

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

Source: *Poetry* (November 2010)