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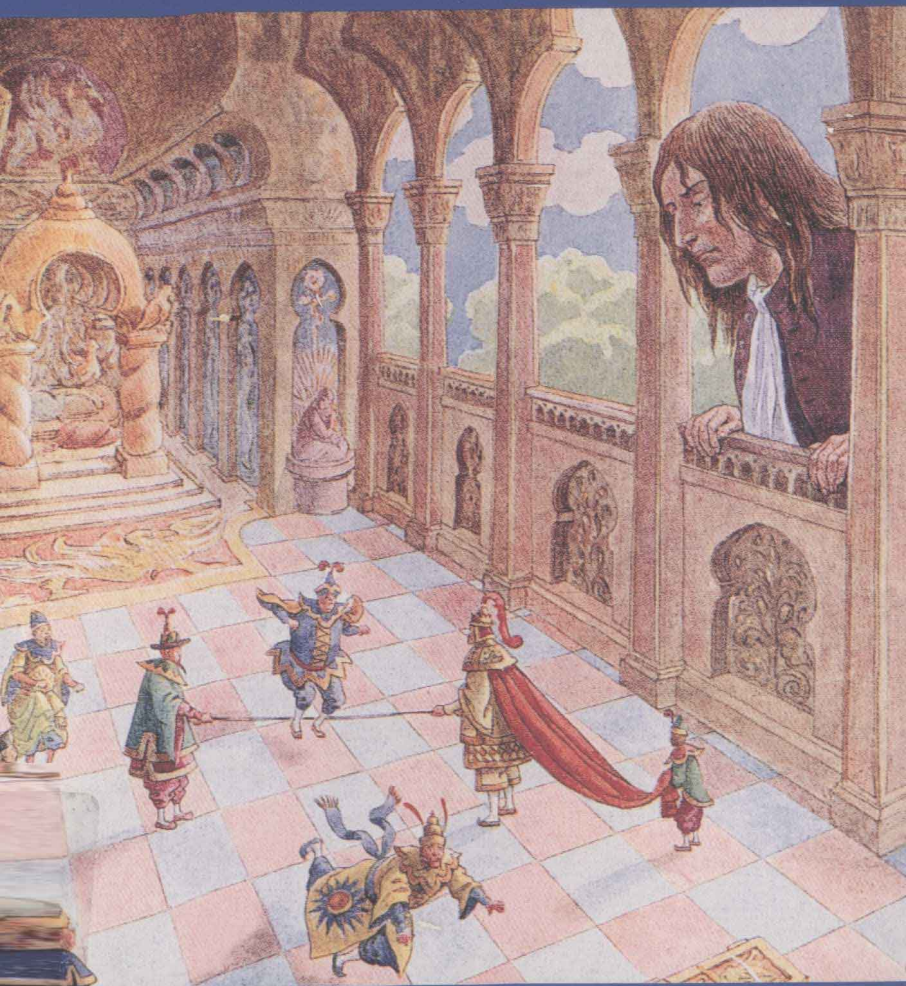
Gulliver's Travels

JONATHAN SWIFT



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

Jonathan Swift

Introduction and Notes by

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

General Adviser
KEITH CARABINE
Rutherford College
University of Kent at Canterbury

INTRODUCTION

> About ten days ago [wrote John Gay in England to his friend Swift in Ireland] a Book was publish'd here of the Travels of one Gulliver, which hath been the conversation of the whole town ever since: the whole impression sold in a week: and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extreamly. 'Tis generally said that you are the Author, but I am told, the Bookseller declares he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest, it is universally read, from the Cabinet-council to the Nursery.
>
> (16 November 1726: *Correspondence* III, p. 182)

Thus began the career not only of an Augustan masterpiece, but of one of the world's most widely read and enduring narrative satires. If, today, Dickensian terms like 'Pickwickian' or 'The Circumlocution Office' are indispensable and ever-applicable items of shorthand allusion, the same can surely be said of such Swiftian inventions as 'Struldbrugs' or

'Yahoos', while 'Lilliputian' and 'Brobdingnagian' are adjectives as familiar and expressive as 'quixotic', 'gargantuan' or 'Panglossian'.

