

Timothy Lange 5F

# The Lady's Dressing Room

Jonathan Swift

1732

Edited by Jack Lynch

- Vocab
- paragon
- litipution
- ↳ small
- polysyndeton
- ↳ repeat conjunctions
- vermiculation

Stereotypically  
clean, elegant,  
sophisticated

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, Brocades and Tissues.  
Strephon, who found the Room was void, [5]

satirical  
arrogant  
proud  
superior  
paragon of beauty  
slowly comes out.  
expensive materials  
wedding dress material

And Betty otherwise employ'd;  
Stole in, and took a strict Survey,  
Of all the Litter as it lay;  
Whereof, to make the Matter clear,  
An Inventory follows here. [10]

Celia + Strephon  
↳ high romantic poetry  
↳ high status  
contrast from  
high status to  
disgust.

And first a dirty Smock appear'd,  
Beneath the Arm-pits well besmear'd.

Strephon, the Rogue, display'd it wide,  
And turn'd it round on every Side.

uncover  
"gross" place  
weird performance of it.

On such a Point few Words are best, [15]

And Strephon bids us guess the rest;

But swears how damnably the Men lie,  
In calling Celia sweet and cleanly.

too disgusting to describe  
false, untrue  
lie is strong

Now listen while he next produces,

The various Combs for various Uses, [20]

Fill'd up with Dirt so closely fixt,

No Brush could force a way betwixt.

A Paste of Composition rare,

unbearable  
opposite  
sarcastic  
doesn't fit with rhyme scheme

Sweat, Dandriff, Powder, Lead and Hair;

present scale

A Forehead Cloth with Oyl upon't [25]

To smooth the Wrinkles on her Front;

"eww"  
gross  
wrinkles smoothed by gross.  
not human

Here Allum Flower to stop the Steams,  
Exhal'd from sour unsavoury Streams,

} sibilance.

There Night-gloves made of Tripsy's Hide,

Dog didn't bequeath anything.

Bequeath'd by Tripsy when she dy'd, [30]

dead lapdog's backside } put on hand  
unpleasant gross revolting }

With Puppy Water, Beauty's Help

Distill'd from Tripsy's darling Whelp;

Here Gallypots and Vials plac'd,

Some fill'd with washes, some with Paste,

Some with Pomatum, Paints and Slops, [35]

And Ointments good for scabby Chops.

word choice } reveal true mouth/jaw.

Hard by a filthy Bason stands,

} jaw/face

Fowl'd with the Scouring of her Hands;

The Bason takes whatever comes

Sympathy for basin

The Scrapings of her Teeth and Gums, [40]

A nasty Compound of all Hues,

For here she spits, and here she spues.

But oh! it turn'd poor Strephon's Bowels,

Strong disbelief

When he beheld and smelt the Towels,

Begumm'd, bematter'd, and beslim'd [45]

With Dirt, and Sweat, and Ear-Wax grim'd.

loses power pathetic

No Object Strephon's Eye escapes,

Polysyndeton for emphasis

Here Pettycoats in frowzy Heaps;

Nor be the Handkerchiefs forgot

tobacco to sniff

All varnish'd o'er with Snuff and Snot. [50]

The Stockings, why shou'd I expose,

Stain'd with the Marks of stinking Toes;

Or greasy Coifs and Pinner's reeking,

Which Celia slept at least a Week in?

A Pair of Tweezers next he found [55]

To pluck her Brows in Arches round,

Or Hairs that sink the Forehead low,

Or on her Chin like Bristles grow.

The Virtues we must not let pass,

Of Celia's magnifying Glass. [60]

When frighted Strephon cast his Eye on't

It shew'd the Visage of a Gyant.

Scrapings is hard activity onomatopoeic  
harsh, vivid  
much unpleasant  
detracts on teeth  
repetition of syllables  
animalist  
boushily = care

long stanza  
=> sense of never-ending

A Glass that can to Sight disclose,  
The smallest Worm in *Celia's* Nose,  
And faithfully direct her Nail [65]  
To squeeze it out from Head to Tail;  
For catch it nicely by the Head,  
It must come out alive or dead.

makes us think of vermiculation  
decomposition by worms

blackheads

no tool just with nail.

activity explicitly gross

really gross

Why *Strephon* will you tell the rest?  
And must you needs describe the Chest? [70]

young women

That careless Wench! no Creature warn her  
To move it out from yonder Corner;  
But leave it standing full in Sight  
For you to exercise your Spight.

spittable / 100 "chamberpot"  
no shame

In vain, the Workman shew'd his Wit [75]

