drown out his fall” [Noch hielt er sich mit schwächer werdenden Händen fest, erspähte zwischen den Geländerstangen einen Autoomnibus, der mit Leichtigkeit seinen Fall

übertönen würde] (DU 17). Georg, before jumping, looks down at the traffic and thinks of his fall. Kafka's phrasing in this sentence is interesting, as he writes "seinen Fall," when "sein Fallen" would be a more regular phrasing. By using "seinen Fall," "his fall," Kafka adds a biblical element, relating the fall to the "Sündenfall," or the fall of man, the fall of Adam and Eve. If we are to relate Georg's fall to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, then perhaps Georg has sinned. But maybe Georg has eaten a metaphoric apple, maybe he has gained forbidden knowledge, knowledge that would no longer allow him to be a part of the bourgeoisie, knowledge that led to his expulsion from the bourgeois "paradise."

It should also be noted, that Kafka's means of starting over, or going under, seem much more extreme than Nietzsche's. While Zarathustra's going under consists of the wish to teach others the Übermensch, Georg's going under is a suicide. Even though Kafka seems to adapt Nietzsche's idea of "going over," Nietzsche's and Kafka's vision of death differs. Kafka uses death to regain a failed existence, while Nietzsche, rather than relying on death for this regeneration, focuses on an aestheticized life. Georg's suicide is a complete destruction of the old, not the slow process of learning that Zarathustra encourages. Zarathustra describes mankind as a dangerous "on-the-way" (TZ 7) [Auf-dem-Weg] (AZ 6), humanity as "on-the-move," as a transitioning creature. Nietzsche's tightrope walker, though he was eventually disrupted, represented this "Auf-dem-Weg," a movement through life. Nietzsche stresses not the direction in which the person moves, but rather the process of it. Nietzsche's Übermensch, as presented in Zarathustra is represented as an ongoing transformation. Georg however, seems stagnant. Nevertheless, in terms of Georg's transformation, Georg is jumping into a river, a flowing body of water. He is ridding himself of this stagnant life.

Assuming Georg's suicide to be his "Wandlung" or transformation, then, in comparison to Zarathustra's journey Georg goes through a rather abrupt metamorphosis. Nietzsche's famous tightrope metaphor is representative of the transformative process of the human. Shortly after Zarathustra leaves the mountain top, he comes upon a town and a tightrope walker readying himself for a performance. Nietzsche creates a metaphor, man as the tightrope: "Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and the overman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still" (TZ 7) [Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, - ein Seil über einem Abgrunde. Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben] (AZ 6). Zarathustra is describing one's life as movements between and crossings over, as a metamorphosis, but not just in one direction. Life is not just a forward movement, it is a looking back, a shuddering, and a standing still. Nietzsche also uses the word "gefährlich," or "dangerous," four times in this passage alone. He describes the rope as being fastened above an "Abgrund," or "abyss." The tightrope walker does not successfully cross the tightrope; though he walks across the rope, he is not looking back, he is not standing still, and not shuddering.

Then a jester disrupts the tightrope walker's balance and causes him to fall to his death. Because Nietzsche sees humanity as the crossing, then perhaps the tightrope walker was trying to go too far. If people are the rope, then we are not walking on the rope, we are an in-between, a becoming. And in this sense, the tightrope walker was then attempting to expedite his transformation. Rather than allowing himself to learn and transform naturally, he was expediting the process, and in doing so fell.

It is also significant that a jester disturbs the tightrope walker. Nietzsche uses the word “Possenreisser” (AZ 9), which is translated to “jester” (TZ 11) in Adrian Del Caro’s translation. “Possenreisser,” also means “buffoon” or “clown.” The jester represents an entertainer, a performer. The jester is a figure who questions convention, he is laughed at by society, but he is also beloved. After watching the tightrope walker fall, Zarathustra says, “I want to go to my goal, and I go my own way; over the hesitating and dawdling I shall leap. Thus let my going be their going under!” (TZ 15) [Zu meinem Ziele will ich, ich gehe meinen Gang; über die Zögernden und Saumseligen werde ich hinwegspringen. Also sei mein Gang ihr Untergang!] (AZ 10). Zarathustra is not vilifying the jester, who had leaped over the “hesitating and dawdling” tightrope walker, Zarathustra is now imitating the jester. The phrase “Thus let my going be their going under!” [Also sei mein Gang ihr Untergang!] though perhaps alarming, is understandable when “Untergang” is thought of as an “Übergang.” If one must go under to go over, then let Zarathustra’s “Gang” his “going” his “Auf-dem-Weg,” lead to humanity’s going under. Zarathustra wishes to leap over those who hesitate, he wishes to disrupt them as the jester did, and in doing so, allow them to go under and perhaps become their own tightrope or Gang.

When comparing Georg’s abrupt death, or perhaps “Wandlung,” to the tightrope walker, it seems as though Georg was also moving too fast. As Georg leaves his father’s room he feels as though he is being chased: “Georg felt hunted out of the room, in his ears he still heard the father’s crash as he fell on the bed” [Georg fühlte sich aus dem Zimmer gejagt, den Schlag, mit dem der Vater hinter ihm aufs Bett stürzte, trug er noch in den Ohren davon] (DU 16). Kafka describes Georg as feeling “gejagt,” or “hunted,” out of the room. He also uses “stürzte,” or “crashed,” to describe the father’s fall. These verbs relay sudden movements. Here, Georg is not going through a slow or meditated transformation. Even the cleaning lady in Kafka’s story is

surprised by Georg's sudden movement, and shouts "Jesus" (DU 16), as he runs by. As Georg comes upon the bridge from which he will throw himself, he grips the railing: "He held the railing tightly, like a starving man clutching food" [Schon hielt er das Geländer fest, wie ein Hungriger die Nahrung] (DU 17). This description paints Georg's decision as compulsive.

As Georg throws himself off of the bridge, attempting suddenly to do away with his old self and life, like the tightrope walker he has physically fallen from a great height. He too is moving too fast. The question arises if it is even possible for a bourgeois merchant to go through such a transformation, to become a *Neue Mensch*. Though Kafka hints at the rebirth of Georg, it is still unclear as to what becomes of Georg after his fall. It is possible that Georg's dramatic jump was an attempt at "Wandlung," yet an unsuccessful one.

The friend, while serving as a catalyst and inspiration for Georg's transformation, also represents a more authentic person, an allusion to the *Neue Mensch*. The friend's revolutionary past is an important element in Kafka's *Urteil*. Georg recounts a story that the friend told about the Russian revolution, "Like the time during a business trip in Kiev, by a tumult, where a priest on the balcony cut a bloody cross into his hand, raised it, and addressed the crowd" [Wie er z. B. auf einer Geschäftsreise in Kiew bei einem Tumult einen Geistlichen auf einem Balkon gesehen hatte, der sich ein breites Blutkreuz in die flache Hand schnitt, diese Hand erhob und die Menge anrief] (DU 12). Interestingly enough, the friend only witnesses this tumult, he does not take part in it. The friend is on a business trip; he is still engaging in commerce and capitalist society: "during a business trip in Kiev" [auf einer Geschäftsreise in Kiew]. This brings us to the question of whether Kafka's friend is actually engaging in this overturning of the bourgeoisie; perhaps both Georg and the father admire the revolutionary spirit of a man who is no more a revolutionary than themselves.

In looking at the friend's story as a religious metaphor, the blood cross that the priest cuts into his hand could be an analogy to the wounds of Jesus on the cross. If the Russian revolutionary cuts a cross into his hand, then he is painting the revolutionaries as martyrs by associating them with Jesus. He is associating the revolutionaries with those who are suffering, those fighting against the oppressive bourgeois society. Unlike various figures in German Expressionist literature, Zarathustra is not presented as a martyr. And though Zarathustra does have certain monk and prophet-like qualities, he is explicitly not a martyr figure. Nietzsche openly critiques the idea of martyrdom in *Der Antichrist* [The Anti-Christ],⁷ painting the martyr as someone who sacrifices their life for a purpose; and according to Nietzsche, life should not be an end to a means. Assuming that Kafka's friend, or the revolutionary who raised his hand, represents a martyr-like character, this act of revolt would not align with Nietzsche's negative view of martyrdom, unless of course Kafka is criticizing the idea as well. Kafka does use a priest figure as a martyr, a man who represents the old Russian orthodoxy.

Martyrdom serves as an allusion to Jesus. Zarathustra is a Jesus-like character; his name is even derived from Zoroaster, the ancient Persian prophet – which is in itself ironic, and part of Nietzsche's parody, as Zoroaster teaches the realization of the divine. And just as Nietzsche uses a prophet-like character to teach the evils of religion, it is possible that he too is mocking the idea of martyrdom. In "Das Urteil," when a cleaning woman yells "Jesus!" it is unclear as to whether this woman sees Georg as a Jesus-like figure, or whether she was simply startled. Nevertheless, Georg dies shortly after. Of course, Georg is not killed as Jesus is, but there are still undertones of Georg giving up his own life for a greater cause. But Georg's cause is that of the *Neue Mensch*.

⁷ "Martyrdoms, by the way, have been a great misfortune in history: they have *seduced*" (ACE 183) [Die Märtyrertode, anbei gesagt, sind ein grosses Unglück in der Geschichte gewesen: sie verführten] (ACG 292).

Georg uses the word “un glaublich,” or “unbelievable,” to describe the stories that the friend tells: “Back then he told unbelievable stories from the Russian revolution” [Er erzählte damals un glaubliche Geschichten von der russischen Revolution] (DU 12). The word “un glaublich” can be translated as “incredible” or “unbelievable,” but can also include a sense of the laughable or ridiculous. Perhaps the sheer weirdness of this story is Kafka’s way of parodying religion.

During the friend’s story of the Russian revolution, the raising of the hand and the priest’s calling out to the crowd is a demonstration of power. This moment is similar to the father’s transformation, occurring later in the story, where the father rises up and his hand raises up to the ceiling. This raising of the hand is an act of professing, an act of teaching or imparting knowledge, similar to Zarathustra’s means of teaching.

As Zarathustra embarks on a process of teaching, and both a literal and figurative going under, it is important to question whether this friend that Georg and his father perceive as the Neue Mensch, is actually undergoing a process of transformation. Kafka does not provide extensive information on the friend – the friend is instead explained through both Georg’s and the father’s points of view. The friend is somehow involved in the Russian revolution, but it is unclear as to whether he is a bystander or a participant. Georg describes the friend in an almost compassionate way, as “someone who had obviously gone astray, whom one could feel sorry for, but could not help” [der sich offenbar verrannt hatte, den man bedauern, dem man aber nicht helfen konnte] (DU 5). Georg uses the word “verrennen,” which translates to, “to go astray,” a word that would not be used for Georg.⁸ Nevertheless, going astray also makes for a more authentic character. Through this explanation, Georg criticizes this friend’s life. He seems to find

⁸“Verrennen” can also be translated as “reaching a dead end.” The friend deviated from an orthodox path, but it led him to a dead end.

satisfaction, perhaps even meaning or justification of his own existence, by saying that one could feel sorry for this friend, but that one could not help him. This description also distances the friend from Georg.

Kafka's father-son relationship in "Das Urteil," a common theme in Expressionist writing, is a strained one. The relationship between father and son illustrates the tensions between the old and the new. Throughout "Das Urteil" the relationship between Georg and his father undergoes a rapid change. Even though Georg seems to have distanced himself from his father, he realizes that he has not taken good enough care of his father. Georg notices that his father is filthy and sick and brings the father into his room and covers him with his blankets, an act of caretaking. The father asks, "Am I well covered?" [Bin ich gut zugedeckt?] (DU 13), to which he continues, "You wanted to cover me up, that I know my little rascal, but I am not covered up yet" [Du wolltest mich zudecken, das weiß ich, mein Früchtchen, aber zugedeckt bin ich noch nicht] (DU 13), claiming that the son wanted to do away with him, to cover him up. The father is condescending to Georg, calling Georg his "Früchtchen," a diminutive term meaning "rascal," "good for nothing," or even "little devil." The father also makes it clear that Georg does not care for him, he makes it clear that he has provided Georg with everything that Georg now has, including his job and even his honor: "And my son went into the world in jubilation, signed business deals that I had prepared, overflowing with pleasure, and walked away from his father with the closed face of a man of honor! Do you believe that I did not love you, me, from whom you came?" [Und mein Sohn ging im Jubel durch die Welt, schloß Geschäfte ab, die ich vorbereitet hatte, überpurzelte sich vor Vergnügen und ging vor seinem Vater mit dem verschlossenen Gesicht eines Ehrenmannes davon! Glaubst du, ich hätte dich nicht geliebt, ich,

von dem du ausgingst] (DU 15). The father tells Georg that he did love him, and that this love should have been clear through everything that he has done for him.

As the father speaks with Georg, he chastises him – he tells Georg that he has been writing letters to the friend all along, and that the friend already knows of Georg’s engagement: “He knows everything, dumb boy, he knows everything! I wrote to him, because you forgot to take the stationary away from me. That is why he hasn’t come for years, he knows everything a hundred times better than you yourself” [Er weiß doch alles, dummer Junge, er weiß doch alles! Ich schrieb ihm doch, weil du vergessen hast, mir das Schreibzeug wegzunehmen, Darum kommt er schon seit Jahren nicht, er weiß ja alles hundertmal besser als du selbst] (DU 16). The father reiterates how the son has neglected him. He speaks down to Georg, saying, “Of course, I know your friend. He would have been a son after my heart” [Wohl kenne ich deinen Freund. Er wäre ein Sohn nach meinem Herzen] (DU 13). He reiterates that he prefers the friend to his own son, this friend who has abandoned the bourgeois society that both he and Georg live in.

In an attempt to prove to Georg that he has a connection to the friend, the father says, “I was his representative here” [Ich war sein Vertreter hier am Ort] (DU 14). The father describes himself as the friend’s “Vertreter,” or “representative.” “Vertreter” can also be translated as “agent” or even “sales rep.” This is yet another instance of the worshiping of the friend, alongside the wish to transcend bourgeois life, but failing to do so completely. The father, by calling himself a representative, describes himself in terms of another person. He is now idealizing the revolutionary rather than the bourgeois. This is much like the blind following that Nietzsche criticizes in Zarathustra.

