

Dostoevski the Barber

his throat
was a woman's leg
gone three days
w/out a
shave

the mirror darkened
under the suck
of his eyes

beneath his coat
a razor hung
by a loop
of fishing
line

his upturned hands
scarred
by many shavings,
shook

like a medium's
hands—
would they cut
a novel
in his face

a bloody final chapter
that Belinsky
would approve?

All day he waited
shivering, blinking
night clopped up
the street:
Gogol's far-framed troika
returned...

“when will the
first stroke be
& where will it land,
comrade,
have we poor been decently lathered?
will the blade cut deep?”

Pushkin drove
the troika
Dostoevski paid him
with a speech

two crows flew across
the sky
searching for a third

they found Gogol
in his hell
unshaven & grieving

“the revolution
grows like
my beard,
shave me—save
the Czar!”

Dostoevski stropped
& stropped
on Gogol’s tongue

but his dull
blade
could never cut
Lenin from
the marching womb.