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Jonathan Swift and Women

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JONATHAN SWIFT AND WOMEN

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Gloria Hayden
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JONATHAN SWIFT AND WOMEN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The careless and undisciplined reader of Gulliver's Travels who encounters the seemingly misanthropic account of the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms might think it inappropriate for someone to suggest that Jonathan Swift was a good friend to womankind either in his writings or in his life. Such a reader might venture a derogatory whisper regarding some aspects of his relations with the two most important women in his life, might point derisively to certain passages from the Dean's canon and offer these writings as certain proof of Swift's intolerance and hatred of femininity. It must be admitted that such a narrowly isolated interpretation of much of this evidence would paint the Dean's concept of women an ugly black. And yet, a thorough investigation of all the evidence, set against the background of the position of women in the first half of the eighteenth century, may clarify Swift's true attitude toward women, an attitude which has already been hinted at by the best biographers. It is Ricardo Quintana, a recent writer, who suggests, for example, that Swift was woman's friend; that he admired many individual women when there was in them something worthy of admiration; and that in all his railing against the faults and

weaknesses of the sex his purpose was definitely constructive (45:278-9). All of Swift's writings, then, must be viewed in the light of his own theory, stated poetically, that "If Vice can ever be abash'd,/ It must be Ridicul'd, or Lash'd" (53:Vol. II,716).

Before any proper study may be made of Swift's attitude toward women, as exemplified in his life and as expressed in his writings, it would seem advisable to review briefly woman's place in society during the period of Swift's mature life. Certainly no just conclusions could be reached regarding the problem of Swift and women unless the study were predicated on an awareness of the position of women in the economic, educational and social life of, roughly, the first half of the eighteenth century. It needs only to be pointed out, before proceeding, that our concern here is primarily with the lady of quality, or more correctly, the lady of polite society.

Legally and economically the status of women in this period under consideration was marked by a subjection to man difficult to understand in the present age of relative equality for both sexes. Man was a superior being, and the laws were made for him, with little or no regard for the rights of women. In the event of an altercation with her husband, a wife had no real recourse to law. She was rarely allowed to forget that she existed as an inferior creature and that

it was unladylike to assume the aggressive attitude commonly reserved for husbands.

As late as 1877, a case on record reveals a woman who, having brought her husband into court for an injustice done her,

was reminded by the judge that by the law of England, by the law of Christianity, and by the constitution of society, whenever there was a dispute between husband and wife, it was the duty of the wife to submit to the husband (5:24).

Marriage, which in the eighteenth century was predominantly an economic consideration, had sunk, as an ideal, to a rather low level. W. L. Blease suggests that the fashionable idea, and no doubt a hang-over from the Restoration, was that marriage put an end to love, and women married, if the literature of the period can be credited, to gain economic security and social prestige (5:25).

Indeed, husband-catching by fair means or foul became so prevalent a danger to men that in 1770 an act was passed which declared:

All women of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, whether virgins, maids, or widows, that shall from and after such act, impose upon, seduce, or betray into matrimony, any of his Majesty's male subjects by the scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, etc., shall incur the penalty of the law now in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and that the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void (24:Vol. I, 317).

However, marriage was widely desired by women, or at least desired for them by their parents, for two very good reasons. First, it was practically the only career open to most of them, and second, it was extremely unfashionable to be an old maid. Of course, there were menial occupations that could be followed by women of low station, but for the lady of the upper classes all professions were virtually closed, and it was deemed wise to enter into the married state as early as possible. The unfortunate thing about marriage was that, despite some brilliant exceptions in the most enlightened families, it usually meant the end of a woman's individuality and freedom; it meant the end of her personal rights and privileges and the beginning of her subjection to a rather material, sexual view of matrimony, a slavish adherence to a recognition of her inferior place in society (24: Vol. I, 318-20).

Marriage meant, too, that the woman gave up all rights to any worldly possessions that may have been hers. Her husband became entitled to all her real and personal property, which he could dispose of as he pleased. If he were kind enough to leave some of this property at her disposal, she might make a will of it with his consent, but "he could revoke the consent at any time before probate was granted, even after her death" (5:24).

In exchange for the surrender of her property, person, and mind, it is true she gained a sort of economic and legal

immunity. She was entitled to maintenance, and she could not be charged with legal and economic offenses. Her husband assumed responsibility for her transgressions. She could not legally be bankrupt, and he became liable for any debts she might incur. But these "gains" only served to emphasize the loss of her individuality, her economic and civic independence. They marked her as a being without a separate entity, and they reaffirmed her destiny--a state of subjection to the will of man (5:25-30).

There is a close association between this view of marriage and the education of women in this period that makes one the corollary of the other. Since, as has already been pointed out, the pressure of custom and necessity made marriage the chief goal of women, and since marriage frequently implied for the woman almost utter subjection and loss of rights--in short, since woman was looked upon as a definitely inferior creature--it must not be assumed that as a consequence there was an attempt to give her a liberal education comparable to that open to men. On the contrary, there were those who looked with disfavor on the woman who aspired to learn more than was absolutely necessary to teach her the business of being a good housewife. Their attitude can be seen in this "description an exceptionally accomplished young lady gives of her own education":

You know my father was a tradesman, and lived very well on his traffick; and I, being beautiful,

he thought nature had already given me part of my portion, and therefore he would add a liberal education, that I might be a complete gentlewoman; away he sent me to the boarding school; there I learned to dance and sing; to play on the bass viol, virginal, spinet, and guitar. I learned to make wax works, japan, paint upon glass, to raise paste, make sweetmeats, sauces, and everything that was genteel and fashionable' (2:18).

Intellectual pursuits for women were a contradiction in terms, and it was considered positively unladylike to profess any real learning. One writer on this subject tells us that:

Women, as a rule, were exceedingly fearful of being thought learned. . . Even so enlightened a man as Dr. More was alarmed at his clever daughter's progress, and when he found his little Hannah making rapid headway in Latin and mathematics he caused her to discontinue those studies lest she should appear singular (24:Vol. II,44-5).

Daniel Defoe in 1697 published his provocative Essay on Projects, in which was included a proposal for an academy for women. He wrote, as a justification for his plan, that he had "often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world," in view of England's being a civilized and Christian country, that women were denied the "advantages of learning." He deplored the practice of reproaching women with "folly and impertinence," and expressed his confidence that they would be less guilty than men are if equal advantages in education were not denied them. He continued with an expression of wonder that women were able to converse with any intelligence,

since they are only beholden to natural parts for all their knowledge. Their youth is spent to teach them to stitch or sew or make baubles. They are taught to read indeed, and perhaps to write their name or so, and that is the height of a woman's education (15:144).

Incensed at this neglect, Defoe proceeded to set forth his plans for the academy, even including constructive suggestions for the routine operation of the school. We are, of course, interested most in his proposed course of study. He was willing that women should be taught music and dancing, but he insisted, too, on their studying languages, especially French and Italian. He desired that they be instructed in the "graces of speech," and that they be taught to read books, especially history. In fact, he was for allowing them liberty to study whatever they were fitted for:

To such whose genius would lead them to it I would deny no sort of learning, but the chief thing in general is to cultivate the understandings of the sex, that they may be capable of all sorts of conversation; that their parts and judgments being improved, they may be as profitable in their conversation as they are pleasant (15:148).

In Alexander Pope's dedicatory letter to the "Rape of the Lock," addressed to Mrs. Arabella Fermor, there is a subtle, perhaps unintentional, stab at the usual helplessness of women when faced with "hard words." Worried lest Mrs. Fermor fail to understand some words in the poem which only people of learning would ordinarily know, Pope apologized, humbly asking permission to explain "two or three difficult terms." The same writer voiced a more direct acknowledgment

(and condemnation) of the poor education offered to women in three lines of a poem written as a tribute to one of the exceptionally learned ladies of the day, Lady Mary Worelty Montagu: "Impertinent schools,/With musty dull rules,/Have reading to females denied" (42:202).

On this score, this same Lady Mary had much to say. She was among the most successful of a small number of women of her time who, defying custom and prejudice, entered the field of higher learning. She acquitted herself with distinction and gained the admiration and respect of men and women alike, though most of her admirers would still probably have been quick to say that women were unfit for learning. Of all the people of her day--and they were few--who protested against the meager opportunities for women in education, she was perhaps the most persistent, the most indignant, the most rebellious. At one time she remarked knowingly: "There is hardly a creature in the world more despicable or more liable to universal ridicule than that of a learned woman" (36:Vol. II,3). And in another place, speaking of her studies of the classics, she said in an interesting little digression:

My sex is usually forbid studies of this nature, and folly reckoned so much our proper sphere, we are sooner pardoned any excesses of that than the least pretensions to reading or good sense. We are permitted no books but such as tend to the weakening and effeminating of the mind. Our natural affects are in every way indulged, and it is looked upon as in a degree criminal to improve our reason, or

fancy we have any. We are taught to place all our art in adorning our outward forms, and permitted without reproach to carry that custom even to extravagancy, while our minds are entirely neglected (36:Vol. II,3).

In the light of the shallowness and subordination of woman's legal, economic, and educational status in Swift's age, it is not surprising to find that as a social being she was hardly acceptable to the most enlightened and forward-looking gentlemen of the time. How could it be otherwise? Her education was directed primarily toward insuring competence in the routine duties of a housewife, and the adornment of the person, to the end that she was looked upon as a sprightly creature to give delight by her appearance and manner rather than by her art in conversation and intelligent companionship. Gentlemen assumed that when a lady approached, all serious conversation had to be abandoned for gay, idle banter which represented a condescension that must have exasperated intelligent women like Lady Mary Montague, of whose type there may not have been many. As one writer tells us, women

dallied with trifles, yawned out of sheer vacuity, invented wants to pass the time, were by turns elated and vapourish, and affected sentiment for the sake of excitement. There were servile imitations of French manners as well as fashions, and neither was successful. Instead of progressing to a wider life, society turned off into a sidewalk of artificiality and moral inertia (24:Vol. I,349-50).

Here again, as in economics and education, the popular view of women's conduct and place in society can be readily

seen in the literature of the period. One of the best indications of the social status of women is seen in two excerpts from the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son, in which Chesterfield endeavors to give his offspring the benefit of his observations of women. In a letter dated September 5, 1748, he advises:

Women, then, are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good-sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. . . A man of sense only trifles with them, as he does with a sprightly forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters (8:No. 1,585;Vol. IV,1209).

In a second letter written December 19, 1749, Chesterfield elaborates further on this delineation:

Women are much more like each other than men; they have, in truth, but two passions, vanity and love; these are their universal characteristics. . . and in general, all they say and all they do tends to the gratification of their vanity or their love. He who flatters them most pleases them best; and they are most in love with him who they think is the most in love with them (8:No.1679,Vol. IV,1470).

Chesterfield does not here present an attractive picture of the social side of women's life in the eighteenth century, but as the woman historian Georgiana Hill herself says dozens of other writers seem to concur in the portrait, and there is little left but an admission of the basic truth of much of what Chesterfield said. It is probably true that:

The life of a great lady in the eighteenth century is well reflected in the contemporary literature. The satires of poets, the strictures of moralists, the raillery of wits, bring before us the social side of the period in numberless ways (24:Vol. I,348).

Among the satirists, we can turn again to Pope, from whom we might have expected this criticism, found in the Moral Essays:

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
 'Most women have no characters at all,'
 Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
 And best distinguished by black, brown
 or fair (43:180).

And this from the same poem:

In men, we various passions find;
 In women two almost divide the mind;
 Those, only fixed, they first or last obey,
 The love of pleasure, and the love of sway (43:186).

But perhaps the best view Pope gives us of the great lady's role in society is contained in his famous "Rape of the Lock," a social satire that politely laughed at the gentler sex for its extravagant foibles and vanities, a document that shows us how the great lady passed her time in "gay pretense and hollow masquerade." We see how great her concern was for her toilet, how much time and care she gave to the artificial aids to beauty to which the women of the eighteenth century so commonly resorted. We see her at the court, idling the hours away at ombre and silly gossip. Of Hampton Court Pope writes:

Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
 To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
 In various talk th' instructive hours they pass'd,
 Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
 One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
 And one describes a charming Indian screen;
 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
 At every word a reputation dies.
 Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
 With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that (43:95).

Granted, as has already been noted, that there were some exceptional ladies of polite society who were neither ignorant nor "enslaved by their husbands," the picture given is, on the whole, the lady of fashion in the first half of the eighteenth century. Deprived, upon marriage, of economic independence, denied the benefits of a liberal education, secluded from public affairs, petty, vain, childish, vacuous-- she lived as an inferior creature, submissive to man in every real sense. As two modern critics have summed it up,

The actual position of women was low. They were often illiterate. They had no legal rights whatever. Whereas divorce was difficult even for a man, since an act of Parliament was required, no woman could obtain a divorce for any reason. A husband might beat his wife with impunity, provided that he use "reasonable chastisement"-- and almost any chastisement was considered reasonable. A married woman owned no property, everything of hers becoming the property of her husband. Many an heiress was beguiled into marriage by a handsome adventurer who, if he did not desert her after gaining possession of her fortune, reduced her to dependence upon his bounty (6:157).

This, then, is in part the eighteenth century woman with whom Swift is concerned in much of his writings and, at least, the portion of his daily life devoted to her kind.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN SWIFT'S PROSE

As for his Works in Verse and Prose,
I own myself no Judge of those:
Nor, can I tell what Criticks thought 'em;
But, this I know, all People bought 'em;
As with a moral View design'd
To cure the Vices of Mankind:
His Vein, ironically grave,
Expos'd the Fool, and lash'd the Knave.
--Swift, "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift,
D.S.P.D." (53:Vol. II,731).

There is hardly an important prose work in the Swift canon--except perhaps the purely political and religious books and pamphlets--in which the Dean of St. Patrick's fails to express, either directly or by implication, his violent disapproval of woman's deplorable position in his time as regards education, social life, and marriage. For the sake of logic and convenience we may deal with these matters in the order named, although naturally a certain amount of overlapping cannot be avoided.

EDUCATION

Swift seemed to have nothing but contempt for contemporary trends in education for both the sexes among the upper classes. He lamented the abandonment of the strict, classical curriculum which included the study of Greek and Latin as an educational necessity, and he deprecated the emphasis on the cultivation of the social graces as a

satisfactory substitute. He blamed parents and children alike, the former for their indulgence, the latter for their laziness. In an uncompromising piece called An Essay on Modern Education he scolded young nobles who, "either from the indulgence of parents, tutors, and governors, or their own inactivity," expected "the accomplishments of a good education, without the least expense of time or study to acquire them" (62:Vol. Iv,159). But this was not censure enough, for he continued:

What I said last I am ready to retract, for the case is infinitely worse; and the very maxims set up to direct modern education are enough to destroy all the seeds of knowledge, honour, wisdom, and virtue, among us. The current opinion prevails, that the study of Greek and Latin is loss of time; that public schools, by mingling the sons of noblement with those of the vulgar, engage the former in bad company; that whipping breaks the spirits of lads well born; that universities make young men pedants; that to dance, fence, speak French, and know how to behave yourself among great persons of both sexes, comprehends the whole duty of a gentleman (62: Vol IV,159-60).

Swift argues in the same vein in the essay Of the Education of Ladies, a fragment printed in 1765, where he computes that about two thousand males in England, including Wales, have "a tolerable share of reading and good sense," or one in thirty among the upper classes. On further thought he reduces this number to one thousand, "which, at least," he remarks caustically, "will be a number sufficient to fill both houses of parliament" (60:Vol. IV,228).

Swift is far more bitter on the particular question of the education of women. We have already seen how unfashionable it was considered for a lady to possess any real learning, how it was thought that such a condition might endanger her chances of making an advantageous match. Swift not only could not subscribe to this view, but he availed himself of every opportunity to demonstrate the stupidity, the unfairness, and the vacuous results of such a practice. A vein of mild sarcasm characterizes his summary of all the popular arguments against a true education of women: that a woman's chief functions are to bear and raise children and supervise household work; that her place is at home; that she is to be obedient to all the "lawful commands" of her husband, and see no one whom he may disapprove; that her work will consume most of the day, if well performed; that the greater her household, the greater her responsibility to her husband, the less time for "visits and diversions"; and that reading books,

. . . except those of devotion and housewifery, is apt to turn a woman's brain: That plays, romances, novels, and love-poems, are only proper to instruct them how to carry on an intrigue: That all affection of knowledge, beyond what is merely domestic, renders them vain, conceited, and pretending: That the natural levity of woman wants ballast; and when she once begins to think she knows more than others of her sex, she will begin to despise her husband, and grow fond of every coxcomb who pretends to any knowledge in books: That she will learn scholastic words; make herself ridiculous by pronouncing them wrong, and applying them absurdly in all companies: That in the meantime, her household affairs, and the care of her children, will be

wholly laid aside; her toilet will be crowded with all the underwits, where the conversation will pass in criticism or the last play or poem that comes out, and she will be careful to remember all the remarks that were made, in order to retail them in the next visit, especially in company who know nothing of the matter: That she will have all the impertinence of a pedant, without the knowledge; and for every new acquirement, will become so much the worse (60:Vol. IV,226-7).

