

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.