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Author(s): Richard H. Rodino
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Richard H. Rodino

"Splendide Mendax": Authors, Characters, and Readers in *Gulliver's Travels*

RICHARD H. RODINO was associate professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross until his death on 30 December 1990. He is the author of Swift Studies, 1965–1980: An Annotated Bibliography *(Garland, 1984); the coeditor, with Hermann J. Real, of* Modern Studies of Jonathan Swift *(Fink, 1991); and the coauthor, with Hilary Connor, of a series of detective novels (Bantam, 1987–93). He published a variety of articles on Swift and on Robert Pirsig's* Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

After prolonged research on myself, I brought out the fundamental duplicity of the human being. Then I realized that modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress.

Camus, *The Fall*

Gulliver vexeth me more than any.

Swift to Charles Ford, 20 November 1733

IN THE HISTORY of interpretation of *Gulliver's Travels* there has never been an instant when readers would hesitate to debate any given statement about the book, though the site of controversy has shifted several times.[1] As early as 1726, the anonymous poem *The Blunder of All Blunders* observed:

Poor Lemuel's laid upon the Table,
And every one, as he is able,
In blust'ring Words and smart Orations,
Begins to vent his Observations. (13–16)

A serious attempt to understand how and why Swift's text has continuously generated such emphatic disputation can reveal much, for the persistent swirl of controversy not only reflects the predispositions of various communities of readers but also mirrors the attitudes toward meaning expressed within the text itself.

Eighteenth-century critics generally agreed about the first level of meaning for *Gulliver's Travels*: Swift and Gulliver intended to attack human nature and human behavior. Nonetheless, the critics quarreled intensely over the second level, namely, the import of the attack, manifested in how readers would and should respond to the meaning

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Swift and Gulliver apparently authorized. Hostile commentators warned against readers' abasement: "In this last part of his imaginary travels . . . the representation which he has given us of human nature, must terrify, and even debase the mind of the reader who views it. . . . [W]e are disgusted, not entertained; we are shocked, not instructed, by the fable" (Orrery 57). Defenders, however, described a therapeutic process of response to the horrifying narrative:

> Our general answer to all those whose mistaken delicacy, or rather affected squeamishness, may be offended thereat, is; that if the brutality and filthiness of the Yahoos be painted by the powerful genius of Dean Swift, in Colours the most Shocking and detestable, as these certainly are, and, in fact, they ought to have been; the picture is the more striking, as well as the more terrible: and upon that very account the more likely to enforce the obligation of religion and virtue upon the human mind. (Dilworth 74)

By the end of the century, controversy had spread to the first level of meaning, beginning with the objection Thomas Sheridan (the younger) raised to the conventional view:

> The last charge . . . against Swift, and which has gained most general credit, is that of perfect misanthropy; and this is chiefly founded upon his supposed satyr on human nature, in the picture he has drawn of the Yahoos. This opinion has been so universally adopted by almost all who have read *Gulliver's Travels*, that to controvert it would be supposed to act in opposition to the common sense and reason of mankind. And yet I will undertake to overthrow it. (502)

Notwithstanding such support for Swift, the nineteenth century's emphasis on texts as authorial self-expression generated ad hominem attacks on the dean (Thackeray's "shameful, blasphemous, unmanly" is not the harshest [446]) and, through chagrin and alarm that a hallowed masterpiece should express such anticanonical meanings, concocted the theory of Swift's nervous breakdown or actual insanity.

In one of literary history's most cherishable ironies, the twentieth-century "defense" of *Gulliver's Travels* first took the form of denying that Swift had ever intended the very meanings that had elevated his magnum opus to preeminence. Operating on post-Jamesian assumptions about the psychological consistency of characters, distinguishing persona from author, and adopting a less doctrinal reading of historical context, the still predominant "soft school" described by James Clifford finds *Gulliver's Travels* a satire on frustrated idealists like Gulliver; its sentiments on human nature more comic than satiric; the Yahoos merely an impossible image of what human beings would be without reason; the Houyhnhnms impracticable, even ridiculous figures; Captain Pedro de Mendez the embodiment of the central moral values of the work; and so on. In response, what Clifford terms the "hard school" retrenched by adopting "eighteenth-century attitudes": *Gulliver's Travels* is a tough-minded satire that extends little or no comic hopefulness; Swift speaks his own mind through Gulliver, who is a satirical device, not a novelistic character; the Yahoos are a reminder of the depths to which human beings can and do sink whenever they cease pursuing the higher ideals embodied sincerely in the Houyhnhnms; and so on (Clifford; Rodino, *Studies* xxx–xxxvi).

At loggerheads since the 1950s, the hard and soft schools are still going strong, despite the pose, lately fashionable, of dismissing the controversy as no longer relevant—a conclusion that is little more than wishful thinking. (By my count, roughly sixty percent of the critics of *Gulliver's Travels* are still of the soft school.) Because compromise positions almost invariably continue to approach *Gulliver's Travels* from formalist-historical premises, they are limited to arguing that the opposing set of meanings is mistaken or fraudulent; they merely document the never-ceasing vitality of the debate, because they cannot avoid using it as their point of departure and the measuring stick of their success. Only a handful of interpretations rooted in quite different assumptions offer new and larger perspectives, not through pinning down the meaning of *Gulliver's Travels*, but through accepting the debates about its meaning as important symptoms of its essential linguistic nature. As the twentieth century

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wanes, however, it is striking how little influence these new directions have had on the study of Swift, perhaps one (largely unperceived) reason that many Swiftians consider the current enterprise of Swift studies to be in a slump.

Phenomenological readings (W. B. Carnochan's is by far the best known) rise above the hard-versus-soft controversy by positing a state of mind for Swift more complicated and ostensibly more contradictory than has routinely been assumed. His epistemological anxiety glitters through his constant making and unmaking of meanings; convinced that satire is a folly, Swift includes himself in his satirical indictments, while continuing to press them on others as well. The considerable insights of this approach are limited, however, by their dismissal of disagreements as deriving from mistaken or partial understandings of the larger, historically definable entity that is Swift.