That Swift considered most of these arguments preposterous is beyond question. We could wish that he had completed this fragment on the education of ladies, and given us directly his reply to these charges; but it is hardly essential. We know from many other bits of evidence that he believed in a liberal education for women, in addition to useful instruction in domestic matters. To him, a wife needed more qualifications than merely those of a housekeeper and propagator of the species. She should be trained to be a companion, and such training demanded some cultivation of the mind comparable to that offered to the best trained men. In a satirically humorous and justly famous essay, A Letter to a Very Young Lady on Her Marriage, published in 1727, Swift advised:

Your Parents were so far in the right, that they did not produce you much into the World, whereby you avoided many wrong Steps which others have taken; and have fewer ill Impressions to be removed: But they failed, as it is generally the case, in too much neglecting to cultivate your Mind; without which it is impossible to acquire or preserve the Friendship and Esteem of a Wise Man, who soon grows weary of acting the Lover and treating his Wife like a Mistress, but wants a reasonable Companion, and a true Friend through every Stage of his Life (55:445).

This theme of companionship in a woman, especially a wife, is a theme which Swift never grows tired of expounding; it is almost a maxim with him that education should prepare her for this important function. Whether or not the character of Gulliver is always a valid and believable spokesman for the views of Swift is yet a question among the critics, but there is in the Travels what seems to be an implicit criticism of English procedure paralleled in this picture of the education of women in Lilliput:

Neither did I perceive any difference in their education, made by their differences of sex, only that the exercises of the females were not altogether so robust; and that some rules were given them relating to domestick life, and a smaller compass of learning was enjoined them: for their maxim is, that among people of quality, a wife should be always a seasonable and agreeable companion, because she cannot always be young (54:50).

It is interesting to compare this with another observation by Gulliver regarding education among the amazing Houyhnhnms:

Temperance, industry, exercise and cleanliness, are the lessons equally enjoined to the young ones of both sexes: and my master thought it monstrous in us to give the females a different kind of education from the males, except in some articles of domestic management; whereby, as he truly observed, one half of our natives were good for nothing but bringing children into the world: and to trust the care of their children to such useless animals, he said, was yet a greater instance of brutality (54:217).

Then, too, there is the passage in which Swift seemingly gives his impression of the quality of the product

produced by the faulty and inadequate English ideas of education for women:

Half the number of well-educated nobility and gentry must either continue in a single life, or be forced to couple themselves with women for whom they can possibly have no esteem; I mean fools, prudes, coquettes, gamesters, saunterers, endless talkers of nonsense, splenetic idlers, intriguers, given to scandal and censure (60:Vol. IV,228).

SOCIAL LIFE

Since Swift held such a mean opinion of education for women in his time, and since education is intended, among other things, to fit one for the common amenities of social life, we can readily imagine what scorn the Dean must have felt for the lady of quality as a social creature.

His opinion as to woman's proper role and conduct in society was the subject of one of his pet lay sermons; he preached it tirelessly, employing all the sharpest tools of satire, of which he was so accomplished a master. He scolded and cajoled, mocked and threatened. His satirical thrusts cut deep, and must have brought a blush of shame (as well as anger) to the faces of many great ladies who recognized their own images in the mirror of his ill-concealed contempt.

On the other hand, a constructive, positive picture of his views is admirably presented in the biographical eulogy that was devoted to Mrs. Johnson--Stella--who

exemplified the utmost in desirable feminine attributes. A more complete discussion will be handled later but at this point it is enough to say that Swift was a realist. He would naturally not have expected every lady of quality to measure up to such unusually high standards, but he certainly would have demanded that she possess a reasonable number of the qualities and accomplishments he attributes to Stella. Surely he expected more of the English woman of polite society than Gulliver found among the maids of honour in Brodingnag. The sea-loving physician describes his uneasiness among these ladies, occasioned by their nauseating practices in his presence, even to the biological function of excretion before his very eyes. He feels nothing but "horror and disgust" at the sight of their naked bodies,

. . . which I am sure, to me was very far from being a tempting sight. . . The handsomest among these maids of honor, a pleasant frolicsome girl of sixteen, would sometimes set me astride upon one of her nipples; with many other tricks, wherein the reader will excuse me for not being over particular. But, I was so much displeased, that I entreated Glumdalclitch to contrive some excuse for not seeing that young lady any more (54:95-6).

By implication we may assume that in this incident Swift accused English ladies of conduct relatively as indelicate. He may very likely have been hitting at the practice followed by some women of quality; the entertainment of both sexes in the intimate atmosphere of the boudoir, especially in the morning.

There is abundant proof in several passages from his prose that Swift had a low opinion of woman's sense of moral decency. Gulliver tells in one place of an incident among the Yahoos, when, in company with a "sorrel nag," who went along as his protector, he decided to go for a swim in a river, the day being very hot. He stripped naked and entered the stream. A young female Yahoo, who apparently had been hiding behind a bank, saw the whole procedure,

. . . and inflamed by desire, as the nag and I conjectured, came running with all speed, and leaped into the water within five yards of the place where I bathed. I was never in my life so terribly frightened; the nag was grazing at some distance, not suspecting any harm; she embraced me after a most fulsome manner; I roared as loud as I could, and the nag came galloping towards me, whereupon she quitted her grasp, with the utmost reluctancy, and leaped upon the opposite bank, where she stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my clothes (54:215).

Nor does Gulliver find it possible to praise the morals of the great ladies in Laputa. After explaining how the women of quality in this strange place made a practice of consorting with strangers and lovers under their husbands' noses, he recounts a story about the wife of the prime minister who had left her devoted and wealthy husband to live with a deformed footman. The wife, in spite of the daily beatings she suffers at his hands, pawns her clothes and jewels to support him. Gulliver comments that:

. . . this may perhaps pass with the reader rather for an European or English story than for one of a country so remote. But he may please to consider

that the caprices of womankind are not limited by any climate or nation; and that they are much more uniform than can be easily imagined (54:133).

Throughout all the writings of Swift there are his observations which show clearly his attitude toward the "foppery, affectation, vanity, folly, or vice" of women. He warns, in the Letter to a Very Young Lady on Her Marriage, that "you are beginning to enter into a course of life, where you will want much advice to divert you from falling into many errors, fopperies, and follies to which your sex is subject" (55:445).

Personal hygiene, too, was a matter that Swift thought to be of primary concern for ladies, and, again he gives advice to the young lady about to be married:

You will perhaps be offended when I advise you to abate a little of that violent passion for fine clothes, so predominant in your sex. It is a little hard, that ours, for whose sake you wear them, are not admitted to be of your council: I may venture to assure you that we will make an abatement at any time of four pounds a yard in a brocade, if the ladies will but follow a suitable addition of care in the cleanliness and sweetness of their persons: For, the satirical part of mankind will needs believe, that it is not impossible, to be very fine and very filthy; and that the capacities of a lady are sometimes apt to fall short in cultivating cleanliness and finery together. I shall only add, upon so tender a subject, what a pleasant gentleman said concerning a silly woman of quality that nothing could make her supportable but cutting off her head, for his ears were offended by her tongue, and his nose by her hair and teeth (55:447).

It should be pointed out in all fairness to Swift that he was not entirely hostile to the fopperies of fashion. Perhaps he realized that from a psychological, physiological point of view, there was some benefit to a woman to be derived from an interest and pride in her attire; however, he deprecated the extremity to which many women felt it necessary to go in the matter of finery--an extremity that to him transcended reason and amounted to pure ostentation.

I would have you look upon finery as a necessary folly, as all great ladies did whom I have ever known: I do not desire you to be out of the fashion, but to be the last and least in it; I expect that your dress shall be one degree lower than your fortune can afford; and in your own heart I would wish you to be an utter contemner of all distinctions which a finer petticoat can give you; because it will neither make you richer, handsomer, younger, better natur'd, more virtuous, or wise, than if it hung upon a peg (55:451).

Swift seemed to be much more concerned and bitter about woman's affectation in manners than even about her vanity in dress. He hated her servile imitation of silly mannerisms, her slavish devotion to exaggerated standards of good manners, her coquetry, her ostentatious manifestation of foolish fears, fetishes and weaknesses which she felt added to the delicate attractiveness of her femininity. In Polite Conversation he lamented:

But alas! after all, how can she acquire, those hundreds of graces and Motions, and Airs, the whole military Motion in the Face; the risings and fallings; the quickness, and slackness of the Voice, with the several Tones and

Cadences; the proper Junctures of smiling and frowning; how often, and how loud to laugh; when to jibe and when to flout; with all the other Branches of Doctrine and Discipline above recited? (60:Vol. IV,112).

Women who employed the tricks of artificial show in the practice of coquetry suffer much in the pages of Swift. He had a violent abhorrence of hypocrisy in any form, and the coquette was to him a distinct type of hypocrite. Gulliver's master among the Houyhnhnms instructed,

that a female Yahoo would often stand behind a bank or a bush, to gaze on the young males passing by, and then appear, and hide, using many antic gestures and grimaces, at which time it was that she had a most offensive smell; and when any of the males advanced, would slowly retire, looking often back, and with a counterfeit show of fear, run off into some convenient place where she knew the male would follow her (54:213).

Swift is not more complimentary toward the women of Laputa, who "contemn their husbands, and are exceedingly fond of strangers." And it might be added that he did not always hold the foolish male blameless, for he continues:

but the vexation is, that they act with too much ease and security, for the husband is always so rapt in speculation, that the mistress and lover may proceed to the greatest familiarities before his face, if he be but provided with paper and implements, and without his flapper at his side (54:133).

In Gulliver's highly condemnatory account to his Houyhnhnm Master concerning the state of England, he includes a few references to woman's great vanity as manifested by her imaginary illnesses and her foolish ostentation in the

matter of food. Gulliver confesses, with a feeling of shame, that

besides real diseases, we are subject to many that are only imaginary, for which the physicians have invented imaginary cures; these have their several names, and so have the drugs that are proper for them, and with these our female Yahoos are always infested (54:205).

Before this admission, Gulliver had already explained the necessity in England for importing fancy food and drink from abroad to satisfy the "vanity of the females," and he had assured him that "this whole globe of earth must be at least three times gone round, before one of our better female Yahoos could get her breakfast, or a cup of tea to put in it" (54:203).

Affected fright and physical cowardice in the face of imaginary dangers Swift considered another evidence of affectation in women. He took some pains to warn his young friend--and all femininity--against this annoying weakness in the Letter to the new bride, wherein he said:

There is indeed one infirmity which seems to be generally allowed you, I mean that of Cowardice. Yet there should seem to be something very capricious, that when Women profess their admiration for a Colonel or a Captain on account of his Valour, they should fancy it a very graceful becoming quality in themselves to be afraid of their own shadows; to scream in a Barge when the weather is calmest, or in a Coach at the Ring; to run from a Cow at a hundred yards distance; to fall into fits at the sight of a Spider, an Earwig, or a Frog. At least, if Cowardice be a sign of Cruelty (as it is generally granted), I can hardly think it an accomplishment so desirable as to be thought worth improving by Affectation (55:453).

Many passages from Swift's prose give evidence of his great concern over the unfortunate condition of woman's place in conversation. In contrast with the opinion of most of the men of his age, Swift was convinced that women were capable of intelligent conversation, if men would only encourage them in the art. The ability to converse well on worthy subjects was an accomplishment he admired in a woman. It is not surprising then to read in his Letter that, although he had little respect for the generality of the female sex, yet it sometimes moved him with pity

. . . to see the Lady of the house forced to withdraw after Dinner, and this in Families where is not much drinking; as if it were an established Maxim, that Women are incapable of all Conversation. In a Room where both Sexes meet, if the Men are discoursing upon any general Subject, the Ladies never think it their business to partake in what passes, but in a separate Club entertain each other, with the price and choice of Lace and Silk, and what Dresses they liked or disapproved at the Church or the Play-house (55:450).

Indeed, one of Swift's Thoughts on Various Subjects (1706) tells us "A very little Wit is valued in a Woman; as we are pleased with a few Words spoken plain by a Parrot" (59:247). The Hints towards an Essay on Conversation exhibits Swift's views on what he feels should be woman's place in conversation. He refers back to the reign of Charles I, when many great ladies followed the exemplary custom of maintaining salons where both ladies and gentlemen of quality assembled to discuss matters of consequence, and

where the art of conversation was developed to a very high peak. He laments the degeneration of conversation, and insists that:

It has been owing, among other Causes, to the Custom arisen for some Years past, of excluding Women from any Share in our Society, Further than in Parties at Play, or Dancing, or in the Pursuit of an Amour. . . If there were no other Use in the Conversation of Ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a Restraint upon those odious Topicks of Immodesty and Indecencies, into which the Rudeness of our Northern Genius is so apt to fall (59:94-5).

Swift could certainly have insisted, if his attitude toward women had been criticized as intolerant, that he was much kinder to the sex than the members of it were to one another. The propensity of great ladies for scandal-mongering, and their hypocritical intolerance of their own kind, were a source of never-ending irritation to Swift. To the new-married lady he wrote that he "never yet knew a tolerable Woman to be fond of her own Sex. . . But a knot of Ladies, got together by themselves, is a very school of Impertinence and Detraction and it is well if those be the worst" (55:448). Swift did not feel that they could be trusted, nor that their advice should be accepted, and he warned the young lady:

Your only safe way of conversing with them, is by a firm Resolution to proceed in your practice and behaviour directly contrary to whatever they shall say or do: And this I take to be a good General Rule, with very few exceptions. . . it will be prudent to retain as many of their lectures in your Memory as

you can and then determine to act in full
Opposition to them all (55:447-8).

Gulliver notices a spirit of intolerance among the
female Yahoos in the land of the Houyhnhnms, reporting that:

At other times if a female stranger came
among them, three or four of her own sex would
get about her, and stare and chatter, and grin,
and smell her all over, and then turn off with
gestures that seemed to express contempt and dis-
tain (54:213).

It requires no great effort of imagination to transfer this
scene to an English drawing-room of polite society, which
may have been of course, what Swift intended.

In closing this discussion of Swift's attitude toward
women from a social point of view, we may turn to a work not
previously mentioned, a work in which we would not ordinar-
ily expect to find any evidence for this study. And yet,
in The Battle of the Books, it is interesting to note, that
in the personification of the abstract qualities, Swift
made Criticism a goddess, with all the wiles of a woman
popularly conceived, physically disgusting and revolting;
that her mother was Pride and her sister Opinion; and that
Dullness, too, was a goddess. "There, was Opinion her
sister, light of foot, hoodwinked, and headstrong, yet
giddy and perpetually turning" (54:370).

MARRIAGE

Since, so far as Swift was concerned, the errors
and omissions of education in his time made veritable

dullards and dolts of ladies of quality, a condition which in turn was in great measure responsible for their "Errors, Fopperies, and Follies" as social beings, we can readily believe that Swift would consider any marriage with a lady of this tripe as a hollow mockery, empty and doomed to failure from the point of view of compatibility.

Swift had great respect for marriage as a civilized institution. His ideals were high; the standards he established for the prospective new wife were exacting, and few contemporary women were mentally or socially equipped to measure up to them. This deficiency, I think, is the underlying cause for his bitterness when he reflects on marriage. He hopes for a great deal, and he finds very little. To him, marriage is a serious business to be governed by the precepts of reason and good sense; to other men and women (there are always brilliant exceptions!) it is a matter of passion and poor judgment, romantically or economically conceived. Swift, with his keen, far-seeing eye, looks ahead down through the years and sees final disillusionment in a marriage unless there has been adequate, mature substitutions made that will provide for the ultimate loss of youth and beauty. Companionship is the final reality, the only thing that matters in the end. And unless education and social life provide the materials to insure lasting companionship between husband and wife after the first flush of physical ardor has cooled, marriage is doomed.

Swift, however, is not very optimistic about the eventuality of such an ideal marriage because in the essay Of the Education of Ladies he makes this caustic comment: "Considering the modern way," says Swift, "of training up both sexes in ignorance, idleness, and vice, it is of little consequence how they are coupled together" (60:227).

The best support for the foregoing generalizations is found in the most comprehensive and particular expression of Swift's ideas on marriage, the highly subjective Letter to a Very Young Lady on Her Marriage. Here he states his requirements for a wife: she must be slow after marriage in changing the "modest behaviour" that characterized her single life; she must not be ostentatious in showing her love for her husband, especially in company; she must not affect an exaggerated uneasiness when her husband is not at home; she must "abate a little of that violent Passion for fine Cloaths," and cultivate instead personal cleanliness; she must choose her friends wisely, taking care not to follow the advice of female friends, who would mislead her out of pure mischief; she must limit her visits, which are generally a waste of time; her company at home should consist of men in preference to women, and the men of her acquaintance should be of her husband's choice, not those recommended by her female friends; she must not take a waiting-maid into her confidence, for a waiting-woman is nothing but a scandal-monger; she must strive to "gain and preserve the Friendship

and Esteem" of her husband; she must acquire some accomplishments which her husband will value, which includes the cultivation of her mind through reading and conversation with "Persons of knowledge and understanding." In addition, Swift warns against association with rude men. Finally, Swift instructs a wife to:

Learn to value and esteem your Husband for those good Qualities which he really possesseth, and not to fancy others in him which her certainly hath not. For although this latter is generally understood to be a mark of Love, yet it is indeed nothing but Affectation or ill Judgment (55:453-4).

