

Malcolm Guite

Poets in Age
or A Study of Reading Habits

At first I used to wish that I were Keats
And then I wished I'd been one of the Beats
I'd be Kerouac or Dylan
If my muse were only willin'
I'd be On The Road, or in-between the sheets.

I used to think the best songs had been sung,
That genius is destined to die young,
That you must expire like Shelley,
Or the fire in your belly
Will be quenched before your passing bell is rung.

But now I need the poets who grew old
And wore the bottoms of their trousers rolled,
I need characters like Tennyson,
Who improve, like port and venison,
And turn life's lead to poems of pure gold.

I need the poets now, who match my age,
Like Coleridge I could become a sage,
And I bet I'd get more dates
Than WB Yeats
For all his talk of old men's lust and rage.

I've glanced awhile at poets on the shelf,
Desiring this man's style or that man's wealth,
But tonight I smile and say,
As I put their books away,
Oh sod the lot! I'd better be myself.