This fixation or even “worshiping” of Kafka’s friend is similar to Zarathustra. Originally people do not listen to Zarathustra. Zarathustra warns against “becoming the last man”: “Behold!

I show you *the last human being*” (TZ 9) [Seht! Ich zeige euch den letzten Menschen] (AZ 7).

Zarathustra professes, “Beware! The time of the most contemptible human is coming” [Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit des verächtlichsten Menschen] (AZ 7). The masses simply laugh at him.

However, as time goes on the people begin to worship him – the people become interested in the Übermensch and want to become him. They begin to think of Zarathustra as a holy figure, but this only leads to their inability to learn and to their misunderstanding of his teachings.

Zarathustra encounters a man, a man who is not simply a follower in the herd of people in town.

However, this man has also mistaken Zarathustra’s teachings, speaking of how he often skips steps as he ascends the mountain: “How ashamed I am of my climbing and stumbling! How I mock my violent panting! How I hate the flying one! How weary I am in the heights!” (TZ 30)

[Wie schäme ich mich meines Steigens und Stolperns! Wie spotte ich meines heftigen Schnaubens! Wie hasse ich den fliegenden! Wie müde bin ich in der Höhe!] (AZ 18). This man has attempted to transform, but like the tightrope walker, he moved too fast. The man says to Zarathustra, “you are the lightning for which I waited!” (TZ 30) [du bist der Blitz, auf den ich wartete!] (AZ 18). This man thinks highly of Zarathustra, he worships him, he simply attempts to mimic what Zarathustra has done.

Also sprach Zarathustra is a book of opposites. Though Nietzsche’s distaste for religion is clear, Zarathustra represents a priest-like figure. And while Zarathustra could appear to be an ascetic figure, Nietzsche explicitly speaks against asceticism in other works.⁹ Because of Nietzsche’s apparent distaste for asceticism, Zarathustra can be seen as a parody of the ascetic, an isolated priest-like figure, yet one who preaches the Übermensch rather than a religion. In the

⁹ “The ascetic ideal not only spoilt health and taste, it spoilt a third, fourth, fifth, sixth thing as well – I shall refrain from saying what they all were (I would never reach an end!)” (GME 109) [Das asketische Ideal hat nicht nur die Gesundheit und den Geschmack verdorben, es hat noch etwas Drittes, Viertes, Fünftes, Sechstes verdorben – ich werde mich hüten zu sagen *was* Alles (wann käme ich zu Ende!)] (GMG).

section “On the Flies of the Market Place” (TZ 36) [Von den Fliegen des Marktes] (AZ 22) Zarathustra teaches solitude. He teaches that one should not follow the masses, that one should break from their society and find isolation: “Flee, my friend, into your solitude! I see you dazed by the noise of the great men and stung by the stings of the little” (TZ 36) [Fliehe, mein Freund, in deine Einsamkeit! Ich sehe dich betäubt von Lärme der grossen Männer und zerstoehen von den Stacheln der kleinen] (AZ 22). Zarathustra calls society flies, and warns those who seek to learn and transform to flee. Zarathustra says, “Flee, my friend,” and that is just what Kafka’s friend did. The friend in Kafka’s “Das Urteil,” like Zarathustra, removed himself from these “Shoo-fly” (TZ 38) [Fliegenwedel] (AZ 23). Kafka’s friend can be seen as having ascetic qualities, or is at least the most isolated or ascetic character in Kafka’s story. However, assuming Kafka’s friend represents a character who abstains from certain pleasures, then what is he actually abstaining from? Both Kafka and Nietzsche present characters who seek isolation, yet neither conform to severe forms of self-discipline. However, the friend’s existence is in question in Kafka’s “Das Urteil,” as the friend is only spoken of. And if the friend is an imaginary character, then the friend could be the ascetic aspect of Georg. Georg and the friend could be two aspects of one personality.

Kafka’s title, “Das Urteil” or “The Judgment,” “Verdict,” or “Sentence,” is indicative of the religious elements in the story. Because the father gives Georg a “Befehl,” an “order,” he is commanding Georg to do something. The father is giving a judgment; he becomes a godlike figure, suddenly growing in size; his hand reaches the ceiling: “Only one hand did he hold lightly on the ceiling” [Nur eine Hand hielt er leicht an den Plafond.] (DU 13). The father becomes menacing, powerful and commanding: “The father leaned forward but did not fall. Because Georg did not approach, as he had expected, he rose again” [Der Vater beugte sich vor, fiel aber

nicht. Da Georg sich nicht näherte, wie er erwartet hatte, erhob er sich wieder] (DU 15). It is in this moment that the father heaves himself up, that the father transforms, shedding his old sick self. The father bends over, physically going down, yet then reemerges. The father rises up as a new figure and orders Georg to his death. Because Kafka's father becomes godlike, his death can be seen as the death of God. In Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Zarathustra presents the metaphor of God's death, proclaiming, "This old saint in his woods has not yet heard the news that *God is dead!*" (TZ 5) [Dieser alte Heilige hat in seinem Walde noch Nichts davon gehört, dass Gott todt ist!] (AZ 5). For Zarathustra, the death of God is not simply the end of religion, but the end of the possibility of a belief in God, the end of old ideas that control the human. In "Das Urteil," not only is the father a godlike figure, but the connotations that come along with his death are similar to those of the death of God - the death of the father symbolizing the end of the patriarchy and the end of the old system.

Throughout the story not only do father and son transform, but a transformation in their relationship to the friend can also be seen, a transformation of concepts and ideas. Both father and son begin to speak of the friend differently – it seems as though they begin to hold him to a higher standing as time goes on. Georg begins with descriptions of the friend, "such a man" [einem solchen Manne] (DU 5), speaking of the friend in a slightly removed manner. In the beginning of the story, Georg even criticizes the friend's way of life: "Should one perhaps advise him to come home, to relocate himself here, to resume all the old friendly relations" [Sollte man ihm vielleicht raten, wieder nach Hause zu kommen, seine Existenz hierher zu verlegen, alle die alten freundschaftlichen Beziehungen wieder aufzunehmen] (DU 5). However, both the father and son become more and more fascinated with the friend, and their respect for him grows. After the father questions the friend's existence, Georg begins to call the friend "my friend" [mein

Freund] (DU 12), exerting possession over him. The father's view of the friend goes through an abrupt change after he tells his own son that the friend would have been a son, of whom he would have been fonder: "He would have been a son after my heart" [Er wäre ein Sohn nach meinem Herzen] (DU 13). The father's and Georg's changing relationship to the friend represents a shift in their ideals, but is also a criticism on how quickly people fixate on one ideal or person.

Also sprach Zarathustra begins as *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [The Gay Science] ends, with the phrase "Incipit tragoedia" (GS 195), meaning "The tragedy begins." However, in the preface to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche warns that this tragedy might be a parody: "Incipit tragoedia we read at the end of this suspiciously innocent book. Beware! Something utterly wicked and mischievous is being announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt" (GS 4) [Incipit tragoedia - heisst es am Schlusse dieses bedenklich-unbedenklichen Buchs: man sei auf seiner Hut! Irgend etwas ausbündig Schlimmes und Boshafes kündigt sich an: *incipit parodia*, es ist kein Zweifel] (FW 2). Nietzsche is identifying *Also sprach Zarathustra* as both tragedy and parody. Nietzsche is highlighting the tragic elements through the comedic, and presenting tragedy itself as comedy. Simultaneously, if we are to take the definition of "tragedy" in the form of drama, this insinuates that the journey of Zarathustra is one of human suffering, but one that invokes pleasure for the audience. And by calling his work a tragedy, Nietzsche criticizes both the idea of the Übermensch, along with certain societal norms and patterns – he is critiquing the masses who do not follow Zarathustra's teachings. For Nietzsche, the Übermensch is still a reachable state. In "Das Urteil," it is questionable as to whether Kafka considers the Neue Mensch to be achievable – perhaps he is questioning the notion, or perhaps "Das Urteil" is a parody in itself, or even a parody of Zarathustra's journey and teachings.

Nietzsche's blend of the tragic and the comedic is also present in Kafka's writing. Especially in the grotesque quality of Kafka's work, meaning that it is comically distorted. The father's sudden growth, for instance, can be seen as a grotesque or comedic element. As Georg speaks with his father, the father informs Georg, "your clientele I have here in my pocket!" [deine Kundschaft habe ich hier in der Tasche!] (DU 6), and Georg gives a rather laughable response, shouting, "He even has pockets in his night gown!" [Sogar im Hemd hat er Taschen!] (DU 6). With both Kafka and Nietzsche, it is unclear as to whether a tragedy is being expressed or whether one should laugh, or maybe cringe. At one point Georg even accuses his father of being a comedian. Directly after the father tells Georg that he too has a relationship with the friend, Georg exclaims, "Comedian!" [Komödiant!] (DU 15). The father responds, "Yes, happily I have played comedy! Comedy! Good Word! Which other consolations remain for an old and widowed father?" [Ja, freilich habe ich Komödie gespielt! Komödie! Gutes Wort! Welcher andere Trost blieb dem alten verwitweten Vater?] (DU 15). The father says that he played comedy, and by using the word "gespielt," he is mocking the life that Georg is living by painting it as a game. As the father describes his reclusive state, he presents comedy also as his coping mechanism, thus emphasizing the tragic elements of the situation, presenting a mesh of tragedy and parody.

Through comedy, the father is taking control; he is mocking Georg and his lifelong pursuits. Zarathustra however does not mock the people whom he tries to teach, rather he is mocked by them. Yet this mocking of Zarathustra is what Nietzsche is mocking. Nietzsche's use of comedy is perhaps subtler, appearing in various paradoxes like Zarathustra the non-religious priest. By changing the way that we look at these texts, by recognizing the comedic undertones in tragedy, we are forced to go through a transformation of how we evaluate and judge the text.

Not only are the characters going through a “Wandlung,” but the reader also undergoes a transformation.

Though Kafka questions the idea of the *Neue Mensch*, Georg is still a representation of one; he is in the act of becoming, and through Georg’s dismissal of bourgeois society, one can derive hope. Georg’s character reflects this Expressionist struggle of becoming “wesentlich.” In his attempt to break away, to become authentic, Georg goes through a process which could be seen as a regeneration, a theme that, as the next chapter will show, Georg Kaiser also pursues. In his *Vision und Figur* (1918), Kaiser writes of a vision: “What kind of vision is it? There is only one kind: the regeneration of man” [Von welcher Art ist die Vision? Es gibt nur eine: die von der Erneuerung des Menschen.] (Anz, *Expressionismus* 140). This idea of regeneration, present in both Kafka and Kaiser, furthers the Expressionist vision of hope, hope resting in the hands of the new man.

Chapter 2. Breaking Through: Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts*

Georg Kaiser's play *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (1912) was Kaiser's first Expressionist drama, and one of the first Expressionist plays ever written (Schürer 83). The play follows a bank teller's transformative process, inspired by a visit that Kaiser took to the bank, where he noticed a bank teller, and wondered why the teller did not take the money and head south (Schürer 83). Nietzsche's influence on Kaiser's work is a debated topic. Some scholars, such as Herbert W. Reichart, in his book *Studies in Philology*, label Kaiser "a disciple of Nietzsche" (85),¹⁰ while others object to this claim. Whether Kaiser read Nietzsche is, however, not in question; in 1904, "Kaiser conceived plans for a drama dealing with the superman and jotted down notes and extracts from Nietzsche's writings" (Reichart 86). In this section I will not be answering the question of influence; I will be examining Kaiser's Bank Teller's process of transformation in relation to Nietzsche's Zarathustra. As with Kafka, the comparison is an attempt to better understand the Übermensch itself and the Expressionist vision of it.

In looking at the figure of the Neue Mensch in *Von morgens bis mitternachts* it is important to note that Kaiser does not present a constant picture of the new man. Walter Sokel writes of this in his book *The Writer in Extremis*: "constant vacillation is, for instance, a prominent feature in Kaiser, who changes his outlook from play to play" (Sokel 143). Because of this vacillation, it is challenging to form a clear conception of Kaiser's new man. And seeing as though the concept of the Neue Mensch is, according to Anz, an "empty formula," Kaiser's changing image seems fitting. I hope to ultimately show that Kaiser's Bank Teller, Kaiser's Neue

¹⁰ Hugo F. Koenigsgarten claims Kaiser to be a disciple of Nietzsche "by virtue of his strong and recurrent plea for the vitalistic regeneration of man" (Reichart 85).

Mensch, undergoes a transformative process similar to that of Zarathustra, a process of regeneration.¹¹

In *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, Kaiser presents a distorted world, where family represents an old stifling life, and money is of the utmost importance. Kaiser's characters do not have names; the protagonist is known simply by his job title. And even after leaving his job, he is still known as the "Kassierer," which translates to "cashier" or "bank teller." As a bank teller, the protagonist's job consists of a process of exchange, a process of exchange that is similar to the Teller's process of transformation, a process in which, throughout the course of the play, he exchanges one identity for another.

The Bank Teller's first transformation happens at the beginning of the play, as an Italian woman enters the bank. The Teller is bent over, counting money. The stage directions depict a sort of sexual awakening. The Italian woman touches the Teller's arm: "Startled by the commotion, she turns around. Resting herself on the counter, her hand sinks into the Bank Teller's hand." [hat sich schwach erschreckend umgedreht: sich aufstützend sinkt ihre Hand auf die Hand des Kassierers] (MM 14).¹² This simple gesture leads the Bank Teller to steal 60,000 marks. This woman holds an incredible power over the Bank Teller, exerting an almost god-like pull on him. The stage directions read, "She puts on the bracelet, struggling with the clasp. Stretching out her arm to the Bank Teller" [Sie legt das Armband an, müht sich an der Schließe. Dem Kassierer den Arm hinstreckend] (MM 14). The Teller reacts to the Woman's gesture: "Glasses sink into blossoming caves of opened eyes" [Brille sinkt in blühende Höhlen eröffneter Augen] (MM 14). The Bank Teller's eyes are described as blossoming caves, as though he

¹¹ Ernst Schürer uses the term "regenerated man" in his book *Georg Kaiser*. This term also comes from the German word *Wandlungsdrama*, or a play of regeneration (Schürer 86).