Again, in the same vein, Swift recited in brief his qualifications for a wife in the opening sentences of the fragment, Of The Education of Ladies:

There is a subject of controversy which I have frequently met with in mixt and select companies of both sexes, and sometimes only of men; whether it be prudent to chuse a wife, who hath good natural sense, some taste of wit and humour, sufficiently versed in her own natural language, able to read and to relish history, books of travels, moral or entertaining discourses, and be a tolerable judge of the beauties in poetry. This question is generally determined in the negative by the women themselves, but almost universally by the men (60:225).

Swift felt that all these requirements in a wife were important to make her an agreeable companion to her cultured husband, even though the latter was more than a little blameworthy in not regarding these qualities highly enough. This key to compatibility seemed to be Swift's

whole concern on the question of marriage. In the Letter he advised:

. . . and when you can bring yourself to comprehend and relish the good Sense of others, you will arrive in time to think rightly yourself, and to become a Reasonable and Agreeable Companion. This must produce in your Husband a true Rational Love and Esteem for you, which old Age will not diminish. He will have a regard for your Judgment and Opinion in matters of the greatest weight; you will be able to entertain each other without a Third Person to relieve you by finding Discourse. The endowments of your Mind will even make your Person more agreeable to him; and when you are alone, your Time will not lie heavy upon your hands for want of some trifling Amusement (55:450).

Swift's reference to a "True Rational Love and Esteem" is significant of an attitude encountered many times in his prose. He entertains no romantic ideas about marriage. To him it is a cold business based on reason and common sense. "You have," he states coldly,

but very few years to be young and handsome in the eyes of the World; and as few months to be so in the eyes of a Husband, who is not a Fool; for I hope you do not still dream of Charms and Raptures, which Marriage ever did, and ever will, put a sudden end to. Besides yours was a match of Prudence and common Goodliking, without any mixture of that ridiculous Passion which has no Being but in Play-books and Romances (55:449).

Perhaps the Dean's most unqualifiedly acid comments on marriage appear in the stray Thoughts on Various Subjects. We may profitably group together three of these random thoughts in bringing to a close this study of Swift's attitude towards marriage. They speak for themselves:

Venus, a beautiful, good-natur'd Lady, was the Goddess of Love; Juno, a terrible Shrew, the Goddess of Marriage; and they were always mortal Enemies (62:Vol. IX,247).

Matrimony has many children; Repentance, Discord, Poverty, Jealousy, Sickness, Spleen, Loathing (62:Vol. IX,252).

What they do in heaven we are ignorant of; what they do not do we are told expressly, that they neither marry, nor are given in marriage (62:Vol. IX,222).

This, then, is a composite picture of Swift's attitude toward women as expressed in his prose. His observations and experiences led him to believe that, with few exceptions, the lady of polite society was often improperly and inadequately educated, coarse and indecent, deceitful, vain, foppish, physically repulsive, affected in manners and speech, guilty of coquetry, addicted to foolish fears and weaknesses, incapable of intelligent conversation, intolerant of her sex, fond of scandal and censure, and, as a result of all these deficiencies, poorly prepared for the nobility, companionship, and good sense which an ideal marriage demanded.

All this constitutes a serious charge, and it is not remarkable that Swift's attitude toward women was for a long time rather narrowly interpreted. Although judgments and conclusions are reserved for a final chapter in this study, I should like at this time to point out two things. First: Swift's purpose in his criticism of women was undeniably

constructive. It was his peculiar method to encourage correction by showing faults in a very disagreeable light. He was concerned with results, and it mattered nothing to him if he shocked and offended the mock sensitivity of a foolish and stupid world, so long as he made clear its weaknesses. Second: Swift, un hypocritical in this as in everything else, does not pretend that woman is alone to blame for all the indictments he brings against her; he frankly admits that frequently it is a man who is unequivocally responsible for her numerous "Errors, Fopperies, and Follies."

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IN SWIFT'S VERSE

How cou'd it come into your Mind,
To pitch on me, of all Mankind,
Against the Sex to write a Satyre,
And brand me for a Woman-Hater?
On me, who think them all so fair,
They rival Venus to a Hair;
Their Virtues never ceased to sing,
Since first I learned to tune a String.
Methinks I hear the Ladies cry,
Will He his Character belye?
Must never our Misfortunes end?
And have we lost our only Friend?
Ah lovely Nymphs, remove your Fears,
No more let fall those precious Tears.
Sooner shall

.
The Hound be hunted by the Hare,
Than I turn Rebel to the Fair.

--Swift, "The Journal of a Modern Lady."
(53:Vol. I,230).

We are not concerned here with an artistic evaluation of Swift as a poet, nor do we need to discuss his intrinsic right to the title. Any satisfactory conclusion on that point must depend on one's own definition of poetry. There are those who assert bluntly that Swift was not a poet in any sense of the word. Dryden, for example, when first given some of Swift's early poetry, was quoted by Samuel Butler as saying, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet" (29:2). Others, although they admit the limitations of the Dean's powers, nevertheless give him some credit as an innovator in English poetry; some hesitate to express any opinions whatever, suggesting that controversy can be

avoided by referring to Swift's "verse"; while a few go so far as to accord him a place in the company of the greatest poets in our language. Swift himself made no elaborate pretense of belonging to the company of poets, and he touched very significantly on the character of his verse in a poem to Mr. Delany, dated 1718, in which he admitted:

To you the Muse this Verse bestows,
Which might as well have been in Prose;
No Thought, no Fancy, no Sublime,
But simple Topicks told in Rime (53:Vol. II,586).

However the individual may feel regarding the propriety of calling Swift a poet, we may claim without fear of contradicting that for the purposes of the present study a consideration of his verse is essential for its revelation of his most personal observations and commitments, many of them on the subject of women. Indeed, no valid study of any phase of Swift's life, character, or genius could be made, independent of the eloquent testimony of his poems. Two of the outstanding scholars in this field have emphasized the point. F. Elrington Ball writes that:

Without knowledge of his verse a true picture of Swift cannot be drawn. In his verse he sets forth his life as a panorama, he shows more clearly than in his prose his peculiar turn of thought, and he reveals his character in all its phases from the most attractive to the most repellent (3:viii).

And Mr. Harold Williams has added that "the events of Swift's life, his character, his standing with his fellows, and his place in history can only be adequately interpreted if his

if his verse is closely read and understood" (58:Vol. I, xvi-xvii). A third writer has asserted, most significantly for our purpose, that:

Swift, little of the poet as he seemed to have in him, had this: it is in his verse that his soul, its desires and disgust, most fully express themselves. . . It is in his verse especially that his profound dissatisfaction with women is most vehemently displayed (47:213).

This is justification enough for a detailed examination of Swift's attitude toward women as expressed in his verse.

Swift's first poetry was written as Pindaric odes and in heroic couplets; for Swift these were ponderous in style and pedestrian in tone. It was when he began to write in octosyllabic couplets that his poems took on a naturalness of style, a lightness, ease and humor which make many of them delightful reading even today. But what is even more important, according to Roberts, is that "There are no poems of the eighteenth century, not even Pope's "Rape of the Lock," which betray so keenly the follies and fashions of his period" (47:219).

The first of his satirical poems, "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Tablebook" (53:Vol. I,51), generally ascribed to the year 1698, is supposed to have been written on memoranda tablets of ivory; it is a curious jumble of notes apparently made by the lady regarding toilet articles, and romantic expressions of devotion made by her admirers. It shows Swift's early annoyance with both these things.

Here you may read, (Dear charming Sait)
 Beneath, (A new Receipt for Paint.)
 Here in Beau spelling, (tru tel Deth.)
 There, in her own (far an el Breth.)
 Here, (lovely Nymph pronounce my doom.)
 There, (a safe Way to use Perfume.)
 Here, a Page fill'd with Billet-Doux;
 On t'other Side, (laid out for Shoes.)
 (Madam, I die without your Grace)
 (Item, for half a Yard of Lace.)
 Who, that had Wit would place it here,
 For ev'ry peeping Fop to jeer? (53:Vol. I,51).

In 1709 Swift wrote a little poem in which he rever-
 ted to the ten-syllable line, but now it is handled with
 consummate ease and grace, and Ball suggests that it is as
 "polished as anything that ever came from Swift's pen (3:95).
 The poem is a charming compliment to Mrs. Biddy Floyd, a
 woman who represents Swift's ideal from a social point of
 view, and it is of significance to us here because it shows
 that Swift, where women were concerned, could praise as well
 as blame when the occasion warranted. The lady in question,
 blessed with the natural graces derived from the country
 scene where she was found, is given by the Court the desir-
 able social qualities, free from affectation and vanity.

When Cupid did his Grandsire Jove intreat,
 To form some Beauty by a new Receipt;
 Jove sent and found far in a Country Scene,
 Truth, Innocence, Good-Nature, Look serene;
 From which Ingredients, first the dext'rous Boy
 Pick'd the Demure, the Awkward, and the Coy:
 The Graces from the Court did next provide
 Breeding, and Wit, and Air, and decent Pride.
 These Venus cleans'd from ev'ry spurious Grain
 Of Nice, Coquet, Affected, Pert, and Vain.
 Jove mix'd up all, and his best Clay employ'd;
 Then call'd the happy Composition Floyd (53:Vol. I,75).

It might be added that again, in 1709, Swift proved his willingness to credit openly the praiseworthiness of the individual woman in "Apollo Outwitted," a poem in quatrains addressed as a compliment to the poetess Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea.

In the poem "Corinna," written about 1711, Swift seems to swing to the other end of the pendulum. The poem is an uncompromising attack upon Mrs. Mary de la Riviere Manley, author of the New Atlantis and a lady journalist of Swift's time who succeeded him as editor of The Examiner. Since Swift's relations with Mrs. Manley seem to have been friendly, the reason for the poem remains a mystery to the biographers. It may possibly be explained on the grounds of her shady moral and literary reputation, to which Swift may have had a personal objection. In the poem he traces briefly her life from birth, ending:

At six Years old, the subtle Jade
 Stole to the Pantry-Door, and found
 The Butler with my Lady's Maid;
 And you may swear the Tale went round.

 At twelve, a Wit and a Coquette;
 Marries for Love, half Whore, half Wife;
 Cuckolds, elopes, and runs in Debt;
 Turns Auth'ress, and is Curll's for Life (53:
 Vol. II, 497).

One recent writer (20:529-30) suggests that a Mrs. Eliza Haywood is the model for Corinna. But it would not matter much even if we did not know to whom the poem was addressed. The important thing is that it displays Swift's

dislike for ladies addicted to scandal, false wit, coquetry, and loose morals--qualities, as we have seen, of which he thoroughly disapproved.

In October, 1713, Lord Harley, Swift's friend the Earl of Oxford, Lord Treasurer, was married to Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles, daughter of the Duke of Newcastle, Swift was prompted by this marriage to write some lines celebrating the virtues of the bride and groom, though its real significance for us lies in its subtle attack on some of the popular follies and vanities of women. Too, it shows Swift had no objection to marriage where the attainments of the wife were equal to those of the husband. In the poem young Harley is represented as so fine and learned a gentleman that Swift long thought he would never win a wife,

For such is all the sex's flight,
They fly from learning, wit, and light:
They fly, and none can overtake
But some gay coxcomb, or a rake.

And so Swift wonders:

Then where, said I, shall Harley find
A virgin of superior mind,
With wit and virtue to discover,
And pay the merit of her Lover?

The answer, of course, turns out to be the Lady Henrietta, "Born to retrieve her sex's fame," worlds above the general run of ladies who, "by formal arts,"

Display their various nets for hearts:
Their looks are all by method set,
When to be prude, and when coquette;
Yet, wanting skill and pow'r to chuse,
Their only pride is to refuse (53:Vol. II, 583-585).

Almost a contrast to this poem on the subject of wives is a humorous piece written in 1719 called "A Quiet Life, and a Good Name," which mocks the "False Patience, and mistaken Pride" of husbands who fear meekly the bad temper of shrewish wives. Will, a friend of the family, cannot understand why Dick sits mute and suffers the incessant scolding and quarreling of Nell. To Will's suggestion that he slit her tongue, Dick replies:

Dear Will, I suffer this for Peace;
 I never quarrel with my Wife;
 I bear it for a quiet Life.
 Scripture, you know, exhorts us to it;
 Bids us to seek Peace and ensue it.

On Will's next visit he finds Nell beating a peaceful neighbor with Dick's staff and, interposing, gets banged for his pains. This assault is too much for him to bear without further remonstrance. He draws Dick out of the house to "take a Quart," and advises that if Nell were his, he certainly would break her limbs, or perhaps ship her off to Jamaica, at any rate "send her far enough away," but Dick interrupts:

Dear Will; but, what would People say?
 Lord! I should get so ill a Name,
 The Neighbors round would cry out, Shame.

Swift then shows how the poor husband becomes a laughing-stock to the whole parish for his sufferance, and concludes:

False Patience, and mistaken Pride!
 There are ten thousand Dicks beside;
 Slaves to their Quiet and good Name,
 Are us'd like Dick, and bear the Blame (53:Vol. I,211-12).

As we have seen, Swift believed in marriages arranged on the basis of practicability and common sense. Romantic notions of love should not be considered. In "Phyllis, Or, the Progress of Love (1719), Swift pictures the disastrous results of a marriage hastily conceived on the theory that "Marriages are Made in Heaven." Certainly the poem is, as Herbert Davis explains in his essay on Swift's verse, "a satire upon the popular notions of romantic love and such attendant follies as a girl's elopement with a servant to escape from a reasonable match properly arranged by her parents" (14:34). Phyllis at the beginning of the story is a great prude who actually "trembled when a Man drew near," although she is not ignorant of many of the tricks of the coquette.

In Church, secure behind her Fan,
 She durst behold that Monster, Man:
 There practis'd how to place her Head,
 And bit her Lips, to make them red;
 Or, on the Mat devoutly kneeling,
 Wou'd lift her Eyes up to the Ceiling,
 And heave her Bosom, unaware,
 For neighb'ring Beaux to see it bare.

At length a match is arranged with a young fellow whom she herself approves, the marriage contract is drawn up, the lawyer paid, and even the vicar and a ring are spoken for. But Phyllis elopes with John the butler, leaving behind a note of explanation addressed to her father:

('Tis always done, Romances tell us,
 When Daughters run away with Fellows)
 Fill'd with the choicest common-places,
 By others us'd in the like Cases.

She begs forgiveness on the ground that:

It was her Fate; must be forgiven;
 For Marriages are made in Heaven:
 His pardon begg'd but to be plain,
 She'd do't if 'twere to do again.

Any happiness she may have felt in the marriage is short-lived, however, for soon their little money is gone and she is forced to sell first her trinkets and then her virtue, "In Kindness to maintain her Spouse," until finally:

Fate put a Period to the Farce,
 And with exact poetick Justice;
 For, John is Landlord, Phillis Hostess:
 They keep, at Staines, the old blue Boar,
 Are Cat and Dog, and Rogue and Whore (53:Vol. I, 213-216).

Often listed among the noxious poems is "The Progress of Beauty" (1719), which, as Davis points out, "shows how Swift is prepared to deal himself with subjects, which have been sicklied o'er with the sentimentality of romantic poets" (14:36). Swift marches into the boudoir and peers behind the veil that cosmetics create to achieve an artificial beauty which satisfies foolish romantics, but which Swift looks upon for what is--another form of hypocrisy. The picture of Celia as she rises in the morning would disillusion even the most love-sick swain:

When first Diana leaves her Bed
 Vapours and Steams her Looks disgrace,
 A frowsy dirty-colour's Red
 Sits on her cloudy wrinkled Face.

 To see her from her Pillow rise,
 All reeking in a cloudy Steam;
 Crack'd Lips, foul Teeth, and gummy Eyes;
 Poor Strephon, how would he blaspheme!

Three Colours, Black, and Red, and White,
 So graceful in their proper Place,
 Remove them to a different Light,
 They form a frightful hideous Face.

But Celia is a master at the art of make-up, and proceeds without delay to repair the ravages of the night.

But Celia can with Ease reduce,
 By Help of Pencil, Paint, and Brush,
 Each Colour to its Place and Use,
 And teach her Cheeks again to Blush.

Her workmanship is so good that "after four important Hours" she is once more "the Wonder of her Sex." Of course, it is all useless vanity, for, even as the moon must wane and die, the artifice cannot be maintained forever.