Outside the specialist guild, criticism of Swift has something of a reputation for reader-oriented approaches. Nearly all of them, however, are rooted in positivistic rhetorical premises, with "The Reader" conceived of as a monolithic consciousness identifiable at every point. As a result, such criticism has almost always ended up serving some interpretation that is either hard-school (e.g., Claude J. Rawson) or soft-school (e.g., Wayne C. Booth) or else a typical attempt at rapprochement (e.g., A. E. Dyson).

Poststructuralist perspectives, though they would seem to have much to offer on the vexed question of *Gulliver's Travels*, have appeared only in dribs and drabs since 1980.[2] One needed project is a full history of the critical reception of *Gulliver's Travels*, based not on the traditional premise that the history of reading is a melioristic record of earlier errors erased and correct meanings discovered but rather on the concept that grasping the larger meaning of *Gulliver's Travels* must include acknowledging the various meanings readers have generated in response and the readers' unavoidable implication in intertextuality (see Jauss). The present essay tackles a complementary task by analyzing structures of discourse dramatized in Swift's and Gulliver's tales and in the relations between them. The *Travels* has been a battleground where readers, both within and outside the text, resist the authorial powers of Swift and Gulliver and author their own texts in contrast to those of other readers. These battles reflect and therefore contain, rather than exclude, additional searches for meaning in *Gulliver's Travels.*

In Faulkner's 1735 edition of *Gulliver's Travels* the first words identify the protagonist as "splendide mendax," a liar for the public good (Teerink 41). Thus the text is introduced as a nexus of fiction making and power wresting, for the allusion is not only to Horace but also to Plato's vastly influential statement of the "noble lie," in *The Republic.* Plato's term, *gennaion pseudos*, describes a lie at once high-minded and well-bred, the instrument of a privileged social class, of those in power. His example is a fabrication about the origins of class distinctions, designed to quell the subversiveness of less privileged classes toward the existing power structure (see Bok).

Gulliver's story, too, conflates the power of language with the language of power. Acts of interpretation within *Gulliver's Travels*—acts of creating and of reading, of inventing characters and of becoming characters in the fictions of others—signal both the text's complex relations to truth and its readers' unceasing stratagems for gaining power over its meaning. The story within reflects the story without: a struggle in which readers willfully characterize Swift and rewrite Gulliver while opposing their own texts to those of others. The ambivalent returns of Gulliver's eager upward mobility in each voyage suggest not only Swift's own lifelong complaints of missed opportunities and unrewarded merits, of political and social deprivation and exile, but also his readers' double-edged gestures of self-assertion and control (see McKeon 338–56).

In *Gulliver's Travels*, interpretation, by the human characters at least, is never merely a quest for truth and virtue; it always contains a desire to control the flux of meaning. The potential for fictions and other lies is at once creative and pernicious. Language conceals even as it reveals. The text opens up a central difficulty in eighteenth-century culture, in that the will to determine the self's experiences can never free itself from a

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struggle for authority over others as well as over the self. Thus, instead of realizing Habermas's "ideal speech situation"—where the self can use language freely, where speech can be action, and where truth claims can be made—the century's heavy investment in dialogue is shown to conflict with the usurpative role of language in constituting self and other.[3]

Even a preliminary exploration of this battleground requires an unusually complex understanding of the rhetorical relations involved. We must, for instance, go beyond Everett Zimmerman's pioneering description of the *Travels* as "a book not about a man who undergoes certain experiences but about a man who writes a book about experience that he has undergone"—a view that regards the reader simply as a receiver of meaning (115–17) and sees the text as a movement toward truth and away from lying, away from each author, reader, and character unavoidably playing the role of *mendax—splendide* or otherwise. At a minimum, we need to acknowledge that Swift the author writes the story of Gulliver the author writing the story of Gulliver the character, who in turn becomes an author of various texts for various readers within the *Travels*. In addition, Gulliver is constantly the reader and interpreter of others' texts and frequently (and most often uncomfortably) also a character in them, as well as in his own and Swift's stories.[4]

A somewhat fuller description that incorporates readers outside the text would need to include a text (Swift's, signaled by the phrase "Vol. III of the Author's Works" on Faulkner's 1735 title page) that urges readers to infer an author (Swift) who has invented an author (Gulliver) who is inventing a text that urges his own readers to assume a new relationship to him as character and through that relationship to construct his desired image of himself, that is, Gulliver as he intends to be understood. During any given reading, then, the reader is invited to play at least three roles: docile interpreter of Gulliver's authorial intentions; metacritic of Gulliver's motives and strategies; and metametacritic of Swift, who glimpses the levels and loops of textuality in which the *Travels*'s other readers, authors, and characters are situated. The reader's unstable roles thus also include the parts of author and character. But this model of the reading process is trite (though complicated) unless we bear in mind that slippage is always occurring among the various roles, during individual readings as well as over the readings of a lifetime (see Prince 128–32). For, in practice, the reader as interpreter of intention is necessarily reinvented by the friction between the reader as critic of Gulliver and the reader as critic of Swift and in turn, sooner or later, must reinvent these readers. Of course, through the reciprocal processes of critical analysis, it is the reader as critic of Gulliver who distinguishes Gulliver the character from Gulliver the author and from Swift the author and, yes, even distinguishes between the reader's own roles as critic of Gulliver and critic of Swift.

These tensive and slippery activities outside the text are mirror images, always with some distortion, of the writing and reading experiences of Gulliver: as author he aspires to pure control of a whole meaning synonymous with his intention; as reader he desires pure interpretive freedom from authorial constraint. (To analyze this reciprocal repression in Gulliver necessitates bracketing, to a degree, the way in which readers' own senses of self are threatened in precise synchronization with Gulliver's.[5])

Swift's disguises of his own identity, his deliberate autocorruptions of his texts and his blurring of fictional levels and the borders of reality and fiction, though long recognized as narrative signatures, are usually understood as mere signs of some whole and intelligible signified that existed before and inside them, a hidden heart of discourse into which readers can burrow. However, as Michel Foucault and other post-Saussurian philosophers of language have warned, this signified is illusory, though enticing (215–37). The reader may experience Swift's disguises as pointers in a system of glassy surfaces—tempting illusions of windows but in practice only mirrors in which one sees other faces without, perhaps, recognizing one's own.[6]

The mirroring and looping of roles begin with the contrast between the 1735 title page and modern readers' expectations of the famous, though even more fictive, common title—a fic-

