

## Nietzsche's Mother

**By Tom O'Connor**

My son wishes brimstone on every priest. Behind  
his eyes: insanity pulses. Sleepless, he

can't afford the best treatment. I save him  
from the Jena asylum. Home in Naumberg,

he throws out food by name—German, English,  
God forbid Irish: *potatoes are the path to liquor,*

*rice to opium.* Squinting eyes condemn coffee's dark  
habit, hell-worthy painkillers, even pure mountain water.

He proclaims he's Christ himself. All storm fronts  
must agree before we step outdoors for an hour-walk

beneath cloudless skies. He breathes the humidity-free  
air, stares ahead with blurry eyes. He thinks clearly

to preach only at the piano, holding my hand in his  
against his chest for hours. His eyes dart, his next

thought untraceable. Again, quiet hands reach  
for mine as if I had the touch of Jesus.