But, Art no longer can prevail,
 When the Materials all are gone;
 The best Mechanick Hand must fail,
 Where nothing's left to work upon (53:Vol. I, 216-219).

Quintana suggests (45:283) that this poem is not entirely, as some critics think, the product of a "diseased imagination," but that Swift was drawing upon actual experience, as indicated in a passage from the Journal to Stella for December 21, 1711. He confided to his friend in Ireland that he "was to see Lady _____, who is just up after lying-in; and the ugliest sight I have seen, pale, dead, old and yellow, for want of her paint. She has turned my stomach. But she will soon be painted and a beauty again" (56:283).

Once more Swift shows he has not forgotten the art of compliment in a poem called "Apollo's Edict," written about 1821 in response to some lines by Dr. Delaney which

asserted that Swift, by the vote of a convention of poets on Parnassus, was appointed Apollo's vicegerent to ordain the course of poetry on earth. "Apollo's Edict" is Swift's reply. The poets are instructed to follow Swift's example in abandoning the beaten paths. Among the things to be avoided are the usual trite accouterments of romantic verse, and, of course, the clap-trap of love poetry:

When you describe a lovely Girl,
 No lips of Coral, Teeth of Pearl.
 Cupid shall ne'er mistake another
 However beauteous for his Mother:
 Nor shall his Darts at random fly
 From Magazine in Coelia's Eye.
 With Women Compounds I am cloy'd
 Which only pleased in Bidy Floyd.

Now, if poets need a model of feminine perfection, they are not to borrow foreign aid, for they have a perfect example in their own country, in the person of Lady Donegal:

Unerring Heav'n, with bounteous Hand,
 Has form'd a Model for your Land;
 Whom Jove endow'd with ev'ry Grace,
 The Glory of the Granard Race;

 Then, would you paint a matchless Dame,
 Whom you'd consign to endless Fame?
 Invoke not Citherea's Aid,
 Not borrow from the Blew-ey'd Maid,
 Nor need you on the Graces call,
 Take Qualities from Donegal (53:Vol. II,592-594).

This is just one more example of Swift's willingness to pay tribute to the superior qualities of individual women not guilty of the usual errors of folly and vanity.

Swift's practice of heaping ridicule on marriages which were not arranged on the basis of common sense was continued

in "The Progress of Marriage" (1722), in which he satirized the union of Dean Pratt and Lady Philippa Hamilton. To Swift, the ridiculous aspect about this marriage was the disparity in the ages of the two principals. The poem begins:

Aetatis suae fifty-two
A rich Divine began to woo
A handsome, young, imperious Girl
Nearly related to an Earl.

We need only remember that two of Swift's "Resolutions When I Come To Be Old" declared his resolves "Not to marry a young Woman" and "Not to hearken to Flatteries, nor conceive I can be beloved by a young woman" (61:405), to realize how unflatteringly he would deal with a match like Benjamin Pratt's. As the poem begins, we learn that the marriage is arranged and the day of the ceremony is spent in mirth, although Swift emphasizes:

The Wedding-day, you take me right,
I promise nothing for the Night.

Of course, the tottering bridegroom is soon left behind for reasons which Swift makes very clear:

The Swain is rich, the Nymph is fair;
But, what I gladly would forget,
The Swain is old, the Nymph coquette.
Both from the goal together start;
Scarce run a step before they part;
No common ligament that binds
The various textures of their minds;
Their thoughts, and actions, hopes and fears,
Less corresponding than their years.

That is the important thing to Swift--the senseless incompatibility, the fact that they have nothing in common. He

proceeds to outline a typical day of each, in order to demonstrate the basic absurdity of the marriage. The Dean rises early, has his coffee, "goes out to cheapen books," has dinner at four (although he had been accustomed to dine at one), wonders vaguely "what employs" his young wife's brain (but never asks because his mind is "full of other Cares"), goes to his church to pray, returns home at a quarter past nine to meet his wife hastening to a ball, calls the family to prayers, and finally goes alone to bed. The wife, on the other hand, "rises to her Tea at noon," spends some time at her toilet (her maid "buzzing at her Ear"), and:

At one she rambles to the shops,
To cheapen tea, and talk with fops;
Or calls a council of her maids,
And tradesmen, to compare brocades.

Then (at four) she has dinner, drops her husband at the church while she rides on to the theater, is off again to a ball by a quarter after nine, and finally returns home at five, not because the masquerade is over, but because "She can't abide to stay out late."

But this is not the end of the poor Dean's troubles. In less than a year his wife miscarries three times, as a result of which the doctor prescribes that she take the baths. The Dean objects on the ground that the expense would be too great for his already depleted pocket-book, but this is "a clownish Reason," and so there is nothing

left for him but to agree. At the resort his wife,

His money and her time employs
 In Musick, raffling-rooms and toys;
 Or, in the Cross-bath, seeks an Heir,
 Since others oft have found one there:

While the Dean, like

The sober hen not born to swim
 With mournful note clucks round the brim.

The story ends sadly. The husband, instead of getting an heir, contracts a fever and dies (Benjamin Pratt died the year following his marriage), leaving his wife his entire estate, which Swift feels will spell her own undoing.

The widow goes through all her forms:
 New Lovers now will come in swarms.
 Oh, may I see her soon dispensing
 Her favours to some broken ensign!
 Him let her marry, but his face,
 And only coat of tarnisht lace;
 To turn her naked out of doors,
 And spend her jointure on his whores:
 But, for a parting present, leave her
 A rooted pox to last for ever (53:Vol. I, 219-224).

It should be observed that a certain type of man, in the person of the foolish old Dean, is as much the butt of ridicule in this poem as the vain young wife.

What Swift thought of the average woman's mental attainments is given expression in "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind" (1727). The entire poem cannot be quoted, but the language is the epitome of epigrammatic concentration. Here are some of the best lines for our purpose:

A set of Phrases learn't by Rote;
 A Passion for a Scarlet-Coat;
 When at a Play to laugh, or cry,
 Yet cannot tell the Reason why:

Never to hold her Tongue a Minute;
 While all she prates has nothing in it.
 While Hours can with a Coxcomb sit,
 And take his Nonsense all for Wit;
 Her Learning mounts to read a Song;
 But, half the Words pronouncing wrong;

• • • • •
 Can, at her Morning Tea, run o'er
 The Scandal of the Day before,
 Improving hourly in her Skill,
 To cheat and wrangle at Quadrille.

• • • • •
 What Colours each Complexion match,
 And where with Art to place a Patch.
 If chance a Mouse creeps in her Sight,
 Can finely counterfeit a Fright;
 So, sweetly screams if it comes near her,
 She ravishes all Hearts to hear her.

Further, she knows the art of teasing her husband by becoming suddenly ill, thinking it very ladylike to be frail and vainly delicate. She is furious in party, "A bitter Whig, or Tory sow'r," but her arguments are so misapplied that they hurt rather than help the side which she attempts to defend. Indeed, she

Will prove herself a Tory plain,
 From Principles the Whigs maintain:
 And, to defend the Whiggish Cause,
 Her Topicks from the Tories draws (53:Vol. I, 228-230).

"The Journal of a Modern Lady" (1729) recalls not only "The Furniture of a Woman's Mind," but perhaps even more particularly "The Progress of Marriage," in its recital of "The Annals of a Female Day," which, as we can guess, Swift traces with humorous ridicule. The poem begins with a kind of apology. Swift chides Lady Acheson for having suggested to him the subject of the poem, protesting that it will cause him to be branded as a woman-hater, which is

unfair because he has never ceased to sing the virtues of the fair sex. But he has given his word to write the poem, so he must submit. However:

I but transcribe, for not a Line
Of all the Satyr shall be mine.
Compell's by you to tag in Rhimes,
The common Slanders of the Times,
Of modern Times, the Guilt is yours,
And me my Innocence secures.
Unwilling Muse begin thy Lay,
The Annals of a Female Day.

Having sat up all night playing quadrille, the lady rises at noon, complaining of a headache and the spleen. She takes some citron water, spends a good deal of time at her toilet, loiters over her tea and cream, and then turns to her favorite topic of conversation--her bad luck at cards. The scene changes. She interviews some tradesmen and drives several hard bargains in silks and laces. By four she is almost dressed, but not quite ready for dinner, which she orders to be delayed, objecting that she is never given time to dress. Finally she comes down to dinner, and torments all the company with her stale conversation--all, that is, except her "Booby Husband," who sits "In Admiration at her Wit." Now evening comes on. It is tea-time, and as the lady's clan of "Prudes, Coquets, and Harridans" arrives, silence, discretion, and modesty are frightened away, to be replaced by pride, scandal, hypocrisy, scurrility, vulgar laughter, malice, vanity, impudence, affectation, and ignorance. A session of scandal-mongering and vicious

gossiping ensues, the ladies accusing others of vices and faults of which they themselves are most guilty. The din is terrible, everyone trying to talk at once,

Nor do they trust their Tongue alone,
 But speak a Language of their own;
 Can read a Nod, a Shrug, a Look,
 Far better than a printed Book:
 Convey a Libel in a Frown,
 And wink a Reputation down;
 Or, by the Tossing of the Fan,
 Describe the Lady and the Man.

Eventually "the Female Club disbands," for the members have many more visits to make. Our lady is left alone, subject to fits and vapours, "A dreadful Interval of Spleen" which ends only when the gaming ladies arrive. Then,

Her Spleen and Fits recover'd quite,
 Our Madam can sit up all Night,
 "Whoever comes, I'm not within--"
 Quadrill the Word, and so begin.

They play far into the night, bickering, cheating in devious ways, talking incessantly except for a brief period to gobble some supper. "Past Four a-Clock," the watchman finally calls, but the chair-men cannot be found, which serves admirably for an excuse to play a while longer, until:

Now, all in haste they huddle on
 Their Hoods, and Cloaks, and get them gone:
 But, first, the Winner must invite
 The Company to-morrow Night.
 Unlucky Madam, left in Tears,
 (Who now again Quadrill forswears,
 With empty Purse, and aching Head,
 Steals to her sleeping Spouse to Bed (53:Vol. I,
 230-238).

Several more poems remain, exclusive of those to be treated in the other divisions of this chapter, in which Swift attacked the "follies and fashions" of women. Most significant in this respect are such pieces as "My Lady's Lamentation and Complaint Against the Dean" (1728), "A Pastoral Dialogue" (1729), "To Betty the Grizette" (1730), "Daphne" (1730). However, it would be needless repetition to discuss these, too, in detail. Certainly we have now had sufficient proof from the general body of the Dean's verse of his attitude toward women as regards marriage, education, and social life.

THE "FOUR OFFENSIVE PIECES"

The appellation is Ball's, but it might easily be credited to any one of a dozen or more critics of Swift. Comparatively few have risen to defend the Dean in the face of the "scatological ugliness" of "The Lady's Dressing Room," "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," "Strephon and Chloe," and "Cassinus and Peter."

The first of these poems (53:Vol. I, 342-247) was written in 1730. It presents a remarkable frank picture of the dressing room of a lady of quality, which is important to us for its direct criticism of the personal hygiene of women in Swift's time. The poem starts with a satiric reflection on the vanity of Celia in the matter of dress:

Five Hours, (and who can do it less in?)
 By haughty Celia spent in Dressing;
 The Goddess from her Chamber issues,
 Array'd in Lace, Brocade and Tissues.

Strephon, the swain, avails himself of the opportunity to steal into the chamber to take a "strict Survey" of the litter. The inventory which follows is hardly pleasant reading, but there is little reason to believe that Swift was exaggerating. Strephon finds in rapid succession the dirty smock well besmeared under the arm-pits, the filthy combs, the pots of rank-smelling pastes and cosmetics, compounded of sweat, dandruff, powder, lead, and hair, the disgusting towels,

Begumm'd, bematter'd and beslim'd
 With Dirt, and Sweat, and Ear-Wax grim'd,

the frowzy heaps of petticoats, soiled handkerchiefs and stockings, and the reeking nightcaps. In addition:

The Virtues we must not let pass
 Of Celia's magnifying Glass:
 When frighted Strephon cast his Eye on't,
 It shew'd the Visage of a Giant:
 A Glass that can to Sight disclose
 The smallest Worm in Celia's Nose,
 And faithfully direct her Nail,
 To squeeze it out from Head to Tail;
 For, catch it nicely by the Head,
 It must come out alive or dead.

The point of the adventure is clear:

But Vengeance, Goddess, never sleeping,
 Soon punish'd Strephon for his peeping.
 His foul Imagination links
 Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks;
 And, if unsav'ry Odours fly,
 Conceives a lady standing by:

.

I pity wretched Strephon blind
 To all the Charms of Woman-kind.
 Should I the Queen of Love refuse,
 Because she rose from stinking Ooze?

.
 When Celia in her Glory shows,
 If Strephon would but stop his Nose,

 He soon would learn to think like me,
 And bless his ravish'd Eyes to see,
 Such Order from Confusion Sprung,
 Such gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung.

"A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" (53:Vol. I, 247-249), which I choose to view as another evidence of Swift's unending war on hypocrisy, is reminiscent of "The Progress of Beauty," only now the attack is more nauseating to those with delicate stomachs. Corinna, a Drury-Lane strumpet, returns at midnight to her room and prepares to retire. She removes her artificial hair, a glass eye, false eyebrows, plumpers used to fill out her hollow cheeks, false teeth, and rags contrived to support "Her flabby Dugs." Then the "lovely Goddess"

Unlaces next her Steel-Rib'd Bodice;
 Which by the Operator's Skill,
 Press down the Lumps, the Hollows fill.
 Up goes her Hand, and off she slips
 The Bolsters that supply her Hips.

This metamorphosis accomplished, the lady treats her running sores and removes her make-up. Then, when a few more beauty aids have been attended to, she creeps in between her blankets and succumbs to a medley of dreams which run the gamut from "Pains of Love" to encounters with "Watchmen, Constables and Duns." However, the worst is yet to come, for in the

morning Corinna awakes to "Behold the Ruins of the Night!" A rat, a cat, a pigeon and a dog have soiled and scattered the most intimate of her artificial aids to beauty. Swift is at a loss to describe how she will find the various parts and put herself together again, and concludes:

The bashful Muse will never bear,
 In such a scene to interfere.
 Corinna in the Morning dizen'd,
 Who sees will spew; who smells, be poison'd.

"Strephon and Chloe" (1731) (53:Vol. I, 250-259) is perhaps the most vilified of all Swift's poems. It continues his practice of removing the veil of sentimental romance. Chloe is a young lady of such surpassing beauty, charm and cleanliness that it is difficult to believe she is mortal.

So beautiful a Nymph appears
 But once in Twenty Thousand Years.
 By Nature form'd with nicest Care,
 And, faultless to a single Hair.

Indeed, she seems to be just the reverse of the lady pictured in "A Beautiful Young Nymph." As can be expected, all the beaux in town are rivals for her hand, but Strephon drives them all down "With Coach and Six, and House in Town." A marriage is speedily arranged and solemnized, but the consummation presents to Strephon a vexing problem. He realizes he is merely mortal, subject to the biological necessities of earthly beings, while she is surely a goddess, "unsusceptible of Stain,"

And, Venus-like, her fragrant Skin
 Exhal'd Ambrosia from within:
 Can such a Deity endure
 A mortal human Touch impure?
 How did the humbled Swain detest
 His prickled Beard, and hairy Breast!
 His Night-cap border'd round with Lace
 Could give no Softness to his Face.

Strephon is worried, too, about something else:

But, what if he should leave his Life
 By vent'ring on his heavenly Wife?
 For, Strephon could remember well,
 That, once he heard a School-boy tell,
 How Semele of mortal Race,
 By Thunder dy'd in Jove's Embrace,
 And, what if daring Strephon dyes
 By Lightning shot from Chloe's Eyes?

We need not go into detail regarding the events of the wedding night. Suffice it to say that Strephon quickly falls out of love with his "goddess" as he discovers her shocking mortality, disclosed in disgusting fashion by her vulgar urination and flatulence. The aura of gilded romance fades.

Adieu to ravishing Delights,
 High Raptures, and romantick Flights.

As usual in Swift, there is a moral to the story. Maids who have nothing to offer but an outward show of beauty should, in all fairness, practice to hide "each Blemish" from her spouse to protect him from the disillusioning knowledge that she is not the faultless nymph he thought her.

Unjustly all our Nymphs complain,
 Their Empire holds so short a Reign;
 Is after Marriage lost so soon,
 It hardly holds the Honey-moon:

For, if they keep not what they caught,
 It is entirely their own Fault.
 They take Possession of the Crown,
 And then throw all their Weapons down:

Of course, Swift is writing with his tongue in his cheek. The real moral, in which there is no laughter, follows a digression attacking the hypocrisy of women in pretending to be what they are not. Swift advises:

Rash Mortals, e'er you take a Wife,
 Contrive your Pile to last for Life:
 Since Beauty scarce endures a Day,
 And Youth so swiftly glides away;
 Why will you make yourself a Bubble
 To build on Sand, with Hay and Stubble?
 On Sense and Wit your Passion found,
 By Decency cemented round;
 Let Prudence with good Nature strive,
 To keep Esteem and Love alive.
 Then come old Age whene'er it will,
 Your Friendship shall continue still:
 And, thus a mutual gentle Fire,
 Shall never but with Life expire.

