

Martin Robertson

Age

Age takes everything we hate to give
not everything we have—in mockery
leaves us (our fee to Death) the will to live.

Condemned we snatch at every short reprieve,
disguising from ourselves how ruthlessly
Age takes everything we hate to give.

Huddled in his barbed camp we fret, we grieve
numbly under his rifling hands, but he
leaves us our fee to Death. The will to live

(which yet loves nothing like a sedative)
traps us in self-despising misery,
Age takes everything we hate to give:

knowledge and strength, to his imperative
obedient, love, hope—each successively
leaves us. Our fee to Death, the will to live,

outlasts this tarnished thing, worn to a sieve,
once the golden bowl of memory.
Age takes everything we hate to give,
leaves us our fee to Death, the will to live.