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RATIONALE FOR THE MARRIAGE OF

JONATHAN SWIFT AND STELLA

(TITLE)

BY

Nellie G. Wiseman

PLAN B PAPER

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RATIONALE FOR THE MARRIAGE OF
JONATHAN SWIFT AND STELLA

by
Nellie Wiseman

One of the most fascinating and interesting romances during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century is that of Jonathan Swift and his intimate friend Stella. Their romance is fascinating because it is known to the world only through a series of letters and a number of verses which Swift dedicated to Stella. In his series of letters, Jonathan Swift recorded in meticulous detail his daily thoughts about Stella, gossip about their acquaintances, and each event that occurred in his daily life.

Many of these letters were written as Swift sat in bed late of an evening or early of a morning. These letters are interesting because they are written in what Swift termed the "wee" or "little" language or what might be called in modern language "baby-talk."

Jonathan Swift and Stella's romance is intriguing to study in order to attempt to relate what others have said about this unsolved riddle: In their long relationship was Stella a Platonic lover, wife, or a kept mistress?

This paper will attempt to demonstrate that Swift was married to Stella in about the year of 1716. This paper will present as many as possible of all the known details of what others have found and have thought of this affair. From the writings of others, an attempt will be made to arrive at some conclusive evidence on their marriage. However, it is a known fact that the found evidence will not detract from or add to the great writings of Jonathan Swift.

Historical Background of Swift and Stella

Jonathan Swift's ruling instinct was toward action among stubborn men. He was born without rank or fortune, but he did have a boundless appetite for power. In order to gain power, he used two weapons, prose and poetry. He wrote satires in a fury of revenge against the buzzing wits and upstart scientists whom he thought infested the moral and intellectual life of the times. In his periods of frustrations, he used his power of writing greedily, even cruelly, to assure himself that he still had the faculty of dominion.¹

In relaxing intervals, he found it soothing to let these powers of writing play over women; especially those women whose nature seemed yielding and responsive. Jonathan Swift cannot be called a "ladies" man or a modern Cassanova. Yet his friendship with Esther Johnson (Stella) and Hester Van Homrigh (Vanessa) has made them famous and immortal.

Jonathan Swift, as a young man of twenty-two, first met Stella when she was a child of six. She was an inmate in the household of Sir William Temple where Swift was employed as a secretary.² Swift became Stella's tutor. From this relationship, Stella owed much of her education to a man whose life was to be so strangely linked with hers.

¹ Carl Van Doren, Swift (London, 1931), p. 23.

² James Hay, Swift, The Mystery of His Life and Love (London, 1891), p. 126.

Stella's real name was Esther Johnson. Swift first changed her name to Stella when he wrote a verse addressed to her on her birthday on March, 1719. The opening lines are as follows:

Stella this Day is thirty four
 (We won't dispute a Year or more)
 However Stella, be not troubled,
 Although thy Size and Years are doubled,
 Since first I saw thee at Sixteen³

For a few years following Swift's tutoring of Stella, as a child, Swift and Stella were separated. When their paths crossed again, Stella was a lovely young girl of fifteen. Swift describes her as "...one of the most beautiful, graceful, and agreeable young women in London, only a little too fat."⁴ Later when Stella was nineteen, their romance developed into the ambiguous shape it was to wear for nearly the next quarter of a century.

In 1701, shortly after the marriage of Stella's younger sister, Stella left her home to live with a kinswoman by the name of Rebecca Dingley.⁵ Since Stella had inherited a small fortune from William Temple, Swift took Stella's well-being upon his shoulders. He pointed out to her that interest for money was higher in Ireland and that living was much

³Jonathan Swift, The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Harold Williams (Oxford, 1938).

