

## Brush work

The sun empties out its light,  
splashing walls and easels,  
the bare floor. We stare at  
fallen flower pots and feathers  
in jars. We narrow our eyes,  
chew pencil ends and sigh.  
Neat, we are, in navy skirts,  
blue tops and ties,

*Jean and Kathleen,*

*Maeve and me.*

Small sounds nudge the silence,  
shoes scuff, adolescent stomachs  
murmur and we grumble a bit.  
We dip hog-hair into water,  
mix puddles of paint in clean  
white saucers, make first  
tentative marks. We measure,  
thumbs on brushes,

*Jean and Kathleen,*

*Maeve and me.*

We are different, we Higher Art  
girls. Others slog over maths  
and Latin verse, chemistry and  
French. In our sky-high eyrie Miss  
Meldrum brings us shortbread,  
Miss Liston talks of love. And,  
in secret society, we dream our  
futures, not knowing,

*Jean and Kathleen,*

*Maeve and me.*

We have grown old, we Higher Art  
girls – and I read in the paper  
they've pulled the building down,  
our bright rooftop refuge  
ripped across and across like  
some unfinished painting. Yet,  
we pose together in time, we four,  
framed in sunlight,

*Jean and Kathleen,*

*Maeve and me.*