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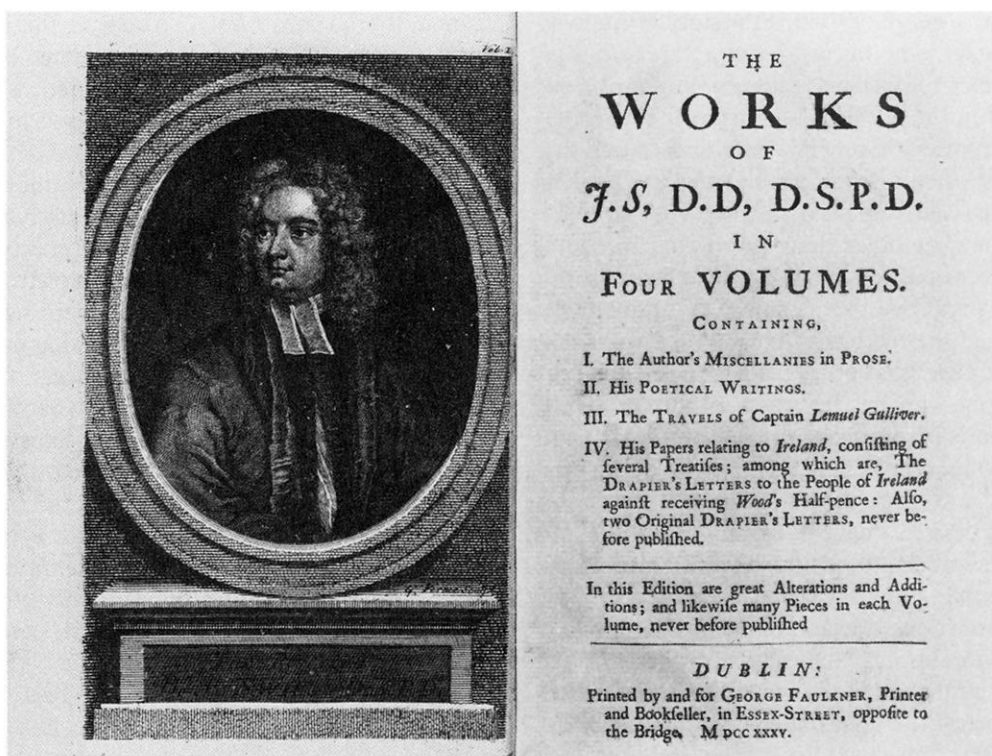
tion rung upon the original fiction, which itself is of the conventional travel variety that, Gulliver later complains, "impose[s] the grossest Falsities on the unwary Reader" (see Adams 1–18; Lawry). The familiar title is a reassuring assertion of subject-object duality: only an eponymous Gulliver has done or will be doing any traveling; readers by implication will be engaged in altogether distinct activities, that is, witnessing and perhaps assessing. The original title, in contrast, inscribes no such detachment, merely asserting that contained herein are (someone's) voyages into remote nations and identifying Gulliver by titles of sheer authority: author, captain, and surgeon. This bare hint of adversarial relations between voyagers and captain (exacerbated for all in later voyages), between readers and author, is enhanced by the quotation from *De rerum natura*, which not only claims a bitter, though medicinally pure, textual meaning but in the quoted scrap itself—"Vulgus abhorret ab his"—insults recalcitrant readers as the vulgar who distance themselves from textual authority. Though ostensibly a negative model, Lucretius's vulgar reader turns out to be an uncanny mirror of both Gulliver and his readers over 264 years. Faulkner's title page insists on a metatext ("the Author's Works") containing these voyages, an author ("by Jonathan Swift") inventing Gulliver, and, most interestingly, errors in earlier editions that have been "corrected." Gulliver's attempt to make meaning will occur within the context of yet another story, this one a tale of textual transmission, corruption, and emendation that itself signifies within the story of Swift's own vexed and insufficient struggle to restore his text's original purity, as retold time and again.[7]

These concentric fictional levels are reflected more obviously in the frontispiece, which, as Grant Holly has remarked, amounts to a series of regressive mirrors: an engraving of a portrait of a literary character (or, for most modern readers, a photocopy of an engraving, etc.), an image


THE

WORKS

OF

J. S, D.D, D.S.P.D.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

CONTAINING,

I. The Author's MISCELLANIES in PROSE.

II. His POETICAL WRITINGS.

III. The TRAVELS of Captain *Lemuel Gulliver*.

IV. His Papers relating to *Ireland*, conſiſting of ſeveral Treatiſes; among which are, The DRAPIER'S LETTERS to the People of *Ireland* againſt receiving *Wood's* Half-pence: Alſo, two Original DRAPIER'S LETTERS, never before publiſhed.

In this Edition are great Alterations and Additions; and likewiſe many Pieces in each Volume, never before publiſhed.

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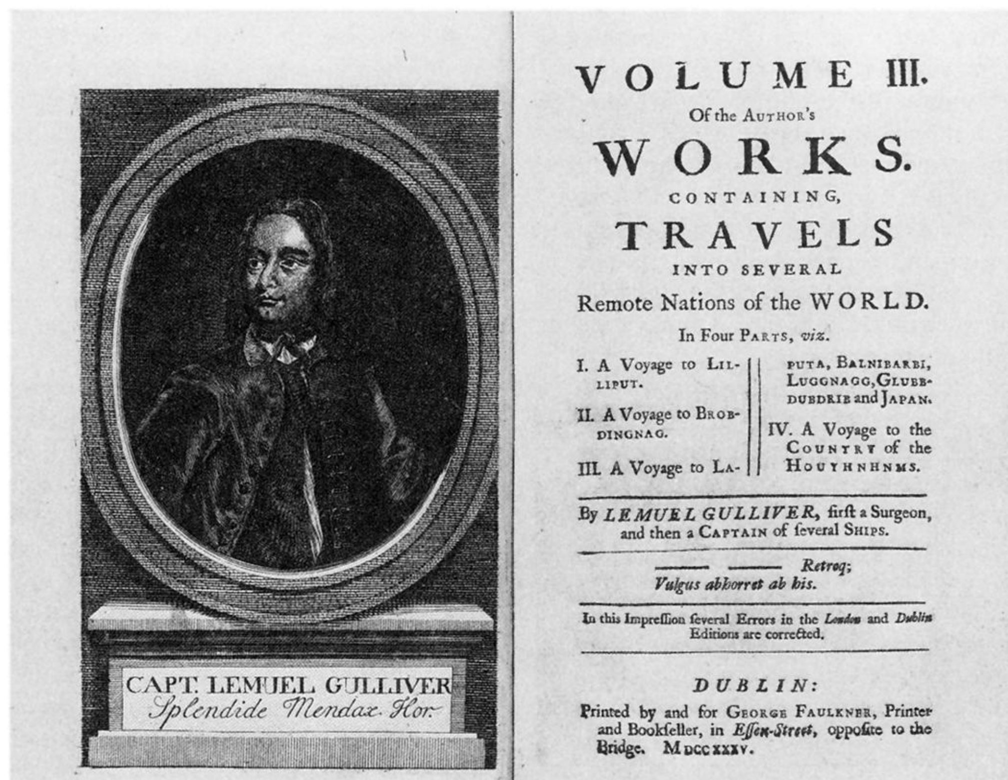
of an image of an image (149–50). The potential for slippage is mirrored, too, since the pedestal, frame, and orientation, as well as Gulliver's features and expression, are virtually identical with those in the portrait of Swift in the frontispiece of the metatext, *The Works of J. S., D. D., D. S. P. D.* (Mezciems 48–54). The title-page layouts are also reflective: both delineate a four-part division and announce the variable histories of their texts by declaring corrections, alterations, and additions.