⁴Van Doren, p. 39

⁵Irvin Ehrenpreis, The Personality of Swift (London, 1958), p. 17.

cheaper. Swift suggested that Mrs. Dingley and she move to Ireland; a proposal which he admitted was very much for his own satisfaction.⁶

Three years after moving to Dublin, Stella contemplated marriage with a Reverend William Tisdall. This suitor was much younger, wealthier, and better established in the world than Swift. Tisdall wrote to Swift, asking that Swift put before Stella's mother a proposal for his marriage to her daughter.⁷ This letter must have implied to Swift how much authority he had over Stella. Swift resented and was annoyed by this intrusion. Swift's reply was written in an unfriendly, unkind, and unaccountable manner. He discouraged their marriage in his cold, satiric manner. Swift indicated that Stella was the woman he, too, would choose among all other women on earth; providing he were in the position to make the choice. Rationalizing, Swift stated that his only reason for not being a rival was the state of his fortune. He ended his letter on rather a wistful or sad note, saying, in effect, that he saw no such peace or settlement in the uneasiness of life.⁸ In this letter to Tisdall, Swift praised Stella for her intellectual, moral, and social virtues. However, not one syllable suggested sexual desire of a man for a woman. Stella, after reading the letter to Tisdall, must have interpreted from this letter that Swift did not wish to release her to another man. This letter strengthened her decision to put aside the chance for marriage. Stella continued her relations with Swift regardless of their discouraging state.

⁶Herbert Davis, Stella A Gentlewoman of the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1942), p. 13.

⁷Van Doren, p. 61.

⁸Ibid., p. 62.

No matter how closely she scrutinized this letter, she could not find the words of a possible husband in it. Years later, she wrote the following poem to Swift which gave part of her reasoning in rejecting marriage:

When men began to call
 me fair,
 You interpos'd your timely
 care;
 You early taught me to
 despise
 The ogling of a coxcomb's
 eyes;
 Shew'd where my judgment
 was misplac'd;
 Refined my fancy and my taste.⁹

After the closing of the Tisdall episode, Stella discovered that there was another woman in Swift's life. The other woman was Vanessa Van Homrigh. Stella first learned of her rival when Swift returned to England to accept a commission from the Irish Church to make contact with the new Tory government. Probably she had the right to think he might possibly change his affections as easily as he changed political parties. Somehow Stella learned that Swift lived near Vanessa, dined with her often, and went so far as to have a small room with Vanessa and her mother in which he kept his best gown and periwig. Most of Stella's information was gathered from Swift's letters. One of Swift's letters, dated February 26, 1711, mentioned dining with Mrs. Van Homrigh (Vanessa's mother). He defended having visited the Van Homrighs by writing:

⁹Williams, p. 737.

...You say they are of no consequence: why, they keep as good female company as I do male; I see all the drabs of quality at this end of the town with them.¹⁰

In Swift's Journal to Stella, he never wrote about Vanessa directly but spoke rather of the mother or whole family. Perhaps this was Jonathan Swift's secret for keeping the "Wife Extraordinary" and "Mistress Extraordinary" appeased without the scandal of dissension.

Illicit love triangles, whether eighteenth-century or modern day, eventually come to a climax. In this case it was the "Mistress Extraordinary," the passionate Vanessa, who forced Swift to choose between Stella and her. Vanessa was not as obedient or as complaisant as Stella. She stubbornly refused to give into the idea of their relationship being only one of deep friendship. Swift, while succeeding in his affair with Stella, blundered with Vanessa. He let his pride seduce him by the flattery of being so fiercely loved by Vanessa.

Swift wrote a ballad, which was written for Vanessa, called "Cadenus and Vanessa." This bold and humorous poem was his way of telling Vanessa that he was just her tutor and that she was just his pupil. Vanessa refused to take the hint and tried in many ways for the rest of her life to move from the place he assigned her in the poem. Vanessa demonstrated this in one of the last letters that she wrote to Swift.

¹⁰Jonathan Swift, Journal to Stella, ed. by George A. Aitken (London, 1901), p. 158.

If you think I write too much tell me so, or at least write me so that I may know you don't forget me. Now that I am in a disagreeable place among strange, prying, deceitful, people. Pray what could be wrong in seeing and advising an unhappy young woman?¹¹

Swift, who was somewhat afraid that a visit to Vanessa would cause gossip, replied:

This morning a woman who does business told me she heard I was in--with one--naming you, and twenty particulars ...I ever fear the tattle of this nasty town, and told you so, and that was the reason why I said to you long ago that I would see you seldom when you were in Ireland.¹²

From this letter, Vanessa realized that Swift was not a man with marriage in view. She wrote a letter to Swift and said,

...'tis not in the power of art, time or accident to lessen the expressible passion which I have for _ _ _ . Put my passion under the utmost restraint, send me a _ _ _ distant from you as the earth will allow, yet you cannot banish those charming ideas which will ever stick by me...don't suffer me to lead a life like a languishing death, which is the only life I can lead if you have lost any of your tenderness for me.¹³

In 1723, Vanessa learned of the relationship between Swift and Stella. The story is told that Vanessa wrote a letter to Stella. In this letter Vanessa asked Stella if she were married to Swift. Stella sent this letter to Swift. Supposedly, this letter aroused his violent anger to the point that he took the letter to Vanessa, hurled it down before her, and then left without a word.¹⁴

¹¹Evelyn Hardy, The Conjured Spirit Swift (London, 1949), p. 169.

