John Donne Journal
Vol. 18 (1999)

"To his Mistress Going to Bed," or "Could You Lend Me Your Clothes?"

Allison Spreuwenberg-Stewart

In John Donne's "Elegy 19"[1] clothing provides imaginative structure, metaphorical depth, and sexual ambiguity; what seems to be a chaos of discarded garments is actually a meticulous catalogue of feminine costume with connotations that intensity the references in each line, charging the images with erotic fire and ingenuity. Designed around an orderly striptease, dress in the poem materially represents the changeable, urgent, and mysterious nature of desire. The speaker uses costume to command and describe a series of erotic acts that ascribe to specific accessories complex and abstract imagery; these images play on an intimate understanding of Renaissance feminine apparel. On close examination, however, Donne does not employ any exclusively feminine article of clothing: all the items he mentions in the poem were worn by both men and women.[2] The appeal of this already satisfying work is much enhanced when the reader understands the connotations of the poem's beautiful, tantalizing—and ambiguous—clothing and ornament. It does not even matter if, as some critics maintain, the mistress is absent, as the speaker and his lover are united in the flexible way Donne plays on Renaissance sensibilities of dress and gender.

Other critics have examined the apparel in "Elegy 19" with conflicting results. Roma Gill denies the sensuality of the poem despite her acknowledgment of the "slow titillation as each Elizabethan garment is removed with deliberation and relish."[3] Arthur Marotti concurs, calling the work an "antierotic treatment of a sexual encounter."[4] Thomas Docherty 's "Elegy 19," on the other hand, effaces the woman, who is obscured by a pile of clothes and then reduced to the "autoeroticism of the speaker."[5] John Carey suggests that the clothing

is more important than the mistress,[6] and Thomas Greene says "the poem is a tissue of *coverings,* analogical garments which apparel the 'full nakedness' the text seems to celebrate but actually withholds."[7] All of these approaches focus on the clothing that provides richness and density to the poem, but without a contemporary understanding of the costume Donne employs.

Although the clothing in the poem is metaphorical, the apparel imagery is interwoven with Donne's perception of contemporary dress.[8] Therefore, it is difficult to appreciate the richness and depth of this poem's imagery without an accurate understanding of costume history. Such material knowledge illuminates the ways clothing references organize and enrich the structure and meaning of the poem.

"Elegy 19" probably was written in the late 1590s when fashion could best be characterized as fantastic, elaborate, and extreme. Blanche Payne comments:

> The greatest absurdities marked the end of the century: the drum shaped French Farthingale became more popular than the Spanish cone; bloated leg of mutton sleeves came into fashion, ruffs spread to shoulder width and required wired support, pushing the hair to the top of the head.[9]

Payne traces the escalation of ornament, noting that during the 1580s "features which had come into fashion as interesting innovations or natural developments were magnified or intensified into grotesque proportions."[10] Although much of English apparel was influenced by Continental fashions, many costume historians hold Queen Elizabeth I partially responsible for disfiguring and constrictive styles. Some historians suggest that Her Majesty used clothing for dramatic stage effects to enhance her authority and add to her figure. Faith Jacques asserts that the wide hoops and high heels of the period were designed to inflate the skinny Queen.[11] *The Undercover Story* notes that huge clothing creates a powerful image by "claim[ing] an enormous amount of physical space."[12] The style of the 1590s is described in *The Undercover Story* as "bulbous, aggressive, unbalanced and grotesque —and . . . effective. Queen Elizabeth I was a fairly terrifying visual

object as well as a prickly and dangerous monarch to cross." [13] Her Royal Highness seems to have been well aware of the role of dress in public identity, and affected a highly ornamental style that was imitated and even embellished by both the merchant and courtier classes.

Elizabethan costume was not as erotically charged as modern dress despite its often revealing nature. Although there were sexual distinctions, they were often subtle, or ignored. Sandy Feinstein notes that both the queen and other women at court "appropriated male fashions and adapted them to fit both their needs and their bodies."[14] Similarly, Pearl Binder mentions that the Elizabethan tall hat was worn equally by men and women and that "Peascod-bellies and bombasted doublets and trunks gave men the appearance of pregnant women."[15] In her role as unmarried female monarch Queen Elizabeth may have needed all the masculine symbols of office she could muster. Feinstein points out that men and women not only wore similar exterior garments but also that they employed similar undergarments for body shaping.[16] This convergence would have been more apparent than one might imagine since a close look at historical studies of costume reveals that, starting in the late fifteenth century, underclothing was no longer hidden beneath the outer clothing, but began to be a part of exterior indications of class distinction. The Cunningtons note in *The History of Underwear,* "women's underwear began to share in the extreme degree of finery and physical discomfort which became the acceptable hall-mark of the social superior."[17] The word "share" here reminds us that male and female waists and chests were similarly constricted, and this restraint appears to have been related to high social status. In this context undergarments are less erotic than status-signifying.[18] Fashions, then, were extravagant, and constrictive, differentiated by rank more than gender; and centered on what was underneath—not the body, but the underclothing. "Elegy 19" not only explores the implications of the erotic body, but also the cultural meaning of the garments themselves.

Employing a range of technical costume detail, Donne creates a glorious striptease that is both material and metaphorical, at once delaying and increasing desire, beginning with the girdle, which Yarwood's *Encyclopedia of World Costume* describes as

> A belt for the waist or hips worn from the early Middle Ages, made of metal, leather, fabric or cord and often with one or two hanging ends. In the sixteenth century in particular, the lady's girdle hung down in the center front of the dress and terminated in a pomander, jewel, mirror or book. Often, articles were attached to or suspended from the belt, especially a purse, keys and mirror.[19]

The girdle is a narrow exterior garment worn outside of the gown. It follows the waistline, rests on the hips, and is often elaborately decorated (see fig. 1).[20]

In the poem, the girdle becomes an object of increased contextual clarity and metaphorical intricacy:

> Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glistering,
> But a far fairer world encompassing. (5-6)

If the modern reader imagines a modern girdle or shaping undergarment, instead of a Renaissance girdle or thin exterior belt that acts as the outermost restriction of Renaissance dress, then he misses the point, for the girdle marks the beginning of undress, not the end. Doniphan Louthan addresses this issue in his explication of the poem:

> someone may object that *Girdle* here has for the reader a modern, not a seventeenth-century sense. Quite true, but the context of the phrase in "Elegie XIX" leads us to believe that the phrase meaning (if not the word meaning) had the same force for Donne's contemporaries that it now has for us.[21]

Although the narrator's imperative voice may have had the same "force" as it does now in the senses of being commanding and sexually dominating, it is important to distinguish the sexual tone from the article of dress the speaker wants removed. The Renaissance girdle is much less intimate than the modern girdle, thus the tone eroticizes the clothing rather than the other way around.