This to Swift, is the only true foundation for lasting marriage; not beauty, for beauty is only skin deep; it "scarce endures a Day," as Strephon discovered. Superior qualities of mind and character represent the only real insurance against the ravages of Time, the foe of compatibility in marriage.

"Cassinus and Peter" (1731) is actually only a Rabelaisian-like footnote to the three poems already discussed. Peter, a student of Cambridge, visits his classmate Cassinus and finds him in a terrible state. Uncouth, dishevelled, "swallow'd up in Spleen," he sits weeping, unable at first even to speak. Upon being pressed to

disclose the cause of his sorrow, he at length pronounces three times in grief-stricken tones the name of a young lady. Peter is alarmed.

Dear Cassy, though to ask I dread,
 Yet, ask I must. Is Celia dead?
 How happy I, were that the worst:
 But I was fated to be curst.
 Come, tell us, has she play'd the Whore?
 Oh Peter, wou'd it were no more!

The suspense becomes keen as one question after another is answered in the negative by Cassinus, who intimates that Celia is guilty of a "Crime that shocks all human Kind." Finally, after a great deal of coaxing, he agrees to reveal the secret:

Nor, wonder how I lost my Wits:
 Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia sh--

Celia is a mere mortal; she performs the regular biological functions.

These poems employ, to say the least, definitely unconventional language, the cause of many bitter attacks on Swift. Because the matter is so much a part of these verses which seem on the surface to display "a lack of chivalry towards ladies in general," we may justifiably look into scholarly opinion on the subject.

W. A. Eddy stated bluntly that "Much of Swift's poetry would not pass the censor, and is, in any case, not fit for reading" (61:450). Other critics have been less mild on the question of Swift's preoccupation with ordure.

Johnson attributed it to a "depravity of intellect" which prompted Swift to take delight in ideas from which the normal mind would shrink "with disgust." Very shallowly, I think, he asked: ". . . what has disease, deformity, and filth upon which the thoughts can be allured to dwell?" (29:12). Sir Walter Scott accused Swift of neglecting "both the decency due to his station as a clergyman and a gentleman, and his credit as a man of literature" (62:Vol. I, 360), although in fairness to Scott it must be recorded that he attempted in a way to defend the Dean by listing as extenuating circumstances "the habit of the times, and situation of the author." Augustine Birrell raved:

No fouler pen than Swift's has soiled our literature. His language is horrible from first to last. He is full of odious images, of base and abominable allusions. It would be a labour of Hercules to cleanse his pages. . . This habit of his is so inveterate that it seems a miracle he kept his sermons free from his black-guard phrases. It is a question not of morality, but of decency, whether it is becoming to sit in the same room with the works of this divine. How the good Sir Walter ever managed to see him through the press is amazing. In this matter Swift is inexcusable (54:2-3).

R. Ellis Roberts expressed the belief that the "stench" in Swift's poems represents "an enormous neurasthenia." This critic, in spite of several very judicious comments to which we shall refer later, exclaimed extravagantly in one place:

The boudoir, the closet, the double bed:
his fancy only has to stray to any of them--
and it strayed far too often--and he writhes

helpless, indignant, outraged in pangs which make him for ever of the company of those artists who pace, like the damned souls whom Vathek saw, on the fiery and reverberating pavements of hell, each with his hand over his heart, and each with a heart of burning flame (47:213).

The list of critics and biographers who have concluded that the apparent foulness of Swift's language is an ineradicable blot on his escutcheon, or indicates his depravity of mind and character, is a long one, but one more might be dealt with here because of the essential unfairness of his attack. In an essay on Swift in which he attributes the Dean's coarseness to a "hatred of bowels," and makes the solemn pronouncement that the Dean "wished to suffer," Mr. Aldous Huxley has written that "Swift's poems about women are more ferocious even than his prose about the Yahoos; his resentment against women for being warm-blooded mammifiers was incredibly bitter" (26:99). This twentieth-century essayist suggests that it was "a source of excruciating suffering" for Swift "That human beings should have to get rid of the waste products of metabolism and digestion" (26:99); and, "That the lovely Celia should obey the calls of nature like any cow or camel, is for Swift a real disaster. . . Swift would have liked Celia to be as bodiless as an abstraction: he was furious with her for being solid and healthy" (26:110). This is very smart language indeed in which to display, in my

opinion, a very narrow reading of Swift. Mr. Huxley apparently fails to realize that Swift objected not to Celia's obeying "the calls of nature," but to her obeying them "like any cow or camel," the meanwhile pretending to the qualities of a nymph. Mr. Huxley seems to be unaware of the nature of the irony of Gulliver's observations of the Yahoos and to have missed the moral purpose, wit and humor of Swift. In the use of terms as "ferocious," "incredibly bitter," "excruciating suffering," and "real disaster," Huxley seems to have missed the whole point.

On the same basis, I feel that D. H. Lawrence, too, has somewhat overlooked the humor of Swift's satire in taking these poems too seriously. Certainly he has overstated the case in accusing Swift of a kind of "taboo-insanity." Lawrence seems rather melodramatic when he says:

His physical sympathies were too weak, his guts were too cold to sympathize with poor Celia in her natural functions. His insolent and sickly squeamish mind just turned her into a thing of horror, because she was merely natural and went to the w. c. It is monstrous! One feels like going back across all the years to poor Celia, to say to her: It's all right, don't you take any notice of that mental lunatic (32:281-2).

On the other side of the picture, we have a group of less squeamish critics who have not rushed to condemn Swift for his "filth," but who have attempted to qualify first reactions by careful analysis based on facts rather than conjecture and prejudice. The biographers who knew Swift

personally maintained that in writing the four poems under discussion he had definitely a moral purpose. Patrick Delany expressed it as follows in his Observations:

They are the prescriptions of an able physician, who had in truth the health of his patients at heart, but laboured to attain that end, not only by strong emetics, but also by all the most nauseous and offensive drugs and potions that could be administered, but yet not without a mixture of the finest ingredients that could possibly be imagined and contrived to take off the offence which the rest so justly gave (3:275-6).

Many modern biographers and critics subscribe to this view and in addition point out that the Augustan Age was in great measure responsible for Swift's shocking frankness. Herbert Read in the Times Literary Supplement for July 4, 1929, proposes that only prejudiced people assume "that poetry connotes but one half of life--things of beauty, sentiments of pleasure, innocence of experience" (46:521-22). The same writer reminds us it was Goldsmith who placed Swift in the same rank as Milton, Dryden and Pope because "he was the first poet who dared to describe nature as it is with all its deformities, and to give exact expression to a turn of thought alike dry, sarcastic and severe" (46:522). And besides, Rossi and Hone insist that Swift "could not have published such poems as "The Lady's Dressing-Room" and "Strephon and Chloe" . . . if the public had not been quite ready to accept his jokes wholeheartedly. . . The popularity of an obscene writer reveals an obscene mankind

around him" (48:176). This is closely related to the statement made by R. Ellis Roberts to the effect that "Swift did not exaggerate the part played by ordure in the apparently ordered life of the beaux and the belles. London may not have been a stews, but it stank; and Swift refused to shut his nostrils" (47:198). Herbert Davis reveals an interesting point of view in suggesting "that some of the unpleasant qualities of these poems, which have caused his admirers so much difficulty, may have been due as much to his impatience with poetic cant as to any unspeakable perversions in his mind" (14:36). And Quintana strikes the same note when he says that "The most reviled of Swift's poems. . . are not to be explained by morbidity alone. . . they are parodies on sentimental poetry, styptics to the sensual imagination" (45:65-6).

It is more directly important for our purpose to realize that in his treatment of women in these poems Swift was not expressing hatred of them, but impatience with their follies and weaknesses. It is true that, to call these faults to their attention, he adopted coarse, harsh methods, but his coarseness was definitely moral, never lascivious or sensual. Quintana says wisely, "It is through disgust that Swift habitually attains his most forcible effects: all that is unacceptable to reason is given an emotional repulsiveness so strong that it is attended by a definite

visceral reaction" (45:83). And W. E. H. Lecky declares:

It must be added that the coarseness for which Swift has been so often and so justly censured is not the coarseness of vice. He accumulates images of a kind that most men would have sedulously avoided, but there is nothing sensual in his writings; he never awakens an impure curiosity, or invests guilt with a meretricious charm. His writings in this respect are wholly different from those of Byron, or Sterne, or of French novelists; and it may be safely affirmed that no one has ever been allured to vicious courses by reading them. He is often very repulsive and very indecent, but his faults in this respect are rather those of taste than of morals (34:22).

In this connection, it is significant that in his personal life Swift objected to vulgarity or indecency in conversation (48:176).

Finally, once more let it be affirmed that in these four poems Swift, as he ridiculed, laughed. The reader who finds nothing to incite laughter, is, I think, lacking in a generous sense of humor. It is in the famous "Epistle to a Lady" that Swift defends his method in poetry:

Ridicule has greater Pow'r
 To reform the World, than Sour.

 Thus, I find it by Experiment,
 Scolding moves you less than Merriment.

 As my Method of Reforming,
 Is by Laughing, not by Storming (53:Vol. II, 675-684).

CADENUS AND VANESSA

This justly famous poem (53:Vol. I, 103-128) written in 1713, has been the delight of both biographers of Swift

and admirers of his verse: to the first group because it represents an accurate account of Swift's friendship with Vanessa, Esther Vanhomrigh; to the second because they generally feel it to be the finest metrical composition ever to come from Swift's pen. Its particular interest to us here rises from the fact that it reveals, more completely perhaps than any other single composition, his attitude toward women--their foibles and follies, marriage, romantic ideas of love, and his own demands in connection with them. Because this very personal document was never written to be published, we can credit its essential honesty.

The story of "Cadenus and Vanessa" is told as an interlude in a mythological fable about Venus and the Court of Love. And Gwynn has said that "the mythological imagery . . . makes this poem . . . one of the most beguiling compliments ever addressed to woman" (23:183). As the trial begins, the nymphs stand before Venus and accuse the shepherds of reducing marriage and love to questions of money and intrigue, to which the shepherds retaliate by insisting that women are to blame for this state of affairs. Modern love, they say, is no longer

A Fire celestial, chaste, refin'd,
Conceiv'd and kindled in the Mind;

but instead women are moved by "gross Desire," caprice, and folly. Furthermore,

A Dog, a Parrot, or an Ape,
Or, some worse Brute in human Shape,

Engross the Fancies of the Fair,
 The few soft Moments they can spare,
 From Visits to receive and pay;
 From Scandal, Politicks, and Play;
 From Fans, and Flounces, and Brocades,
 From Equipage and Park-Parades;
 From all the Thousand Female Toys;
 From every Trifle that employs
 The Out or Inside of their Heads,
 Between their Toylets and their Beds.

The shepherds add that the female mind turns uncertainly with every whim and caprice and draws to her only "Fools, Fops, and Rakes," which leads them to conclude that "no Women's Hearts"

Are won by Virtue, Wit, and Parts:
 Nor are the Men of Sense to blame,
 For Breasts incapable of Flame;
 The Fault must on the Nymphs be plac'd,
 Grown so corrupted in their Taste.

Venus is not able, after hearing all the evidence, the testimony of witnesses, to make a decision in the case. She consults the Muses, then her books. Ovid, Vergil, Tibullus, Cowley, Waller--all fail to give assistance toward rendering a just verdict. The trial is drawn out and reheard day after day, year after year, until sixteen years go by and Venus is no nearer a decision than when the case was begun. Her empire is threatened with ultimate decline and extinction, so that she finally decides on an experiment which she believes will "show the Merits of the Cause" far better than any of the laws have been able to do. She chooses a new-born maid, Vanessa, to endow with all the qualities men complain are lacking in women: sweetness,

cleanliness, a decency of mind as modest as the "Speech of Prudes," a rare beauty of "outward Form," and a "gentle, soft, engaging Air." But this is not enough. Venus tells Pallas that Vanessa is a boy, and persuades the goddess to bestow on the infant those qualities "For manly Bosoms chiefly fit,"

The Seeds of Knowledge, Judgment, Wit.
Her Soul was suddenly endu'd
With Justice, Truth and Fortitude;
With Honour, which no Breath can stain,
Which Malice must attack in vain;

and some other qualities "long unknown to Womankind."

Now the work is completed, and Venus is proud of the product; she is certain that Vanessa, thus endowed, will awaken feelings of love in the breasts of all men and that she will serve as a model for all womankind. Venus feels assured that, as a result of creating this paragon, her power will be restored and happy lovers will again bless her reign. However, Pallas in the meantime has discovered the deception that has been practiced on her. The irate goddess tells Venus that the whole scheme will fail and that Vanessa herself will prove the greatest foe to her plan.

Thou hast, as thou shalt quickly see,
Deceiv'd thy self, instead of me;
For how can heav'nly Wisdom prove
An Instrument to earthly Love?
Know'st thou not yet, that Men commence
Thy Votaries for want of Sense?

Vanessa goes out into the world, very keenly alert to the dangers she must avoid. She listens scornfully to the conversation of the fashionable fops and earns their dislike by discoursing to them on all manner of learned subjects.

Their Judgment was upon the Whole,
 --That Lady is the dullest Soul--
 Then tipt their Forehead in a jeer,
 As who should say--she wants it here;
 She may be handsome, young, and rich,
 But none will burn her for a Witch.

Next she listens to the scandal and tittle-tattle of a group of fashionable ladies and is thoroughly disgusted and enraged at their censure and innuendoes. The dames leave to tell their friends with gossipy delight of Vanessa's failings, their final judgment being that she might become acceptable if they could only get her to "know the World a little better," to which Swift adds parenthetically:

(To know the World! a modern Phrase,
 For Visits, Ombre, Balls and Plays.)

Enough has happened now to make Venus realize that she has made a great mistake in enlisting the aid of Pallas, for Vanessa's learning has made her disagreeable to men and women alike. She is neither loved by the beaux nor imitated by the ladies; these groups are too ignorant to show anything but disdain for superior virtues. However, Vanessa does admit to her society both men and women of true learning and wit, among them some members of the clergy, whom

she entertains for the sake of Cadenus (an anagram for Decanus, i.e. Dean), who has been selected by Pallas as a coadjutor against Venus. The goddess of beauty seems doomed to defeat, when Cupid, her son, decides to "vindicate his Mother's Wrongs." He discharges his shafts at colonels, lords and beaux, but Cadenus wards off the blows by placing a book in the path of each shaft. Cupid, undismayed, realizes that Vanessa will be satisfied with nothing but a doctor, and decides to give her the man she seems most to admire.

Cadenus is a Subject fit,
Grown old in Politicks and Wit;
Caress'd by Ministers of State,
Of half Mankind the Dread and Hate;
Whate'er Vexations Love attend,
She need no Rivals apprehend:
Her Sex, with universal Voice,
Must laugh at her capricious Choice.

Cupid watches for his opportunity. While Vanessa sits reading a volume of writings by Cadenus, he lets fly an arrow which pierces the book and reaches Vanessa's heart. What immediately follows represents not only Swift's attempt to show Vanessa the folly of her love, but also his ideas on the subject of marriage between persons of unequal ages. It needs no interpretation.

Vanessa, not in Years a Score,
Dreams of a Gown of Forty-four;
Imaginary Charms can find,
In Eyes with Reading almost blind:
Cadenus now no more appears
Declin'd in Health, advanc'd in Years:
She fancies Musick in his Tongue,
Not further looks, but thinks him young.

What Mariner is not afraid
 To venture in a Ship decay'd?
 What Planter will attempt to yoke
 A Sapling with a falling Oak?
 As Years increase, she brighter shines,
 Cadenus with each Day declines,
 And he must fall a Prey to Time,
 While she continues in her Prime.

Cadenus himself knows nothing of love; his only interest in Vanessa is that of a father in his child or of a teacher in his pupil. He is amazed at the sudden change in her and is at a loss to account for her "distracted Mind," unless it be, he conjectures, that he has made a mistake in troubling her with "dull Studies" which have robbed her of freedom and hidden her from the fashionable world. Perhaps, he feels, his plans for her have been visionary and he must now own to failure and take his leave. Vanessa does not yield to tears, having learned to scorn female frailties, but she does say his lessons which were "aim'd at the head had reach'd the heart." Cadenus is at once ashamed, disappointed and confused. He had been totally unaware of Vanessa as other than a student: "His thoughts had wholly been confined "To form and cultivate her mind." He is afraid that people will say that he has betrayed a harmless maid and used his wit to flatter and seduce her. Cadenus is afraid that his reputation will suffer:

That scholars were like other folks;
 And, when Platonic flights were over,
 The tutor turn'd a mortal lover!
 So tender of the young and fair!

