

The Male Line

Once, my father tried to rouse the fire
– my mother being gone to early Mass –
by pouring paraffin from an old jam-jar.
So focused on the task he seemed to miss
the presence of his young son in the arch
of his bent legs, a child too keenly drawn
to adult action, always on the search
for something new – well, he would soon learn
that when the heady vapour caught a spark
All Hell Broke Loose – My God, how I whinged!
But when in better light she would remark
that my fair eyebrows looked like they'd been singed,
I saved my breath to cool my porridge, and he
just winked to seal our first complicity.

From *The Eyes of Isaac Newton* (Dedalus Press 2017)