

The Haircut

Egg tempera on gesso panel, 1986

His hands with clipped nails trim your hair
Shining and dense
As massed fibres of ice, snow blown and drifted

Down either side of your eyes, his
Fingers arching, an aureole
Above your head, scissors and red comb

Poised, the first severed filaments of hair about to
Drop, catch in the stiff
Chrysalis of white about your shoulders

Your exposed forearms relaxed and crossed at the wrists
Against your chest, a gargoyle
Cut from stone and not ready to be

Mortared into the wall of a medieval churchyard
But sitting upon a stool to face
Down death, you watch its approach

In the mirror, noting how your knuckles
Gnarl, the sheet pulled close about prosaic loose
Fleshed bones while he remains

Naked and younger, your sculpted
Neoclassic lover unselfconscious in his skin
Body for now not holding any

Pose, marbled and warm as he hones with exact
Scissor-strokes the down-turning
White bowl

Of your hair, his light-footed shift
In stance to being stationed behind you
Rather than lying before not only mastery

But a sign of how he observes, what he makes
His own after being watched through
The millennia you have drawn him—and draw

Him still—his longing so quiet and workman-like
You are humble but never
Overcome, the respect each snip invokes

Real and expressed in skill, a persistent
Modernity you share, held
Gaze for gaze, his eyes intent

On scissors and hair not abstracted and unempty
Of agapé while you notice everything
Private within you

Sharpen, ageless with his shaping.