¹²Ibid., p. 172.

¹³Van Doren, p. 157.

¹⁴Hardy, p. 201.

Vanessa did not live very long after this incident. Dying she planned what revenge was left to her, the publication of his poem "Cadenus and Vanessa" and the publication of the letters between them.

These publications proved to be quite a delight to some of Swift's political enemies. Swift kept silent to their attacks but told a friend, "It was just a 'cavalier business,' 'a private humoursome thing which by an accident inevitable and the baseness of particular malice' had been made public."¹⁵ He refused to justify himself by saying, "Let people think of me as they please. ...I have borne a great deal more."¹⁶

Stella found the affair of Vanessa with Swift as insufferable as Swift found Stella's affair with Tisdall. Although angry, Stella dismissed the whole affair with the witty comment, "The Dean could write finely about a broomstick."¹⁷

After ending the affair with Vanessa, Swift returned to London. Stella did not follow but lived at the Deanery, which Mrs. Dingley and she customarily did during Swift's absence.

There had been an interval during the "dallying" with Vanessa when Swift's letters to Stella seemed to be less ardent. Whether or not the affair had anything to do with their relationship is not known, but Swift's letters to Stella after this affair grew more and

¹⁵Van Doren, p. 159.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Stephen Gwynn, The Life and Friendships of Dean Swift (New York, 1933), p. 278.

more intimate. Just like a husband who had been unfaithful to a faithful wife, he now spoke only of his desire to make "M. D." (My Dear) happy. He repeatedly told her in his letters that he could find peace only with "M. D."

As time passed, Swift showed a husbandly concern for Stella's health. Swift sent her money to be used in attempting to restore her failing health. In spite of all precautions and admonitions, Stella's health failed and serious illness resulted. Although Swift's concern for Stella was genuine, he preferred that she not die at the Deanery.¹⁸ This was perhaps to protect Stella's reputation and his own. Swift once spoke of the love and respect in which Stella was held by the Irish people. Perhaps, he did not want this reputation marred by any maglignant misinterpretation put on her character by the foes that he had made in his satiric writing.

Stella had chosen this love affair at the cost of partial isolation from ordinary domestic happiness. She probably deemed the part of the illustrious Swift that was hers to possess as a full equivalent for the sacrifice she had made. Stella died, carrying to her grave the secret that Swift so wished her to keep.

This secret would have been well kept if some curious listener had not been present at Stella's death bed. Mrs. Whiteway, a relative of Jonathan Swift, who was present at Stella's death bed, told the story "...shortly before Stella's death, Dean Swift sat by her bedside and

¹⁸Hardy, p. 230.

talked in a tone of voice too low for Mrs. Whiteway to hear. At length she heard the Dean say, 'Well, my dear, if you wish it, it shall be owned'; to which Stella answered, 'Too late.'¹⁹

Research on Swift and Stella

One of the early biographers to study Swift's life was Lord Orrery. The following statement of his was first presented on November 7, 1751.

That Stella was the concealed, but undoubted, wife of Dr. Swift. I cannot tell how long she remained in England, or whether she made more journeys than one to Ireland after Sir William Temple's death; but, if my informations are right, she was married to Dr. Swift, in the year of seventeen hundred and sixteen, by Dr. Ashe then Bishop of Clogher.²⁰

Other biographers studying the above statement made by Lord Orrery have attempted to disprove his statement. The reason for this attempt to disprove Lord Orrery's statement about Swift and Stella's marriage was that in 1742 Lord Orrery wrote a letter which contradicted what he had said in 1751. In the letter of 1742, Lord Orrery said, "The Dean would not have felt a blow, or wanted a companion had he been married, or in other words, had Stella lived."²¹ Since so many biographers had taken Lord Orrery's letter of 1751 as true,

¹⁹Hay, p. 141.