So multi-sided is the book that modern readers are still as divided as was the eighteenth century over where to lay the final emphasis. Is it (in the phrase of Swift's friend John Arbuthnot) a 'merry work', or a dark – even tragic – one? Is it misanthropic, or (like Voltaire's *Candide*) robustly uncrushed by the spectacle of human nature? Gulliver himself is no easier to pin down than is Don Quixote, who was seen by early readers as the main target of Cervantes' satire but was afterwards romantically reinterpreted as a sympathetic figure, an idealist estranged by a prosaic world. In neither case, again, is it easy to define the relationship between the character and his creator. With *Gulliver's Travels*, this question tends to be focused particularly on Part Four, and what is to be inferred from it about the attitude of the real author behind the narrator. The fact that there are *four* voyages increases the complication, since it makes for a constant revision of images and perspectives. Thus, if we accept the equation in Part One between physical smallness and moral meanness, we are disconcerted to find that in Part Two the notion of bigness is related to grossness rather than grandeur. Indeed the idea of the relation (or non-relation) between physical and mental is played with in a variety of ways all through the book.

Perhaps Swift has the most fun with it in Part Three (the section which was in fact the last to be written, and has, unfortunately, least endeared itself to readers). Here, according to one line of imagery, there is the closest possible correlation between mind and body. Thus, the Laputan aristocrats' physiognomies seem marvellously to reflect their mental preoccupations (they have one eye turned inwards and the other turned up towards the heavens). And the Lagadoan academicians have schemes for perfectly identifying the physical and the mental: they carry their language around with them in the form of luggage, and write mathematical propositions 'on a thin wafer, with ink composed of a cephalick tincture' (p. 141), so that knowledge can be quite literally swallowed and digested (and perhaps vomited up). It is no wonder, then, that they believe that excreta perfectly express political intentions and other states of mind – a correlation that the Yahoos seem to discover by native instinct. On the other hand, Part Three's insistent presentation of mathematics, logic, philosophy and speculative reasoning as divorced from reality or practical competence suggests the utter separateness of the worlds inhabited by the mind and the body. Thus, Laputan music theory has nothing to do with any aim or effect of sensory enjoyment. And here we are close to the world of Lewis Carroll, where adult intellectuals are all imaginative lunatics, and only children are prosaically

sane. After the first three parts of *Gulliver's Travels*, we are ready to accept horses that (though one could not have predicted it from their physique) are fine orators and handy seamstresses.

It is eminently in keeping that such a book was not published in quite the ordinary way. It first appeared on 28 October 1726, as the work of 'Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships'.[1] The mystery surrounding the actual authorship was partly a matter of in-joke humour, partly of prudence. Swift's friends were in the secret, for during the six-month visit to England that he had begun the previous March, he had consulted them about the publication of the manuscript, on which they knew he had been working since early in 1721. According to Pope, part of it was delivered to the London publisher Benjamin Motte 'he knew not from whence, dropp'd at his house in the dark, from a Hackney-coach' (16 November 1726, *Corresp.* III, p. 182). It was accompanied by a letter, purportedly from Gulliver's cousin Sympson, offering Motte the completed work for £200, which would be devoted to 'the use of poor seamen'. (This fee is, in fact, the only payment ever received by Swift for any of his works, and he gave Pope the credit for securing it.) The manuscript itself has not survived, perhaps because it was destroyed by Motte to obscure the authorship, since he knew that the book, with its outspoken attacks on the Whig ministry of the day and its irreverence towards George I, would be a risky one to publish. Indeed, Swift had wondered, back in September 1725, whether he would find a printer 'brave enough to venture his ears'. As it was, Motte compromised by bowdlerising the satire in various ways, for instance by rewriting both the superscription to Chapter 3 of Part Four, and the same chapter's scathing account of 'a first or chief minister', and simply leaving out the story of the Lindalino rebellion in Part Three, Chapter 3.[2]

1 The original title, which promoted the book's masquerade as an authentic travel memoir in the tradition of William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697), was *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts.* There was a frontispiece portrait allegedly of Captain Gulliver at the age of fifty-eight (about Swift's age at this time), with an accompanying Latin inscription lauding the Captain as 'compositum jus, fasque animi, sanctosque recessus mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto' (i.e. as a man of 'well-judged justice, uprightness and nobility of soul, given to retirement to the holy places of the mind'). The 1735 Dublin edition substituted a different and younger-looking Captain, whom it addressed as 'Splendide Mendax' ('splendid liar').