The inscription under Gulliver's portrait is what transmutes this infernally hilarious, but seemingly analyzable, joke into a strange loop. If Gulliver is a liar, then what must Swift be when he identifies his portrait with Gulliver's? Is the identification itself therefore a lie? But that possibility, of course, would reinforce the identification of these two liars. And if Swift is not Gulliver but, rather, a man of truth, then his claim that the two portraits are alike is a lie. Both distinguishing Swift from Gulliver and attempting to identify the two are locked in paradox, equally excluded, in principle, from analytical definition (see Mezciems 53). As Epimenides the Cretan might murmur, "This complaint is made by a liar"; or, "All fiction makers are liars, including this one."

The "Letter to Sympson" focuses these mirrors of textuality. At stake is an "original Manuscript," which, in Gulliver's tortured nostalgic view, was once the site of uncorrupted authorial intention and therefore of truth and over which he had wielded absolute power. "I do not remember that I gave you power" to meddle with my text, complains Gulliver (5). The lies, deletions, additions, and commentaries perpetrated by others are willful falsehoods. Yet Gulliver palpably lies even in the "Letter to Sympson" and thus is himself a falsifier of his own texts. For instance, his claim that the truth of the first three voyages "immediately strikes every Reader with Conviction" (8) is a prevarication; Gulliver himself amply documents that neither in Houyhnhnmland nor in



VOLUME III.

Of the AUTHOR'S

WORKS.

CONTAINING,

TRAVELS

INTO SEVERAL

Remote Nations of the WORLD.

In Four PARTS, *viz.*

I. A Voyage to LILLIPUT.
II. A Voyage to BROBDINGNAG.
III. A Voyage to LAPUTA, BALNIBARBI, LUGGNAGG, GLUBBDUBDRIB and JAPAN.
IV. A Voyage to the COUNTRY of the HOUYHNHNMS.

By *LEMUEL GULLIVER*, first a Surgeon, and then a CAPTAIN of several SHIPS.

——— ——— *Retroq;*
Vulgus abhorret ab his.

In this Impression several Errors in the *London* and *Dublin* Editions are corrected.

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England are Yahoos susceptible to immediate conviction by truth.[8]

The Gulliver of the "Letter to Sympson" is not only post-Houyhnhnm but also posttextual. In Europe, Gulliver cannot privilege the orality he admired in Houyhnhnmland; Europeans are "so new fangled in their Words" that "when any Yahoo comes from *London* out of Curiosity to visit me at mine own House, we neither of us are able to deliver our Conceptions in a Manner intelligible to the other" (7).[9] Yet neither can he endorse the uncoerced publication that Swift himself pursued. Gulliver regrets not that he wrote his memoirs but that he "suffer[ed his] Travels to be published" (6). His wistfulness is for a text that is written but unread, or at least unpublished; in his fantasy of pure authorial control over reading circumstances and consequences, an author need never become a character in another's fiction or allow a reader to transmogrify into author.

Since only unpublished writing has power both to reveal the mind's thoughts and yet to avoid interpretive degeneracy, Gulliver recommends (for others) a reversal of the publication process, the reabsorption of the printed artifact into the being of its author, the redigestion of the external sign into the internal realm of one who signifies: all those pilers of texts upon texts, he complains, should be "condemned to eat nothing but their own Cotton, and quench their Thirst with their own Ink" (6). Yet the very image betrays Gulliver's intended sense of cure, of restoration of some primal whole, by suggesting a potentially endless cycle of ingestion and evacuation.[10]

Even Gulliver's fantasies fail to satisfy, and his practical efforts are self-defeating. Everywhere apparent in the "Letter to Sympson" is his anxiety that readers' responses have made lies of his truths; he resents being implicated in a network of falsity. For the critics "loading our Carrier every Week with Libels, and Keys, and Reflections, and Memoirs, and Second Parts" are all liars (7), some claiming that Gulliver is not the author of the *Travels*, others that he wrote books he never saw. Nevertheless, readers operating on the critic-of-Swift level know that the libelers and key makers also manage to tell the truth in senses Gulliver can never grasp: Swift, author of books Gulliver has not seen, is at least as truly the author of the *Travels* as Gulliver is. Moreover, Gulliver can hardly claim innocence of instigating the keys and continuations of his story (see Tippett 89–90). On the contrary, he plunges even further into intertextuality by voluntarily adding his own remedial emendations, comments, and corrections to the textual "bundles"—in this, of course, copying Swift.

Gulliver bears another complex family resemblance to his kinsman and ostensible adversary Richard Sympson, who, though by profession a meddler with texts (i.e., an editor), is every inch a "simp's son" about language and meaning. This simp believes that read words can nevertheless remain disentangled of interpretation, can be more than what Gulliver calls "meer Fiction" (8), even while paradoxically leaving Sympson as reader "Liberty to dispose of them as I should think fit" (9). Sympson tries to defend this putative transparency of the text by comparing its ideally docile readers (those who simply interpret Gulliver's intentions) with Gulliver's Redriff neighbors, whom he imagines solemnly treasuring Gulliver's every word. Sympson will never see the neighbors' raised eyebrows or hear the delicious ambiguity of their paradoxical "Sort of Proverb": "it was as true as if Mr. *Gulliver* had spoke it" (9). An audience less naive than Sympson knows a "splendide mendax" when it hears one neighing.

