

'Razor Sharp'

William Thirsk-Gaskill

My father shaves, every morning, and again
if he ventures out in the evening.

His beard is a source of embarrassment,
which must be extirpated.

Silver hair. White vest. Red neck.
Nut-brown face. Steel blade. Shaking hand.
Badger brush. White soap. Shaking hand.
His ridged thumbnail scrapes the suds off his lips.

His newly-screwed-in blade cuts away
the foam from his jaw-line, from under
his chin, from his cheeks, from around his mouth.
Shaking hand. No blood, this time.

He rinses off. Pats dry. Ironed shirt.
Silk tie. Tries another tie. Puts on another tie.
Gets the bus. Gives a lecture.
To the students. To the world. This is what he lives by.

I cut my chin less often than he did,
but I undergo fewer trials.