

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)