In his next breath, Sympson admits that he has honored the author's "air of truth" by tampering with (or perhaps even engineering—which is not beneath the lying simp) these organic virtues for rhetorical effect, "to fit the Work as much as possible to the general Capacity of Readers" (10). To demonstrate his own power over Gulliver's text, this simple and silly man offers to show curious readers the Ur-text itself, "the whole Work at large" (10)—a gesture repeated by most critics for 264 years after him. But this offer involves another lie, as Gulliver confirms nine years later: Sympson and other readers, however conservatorially minded, have destroyed the original textual meaning by their very perceptions of it. Now even Gulliver "cannot stand to" the cor-

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rections and leaves it to "my judicious and candid readers to adjust it as they please" (7). The remainder of the *Travels* is a history of how Gulliver reached this startling acquiescence to readers' arrogation.

Gulliver enters Lilliput with attitudes much like those of Sympson. Lilliput is, above all, a world dominated by texts, a world of ritual gestures, proclamations, ceremonies, and "Articles," and Gulliver quickly assumes a citizen's prerogatives by becoming a docile decoder of those texts and deluding himself that he is quite at liberty. On the surface, language appears less enigmatic in Lilliput than in the other lands he visits: even on a first encounter, gestures and intonations, if not yet words, convey the meaning of both parties well enough; and Gulliver learns the idiom quickly. Underneath, bubbling away, however, is his belief in what might be called Sympson's paradox: the truth will set a reader free, but the true knowledge of any text is what its author intended. And so Gulliver's pursuit of personal liberty throughout book 1 is in essence a pursuit of freedom both to interpret and to express meanings authorized by his own intentions.

The problem with Lilliputian texts, one that the character Gulliver cannot see, is their hidden agendas—a bit like the narrator Gulliver's concealed motives toward his own readers (Castle, "Houyhnhnms" 39–40; Swaim 51–70). Gulliver the character does not realize the tension between his constant collaboration with Lilliputian codes of meaning and the rather blustery image of himself as a hero of freedom, the impression he wants to inculcate in his readers. His first words in Lilliputian empower him to request liberty, and he perceives his increasing participation in Lilliputian textuality as a process of liberation: "I had sent so many Memorials and Petitions for my Liberty" (42). Yet Gulliver is set free only to obey Lilliputian authorial intentions, to interpret and express only within the Lilliputian system of discourse, which simply denies whatever threatens its authorial power. Thus, when Gulliver painstakingly translates the emperor's proclamation "Word for Word," he fails to catch—though he does not mask from his readers—the irony of this *splacknuck*'s dubbing himself the "Delight and Terror of the Universe" (43). Learning the language quickly, Gulliver has already begun to lose the double context that not long before permitted him to "wonder at the Intrepidity of these diminutive Mortals" (24). In fact, the "full Liberty" Gulliver boasts of after swearing to the Articles signifies only that he has been lulled into complete readerly docility by the illusion of interpretive free play. For instance, while Reldresal's "convenient" close reading of the key Big-Endian text, the directive to break eggs at the convenient end, appears objective and seems to avoid "a Strain upon the Text" (49), in actuality it merely reinvests meaning, as do all formalist interpretations, in the desires and practices of his particular interpretive community. But Gulliver, mistaking this sort of interpretation for a mode of personal freedom to seek truth, is so roused that he pledges his life to the emperor's defense.

Gulliver cannot wake up to the emblematic significance that all Lilliputian writing is slanted (39). As late as chapter 6, he approvingly recites a little allegory in which breach of trust is the greatest of crimes and the roles of master, criminal, sum of money, order, and running away reflect all too uncomfortably the power relations among author, reader, signifier (text), authorial intention (signified), and interpretation in the system of discourse that holds Gulliver prisoner (40). For Gulliver as character can neither read nor convey his intentions freely, no matter how naively he protests that his "Heart was wholly free" (36). For one instance, his freest and most generous expression of biddability, his prodigious urination on the roof of the Imperial Palace to extinguish a fire (56), is inexorably read as disrespect; the Lilliputians do not interpret by searching for Gulliver's authorial intention.

The narrator Gulliver is a different story. In fact, he treats his readers very much the way the Lilliputians treat theirs, including the character Gulliver. Once "at full Liberty," Gulliver pointedly refrains from repeating the emperor's compliments word for word (44), ostensibly to "avoid the Censure of Vanity," though even more effectively forestalling his reader in the critic-of-Gulliver mode from the subversive sneering that details of these compliments would certainly

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promote at Gulliver's expense. He trains readers in how to read him; his word-for-word rendering of the Lilliputians' inventory of his pockets (34–36), for example, invites readers to share the misleading joke that language is merely an interpretive riddle, a screen before an intelligible, whole truth.

The story within a story in chapter 7 is pivotal, not only providing Gulliver with a crucial metaperspective from which to understand his delusive trust in authorized meanings but also warning his critic-of-Gulliver readers about their parallel trust in him. The teller, text, characters, and readers of His Lordship's story—as in Fielding's, Sterne's, and Cervantes's interpolated stories—echo and reveal much about the main story. First, both stories are locked in chains of writing, reading, and rewriting. Just as Gulliver is the audience for a pointed summary of other discourse, including both a dramatic rendition of Reldresal's slanted importuning and the "Abstract" His Lordship has edited from the language of the Articles, so do Gulliver's readers read what Gulliver has re-created of His Lordship's story from notes taken after the visit had ended—all this contained within the text edited by Sympson, written by Swift, edited by Motte, reedited by Faulkner et al., and so on. Second, as a character in His Lordship's story, Reldresal exhibits a cruelly ambiguous "friendship," reminiscent of the narrator Gulliver's own double motives. Third, and perhaps most interesting, as His Lordship's reader, Gulliver reflects one version of his own readers' responses. His response forms three crests. At first, he imagines he can assert his independent consciousness against the calumnious text—"being conscious of my own Merits and Innocence . . . I was going to interrupt" (68). Then, as he better understands the interrelations of these textual layers, he senses his constraint, and so, in a second wave of response, he is "under many Doubts and Perplexities of Mind" (72).

