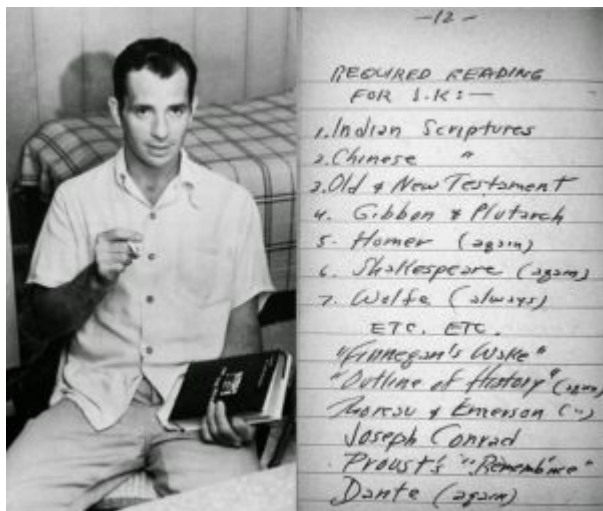


A Poor Vintage



after Kerouac and Keats

My heart aches for tranquility –
for the still, clear, rhythm-
less rhyme
that a dead, Beat Poet's heart
has. Jack's beats time
silently – painlessly now –
after the bloody, full-stop dash
On The Road to his last sentence.
No plaintive nightingale needed
now, to soothe his furrowed brow.
His rotted skin and flesh
has exposed a cache, a sacred
cow: a chalky, white skull slow-
decaying in half-
lives of lost memory
below the slaked lime lying
in the dour subsoil
of a wet and deep, delved earth.
No mirth for me, either, as I sip
this old libation – this draught
of sour vintage in a time bereft
of music or jazz-like syncopation.

John D Kelly lives in Co. Fermanagh. His work has appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies. He won the Listowel Poetry Short Collection Award and also the Desmond O'Grady International Poetry Competition, in 2020. His manuscript was highly commended in the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award 2016. Most recently he was a finalist in the Montreal International Poetry Prize, 2022. His first collection: *The Loss Of Yellowhammers* was published by Summer Palace Press in 2020.

Image: The reading list Kerouac wrote for himself as an 18-year-old G.I.