

**Stephen Robertson**

## **Gathering dark**

Thesis:

*Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made.*  
—Robert Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*

Antithesis:

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*  
—Dylan Thomas, *Do not go gentle into that good night*

Synthesis:

*While the Rose blows along the River Brink,  
With old Khayyam the Ruby Vintage drink:  
And when the Angel with his darker Draught  
Draws up to thee—take that, and do not shrink.*  
—*The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, tr. Edward Fitzgerald

Maybe, for some, the resolution lies  
in their cups. Thomas certainly did his level best  
to drink himself to death. But for these falls,  
no drink involved.

*P*

The fall is denied.  
Anyway, the cancer can be blamed  
for many things. Hard to tell, now,  
which failing faculties to place  
at its door. Rage too against  
the cessation of treatment—  
but that is a symptom, not a cause.

*A*

The fall drew blood.  
No such obvious culprit here,  
except for age, pure and simple. No rage—  
just a sort of passive acceptance.  
Set against this, a certain toughness,  
hidden, but evident in the number,  
best expressed Roman fashion:  
CII.

*We*

As for us, the bits begin to fall off.  
We are not so far behind.

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