The third wave of Gulliver's response to this uncertainty and textual dependence is an incipient understanding that reading the apparent intentions of authors can only lead to blindness. Instead of seeking to escape textuality, Gulliver realizes he must inscribe his "Liberty" among, rather than in isolation from, Lilliputian texts. Instead of merely fleeing Lilliput, he issues a text to Reldresal, "signifying my Resolution," and later addresses the emperor of Blefuscu so strategically that even readers outside the text are persuaded that he has not betrayed the truth, though in effect his explanation is nearly a pure lie (74). Although the character Gulliver professes to be newly sensitive to rhetorical abuses of power, the narrator offers no fresh circumstantial candor but continues declining to "trouble the Reader" with details of his reception in Blefuscu, as if to thwart the double context that would render ridiculous the "Generosity of so great a Prince" (74)—and, more important, would very likely subvert the story of good versus evil that the refugee Gulliver finds useful to promulgate.

The emperor of Blefuscu's devious letter to his counterpart in Lilliput only reaffirms a lesson Gulliver has already begun to absorb: that neither mastering the secret intentions of authors nor issuing counter, revisionist texts of interpretation creates freedom. The same lesson is gradually becoming available for Gulliver's reader-critics, although their adversarial authors include Swift and Gulliver himself. On the trip back to England, Gulliver the character demonstrates his new awareness of the battle between authors and readers. All pretense of circumstantiality dropped, he carefully limits his story for the crew to "few Words" (79), and when even these few are read as a text of lunacy, he authorizes his "Veracity" (79) by proffering things in place of words, first tiny cattle and sheep, then gifts of gold.

By the end of his first voyage, then, the character Gulliver has freed himself of persecution only by participating to some degree in the same rhetorical tactics by which he was persecuted, including, most important, stylistic reduction and concealment from his readers. At the same time, since Gulliver the narrator cannot escape language, he seeks power through metadiscourse, generating his own commentary on and outside the texts that oppress him. On his next voyage, the narrator Gulliver immediately talks more freely to his readers about the inadequacies of the very text they are reading. At the end of chap-

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ter 1, for instance, he validates exhaustive circumstantiality as the mode of "Truth" but confesses in the next breath that, "upon a strict Review, [he] blotted out several Passages of less Moment" to avert reader tedium (94). Gulliver's self-editing of truth is both an appeal for sympathy for such service and, at the same time and for other readerly roles, a flaunting of his power and willingness to occult and reorder the text for his own purposes.

A bit later, Gulliver admits that any stylistic decision will trap him in lies: the departicularized style needed to evade censure as a liar in Europe ("I should hardly be believed") necessarily perpetrates a lie in Brobdingnag ("a false and diminutive Representation" [115]). And so, even while airing his text's insufficiency to rise above lying, Gulliver the narrator offers an alternative, metatextual honesty as his readers' access to truth.

Gulliver the character, however, lacks metadiscourse inside Brobdingnag and therefore quickly loses control of the meanings his audience desires to make. His fate there is always to be freely interpreted, consistently to be made a character in the discrediting fictions of others: "I was every Day furnishing the Court with some ridiculous Story"; even his beloved Glumdalclitch writes such stories (124). Gulliver can only retell these fictions to readers outside Brobdingnag, trusting the metacontext to restructure ridicule into sympathy. But if the reader as interpreter of intention is inclined to sympathize, the reader as critic of Gulliver is just as tempted to share the giants' amusement; additionally, part of the consciousness of the reader as critic of Swift is continually stimulated to contemplate Gulliver's textual dilemma. For though Gulliver officially deplores the distorting liberties of the giants' way of reading, he nonetheless desires precisely the same freedoms for himself. He grotesquely misinterprets the king's request for "as exact an account" as possible of England, conjuring it into a new willingness on His Majesty's part to concede Gulliver's authority: "The King . . . began to conceive a much better Opinion of me than he had ever before"; "he should be glad to hear of any thing that might deserve Imitation" (127).

Gulliver becomes no more than a collection of unreliable fictions to the Brobdingnagians, as the king acknowledges by denouncing all European culture as a corrupted text: "I observe among you some Lines of an Institution, which in its Original might have been tolerable; but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by Corruptions" (132; Castle, "Houyhnhnms" 40). Gulliver counterblasts by condemning Brobdingnagian legal texts and readers as immobilized by single meanings (i.e., he makes the same assumption that was near fatally wrong about the Lilliputians): "They are expressed in the most plain and simple Terms, wherein those People are not Mercurial enough to discover above one Interpretation" (136). To Gulliver, the Brobdingnagians have self-administered the same punishment the Lilliputians sought to inflict on him: reduction of insight and even of physical sight ("short Views!" exclaims Gulliver of the king [135]). Although Gulliver continues to trumpet his "extreme Love of Truth" (133), he cannot assert the validity of his own intended meanings without paradoxically endorsing a multiplicity of interpretations and expressing hostility toward the idea that a single meaning may be synonymous with truth.

Glumdalclitch's "little old Treatise" on human weaknesses (137–38) mirrors the dilemma confronting Gulliver, his readers, and his authors (Quintana 298–99). For the treatise is an undeniable image of the *Travels* itself, treating a good many of Swift's long-standing themes—especially the diminutiveness of the human species in modern times when compared with the ancients and even with certain animals—and achieving, even Gulliver has to admit, "several moral Applications useful in the Conduct of Life" (137). Even so, Gulliver's more pressing complaint, that the book quarrels with the author of humanity, also rings true—at least until we realize that Gulliver's quarrel repeats the treatise's. Since nature did not give human beings foresight, complaints about nature are only natural. Likewise, since the treatise is an interpreter's quarrel with the authorship of nature, so it echoes Gulliver's quarrel with its own quarrelsomeness, not to mention the quarrel that the critic of Gulliver has with Gulliver's

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quarrelsome criticisms, the quarrel that the interpreter of intention has with the quarrelsome criticisms advanced by the critic of Gulliver, and on into the critical commentaries of the critics of Swift and *Gulliver's Travels*, and eventually so back into the text, in a circle of quarreling by readers made authors by virtue of their quarrels with other authors.