Figure 1

These examples of earlier girdles vary in style from but are similar in material and function to most descriptions of the late sixteenth-century girdle (Yarwood 197).

a. Jewelled metal girdle, English, c 1360.

b. Black jewelled girdle with leather purse, Spanish, c 1450.

c. Queen Jane Seymore, 1536. Gold and Jeweled girdle.

Docherty uses the historically-correct definition of the girdle in his exploration of colonialism and the female body, but his approach is farfetched. Docherty's girdle surrounds and hugs from the outside, representing the woman's position sexually around the man. This connection is interesting because the usual hierarchical reading of the poem is reversed. The woman, however, takes on an active role, which contradicts Docherty's acknowledgment of the absence of the woman's body in the poem. He shifts his attention from the physical to the cosmic significance of the mistress, calling her a "geometrical 'encompassing' of the world."[22] This image does not match the language of the poem, which frames the woman as the world encompassed by the girdle. Another of Docherty's perspectives is linguistic: "the *girdle*" he points out, "contains the *girl,* and the breach made in this girdle to 'produce' the girl becomes tantamount to a breach in the body of the girl herself, tantamount to the opening of the girl's legs, her 'compass.'"[23] Docherty finds rhetorical fun and meaning in girl/girdle, which he says shows that the mistress is "mixed up promiscuously, anagrammatically, in another word or object." He concludes that she actually "becomes the man's girdle."[24] Such a transformation seems clever, but what happens to the erotic tone of the poem as striptease narrative if the mistress removes her girdle? In Docherty's scenario removing the girdle would more likely indicate the consummation of and retreat from desire rather than its anticipation. The imagery becomes worse and worse if the girdle has anything to do with the girl's "breach." I am not sure the poem supports the reading of the woman becoming the girdle any more than it does the mistress becoming the phallus.[25] On the other hand, Docherty acknowledges the suppleness of Donne's poetic images and touches on the important gender blurring in the poem. He looks at clothing in the poem, finds that dress obscures the body, but then ignores the significance of dress itself.

One way the mistress' dress would have been significant to contemporary readers was its relationship to Renaissance cosmology. A girdle confines, binds, or encircles something, an image that must be important in a culture whose imagined universe is a series of concentric rings arranged around the earth. The girdle could refer to the zodiac,[26]

which was a word almost synonymous with "zone."[27] Donne's readers may have more readily connected the word "zone" with "girdle" and the zodiac than would modern readers. "Heaven's zone glistering" is the girdle, richly ornamented and perhaps jeweled or embroidered with gold, the bright heavens that orbit the mistress, and the attractive part of the mistress the speaker wishes would enclose him. She is superior to the world, containing her own world of beauty; her girdle, her personal zodiac, encloses the world: "But a far fairer world encompassing" (l.6). No matter how vast and beautiful the encompassing heavens are (the girdle and other clothing), they orbit something more important: not simply the body, but that indescribable and elusive constellation called desire.

The girdle not only highlights the numerous coverings of the body, but also points the way to their removal. This idea resonates with the imagery of the heavens, as stars are traditional guides to men, orienting them in their travels. The girdle is spangled with gems the way the zodiac is filled with stars; the girdle directs the speaker's commands, as the central and most exterior garment. Donne later echoes the guiding nature of dress in lines 27-30:

> O my America, my new-found-land,
> My kingdom, safeliest when by one man manned,
> My mine of precious stones, my empery,
> How blessed am I in this discovering thee!

One gets to the New World by navigating with the help of the stars, which lead to dis-covery. Feinstein notes that the lines preceding this passage contain a reference to the ongoing nationalistic controversy over fashion. With many sumptuary laws and trade restrictions aimed at maintaining the manufacture and consumption of domestic goods, "Licence my roving hands" may refer to a legal as well as moral restriction, and make nakedness and America the only places truly free of such legislation.[28] More globally, the bejeweled belt leads to the world of seduction and the seduction of the woman as world. The mistress is both elevated by comparison to an exotic land, and then

clearly subordinated by being discovered by the speaker. George Parfitt sees in these lines and in the poem as a whole a panorama of male colonialism that puts the woman in a vastly inferior position:

> Donne's poem sees women only in physical terms and his imagining reiterates male power over the female: the woman is to be 'My kingdom', 'my empery'. She remains essentially passive, to be discovered and explored—and the more precisely Donne makes language enforce this equation between colonisation and women, the more firmly the latter is dehumanized.[29]

Parfitt focuses on the center of the poem rather than its beginning. His analysis makes sense because the speaker may be imaginatively exploring the various possible states of undress of the mistress without her consent or participation, but I think his argument is too strong.[30] The woman may be excluded, and I will not claim that women played an equal role in society or love relationships during the Renaissance, but this is, after all, a poem of fantasy and not a dialogue, and the exclusion may simply imply the absence or unavailability of a longed-for lover.

The mistress' consent or refusal is a consideration throughout this poem. The gems in the girdle emphasize the work's insistent material nature and then blur into a "mine of precious stones," a dark yet glittering space representing sexual favors that the speaker will claim for himself—but not necessarily in a colonialist sense; perhaps he is just eager, and has an exalted perception of sensual value. This exterior and artificial imagery includes the more mysterious spiritual or companionate bliss implied in the word "blessed."[31]

The breastplate (see fig. 2), which follows the girdle in the poem, probably refers to the stomacher. Yarwood describes the stomacher as

> a decorative panel of a V or U shape worn attached to or separate from the front of a doublet or gown. . . . In the sixteenth century the stomacher was characteristic of Spanish dress; it was part of a stiffened bodice front like a breastplate and was reinforced by strips of metal and/or whalebone to maintain the smooth, rigid

Fig. 2

This image of Elizabeth I by M. Gheeraerts the Younger shows the stomacher clearly as the U-shaped beaded outline extending from the breast to below the waist. (Iris Brooke, *English Costume of the Later Middle Ages: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* [London: A & C Black, 1935], 27.)

> form of the doublet or gown bodice. It was worn over the body garment (often laced to it) and descended to a sharp or rounded point at the waist. The stomacher was usually ornately decorated either all over or in part with lace, ribbons or jeweled embroidery and it was a different material and colouring from the remainder of the costume.[32]

The stomacher's relationship to the more military term "breastplate" may be explained in a discussion of late sixteenth-century style from *The History of Corsets in Pictures:*

> The knight's armor had become more of an ornamental distinction than a necessity. Some of the armor was beautifully etched in imitation of embroidery and was worn as a mark of caste as well as for protection. It is natural that the metals used in armor should have influenced the costumes of the upper class women of the period.[33]

Armor imitates embroidery as masculine metallic covering mimics softer, more feminine textures. Conversely, during Queen Elizabeth's reign women adopt masculine dress for its representation of the Queen's traditionally masculine power and influence.

