WAYNE TOMPKINS

NIETZSCHE’S UMBRELLA

From Zarathustra and Sons, haberdashers:
it is sturdy and serviceable.
Closed: it’s the arrow of thought.
Open: a web
to catch the meaning of rain.
He leans on it like a walking stick—
it bends but doesn’t break.
He thrusts it into gaps in walls and arguments.
Pulling off the handle he discovers a stiletto—
which stimulates his imagination.
Using it for balance
he skips gaily across the high wires of logic.
It keeps his beard and boots dry.
Sometimes during sudden alpine storms
he finds himself without it.

Memo: remember to take your umbrella.

He easily twirls various entities
from its shining tip. At county fairs
it is his best dance partner.
He keeps it ready to hand
when cracking metaphysical problems
(he is the last metaphysician).
He enjoys shaking droplets
from it
and sometimes makes brief rainbows.
He misappropriated it:
it once belonged to Hegel.