²⁰Maxwell B. Gold, Swift's Marriage to Stella (Cambridge, 1937), p. 8.

²¹Ibid., p. 69.

Maxwell Gold, in his search for proof about the marriage of Swift to Stella, found in Orrery's copy book a footnote explaining what was meant by his earlier letter. Gold quoted Orrery as having written in the annotation: "Mrs. Johnson, call'd Stella in his Poems. She was the natural daughter of Sir William Temple and privately married to the Dean."²² Mr. Gold summed up the annotation as follows: "What we should notice in Orrery's annotation is that at the time he wrote he meant exactly what a simple interpretation of his sentence would indicate, namely, that Stella had been Swift's wife."²³ The statement in Lord Orrery's book on Swift, "...if my informations are right," has been questioned since most biographers claim that Lord Orrery had only hearsay proof. Gold, further proving that Lord Orrery's statement is factual, cited passages from Mrs. Whiteway's letters and Lord Orrery's remarks to show that the phraseology used in both was similar.²⁴ In other words, Gold was not concerned about the relationship of Orrery to Swift. Gold's main concern was discovering where Orrery obtained his information about the marriage. Gold concluded that "Orrery's sources were, ...primarily, Mrs. Whiteway, and secondly, Deane Swift (a cousin once removed of Jonathan Swift), who in turn obtained his information from Mrs. Whiteway."²⁵

²²Ibid., p. 70.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 71.

²⁵Ibid., p. 75.

Another biographer who wrote about Swift's marriage to Stella was Patrick Delany. Swift was introduced to Delany by Thomas Sheridan, a close friend of Delany's and Swift's, in November, 1718. Delany and Swift were good friends until Swift's last days.²⁶ In reply to Lord Orrery's remark about Swift and Stella's marriage, Delany said, "Your account of the marriage is, I am satisfied true."²⁷ Delany continued by completely accepting the marriage story as true. Gold pointed out that Delany had no reason for agreeing with Orrery since all through Delany's essay he lashes at Orrery's style of writing.²⁸ Therefore, Gold concluded that since Delany knew Thomas Sheridan, Thomas Sheridan had probably related the marriage to him. Since Delany and Sheridan were good friends, Delany possibly felt there was no need for disputing Lord Orrery's word.²⁹

After the publication of Delany's Observation on Lord Orrery's Remarks, there appeared a book entitled An Essay upon the Life, Writings, and Character of Jonathan Swift by Deane Swift. "Deane Swift was doubly related to Jonathan Swift since his father was a son of Godwin Swift, who was a brother to Adam Swift (Mrs. Whiteway's father) and to Jonathan Swift (father of the Dean)."³⁰ Deane Swift was doubly related not only to Jonathan as stated above, but also he was married to Mrs. Whiteway's daughter in 1739.³¹ Since Deane Swift was so closely related to Mrs.

²⁶Ibid., p. 82.

²⁷Ibid., p. 10.

²⁸Ibid., p. 81.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 11.

³¹Ibid.

Whiteway, it is unquestionable that he collected his information directly. In his Essay he stated, "...she (Stella) was married to Dr. Swift in about the year 1716, I am thoroughly persuaded."³² Since Dean Swift was close to Swift from 1738 on, he probably knew what had happened between Swift and Stella. Gold, in summing up his opinion of Deane Swift's remark, stated, "Deane Swift, in fact, though of slight importance, nevertheless ranks higher as a source of Swiftiana than the annator, because of the many years he spent in and about the Deanery and because of his relationship to Swift and Mrs. Whiteway."³³

The next biographer who was indirectly related to Swift was Dr. Samuel Johnson. Dr. Johnson wrote an account of Swift's life for the Lives of English Poets in 1781.³⁴

In his essay on Swift, Dr. Johnson confirmed what had been previously stated by other biographers: "Soon after (1716), in his forty-ninth year, he was privately married to Mrs. Johnson by Dr. Ashe, Bishop of Clogher, as Dr. Madden told me in the garden. The marriage made no change in their mode of life."³⁵ Later in this same essay, Johnson continued, "In some remarks lately published on the Life of Swift, the marriage is mentioned as fabulous, or doubtful; but alas! poor Stella, as Dr. Madden told me, related her melancholy story to Dr. Sheridan."³⁶

³²Ibid., p. 12.

³³Ibid., p. 84.