Correspondingly, in "Elegy 19" the dazzlingly ornamented breastplate echoes military and proprietary language:

> Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
> That th'eyes of busy fools may be stopped there. (7-8)

The "spangled breastplate" is reminiscent of the guiding nature of stars, but armor is also a deterrent to others' eyes as a military breastplate might stop an arrow. The opacity of richly fashioned clothes both attracts and shields the body from the eyes of men other than the lover. The martial sense of "breastplate" also reflects earlier lines of the poem that address two forms of battle, love and war:

> The foe oft-times having the foe in sight
> Is tired with standing though they never fight. (3-4)

The lover, impatient with desire, "stand[s]" erect in expectation of a battle that might never occur, at least not in this poem. The analogy between love and war becomes complicated and inverted, however. In the early traditions of war, the spoils of battle include the submission of the foe, who then relinquishes his armor and weapons. Here, the speaker commands that the antagonist remove her protective equipment before the "fight." The word "tired" also has the double meaning of "dressed," so the speaker is clothed in a bawdy sense, with "standing." Desire is both something a man wears, and something a woman wears to prolong desire.

A similar protective seductive duality returns later in the poem, in lines 35-38:

> . . . Gems which you women use
> Are like Atalanta's balls, cast in men's views,
> That when a fool's eye lighteth on a gem,
> His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.

Clothing distances the male gaze by focusing it on dress, like a shiny object thrown to distract the eye, but it also inevitably directs attention to the body beneath. These lines move from the mere attraction and repulsion of decorated armor to an accusation of feminine deception. Such ornamentation causes men to fall in love with the woman's body through its accoutrements, not with the body that lies within. Additionally, by adapting armor to feminine high fashion, women are usurping an area of male status and prestige by increasing, if not improving on, its decoration. Interestingly, in Ovid "Atalanta's balls" were thrown by a man to distract her from a race; Donne has reversed the genders in his mythological analogy.[34] The poem's imperative striptease includes hints of female subterfuge, but is illustrated by an example of classical male deception. Women's gems are like Atalanta's balls rather than women are like Atalanta, a distinction that underscores Donne's emphasis on the eroticism of things rather than of people.

The words "unlace yourself" in line 9 of the poem most probably refer to the corset (see fig. 3 and fig. 4). Yarwood describes the corset as a shaping garment using wood, metal, or whalebone strips in the

Fig. 3

These examples of sixteenth-century corsets demonstrate the general structure and design of the corset Donne probably had in mind in "Elegy 19" (a: Yarwood 111; b: Ruth Turner Wilcox, *The Dictionary of Costume.* New York: Macmillan, 1969, 288).

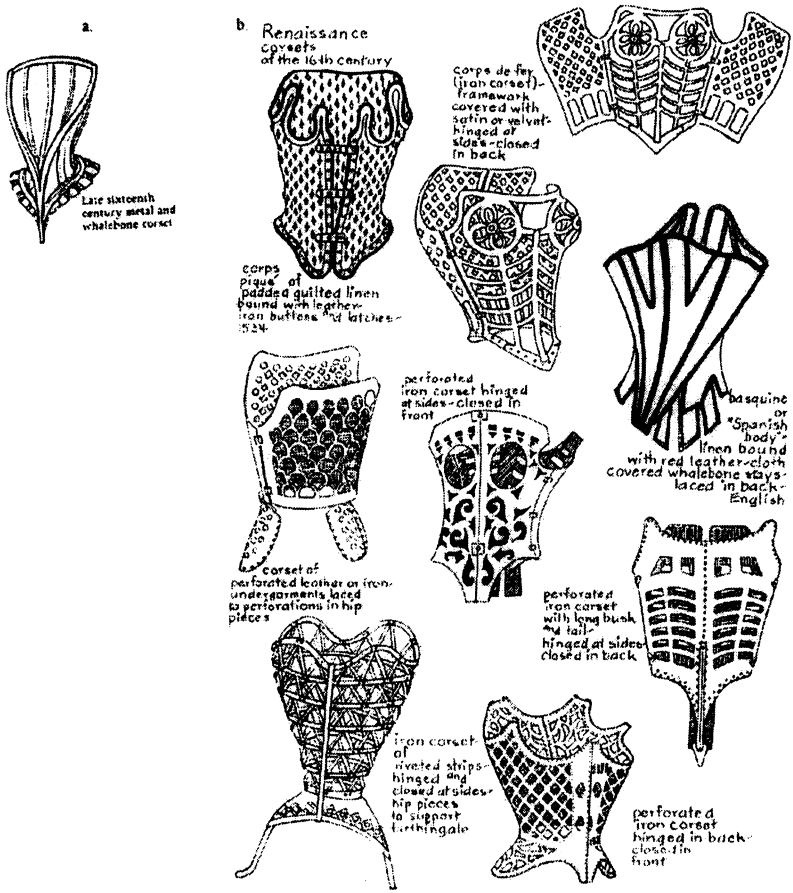


Fig. 4

Men also wore corsetry during the Renaissance. Although these examples illustrate what clothing looked like with corsetry under them rather than showing the corsets themselves, their structure would have been similar to the female shaping devices. (Wilcox 289).

seam, also called a bodice. She explains that by 1580 it had become "an agonizing straight-jacket to endure," with the primary purpose of slenderizing and elongating the waist.[35] Karen Baclawski in her *Guide to Historic Costume* suggests that it was in the sixteenth century that the corset became significant and unique. Then, the bodice and skirt began to be constructed separately and perhaps that is the reason the corset began to be called "a pair of stays" or "pair of bodies." Constructed of layers of fabric, usually linen and cotton, it has built-in stiffeners of reed, whalebone, bone, or other similar material. The front is usually lower than the back but the laces are in front or in back. Busks (long thin stiffening devices for flattening and elongating the chest area) are inserted into a special seam in the front to increase rigidity.[36] Binder gives us an idea of what the corset and farthingale (hoop support for skirts; see figs. 7 and 8) looked like on the body:

> The English farthingale was worn sharply tilted up at the back, so as to give a curiously unbalanced look, as though the lady were falling forward. . . . When the farthingale was worn in conjunction with the breast-flattening Tudor corset a mutually contradictory effect was produced. The corset, as with the exposed open bosom affected by Elizabeth I, suggested flat-chested immaturity, while the farthingale exaggerated the hips and posterior. As the Queen herself was naturally very low-waisted, English farthingales were worn pulled well down over the hips, so that a whole generation of fashionable ladies gave the appearance of having extremely long, straight bodies mounted on extremely short legs.[37]

This description indicates the level of constriction as well as physical and visual distortion that Elizabethan dress required. Albert Racinet explains that the Spanish figure so popular at that time was described quite literally as "espoitrinement," or the imprisonment of women's busts.[38] He notes that Montaigne wrote of some French women who died from cuts made by metal and wooden splints.