¹² The English translations of Kaiser's *Von morgens bis Mitternachts* are my own.

cannot resist the force of his vision. In the stage directions, the glasses are the subject of the sentence, not the Bank Teller, implying that the Bank Teller's subjectivity is taken away from him. Kaiser uses the word "eröffneter," or "open," which can also be connected to "offenbarung" or "revelation." The Teller is going through a quasi-religious experience. In this awakening, the Teller undergoes a substantive change; he transforms from a cashier, going mechanically through his day, to a human with desires and needs.

The manager of the bank describes the woman as an "Erscheinung," which translates to "apparition" or "vision:" "This woman from Florence – who pretends to come from Florence – have you ever seen a phenomenon like this in front of the counter? Fur – perfumed. That is enough for me, one breathes adventure in with the air!" [Diese Dame aus Florenz – die aus Florenz kommen will – ist Ihnen schon einmal eine Erscheinung wie diese vorm Schalter aufgetaucht? Pelz – parfümiert. Das reicht nachträglich, man zieht mit der Luft Abenteuer ein!] (MM 12). The manager and the Bank Teller are entranced. The manager describes the fur coat she wears along with her perfume – the instinctual and the refined. For these men, this woman is unreachable. She is an enchanting figure from Florence, a representation of the longed for south. Even Nietzsche experienced this pull to the south, and wrote in a notebook entry after moving to Italy, "I don't have enough strength for the North: awkward and artificial souls reign there, who work as constantly and necessarily at the measures of prudence as the beaver at his dam" (Huddleston). This romanticizing of the south is a similar sentiment to Kaiser's Bank Teller. In encountering the Italian woman, he too feels the pull of the south and begins to develop a resentment towards the north, with its "awkward and artificial souls."

However, despite all the woman's pulls, the men are just as interested in her money as they are in her. Much of the attraction comes from her material wealth: her silk, her fur, and of

course, her money. The bank manager describes women as modern sirens: “Then foaming in fur and silk. Women! These are the modern sirens” [Dann schäumend in Pelz und Seide. Weiber! Das sind die modernen Sirenen] (MM 12). The manager even uses the word “schäumend,” meaning “sparkling” or “foaming,” as though the woman and her goods are something that he simply cannot comprehend. His description alludes to the Dionysian as well, as though there is an energy seething inside her.

Unlike Zarathustra’s process of transformation, a slow process, the Bank Teller’s transformation seems to be a radical break. The Teller does not act rationally; rather he acts upon an impulse. After stealing money from the bank, the Teller finds the Italian woman who inspired him to do so. But unfortunately for him, the woman is not interested. After hearing this, the Teller tries to convince the woman that she must come away with him: “I have destroyed my existence – I have blown up every bridge – I am a thief – a criminal – Now you must!!!” [Ich habe meine Existenz vernichtet – alle Brücken sind gesprengt – ich bin ein Dieb – Rauber --- Jetzt müssen Sie doch!!!] (MM 23). The Teller speaks of his existence, saying that he has destroyed his existence, that he has destroyed all of his bridges. The Teller is at a standstill: after stealing the money he sees no way out and no way back.

In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, humans are described as a bridge: “What is great about human beings is that they are a bridge and not a purpose” (TZ 7) [Was gross ist am Menschen, das ist, dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist] (AZ 6). In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche’s human is not destroying his bridges, he is one.¹³ The quote continues, “what is lovable about human beings is that they are a crossing over and a going under” (TZ 7) [was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein Übergang und ein Untergang is”] (AZ 4). Nietzsche

¹³ It should be noted here that Kafka too is drawn to this metaphor. In his short story *The Bridge*, Kafka uses the metaphor of a human as a bridge.

emphasizes this going under and crossing over as imperative to the human. Nietzsche takes the metaphor of transformation one step further – human beings are not in the process of crossing over, but they are in fact the crossing over. And if humans are the bridge, then it is impossible for them to reach the other side, suggesting that their transformation cannot come to an end. So, by being the bridge, the person remains in a constant state of transformation.

However, Nietzsche also uses the metaphor of destroying one's bridges. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* Nietzsche speaks of burning one's bridges: "We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us — indeed we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us" (GS 119) [Wir haben das Land verlassen und sind zu Schiff gegangen – Wir haben die Brücke hinter uns, - mehr noch, wir haben das Land hinter uns abgebrochen!] (FW 94). Nietzsche writes of the burning of bridges as something that leads to the "horizon of the infinite." In this passage a little ship in the ocean becomes a ship in the sea: "Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean" (GS 119) [Nun, Schifflein! sieh' dich vor! Neben dir liegt der Ozean] (FW 94). By destroying its bridges, the little ship breaks away. Both Nietzsche and Kaiser are presenting a point of no return. Nevertheless, the Bank Teller's version of burning his bridges seems unlike Nietzsche's. It is unclear if the Teller is venturing into the "horizon of the infinite," or if he has reached a sort of stand still.

Nietzsche is presenting us with a paradox: how can one be a bridge but also burn the bridge. This paradox shows the challenges or perhaps even the impossibility of transformation. However, even though Kaiser's Bank Teller claims to have burned his bridges, he can still be thought of as a bridge when looking at Nietzsche's metaphoric bridge as an "Übergang," a "going over" or "transition." The Bank Teller continues to transform. He is constantly in

transition from one existence to another. It is this process of transformation that Nietzsche stresses, what lies behind is not important, along with where the bridge is going.

After visiting the Italian woman, a dream sequence begins in which the Bank Teller undergoes another transformation. The setting is a field, deep in snow surrounded by low hanging branches and shadows. Spurred by stealing the money and being rejected by the Italian woman, the Bank Teller starts to question his own life. The scene begins with the stage directions: “Comes, going backwards. He is shoveling his tracks with his hands. He stands upright” [kommt, rückwärts gehend. Er schaufelt mit den Händen seine Spur zu. Sich aufrichtend] (MM 25). The Teller is walking backwards covering his footsteps, he is going backwards into his new life. This backwards movement seems ironic and makes one question whether Kaiser’s protagonist is really transforming. However, backward movement is also a key to Zarathustra’s transformation, where Nietzsche describes mankind as, “A dangerous crossing a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still” (TZ 7) [Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben] (AZ 6). The Bank Teller’s backward movement is questionable, but also a sign of his humanity, a sign that he is in the process of transforming. The Bank Teller then begins to describe man as a mechanism or contraption, he wonders how he can use his hands in such a way, calling the human a “Wunderwerk,” or “marvel.” The Teller seems to be discovering something new about himself and acknowledging his physicality. He is discovering how his limbs work, and in doing so, simultaneously breaking away from his mechanical existence as a Bank Teller. The Teller is moving away from a machinelike existence; he is essentially discovering that he is human. Like the Bank Teller, Zarathustra speaks of human beings as something removed from him: “Behold! This cup that wants to become empty again,

and Zarathustra wants to become human again” (TZ 3) [Siehe! Dieser Becher will wieder leer werden, und Zarathustra will wieder Mensch werden] (AZ 4). Both Zarathustra and the Bank Teller seem to be estranged from their human existence. Kaiser’s Bank Teller even compares his previous existence to a sickness that causes one to lose control of one’s actions. Zarathustra as well compares life to a sickness or form of nausea.

During the Bank Teller’s dream or hallucination, as he moves through the snowy field, he shows his transformation through taking off his cuff links and throwing them on the ground. The stage directions read, “He unfastens the buttons and flings the cuff links away” [Er knöpft die Knöpfe heraus und schleudert die Manschetten weg] (MM 25). In this moment the Teller is ridding himself of a symbol of his bourgeois existence and past life, his sickness. It is another act of burning his bridges. However, this transformative act does not seem to last long, as right after throwing the cuff links to the ground, he picks them up again. The Teller makes a possibly ironic statement: “You will be missed in the wash” [Ihr werdet in der Wäsche fehlen] (MM 25), followed by a description of the missing cuffs as a “Catastrophe in the boiler. Doomsday” [Katastrophe im Wackessel. Weltuntergang] (MM 25). The Bank Teller’s use of sarcasm shows his ability to reflect: he is aware that returning home without his cuff links would be disastrous. And though the Bank Teller seems to pick up his cuff links only to avoid “Weltuntergang,” or “the world going under,” this action makes one question the success of his transformation. Kaiser’s protagonist does not seem to commit himself to a certain trajectory. And even though the Bank Teller throws his cuff links on the ground, he is simultaneously trying to cover his tracks: “Achieved is an obscure incognito” [Erzielt ist ein undurchsichtiges Inkognito!] (MM 25). Everything the Teller does, he also does the opposite of, a sign of his uncertainty. The Teller is transforming; he is breaking away but he is also running away. And because the Bank Teller is

running away from his past life, it is once again easy to question his transformative process. This also makes us question the destruction of his bridges. If he is running from his past, then he has not broken fully from it.

Though the Bank Teller's original transformation seemed to be a radical break, the Bank Teller begins to think about what he has done, and tries to justify his actions. He suddenly begins comparing life to a high stakes poker game: "I play too high to lose" [Ich spiele zu hoch, um zu verlieren] (MM 25). Once again, the Teller seems unable to completely break from his past life. He expresses everything that he has experienced in terms of money. Even in the snow field away from modernity, Kaiser's protagonist still thinks in monetary terms. The Bank Teller searches for something to buy: "I must pay!! – I have the money in cash!!" [Ich muß bezahlen!! – Ich habe das Geld bar!!] (MM 27). He even considers buying snow, yet then denies the "sale," speaking all the while to an imaginary person. The Bank Teller is seeking a way out, but is simultaneously a captive of his old self.

The Bank Teller lacks a destination. He describes himself as being on the move: "I am on the march – there is no turning back" [Ich bin auf dem Marsche – Umkehr findet nicht statt.] (MM 26). He declares that he will only move forward. This lack of destination makes one question what the Teller is working towards, but it does align with our bridge metaphor. The Bank Teller is not headed anywhere in particular, and in this sense, he is being a bridge. The Bank Teller thanks the woman for what she has done for him: "I owe you my life! Crackling, you have loosened me" [Ich verdanke Ihnen das Leben! Mich haben Sie, knisternd, aufgelockert] (MM 26). The Teller uses the word "knisternd," which can be translated as "crackling" or "sizzling." The Teller is alluding to fire, to passion; as though this woman has given him the fire to burn his bridges. And not only has this woman assisted him in his transformation, but she has

scattered and relaxed him. The Bank Teller describes this new existence as transcendent. The Teller is rediscovering his human qualities, and simultaneously going beyond his old life.

For both Nietzsche and Kaiser women serve as catalysts. The Italian woman helped in the Teller's transformation. However, as we will later see, the Teller simply disregards his wife. He neither loves his wife nor uses her to transform. In Kaiser's play, the Italian woman exists simply as an effect. And in Nietzsche's passage "On Child and Marriage," Nietzsche writes of the process of becoming an Übermensch, and states that man should take a wife to help him in this transformative process. The wife in Nietzsche's sense is also there as an aid, as an effect: "Over and beyond yourselves you must someday love! Thus learn first to love! And therefore you must drink the bitter cup of your love. There is bitterness in the cup of even the best love: thus it causes longing for the overman, thus it causes your thirst, your creator!" (TZ 53) [Über euch hinaus sollt ihr einst lieben! So lernt erst lieben! Und darum musstet ihr den bitteren Kelch eurer Liebe trinken. Bitterniss ist im Kelch auch der besten Liebe: so macht sie Sehnsucht zum Übermenschen, so macht sie Durst dir, dem Schaffenden!] (AZ 31). Zarathustra speaks of marriage and woman as a means in which one can learn to love. And after learning to love the man can implement this love to become an Übermensch, to love "over and beyond." Kaiser's protagonist uses the Italian woman for his transformative process, as Nietzsche advises.

The Teller is undeniably going through a transformation. But whether the transformation aligns with that of Zarathustra's and whether the transformation was sparked by a similar motive is still in question. Zarathustra wishes to teach mankind. As Zarathustra first descends from the mountain, he says, "I bring mankind a gift" (TZ 4) [Ich bringe den Menchen ein Geschenk] (AZ 4). When looking at Kaiser's protagonist as a representation of the Neue Mensch, it seems fitting to consider whether or not the Bank Teller undergoes simply a personal transformation, or

whether he, like the Übermensch, attempts to teach others. Like Zarathustra, the Bank Teller does bring the people a gift – his money. Even though this is an instance of Kaiser’s irony, perhaps the Bank Teller is attempting to teach others with his money, perhaps he too believes that he is bringing mankind a gift. Nevertheless, the Bank Teller does not teach his children, another piece of advice from Nietzsche in the passage “On Child and Marriage.” Here, Kaiser’s Teller is working on his own transformation. However, the Bank Teller does go back to tell his wife about his transformation. It seems as though he wouldn’t return if he wasn’t trying to teach them something. Other Expressionist writers’ representations of the Neue Mensch attempt to start revolutions, revolutions that incite change and teach those who have not yet transformed.¹⁴ The Bank Teller is not sparking a revolution. He is going through more of a personal transformation. Nevertheless, the Teller does attempt to warn against remaining stagnant. Part of the struggle for both the Neue Mensch and the Übermensch is this failure. They are undergoing a change; they are undergoing a metamorphosis that no one seems to understand. And like Zarathustra, who warns the people in the town of the “The Motley Cow” (TZ 17) [bunte Kuh] (AZ 11) not to become the last human, not to be left behind, the Bank Teller’s family disregards him, just like the people of the The Motley Cow.

It is after the dream sequence when the Bank Teller returns to his house. When his wife asks him where he has been, the Teller replies, “Out of the grave. I bore my forehead through plates of ice. There is still ice here. It took a lot of effort to get through” [Aus dem Grabe. Ich habe meine Stirn durch Schollen gebohrt. Hier hängt noch Eis. Es hat besondere Anstrengungen gekostet, um durchzukommen] (MM 31). The Teller is describing his near death experience,

¹⁴ In Hasenclever’s *Der Sohn* (1914), the protagonist tries to overturn the old society in which he lives through a revolution of the youth. Additionally, in Kafka’s “Das Urteil,” Georg’s friend, the possible representation of the Neue Mensch and person who Georg looks up to, is a revolutionary.

saying that he drilled his head through the ice. The imagery that Kaiser uses in this section shows the Teller's process of going under to go over, much like Zarathustra's own transformation. Zarathustra goes physically up, he speaks with the sun, and decides to go down. The Bank Teller goes down, and physically goes up, he bores himself through the ice. The Teller ascends from his "Grave," and attempts to bring light to the people around him. The Teller sees the sun after the snowy field, Zarathustra sees the sun after his isolation.