³⁴Ibid., p. 15.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

Henry Craik, in his book The Life of Jonathan Swift, verified the last quotation by writing that Dr. Johnson probably received his information from Dr. Madden when he was correcting Madden's poem "Boulter's Monument."³⁷ Craik further commented: "Monck Mason discredits the idea that Sheridan could have been Madden's informant because they were different in politics. When, however, we remember that they both were clergymen, both frequenting Dublin society, both men connected with Trinity college, both men of kindly and sociable habits, the balance of probability is very decidedly the other way."³⁸

Gold stated that he felt the information presented by Dr. Johnson was factual since most literary men consider Dr. Johnson an authority.³⁹ Gold felt that the account of the marriage which was told to Johnson by Madden who received his information from Sheridan was the same as that reported by Mrs. Whiteway. Mrs. Whiteway probably received her information directly from Stella.⁴⁰

Still another biographer was Thomas Sheridan Junior, whose father was the life-long friend of Swift. Many biographers found young Sheridan's writing a stumbling block when they tried to disprove Swift and Stella's marriage. James Hay, in his book on Swift, said, "Johnson gets his information from old Madden; old Madden get it from young

³⁷Henry Craik, The Life of Jonathan Swift (New York, 1894), II, p. 304.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Gold, p. 88.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Sheridan; young Sheridan gets it, when a boy, from his father, and, in half a century expands it into a melodramatic scene, fit for a stage..."⁴¹

Thomas Sheridan's Life reinforced the information that has been related by the earlier biographers: "Accordingly the ceremony was performed without witnesses, and the connubial knot tied in the year 1716 by Dr. Ashe, Bishop of Clogher."⁴² Young Sheridan added that his "...account of the acknowledgment I had from my father."⁴³ Swift considered Thomas Sheridan Senior "...his closest friend and the best scholar in both kingdoms."⁴⁴ Swift also mentioned that Stella and Sheridan were good friends.⁴⁵ Since it is a known fact that Swift and Thomas Sheridan Senior were close friends, young Sheridan had a chance to gather his information from his father. There would seem to be no reason for a father to lie to his son about a relationship of a friend. If Jonathan Swift was not married to Stella, Thomas Sheridan had no reason to tell his son about Swift and Stella's relationship. If young Sheridan had the story confused, he probably would, at least, remember whether or not his father had said that Swift and Stella were married. It was Gold's contention that young Sheridan did remember the story and that Swift and Stella were married.⁴⁶

⁴¹Hay, p. 142.

⁴²Gold, pp. 15-16.

⁴³Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁴Van Doren, p. 224.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Gold, p. 46.

Most biographers from his period on have drawn their information from the early biographers, rumor, or the study of Swift's writing.

The Married Relationship of Jonathan Swift and Stella

The probability that Swift and Stella were married will now be presented from the point of view of a poem by Swift to Stella entitled "To Stella Who Collected and Transcribed His Poems." In the third stanza of this poem which was written in January, 1720, Swift said:

In all the Habitues 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.⁴⁷

From this poem which was written sometime after Stella learned of Vanessa and Swift's affair, Swift is apparently saying that Stella was his wife and that he had been an unfaithful husband. This stanza seems to ask for forgiveness. Swift said that he found their relationship the best and that his pursuits are finished.

His ~~next-to-the-last~~ stanza ended with a warning to Stella.

Stella, for once you reason wrong,
For should this Ferment last too long,
By Time subsiding, you may find
Nothing but Acid left behind
From Passion you may then be freed,
When peevishness and Spleen succeed.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Williams, p. 728.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 731.

At the beginning of this poem, Swift asked forgiveness for his actions, excusing himself on the basis of every man's desire for variety. Near the end of this poem, Swift changed positions by stating in a somewhat typical married man's way that Stella should forget this little incident. He reprimands her, as a husband might a wife, and said that if she carried her jealousy too far, she would find herself completely lost of him.

With the evidence presented to this point about Swift and Stella's marriage, the author would like to continue by proving that even though Swift and Stella were married, Swift found it impossible to live with Stella.

Nigel Dennis in his recent book about Jonathan Swift probably gave the most logical reason for Jonathan Swift and Stella living separate lives.

