
COMBING THE HAIR ('LA COIFFURE') CIARÁN O'ROURKE

Edgar Degas, 1896. For my sisters

Days burn out; our inner life persists –
so this wall as red as a bursting fruit
could be a metaphor
for pain and sweetness both combined,
the easy, spreading wave of touch

a hairbrush tugs through all the room,
where soon you'll shindy from your seat
as the ritual completes, your hair
a flaring melody released
by the comber's tactful hands, her face

like yours a paragon
of second thoughts and soft abidance,
her deft, attending stance
the light
that sets your laughing arms aglow –

which leaves the watcher only
to depict, who keeps concealed
his stillness in the dance,
though every window's
singing now

his dream of praise, his passing glance.