

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

My dark red velvet jacket
(the early death of Romanticism)

by Steve Brown

Those early years: the assumed Keats cough;
the Players number 6 – small sticks of opium;
the sharp glee of Shelley, caught
in a shrill joke; Byron – in your dreams.

In rooms where girls do certainly come and go
- but not talking of Michelangelo –
I leant, one hand on a walnut cabinet,
the other, nursing throat-stripping wine,

talking the tangled verbiage of pale youth,
heart-sore, though mainly drunk.
Her face, illuminated by candle-light
- as beautiful as my El Greco pin-up.

I was at ease in velvet – it came with the job;
the plush, though slightly stiff and cheap,
seemed like the soft and easy death,
fitting to the young and the romantic.

So, I was talking – felt warm with ardour,
felt illuminated and transfigured
by the fires of inspiration –
till she said, “Oh, your jacket’s alight!”

It was – with fire licking half-way
up one side. I was doused
with tonic water and some wine.
I spent the rest of the evening charred

-dazed and floating, like a stunned, dumb
minor Satan, fallen:
damned in slapstick.