Vanessa argues that reason has been her guide in love. Cadenus himself has taught her so effectively that she has become a miniature of him. She is, therefore, accused of self-love since her love for him is also love for a larger version of herself.

Cadenus, who could ne'er suspect
His lessons would have such effect,
Or be so artfully applied,
Insensibly came on her side.
It was an unforeseen event;
Things took a turn he never meant.

He had not realized that "Each girl, when pleased with what is taught, will have the teacher in her thought."

But, now things take a rather different turn as Cadenus begins to take some pride in Vanessa's attention:

His pride began to interpose;
Preferr'd before a crowd of beaux!
So bright a nymph to come unsought!
Such wonder by his merit wrought!

Cadenus cannot hide his pride in this situation, so now he must seek instead to justify it:

Construing the passion she had shown,
Much to her praise, more to his own.
Nature in him had merit placed,
In her a most judicious taste.

The result, however, is friendship for Vanessa and not the love she may have desired. Dignity and a recognition of his old age "Forbid Cadenus to engage."

But Friendship in its greatest Height,
A constant, rational Delight,
On Virtue's Basis fix'd to last,
When Love's Allurements long are past;

Which gently warms, but cannot burn;
 He gladly offers in return:
 His want of Passion will redeem.
 With Gratitude, Respect, Esteem:
 With that Devotion we bestow,
 When Goddesses appear below.

Vanessa proceeds immediately to turn this line of reasoning to her own account, saying that Cadenus speaks of "Devotion, Duty, and Respect," the tables are turned and she must become his tutor, although she knows he will have difficulty in mastering the "Science she designs to teach." The interlude ends on a mysterious note, posing a question that has given rise to unflattering rumors, a question that still baffles the world, and whose solution will probably never be known.

But what Success Vanessa met,
 Is to the World a Secret yet:
 Whether the Nymph, to please her Swain,
 Talks in a high romantick Strain;
 Or whether he at last descends,
 To act with less Seraphick Ends;
 Or, to compound the Business, whether
 They temper Love and Books together;
 Must never to Mankind be told,
 Nor shall the conscious Muse unfold.

The poem now turns back to the fable. Venus has not succeeded in her established purpose, but the experience she has gained from her experiment makes her better able to give a verdict in the trial. After listening to the final arguments of the lawyers for both sides, she decides against the shepherds, explaining that they have really lost the case for themselves. Harkening to their

complaints that "Women were not worth the wooing," she has gone to great trouble to create a woman who would possess all the virtues they demanded, only to find that the men have failed to recognize and appreciate the very thing for which they were clamoring.

She was at Lord knows what Expence
 To form a Nymph of Wit and Sense;
 A model for her Sex design'd
 Who never could one Lover find.
 She saw her Favour was misplac'd;
 The Fellows had a wretched Taste;
 She needs must tell them to their Face,
 They were a stupid, senseless Race:
 And were she to begin again,
 She'd study to reform the Men;
 Or add some Grains of Folly more
 To Women than they had before,
 To put them on an equal Foot;
 And this, or nothing else, wou'd do't.
 This might their mutual Fancy strike,
 Since every Being loves its Like.

Venus is so thoroughly disgusted that, as a final gesture, she turns the world over to her son to use at his discretion, harnesses her doves, and flies away to heaven.

So much, then, for "Cadenus and Vanessa," a clever explanation of Swift's attitude toward Esther Vanhomrigh. In this examination, the aim has been to let the poem speak for itself as far as possible; attention need hardly be called to the implicit criticism of the weaknesses of women (for which men are held in great measure responsible) which threads its subtle way from the beginning to the end of the tale and which is particularly evident in the mythological framework.

THE POEMS TO STELLA

In 1719 Swift seems to have begun the interesting practice of celebrating Stella's birthday in verse, a habit which he continued to 1728, the very year of her death. In all, there are nine poems, two of which are substitutions for the regular birthday verses. The importance of these compositions as evidence in this study cannot be overestimated, for as always when writing about Hester Johnson, Swift here gives clearly his conception of the ideal woman. As Quintana states, "Here is an expression of Swift's true attitude towards women" (45:278). And the same writer indicates the significance of these poems for us when he says, in another connection, that "it is only when hung beside the portraits of Stella, the model of her sex, that Swift's satiric representations of woman can be properly understood" (45:285).

The first poem, "On Stella's Birthday" (1719) (53: Vol. I, 135), is a graceful compliment. Swift reminds Stella that she has reached the age of thirty-four (although she was older), but he asks her not to be troubled, for,

Since first I saw thee at Sixteen,
The brightest Virgin on the Green,
So little is thy Form declin'd;
Made up so largely in thy Mind.

As we know, this is not a new idea for Swift. To him, the continued development of the mind of woman was always much more important than the physical preservation of her body.

In 1720 there were two poems to substitute for the regular birthday tribute. "To Stella, Visiting me in my Sickness" (53:Vol. I,135-9) pays special homage to Stella's sense of honor and physical courage. Swift eliminates all the usual, half-true conceptions of honor and insists on a consideration of this virtue in the highest sense only. Stella's honor is, of course, of this kind.

Ten thousand Oaths upon Record,
 Are not so sacred as her Word;
 The World shall in its Atoms end,
 E'er Stella can deceive a Friend.
 By Honour seated in her Breast,
 She still determines that is best:
 What indignation in her Mind
 Against Enslavers of Mankind!
 Base Kings and Ministers of State,
 Eternal Objects of her Hate.

Stella is not addicted to the usual feminine fears, which are frequently affected and foolish. She has the courage of a man, and does not consider that there is charm in pretending to be frightened by imaginary apparitions, sudden noises, or "an Earwig in a Plum." Indeed, Stella is so free of the usual female weaknesses that Swift wonders whether she has been born a woman by mistake.

Say, Stella, was Prometheus blind,
 And forming you, mistook your Kind;
 No: 'Twas for you alone he stole
 The Fire that forms a manly Soul;
 Then to compleat it ev'ry way,
 He moulded it with Female Clay:
 To that you owe the nobler Flame,
 To this, the Beauty of your Frame.

The poem ends with a grateful acknowledgment of Stella's kindness in her slavish devotion to Swift in his illness.

The second poem, attributed to 1720, "To Stella, Who Collected and Transcribed his Poems" (53:Vol. I,139-144), presents in part a very significant picture of the relationship between Swift and Stella; it is the Dean's repetitious expression of his preference for friendship over romance.

Thou, Stella, wert no longer young,
 When first for thee my Harp I strung:
 Without one Word of Cupid's Darts,
 Of killing Eyes, or bleeding Hearts:
 With Friendship and Esteem possesst,
 I ne'er admitted Love a Guest.

In all the Habitudes of Life
 The Friend, the Mistress, and the Wife,
 Variety we still pursue,
 In Pleasure seek for something new:
 Or else, comparing with the rest,
 Take Comfort, that our own is best:
 (The best we value by the worst,)
 As Tradesmen shew their Trash at first:
 But his Pursuits are at an End,
 Whom Stella chuses for a Friend.

In 1721 Swift marked Stella's thirty-sixth year with "Stella's Birthday" (53:Vol. I,144-5), an unusual tribute in which he begins by calling attention to her physical deterioration, a procedure which the average lady would hardly have considered complimentary. But while her body shows the effects of time, her mind and character steadily improve, which of course is all that really matters to Swift, as we have seen.

Now, this is Stella's Case in fact,
 An Angel's Face, a little crack'd:
 (Could Poets, or could Painters fix
 How Angels look at Thirty-six:)
 This drew us in at first, to find
 In such a Form an Angel's Mind;
 And ev'ry Virtue now supplies
 The fainting Rays of Stella's Eyes.

Other women, Swift maintains, may go on trying to appear physically young, but they will certainly be ignored by men of sense, who will always prefer superior qualities of the mind to a mere outward show of beauty.

Though you and all your senseless Tribe
 Could Art or Time or Nature bribe
 To make you look like Beauty's Queen
 And hold for ever at fifteen:
 No Bloom of Youth can ever blind
 The cracks and Wrinkles of your Mind:
 All Men of Sense will pass your Door,
 And crowd to Stella's at Fourscore.

The birthday poems for 1722, 1723, and 1724 are conventional compliments and need not be treated in detail here. "Stella's Birthday" (1725) (53:Vol. I,153-5) reiterates the importance of their relationship founded on "Esteem and Friendship," and repeats, too, the belief that cultivation of the mind is far more important than hiding the visible evidence of advancing years. Swift insists:

No Length of Time can make you quit
 Honour and Virtue, Sense and Wit:
 Thus you may still be young to me,
 While I can better hear than see:
 Oh, ne'er may Fortune shew her Spight,
 To make me deaf, and mend my Sight.

In 1727 Swift celebrated Stella's birthday for the last time. She died on January 28, 1728, less than a year after the final "Stella's Birthday" (53:Vol.I,157-9) was written. It is perhaps the most tender of all the annual tributes and shows clearly the deep affection which Swift felt for Stella. She was already seriously ill at the time

the poem was conceived; Swift seeks to console her by pushing aside the cares of the moment and by reflecting on the joys of the past.

This day then, let us not be told,
That you are sick, and I grown old,
Nor think on our approaching Ills,
And talk of Spectacles and Pills.
To-morrow will be time enough
To hear such mortifying Stuff.
Yet, since from Reason may be brought
A better and more pleasing Thought,
Which can, in spite of all Decays,
Support a few remaining Days:
From not the gravest of Divines,
Accept, for once, some serious Lines.

He reminds her of her "Life well spent," arguing that it should be a source of real happiness for her to reflect on all her good deeds, including her great and unselfish devotion to him. He pleads with her not to allow her ills to affect her reason and cause her to imagine that her friends "can be unkind." At least,

Me, surely Me, you ought to spare,
Who gladly would your Suff'rings share;
Or give my Scrap of Life to you,
And think it far beneath your Due:
You, to whose Care so oft I owe,
That I'm alive to tell you so.

This last poem alone is enough to urge agreement with G.A. Aitken's observation regarding the poems to Stella, that "Swift is at his best in these pieces of sincere affection for the woman whom he loved throughout her life" (1: 134).

If there is anything at all about Swift which may be said with certainty, it is that he is consistent. His

attitude toward women as expressed in his verse is a more personal reiteration of the same expression in his prose. He finds women vain, foolish, affected, and improperly educated--but not hopelessly so. Stella and Vanessa are cases to prove that women are capable of living intelligent, constructive lives, although Vanessa was in the end betrayed by an emotional force which Swift could not approve.

Certainly it is not fair to call attention, as some critics have done, only to the scatological poems and to conclude from these that Swift's attitude toward women was an unfriendly one. These pieces must be considered along with "Cadenus and Vanessa" and the poems to Stella. A careful study of all these verses leads to the conclusions that, although Swift's approach is frequently drastic and shocking (not taking into consideration the element of humor), nevertheless his purpose is at all times socially and morally constructive. He paints the evil to show the need for a cure.

Perhaps I may allow, the Dean
 Had too much Satyr in his Vein;
 And seem'd determined not to starve it,
 Because no Age could more deserve it.
 Yet, Malice never was his Aim;
 He lash'd the Vice, but Spar'd the Name.
 No individual could resent,
 Where Thousands equally were meant:
 His Satyr points at no Defect,
 But what all Mortals may correct (53:Vol. II,737).

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN IN SWIFT'S CORRESPONDENCE AND LIFE

That Love is the Devil, I'll prove when requir'd:
These Rhimers abundantly show it:
They swear that they all by Love are inspir'd,
And, the Devil's a damnable Poet.

.
The glass, by lovers nonsense blurr'd,
Dims and obscures our sight:
So, when our passions Love hath stirr'd,
It darkens Reason's light.

--Swift, "Verses written upon Windows"
(53:Vol. II, 413).

In all Swiftiana there is perhaps no problem more perplexing than the Dean's personal relations with women. This phase of Swift's life is tangled in a maze of gossip and speculation, and there is even now no essential agreement regarding facts, doubtless because so many of the so-called "facts" have their roots in frequently malicious rumor and owe their existence to stray remarks in memoirs and family papers of the time. Thomas Sheridan wrote with discernment:

Perhaps there never was a man whose true character has been so little known, or whose conduct at all times, even from his first setting out in life, has been so misrepresented to the world, as his (49:65).

True, Swift's voluminous correspondence represents an authentic source, but, with the possible exception of the Journal to Stella, few letters can be found which elucidate his deepest feelings on personal matters. And

even the letters to the one woman he loved are often clothed in mystery. W. A. Eddy, for example, feels the Journal offers little help:

Too much has perhaps been made of the Journal to Stella as an intimate revelation of Swift's feelings. To be sure he wrote it nightly, when he was alone in bed, to the friend he trusted above all others. It is indeed confidential, intimate, informal; and it shows us Swift off-stage. But the Journal tells us little of his feelings toward Stella that we do not know from other writings. . . as a series of love-letters the Journal is not a masterpiece (17: xix-xx).

However, in spite of the element of careful reserve in Swift's personal writings, much interesting material comes to light which, even if it can never solve the enigma of Swift, Stella, and Vanessa, cannot nevertheless be ignored in any appraisal of Swift's attitude toward women.

The reader of Swift who interprets narrowly the many unflattering references to women in the prose and poetry and who would deduce from this that Swift shunned the society of women, and women the company of Swift--such a reader might well be amazed at the evidence to the contrary in the interesting pages of the correspondence. Here, as perhaps in no other place, we become aware that Swift, throughout the greater part of his life, "had the companionship and affection of many splendid women" (12:521). His letters and journals indicate the dozens of well-known ladies with whom he was intimately acquainted--leaders in

the feminine world who went out of their way to court his favor and to set traps for him, vying with one another in the heated competition of getting him to come to dinner (51:92).

Actually, a reader need only open any one of the collected volumes of Swift's letters and glance down the table of contents to see that his correspondence with women was much larger than might have been expected.

Miss Anne Long, a "celebrated lady--the toast of the Kit-cat Club"--writes, on November 18, 1711, a pleasant, gossipy letter in which she reports to Swift on the state of her health and the news of the little town in which she resides. "If you will again allow me," she begins, "the pleasure of hearing from you, without murmuring, I will let you enjoy that of laughing at me for any foolish word I misapply; for I know you are too reasonable to expect me to be nicely right in the matter" (63:Vol. I,273).

On December 20, 1712, Swift writes to thank the Duchess of Ormond for sending him her picture; he is delighted with it, deeply honored, but,

After all, to deal plainly with your Grace, your picture. . . will be of very little use, farther than to let others see the honour you are pleased to do me: for all the accomplishments of your mind and person are so deeply printed in the heart, and represent you so lively to my imagination, that I should take it for a high affront, if you believed it in the power of colours to refresh my memory (63:Vol. I,327).

No one can doubt that Swift knew how to pay a pretty compliment.

Lady Masham, under date of July 29, 1714, sends a note to Swift by "a safe hand," imploring him not to go back to Ireland, as is his intention, but to remain in London, where he can be of some service to the Queen. She praises him for his goodness, his "charity and compassion," and adds: "I know you take delight to help the distressed; and there cannot be a greater object than this good lady, who deserves pity" (63:Vol. II,88). A day after Swift's receipt of this letter, the Queen is dead. He sends a reply, dated August 7, commending Lady Masham for her devotion and service to the Queen, concluding: "I most heartily thank your Ladyship for the favourable expressions and intentions in your letter, written at a time when you were at the height of favour and power" (63:Vol. II,109).

The Duchess of Ormond writes again to Swift on October 17, 1715, expressing pleasure that the Dean has not forgotten her, and urging that he write oftener, "for no friend you have has more respect for you" (63:Vol. II,189). She proves her contention by maintaining her correspondence with Swift over an extended period, in each letter expressing her gratitude for his favors and kindnesses or chiding him for his failure to write or visit her.

There is another letter from Lady Masham, written in February, 1723-4, in which she voices pleasure at receiv-

ing a missive from him after a long interval of silence.

She assures Swift from the bottom of her heart,

. . . there is not a person living I have a greater friendship for than yourself, and shall have to the end of my life. Indeed now I can show it only in expressions, but I flatter myself you believe them sincere. I long to see you at my retired habitation, where you will meet with a most hearty welcome and faithful friends (63:Vol. III,8).

Quotation might be piled upon quotation, from William's edition of the Correspondence, from The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford, and from the Journal to Stella, to prove the friendship and esteem of many great ladies for Swift, and his admiration, affection, and respect for them. They wrote to get his advice, to inquire about his health, to announce a gift, to request an audience, to extend an invitation, to express gratitude for favors, to praise his charity, or merely for the pleasure of exchanging views on a variety of subjects, for his judgment was greatly respected. He numbered among his correspondents such well-known figures as the Duchess of Queensberry, Lady Elizabeth Germaine, the Duchess of Ormond, the Duchess of Hamilton, the Countess of Orkney, the Marquess of Wharton, Lady Johnson, Lady Catherine Jones, the Countess of Holderness, Lady Worsley, Lady Carteret, the Countess Suffolk, Lady Acheson, the Countess of Kerry, Viscountess Bolingbroke, Lady Howth, and, of course, many ladies of lesser name, like Mrs. Howard, Miss Alice Hill, Mrs. Chetwode,

Mrs. Pratt, Miss Martha Blount, Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Pilkington--the list seems almost endless.