2 For further information on Motte's tampering, and on the revisions in later editions, see the Notes at the end of this volume, especially 2 and 3. Modern editions of the *Travels* are based on George Faulkner's 1735 Dublin edition, which still did not dare to include the Lindalino rebellion.

II

The historical and political context of *Gulliver's Travels* is explored in the discussion following this Introduction, so it is not necessary to dwell on it here. But there is also a cultural context which is, likewise, at once specific to Swift's age and powerfully resonant in ours. It is, for instance, no coincidence that the two most politically complex, spy-ridden and bureaucratic of the imagined societies, the Lilliputians and the Laputans, are also the most technologically-minded, and in one aspect, the contrasts between them and the two simpler societies of the Brobdingnagians and the Houyhnhnms represents a phase in the long quarrel between art and science. The Romantics were to revive it with their protests against what Blake, particularly, saw as the atomised and deadening world of Newtonian physics. And it flared up again in the 1950s, in a notorious clash in print between the scientifically-trained novelist C. P. Snow and the critic F. R. Leavis. Snow, in a lecture published as *The Two Cultures*, criticised arts specialists for their snobbish attitude towards the applied sciences, and ignorance of the basics of science, and Leavis published an angry retort attacking Snow as a crude and facilely optimistic materialist with no understanding of culture or the life of the mind.[3]

There ensued a pamphlet war (drawing in many other combatants) that was not unreminiscent of the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns which was flourishing, on both sides of the Channel, around the turn of the seventeenth century. In France, the chief protagonists for the moderns were Charles Perrault, poet and writer of fairy tales, and the Sieur de Fontenelle, Secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, against the neo-classical poet and critic Nicolas Boileau. Swift had joined in with *A Tale of a Tub* and 'The Battle of the Books' (1704), the latter being a mock-heroic 'Account of a Battle between the Ancient and Modern Books in St James's Library', in which the personified modern texts are roundly trounced in their attempts to storm their predecessors' stronghold of Parnassus.

Like affairs in *Gulliver's Travels*, the Quarrel had dimensions both of significance and of silliness. It really goes back to the rise of Enlightenment science. The leading English philosophers of the century and a half before Swift, Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, had embraced the values and methodology of the new science and engaged in applying them to the

3 Similarly, Marshall McLuhan seemed to many in the 1960s and 1970s to be gleefully ushering in a new electronic age of barbarism, with such works as *Understanding Media* (1964).

more traditional fields of politics, ethics and the study of the mind. They had spoken dismissively of Aristotelian philosophy and Platonic metaphysics, as over-reliant on *a priori* reasoning, instead of empirical experiment, observation and induction. Similarly for traditional logic: it substituted empty terminological disputes for serious investigation, while classical rhetoric ignored the referential function of language in favour of frivolous adornment, thus preventing the communication of real knowledge about things. The ideal, said Thomas Sprat, founder member and historian of the Royal Society, should be a plain language that preferred brevity and clarity to misleading figures of speech, and prevented ambiguity by fixing its terms in agreed definitions (as geometry did). As for the science of the ancients, the moderns boasted that Galilean and Newtonian physics and astronomy had superseded it, and modern science had produced printing, the telescope, the microscope and the compass, not to mention gunpowder. (Gulliver in Part Two of the *Travels* is particularly proud of the destructive power of gunpowder.)