To look silly is certainly the last thing Swift wants. His position, his independence, his dignity, all depend on his authority's being accepted and respected by others. This will not be the case if either party to the arrangement is a slave to passion and turbulent emotion. Hence the necessity of inflexible rules of behavior, which the Dean struggles to impose not only on himself but on the whole society in which he lives.⁴⁹

In 1755 John Hawkesworth, an early biographer, further verified Swift's constant attempt to do the proper thing.

⁴⁹ Nigel Dennis, Jonathan Swift (New York, 1965), p. 62.

He was still a good Dean and a good priest; he applied himself to the Care of the Deanery, his Cathedral, its Regulations, its Income and Economy, with great Diligence; he renewed the primitive Practice of celebrating the Holy Communion every Sunday, and this Sacrament he was not only constantly present, but he consecrated and administered it with his own Hands in a manner equally graceful and devout.⁵⁰

J. Middleton Murray also felt that Swift was a devoted man to his career.

For a moment it is sufficient to say, that, although he particularly enjoyed and was dependent upon the society of women, he deliberately renounced marriage as an impediment when he determined to make his career.⁵¹

In the quotations above, it is evident that Swift took his position seriously. Swift did not wish to show any sign of passion to his observers. Swift's obsession to show strength rather than weakness must have been brought about by some inward psychological condition.

Keeping the above in mind, the writer would like to present Gold's comments on Swift and Stella's married, but separate lives. Gold cited many examples of early biographers who had recognized Swift's constitutional coldness and suspected his defects in nature. Among these early biographers were Orrery and Sheridan. Gold also introduced evidence of a specialist in the field of Anaesthesia Sexualis. This specialist was Krafft-Ebing who formed his diagnosis in 1874 from a biography by

⁵⁰ John Hawkesworth, The Life of the Revd. Jonathan Swift, D. D. (London, 1755), pp. 75-76.

⁵¹ J. Middleton Murray, Swift (London, 1961), p. 6.

Stern.⁵² Krafft-Ebing diagnosed Swift as a anaesthesia sexualis. He said, "No doubt Swift's, the great satirist, was a case of anaesthesia sexualis."⁵³ Gold defined sexual anaesthesia as a state which "...eliminates merely sexual love; it does not exclude tender emotion that Swift felt for Stella. Nor does it imply impotency. It does not exclude, either, a desire for a home and a wife."⁵⁴

Using Gold's definition of sexual anaesthesia, the writer would like to quote a few lines from the poem "The Description of a Salamander" in which Swift makes sex somewhat repulsive.

I've seen a snake in human form
 All stained with infamy and vice
 Leap from the dunghill in a trice,
 Burnish and make a gaudy show,
 Become a general, peer and beau.⁵⁵

Aldous Huxley in his essay on Swift wrote about Swift's "resentment against women for being warm blooded mammals."⁵⁶ Huxley suggested the same as Gold that Swift found sex repulsive. "Read (with a bottle of smelling salts handy, if you happen to be delicately stomached) 'The Lady's Dressing Room,' 'Cassinus and Peter,' 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed.'"⁵⁷ To prove that Swift found sex repulsive, Huxley

⁵²Gold, p. 128.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 129.

⁵⁵Jonathan Swift, The Poems of Jonathan Swift, selected by Padraic Colum (New York, 1962), p. 107.

⁵⁶Aldous Huxley, "Swift," Do What You Will (New York, 1929), p. 99.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 99-100.

quoted several lines from Swift's poem "The Lady's Dressing Room," which was written in 1732.

And first a dirty smock appeared
 Beneath the armpits well besmeared
 But oh! it turned poor Stephen's bowels,
 When he beheld and smelt the towels,
 Begummed, besmattered, and beslimed,
 With dirt and sweat and earwax grimed.⁵⁸

To continue his proof that Swift found some things almost unbearable, he quoted such lines as:

His foul imagination links
 Each dame he sees with all her stinks,
 And if unsavoury odours fly,
 Conceives a lady standing by.⁵⁹

Huxley's conclusion was nearly the same as Gold's report on Krafft-Ebing. Huxley wrote as follows:

...any man with a normal dosage of sexuality could have behaved quite so oddly as Swift behaved toward the women he loved seems certainly unlikely. We are almost forced by the surviving evidence to believe that some physical or psychological impediment debarred him from making love in the ordinary, the all too human manner.⁶⁰

In Swift's book Gulliver's Travels several passages may be found which would definitely show sexual anaesthesia as described by Gold. While in the land of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver told about an experience

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 100.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 110-111.

of his. One day while he was abroad with a sorrel nag, he decided to swim. He said his sorrel nag gave him permission.