Indeed, the number of the Dean's feminine friends was so extensive, and their interest in him so great, that a few biographers and critics have, I believe, been falsely led into overstating the case when they intimate that he bullied women mercilessly and held sway over them like a sultan. Leslie Stephen insisted that Swift was a bully of ladies and that "he required absolute submission." This critic continued:

His dominion was most easily extended over women; and a long list might easily be made out of the feminine favourites who at all periods of his life were in more or less intimate relations with this self-appointed sultan. From the wives of peers and the daughters of lord-lieutenants down to Dublin tradeswomen with a taste for rhyming, and even scullery maids with no tastes at all, a whole hierarchy of female slaves bowed to his rule, and were admitted into higher and lower degrees of favour (50:121-2).

And a later writer, Sidney Dark, has said much the same thing. In seeking an "explanation of the relations between Swift and Stella and Vanessa, and of the earlier incident with Varinna," Dark asserts that the answer may be found in Swift's temperament. "He liked gossiping to women; he liked writing to women; he liked being admired by women; above all, he liked domineering over women" (11:146). At least part of this statement is true, but it is most unjust to add: "Swift preferred women friends to men friends

because they were more easily bullied" (11:148). Certainly this bold dictum is not in keeping with what we can deduce of the Dean's character and controlling ideas from the entire bulk of his correspondence and writings--his hatred of sham, hypocrisy, extravagance, oppression, and domination; his love of honesty, frankness, tolerance, and liberty.

VARINA

Not much is known concerning Swift's affair with Miss Jane Waring (Varina), sister of one of his classmates in Trinity College, Dublin. The story is pieced out from two letters which the Irish cleric wrote to her, the first dated April 29, 1696, shortly after he had been appointed to the prebend of Kilroot. In this first missive (not apparently the first he had written to her) he is the meek lover, supplicating, pleading romantically for her hand in marriage. One gathers that the young lady, after the coquettish manner of her time, has been holding Swift off, perhaps treating him scornfully, but yet giving some encouragement, enough to make him impatient for her answer. He humbles himself in a way which was to prove impossible for the more mature Swift. The letter tells its own story, and may be quoted in part:

Impatience is the most inseparable quality of a lover, and indeed of every person who is in pursuit of a design whereon he conceives his greatest happiness or misery to depend. . .

You have now had time enough to consider my last letter, and to form your own resolutions upon it. I wait your answer with a world of impatience. . . I desire nothing of your fortune; you shall live where and with whom you please till my affairs are settled to your desire. . . Would to heaven you were but a while sensible of the thoughts into which my present distractions plunge me; they hale me a thousand ways, and I not able to bear them. It is so, by Heaven: the love of Varina is of more tragical consequence than her cruelty. Would to God you had treated and scorned me from the beginning. It was your pity opened the first way to my misfortune; and now your love is finishing my ruin. . . Surely, Varina, you have but a very mean opinion of the joys that accompany a true, honourable, unlimited love. . . Ambition, high appearance, friends, and fortune, are all tasteless and insipid when they come in competition; yet millions of such glorious minutes we are perpetually losing, for ever losing, irrecoverably losing, to gratify empty forms and wrong notions, and affected coldnesses and peevish humour. . . The little disguises, and affected contradictions of your sex, were all, to say the truth, infinitely beneath persons of your pride and mine; paltry maxims that they are, calculated for the rabble of humanity. . . Farewell, Madam, and may love make you awile forget your temper to do me justice. Only remember, that if you still refuse to be mine, you will quickly lose, for ever lose, him that is resolved to die as he has lived, all yours (63:Vol. I,18-23).

This is truly an unusual kind of letter for Swift, and, as far as we know, he never wrote another like it. The second letter was written after a space of four years (of course, there were undoubtedly other letters, but they have apparently not survived), on May 4, 1700. It is apparent that Varina has at length relented, perhaps having heard of Swift's increased income; but he has grown

older, wiser, more proud, more discriminating. He does not refuse to marry Varina, but the conditions he imposes are hard--too hard, he knows, for her to accept. The letter begins with an attempt to satisfy her curiosity on several points she has raised:

You would know what gave my temper that sudden turn, as to alter the style of my letters since I last came over. If there has been that alteration you observe, I have told you the cause abundance of times. I had used a thousand endeavours and arguments to get you from the company and place you are in; both on the account of your health and humour, which I thought were like to suffer very much in such an air, and before such examples. All I had in answer from you was a great deal of arguing, and sometimes in a style so very imperious as I thought might have been spared, when I reflected how much you had been in the wrong. The other thing you would know is, whether this change of style be owing to the thoughts of a new mistress. I declare, upon the word of a Christian and a gentleman, it is not; neither had I ever thoughts of being married to any other person but yourself. I had ever an opinion that you had a great sweetness of nature and humour, and whatever appeared to the contrary, I looked upon it only as a thing put on as necessary before a lover; but I have since observed in abundance of your letters such marks of a severe indifference, that I began to think it was hardly possible for one of my few good qualities to please you (63:Vol. I,33).

Then follows a paragraph in which Swift assures Varina that he had no ulterior motive in asking about her means. He is not a fortune-hunter. If marrying a lady with money were his chief concern, he reminds her that he has told her many times that:

In England it was in the power of any young fellow of common sense to get a larger fortune than ever you pretended to. I asked, in order to consider whether it were sufficient, with the help of my poor income, to make one of your humour easy in a married state (63:Vol. I,33).

And then comes the part of the letter which shows that Swift has suffered at her scheming hands as much as his pride and common sense would permit, and which shows, too, that he has already arrived at certain standards for a wife. It is principally this section of the letter for which he was so bitterly condemned by some of his nineteenth-century critics. It is too important for mutilation; in spite of its length it must be quoted in full:

My uncle Adam asked me one day in private, as by direction, what my designs were in relation to you, because it might be a hindrance to you if I did not proceed. The answer I gave him, which I suppose he has sent you, was to this effect: that I hoped I was no hindrance to you; because the reason you urged against a union with me was drawn from your indisposition, which still continued; that you also thought my fortune not sufficient, which is neither at present in a condition to offer you; that if your health and my fortune were as they ought, I would prefer you above all your sex; but that, in the present condition of both, I thought it was against your opinion, and would certainly make you unhappy; that, had you any other offers which your friends or yourself thought more to your advantage, I should think I were very unjust to be an obstacle in your way. Now for what concerns my fortune, you have answered it. I desire, therefore, you will let me know if your health be otherwise than it was when you told me the doctors advised you against marriage, as what would certainly hazard your life. Are they or you grown of another opinion in this particular? Are you in a condition to manage domestic affairs, with an income

of less perhaps than three hundred pounds a year? Have you such an inclination to my person and humour, as to comply with my desires and way of living, and endeavor to make us both as happy as you can? Will you be ready to engage in those methods I shall direct for the improvement of your mind, so as to make us entertaining company for each other, without being miserable when we are neither visiting nor visited? Can you bend your love and esteem and indifference to others the same way as I do mine? Shall I have so much power in your heart, or you so much government of your passions, as to grow in good humour upon my approach, though provoked by a --? Have you so much good-nature as to endeavour by soft words to smooth any rugged humour occasioned by the cross accidents of life? Shall the place wherever your husband is thrown be more welcome than courts or cities without him? In short, these are some of the necessary methods to please men, who, like me, are deep-read in the world; and to a person thus made, I should be proud in giving all due returns towards making her happy. These are the questions I have always resolved to propose to her with whom I meant to pass my life; and whenever you can heartily answer them in the affirmative, I shall be blessed to have you in my arms, without regarding whether your person be beautiful, or your fortune large. Cleanliness in the first, and competency in the other, is all I look for. I desire, indeed, a plentiful revenue, but would rather it should be of my own (63:Vol. I, 35-6).

Certainly the letter is not gallantly chivalric in the best Victorian tradition, but it has qualities much more to be commended from the point of view of Swift's day, as well as that of our own; it is honest, frank, and--in the last analysis--extremely kind, in that Swift saw misery ahead for Varina if he should allow her to accept him without knowledge of the demands he would make on a wife--demands which today represent a sine qua non of any reasonable marriage. Would the world have been better satisfied

if Swift had married the importunate young lady, only to have her learn too late that by inclination, temperament, and training she was not a proper match for one "deep-read in the world?" I do not think it extravagant to suggest that the Varina affair is strikingly indicative of the ultimate fairness and keen common sense of Swift's attitude toward women.

STELLA AND VANESSA

The question of the relations of Swift, Stella, and Vanessa has always called forth speculation and controversy which began officially with the publication of Lord Orrery's Remarks in 1752 and have not yet abated. It may safely be ventured that the subject has provided matter for any other phase of Swift's life, work, or character. The curious aspect about the whole business is that there are little more facts to work with now than there were in Orrery's and Delany's time; yet the question is so provoking that scholars will not cease stirring and turning over and over again the meager pile of facts and the greater mass of fiction which were early heaped together by both friends and detractors of the great Dean.

The two points which have not yet been--and perhaps never will be--settled to everyone's satisfaction concern the justice of Swift's treatment of Vanessa and the true

nature of his relations with Stella. The stories of these two women are well known; they may be traced in a hundred sources, and need not be repeated in too great detail here. And since there is no point in entering the controversy in the hope of reaching an incontrovertible solution, it will suffice for the purpose of this study to review the scholarly opinion on the subject and perhaps to suggest an interpretation of Swift's attitude toward women as based on the Stella and Vanessa affairs.

From the first, a stigma has attached to the Dean's name because of malicious rumors which were circulated by ill-informed persons who apparently invented exciting and vivid episodes concerning his dealings with the two women. Many of the early biographers credited these unsubstantiated stories, thus perpetuating them, and it was not, so far as I can determine, until John Churton Collins' very readable biography in 1893, that Swift's conduct was judged on the basis of facts alone.

The tenor of most of the early versions was that Swift, in his relations with Vanessa, was guilty of conduct unbecoming a gentleman; that he led her on and then spurned her cruelly when she expected marriage; that he should have broken with her definitely when he first suspected her passionate love for him. In regard to Stella, it was popularly believed that Swift had married her but he

persistently refused to allow the union to be publicly admitted, for what reason no one seems to know.

To deal first with the case of Vanessa, no reader of the Journal to Stella can deny that between the years 1710-13, while Swift was in London, hard at work for the Tory ministry, he visited often at the home of Mrs. Vanhomrigh, an acquaintance who lived but a short distance from his lodgings and entertained very good company. Swift was fond of good company, and became quickly very much interested in Mrs. Vanhomrigh's eldest daughter, Esther. There is no evidence to indicate that his interest in her was anything more than the interest of a teacher in a very apt pupil, as we know from "Cadenus and Vanessa." As Collins has said: "No man thought more highly of the moral and intellectual capacities of women than Swift, and nothing gave him so much pleasure as superintending their education" (9:134). Vanessa had qualities which made her a particularly appealing pupil to Swift. In describing Vanessa Martin Freeman says:

She was a young woman of an unusual type, or of a type considered unusual by her friends, with no taste for cards or entertainments, or for parties, little even for dress; intelligent and receptive, interested in the things of the mind, yet too idle to study, petulant, self-willed but not strong-willed, delighting in reasonable conversation as much as she hated tattle (21:9).

It was for at least two years a pleasant relationship for both of them. Swift took great pleasure in forming her

mind, and she gloried in the company of a man whose name was growing every day more important in the social and political whirl of London. How was he to foresee that the pupil-teacher relationship would soon suffer destruction because of a violent passion which Vanessa conceived for him--an attachment which must have puzzled and annoyed the cleric almost twice her age. As Freeman points out:

There is no reason to doubt that in entering into this relation with Esther, Swift was guiltless of any design beyond what was openly avowed, namely, to persuade her to read and improve her natural abilities. He saw in her the makings of just that kind of woman he most admired, and at the same time saw her backward, uneducated, spoiling in idleness (21:12).

To Swift Vanessa had represented a diversion from the intricate and trying business of party politics. She was described by a critic as:

. . . a kitten that one picks up and plays with at the end of the day's work. It was pleasant to banter her, to make fun of the books she was reading, to sit with her after dinner and teach her some philosophy or some history, but she did not occupy his thoughts during the day: one does not think of absent kittens (51:109).

Now, suddenly, the kitten clings with tenacious, sharp claws and will not be put down, and Swift is faced with the problem of dealing with a woman passionately in love with him.

It has been easy for some critics, looking dispassionately at this situation over a comfortable bridge of time, to place the blame for what followed on Swift. They know what he ought to have done. He ought, they assert,

to have severed immediately all connections with Vanessa, unless, of course, he had been willing to marry her (9:135). But apparently Swift, not being clairvoyant, did not think the situation drastic enough to take either of these steps. Vanessa was young and impressionable, but she was also intelligent, and might be made to realize the humor and foolhardiness of her attachment. "Cadenus and Vanessa" was his answer.

But Esther was not to be easily dissuaded. She refused to accept friendship for love, in spite of all his arguments, and he gradually came to see that his temporizing and persuasion based on reason were making no impression on the stubborn Vanessa. His visits to the Vanhomrigh home ceased, he ignored her letters, but she persisted in her attention. The death of Mrs. Vanhomrigh in 1714 complicated matters, for her daughter inherited some property near Dublin, and announced her intention of following Swift to Ireland. He now became really alarmed. In a letter dated August 12, 1714, he warned her to be discreet, saying that Ireland "is not a place for any freedom, but where everything is known in a week and magnified a hundred degrees" (21:99). He even argued that "If you are in Ireland while I am there I shall see you very seldom." But Vanessa persisted in her intention, and in a short time she and her sister were living a short distance from the deanery. Swift tried to ignore her presence in Dublin, but her messages

grew increasingly more importunate. In a letter dated simply 1714, she pleaded:

If you continue to treat me as you do you will not be made uneasy by me long. 'Tis impossible to describe what I have suffered since I saw you last; I am sure I could have bore the rack much better than those killing, killing words of yours. Sometimes I have resolved to die without seeing you more; but those resolves, to your misfortune, did not last long (21:105-6).

The tone of Swift's replies indicates how tactfully he tried to bring her to her senses. Certainly he gave her no encouragement to continue the mad course she was pursuing, and all his efforts were bent toward demonstrating to her, as tenderly as he was able, how impossible and unreasonable were her demands. In spite of all he could do, however, she was still, in 1719-20, writing in the following vein:

I believe you thought I only rallied when I told you the other night I would pester you with letters. Did not I know you very well, I should think you knew but little of the world, to imagine that a woman would not keep her word whenever she promised anything that was malicious. . . I here tell you that I have determined to try all manner of human arts to reclaim you. . . For when I undertake anything, I don't love to do it by halves (21:110-1).

Swift may have hoped that when Vanessa left Dublin for Celbridge she would forget about him at last, but such was not the case. A short while after going into seclusion in the little town she wrote:

You endeavour by severities to force me from you; nor can I blame you, for with the utmost distress and confusion I behold myself the cause of uneasy reflections to you. Yet I cannot comfort you, but here declare that 'tis not in the power of art, time or accident to lessen the unexpressible passion which I have for _____. Put my passion under the utmost restraint, send me as distant from you as the earth will allow, yet you cannot banish those charming ideas, which will ever stick by me whilst I have the use of memory. Nor is the love I bear you only seated in my soul, for there is not a single atom of my frame that is not blended with it. Therefore don't flatter yourself that separation will ever change my sentiments, for I find myself unquiet in the midst of silence, and my heart is at once pierced with sorrow and love (21:127-8).

How distasteful it must have been for Swift to receive such open avowels of a hopeless, uncontrolled passion! There was nothing for him to do but continue to write to her and pay her an occasional visit, until the unpleasant chapter was closed by her death in 1723.

Apocryphal testimony and the prejudiced interpretations of critics like Jeffrey and Thackeray would have us believe not only that Swift's conduct in the Vanessa episode was highly culpable, but that it caused the lady's early death. Yet the correspondence and "Cadenus and Vanessa"--which represent the only authentic documentary evidence in the case--argue no such conclusions. Regarding the second charge, Leslie Stephen has wisely pointed out that:

Vanessa's death, though she was under thirty-five, is less surprising when we remember that her younger sister and both her brothers had died before her; and that her health had always been weak, and her life for sometime a languishing death (50:137).

It must have suited the fancy of the romantic and Victorian mind to picture a woman dying of a broken heart; and it must have seemed a highly gallant gesture to heap condemnation on the head of the man supposedly responsible.