As against this, the pro-ancients responded that it was ancients such as Euclid and Archimedes who had *founded* mathematics and the sciences. All the important questions in ethics and civics had been identified by ancient philosophy, and the lines of subsequent inquiry laid down. Modern political theorists were still looking back to the sophisticated commonwealths that had existed before the Dark Ages. And the ancients had the supremacy in literature. They had invented all the major literary kinds (i.e. genres): epic, tragedy, satire, comedy, pastoral, etc., and had left unsurpassed and unsurpassable models of them.

But Swift was not on easy ground. He had inherited from Aristophanes and Rabelais a brilliant tradition of spoof-science, and he was deeply suspicious of the Enlightenment, yet he shared its impatience with speculative reasoning and he certainly had not enjoyed or shone in the Aristotelian part of the curriculum at Trinity College, Dublin. Thus, in Part Two of *Gulliver's Travels*, Gulliver's scorn for the Brobdingnagians' lack of interest in such things is to be taken ironically: 'And, as to ideas, entities, abstractions and transcendentals, I could never drive the least conception into their heads' (p. 101). Swift tries to insulate the ancients from responsibility for begetting these studies by blaming them on the Middle Ages (which count as modern), and on later system-builders like Descartes. Thus, in Part Three, Gulliver asks the magicians of Glubbdubdrib to call up the ghosts of Homer and Aristotle, and all their commentators. The latter are so numerous that they overflow into the courtyard, but Homer and Aristotle do not recognise any of them. (It is a warning that has not been heeded by today's education industry.)

Scholastic philosophy, scientific virtuosity and modern textual and

linguistic criticism are all linked in Swift's mind as varieties of vain footling, as illustrated in Part Three, Chapter 2, in Gulliver's ponderously elaborated etymological analysis of the word 'Laputa' (p. 121). Swift's virtuosi, logicians and critics all fix myopically on trivial details, instead of taking wise, broad views of the whole. Both he and Pope (the latter especially in *The Dunciad*) often present this kind of activity through insect imagery – bugs, spiders, fleas and other parasites and their excretory processes. The moderns crawl and chew over the beauties of nature and the creations of the classical world and reduce them to heaps of dung or cobwebs in an inverted fertility.

Ancients and moderns were apt to disagree over the question of whether humankind had continued to degenerate after the Fall. Until a couple of generations before Swift, the prevailing view had been that degeneration was ongoing. In the days of the biblical patriarchs, people had been bigger, stronger, wiser and longer lived than now. Abraham had lived to a hundred and seventy-five and Methuselah to nine hundred and sixty-nine. But since then, the world had moved closer to its dotage. However, with the Enlightenment there arrived a new view of history as progressive. Francis Bacon anticipated it with his boast that it was the moderns who were the true authorities: they had inherited all the wisdom of the past, and added vastly to it. Paradoxically, they were the true ancients, since the world was older now. In this matter Swift, as a satirist, does not have to put his cards on the table, but he makes tactical use of the old degeneracy theory. For instance, in Part One, Chapter 6, Gulliver notes that the ancient laws of the Lilliputians seem more enlightened than their current practices. And the Houyhnhnms speculate that modern Yahoos are descended from an ancestral pair possibly less wicked and more rational than the present specimens – a sort of reverse evolutionary myth that fumbles towards the Adam and Eve story. The Houyhnhnms themselves are apparently a static society: they know of no time when they were different from the way they are now.

The Brobdingnagians are also acquainted with some form of the degeneracy theory: their king observes among the Europeans 'some lines of an institution, which in its original may have been tolerable; but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions' (Part Two, Chapter 6). In the following chapter, Gulliver looks into an old treatise of morality belonging to Glumdalclitch's governess. Its author claims that 'nature was degenerated in these latter declining ages of the world, and could now produce only small, abortive births, in comparison of those in ancient times. He said, it was very reasonable to think, not only that the species of man were originally much larger, but