...I immediately stripped myself naked, and went down softly into the stream. It happened that a young female Yahoo, standing behind a bank, saw the whole proceeding, 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; ...She embraced me after a fulsome manner; I roared as loud as I could, with the utmost reluctance, and leaped upon the opposite bank, where she stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my clothes.⁶¹

Gulliver continued to say that he was mortified. The writer feels that this description by Gulliver and his expression of his mortification were parts of Swift's hidden hatred for sex. Many biographers have said that Gulliver's Travels is Swift's autobiography. Recently Jerome Weidman was reviewing Gulliver's Travels for current readers. He made the following statement about the book: "For Gulliver's Travels is Swift's thinly disguised autobiography, a savage commentary on his anguished journey through life."⁶²

Another factor which points toward Swift's sexual anaesthesia is his fatherly love for Stella. Irwin Ehrenpreis, in his book on Swift, said the following:

⁶¹Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, ed. by Maxwell Geismar (New York, 1960), p. 267.

⁶²Jerome Weidman, Holiday, "Good Reading--Gulliver's Travels," XXVI (December, 1959), p. 158.

The role of a parent gave him a double pleasure: first, he could provide his beloved with that guidance and warmth which he himself had missed and therefore valued intensely; secondly, he could make up to himself for the inadequacy of childhood, since the women he chose had needs much like his own...⁶³

One way that his paternal love was shown was through Swift's constant concern for Stella's eyes. On this matter, Swift treated Stella just as he might his own child. In a letter written on October 12, 1710, Swift wrote, "I am thinking it would be a pretty thing to hear from saucy MD; but do not hurt your eyes, Stella, I charge you."⁶⁴

Another example of this paternal love for Stella was Swift's pretending with her. This pretending in letters to her was somewhat a father's childish method to hold his child's attention or to convince his child that he is omniscient. Once pretending in a letter to Stella that he had a letter from her that day, he said, "I was glad at heart to see it, and to see Stella so brisk. O. Lord, what pretending?"⁶⁵

In other places in his Journal to Stella, he chides her about reading the Bible and taking her exercise. This chiding is done in a fatherly fashion. In his November 23, 1710, letter, he said to Stella and

⁶³Irvin Ehrenpreis, The Personality of Swift (London, 1958), p. 22.

⁶⁴The Journal to Stella, p. 36.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 197.

Mrs. Dingley, "Pray be goodhousewives; and I beg you walk when you can for your health."⁶⁶

What might be classified as another fatherly reaction was Swift's expression of his love for Stella by using silly, tender, and endearing phrases of their "little" language. These words were like the language endearments some adults use in expressing their love for a baby. Swift termed this language the "wee" or "little" language. This "little" language probably originated between Swift and Stella when Stella, as a child student of Swift's, had difficulty pronouncing and spelling words. This can be verified by noting Swift's gentle chiding of Stella's misspelling in the letters that she wrote to him.

Tell me truly, sirrah, how many of these are mistakes of the pen, and how many are you to answer for as real ill spelling? There are but fourteen; I said twenty by guess. You must not be angry, for I will have you spell right, let the world go how it will. Though, after all, there is but a mistake of one letter in any of these words. I allow you henceforth but six false spellings in every letter you send me.⁶⁷

Swift did not use this "little" language as an escape from political life as some might think. Instead Swift found this "little" language a part of his personal life.

Do you know that every syllable that I write I hold my lips just for all the world as if I were talking in our own little language to MD? Faith, I am very silly, but I cannot help it for my life.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 74.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 322.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 209.

Swift disliked men as well as women because he considered them at times to be as foolish as women. Swift presented his own view on this matter as follows: "And as the same virtues equally become both sexes, so there is no quality whereby women endeavor to distinguish themselves from men, for which they are not just so the worse."⁶⁹ In his *Journal to Stella*, Swift related an incident to Stella which he found quite distasteful.