If Swift is blameworthy for anything at all, I think it must be for making the pardonable error of rating too highly Vanessa's intelligence and strength of character. If he could have foreseen that she would not ultimately yield to reason and common sense, but that she would continue to force herself upon him without sense of pride or shame, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose he would have broken with her definitely at the first hint of trouble. He never gave her encouragement to love, and no doubt he had every reason to feel that her passion was an infatuation of the moment that would pass away in good time. When he finally realized to his dismay that the attachment showed no signs of melting, it was too late to withdraw completely. The letters show that he tried that course at least twice, but each time Vanessa's entreaties softened his heart and called him back (21:102,110). He pitied her in her misery and could not refuse to extend whatever solace it lay in his power to give. Collins has expressed it succinctly, at the same time getting at the very core of the matter: "From beginning to end it is the same story--on the woman's side, blind, uncontrollable passion--on the man's side,

perplexity, commiseration, undeviating kindness" (9:144).

Hester Johnson--or Stella, as she is more familiarly known--was throughout her life Swift's closest and dearest friend. The Dean's first acquaintance with her occurred at Sir William Temple's at Moor Park, when she was a child of about seven, and he a young man of twenty-two. Her mother was a stewardess in the Temple household, companion to Lady Giffard, Sir William's sister. Swift early developed a fondness for the companionable child and willingly assumed the direction of her studies. As the years passed, their friendship grew keener and more intimate and he continued to act as her guide and counselor. When Temple died in 1701, Swift suggested to her that she and her companion, Mrs. Rebecca Dingley, remove to Ireland, where Stella had a small estate, and where she might live more economically than in England. She accepted his advice, and until her death resided, always near Swift, in Ireland. Close as was their association, even the most malicious of detractors have insisted that Swift and Stella were never together in the same room without a third person present, usually Mrs. Dingley. Only one actual letter from Swift to Stella survives, dated April 30, 1721 (63:Vol. II,385), and the Journal to Stella, which in its "little language" and endearing phrases clearly attests to his deep affection for her, was nevertheless addressed to both Stella and Mrs. Dingley, meant for both of them to read.

These, then, are the bare facts of the relationship of Swift and Hester Johnson; there are no authentic documents to prove there was ever any greater intimacy between them than has already suggested; and yet a fantastic hodge-podge of conflicting reports has served to create doubt and suspicion in the minds of many as to the true attitude of Swift toward Stella, as well as toward Vanessa. As James Sutherland has said: "The idea that the two could have remained all those years merely good friends seemed incredible to the eighteenth century and still puzzles, or disappoints, the twentieth" (51:85).

The principal bone of contention in the never-ending controversy concerns the authenticity of a purported marriage between Swift and Stella in 1716. Actually it matters little whether there was or was not a marriage; the obvious fact must always remain that in either case Swift's deep appreciation of Stella shows his continued willingness to admire and respect women of cultivated mind and character. However, if it could be proved beyond possibility of error that Swift married Stella, an entirely new light could be thrown on the Vanessa affair. It would brand the Dean's conduct toward Esther Vanhomrigh as highly culpable.

The story of the marriage was first reported in 1752 by Lord Orrery in his Remarks, where he wrote with glib assurance:

Stella's real name was Johnson. She was the daughter of Sir William Temple's steward, and the concealed, but undoubted wife of Dr. Swift. . . . if my informations are right, she was married to Dr. Swift in the year seventeen hundred and sixteen, by Dr. Ashe then bishop of Clogher (38:Vol. II,45).

Of course, Orrery could offer no proof of his assertion, and the phrase "if my informations are right" indicates that there was sufficient doubt in his mind to urge the inclusion of the qualifying words. Shortly after the publication of Orrery's book, Patrick Delany issued his Observations of Lord Orrery's Remarks, in which he remarked: "Your Lordship's account of his marriage is, I am satisfied, true" (10:524). Delany, as can be seen, simply concurred with Orrery's account of a marriage for which he contributed no proof whatever. Then came Deane Swift, another early biographer, who in his Essay on the Life and Writings of Swift simply stated he was convinced that Swift had married Stella, without giving any reasons for his conviction (52:7).

Many of the stories grew out of the need of believers in the marriage to explain why, if Swift were really married, he was so anxious to keep the ceremony a secret and live apart from Stella. The accounts are inconsistent and fantastic, even as Craik, who credits the marriage, admits (10:530). It is Sheridan who tells the unbelievable tale about the death scene. According to the story, Stella, on her death bed, implored Swift to make their union known to

the world, whereupon the Dean turned on his heel and left the room without a word, never to see her again (49:45). Both Delany and Deane Swift offer a contradictory version. They maintain that Swift wished to declare the marriage, but that Stella refused (9:154). Sir Walter Scott hints at another solution of the mystery when he recites an incident which has been interpreted as an insinuation that Swift and Stella were illegitimate children of Sir William Temple and therefore brother and sister. Scott writes:

Immediately subsequent to the ceremony, Swift's state of mind appears to have been dreadful. Delany, (as I have learned from a friend of his relict,) being pressed to give his opinion on this strange union, said, that about the time it took place, he observed Swift to be extremely gloomy and agitated, so much so, that he went to Archbishop King, to mention his apprehensions. On entering the library, Swift rushed out with a countenance of distraction, and passed him without speaking. He found the Archbishop in tears, and upon asking the reason, he said, 'You have just met the most unhappy man on earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness, you must never ask a question' (62:219-21).

Other reasons which have been propounded to explain Swift's failure to live with Stella include medical diagnoses, ranging from, as Collins very delicately puts it, "a cause very derogatory to the moral character of the sufferer" (9:239), to the latest theory, *anaesthesia sexualis* (22:126-46).

There is no need to delve further into the marriage controversy; enough has been said to indicate the highly

speculative nature of the outstanding positive evidence, and it is hardly necessary to list the best testimony against the union (passages from letters, poems, other works), since the burden of proof rests with those who claim the marriage existed. In the absence of irrefutable documentary evidence, no satisfactory conclusion can be reached, and we must continue to assume there was no ceremony. Conjectural argument has proved nothing and will continue to prove nothing. Stanley Lane-Poole, a frequent writer on Swift, indicates the futility of the entire controversy when he says:

Yet, on the top of all this negative evidence, comes the astounding rumour that he was privately married to her in 1716-17, and nevertheless continued to live apart from her during the remaining eleven years of her life. The motives of such a marriage, in contradiction to every thing he said or wrote, the reasons for its merely formal nature, the object of its concealment, the strange silence of everybody (but one) on the subject of it during his lifetime, have naturally exercised the ingenuity of every biographer, and the fors and againsts of the alleged marriage have been keenly debated, with completely contrary conclusions (31:320).

The prevailing opinion among modern biographers like Quintana, Gwynn, and Rossi and Hone is that the marriage may indeed have taken place, but since there is lack of any definite proof the whole thing is unlikely and cannot be affirmed with any assurance whatever. In all fairness it must be mentioned that Maxwell Gold has carefully gathered all the known evidence pro and con and has come to the conclusion

that "Swift and Stella were married about the year 1716, and that Swift offered to acknowledge the marriage publicly (22:5). In the last analysis, however, Mr. Gold's conclusion depends on his own opinion of the honesty of the early commentators, not on the unimpeachable testimony of known fact. If we were willing to take Orrery's word in the first place, there would be no argument.

Putting the marriage controversy aside, it would seem that a great deal of pity has been wasted on the memory of Stella. One would think that Swift behaved toward her like a monster, whereas nothing could be further from the truth. He never made a secret of his great affection for her, as we have already seen from a discussion of his prose and poetry, and there is nothing which might lead us to believe that Stella was unhappy about her situation. She seemed to accept it willingly and was deeply grateful for his friendship, as is proved by the poem she wrote in honor of his birthday, November 30, 1721. It begins:

St. Patrick's Dean, your country's pride,
 My early and my only guide,
 Let me among the rest attend,
 Your pupil and your humble friend,
 To celebrate in female strains
 The day that paid your mother's pains;
 Descend to take that tribute due
 In gratitude alone to you.

And it ends:

Long be the day that gave you birth
 Sacred to friendship, wit, and mirth;
 Late dying may you cast a shred
 Of your rich mantle o'er my head;

To bear with dignity my sorrow,
 One day alone, then die tomorrow (57:81-2)

"Stella," says Sidney Dark, "was apparently content with the friendship of the man whose greatness she had intelligence enough to realize and demanded nothing more than he was ready to give" (11:150). And in another place the same critic asserts that "despite Thackery, it is quite clear that Swift behaved to her with considerable chivalry, and was always careful for her good name" (11:122). W. A. Eddy sums up their relationship as follows:

Whether or not Stella died of a broken heart, starved for romantic affection, we do not know; but we must not be too immoderate in our pity. She enjoyed much that women of her time sought eagerly: the friendship of the leading men of letters; a wide acquaintance among the cultured who year after year frequented her parlour; the gratitude of many unfortunates to whom she was a gracious and openhanded patroness. If she remained in the shadow of a great man, she was one of many women who chose that part. She was Swift's lifelong companion and his closest friend, intensely interested in his career, able to converse with him and to criticize his ideas. He was devoted to her charming person, her uncommon gentility and refinement, her sound opinions and lively conversation, her unfailing generosity and kindness (17:xix).

The eulogy to Stella begun in 1728 on the night of her death is an eloquent summing up of all of Swift's admiration. Moved by the passing of his friend and companion, he felt constrained to set down, at least for his own satisfaction, "something of her life and character." To him, she had been the living embodiment of all that a woman, as

a creature of society, should be. Born with superior "gifts of the mind," she improved them by reading and conversation; she seldom, if ever, made wrong judgments regarding "persons, books, or affairs"; her advice was always sound, free, and decent; she was graceful "somewhat more than human" in her use of language and in the very motion of her body. In fact, says Swift, "Never was so happy a conjunction of civility, freedom, easiness and sincerity" (60:Vol. V,228-9). She was treated with dignity by all those with whom she came in contact, and yet all sorts of people felt at ease in her presence; she was sure to expose unmercifully a "rude or conceited coxcomb," yet gently, so that even he could not complain; in the course of an afternoon or evening, she always said the best things of all the company; she never misjudged the understanding of others, nor did she ever use quite so severe a word as she might justifiably have used; she was loved and respected by her servants, who appreciated the occasional freedom that she allowed them, although they would never dare to take advantage of it; she had the soft temper of a lady and the

personal courage of a hero. She was never known to cry out, or discover any fear, in a coach or on horseback, or any uneasiness by those sudden accidents with which most of her sex, either by weakness or affectation, appear so much disordered (60:Vol. V,229).

Swift continues by pointing out that she was polite

in conversation, had a very agreeable voice, and spoke in plain words. What was more important, "she was but little versed in common topics of female chat; scandal, censure, and detraction, never came out of her mouth. . . The follies of her own sex she was rather inclined to extenuate or to pity" (60:Vol. V,230). Stella was familiar with Greek, Roman, French and English literature, and had in addition a first-hand acquaintance with the best books of travels; she "understood the Platonic and Epicurean philosophy," made wise abstracts of her best reading, was familiar with the errors of Hobbes in his views on government and religion, and knew something of "physic" and anatomy. And so Swift goes on, touching upon her attainments as a person of wit and good sense in both poetry and prose, a critic of style, a judge of books, a supporter of charity, a scorner of elaborate fashions in clothes, a kind dispenser of gifts, a possessor of such virtues as "honour, truth, liberality, good nature, and modesty," a defender of Ireland, and an enemy of tyranny and injustice. Finally:

Although her knowledge, from books and company, was much more extensive than usually falls to the share of her sex; yet she was so far from making a parade of it, that her female visitants, on their first acquaintance, who expected to discover it, by what they call hard words and deep discourse would be sometimes disappointed, and say, they found she was like other women. But wise men, through all her modesty, whatever they discoursed on, could easily observe that she understood them very well, by the judgment shown in her observations as well as in her questions (60:Vol. V,236).

Whether or not this picture of Stella is overdrawn-- in the manner of most eulogies, especially when written close upon the death of the subject, so that grief distorts fact--is of little consequence at this point. It is probably not an exaggeration of Stella's superb character, but even if it were, it would still be Swift's portrait of his ideal conception of woman.

Finally, it must be admitted that all of the thoroughly reliable external evidence, and the internal testimony of Swift's letters, his Journal to Stella, "Cadenus and Vanessa," and many of his shorter poems and prose pieces, lead definitely to two positive conclusions regarding his relations with the two most important women in his life: that he exhibited unusual patience and kindness in his vain attempt to dissuade Vanessa from her mad course, and that he held Stella and her memory always in the greatest esteem, love, and respect.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

'Tis plain, his Writings were design'd
To please, and to reform Mankind;
And, if he often miss'd his Aim,
The World must own it, to their Shame;
The Praise is His, and Theirs the Blame.

--Swift, "The Life and Character of Dean Swift"
(53:719)

The opinion which still persists in many quarters regarding Swift's attitude toward women may be indicated by three brief quotations from modern critics. Writing on the Dean in The Cambridge History of English Literature, G. A. Aitken says: "It is not easy to reconcile. . . his attacks on woman with his love for one, and the love which two women felt for him" (1:142). W. A. Eddy, in his edition of the Satires and Personal Writings of Swift, writes: "Editors of Swift have debated among themselves with no little feeling the question of Swift's lack of chivalry towards. . . ladies in general" (17:60). And Shane Leslie proclaims: "Swift, who was described as the 'hypocrite reversed,' was also the lover or gallant reversed. An introspective hatred of women permeates his whole work" (35:14).

Such opinions of Swift's attitude are derived, no doubt, from a too narrow reading and interpretation of the Dean's acid comments on the weaknesses and failings of women,

and from a confusion of his methods with his aims. It must be recognized, as this study has attempted to point out, that in all his railings against the sex his purpose was constructive. Just as he wrote A Tale of a Tub to attack the abuses of religion, not religion itself, and just as he wrote The Battle of the Books to satirize pretence in scholarship, not scholarship itself,--so, I think, he does not attack women per se, but the "Errors, Fopperies, and Follies" of women, for which, we may recall, he frequently blames men. He is not the enemy of women, but the enemy of their faults.

The method he followed may be open to attack, but certainly his aims were above reproach. As he himself said in his Apology to A Tale of a Tub:

Why should any Clergyman of our Church be angry to see the Follies of Fanaticism and Superstition exposed, tho' in the most ridiculous Manner? Since that is perhaps the most probable way to cure them, or at least to hinder them from farther spreading (54:244).

And as Charles Whibley has expressed it:

He did not write for his own pleasure, or to put money in his pocket. He wrote in scorn of stupidity, or with a fixed desire to reform abuses. He does not temper the wind of his wrath to his shorn victims. He does not bring an easy message of perceptibility to a sanguine world. He is even cruel in his denunciation of abuses, and those who regard literature as an anodyne do not like cruelty. But let it be remembered that Swift's cruelty was always justified. (66:361).

This is exactly the method Swift follows in his treatment of femininity, but to infer from it that he was unfriendly to women would be akin to suggesting that a father did not love his daughter because he scolded her in harsh language. There is almost nothing which Swift says about women, derogatory and blasphemous as it may seem, which, in my opinion, was not intended to help woman, rather than hinder her, in her battle for equality with man. True, Swift's method is undeniably less gentle than Addison's and Steele's, less journalistically cold and impersonal than Defoe's, less mockingly satirical than Pope's, but perhaps more effective, because of the intrinsically shocking nature of its savage intensity, than any of these.

Of all the modern biographers, I think it is Quintana who comes closest to the truth about Swift's treatment of women, when he writes:

No, Swift was not a hater of women. The same piercing eyes which saw delusion in romance, ennui in marriage, and indignity in the necessities of the body, saw also the chief, if hidden, attribute of cultivated woman--her realism. What man talked--or thought--better sense than Stella? (45:171-2).

And in another place he adds:

Swift's true attitude. . . was a noble and generous one. Unlike the majority of the great satirists, Swift did not look upon woman as a flagitious and inferior being; properly, she was man's equal, contemptible only when she assumed the conventionally feminine role and

laid reason aside for wiles and affected airs. When Swift browbeat the women of his acquaintance, it was to make them act like the rational beings that he assumed they were (45:278-9).

In conclusion, it may be said that it is still a matter of controversy whether Swift was married to Stella, whether he is censurable for his treatment of Vanessa, whether he was a skeptic in religion or the most un hypocritically devout of men, whether he was an apostate in politics or concerned chiefly for the public good, whether he was inexcusably coarse and indecent or "the mightiest moralist in printed English" (35:15), whether he actually hated or had a grudging affection for Ireland, whether he was a true poet or merely a skillful writer of simple rimes, whether certain of his poems should be regarded as "the product of a diseased imagination or as a contemptuous revolt against poetic sentiment" (14:36),--these, it may be said, are still questions of debate, but I do not believe there can be any longer the slightest doubt about his true attitude toward women. He was woman's friend and champion, not her enemy and detractor. For the measure of equality with men that women enjoy today in education, society, and marriage, they owe at least some moral debt to the Dean of St. Patrick's; his heart was torn with savage indignation on their account, too, as he recognized and bitterly condemned the injustice of their inferior position in the life of his time.

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