also, that there must have been giants in former ages' (an 'unconscious' echo of Genesis 6:4). We have to be careful in interpreting this: Gulliver himself seems to miss the irony of a Brobdingnagian's accusing his own race of puniness, but he might be right in detecting an accent of moaning here. The older generation almost always deplores what the modern age has come to. More disquietingly, the repulsive image of the Struldbrug immortals whom Gulliver encounters in Luggnagg conveys the same point, yet also horribly undermines the notion of human progress and perfectibility. And it is particularly Part Three, with its rapid shiftings of Gulliver between Balnibarbians, Luggnaggians, Japanese and Dutch, that exploits another corollary of the Fall. For it was the Fall that had brought about the division of humankind into different racial groups, and the fragmentation of an originally unitary language into different national tongues. The consequence, mutual unintelligibility and failure of communication, was symbolised in the Tower of Babel story in Genesis, Chapter 11.

The Fall was viewed as a revolt of the lower nature against reason, which stood at the top of what was traditionally conceived as a hierarchy of separate mental faculties. It was that power that linked the human with the angelic and the divine. By apprehending the good or just, it presented the will with objects for right action. Passion, by contrast, came from the body – a function of animal nature. And sin was the result of the passions' conquest of reason and diversion of the will towards wrong choices. (The imagination frequently aided the passions by presenting bad objects attractively.) The Hebraeo-Christian model of mind was to this extent remarkably consonant with the classical, though in the century of Swift's birth, Calvinistic Puritanism had laid all the emphasis on natural depravity.

There were several different kinds of counter-reaction to Puritanism. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy preferred to stress the power of reason. Before it, in the decade before Swift's birth, Thomas Hobbes had secularised Calvinism with his view of the passions not as evil so much as just naturally and inevitably self-referential.[4] They, and not reason, were the prime sources of human motivation: no one *acted* on merely rational grounds, though only

4 Swift had closely read Hobbes's political treatise, *Leviathan* (1651), and the idea of Lilliput may have been stimulated by that work's original frontispiece, which portrayed the figure of a monarch composed of numerous tiny figures representing the subjects. The leading benevolist opponent of Hobbes in Swift's day was the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, in a set of essays collected as *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711).

reason could reliably discriminate between short-term gratification and long-term benefits, and formulate efficient means of achieving the latter. By the early eighteenth century, most people had more or less accepted that it was not reason that powered the individual will. But they were very uneasy with the Hobbesian assumption that human motivation is always and necessarily self-interested. Hence a benevolist movement that developed alongside rationalism, upgrading the status of the emotions and insisting that virtue itself was non-rational. Certainly there thrived 'passions' like greed or avarice, but there were also natural social 'sentiments' like pity and sympathy. The debate over human nature is a fertile and lively one in earlier eighteenth-century literature. As against the Hobbesianly acquisitive and self-centred motives that interest Defoe, there is the innate goodheartedness of Fielding's Tom Jones, though it must somehow accommodate itself to the prescriptions of rational prudence. In so far as vice so often presents itself in *Gulliver's Travels* as madness or sub-rationality, Swift seems outstandingly traditionalist. Yet reason itself seems to be the problem in Part Three; and Swift regarded the Stoic school of the Greeks, and the Deism of his own age, as evidence of the dangers of belief in the all-sufficiency of reason. To dispense with God or revelation is the ultimate stance of pride.

III

It is in this context, and, equally, in the light of the strategies of satire, that the passionless Houyhnhnms need to be viewed. If both they and the Yahoos are versions of the 'Natural Man' that the period was so fond of imagining, Part Four shows that your version of Natural Man will depend on your initial assumptions – rationalist or 'emotionalist', optimistic or pessimistic. This seems to work against the temptation to take the Houyhnhnms, as Swift's eighteenth-century defenders did, as a straightforward ideal.