The Bank Teller continues to describe his transformative process to his wife: "I have dirtied my finger a little. You must have long fingers to get out. You lie deeply embedded. They shovel lots of earth on you in a lifetime" [Ich habe mir die Finger etwas beschmutzt. Man muß lange Finger machen, um hinauszugreifen. Man liegt tief gebettet. So ein Leben lang schaufelt mächtig] (MM 31). The Bank Teller describes how he dug himself out of his previous existence, speaking of all the dirt that covers you over a lifetime. However, the Teller only dirtied his finger – he has had a relatively easy time going through this transformative process. And even as the Teller claims to have broken away from his bourgeois life, he is still describing this to his wife; in his process of breaking away from his past, he has actually returned to it. This is the same paradox that occurs in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: for Zarathustra to teach he too must go down, his "Untergang."

Like Zarathustra's "Untergang," during the Teller's dream sequence he physically descends. The Teller falls into the ice and comes up again, he resurfaces and is cleansed. This experience is almost baptismal, one of rebirth. The Teller describes himself as "Aufgetaut!" (MM 31), or "defrosted," and calls his experience an "Erneuerung" (MM 31), meaning "renewal" or "regeneration."¹⁵ The Teller also describes his transformation as an "Aufbruch," a

¹⁵ In Ernst Schürer's book *Georg Kaiser*, he writes of Kaiser's focus on the regeneration of man.

“breaking away.” By using the phrase “Aufbruch,” The Teller once again stresses the energy it takes to break through society. He is sick and frozen from his bourgeois life. And in this scene, the Bank Teller has a near death experience, where he sees a tree transform into a skeleton. The Teller’s first instinct is to question whether the skeleton has been eavesdropping, he asks if he is a police agent, a “Police of Existence” [Polizei des Daseins] (MM 28). Because the Bank Teller thinks of the skeleton as his existence, he is associating existence with death. Death would be an escape from bourgeois life, but the protagonist decides against death. And by coming out of this dream, by digging himself out of the ice, the Bank Teller can be thought of having a sort of rebirth. Perhaps his past self has died, and he has reemerged as a new man.

The Bank Teller faces his death and rejects it, speaking of the many things that he still has to do: “I still have things to take care of” [Ich habe noch einiges zu erledigen] (MM 28). The Teller says, “I expect many commitments before evening” [Ich sehe bis zum Abend eine ganze Menge Verpflichtungen vor mir] (MM 28). The Bank Teller is showing a strong forward trajectory. As previously stated, for him there is no going back. The Bank Teller also foreshadows his own death in this passage. He tells the skeleton to call him at midnight, saying that his number will change every hour: “Call me again around midnight. Inquire at the switch board for my changing telephone number!” [Rufen sich mich gegen Mitternacht nochmals an. Wechselnde Telephonnummer beim Amt zu erfragen!] (MM 28). The changing number that the Bank Teller is referencing aligns with his transformations; every hour he will be somewhere and someone else. This passage brings us back to the question of what the Teller’s goal is: is he working towards something? Because he says that he still has “things to take care of” [noch einiges zu erledigen] it seems as though the Bank Teller wants to accomplish something in particular. He has told death, the skeleton, to search for him at midnight, yet he still has a plan.

Perhaps the Teller wants to spread what he has learned, to teach, or perhaps he wants to find something more in his life.

At the end of the Bank Teller's dreamlike experience, the skeleton turns back into a tree and the sun comes out again: "The sun breaks through" [Sonne bricht durch] (MM 29). The sun is an important element both in this passage and in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as Zarathustra begins his journey in speaking to the sun. The Teller describes his "Erneuerung" (MM 31), or "renewal." Addressing his wife, the Teller describes the snowfield as a cemetery of modern existence with everyone buried under the snow: "The dead lie three meter under the earth's crust, the living are being buried deeper and deeper down" [Die Gestorbenen liegen ihre drei Meter abgezählt unter der Oberfläche – die Lebendenden verschüttet es immer tiefer] (MM 31). This is the Teller's warning, that if one is to remain stagnant, if one does not try to transform, one will then be buried deeper and deeper under the earth's crust. The Teller even uses the word "abgezählt," or "counted." Even the dead are buried a specific number of meters below the earth, suggesting that the mechanical aspect of society never leaves. This warning is once again similar to Zarathustra's teachings and warnings against becoming the last man: "Beware! The time approaches when human beings no longer launch the arrow of their longing beyond the human, and the string of their bow will have forgotten how to whirl" (TZ 9) [Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit, wo der Mensch nicht mehr den Pfeil seiner Sehnsucht über den Menschen hinauswirft, und die Sehne seines Bogens verlernt hat, zu schwirren] (AZ 7). Kaiser's Bank Teller is addressing his wife and family, who he finds to be stagnant. These too are people who are not "longing beyond the human," they are content in their ways and have yet to break from this icy existence.

The Teller gives an apathetic description of familial life. He describes the monotony that he sees: “Grandmother by the window. Daughter at the table sewing. – Wagner playing. Wife in the kitchen. Build four walls around the scene - family – life. Nice coziness of being together” [Alte Mutter am Fenster. Töchter am Tisch stickend. - Wagner spielend. Frau die Küche besorgend. Von vier Wänden umbaut – Familien – leben. Hübsche Gemütlichkeit des Zusammenseins] (MM 34). The Teller describes this scene with the present participle, implying that these actions are not finite, implying an ongoing boredom and a machine-like existence. By using the present participle, the subject’s agency is diminished. There is no individuality. There is no active agent, only the incessant duration of the situation. The Teller also uses the word “umbaut,” which suggests an enclosure - he feels himself to be encaged, surrounded by walls. The Bank Teller is addressed by his family as “Vater,” “Der Mann,” and “Der Sohn,” an accumulation of the traditional roles of a man. He seems stuck and placed into these categories. And just as the Bank Teller expected when he picked up his cuff links to avoid a catastrophe, the Grandmother is so appalled when the Teller gets up from the table, that she dies: “She dies because someone, for once, leaves before lunch” [Daran stirbt sie, weil einer einmal vor dem Mittagessen weggeht] (MM 35). When describing the death of his mother, the Teller’s indifference is clear, even the language he uses is mechanical. The Bank Teller even uses the word “einer,” or “one,” rather than “ich,” “I.” Who left the table is not important, individuality is lacking, and the slightest disturbance of family happiness leads to disaster. The Teller’s family cannot understand him. His mother makes sense of the situation by deeming him sick, “He is sick” [Er ist krank] (MM 33), though for the Bank Teller, she is the one who is sick due to her dreary and stagnant life.

During his visit home, the Teller tears his suit apart, hands it to his wife, and proclaims himself to be a wanderer. The Bank Teller tells his wife, “Better a neglected wanderer on the street - than streets empty of wanderers” [Besser ein verwahrloster Wanderer auf der Straße – als Straßen leer von Wanderern] (MM 35). Like Kaiser’s Bank Teller, Zarathustra identifies himself as a wanderer: “I am a wanderer and a mountain climber” (TZ 121) [Ich bin ein Wanderer und ein Bergsteiger] (AZ 65). Zarathustra asserts that his destiny will “involve wandering and mountain climbing: ultimately one experiences only oneself” (TZ 121) [ein Wandern wird darin sein und ein Bergsteigen: man erlebt endlich nur noch sich selber] (AZ 65), implying that his journey is one of self discovery. The Bank Teller describes himself as a “verwahrloster” wanderer, or a “neglected” wanderer, a similar sentiment to Zarathustra, as he is also alone and misunderstood. “Verwahrloster” also means “homeless,” or “dilapidated,” a stronger statement than Nietzsche’s, implying that the Bank Teller has fallen into disrepair. But even this disrepair is preferable to the pent up life that the Teller was living. After this proclamation, the wife simply answers, “We’re eating lunch now” [Wir essen jetzt Mittag] (MM 35).

Kaiser’s play is a ‘Stationendrama,’¹⁶ the protagonist is moving from station to station. The ‘Stationendrama’ is a deliberate appropriation of the Bible as Christ is on his way to Golgotha – he too moves from station to station. The Teller, who has destroyed his bridges and swears only to move forward, is moving from the old to the new. Each station is a possible rebirth; each station holds the possibility of a new man. The Teller’s next station is a bicycle race in a sports hall, most likely in Berlin. He begins to give away his riches and observes how the masses react when offered wealth. The masses seem to be in ecstasy as they take the Teller’s money. As the Bank Teller gives away the money he feels free, as though he is breaking out of

¹⁶ Ernst Schürer, in his book *Georg Kaiser*, describes *Von morgens bis mitternachts* as a ‘Stationendrama,’ a term used to describe theatre in which the scenes are self contained.

his chains. The Teller finds momentary satisfaction during this scene: “Restraint has gone to hell. The tail coats tremble. The dress shirts rip. Buttons burst in every direction” [Die Beherrschung ist zum Teufel. Die Fräcke beben. Die Hemden reißen. Knöpfe prasseln in alle Richtungen] (MM 42). The Teller is watching as the people enter a frenzy, an intoxication. It seems as though they no longer have control over their bodies. But for a moment this seems to be a liberation. Nevertheless, the Teller describes the people through their clothing. It is as though these people are devoid of personality, their clothing more noticeable than themselves.¹⁷ The Bank Teller says, “Unchained – free. Curtains up – pretexts down. Humanity. Free humanity. High and low – human” [Entkettet – frei. Vorhänge hoch – Vorwände nieder. Menschheit. Freie Menschheit. Hoch und tief – Mensch] (MM 46). The Bank Teller wants passion. He watches as the people break loose from their “chains,” and finds pleasure in watching the Dionysian aspects of humanity. The Teller enjoys this frenzy, yet in his attempt to evoke passion and life, he does not find joy, as the ecstasy comes quickly to an end, he has simply attempted to buy it. The Teller also describes the people as “hoch” and “tief,” which can be translated to “high” and “low,” or to “elevated” and “profound.” The Teller is presenting a paradox and also a sense of comedy – the Teller is describing the human, who is scrambling on the ground for money, as profound. Simultaneously, the human described as high and low is a paradox in and of itself.

The Teller admires how society and class have dissolved into one, into passion: “No rings – no stratification – no classes. Into the endless liberation from indentured servitude and reward in passion” [Keine Ringe - keine Schichten - keine Klassen. Ins unendliche schweifende Entlassenheit aus Fron und Lohn in Leidenschaft] (MM 46). The Bank Teller ends his speech by declaring himself not pure, but free. He says, “This will be the proceeds from my pertness” [Das

¹⁷ Gottfried Benn, in his poem *Nachtcafe*, also substitutes instruments for people, presenting their fragmented personalities.

wird der Erlös für meine Keckheit] (MM 46). The irony of this scene is that he is evoking this passion only by giving away his money. He is attempting to teach the others to move away from bourgeois society, from the drudgery of their lives, but he is doing this by offering them money, something that only brings them further away from this goal. Kaiser also uses the word “Keckheit,” which can be translated as “pertness,” “cockiness,” or even “provocation” or “daring.” The Bank Teller is rewarding and congratulating himself, viewing himself as a revolutionary. But, the process of renewal for Nietzsche comes from the inside, from the long process of becoming, and the Bank Teller attempts to bring about this transformation from the outside. This could perhaps induce a Dionysian frenzy, but cannot create the *Neue Mensch*. Additionally, the Teller uses the word “Erlös” to describe his own transformation. The German word “Erlös” is tied to the word “Erlösung” or “redemption,” but “Erlös” is also used for a monetary reward. The Bank Teller is seeking “Erlösung,” but his money seems only to provide “Erlös.” Before advancing to the next station the Bank Teller is disheartened when the frenzy which he has created is disrupted as the Crowned Prince enters: “This fire that just started burning has been beaten out by a leather boot on the leg of his Highness” [Dieser eben noch lobernde Brand ausgetreten von einem Lackstiefel am Bein seiner Hoheit] (MM 47). Once again it is the clothing that is described rather than the person himself – once again Kaiser presents a world devoid of personality and controlled by a militaristic leather boot. As the Prince enters, everyone stands and conforms once again to tradition. In this scene, the Bank Teller does seem to be a representation of the *Neue Mensch*: he is transcending and he is looking for something new. And he is doing it in a Nietzschean and Dionysian manner. Nevertheless, Kaiser’s Bank Teller is at this point still reliant on money. Like Zarathustra, who brings man a gift through his teachings, the Bank Teller is bringing man a gift, but a gift of money. The Bank Teller’s gift is perhaps a

parody or commentary of Zarathustra's gift, picking fun at both the Teller and the masses, who value money over improving oneself.

The next stop is a ballroom where the Bank Teller continues to search for liberation by ordering champagne and caviar. At this point the Bank Teller orders a woman to dance for him. But after noticing that the woman has a wooden leg, he smashes a bucket of ice over his own head. For Nietzsche, dance is an act of liberation – an act of freedom, experiment, and play. In the prologue, Zarathustra is described as a dancer: “Does he not stride like a dancer?” (TZ 4) [Geht er nicht daher wie ein Tänzer] (AZ 4). In *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, the Bank Teller actually orders the woman to dance for him, and this is not an act of liberation, this is not an act of passion, this is simply obedience. In ordering the woman to dance for him, the Bank Teller wishes to see passion, to see liberation, and it is as though he wishes for the woman to do this for him. He wishes to live vicariously through her. Dance is no longer an inner urge, a realizing of oneself, as it is for Nietzsche. Though the Teller is moving from station to station, his constant reliance on money for this forward movement makes one question whether this man has really broken from his old ways. It is possible that Kaiser is simply mocking his protagonist's transformation or questioning the ideal of the *Neue Mensch*.

