

Staying Awake · John Logan

*But we are old, our fields are running wild;  
Till Christ again turn wanderer and child—  
Robert Lowell*

You see I did not want to leave  
so I kept the young couple up.  
It was the reverse of the scene where Robert Lowell  
read at St. John's College the year I turned twenty-eight.  
I wanted to follow him wherever he would go.  
I knew he was headed off to Iowa to teach,  
but I had a wife and three kids.  
(While she did dishes I bathed kids and put them to bed.  
I loved their infantile white flesh and their tousled heads.)  
I was teaching. I was not free to go, but I held  
LORD WEARY'S CASTLE in my hand  
as I passed by from class to class,  
and the evening Lowell read I got high on rhyme  
and his fierce family vision,  
oracles that move through his verse.  
I knew he was the master then,  
and I wanted to apprentice myself under him.  
Well, they say that I'm a master now, but on this night  
when I was reading Lowell's poems with a pupil  
it grew late: I still wanted to take what the student  
had to share. I am sixty and am tired of giving.  
So I overstayed and kept the couple up, I said,  
away from their conjugal bed.

*For Tom Lucas*