And why are they imaged as horses? As was shown in the 1970s film *Planet of the Apes*, which owes something to *Gulliver's Travels*, reversing the roles of two species routinely contrasted with each other as superior and inferior is a powerful shock-tactic. And still more than the ape-shape, the horse-shape (so naturally adapted to saddle and bridle, we think) does seem to us rather unadapted to the life of the mind. Swift plays on this with Gulliver's reproductions of Houyhnhnm speech (next to unpronounceable for any but a native speaker), and accounts of these creatures milking cows and threading needles. Moreover, the senses and the passions are traditionally identified with the animal

nature, yet Swift makes the good society an animal one. He can thus dramatise how modest are the sensory and passional wants of animals, in comparison with humans. Horses do not need money, grand country seats, coffee-mills, silver cutlery, powdered periwigs or titles. They do not go to war with each other for possession of such things, as the Lilliputians do. Houyhnhnms do not even taste oats until they are eighteen (the age at which today's British youth is allowed to drink and vote). Gulliver himself learns how happy one can be on a diet of milk, honey, oatbread and herbs, eked out with the odd rabbit or bird. And, of course, if one does not want any more than this, then there is no need for an elaborate machinery of commercial, legal, social and political institutions whose whole *raison d'être* is to secure a supply of luxuries for one group, whilst keeping them out of the hands (or hoofs) of all the rest.

Hence the simple socio-political structures of the Houyhnhnms. If we ignored their passionlessness, we could almost misread Swift, in his image of these non-acquisitive simple-lifers, as anticipating the dreams of Rousseau. With the Yahoos, on the other hand, the reader has to make a reverse mental leap and reassociate passion with the animalistic (for the Yahoos seem much the more animal of the two groups). And, bafflingly enough, both Houyhnhnm rationality and Yahoo depravity arise out of the fact that each follows the dictates of nature – 'nature' being one of the crucial slippery terms in *Gulliver's Travels*. For the Houynhnhnms, reason is nature, and they see their whole social system not as a product of conventions that might be different, but as a reflection of the inherent order of things. (This, of course, is how we all tend to see our own society: what we do is natural; other people's customs are unnatural, alien, other.)

But the whole thing is double-edged in a way that Gulliver is unable to see. The Houyhnhnms have a hierarchy, but do not see themselves as operating a class-system. Apparently 'among the Houyhnhnms, the White, the Sorrel, and the Iron-Grey, were not so exactly shaped as the Bay, the Dapple-Grey, and the Black; nor born with equal talents of mind, or a capacity to improve them; and therefore always continued in the condition of servants, without ever aspiring to match out of their own race, which in that country would be reckoned monstrous and unnatural' (Part Four, Chapter 6). The context, and the flatly factual tone, pass this off as a neutral statement of observed actuality. But if we perceive irony, we still have to be careful, for evidence from all over the book suggests that Swift did see as natural a system of heredity-based hierarchy – as did his contemporaries. Thus, when the Brobdingnagian king comments acidly (and apparently reliably) on Gulliver's eulogistic

account of the House of Lords, he does not question the principle, merely the practice. On the other hand, Swift lays considerable ironic emphasis on the intellectual innocence of the Houyhnhnms. Their very language does not allow them to associate the idea of evil or deficiency with themselves. The apparently neutrally referential term 'Houyhnhnm' translates literally as 'the perfection of nature'. (We might compare our own term 'homo sapiens'.) The word 'Yahoo', as well as naming a species, functions as a negative prefix something like the English 'dis', 'un' or 'mis' (as in 'dislike', 'ungodly' or 'misunderstand'). Anything regarded as nasty or defective is termed Yahoo-something or other. Thus evil is externalised and identified with the non-Houyhnhnm other, and value-judgements are offered as normative linguistic descriptions. And their vocabulary does not allow them to speculate beyond the system within which they live. Nothing outside it is linguistically recognised as an object of perception or conception: it is simply either 'that which is not', or an aspect of the Yahoo. In short, Houyhnhnm reality is that which the language has granted terms for. That they lack a word for 'government' is another double-edged irony. The butt may be them, in their confusion of culture with nature, or us, in so far as political complexity indicates corruption; for the exercise of right reason should be enough.