As if in extension of the Brobdingnagians' marginalization of him, Gulliver's character begins in Laputa utterly deprived of readers. His discourse is no longer even "turned into Ridicule" (133); indeed, he is barely noticed, despite Flapper intervention. This authorship of virtually unpublished texts may seem close to Gulliver's fantasy in the "Letter to Sympson," but in Laputa the character Gulliver, still the enthusiast of unfettered interpretation that Brobdingnag made of him, longs in vain for readers of his own. For their part, the Laputans claim perfect authorship; they scarcely need readers. On the one hand, their language assigns names to things, aping the epistemology of Adam in Eden or perhaps of euclidean mathematics, in which signs bear natural and unvarying relations to reality (Reiss 328–32). On the other hand, as readers the Laputans connect with the words of others only by threads (163). No wonder Gulliver, though he can and does exercise every freedom of reader response, is soon "heartily weary" of this world. He cannot bear to be a pure reader—however unrestrained—if he is consequently deprived of authorship; but his own words hardly reach Laputan ears.

Lagado further projects this alienation of author and reader in alternating fantasies of control and freedom. Many of the experiments are bent on rescuing some original whole from corruption: cucumber flesh is merely a container for some anterior essence; excrement may be returned to its original food; houses may be built so that the bottom can never determine the shape of the top (an idea reminiscent of the Laputans' unresponsiveness to what is below); colicky patients are reinjected with outside air until the external is realigned with the internal (179–81; see Ehrmann). Other experiments are images of pure freedom to nose about: acorns, dates, and chestnuts are distributed for the convenience of hordes of rooting and fertilizing pigs; a spider's web, the famous symbol of private and personal art in *The Battle of the Books*, is converted into a mere vehicle to "fit every Body's fancy"; readers of Lagadan sundials find meanings that reflect "all accidental Turnings of the Wind" (180–81).

The next four experiments carry the fantasies explicitly into language. The book machine is a nearly perfect image of reader gratification: a text utterly free of authorial control—literally authorless—in which "the whole Disposition of the Words was entirely changed" by any sudden turn of the wheel (184). (Similar, of course, are the uninhibited artists in the school of political projectors, "dextrous in finding out the mysterious Meanings of Words, Syllables and Letters" [191].) But the last three experiments, in the school of speculative learning, are an author's fantasy of perfect control: shorten discourse to just the names of reality; abolish words altogether and discourse transparently through real things themselves; or, more "practically," let readers swallow one's propositions (rendered in "natural" mathematical symbols) without mediation, so as to imprint signs directly on the brain, without need for the corrupting intervention of eyes and mind (186). (Readers, of course, at least the critics of Gulliver and Swift, are inclined to steal aside and vomit.)

Fleeing these grotesque disjunctions of author from reader, Gulliver eventually stumbles on apparent images of wholeness in the three interpreters who figure in his last adventures on the third voyage. Since interpreters are hybrid creatures, by definition always authors and readers at the same time, so in their company Gulliver is again simultaneously author and reader; the price is that he once again is constantly a character in others' fictions. This dilemma he learns to address by lying. Sailing to Luggnag, Gulliver resorts to lies about his nationality, but they succeed only in bringing about his confinement (203). But as soon as he hires a young interpreter (to keep, as it were, Gulliver's tongue in his mouth), Gulliver is able to control the meaning of conversations to his own advantage, without resorting to lies (or at least to any he deems worth mentioning). His Majesty is delighted with the

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Englishman's interpreted company; the floor Gulliver is given to lick is almost dust-free; and as he modestly observes, "I had many Acquaintances among Persons of the best Fashion, and being always attended by my Interpreter, the Conversation we had was not disagreeable" (207).

However, assigning away one's tongue, authorizing another to clarify one's meaning, is potentially an abdication similar to the assignment of one's awareness to Flappers, as Kathleen Swaim has shrewdly remarked (136). The second interpreter, a volunteer, gives an expurgated account of the Struldbruggs that tricks Gulliver into a ridiculous burst of enthusiasm. Chagrined, Gulliver learns, in dealing with his third interpreter in Japan, how not to be exploited by a highly unstable chain of readers and authors: he lies to his interpreter. This tactic works spectacularly well, outside as well as within the text; interpreters of intention are preponderantly receptive to Gulliver's anxiety and apparent powerlessness in Japan, while in fact Gulliver is inducing the emperor himself to conspire in, even to initiate, keeping Gulliver's secrets (216–17). The lesson is reinforced by Gulliver's voyage home among Dutch sailors, which in the absence of a mediating translator proves "very long and troublesome." Although Gulliver resorts to brevity—"I made up a Story as short and probable as I could, but concealed the greatest Part"—and evasion by "general answers," he is constantly threatened with unmasking (217).

Having learned to lie to others, the character Gulliver learns a penultimate strategy in Houyhnhnmland, lying to himself; and the author Gulliver teaches the art of the "splendide mendax" to his readers, even those who do not care to learn it. Among the Houyhnhnms there seems no tension or communicative conflict of interest—at least none is permitted—no changefulness or competition of desires; authors and readers are linked by "immediate Conviction" (267). All this and truthfulness as well. Yet Gulliver is still limited by Sympsonian notions of the relations between language and reality. As he habitually learns languages by treating words as mere names for a reality that precedes and creates the need for language, so he analyzes the Houyhnhnms:[11] "their Language doth not abound in Variety of Words, because their Wants and Passions are fewer than among us" (242); for example, the Houyhnhnm tongue has no terms for "Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other Things" (244). Readers who buy into this sort of explanation wholeheartedly can scarcely avoid perceiving apparent contradictions in Houyhnhnmland, and indeed the majority opinion among twentieth-century critics has been that the Houyhnhnms must be hypocrites.