Only when the stomacher has been removed can the corset be addressed. The corset is covered by the stomacher in front, by the

bodice all around excepting the front, and by the ruff, sleeves and other attached ornamentation on almost all sides. The ongoing pull between clothing as alluring as well as constraining in relation to love-making is much more complex than the words in the poem convey. Not only is the woman through her dress a contributor to sexual tension and its potential relief through undress, but also undressing is no easy matter. The woman's power is increased despite the imperious lover because she possesses the secret to undress—and yet the speaker expects her to yield to his demands. "Unlace yourself," he directs. Of course, telling the woman to undo her stays is also much easier than the speaker having to do it; he may be deliciously lazy as well as imperious.

Along with the corset comes a watch, probably attached to the mistress' stomacher:

> Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime
> Tells me from you that now 'tis your bed time. (9-10)

The note in Smith's edition of Donne says about these lines: "ladies sometimes wore a chiming watch on their stomachers. But the phrase also suggests that she is in accord with him here and has started to undress as he asks her."[39] Although the phrase "from you" implies that the woman is willing, the clock is what speaks. The clock is "from" her because it is attached to her clothing rather than her, the chime is the watch's voice, not hers, and at this point the stomacher has been removed. A detached ornament rather than the mistress tells Donne that it is bed-time. The "harmonious chime" also brings to mind the music of the spheres, relating to the girdle's heavenly constellation of stars. I am not sure if such an accord is an indication that anything other than clock or heaven is in harmony with the speaker's demands. The chime could indicate the time, the celestial beauty of the woman, the concordance of the stars in their union, the acquiescence of the apparel in seduction, perhaps more than the capitulation of the woman. The language of "Elegy 19," contrary to most Ovidian poems, is strongly persuasive, implying a Petrarchan distance or resistance on the woman's part. If such a barrier is present, it is sensible for the lover to try to

convince his lady that even her adornment agrees with his desire—after all, she did put on beautiful clothing in order to appear attractive. Carey sees the chiming watch as an indication of status: not everyone could afford one, therefore it argues for the high social position of the mistress. Such indicators may have been important when Henry VIII's wife gave him the rare novelty of a watch in 1541, but they were becoming more common by the time of Donne. Queen Elizabeth had 20 watches.[40]

The implications of "Unlace yourself" have a relish beyond the erotic command. The corset, which is what is laced up, is the last major constraining (as opposed to covering) device in the Renaissance woman's dress. The corset molded the shape and size of the upper body for the effect of an entire costume, and unlacing a corset without even removing it would quite literally allow the stomach and breast area to breathe and feel free. Loosening a corset might mean becoming more natural, revealing one's true self rather than modeling a fashionable construction.

After the corset comes the busk. As Feinstein correctly states, the busk is not the same as the corset, despite that gloss in some editions of "Elegy 19." "The busk," she explains, "along with the bodice, was one of the primary means to create the stiff, erect, masculine visual effect that was achieved by flattening the chest and stomach and elongating the waist."[41] The best description of a busk is to say that it resembles a blunt knife, and is inserted into a center pocket or sheath of the corset (see fig. 5 and fig. 6). A busk is a kind of stay. In *The Handbook of English Costume,* the Cunningtons imply that perhaps there were several busks, with the center one most prominent and often decoratively carved.[42] The most succinct definition is the entry for "busc" in Leloir's dictionary:

> A straight or lightly curved blade intended to support the rigidity of the bodice. During the sixteenth century, Henry III introduced a style of padded doublet, the waist support being augmented by the busk. Until the metal corset was replaced by the whalebone corset, bodices were reinforced by a busk. In general, the busk was independent of the bodice itself, and slid

> into a sheath. It was made of hard wood, metal, ivory, bone or the breastbone of a [kind of rooster.] They could be flat, round, carved, very finely etched, or bear mottoes. The busk could also sometimes be a sheath containing a thin dagger.[43]

It seems significant that this definition attributes the invention of the busk to Henry III of France, a notorious homosexual and fashionable dandy,[44] although in England the busk was imported as a feminine fashion that carried over into masculine dress. Henri III's input emphasizes the fluidity of gender in Renaissance costume. Additionally, like many sixteenth - century accessories, the busk was detachable independently from the rest of an ensemble. Elizabeth Ewing, among others, remarks that the busk had a removable lace that was sometimes given to a lover as a special favor.[45]

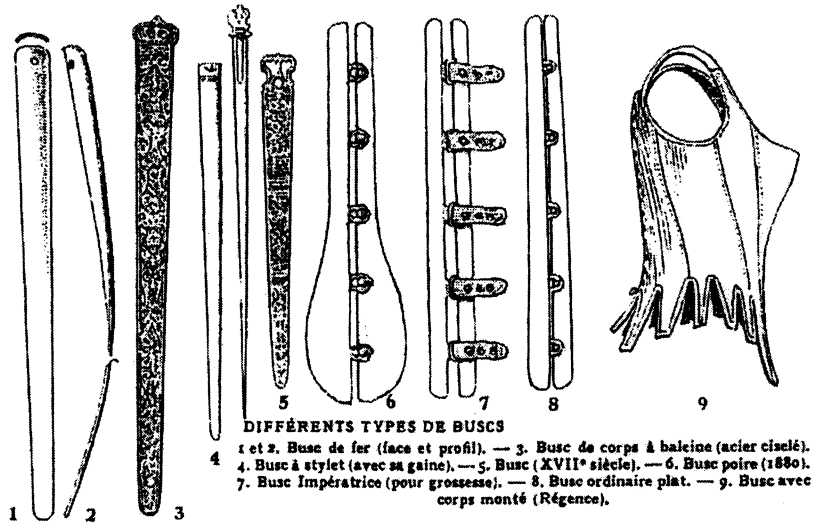
Feinstein carries her discussion of the busk beyond definition, quoting some contemporary reactions to the accessory. One source rails against the unnaturalness and immorality of the busk, and Feinstein speculates, "although they might appear as protective armor, guarding virginity as a chastity belt once did, they not only attract men but, worse, they interfere with procreation by deforming the body."[46] She wonders if people

> also feared that [such devices] enabled women not only to look like "gallants" but to act like them as well: that is, women might have felt freer to have sex if they thought they could guard against pregnancy. . . . In this light, corsets in general, and busks in particular, were feared by some as one way women actually controlled their bodies. [47]

Like Leloir, Feinstein notices that "Out of 'harness,' busks resemble daggers. Therefore, as a potential weapon, they may also have provided women with a sense of security, if not power."[48] She notes that men followed women in adopting busks and feels that this is one of the many ways in which the sexual roles of men and women during the 1590s were ambiguous.[49]

Fig. 5

This is Leloir's illustration (Leloir 58) of the busk.
1, 2. Iron busk (front and side)
3. Whalebone busk (steel carved)
4. Dagger busk (with sheath)
5. Seventeenth-century busk
6. Pear-shaped busk (1881)
7. Empress busk (for pregnancy)
8. Common flat busk
9. Busk in a corset (Regency)



DIFFÉRENTS TYPES DE BUSCS

1 et 2. Busc de fer (face et profil). — 3. Busc de corps à baleine (acier ciselé). 4. Busc à stylet (avec sa gaine). — 5. Busc (XVII[e] siècle). — 6. Busc poire (1880). 7. Busc Impératrice (pour grossesse). — 8. Busc ordinaire plat. — 9. Busc avec corps monté (Régence).

