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Carly KoenigProfessor Geoffrey EmersonEnglish 215-00410 November 2017 The Lady’s DressingRoom             Known as asatirist, the Irish author Jonathan Swift was born on November 30, 1667. Swiftwas born with and suffered from Meniere’sDisease. His father died two months before hewas born and since his mother could not provide Swift was raised by his uncle.

Swift received the best education in Ireland and at the age of 14 began hisundergraduate studies at Trinity College in Dublin (Jonathan Swift). When Swift moved from Ireland to England his mother found him asecretary position under an English statesman, Sir William Temple. Whileworking for Temple, Swift was influenced to begin writing. When Temple died, Swift found a job outside of Dublin and here he released his first politicalpamphlet. Swift’s writings earned him a reputation and welcomed by the Tories, Swift became “ the most brilliant political journalist of the day” as the editorof the Examiner (The Norton Anthology of English Literature). Here he wrote letters to his lifelong love, Ester, which he later published as The Journal to Stella. When Swift returnedto Ireland he began leading a congregation and there he wrote what is now hisbest work. “ He has been called a misanthrope, a hater of humanity, and Gulliver’s Travels has been consideredan expression of savage misanthropy” (The Norton Anthology of English Literature).

Swift is known fortaking a hard look at the facts of the body and life itself. The Lady’s Dressing Room was publishedin 1732. Swift suffered from a stroke in 1742 and died three years later.            Thebeginning stanza begins with the reader meeting the beautiful Celia, aftertaking five hours to get ready in her dressing room. Strephon, her lover, findsthe room to be empty and sneaks in to take a look around the mysterious room. WhatStrephon finds next changes everything. What Strephon then sees in each stanzamake Celia appear more and more nauseating.

Strephon sees a dirty smock withsweat stains and covered in filth. He even swears that any man to call Celiaclean is lying. The horror continues as Strephon discovers combs filled withdandruff, cosmetics from Celia’s dead dog, and “ beslimed” towels that turnedStrephon’s bowls (The Norton).

At the center of Celia’s dressing room Strephon finds that she does in fact” shit” (The Norton). Swift then alludes to Pandora’s Box to express Celia’s dressing room and Celiaherself as horrid. He says that Strephon venturing into Cilia’s room was thelifting of the lid which released the secret monstrosities. The goddess thatnever sleeps, Vengeance, then punishes Strephon for snooping. His punishment bethat he will see the truth of every woman, no longer with he be tricked by the” charms of womankind” (The Norton).

Finally, Swift ends by saying Strephon would soon learn to think like him andrealize that women are lying, disgusting creatures who cover up their trueappearance.             This satireby Jonathan Swift is specifically targeting the female sex. The Lady’s Dressing Room takes theprivate affairs of Celia, representing womankind, and shoves them into thelight of the public. Strephon invading Celia’s dressing room is a perfect modelfor illustrating the connection between public and private life and the role ofeach in Swift’s society. This poem takes the woman’s dressing room, an objectof femininity, and uses it to introduce a nauseating perception of the femalesex. Swift loved individuals, but hated “ that animal called man,” meaninghumankind in general.

Although the focus of the poem is based on misogyny, theidea that lies beyond the lines is more extensive than Swift’s opinion of prideand women. Swift points out the idiocy of society’s pursuit to mask what cannotbe concealed; the basic nature of humanity no matter the advancements.              A referenceto the divine is how this poem begins. Celia is referred to as “ the goddess” (The Norton). Using the imageryof a goddess, this alludes to the traditional idea that feminine beauty isdivine. By comparing illustrations of human excrement with the divine, Swift urgesagainst the habit to idealize humanity.

The tone of the poem turns scientificwhen Strephon enters and discovers Celia’s secrets, “ an inventory follows here”(The Norton). Strephon is on a mission to discover what truly occurs in Celia’s dressingroom. What he discovers drastically changes how Strephon perceives women. Throughseeing Celia’s filth and cosmetics the true essence of humanity is revealed byshowing the eccentric means by which the truth is veiled. “ The virtues we mustnot let pass, of Celia’s magnifying glass. When frightened Strephon cast hiseye on’t, it showed the visage of a giant.” (The Norton).

This line acquaints the reader with Celia’s mirror as a scientific tool and notjust an object of reflection. Magnifying glass is used to enlarge an image andreveal the truth which we cannot see. Strephon is surprised to see himself as agiant in the reflection.

Strephon has molded from a curious man into a mansubject to the hideousness of womankind. The transformation of Celia from thedivine beauty to a horror represents unveiling the true animalistic nature ofhumankind. “ As from within Pandora’s box, when Epimetheus oped the locks, a suddenuniversal crew of human evils upward flew” (The Norton). By alluding Celia to Pandora and Strephon to Epimetheus, Swift is notdiscouraging exploration but simply cautioning that discoveries should be takenfor what they are and not romanticized.              Swift’ssatire unfairly focuses on womankind and holds a misogynistic tone.

However, there is more than meets the eye. Swift attempts to portray life how it reallyis, without the curtain of deception. Instead of divine beauty, Strephon findsfeces in Celia’s dressing room. Under a magnifying glass, humanity should beable to see the truth; the animal nature that lies at the base. Swift displaysto his readers that the truth can be perilous if not revealed. Not everythingcan be placed perfectly in the history of humankind.

The Lady’s Dressing Room satirizes the attempt of society toconceal the basic nature that is found in every person. Regardless of theirmade-up divinity.