After tiring of the ballroom, the Bank Teller allows himself to be led away by a woman from the Salvation army. He enters the Salvation army hall, which is full of benches and people, with a black cross behind them. During this scene people begin to confess their sins – a soldier, a prostitute, a father, and a cyclist. The atmosphere is once again one of ecstasy, and after hearing these people repent, the Bank Teller decides to repent himself. He admits that he has stolen a large sum of money and tries to teach the people what he has learned: “I had a push to start searching. It was a general departure without possible return – a destruction of all bridges” [Ich

hatte Anstoß bekommen, auf die Suche zu gehen. Es war ein allgemeiner Aufbruch ohne mögliche Rückkehr – Abbruch aller Brücken] (MM 65). He speaks of his “Aufbruch,” his breaking away, or awakening, and the impossibility of return. The Bank Teller describes his experience, saying, “So I was on the march since the morning. I do not want to bother you with the stations, which did not hinder me. They did not reward my decisive departure” [So war ich auf dem Marsche seit dem Vormittag. Ich will euch mit den Stationen nicht aufhalten, an denen ich mich nicht aufhielt, Sie lohnten alle meinen entschiedenen Aufbruch nicht] (MM 65). The Teller says that none of the stations were worth his break with his old life, that they vanished into the distance: “I marched vigorously forwards – with examining glances, groping fingers, and a surveying head. I passed by everything, alone. Station behind station sank behind my wandering back” [Ich marschierte rüstig weiter – prüfenden Blicks, tastender Finger, wählenden Kopfs. Ich ging an allem vorüber. Station hinter Station versank hinter meinem wandernden Rücken] (MM 65). Yet as he throws the money to the floor tumult ensues. There is a wild scramble; everyone in the Salvation Army takes as much as they can and then they leave.

It is not until the Salvation Army that the Bank Teller realizes that his money cannot bring him what he wants: “The money worsens the value. The money disguises the real – the money is the poorest betrayer of all fraud!” [Das Geld verschlechtert den Wert. Das Geld verhüllt das Echte – das Geld ist der armseligste Schwindler unter allem Betrug!] (MM 66). Even as he realizes the dangers of money, he still speaks in terms of value: “The money worsens the value.” The Bank Teller cannot fully break away from his identity as a Teller, perhaps implying a failed transformation. Money is only mentioned once in *Also sprach Zarathustra* in the section “On the new Idol,” where Zarathustra calls those with money the impoverished ones and warns that the state has become the new idol that the masses worship: “Just look at these superfluous

ones! They acquire riches and yet they become poorer. They want power and first of all the crowbar of power, much money – these impotent, impoverished ones!” (TZ 35) [Seht mir doch diese Überflüssigen! Reichthümer erwerben sie und werden ärmer damit. Macht wollen sie und zuerst das Brecheisen der Macht, viel Geld, - diese Unvermögenden!] (AZ 21). Nietzsche presents another instance of false worship in the fourth section of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, where Zarathustra finds a group of men in whom he had seen promise in, praying to the king’s donkey. Much like the role that money plays in *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, Nietzsche’s donkey serves as an idol.

Throughout the chaotic scene in *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, as the people of the Salvation Army scramble for money, the woman who led him to the Salvation army stands by the Bank Teller. The Teller is suddenly convinced that he has discovered something, that perhaps this is where he was being led. At this moment Kaiser’s Bank Teller feels love, or something similar: “Maiden and man – meaning, purpose, and goal” [Mädchen und Mann – Sinn und Ziel und Zweck] (MM 67). Suddenly the Bank Teller has a goal, a meaning. He has a sense of where he is going or what he has been searching for. This also brings us back to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, and the passage “On Child and Marriage.” Just as Nietzsche argues, that by learning to love one also gains a longing for the Übermensch, the Bank Teller’s bout with possible love sends him to a new conclusion as well; he finds a new importance in life – maiden and man. He wishes to start a new life with this woman in a garden of Eden, a new life with meaning and purpose.

When comparing the transformation of the Übermensch to the Neue Mensch, it seems wrong to ignore Nietzsche’s three metamorphoses. The spirit becomes a camel, the camel a lion, and in the final transformation the lion becomes a child. The spirit itself is fearful and looks for

routine. The spirit then overcomes itself and becomes the camel, a carrier animal, an animal that faces life's challenges. The camel becomes the lion when it begins to reject moral codes and duties. The lion becomes the child when he stops saying no, when he says the "heilige ja," the holy yes: "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes –saying" (TZ 17) [Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen] (AZ 11). Nietzsche's final transformation is both a returning and a becoming, as though one has moved in a circle. Like the lion, Kaiser's Bank Teller has overcome the words "thou shalt" (TZ 17) [Du – sollst] (AZ 11). The Bank Teller, after stealing the money, no longer conforms to the rules of society. The Bank Teller is no longer a camel, no longer a beast of burden. But has the Bank Teller transformed into a child? The Teller falls in love with the woman from the salvation army, and allows her to lead him away. This is similar to the beginning of the play, when the Bank Teller follows the Italian woman. In both of these instances the Teller is regressing to childlike tendencies. He is searching for comfort in women, searching for love, but perhaps also for something motherly. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's child is a "new beginning." Nietzsche's child is innocent and forgets its previous constraints, traits that Kaiser's Bank Teller does not fully embody – as previously mentioned, the Bank Teller is identified as the Bank Teller throughout the play, never fully transitioning out of his previous existence. Being a bank Teller is an identity that he cannot shed, a piece of himself that he can never fully break from. But, in some ways the Bank Teller does find a new beginning after following these women. He follows them with the innocence of a boy, with no self-restraint.

The Salvation army woman does betray the Bank Teller at the end of the play, and reports him to the authorities to collect a monetary reward. Kaiser's play ends as it begins, with

the Bank Teller speaking to the skeleton from his earlier dream sequence. The Bank Teller says, “From morning to midnight I race in a circle – now his beckoning arm shows me the way – whereto?” [Von morgens bis mitternachts rase ich in Kreise – nun zeigt sein fingerhergewinktes Zeichen den Ausweg --- wohin?!!] (MM 68). In this moment the Bank Teller realizes that he has only been traveling in a circle, he is back where he started, once again facing death. This line is also the title of the play, “Von morgens bis mitternachts,” and a line that embodies the circular movement that is so crucial to Kaiser’s play. In this moment, the Bank Teller also sees a way out. He sees where the skeleton is pointing and shoots himself in the chest. The Bank Teller realizes that there is no room for individuality, no room for the *Neue Mensch*, he feels swallowed up by the masses who worship the new idol, money.

The Bank Teller’s circular movement is similar to the idea of the eternal recurrence, a concept introduced in multiple works by Nietzsche, and a concept that Zarathustra struggles with. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche even writes that the eternal return is the “basic conception” (EHE 65) [Die Grundconception] (EHG) of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a dwarf tells Zarathustra of the eternal return, saying, “Must not whatever can already have passed this way before? Must not whatever can happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before?” (TZ 126) [Muss nicht, was laufen kann von allen Dingen, schon einmal diese Gasse gelaufen sein? Muss nicht, was geschehen kann von allen Dingen, schon einmal geschehen, gethan, vorübergelaufen sein?] (AZ 68). This description that everything that happens has already happened, and everything that has happened will happen again, suggests that there is nothing fixed, that all things change and reoccur eternally. The human’s task is to embrace this idea rather than resist and fight against it. Both Zarathustra and the Bank Teller struggle with the

idea of the eternal recurrence – Zarathustra struggles to embrace the idea but does not disregard it, while the Bank Teller simply cannot conceive of running in circles any longer.

The eternal recurrence is an experiment, a question. Nietzsche introduces the eternal recurrence in the *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, where he presents a story of a demon who tells someone that they must relive every day of their life, “every pain, and every joy and every thought and every sigh” (GS 194) [jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer] (FW 159). In the *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, the demon who describes the eternal recurrence asks if one would will their life to be lived over again: “The eternal sand-glass of existence will ever be turned once more, and you with it, you speck of dust!” (GS 194) [Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer umgedreht – und du mit ihr, Stäubchen von Staube!] (FW 159). The eternal recurrence brings up the question of whether one would live one’s life as they did before. The eternal recurrence strips a life of its singularity and makes one question how one views one’s life as a product of one’s own will. Kaiser’s Bank Teller, when confronted with the idea of an eternal recurrence, wants a way out, as it had only brought him back to where he had started.

After the Bank Teller’s death, his body is described as having fallen back, arms stretched out against the cross on the wall behind him. The stage directions read, “His gasp sounds like an Ecce, his heavy sigh is like a Homo” [Sein Ächzen hüstelt wie eine Ecce – sein Hauchen surrt wie ein Homo] (MM 86). Ecce Homo, or behold the man, is both a reference to the Latin phrase that Pontius Pilate says as Jesus walks with a thorn crown to his crucifixion, as well as a reference to Nietzsche’s biographical work *Ecce Homo*, where he both compares Christ to Dionysus and praises Dionysian existence. At the end of Kaiser’s play, the Teller represents both the new man and the old man. He is both a Jesus figure and the embodiment of the new – a character who has broken out of this endless circle in which he has lived. But by presenting the

Bank Teller as a Jesus figure, it is possible that Kaiser is painting his protagonist as an old ideal that has outlived its purpose.

Directly after the Bank Teller's death, the all the lamps explode, and a policeman says, "It is a short circuit in the main" [Es ist ein Kurzschluß in der Leitung] (MM 68). The stage goes dark. Even as the Bank Teller dies with his arms stretched out before a cross, the policeman only thinks of the mechanics of the situation, and declares it to be a short circuit. The Bank Teller is Kaiser's manifestation of the new man. He is the only character who even attempts to break away. The rest of Kaiser's characters are machinelike, focused only on money and self gain. Nevertheless, whether the Bank Teller is a savior or a perversion is open ended. The Bank Teller is a misunderstood martyr character, yet he is not innocent.

When putting the eternal return, along with the whole transformative process of the Bank Teller into context, it is important to note that Kaiser's play takes place throughout the course of one day: "I have been underway since this morning" [Ich bin seit diesem Morgen unterwegs] (MM 66). Though the Bank Teller did travel from station to station, it is easy to question whether a transformation can really happen in one day. This also seems far from Zarathustra's slow version of learning or transforming. Nevertheless, this one day stands in as a metaphor for the eternal, as though this day is infinitely repeatable. What happens in this one day speaks to a universal cycle of waking and sleeping, much like the eternal recurrence. Additionally, even the name of the play "Von morgens bis mitternachts" speaks to eternal return and circular movement. It is also clear that the Bank Teller goes through a process of metamorphosis. This metamorphosis is hasty, and at many times bordering on parody. But the Bank Teller does break away from the expectations of society. For the Bank Teller to transform, he must first fall into all

of these traps. Like Zarathustra, the Bank Teller first must fail. Kaiser's play presents the regeneration of man, but simultaneously puts into question the reality of the new man.

Chapter 3. The New Woman: Strauss' *Salome*

Richard Strauss has a reputation as a Nietzschean composer, his Op. 30, titled *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a tone poem undoubtedly inspired by Nietzsche. Theodor Adorno called Nietzsche Strauss' "mentor," and Charles Youmans, writes of how "Strauss has long stood as the paradigmatic Nietzschean composer" (Youmans 309). Because of Strauss' focus on Nietzsche, there is much debate over whether Strauss actually grasped Nietzschean concepts. In this chapter I will examine Strauss' opera *Salome*, a story based both on the biblical story of the execution of John the Baptist, and Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*. Rather than addressing the question of Nietzsche's influence on Strauss as a whole, I will be considering how Strauss' figure of Salome contributes to a discussion of the transformative process of the Expressionist *Neue Mensch*, and examining to what extent this aligns with Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Salome's development holds similarities to *Zarathustra*, alongside various Nietzschean undertones.

Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and the Expressionist *Neue Mensch* are both gendered male experiences. In the previous chapters, the female characters did not undergo their own transformations. Kafka's female characters in "Das Urteil" are not emphasized, along with the women in Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, where they act merely as aids to the men. I have chosen to look closely at Strauss' opera *Salome*, which follows the female protagonist Salome through her process of liberation and self-expression. In both of the past chapters, and in most Expressionist literature, the women's role is that of a "Mittel zum Zweck," a means to an end,¹⁸ to bring about male salvation. Salome, however, actually becomes a 'Zweck,' or a purpose. As a woman, she does not let herself be used as a means. Salome becomes a representation of the *Neue Mensch* – the woman as the new man.

¹⁸ Frank Wedekind's character Lulu exemplifies the woman character who is used. Lulu is mainly an incarnation of male lust.

Throughout his writing, Nietzsche's view on women changed after a woman, coincidentally named Lou Andreas-Salome, rejected his marriage proposal. Lou Salome was the subject of Nietzsche's, Freud's, and Rilke's love; and Nietzsche's misogynistic and sexist passages in *Also sprach Zarathustra* can be attributed partially to this rejection (Martin 62). There is no doubt that Strauss' Salome is a character who represents many of Nietzsche's and Zarathustra's teachings – she transcends; she follows both her passion and her savvy; she dances a line between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, and does not confine herself to institutionalized religion. Despite the fact that Nietzsche's Übermensch is explicitly male, I examine Strauss' female Neue Mensch in relation to Nietzsche's Übermensch – and in doing so, go deeper into both the concept of the Übermensch and the Neue Mensch.

Though Salome embodies the Expressionist Neue Mensch, the opera is still written from a male perspective, and some of the judgments that Nietzsche holds, are present in *Salome*. One critique that Nietzsche makes is that women cannot make friends, that women are only capable of lust: “Woman is not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats, and birds. Or at best cows” (TZ 41) [Noch ist das Weib der Freundschaft fähig: Katzen sind immer noch die Weiber, und Vögel. Oder, besten Falles, Kühe] (AZ 25). By calling women cows, Nietzsche is relating women to the lowliest of metaphors – the last man, the people of the town the Motley Cow who remain stagnant. Nietzsche continues, “woman is not yet capable of friendship: she knows only love” (TZ 41) [Deshalb ist das Weib noch nicht der Freundschaft fähig: es kennt nur die Liebe] (AZ 25). It is unclear whether Salome is capable of friendship; friendship is not a theme in the opera. Salome does, however, seem to be controlled by desire and lust. Salome's desire for Jochanaan, as we will soon see, is a controlling force, but the extent to which she is actually controlled by these impulses is debatable. Also, Salome is expressing her Dionysian instincts,

something that Nietzsche praises.