Fig. 6

This drawing shows how some busks were decorated, as well as demonstrating that they were often removed and held in the hand like a fan or other small ornament (M.D.C. Drawford and Elizabeth A. Guernsey, *The History of Corsets in Pictures*. New York: Fairchild, 1951, 8).

So even when the corset is unlaced, there is still the formidable busk to contend with:

> Off with that happy busk, which I envy,
> That still can be, and still can stand so nigh. (11-12)

Line 12 personifies and eroticizes the busk. Enclosed inside the corset, a feminine garment (here feminine because it is worn by a woman, although men also wore corsets and other slimming and stiffening devices), the busk suddenly has determinedly masculine attributes in its stiffness. "Still," despite the proximity of the woman can be read as erect but inactive, since the busk is by definition rigid and inert; "still" can also mean always, or continuously,[50] making the busk an idealized masculine signifier. Nothing active occurs in the language of the poem, so the busk stands as an emblem of such anticipation. The woman is wearing a phallic object that helps her to look more masculine and to have a phallus-shaped torso in costume; the busk also represents the masculine phallus enclosed within a feminine "garment." Convenient to an erotic image is that the busk is removable (and replaceable). As Feinstein points out, removing the busk would "have [the mistress] relinquish her seemingly armorial defense; then, joined to [the speaker], he and she would be a new "pair of bodies" [or corset]—for which [the speaker's] own fleshly busk would be ready to serve."[51] Once again, the woman controls desire with her power over such symbolic dress. For the speaker, the busk is both an interesting comrade, and an envied rival. Its shape, size, and location emulate the speaker's masculinity, the mistress' sexuality, and their mutual erotic desire. Feinstein counters the usual question about the work: "where is the mistress in the poem?" and demands to know where Donne's phallus is in the poem, as the only other reference to the speaker's equipment appears in the ambiguous "seal" in line 32. Is the speaker's request to remove the busk an attempt to emasculate her,[52] or an effort to make room for the expression of the his own masculine desire? After all, there is usually only one phallus in a heterosexual affair.

Despite the removal of the girdle and the stomacher, the unlacing of the corset, and the disarmament of the busk, the woman in the poem is not yet completely undressed. If the reader knows nothing about Elizabethan apparel, at this point it would seem absurd to ask the mistress to remove her gown. In fact, it is not. The gown was never meant to cover the front of the bodice and all of the untying and removal described above could have been done without disturbing the outer gown. [53]

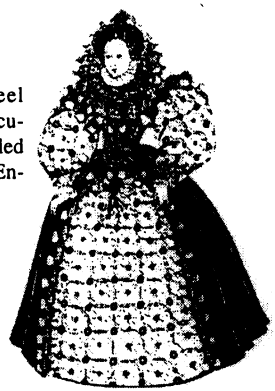
The Renaissance gown (see figs. 7 and 8) is an exterior garment. However, it is impossible to define it without discussing what lies underneath, in addition to all that has been described above. Yarwood, in describing the many different styles, cuts, and variations of gowns in the Renaissance period has the same qualification for each: they are worn *over* a chemise, an underskirt, a kirtle, and possibly several other layers.[54] Although the chemise is not explicitly mentioned in "Elegy 19," the contemporary structure of the gown over a chemise makes an assumption of its presence. Thus what one imagines more than the gown is what is peeking out from under it. Sometimes it is a kirtle, or underskirt, which was mostly exposed, and elaborately decorated for display.[55] The development of the kirtle demonstrates that the gown is more revealing than concealing. Cunnington's *Picture History* adds that the gown is often worn for warmth over a separate bodice and skirt[56] rather than being a decorative garment, leaving ornament to the fabric beneath.

The ankle-length and loose chemise (see fig. 9) is worn under the stiffened bodice and is also called a shift.[57] What is perhaps most interesting, in light of all the stays, corsets, petticoats, and other layers of clothing, is that although women wore stockings and other undergarments,[58] they did not wear what we would call underpants beneath their skirts.[59] The relaxed chemise or shift is the garment closest to nudity. Despite the constrictions and molding garments over it, the chemise has "pleats or gathers at the shoulders [to ensure] that the fabric of the garment flow[s] freely." [60] The gown and chemise are both loose, flowing garments, one revealing underclothing, the other covering

Fig. 7

In addition to being worn over petticoats and the chemise or shaft, women's gowns in the late sixteenth century were often worn over wore the Spanish or French farthingales (a: Yarwood 163; b: Wilcox 287).

a.



Silk gown over wheel farthingale without circular drum ruffle. Jewelled embroidered borders, English, 1610.

French or wheel farthingale petticoat. White satin gown embroidered in colours worn over wheel farthingale, English, 1600.

b.

Fig. 8

This photograph of a late sixteenth-century sleeveless gown (back view; Victoria & Albert Museum) shows the gown without any of the usual accompanying costume elements. It flows freely and hangs loose until attached and ornamented by the bodice, sleeves, petticoats, hoops, etc. (Payne 313).

Fig. 9

These representations of the chemise include what we would call shirts and nightshirts. The chemise was a much more elaborate version of the modern undershirt and was meant to be exhibited. Although here there are only male chemises, the female version was virtually identical (Wilcox 285).

nudity. What is sandwiched between them is ornate fabric, and the "hardware" of shaping machinery.

