

## Dead Poets

I'm livin' every day with the dead poets' society  
Rioting inside my head, so it requires me  
To keep every word I've read close beside me  
Inspiring me to never go quietly

I'm posturing like I'm the offspring of Oscar Wilde  
The foster child of Geoffrey Chaucer; now  
Hip-hop's the trial I face here, so I adopt the style  
But first I'd better make clear that since my eighth year  
I've been possessed by Shakespeare and William Blake's spirits  
And still I wait to hear a voice like T.S. Elliot's  
And Percy Shelley is the first to tell me just  
How to speak out of turn and keep my verse rebellious  
I read Keats and learn from a grecian urn  
How to reach eternity through the gyre where Yeats turns  
So I can meet Traherne, plus I'm a freak like Burns  
With his twenty-some children, though I'm still a young pilgrim  
And I'm buildin' a temple from the skills my tongue's yieldin'  
So I feel like John Milton; paradise is lost  
For the thrill; I'm John Skelton crossed with Wordsworth  
But my zeal is unwelcome in George Herbert's church

I'm livin' every day with the dead poets' society  
Rioting inside my head, so it requires me  
To keep every word I've read close beside me  
Inspiring me to never go quietly

For a challenge I'm known to approach talent shows with  
Poems that I stole from Edgar Allen Poe's lips  
Opium hits dope Alexander Pope's wits  
I was Samuel Coleridge in a trance when I wrote this  
And I awoke with the whole song done  
I felt the soul of John Donne; Andrew Marvel  
Taught me to chase the sun; I can't make it stand still  
So instead I'll make it run, with puns denser  
Than Edmund Spencer's, and modern lyrics  
Modeled on Robert Herrick's; when I dispense words  
It's like a forge is firin', and I'm strikin' the iron  
Inspired by Lord Byron when I'm writin' the Siren  
Song; evidence of desire went wrong  
And lost innocence; my memory's gone  
In a sense, Tennyson has been reborn  
In a form with the fingerprints of Henry Vaughn

I'm livin' every day with the dead poets' society  
Rioting inside my head, so it requires me  
To keep every word I've read close beside me  
Inspiring me to never go quietly

As a poet I'm conscious of the goals I accomplish  
That I owe to accomplices, and when I'm feelin' honest  
My conscience bids me to admit to stealin' sonnet  
Styles from Philip Sydney; I'm fulfillin' a promise  
I gave Dylan Thomas to rage against the dyin'  
Of light; I'm like Adonis: I'm still a novice  
But I already got the skills to thrill a Goddess  
Or start a riot in the heart; that's why it's pounding  
I'm Thomas Wyatt's foundling; on Ezra Pound's wings  
I fly, quietly grounding my weight on the past's crutches  
I'm Robert Browning, and this rap is "My Last Dutchess"  
I'm puttin' the last touches on the way it's sounding  
In strange surroundings my grasp clutches  
For balance; I spin words, recalling how fast structures  
Fell and splintered at my feet like Alan Ginsberg  
That's how I'm ensured power of speech, and now I've been heard

*November 2000*

© Baba Brinkman