The opera begins with Narrboth, a man who is enamored with Salome, a man who loses his life because of this infatuation. In this scene, Salome is not presented as a seductress, rather Narrboth is presented as naïve – Narrboth’s name is fitting, as it contains the word “Narr,” meaning “fool.” The scene begins as Narrboth stares at Salome, admiring her. Narrboth and the Page praise her beauty. The Page describes her: “Like a woman who rises from the grave” [Wie eine Frau, die aufsteigt aus dem Grab] (SA 1),¹⁹ comparing Salome to a Jesus-like figure. Narrboth continues by calling Salome’s feet “white doves. One could think, she dances” [deren Füße weiße Tauben sind. Man könnte meinen, sie tanzt] (SA 1). Narrboth describes Salome as a spirit or ghost. She is something not quite tangible, something that he admires, but cannot reach.

At the beginning of Strauss’ opera, Salome is at a feast. And at this feast Salome undergoes her first transformation. She soon tires of the guests and the feast itself. Salome does not like the way Herodes looks at her: “It is unsettling, that my mother’s husband looks at me in this way. How sweet the air is! Here I can breathe!” [Es ist seltsam, daß der Mann meiner Mutter mich so ansieht. Wie süß ist hier die Luft! Hier kann ich atmen] (SA 2). Salome can breathe after leaving the feast, lending her character an authenticity not found in the other characters. In leaving the feast, Salome sheds her inauthentic skin. Much like our other Expressionist representations of the Neue Mensch, Salome is bored with her lavish life. And as Salome stands on the terrace, she hears the imprisoned prophet Jochanaan’s voice speaking of her mother, Herodias. Jochanaan sparks Salome’s interest. Salome convinces Narrboth to bring Jochanaan to her – and it only takes a smile and the promise of a flower: “You will do this for me, Narrboth. And tomorrow, when they carry me in my palanquin, next to the pictures of the Idols, I will drop

¹⁹ I use my own English translations of Strauss’ *Salome*.

a little flower for you, a little green flower” [Du wirst das für mich tun, Narrboth. Und morgen, wenn ich in meiner Sänfte an dem Torweg, wo die Götzenbilder stehn, vorbeikomme, werde ich eine kleine Blume für dich fallen lassen, ein kleines grünes Blümchen] (SA 3). Even though Salome represents a female character with more freedom, a woman who is not simply a Mittel zum Zweck, a medium or use, she is still not completely free of this objectification. Salome does use her beauty and sexuality to her advantage, but her beauty also makes her an object of fascination for both Narrboth and the Tetrarch Herodes, as we will later see.

After Narrboth retrieves Jochanaan from the cistern, Salome sees Jochanaan, and in this moment she is filled with desire. As Salome introduces herself, Jochanaan replies, “Stand back, daughter of Babylon! Do not approach the Lord’s chosen one! Your mother has filled the earth with the wine of her lust, and the immensity of her sins cries out to God” [Zurück, Tochter Babylons! Komm dem Erwählten des Herrn nicht nahe! Deine Mutter hat die Erde erfüllt mit dem Wein ihrer Lüste, und das Unmaß ihrer Sünden schreit zu Gott] (SA 4). Jochanaan describes himself as God’s chosen one, and describes Salome’s mother as filling the earth with the “wine” of her lust – perhaps a reference to Dionysus, the god of wine. Salome sees the prophet Jochanaan, who is deemed holy, and she sexualizes him. Salome focuses on Jochanaan’s body, his corporal elements that she finds attractive: “I am in love with your body, Jochanaan” [Ich bin verliebt in deinen Leib, Jochanaan] (SA 5). She gives a detailed description of the prophet’s body: “Your body is white like lilies in a field, never touched by a reaping hook. Your body is white like the snow on the mountains of Judea” [Dein Leib ist weiß wie die Lilien auf einem Felde, von der Sichel nie berührt. Dein Leib ist weiß wie der Schnee auf den Bergen Judäas] (SA 5), and goes on to describe Jochanaan’s body as whiter than the roses in an Arabian king’s garden and whiter than the “breast of the moon on the sea” [Brüste des Mondes auf dem Meere]

(SA 5). She then asks to touch his body. Through these descriptions, Salome shows her lust, and her imagination at work. She describes his beauty; to Salome Jochanaan is an aesthetic object. Even though Salome is succumbing to her Dionysian side, her lust, by describing Jochanaan through similes, by comparing him to landscapes and various objects, Salome is also acting upon an Apollonian impulse. This is much like Nietzsche's Gay scientist who portrays the tension between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, a scientist who dances on the table where he does his experiments. In Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [The Birth of Tragedy] (1872), he writes of the necessary dichotomy and tension between Dionysus and Apollo in art: "art derives its continuous development from the duality of the *Apolline* and *Dionysiac*; just as the reproduction of species depends on the duality of the sexes, with its constant conflicts and only periodically intervening reconciliations" (BT 14) [die Fortentwicklung der Kunst an die Duplicität des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen gebunden ist: in ähnlicher Weise, wie die Generation von der Zweiheit der Geschlechter, bei fortwährendem Kampfe und nur periodisch eintretender Versöhnung, abhängt] (GT). Nietzsche considers the dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus to be just as important as the necessity of both man and women during procreation. Nietzsche does not present the dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus to be a relationship without strife, rather as something that periodically aligns. Nietzsche describes the relationship as a struggle, a struggle that seems similar to Salome's.

The scene continues as Salome asks to kiss Jochanaan: "Let me kiss your lips, Jochanaan" [Laß mich deinen Mund küssen, Jochanaan] (SA 5). Jochanaan the Prophet is taken aback by this request, calling her a "daughter of fornication" [Tochter der Unzucht] (SA 6). But Jochanaan's rejections do not effect Salome, and she continues to ask Jochanaan to kiss his lips. Jochanaan, before descending back into his Cistern, says, "I do not want to look at you. You are

cursed, Salome. You are cursed” [Ich will dich nicht ansehen. Du bist verflucht, Salome, Du bist verflucht] (SA 6). Narrboth, the fool, cannot watch Salome’s pursuits any longer and commits suicide.

The dichotomy between Dionysus and Apollo is also seen in the conversation between Herodes the Tetrarch and his wife Herodias, who is actually his sister – a point which causes tension between Jochanaan and Herodias. Herodes asks after Salome and begins also to speak in similes – just like Salome. Through his speech, Herodes is able to portray Dionysian desire alongside the rational: “How the moon looks this evening! Is it not a curious picture? It looks like an insane woman” [Wie der Mond heute nacht aussieht! Ist es nicht ein seltsames Bild? Es sieht aus wie ein wahnwitziges Weib] (SA 6). He continues by comparing the moon to a drunk woman and the wind to angels’ wings. Herodias does not indulge Herodes, saying, “No, the mood is the moon, that is all” [Nein, der Mond ist wie der Mond, das ist alles] (SA 6). Unlike in *Von morgen bis mitternachts* and in Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*, where the sun acts as a symbol of renewal, in *Salome*, it is the moon that serves as an important symbol. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Zarathustra admires the sun, he speaks to the sun and even models his behavior on the sun: “Like you, I must go down” (TZ 3) [Ich muss, gleich dir, untergehen] (AZ 4). *Also sprach Zarathustra* even ends with the line “Thus Spoke Zarathustra and he left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun that emerges from dark mountains” (TZ 266) [Also sprach Zarathustra und verliess seine Höhle, glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunkeln Bergen kommt] (AZ 142). In Kaiser’s play, the sun lights the stage. Kaiser’s sun shines on the Bank Teller after his transformation during the dream sequence. In *Salome*, however, it is the moon that lights the stage. The moon, which is generally a feminine symbol, shows Salome’s importance, her power, and her pull on the other characters.

Granted, Nietzsche's work changed drastically throughout his lifetime. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, he had moved away from this Apollonian and Dionysian dialectic. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is Nietzsche's first book, which he later described as questionable and inaccessible in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" [Versuch einer Selbstkritik], an essay written in 1886 which became the first section of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*: "To say it once again: today I find it an impossible book – badly written, clumsy, and embarrassing" (BT 5) [Nochmals gesagt, heute ist es mir ein unmögliches Buch, - ich heisse es schlecht geschrieben, schwerfaellig, peinlich] (GT). Because of Nietzsche's vacillating views, it is possible that there is a tension between the Übermensch and the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy. Nevertheless, in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," Nietzsche describes Zarathustra as a Dionysian figure: "the Dionysiac monster called Zarathustra" (BT 12) [jenes dionysischen Unholds..., der Zarathustra heist] (GT). The Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy is also still applicable to Salome's character as she fluctuates between her poetic language and her desire.

The opera continues with five Jews arguing about the nature of God. But the discussion goes nowhere; the Jews are discussing whether the prophet Elias had actually seen God, and whether God is good or whether "God is dreadful" [Gott ist furchtbar] (SA 8). Another Jew answers, "Nobody can say how God works" [Niemand kann sagen wie Gott wirkt] (SA 8). Soon after, the Christians enter the conversation, and begin to argue with the Jews. This argument between the Jews and the Christians is pointless, and goes in circles. Perhaps this is Strauss' attempt to show the foolishness of religion through this scene²⁰ – every one is part of a system, a system bound by religion. They are all quarreling, yet it goes nowhere. These people are

²⁰ Strauss held anti-Semitic views and also a prominent post in Hitler's Germany, the president of Hitler's Reichsmusikkammer, or the Reich Music Chamber. Strauss' scene in *Salome* in which a group of Jews are arguing about their religion could also come from his anti-Semitic tendencies.

stagnant, they are the last men, those who cannot transform. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents a world where people are continually searching for someone or something to follow, something to idolize. Even Zarathustra's disciples, after accepting that God is dead, after discarding their old religious ideals, begin to idolize him. And Zarathustra says to them "and only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (TZ 59) [und erst, wenn ihr mich Alle verleugnet habt, will ich euch wiederkehren] (AZ 34); he tells them to be ashamed to have followed him blindly. Strauss' religious men, much like Nietzsche's men, follow their religion blindly, they too are continually searching for someone or something to idolize.

In Strauss' opera, dance is an important element. Herodes orders Salome to dance for him: "Dance for me Salome" [Tanz für mich Salome] (SA 9). Salome refuses, saying, "I don't want to dance, Tetrarch" [Ich will nicht tanzen, Tetrach] (SA 9). Herodes, filled with lust for Salome, and in hopes of convincing her to dance for him, tells her that he will give her anything that she wants if she will dance for him: "If you dance for me, whatever you desire, I will give it to you" [Wenn du für mich tanzest, kannst du von mir begehren, was du willst. Ich werde es dir geben] (SA 9). Herodes even offers her half of his kingdom, if she would only dance. After hearing the promise, Salome agrees to dance for Herodes. Salome asks him if he swears upon this promise, "What do you swear upon, Tetrarch" [Wobei willst du das beschwören, Tetrarch] (SA 9), and Herodes tells Salome that he swears it upon his life. Even though Herodias warns Salome against dancing, she is determined to do so.

Just as the dancers in *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, Salome is ordered to dance. Nevertheless, Salome's dance differs from the women in Kaiser's play. Salome is dancing to reach a certain goal, her lust for Jochanaan, and so Salome's dance is a dance of liberation. She performs "the dance of the seven veils" [Tanz der sieben Schleier] (SA 10). The stage directions

describe Salome's dance of the seven veils as "a wild dance" [einen wilden Tanz] (SA 10) with a "wild rhythm" [wilde Rhythmus] (SA 10). Salome's dance is a moment of transformation: "She seems to languish for a moment, now she pulls herself up as if newly elated" [Sie scheint einen Augenblick zu ermatten, jetzt rafft sie sich wie neubeschwingt auf] (SA 10). In this moment Salome goes down to go up. She physically goes down, she exposes herself to Herodes in order to go up, in order to get what she wants. Strauss describes Salome as "neubeschwingt," which can be translated as "newly elated" or "exhilarated." But "Schwingen," from which the word is derived, also means "wings." Salome rises up as though propelled by wings; she is a forceful and renewed person. She allows herself to dance. And this dance is a dance of liberation, dance as Nietzsche wishes to convey it, dance as a Dionysian impulse.

Nevertheless, Salome's dance of the seven veils is quite complex. This may be an act of renewal, an act of elation, but it is also a pointed act, an act with a goal. It is a dance of seduction where Salome sheds all seven veils and ends naked before Herodes' feet.²¹ The dance is one of disguise. The veil is a symbol of obedience and modesty, but also of illusion. By shedding the veils, Salome sheds herself of her obedient role in society, and of the illusion that Herodes has of her. Nietzsche, in his distrust of women, speaks of their seduction. In the section "The Dancing Song," Zarathustra comes upon girls dancing in the woods. The girls stop dancing as they see Zarathustra, but he tells them to continue their dancing, praising the act of dance: "How could I be hostile towards godlike dancing, you light ones? Or towards girls' feet with pretty ankles" (TZ 83) [Wie sollte ich, ihr Leichten, göttlichen Tanzen feind sein? Oder Mädchen-Füssen mit schönen Knöcheln] (AZ 46). But as Zarathustra sings his song to the dancing girls, he sings of how women are always seductive and jealous: "One thirsts for her and does not become sated,

²¹ There are many different depictions of this dance, in Petr Weigl's production, the opera ends in this manner. Strauss' stage directions leave room for interpretation.

one peeks through veils, one snatches through nets” (TZ 84) [Man dürstet um sie und wird nicht satt, man blickt durch Schleier, man hascht durch Netze] (AZ 47). Nietzsche, though he praises dance as an act of expression, liberation, and play, also sees these dancing women to be seductresses. And in *Salome*, Salome is also seducing Herodes through her dance.