There is no detailed description of the mistress' gown. Rather than linger over the gown itself, Donne focuses on its removal. The gown slipping off is like the shadow of a hill, moving to reveal a field of flowers:

> Your gown going off, such beauteous state reveals,
> As when from flowery meads th' hill's shadow steals. (13-14)

These lines both parody the impatience and imperiousness of the lover, and underscore the delightfully gradual appeal of the striptease. The mistress is undressing slowly and sensuously, as is felt in the word "steals," but as Roma Gill notes, she also moves too slowly if her gown is slipping off as slowly as the earth rotates. A close reading of these lines reveals tonal subtlety; understanding contemporary dress further clarifies their meaning. The gown is probably decorated with flowers, a common textile motif,[61] but it may also reveal flowers. Docherty suggests that the body is replaced by a female landscape described as flowers,[62] which would make sense if the flowers mentioned were the female anatomy. Although the body is certainly important in the poem, Donne makes too meticulous a catalogue of dress to forget the next several layers beneath the gown. Carey addresses this point, and sees the "white robes" [63] of line 19 as a reference to the shift, but also notes that such simplicity seems "out of key" with the floral imagery. He decides that Donne must be discussing flowers spiritually.[64] I believe the whiteness in line 19 refers to the bed sheets; as in line 18, it is the bed he urges the woman to climb into, and it is amongst the bed linen that she will ostensibly "receive" him like the angels described.[65] If these angels are a reference to Genesis 6:4,

> there were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare [children] to them, the same [became] mighty men which [were] of old, men of renown,"[66]

then Donne is once again switching genders in a popularly known story: the "sons of God" are female angels who come to men in bed. The "flowery meads," so genital in their characterization,[67] are actually the shift itself. As explained above, the shift often peeked through outer layers such as the gown and bodice and was meant for partial display, so it was often ornamented, usually with flowers. The floral motif is suggestive of, without revealing, the vibrant sexuality beneath. As corsetry is sandwiched between the gown and shift, so is the lover's imagined desire enclosed between the bed sheets. Releasing the constraints and removing the outer layer is symbolic of removing the underlayer without actually doing so, as well as pulling back the top sheet. It is only later, when the speaker asks the woman to reveal herself "As liberally, as to a midwife" (l.44) that he imagines her lifting off the shift.[68] The embroidered flowers are presented as exterior, artificial, and sterile, although they represent fertility and sexuality. There is an ironic appreciation of the woman's "beauteous state" that could be her kirtle, her shift, her petticoats, or a combination of all three, from a speaker who would remove all artifice.

One of the most artificial accessories is Renaissance headgear. The speaker insists that the mistress show him what is natural, even specifying that he wants to see growing hair rather than some sort of headpiece:

> Off with that wiry coronet and show
> The hairy diadem which on you doth grow. (15-16)

With the word "hairy" this command becomes grotesque, humorous, literal and repellent. A woman has hair on her head, but "hairy" usually refers to an animal, or a man, or is a rude reference to another type of hair. Additionally, "hairy" has the connotation of messy, undisciplined, and chaotic. The phrasing here breaks the tension of desire, while introducing an extremely intimate part of feminine allure that until now been hidden and from the sound of "wiry," sculpted in some way. Figure 10 illustrates one version of Elizabethan coiffure which involved wiring the hair to a butterfly-shaped veil. The hair is an anchor for design expansion, so it is understandable that a lover who seeks his

lover's nakedness would want to see what was really "native" to his mistress.

Hair can also be more intimate than that which adorns the head. Doniphan Louthan points out that "in the matter of *concealing* natural beauty, the intricate underpinnings of the lower regions are to the pubic hairs, as a coronet would be to a lady's coiffure" [my italics].[69] Although both types of hair are concealed, women did not wear complicated underpinnings that *restricted* their pubic region the way they bound and shaped their hair. In fact, the genitalia were readily accessible, only covered like an umbrella by hoops and skirts and circumvented by laces and stays. It would almost be easier to gain access to the more personal region than to uncover the hair on the head. The word "show" (l.15) heightens this correlation as in Renaissance English it can mean to expose sexually. The same word is also used later in lines full of sexual innuendo:

> . . . Then since I may know,
> As liberally, as to a midwife, show
> Thyself. . . . (43-45)

Clay Hunt reminds the reader that the word "know" implies sexual experience, and that "liberally" also had the meaning of lewdly.[70] Wanting to see true female nakedness like a midwife is, like the word "hairy," unerotic. The abrupt mention of a "hairy diadem" and the reference to the midwife puncture this description's sensual appeal while also bringing the sexual connotations of lines 15-16 to the surface.

Shoes are the last items of dress mentioned in Donne's poem. For much of Elizabeth's reign shoes were low, soft, and unassuming—if highly embroidered and decorated, but fashions changed by the later 1580s. Around 1580 came a fashion for wedge cork shoes that were the precursor to modern high-heeled shoes.[71] The mistress's shoes are mentioned only to expedite their removal:

> Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
> In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed" (17-18).

Safety seems an odd consideration in, presumably, an illicit affair. sixteenth-century chopines were a kind of platform shoe used to elevate the foot or other shoes above mud and offal in the streets. Women strapped them over the shoes and they were often associated with the excesses of Venetian prostitutes, who wore them for effect as well as to avoid dirt. Creating a safe zone in bed where one could remove the both perilously high and precautionary shoes adds to the lover's persuasive argument: if she undresses, she will be safe with him. Because "Elegy 19" suggests a striptease it is also useful to remember that strippers often leave their shoes on until the last item of clothing flies off, as it seems to heighten erotic effect. I am not sure why, but perhaps leaving the shoes for last is part of the speaker's fantasy. Louthan notes that the word "tread" is also a term for sexual intercourse.[72] One removes shoes both to tread in a temple and tread in a bed, mixing religious and sexual imagery. Greene suggests that Donne conceals the woman's nakedness with metaphor in order to pursue the spiritual: "perhaps the re-covering of the mistress' body with analogies corresponds to a swerve away from common carnality [and demonstrates] a will truly to hallow the bed, if not indeed to ignore it in search of the temple."[73] I believe that it is more accurate to see the bed as a carnal temple of love, a mischievous and sensual combination of Eastern religious metaphor and carnal pun. Linking the Eastern temple with the bed ironically and exotically spiritualizes love; earthy terminology leads to an additional tonality of ecstatic but playful sexual enjoyment.

One mechanism in "Elegy 19" is the ironic mystification of the body through ornate, elaborate apparel that is opaque, mysterious, constraining, erotic, and both attractive and obstructive. Material knowledge increases the complexity of the poems interpretation and reveals ornate tropical patterns in the language of the poem. Although his language is slippery and complex, an examination of costume history shows that Donne provides the reader with a systematic, orderly removal of the mistress' garments. Without this context, the poem is effective as an erotic plea, but the reader loses many of the rhetorical connections to the details of contemporary apparel. Layers of clothing are placed in the poem as they would have been historically on the

woman undressing; their systematic removal heightens the ever approaching sensuality of the body beneath as well as representing the body. Reading "Elegy 19" with historical sartorial knowledge strengthens the poem's structure and effect; the framework is linear, but draped and pleated with meaning. In the end the speaker rather than the mistress has gone to bed, unclothed, with only the pure white bedclothing for cover. In place of the mistress' garments, he offers his body as an alternative.[74] The word "cover," as Feinstein explains, is a word that means "to mate with" as well as referring to the legal term "femme-couverte" which indicates a woman's dependent status in relation to her husband. With its additional sly overtones of Galatians 3:7, where the baptized "put on Christ"[75] like a robe of salvation, the spiritual and the sexual are incorporated here, suggesting sex, chastity, sin, submission, salvation, death, and ecstasy, all at once.

