The Gentle Art of Shabby Dressing

By Spencer Short

There’s nothing dandier than threadbare threads worn by a discerning shabby dresser. A collar’s fret or subtle fray is not lesser because it’s worn away but models instead the bespoke tailoring of time itself.

Done poorly—the gentleman farmer’s piecemeal pastoral, that NoHo charmer’s duct-taped boots—it’s like an unread bookshelf of secondhand prose: a too-studied pose. Done well, it draws you in to draw you near, reveals the intricate pattern in the years’ inexorable ravel. Between decompose

and deconstruct, what seemed a foppish quirk grows wise. Design undone. We wear time’s work.

Source: Poetry (May 2019)