It is not only seduction that Zarathustra speaks about, but he also speaks of lust. Zarathustra believes lust to be an evil. Lust should not rule or control a person, as it does in Strauss' *Salome*. Zarathustra warns against lust: “Lust to rule: the grim gladfly imposed on the vainest peoples, the mover of all insecure virtue, the rider on every horse and every pride” (TZ 151) [Herrschaft: die boshafte Bremse, die den eitelsten Völkern aufgesetzt wird; die Verhöhnlerin aller ungewissen Tugend; die auf jedem Rosse und jedem Stolze reitet] (AZ 82). Nietzsche continues, “Lust to rule: the earthquake that breaks and breaks open everything rotten and hollow” (TZ 151) [Herrschaft: das Erdbeben, das alles Morsche und Hohllichte bricht und aufbricht] (AZ 82). Though Nietzsche wishes for the interaction between the Dionysian and Apollonian, and though lust can be thought of as the Dionysian, the relationship between lust and the Dionysian a more complex one. Nevertheless, Nietzsche seems to use lust in reference to women. Lust is, for Nietzsche, woman's pull, or even her deception. And when taking into account Nietzsche's sexism, perhaps desire and lust should be considered Dionysian impulses, maybe Nietzsche's distaste for lust comes from his distaste for women. In Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts* the woman is also presented as a seductress, and desire becomes something dangerous. In Kaiser's play, however, the Bank Teller's lust for a woman leads both to his downfall, but also his transformation. And in *Salome*, though Salome's desire for Jochanaan does not end well, her desire is also necessary in her transformation.

The stage directions describing Salome's dance of the seven veils reads, "She lingers for a moment, like a visionary, at the cistern where Jochanaan is imprisoned; then she crashes to Herodes' feet" [Sie verweilt einen Augenblick in visionärer Haltung an der Cisterne, in der Jochanaan gefangen gehalten wird; dann stürzt sie vor und zu Herodes' Füßen] (SA 10). Salome is described as a visionary, as though she is the prophet rather than Jochanaan. This brings up the tension between the secular and the religious – a tension that is present in both Nietzsche and the Expressionists. Even Nietzsche's title *Also sprach Zarathustra* is biblical reference, and Nietzsche plays with the presentation of Zarathustra throughout his book. Zarathustra is sometimes a prophet, sometimes an ascetic, and sometimes a messianic figure. Religious imagery is scattered throughout "Das Urteil," *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, and *Salome*²² – which brings us to the question of whether this imagery is used as a critique of religion. Due to Nietzsche's blatant distaste of religion, it becomes clear that he is using religious elements as a sort of parody. But, when looking at examples from the Expressionist movement, there is not always a clear answer. While Strauss, like Nietzsche, seems to critique religion, especially through the quarrels of his religious characters, Salome is continually presented as a quasi-religious figure, shrouded in religious imagery.

In shedding of the veils, Salome has shed her old identity, and is propelled forward to her goal. Much like Zarathustra, Salome is going backwards to go forwards. Her transformation is not instantaneous, it is fluid. She is both agreeing to subjugation and allowing herself to be sexualized, but simultaneously getting what she wants. In this sense, Strauss' transformative process in *Salome* aligns with Nietzsche's and his various metaphors; of man as a bridge or

²² Salome is a biblical figure, the daughter of Herodias and stepdaughter of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee. She is mentioned in biblical literature as an active member in John the Baptist's execution – in Strauss' *Salome*, Jochanaan is his version of John the Baptist.

tightrope and of a continual process of becoming and learning. As previously mentioned, Zarathustra says, “Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and the overman – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still” (TZ 7) [Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, - ein Seil über einem Abgrunde. Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben] (AZ 6). And as previously noted in the Kafka chapter, the danger of this process is stressed. Salome as well, does not shy away from danger, she does not heed the words of her mother, Herodes, or Jochanaan. Additionally, Zarathustra’s tightrope walker ends falling to his death after being disrupted by the jester. Salome’s character resembles the jester rather than the tightrope walker. She is not painstakingly walking on a tightrope. Like Zarathustra, inspired by the jester, Salome jumps over those who hesitate, namely Herodes: “over the hesitating and dawdling I shall leap.” (TZ 15) [über die Zögernden und Saumseligen; und werde ich hinwegspringen] (AZ 10).

After performing the dance of the seven veils, Herodes is amazed with Salome, and once again offers her whatever she wants, but asks her not to follow her desire, even though he himself had followed his desire in asking Salome to dance for him: “But do not ask me what your lips demanded” [Aber verlange nicht von mir, was deine Lippen verlangten] (SA 11). Salome, however, does not heed Herodes: “I demand Jochanaan’s head!” [Ich verlange von dir den Kopf des Jochanaan!] (SA 11). Herodes tries to justify asking Salome ever to dance for him, saying that he had only stared at her so because of her beauty: “Your beauty had confused me” [Deine Schönheit hat mich verwirrt] (SA 11). Even when Herodes offers Salome jewels in a last attempt to convince her not to take Jochanaan’s head, Salome is completely uninterested. Salome is controlled by a sort of calculated desire. She has transformed; jewels, a lavish commodity, are

in Salome's eyes unimportant. Salome uses her own sexuality as a means to an end. She uses her beauty and sexuality, which the men have affirmed and admired, against them.

Like the religious groups who quarrel amongst themselves, Strauss' presentation of Herodes is another instance in which he criticizes religion and those who follow it. Herodes is both a religious character, a character who abides by set moral codes, and a man who is unsure of his own beliefs. Herodes says that Jochanaan *could* be sent from God, not that he is sent from God: "It could be, that the man was sent from God. He is a holy man" [Es kann sein, daß der Mann von Gott gesandt ist. Er ist ein heil'ger Mann] (SA 11). Herodes follows slave morality, a central concept in Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* [*On the Genealogy of Morality*], where Nietzsche describes the two types of morality: master morality and slave morality. Those who are subject to slave morality are not the strong willed, rather people who conform to the moral codes defined by the masters. Herodes does not hold his own personal beliefs, he simply holds on to the idea of Jochanaan as a possibly holy figure. He blindly follows a code of moral conduct, just what Zarathustra advises against. In the section of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, "On Old and New Tablets," Zarathustra speaks to this issue, saying that it is the "good and the just" (TZ 170) [den Guten und Gerechten] (AZ 92) who pose a great danger for the future. Zarathustra is referencing those stuck in their old moral codes, those who blindly follow what he believes to be outdated religious beliefs: "The good and the just themselves were not permitted to understand him: their spirit is imprisoned in their good conscience." (TZ 171) [Die Guten und Gerechten selber durften ihn nicht verstehen] (AZ 91). Zarathustra continues, "the good *must* crucify the one who invents his own virtue!" (TZ 171) [Die Guten müssen Den kreuzigen, der sich seine eigne Tugend erfindet!] (AZ 91), alluding to Jesus. Zarathustra implies that, like Jesus, one should create rather than follow. And yet the good, those tied to their moral codes, find the

creator only to be a “lawbreaker” (TZ 171) [Verbrecher] (AZ 92). Those who are tied down by moral codes are stuck, they are stagnant and unable to transform, unable to become something new. Strauss’ Herodes is an example of someone who tries to follow the “good and the just.” Though Herodes does not seem like a “good” character, he simply follows what he has been told is right. Salome, on the other hand, is a creator and a lawbreaker; she is not imprisoned by her good conscience. Salome would not be considered good and just, but this is what marks her as a character who transcends.

Jochanaan the prophet embodies institutionalized religion and moral codes. Jochanaan is Strauss’ John the Baptist, who was considered a prophet in many religions and a significant messianic figure. But Strauss’ Jochanaan is a character made to be broken away from, just as Salome does. In going against Jochanaan the prophet, in breaking away from the institutionalized moral codes, in a sense Salome becomes the prophet. Salome controls her fate rather than waiting for it. She continues her transformation, her forward movement, rather than remaining stagnant and bound to old senses of morality – she creates. Salome, the *Neue Mensch*, is the only character who is not bound by religion. In both Strauss’ *Salome*, along with the biblical literature which influenced it, Jochanaan, though he is a prophet, is also a prisoner. And in Petr Weigl’s production of *Salome*, performed by the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Jochanaan comes out of the cistern in chains. The literal chains which confine Jochanaan in Weigl’s production, alongside the fact that Jochanaan is imprisoned, allude to the confines of religion itself.

Salome’s complexity as a character is continually brought out in the interplay between the Dionysian and the Apollonian elements. Though Salome acts out of lust, even when expressing her desire for Jochanaan, she uses poetic language. Salome uses poetry to sublimate her desire. She turns something raw into something beautiful. She adapts her impulses into

poetry and lifts the physical into the spiritual realm. Salome does not call Jochanaan's body his "Körper," instead, she uses the term "Leib," the poetic term.²³ If Salome were interested in Jochanaan in a purely instinctual manner, then it seems unlikely that she would use this poetic word choice. Salome is explicit, yet also poetic: "Let me touch it, your body" [Laß mich ihn berühren, deinen Leib!] (SA 5). Through her poetic language and vivid descriptions of Jochanaan's body, it becomes clear that Salome is not only driven by lust, or her Dionysian impulse. There is both a harmony and a clash between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. There is a tension – Salome is simultaneously free, but also calculating. Through her poetic language, Salome attempts to rationalize her desire; she describes Jochanaan's body as landscapes and transforms her lust into poetry.

Though Salome is a strong female protagonist, Strauss' presentation of women is still questionable. Salome and Herodias, the only other prominent female character in *Salome*, have a strong need for revenge. Herodias, who is mad that Jochanaan, as he had spoken ill of her, encourages Salome to take his head. After Salome presents her demands, Herodias says, "Well said, my daughter!" [Gut gesagt, meine Tochter] (SA 11), even saying that Salome was justified in her actions, "She did what is right" [Sie hat recht getan] (SA 13). Herodias is a woman who is simply part of the system; she has become callous. She is not undergoing a transformation as Salome is. But Herodias's approval of Salome's actions presents her as a character who wishes to vicariously live through Salome, much like Georg's relationship to the friend in Kafka's "Das Urteil."

The pinnacle of Strauss' opera is after the beheading of Jochanaan. After Herodes' inability to sway Salome, the hangman goes into the cistern and retrieves Jochanaan's head. The

²³ The word "Leib" is also used in the Catholic church for "der Leib Christi" or the body of Christ.

stage directions read, “The Hangman’s arm extends out of the cistern, holding a silver shield with the head of Jochanaan. Salome seizes it” [der Arm des Henkers, streckt sich aus der Cisterne heraus, auf einem silbernen Schild den Kopf des Jochanaan haltend. Salome ergreift ihn] (SA 13). Herodes covers his face, while Herodias fans herself and smiles. The Nazarenes sink to their knees and begin to pray. Salome, however, is delighted: “Oh! You didn’t want to let me kiss your lips, Jochanaan! Well, I’ll kiss them now!” [Ah! Du wolltest mich nicht deinen Mund küssen lassen, Jochanaan! Wohl, ich werde ihn jetzt küssen!] (SA 13). Yet, Salome is also searching for revenge. She acknowledges that Jochanaan didn’t want to kiss her in an almost taunting way – as though it was a fight that she has won. Salome continues her revenge and lust filled monologue: “Indeed, now I will kiss [your lips], I want to bite in with my teeth, as one would with a ripe fruit” [Wohl, ich werde {deinen Mund} jetzt küssen. Ich will mit meinen Zähnen hineinbeißen, wie man in eine reife Frucht beißen mag] (SA 13). Salome even begins taunting him, asking if he is afraid of her: “Are you afraid of me Jochanaan, is this why you don’t want to look at me?” [Hast du Angst vor mir, Jochanaan daß du mich nicht ansehen willst?] (SA 13). Salome continues to berate the dead Jochanaan: “I am still alive, but you are dead, and your head, your head is mine” [Ich lebe noch, aber du bist tot, und dein Kopf, dein Kopf gehört mir] (SA 13). Salome does not question her actions as past Expressionist figures have. She stands by what she has done.

After speaking to Jochanaan’s severed head, Salome kisses him: “I have kissed your lips, Jochanaan. I have kissed them, your lips” [Ich habe deinen Mund geküßt, Jochanaan. Ich habe ihn geküßt, deinen Mund] (SA 14). Salome’s kiss is another moment of transformation, a moment of freedom. But it is also another instance where the dichotomy between the Dionysian and the Apollonian can be seen, another instance in which, though Salome physically kisses the

severed head, she also describes Jochanaan in a poetic manner – it is another instance of poetry as an act of sublimation. Salome then says, “But it may taste like love... They say that love has a bitter taste” [Doch es schmeckte vielleicht nach Liebe... Sie sagen, daß die Liebe bitter schmecke] (SA 14). Salome is using synesthetic imagery; she is appealing to more than one sense, describing love through taste, creating a balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. She describes Jochanaan’s voice: “Your voice was incense, and when I looked at you, I heard mysterious music” [Deine Stimme war ein Weihrauchgefäß, und wenn ich dich ansah, hörte ich geheimnisvolle Musik] (SA 13), describing Jochanaan’s voice through smell and the sight of him through sound. Salome speaks of incense and music, describing Jochanaan as something ethereal. She details Jochanaan’s body: “Oh! Oh! Jochanaan, Jochanaan, you were beautiful. Your body was an ivory column rested on silver feet. It was a garden full of doves in the sheen of silver lilies” [Ah! Ah! Jochanaan, Jochanaan, du warst schön. Dein Leib war eine Elfenbeinsäule auf silbernen Füßen. Er war ein Garten voller Tauben in den Silberlilien Glanz] (Struass 13). Comparing his body to ivory and a garden of doves, Salome transforms her raw desire into a beautifully phrased verbal image. Though at times it seems as though Salome’s Dionysian passion is stronger than her Apollonian side, the imagery she uses is selective: “Neither wine nor apples could satisfy my craving” [Nicht Wein noch Äpfel können mein Verlangen stillen] (SA 13). Salome describes her passion, her craving for Jochanaan, as something even stronger than wine or apples, the forbidden fruit.