So are dapple-grey Houyhnhnms really superior to iron-greys? The question becomes urgent when we consider the subjugation of the Yahoos. But then, are the Yahoos human? Are they slaves or livestock? They have no speech. Gulliver does not give us much help here. He resists the identification of the Yahoos with himself, but accepts it for his fellow humans. He mends his shoes with 'Yahoo-hide' and caulks his boat with 'Yahoo tallow', but does not eat Yahoo meat. (But then, perhaps, it simply tastes nastier than the Irish babies recommended in *A Modest Proposal.*) At all events, if the word 'reason' means what the Houyhnhnms define it to mean, then clearly neither the Yahoos nor we have it; in which case we need another word for the faculty that enables us to build ships, navigate the seas, invent gunpowder, and so on. And similarly for the concept of following the dictates of 'nature', which in practice are so various, though nature is supposed to be universal and unitary, changeless and unerring (like God).

And yet, despite Houyhnhnm uniformitarianism and intellectual obscurantism, their order does seem to function as some sort of norm. It takes to extremes (or perhaps offers a *reductio ad absurdum* of) tendencies already observable in the nicer models of society that the book imagines. The Houyhnhnms are like a highly simplified version of the ancients, with their Spartan-like education methods, Athenian-like

regulatory assembly, equine old-style Olympic Games (happily drug-free) and traditional literary forms. Gulliver himself remarks on a certain similarity between the ideals of Houyhnhnms and Brobdingnagians. And though the latter, unlike the former, do have script, they take severe measures against its proliferation. They have no political parties, and their longest laws are only twenty-two words long, having never, it appears, been added to, repealed or amended (unlike, say, the American constitution). Indeed, it is a capital offence to write a commentary on any law. (The Houyhnhnms' lack of a word meaning 'opinion' precludes such a practice altogether.) After all, it is implied, if nature is uniform and social arrangements are simply a matter of the application of reason, then the right course of action should be clear and obvious. There are no two ways about it. Truth is truth. It is not a matter of viewpoint. How can there be radical differences of opinion on matters of principle? If there seem to be two sides to an issue, then it must be because of a deficiency of reason in us.

It is the Lilliputians who offer us a society at the furthest extreme from the Houyhnhnms. Physical size apart, they would be thoroughly at home in Brussels. They are urbanised, bureaucratically top-heavy and preoccupied with formalistic niceties and law jargon. They seem to share the legalistic obsession of Defoe's protagonists with documents, contracts, written schedules, inventories, formal permissions and articles of agreement. Gulliver himself has to besiege the Lilliputian Emperor with written memorials and petitions for his release, which is made contingent on his swearing to eight articles according to the prescribed forms of both England and Lilliput. (In Lilliput, a person swears a formal oath by holding the right foot in the left hand, placing the middle finger of the right hand on the crown of the head, and the thumb on top of the right ear.) The Lilliputians are riddled with parties, camps, factions and pressure-groups, but these, apparently, do not represent serious differences of principle – simply rival power-alignments of place-seekers. Again the implication is that such a world is perversely, grotesquely over-complicated. It is so obvious what we ought to be doing. We have known the moral laws all along, and they do not change. There is no need to turn politics into a science, administration into a mystery, law into an adversarial battle of wits and a gigantic system of obfuscation. Why cannot we all mean the same things by the same words?

But there is always at work another side of Swift, sabotaging these redemptive simplicities. Hence the fantasy in Part Three of the Lagado academicians who invent a language that consists of carrying around with one the objects to which reference is to be made. It is not just a

joke about the needless physical effort involved, but a sophisticated recognition that language is not a mere collection of labels for pre-existent things and that the relation between language and reality is not as simple as the Brobdingnagians, let alone the Houyhnhnms, suppose.