With Rings and Hinges counterfeit  
To make it seem in this Disguise,  
A Cabinet to vulgar Eyes;

workman disguise cabinet

For *Strephon* ventur'd to look in,  
Resolv'd to go thro' thick and thin; [80]

He lifts the Lid, there needs no more,  
He smelt it all the Time before.

smell all over room

As from within *Pandora's* Box,  
When *Epimetheus* op'd the Locks,  
A sudden universal Crew [85]

all evils emerge.

at bottom of Pandora is Hope

Of humane Evils upwards flew;  
He still was comforted to find

That *Hope* at last remain'd behind;  
So *Strephon* lifting up the Lid,

like just Pandora's box opened

To view what in the Chest was hid. [90]  
The Vapours flew from out the Vent,

But *Strephon* cautious never meant  
The Bottom of the Pan to grope,

And fowl his Hands in Search of *Hope*.

O never may such vile Machine [95]  
Be once in *Celia's* Chamber seen!

more powerfully revolting  
formal  
high register describe a toilet to



O may she better learn to keep  
"Those Secrets of the hoary deep!"

As Mutton Cutlets, Prime of Meat,  
Which tho' with Art you salt and beat, [100]  
As Laws of Cookery require,  
And toast them at the clearest Fire;

sheep  
meat

grey, aged, disgusting

Celia like  
Mutton  
is tough.

tough

imagination  
is more vivid  
when not  
described.

worse by  
imagination

by not  
mentioning  
there is  
more disgust

If from adown the hopful Chops  
The Fat upon a Cinder drops,  
To stinking Smoak it turns the Flame [105]  
Pois'ning the Flesh from whence it came;  
And up exhales a greasy Stench,  
For which you curse the careless Wench;

woman,  
person  
cooking

dropped  
faeces +  
urine.

So Things, which must not be exprest,  
When plumpt into the reeking Chest; [110]  
Send up an excremental Smell  
To taint the Parts from whence they fell.  
The Pettycoats and Gown perfume,  
Which waft a Stink round every Room.

whatever matter  
from Celia drops;  
Celia will smell too.

undermined

Thus finishing his grand Survey, [115]  
Disgusted Strephon stole away  
Repeating in his amorous Fits,  
Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!

horror  
loving

changed  
meaning

repetition -> irony

not loving

exaggerated  
but true.

ironic

stark,  
direct,  
raw

matter-  
of-fact.

But Vengeance, Goddess never sleeping  
Soon punish'd Strephon for his Peeping; [120]  
His foul Imagination links  
Each Dame he sees with all her Stinks:  
And, if unsav'ry Odours fly,  
Conceives a Lady standing by:  
All Women his Description fits, [125]  
And both Idea's jump like Wits:  
By vicious Fancy coupled fast,  
And still appearing in Contrast.  
I pity wretched Strephon blind  
To all the Charms of Female Kind; [130]

Should I the Queen of Love refuse,  
Because she rose from stinking Ooze?  
To him that looks behind the Scene,  
Satira's but some pocky Quean.  
When *Celia* in her Glory shows, [135]  
If *Strephon* would but stop his Nose;  
(Who now so impiously blasphemes  
Her Ointments, Daubs, and Paints and Creams,  
Her Washes, Slops, and every Clout,  
With which he makes so foul a Rout;) [140]  
He soon would learn to think like me,  
And bless his ravisht Sight to see  
Such Order from Confusion sprung,  
Such gaudy Tulips rais'd from Dung.

## Notes

1. The names *Strephon* and *Celia* come from classical pastoral poetry or romance.
2. *Betty* is the generic name for a maidservant.
3. *Lead* was used as a cosmetic to whiten the face.
4. *Front*, "forehead."
5. *Allum flower*, or powdered alum, is used as an antiperspirant.
6. *Tripsy*, a typical name of a lapdog.
7. *Whelp*, "puppy."
8. *Gallypots*, "jars."
9. *Pomatum*, "ointment for the hair."
10. *Hard*, "near."
11. *Frowzy*, "messy."

12. *Coifs and Pinnars*, "night caps."

13. *Glass*, "mirror."

14. *Machine*, "Any complicated piece of workmanship" (Johnson).

15. "*Those Secrets of the hoary deep*": See *Paradise Lost*, 2.890-91: "Before their eyes in sudden view appear/The secrets of the hoary Deep."

16. *Satira*, the heroine of *The Rival Queens* by Nathaniel Lee; *quean*, "A worthless woman, generally a strumpet" (Johnson). *Pocky* suggests either smallpox or a venereal disease.