One of the findings of this analysis is that Donne frequently plays with gender, blending and switching masculine and feminine roles and accoutrements. Donne not only tinkers with classical and biblical stories, but despite the poem's clearly heterosexual scenario, every accessory he mentions has no exclusive Renaissance gender distinction. If the poem suggests a woman undressing, Donne discusses apparel that could have been worn by either men or women. It is possible that all Renaissance dress had the same nomenclature, and that it differed greatly in male and female versions, but it is fitting that the author of the *Songs and Sonets* plays on the ambiguity and duality of the language of fashion. In "The Dissolution," Donne writes,

> And we were mutual elements to us,
> And made for one another.
> My body then doth hers involve. (3-5)

The spiritual and physical boundaries of the lovers are here dissolved and combined, like the lover in "The Undertaking," who "forget[s] the He and She" (l.20), or the well-known speaker in "Batter my heart, three-personed God," who alternates between masculine and feminine identities. As in these poems, in "Elegy 19" gender, sexuality, and

identity are blurred, layered, stripped, and reimbued with multiple and ambiguous meaning. Although he may simply be playing with words, by imagining a striptease that can include men and women Donne solves a particular logistical problem and brings together the speaker and the lover without requiring the mistress' consent.

In light of recent criticism, gender ambiguity often suggests cross-dressing or inspires a redefinition of sexuality. In Donne's poem, men and women habitually wear the same items, nullifying any taboo in crossing over. Rather than redefining masculinity or femininity, Donne blends the two not to explore alternative sexualities, but to share passion in the most intimate way imaginable. Like the category of dress, desire is indefinable, ephemeral, and unreliable, and almost impossible to conjure centuries after an imagined moment. Understanding the particulars of the mistress' wardrobe in "Elegy 19" illuminates Renaissance witticisms of love and costume, and embellishes and complicates the orderly scenario the poem's structure initially presents. The mistress undresses in the usual way, but there is nothing usual about the layers of reactions and sensations her striptease effects. Clothing and desire in Donne's poem, like recent ideas of gender, have multiplicitous expressions, identities, and meanings, contingent on historical placement, but they are also part of a universal quest for tangible expressions of the immaterial essence of passion.

Croton-on-Hudson, New York

Notes

1. All quotations from Donne's poetry are from A. J. Smith., ed. *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

2. Men and women both wore girdles, stomachers, corsets, busks, gowns (robes of state, outer wraps, clerical and magisterial gowns, etc.), and shoes, not to mention shifts or chemises.

3. Roma Gill maintains that the titillation is too slow to be effective, remarking tartly, "the verse almost gives time for the clothes to be folded." This may be true for Roma Gill; I find the poem to be highly erotic and sensual in its ironic and tortured deliberation. See Roma Gill, "*Musa Iocosa Mea*: Thoughts on the Elegies," in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed, A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 62. The political and allegorical significance of the clothing in "Elegy XIX" has been considered by M. Thomas Hester, "Donne's (Re)Annunciation of the Virgin(ia Colony) in *Elegy XIX*," *South Central Review* 4.2 (1987): 49-64; and Albert C. Labriola, "Painting and Poetry of the Cult of Elizabeth I: The Ditchley Portrait and Donne's 'Elegie: Going to Bed,'" *SP* 93 (1996): 43-63.

4. Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 54. I believe, however, that the poem is erotic in its distance from frank sexuality, more so than if it were more sexually explicit, and that what Marotti and others are missing is a technical understanding of the clothing symbolism. Also, there is more room for fantasy and eroticism in abstract, implied or blurred images of sexuality, than in clear and unambiguous portrayals. I question the separation between emotional/intellectual ideas and sexuality, which seems artificial, if not wrong.

5. The woman, Docherty says, "is first replaced by clothing and metaphor, after which she metamorphoses into an angel, and then into the speaker himself." Docherty reads the poem as an exercise in autoeroticism. He sees the poem not as a fantasy of a woman undressing on command, but a male striptease. Yet, although the woman's body in the text is presented in metaphorical rather than physical terms, the male body is no more obviously present. Docherty is right to point out that the woman is elusive, but he does not seem to notice that so is every other identity and idea in the poem and that nothing is finally brought into focus. There is even less evidence in the text to prove that the mistress metamorphizes into a phallus, or that it is Donne undressing himself alone, than there is to support Donne and the lady ending up in bed together. See Thomas Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (New York: Methuen: 1986), pp. 79, 82.

6. According to Carey, Donne gratifies "not only his sexual but also his social and financial ambitions" and "the luxurious accessories of his fantasy seem as important to him as the striptease itself"(106). Carey is very harsh in his assessment of Donne's poem, characterizing it as pornographic and sadistic. The imperiousness of the narrator's tone is interpreted as viciously patriarchal, with the woman as a

subordinate, if richly dressed, victim. To me, the poem is ironically, cleverly and importunately demanding rather than brutal. I believe that Carey characterizes the speaker in too mercenary a way. There is also no way to prove much about the mistress because the outcome of all of the lover's demands is left mysterious. The reader is never enlightened as to whether the mistress "obeys," or if she has a reaction at all. See John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (New York: Oxford UP, 1981).

7. See Thomas M. Greene "The Poetics of Discovery: A Reading of Donne's Elegy 19," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2.2 (1989): 136.

8. See Anne Hollander's *Seeing Through Clothes,* especially the last two chapters, which focus on cultural perceptions of the body through clothing and their relationship to literature.

9. See Blanche Payne, *The History of Costume* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 291, for detailed and well-illustrated descriptions of period costume, including an understanding of their cultural significance.

10. Ibid., 311.

11. *The Hugh Evelyn History of Costume,* illus. and explained by Faith Jacques, v.3: 1500-1660 (Boston: Plays, 1969), plate ix.

12. *The Undercover Story* (New York: FIT / Kyoto Costume Institute, 1982), p. 10.

13. Ibid., p. 11.

14. See Sandy Feinstein, "Donne's 'Elegy 19': The Busk Between a Pair of Bodies," *SEL* 34 (1994): 62, for a thorough and precise discussion of the busk both in Elizabethan dress and in "Elegy 19."

15. Pearl Binder, *Muffs and Morals* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1953), p. 174.

16. Feinstein, 62.

17. C. Willet and Phillis Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), p. 35.

18. Ibid., p. 36.

19. Doreen Yarwood, *Encyclopedia of World Costume* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), pp. 196-197.

20. Although the illustrations in figure 1 are of an earlier date than Donne's poem, they illustrate the idea of the girdle, including the pendant ends which sometimes dangle a purse or a jewel. It is especially important to note that in the four illustrations Yarwood offers (three are shown here in fig. 1), three are modeled on men rather than women.