The book in fact offers us a Babel of ten different cultures, all but one with its own tongue (if we count the Glubbdubdribians, Luggnaggians, Japanese and Dutch, but bracket the Laputans with the Lagadoans because they both speak Balnibarbian). Granted, they are mostly different aspects of the same thing. Nevertheless, Swift goes to great lengths to work out the languages of those groups among which Gulliver makes a protracted stay, and to give them a distinct character. Balnibarbian, for instance, is a bit like Italian in its preference for the vowels *o* and *a*, and for words terminating in vowels, while Houyhnhnmese is, to say the least, a challenge, because of its non-syllabic nature, consonantal clusters and abbreviated alphabet. Gulliver quotes generously from the languages in question, and is often stuck for an exact translation. Perhaps it is not a crucial cultural difference that Lilliputian *ranfu-lo* translates literally (or perhaps euphemistically) as 'middle cover', though it leaves us uncertain what Lilliputian clothes are actually like. But when we learn that English 'die' has as its closest Houyhnhnm equivalent the word *shnuwnh* (sounding to the uninitiated something between a snort, a snuffle and a sneeze), which translates as 'to retire to one's first mother', we are brought up more abruptly against the perceptual, cognitive and cultural gulfs between one language group and another. In rather the same way, we are invited to ponder whether Brobdingnagian skin is 'really' as ugly, coarse and pocky as it seems to Gulliver.

In all these ways, *Gulliver's Travels* is a book that explores problems rather than firmly proffers conclusions and rests its case. And in so far as the issues are not only sustained but re-examined and deepened from one part to its successor, it is one book, despite its narrative episodicity, constant shifts of location and chameleon-like narrator. Indeed its incremental method contributes importantly to its disquietingness. A careless reading, for instance, might suppose that when Gulliver, in the fifth and sixth chapters of Part Four, tells his Houyhnhnm master about his own society (especially in its military, political and jurisprudential aspects), Swift is merely retracing ground already covered in Part Two, Chapters 6 and 7. But the change in tone from idealistic to cynical conveys a quite different set of implications: it shifts the emphasis from the workings and effects of social institutions to the human intentions behind them. Perhaps they are actually functioning as they were intended. If so, then there seems to be no hope for us.

Those later implications will perhaps be taken as definitive only by a reader who tries to read the narrative as a novel and Gulliver as a coherent 'character' in the same sense as is Fielding's Tom Jones. Certainly the societies of the book, particularly the Lilliputian, are portrayed with the delighted and meticulously concrete fictional inventiveness that is a *sine qua non* of its appeal, and indeed the first two parts continue to be reissued in simplified versions for children, and to generate cartoons and films. They are the most readily visualisable, and the most novel-like, and they give Gulliver plenty to do. Moreover, although Part One is the richest in topical political allusion, the satire is there the most digestible, because the most fully integrated into a sustained plot-action.

All the same, it is a little odd to take the ever-changing protagonist of the first three parts, who is by turns satiric butt, impercipient reporter, holy fool or hard-headed pragmatist, as suddenly developing an inner life and emotional depth in the final part, and undergoing tragic enlightenment (or psychological collapse). It is, rather, a question of the satirist's role. How shall he react to the knowledge that he has had all along: that people are as they are, and satire never seems to reform them? And, equally, that the satirist himself is vulnerable, for he cannot speak from a position outside the world and its defects.

Swift does, of course, need to make us identify ourselves with a 'real' Gulliver to the extent that we feel (in turns proudly, or defensively, or abashedly) represented by him, on the level of the story. And for the story's purposes, we are *not* Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, etc., as every child reader knows. But the *irony* crucially depends on having a defective protagonist-narrator who cannot pre-empt the reader's judgements by supplying appropriate reactions to the stupidities or cruelties reported. And in Part Four, the 'straight' or story-reading and the ironic reading are put particularly deftly at odds, with the ironic self recognising the Yahoo-human parallel, and the ordinary self siding with Gulliver in his desire to deny it.

But *Gulliver's Travels* has to be understood at even more than two different levels at once. As a story, it offers sequences of 'literal' events interesting in their own right, as much to the unsophisticated as to those who recognise that it shares formal features (as it is well aware) with several literary genres: the fantastic traveller's tales already parodied in the second century AD by Lucian's *True History*, and later by Rabelais and Cyrano de Bergerac, Utopian fictions like Sir Thomas More's, novels involving journeys, like *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and non-fictional travel memoirs like William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697), which supplied Defoe with his Crusoe idea and Swift