

*Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going To Bed*

John Donne

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defy,  
Until I labour, I in labour lie.  
The foe oft-times, having the foe in sight,  
Is tired with standing, though they never fight.  
Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glistening      05  
But a far fairer world encompassing.  
Unpin that spangled breast-plate, which you wear  
That th'eyes of busy fools may be stopped there:  
Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime  
Tells me from you that now 'tis your bed time.      10  
Off with that happy busk, whom I envy  
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.  
Your gown's going off such beauteous state reveals  
As when from flowery meads th'hills shadow steals.  
Off with your wiry coronet and show      15  
The hairy diadem which on you doth grow.  
Off with those shoes: and then safely tread  
In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed.  
In such white robes heaven's angels used to be  
Received by men; thou Angel bring'st with thee      20  
A heaven like Mahomet's Paradise; and though  
Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know  
By this these Angels from an evil sprite:  
They set out hairs, but these the flesh upright.

License my roving hands, and let them go      25  
Behind before, above, between, below.  
Oh my America, my new found land,  
My kingdom, safeliest when with one man manned,  
My mine of precious stones, my Empery,  
How blessed am I in this discovering thee.      30  
To enter in these bonds is to be free,  
Then where my hand is set my seal shall be.

Full nakedness, all joys are due to thee.  
As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be  
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use      35  
Are as Atlanta'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.  
Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made  
For laymen, are all women thus arrayed;      40  
Themselves are mystic books, which only we  
Whom their imputed grace will dignify  
Must see revealed. Then since I may know,  
As liberally as to a midwife show  
Thyself; cast all, yea this white linen hence.      45  
Here is no penance, much less innocence.

To teach thee, I am naked first: why then  
What need'st thou have more covering than a man.