21. Doniphan Louthan, *The Poetry of John Donne: A Study in Explication* (New York: Bookman, 1951), p. 58.

22. Thomas Docherty, p. 78.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 79.

25. "She becomes . . . that adjunct of Donne which identifies him as male, the

phallus.... The woman has become more and more covered up, while what is 'discovered' is maleness. The woman has become the imaginative instrument by which Donne identifies names or blesses himself as male.... This man is... an island" (Docherty 80-81).

26. I first believed that the girdle might be related to the concentric rings of the universe. Anne Lake Prescott has pointed out that elsewhere than in Donne, the zodiac is the girdle, a more common analogy.

27. The *Oxford Shorter* describes "zodiac" as a circle of signs or figures, and a "belt of the celestial sphere extending about eight or nine degrees ... within which the apparent motion of the sun, moon, and principal planets take place" (1) (Brown "Zodiac"); the definition of "zone" as "each of the corresponding belts of the celestial sphere" (1), "a girdle or belt, as a part of dress" (3a), and "a thing that encircles something like a girdle... a band, a ring" (Brown "zone").

28. Feinstein, 72.

29. George Parfitt, *John Donne: A Literary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press: 1989), p. 36.

30. Parfitt maintains: "The despotic lover here, ordering his submissive girl-victim to strip, and drawing attention to his massive erection... is of course a perennial dweller in the shadow-land of pornography, particularly attractive as a fantasy role to males who, through shyness or social circumstance, find relations with women difficult" (105).

31. The word "blessed" also highlights the mystery and romance of these lines, as they may contain a reference to the Western Isles, or "Isles of the Blessed" in ancient legend.

32. Yarwood, 397.

33. M.D.C. Crawford, and Elizabeth A. Guernsey, *The History of Corsets in Pictures* (New York: Fairchild, 1951), p. 7.

34. My thanks to Anne Lake Prescott for her insight into the gender reversal in this reference.

35. Yarwood, 110.

36. Karen Baclawski, *The Guide to Historic Costume* (London: BT Batsford, 1995), p. 198.

37. Binder, 117.

38. Albert Racinet, *The Historical Encyclopedia of Costumes* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), p. 162.

39. Smith, 448.

40. Binder, 145.

41. Feinstein, 64. Feinstein, along with James Robinson Planché (*Cyclopaedia of Costume*), notes that the word "busk" came from the verb "to busk" or to dress. Thus the busk, an aid to dress, got its name. Planché even cites a lowland Scottish song which begins: "Come busk ye, busk ye, my bonny bride" (66).

42. C. Willet and Phillis, *Handbook of English Costume in the Sixteenth*

Century, Illus., Barbara Phillipson (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 149.

43. "Lame droite ou aussi légèrment cintrée destinée a maintenir la rigidité du corsage. Lorsqu'au XVIe siecle, Henri III inventa la mode du pourpoint à panse, la bourre fut augmentée d'un busc. D'es qu'on eut remplacé pour les femmes les corps de fer par les corps a baleines, ceux-ci furent renforcés par un busc. Le busc était en général indépendent du corps lui-memes et se glissait dans une gaine. Il s'en faisait en bois dur, en métal, en ivoire, en os, et même en sternum de coq d'Inde. Les uns était plats, arrondis, sculptés, ouvragés, portant des devises. C'etait aussi quelquefois une gaine contenant un fin poignard": Maurice Leloir, *Dictionnaire du Costume* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1951), p. 57-58 [my translation].

44. My thanks to Anthony Low for pointing out this connection. See Joseph Cady's article on Henry III: "The 'Masculine Love' of the 'Princes of Sodom': 'Practising the Art of Ganymede' at Henri III's Court: The Homosexuality of Henri III and his *Mignons*" in Pierre de L'Estoile's *Mémoires-Journaux,"* in *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West,* ed Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1996).

45. Elizabeth Ewing, *Dress and Undress* (New York: Drama Book Specialist, 1978), p. 29

46. Feinstein, 67.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 72-73.

50. My thanks to Anthony Low for this definition.

51. Feinstein, 68.

52. Feinstein, 70.

53. There are probably additional components of dress in the equally independently detachable set of sleeves, petticoats, hoops and other accoutrements (see figs. 11-12).

54. Yarwood, 202.

55. Ibid., 26.

56. C. Willit and Phiillis Cunnington, *A Picture History of English Costume* (London: Vista Books, 1960), p. 20.

57. Ewing, 24; Baclawski, 93.

58. Ewing, 32.

59. *Undercover Story, 9.*

60. Ibid., 12.

61. Because underwear was worn in order to be seen, it was quite often embroidered, painted, or printed. The most common embellishment was a floral motif (*Undercover Story* 12). Yvonne Hackenbrach comments, "The persistence of floral design as part of the English Tradition is extraordinary. . . . Its tenacity is evident in Elizabethan Wallpaper . . . it is reflected in jewelry. It abounds in English literature in garden poems where flowers are compared to jewels, as in the verses of

Robert Herrick, son of Queen Elizabeth's court jeweler "(xvii).

Hackenbrach adds that floral patterns made a nice contrast to dark wood interiors, which were often dreary and dark (xvii): *English and Other Needlework: Tapestries & Textiles in the Irwin Untermeyer Collection* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960). Even today, in New York City, floral design is the majority (about ninety percent) of fashion demand, in both apparel and home furnishings.

62. Docherty, 79.

63. In such white robes heaven's angels used to be
Received by men; thou angel bring'st with thee
A heaven like Mahomet's paradise. . . . (19-21)

64. Carey, 107.

65. Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed. (17-18).

66. Kevin Rintoul, *God for Windows,* version 1.2, computer software, 1993.

67. Various flowers have stood as feminine signifiers during many historical periods, including our own. For example, in the medieval *Roman de la Rose* the Rose is not only symbolic of a woman, but also a bawdy reference to the implications of the verb to deflower, or pluck the rosebud. For a more modern image, see the large floral paintings of Georgia O' Keefe, who painted explicitly genital flowers, whether she meant to or not.

68. I believe that the controversial "white linen" in l.45 is the shift, and is thus the final layer of cloth covering nakedness. This makes good sense when one considers that the women would wear a shift for modesty and warmth even in the presence of a midwife, who would, as Donne explains, be shown the important parts by casting aside the linen shift.

69. Louthan, 72.

70. Clay Hunt, *Donne's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1954.)

71. Payne notes a penchant for cork-filled platform soles on shoes at this time (322) and Baclawski adds that shoes had no left/right differentiation, and were often adorned with red fabric roses (182).

72. Louthan, 72.

73. Greene, 137.

74. Feinstein, 72, discusses the horse, which is a traditional allegorical symbol for all that is carnal and irrational. See also Feinstein's "The *Reeve's Tale:* About That Horse," *Chaucer Review* 26 (1991): 99-106.

75. See R.V. Young, "Donne's *Holy Sonnets* and the Theology of Grace," in *"Bright Shoots of Everlastingnesse": The Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Mo. Press, 1987), pp. 33-4.