Nevertheless, through a literal reading of Strauss’ opera, Salome’s sanity comes into question after she kisses Jochanaan’s severed head; is she calculating, is she working towards a goal, or is this simply a form of insanity? Insanity seems to be a common theme in German Expressionism, though perhaps this insanity should be looked at as a deliberate instance of

exaggeration. In Kafka's "Das Urteil," Georg's sanity comes into question through his relationship with the friend, along with his carrying out of the father's death sentence. In Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, one can question the Bank Teller's mental state as he goes through his dream sequence and rapid transformation.²⁴ Even Nietzsche writes of the madness of the Dionysian character in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," speaking of, "the Dionysiac madness" (BT 7) [der dionysische Wahnsinn] (GT). But Nietzsche does not write of madness as a danger: "Is madness not necessarily, perhaps, the symptom of degeneracy, decline, of the final stage of a culture? Is there perhaps such a thing – a question for psychiatrists – as neuroses of *health*?" (BT 7) [Ist Wahnsinn vielleicht nicht nothwendig das Symptom der Entartung, des Niedergangs, der ueberspaeten Cultur? Giebt es vielleicht - eine Frage fuer Irrenaerzte - Neurosen der Gesundheit?] (GT). Nietzsche is asking if there is such a thing as a healthy neurosis, a madness, that does not come from decay, but rather from youth. He is presenting madness in a way that the Expressionist authors tend to embrace, madness as a spark, as a catalyst. Perhaps Expressionist writers are presenting insanity in this Nietzschean manner, madness as a metaphor for a radical beginning. Perhaps they are presenting insanity as a way in which these characters can break themselves loose from a stifling society and binding moral codes. However, the Expressionist madness is also possibly a commentary on the impossibility of transformation. Both the transformations of Nietzsche's Übermensch and the Expressionist Neue Mensch can be questioned. The reading of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* that I wish to propagate is not one in which the Übermensch is a parody or impossibility. However, the Expressionist Neue Mensch, especially in its state of near-madness, becomes a more open-ended concept. Salome's possible instability can be read literally, but is most likely a literary and

²⁴ In Walter Hasenclever's *Der Sohn*, the protagonist's and Hasenclever's character resembling the Neue Mensch reaches a state of possible insanity, even killing his own Father.

theatrical means of presenting the system as a repressive one – a system that Salome wreaks havoc on.

The production of *Salome* greatly changes how we view Salome's character. In Weigl's production, Salome, after receiving Jochanaan's head, seems maniacal. Her eyes are opened wide and the pleasure that she derives from holding the head that she so desperately wanted is immense. What Salome has done in this scene is incomprehensible to the other characters. Herodes, who had always been charmed by Salome, insults her: "She is a monster, your daughter. I tell you, she is a monster" [Sie ist ein Ungeheuer, deine Tochter. Ich sage dir, sie ist ein Ungeheuer!] (SA 13).²⁵ In this regard, Salome is similar to Zarathustra, as Zarathustra is also misunderstood by the masses. Even in the prologue, where he attempts to speak to the people of the town about the last man, the people simply mock him and laugh at him: "'Give us this last human being, oh Zarathustra' – thus they cried – 'make us into these last human beings'" (TZ 10) [Gieb uns diesen letzten Menschen, oh Zarathustra, - so riefen sie – mache uns zu diesen letzten Menschen!] (AZ 7). Salome, as well as other Expressionist characters, can be perceived as insane through a literal reading. However, this brings up the question of whether Salome is simply misunderstood as Zarathustra is. This question is left open for the reader to resolve. But if, as readers, we are to deem Salome as insane, then perhaps we are Nietzsche's last men, unable to acknowledge Salome's process of transformation.

Strauss' *Salome*, ends with her final transformation. After she kisses Jochanaan, the moon breaks through the clouds and shines on Salome. The stage directions read, "The moon emerges again and illuminates Salome" [Der Mond bricht wieder hervor und beleuchtet Salome] (SA 14). At this moment, we witness the birth of the Neue Mensch. But the opera does not end

²⁵ In "Das Urteil" the father calls Georg a "devilish person" [teuflischer Mensch!] (DU 6).

here. Herodes orders Salome to be killed: “Kill this woman!” [Man töte dieses Weib!] (SA 14). Herodes uses the term “Weib” to describe Salome. “Weib” can be translated as “woman,” but it carries a derogatory connotation. Salome, a free woman, brings about a crisis of masculinity for Herodes – he fears her.²⁶ Not only is Herodes threatened by Salome as a woman, but, like in other Expressionist works, a generational conflict plays out between them – but this time, a generational conflict between father and daughter. After Herodes orders Salome’s death, she is crushed under the soldiers’ shields: “The soldiers fall on Salome and bury her under their shields” [Die Soldaten stürzen sich auf Salome und begraben sie unter ihren Schilden] (SA 14). If Strauss’ opera had ended with the moon’s illumination of Salome, we would have witnessed the birth of the new woman; however, she is killed.

Nevertheless, Salome’s word choice once again presents her as a character who makes calculated decisions. Salome says to Jochanaan, “Oh! I have kissed your lips, Jochanaan” [Ah! Ich habe deinen Mund geküßt, Jochanaan] (SA 14). Instead of saying “ich küsste deinen Mund,” which is more literary speech, Salome uses the present perfect. By using the present perfect, “I have kissed your lips,” there is both more finality in Salome’s words and more of a stress on the process itself. Instead of using the preterit, which suggests a single event and a chronologically limited action, Salome’s use of the present perfect stresses the importance of the kiss, and implies that she did have power over her actions. By putting the verb in its participle form at the end of the clause, it adds extra emphasis on the accomplishment, suggesting that Salome takes great pride in what she has done.

As the moon illuminates Salome, she becomes once again a representation of a holy figure. Salome has killed the messianic Jochanaan and has become herself a figure of power.

²⁶ The manager in *Von morgens bis mitternachts* also describes the woman from Italy as a Weib.

Throughout Strauss' *Salome*, Salome has been compared to a Jesus figure: "Like a woman who rises from the grave" [Wie eine Frau, die aufsteigt aus dem Grab] (SA 1). Granted, Salome's resemblance to Jesus is limited, as she is only interested in her own redemption. Nevertheless, Salome becomes a powerful and even feared character. Even Herodes, who calls for Salome's death, seems to recognize her as a force. Before ordering Salome's death, Herodes says, "Hide the moon, hide the stars! Something terrible will happen" [Verbergt den Mond, verbergt die Sterne! Es wird Schreckliches geschehen] (SA 13). It is possible that Herodes simply fears what will come after the execution of Jochanaan, but Herodes is also aware of Salome's power. Herodes, who was always fascinated in Salome, begins to fear her, an interesting comparison to Zarathustra, who does not incite fear in the people he meets, rather laughter and mockery. Though Herodes found Salome enchanting during her dance of the seven veils, after she kisses Jochanaan, Herodes realizes that he has unleashed something in Salome. Herodes is confronted with the new woman and calls for her death. Herodes wishes for the moon's light to be overshadowed, as though he knows that killing Salome will bring about something unwished. And after the command to kill Salome is spoken, a cloud covers the moon: "A big cloud is drawn over the moon and covers it up completely" [Eine große Wolke zieht über den Mond und verhüllt ihn völlig] (SA 13). The scene becomes apocalyptic. But, perhaps Salome's death is Salome's going under, Salome's "untergehen." Maybe, like Zarathustra, this is her beginning.

In the three works that I have analyzed, the protagonist, the possible representation of the Neue Mensch, has died. In "Das Urteil," Georg commits suicide, in *Von morgens bis mitternachts*, the Bank Teller also takes his life, and in *Salome*, Salome undergoes a self-inflicted homicide. The death of these characters makes us question the transformations of the characters. But perhaps death is their only escape, their only way out of society. It should also be noted, that

insofar as Strauss' *Salome* is built upon a biblical story, as well as the countless retellings of this story, and a play by Oscar Wilde, we can read the opera not only as a story of transformation, but a transformation of Salome's story itself.

Conclusion

The Übermensch and the Neue Mensch are two concepts that are easily abused and easily taken to the extreme. The Expressionists, however, simply used the Übermensch as a springboard and a building block; they set the idea into motion. Expressionist writers create an ideal which changes throughout their works, an idea that itself transforms.

Both Zarathustra and the Expressionist characters continually search for authenticity; an end that will perhaps never be reached. The Expressionists experiment with the Übermensch, creating the Neue Mensch. They put Nietzsche's idea into practice. And because of the idealistic nature of the Neue Mensch, its "empty formula," examining this character becomes challenging, as the Expressionists themselves were experimenting with this chameleon-like figure. Literature became their testing ground. And after looking at various representations of the new man, we can see that the Neue Mensch, when put into practice, becomes less of an ideal. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents the Übermensch in a more straightforward fashion. However, he too does not lay out an easy path to become the Übermensch, there are no step by step directions – even Zarathustra is only a teacher of the Übermensch, not an Übermensch himself. Both the Neue Mensch and the Übermensch are idealistic concepts, but when staged, when allowed to play out, they become more complex.

Nietzsche, like the Expressionists, experiments with his Übermensch. After finishing the third section of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, "which in his mind completed his work" (Berthold), Nietzsche returned to his book and wrote the fourth section. Even though he did not wish for this section to be published, Nietzsche had returned to and revised his own work. Nietzsche's vision of the Übermensch changed throughout his writing process. And because of the parodic elements in Nietzsche's fourth section, scholars have questioned his belief in the Übermensch. Robert

Pippin writes in the editorial introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “Part IV reads more like a comic, concluding satyr play to a tragic trilogy than a real conclusion” (TZ xxxiii). Nietzsche never stopped questioning and revising his own writing. His ideas continue to develop and change, which can be seen in his critiques of his own works.

The Expressionist *Neue Mensch* goes through a transformation throughout the Expressionist period and even in the course of certain works. Gottfried Benn’s poem, *Kleine Aster* [*Little Aster*] (1912), contained in Pinthus’ *Menschheitsdämmerung* is an example of this less idealistic take on the new man:

A drowned beer-truck driver was lifted on the slab.
 Someone had struck a dark-bright purple aster
 between his teeth.
 As I proceeding from the chest
 under the skin
 with a long knife
 cut out tongue and palate,
 I must have nudged it, for it slid
 into the adjacent brain.
 I packed it into his chest cavity
 between the wadding
 as he was being sewn up.
 Drink your fill in your vase!
 Rest peacefully,
 little aster!

(DH 75)

Ein ersoffener Bierfahrer wurde auf den Tisch gestemmt.
 Irgendeiner hatte ihm eine dunkelhellila Aster
 zwischen die Zähne geklemmt.
 Als ich von der Brust aus
 unter der Haut
 mit einem langen Messer
 Zunge und Gaumen herausschnitt,
 muß ich sie angestoßen haben, denn sie glitt
 in das nebenliegende Gehirn.
 Ich packte sie ihm in die Brusthöhle
 zwischen die Holzwolle,
 als man zunähte.
 Trinke dich satt in deiner Vase!
 Ruhe sanft,
 kleine Aster!

Gottfried Benn
(MD 52)

Benn's poem describes a small flower that rests between a beer-truck driver's teeth. As the speaker cuts open the truck driver's body, he places the aster into the man's chest. The aster is a sign of life and hope. It is a beautiful thing surrounded by death. And though the aster is still alive, it needs the truck driver as a vase. The aster's death is only delayed. One could look at the death of the truck driver as the death of the old, the death of the monotonous, and imagine the flower as the new. The aster represents the *Neue Mensch*. But because of the symbiotic relationship between the old and the new, it does not seem as though the aster will continue to live. Benn's *Kleine Aster* is a free form poem, without fixed meter or rhyme scheme, which was common for Expressionist writers, who wished to tame the content of their writing. Not only does Benn present a particularly somber image of the *Neue Mensch*, but he does this with no form, destroying all idealism. Benn is presenting hope as something present, but waning. Unlike the past three works, where death is perhaps a chance of renewal, death in Benn's poem is not a solution. *Kleine Aster* is morose and grotesque. The search for the authentic is perhaps found in the flower, but it is impermanent. Nevertheless, the aster is a small sign of hope. This aster, Benn's symbol of new life, is also a symbol of death, as the aster is often placed on graves. Even Benn's description of the aster is oxymoronic, calling the aster "dunkelhellila," or "dark-bright purple." Benn's aster is representative of the undecidedness of the Expressionists.

In Ernst Stadler's poem *Der Spruch*, Stadler tells man to become "true to your essence" (DH 220) [werde wesentlich] (MD 196). Benn works with this idea as well. However, in Benn's poem, the "wesentlich," the "essential," becomes a "Wesen," a "creature" or "being." In Benn's poem all that is left is the creature, or the aster. As Stadler's new man changes into Benn's aster,

we can see how the concept of the new man differs throughout the Expressionist movement. The Expressionists question their own ideal and play with the concept itself, something that Nietzsche does as well. And this questioning is where politics and arts diverge. On the political end, the Nazis took Nietzsche's Übermensch and accepted it as a reality. The Expressionists, however, took the concept and experimented with it. Literature acted as a medium of reflection.

Throughout his life's work, Nietzsche argues for the value of art and relies heavily on metaphor. Nietzsche sees art as a way of lightening things, a way of making life bearable. Gerhard Kurz writes, "It is difficult to conceive the notion of life as parable other than in terms of artistic creation, which, said Nietzsche, lightens the burden of life" (Kurz 138). Even in Benn's *Kleine Aster*, the aster is the aesthetic, the aster makes the dreary life portrayed in Benn's poem bearable. When taking into account Nietzsche's respect for the aesthetic, we can learn from him and the Expressionists. If we allow the ideas to transform and change, if we look at them as metaphors and examine them in a greater context, there is much meaning to be found. Though the Übermensch and Neue Mensch are idealistic concepts, an analysis is relevant, as art is a medium with which one can reflect. Art is a medium which must not be taken literally, it is a means of experimentation. In Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," he writes, "It should have been singing, this 'new soul', not speaking! What a shame that I dared not say what I had to say then as a poet" (BT 6) [Sie hätte singen sollen, diese "neue Seele" - und nicht reden! Wie schade, dass ich, was ich damals zu sagen hatte, es nicht als Dichter zu sagen wagte] (GT). Though Nietzsche's philosophy is more colorful than the conventional style, he still expresses the wish to have written as a poet, to have sung. The Expressionists have done this for him, they have reworked his ideas into their own aesthetic forms.

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