I was this forenoon with Mr. Secretary at his office and helped to hender a man his pardon, who is condemned for a rape. The Under Secretary was willing to save him, upon an old notion that a woman cannot be ravished, but I told the Secretary he could not pardon him without a favorable report from the judge; besides, he was a fiddler, and consequently a rogue, and deserved hanging for something else, and so shall swing. What, I must stand up for the honour of the fair sex! 'Tis true the fellow had lain a hundred times before, but what care I for that! What must a woman be ravished because she is a whore?⁷⁰

According to Gold, Krafft-Ebing claimed that this disinclination for adults in general is found in cases of sexually anaesthetic individuals.⁷¹ Gold, using Krafft-Ebing as an authority, was apparently trying to prove his point that Swift's marriage with Stella existed in separate ways of life due to sexual anaesthesia. Gold cited an example from Krafft-Ebing similar to Swift. "This same individual, E (case ten), hated children, an antipathy expressed by Swift again, in his 'Resolutions

⁶⁹Quoted by Herbert Davis, p. 49.

⁷⁰Journal to Stella, p. 259.

⁷¹Gold, p. 128.

When I Come to Be Old."⁷² This resolution of Swift's to which Gold referred was written in 1699 when Swift was thirty-two. "Not to be fond of children or let them come near me hardly."⁷³ Continuing his proof of Swift's condition, Gold compared one of Krafft-Ebing's cases with Swift's essay called "Modest Proposal." Krafft-Ebing's case ten "declared that it would be better to castrate all children than to allow others to come into the world fated only to endure poverty and misery."⁷⁴ In Swift's essay "Modest Proposal," he wrote that one child will make two dishes for entertaining a friend, while the fore or hind quarter is adequate for a family dining alone; in addition, the meat can be boiled on the fourth day, with salt and pepper. He figured that a year after Lent the market would always be glutted. The skin of the children would make good boots and gloves; the best way to serve them was to buy them alive and dress them hot from the knife.⁷⁵

Swift's dislike for children was expressed not only in this essay "Modest Proposal," but also this dislike for children was evident throughout his writing in the Journal to Stella.

Macy gave the following reason for Swift's action toward children. "The answer is simply that Swift feared to propagate his tainted stock, that he refrained and suffered."⁷⁶ Since medical science during the

⁷²Ibid., p. 132.

⁷³John Macy, "Swift's Relations with Women," The Critical Game (New York, 1922), p. 165.

⁷⁴Gold, p. 132.

⁷⁵Jonathan Swift, Prose and Poetry, ed. by Edward Rosenheim, Jr. (New York, 1963), pp. 261-262.

⁷⁶Macy, p. 169.

eighteenth century was backward, Swift undoubtedly was intelligent enough to realize that there was something more wrong with him than his frequent headaches. However, there is nothing in the literature to indicate this. Swift merely passed his headaches off as an illness which he had to endure. The headaches and dizziness which Swift mentioned so frequently in his Journal to Stella were probably the symptoms of what Krafft-Ebing called sexual anaesthesia.

Gold concluded that Swift realized that he was incapable of making an intimate husband. This conclusion came from a letter which Swift wrote to Walls in 1713. "The old gentleman you are pleased to be so free with (meaning himself) is a very honest old gentleman, though he has not your faculty of increasing the Queen's subjects."⁷⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the author's opinion that Swift and Stella were married although they never lived together as husband and wife. This is based on the fact that three of the early biographers quoted in this paper expressed their belief that a marriage had taken place. The three biographers, Lord Orrery, Deane Swift, and Samuel Johnson, had no apparent reason to report something which was not true in order to protect the character of Jonathan Swift. In fact, these three writers might have been more inclined to reveal the defects in Swift's character since they did not particularly agree with Swift on many occasions.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 146.

The fact that Swift and Stella did not live together as husband and wife was explained by Gold. Gold first presented the idea that Swift's desire for power would not permit him to show signs of weakness through passion. Secondly, Gold cited a specialist on what might be called sexual deviation. The conclusion reached was that Swift was somewhat less than a complete man. Swift had no desire to live as a normal husband; neither did he have a desire for children. The fact that Swift often wrote about his headaches and dizziness in his letters to Stella indicated that there was possibly something wrong with him physically. If such a condition as sexual anaesthesia exists as Krafft-Ebing believed and if Swift was one of the rare individuals who suffered from the condition, then this might help explain the separate lives of the married Swift and Stella.

In the final analysis, the conclusions based on the research used in writing this paper are the convictions of the writer. The real truth to the mystery of the lives of Swift and Stella was lost to eternity with the death of Swift.

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