

# Barber

By Larry Bradley

Learn from the man who spends much of his life speaking  
To the back of your head knowing what it means to follow

The razor's edge along a worn strop or random thoughts  
As they spring so invisibly from the mind to a mouth

Who shouldered soldiers in two wars and fled fire fields  
Undecorated who fathered once but was fatherless forever

And who works his sentiments in deeper into your scalp  
Under a sign on the knotty-pine walls whose rubric reads

*quot homines, tot sententiae* which means he sees  
In you his suffering smells of horehound tonics and gels

Pillow heads and powders and a floor full of snippings  
Swept neatly every evening into a pile for the field mice

All those roundabout hours only a man who fixes his tie  
To clip crabgrass crowding a lady's grave could believe

With a certain clean devotion and who would never for one  
Moment dream of hurting you when your back was turned

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Larry Bradley's poems have been published in *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and in the online journal *Blackbird*. Frequently elegiac, his work is rich with alliteration and shows a deep knowledge of, and reverence for, natural landscapes. His awards include the New Millennium Writings Award.