That the Houyhnhnm tongue has no terms for "Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other Things" hardly denies that these exist in Gulliver's description of the horses' world. The soft school has for decades rampaged over this fact. Punishment? Why, the Houyhnhnm master has no trouble imagining that any Yahoo who dared venture on a Houyhnhnm's back would shortly be squeezed to death (241). As for government, what else is the Grand Assembly or Representative Council that meets every four years and, despite Gulliver's insistence that disputes are unknown among the Houyhnhnms, regularly debates exterminating the Yahoos? Regarding law, what about the "Exhortations," which do not indeed need to compel a "rational Creature," because by definition any creature not obeying an Exhortation is not rational and so, chillingly, has no rights at all in Houyhnhnmland? And so on.[12]

These perceptions leave much unexplained. Yet bald-faced denial of the contradictions, as in some hard-school interpretations, is also inadequate. The larger question is, Just how can these utterly contrary signals come from the same text? It is easy to forget that all any reader ever can know of the Houyhnhnms comes from Gulliver's account of them. It is Gulliver's, and our own, very different language that invents our sense of the reality of Houyhnhnm "Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other Things." Gulliver cannot interpret the Houyhnhnms, or use the concepts of his language to conceive of them, without destroying their perfection for himself and, as narrator, for us as well. In this way, the fourth voyage brings to a climax a book

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massively concerned with the problems of representation, interpretation, and power.

Instead of claiming that the Houyhnhnms have few words because they have few needs, one could as plausibly contend that they have few wants because they have few words, as post-Saussurian language theory suggests. It is less their orality than their linguistic economy that creates the seeming dispensation of Houyhnhnm discourse. Before Gulliver ever spoke about and interpreted the horses, their reality may well have coincided with their language. In an otherwise brilliant study, Timothy J. Reiss has accused the Houyhnhnms of occulting their vices; but this interpretation presupposes a reality existing prior to and outside language, which the Houyhnhnms' words can only either acknowledge or obscure, that is, surreptitiously fail to acknowledge (345).[13] It also gives Gulliver's readers too much credit for metacritical astuteness and distance. The concealment is as likely Gulliver's and theirs as it is the Houyhnhnms'; the situation is parallel to the Houyhnhnm master's comment that it is "not unwise" for Gulliver to cover and conceal his ugly body (260); but because the master exists outside Gulliver's codes of representation, it never would or could occur to him to follow suit.

On the absence of lying, Reiss similarly remarks that "the use of a paraphrase is hardly proof that the idea is absent: on the contrary, it suggests rather that the idea is being concealed for some reason" (341). True, but who is concealing it and from whom? Here, Reiss's reading illustrates the paradox that even if Gulliver's critics do not allow Gulliver to lie to them, they may not avoid lying to themselves. The Houyhnhnms speak truth, but Gulliver's language cannot say as much without lying about them. The phrase "the Thing which is not" reduces to paradox, simultaneously denying and asserting the same thing. Gulliver cannot celebrate the Houyhnhnms' perfection without delineating its imperfections. His readers, therefore, cannot be relied on even to envy the Houyhnhnms' bliss. Internally realized though the horses' paradise may be, it is violated by outsiders' very acts of knowing it.

And so the character Gulliver finds his linguistic utopia, where simple truth may be promulgated, but he cannot help interpreting, reauthoring, and for many readers destroying it. All that is left is lying to himself that his text, too, is perfect, luminous. Yet the claim that his truth can rise above the vicissitudes of fortune leads Gulliver to identify with yet another classical example of the confluence of truth claims, lying, and power—the importunities of Sinon, whose self-inflicted "misery" and proclamations of truthfulness pried open Troy to conquest. This allusion, overlying Gulliver's braying about truthfulness, evokes not so much Plato's noble lie as Nietzsche's will to power:

> There is only *one* world, and that world is false, cruel, contradictory, misleading, senseless. . . . We need lies to vanquish this reality, this "truth," we need lies in order to live. . . . That lying is a necessity of life is itself a part of the terrifying and problematic character of existence. (451)

As we have seen, by the time of the "Letter to Sympson," Gulliver is complaining that his readers have corrupted his intentions, his truth. But the most profound truth about this text is that his readers did not do it alone.

Readers who pay particular attention to Gulliver's efforts at reading and at writing may see sobering reflections of their own procedures. Of course, many would prefer not to. But some do learn from Gulliver's abuses of these processes to interpret subversively against his intentions. They willy-nilly participate in chipping away the epistemological foundations that underpave the insoluble ambiguity of many Swiftian meanings. The recent attention to Swift's use of indirection, by David Nokes and others, is another reminder that, in attempting to provoke individual acts of responsibility, Swift had to invite—not simply to suffer—a multiplicity of responses. No writer has ever documented more persuasively both the relentless human ambition to totalize systems of understanding and, at the same time, the ultimate futility of those systems.

Nevertheless, the existential pleasure of anarchic or mendacious linguistic experience is not

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inevitably liberated from potential guilt and regret. As recent studies of Swift's linguistic views have convincingly argued, Swift never believed that linguistic redemption could be institutionalized or codified; instead, he put his stock in triggering individual acts of will (Kelly 1–5, 73–103; Wyrick). It is perhaps worth remembering the process of redemption that Augustine long ago defined for the careful reader of Scripture, for it seems an epistemological model for some readers' experiences with Swift's work (e.g., Dyson; Rodino, "Varieties"). This is a process at once intellectual, moral, and psychological, beginning with the experience of error or abuse, then fear and guilt, next rejection of transitory things, and so on to regeneration of the individual will (Augustine 39–40; see also Fish 2–3 for a discussion of this passage).

The power struggles of authors, characters, and readers, both within and outside *Gulliver's Travels*, anticipate Paul de Man's revisionist point that differing meanings cannot simply exist side by side but, rather, "have to engage each other in direct confrontation, since the one reading is precisely the error denounced by the other and has to be undone by it" (*Allegories* 12). At the same time, if it is true that any reader of *Gulliver's Travels* can be regenerated, the process will begin with a certain humility about the manifold errors and lies of human knowledge and the further recognition that all interpretation risks becoming a deathly struggle to defeat its other, to silence that which is different. Only when interpreters understand the nature of their understanding, its unavoidable fallacy and ineluctable ties to power, can they begin to move away from violence and arrogation toward a discourse that examines the "larger political context in which exegesis always takes place—the context of desire and conflict" (Castle, *Ciphers* 187).

I conclude with a word on what this essay does not do, or at least what it tries hard not to do. A reading of this sort, which attempts to understand how almost three centuries of contradictory interpretations can have been generated by the same text, does not presuppose that any documented positions in the traditional thematic controversies over the *Travels* are necessarily irrelevant or wrongheaded. For instance, Clifford's hard-school readers have given ample evidence of the narrator Gulliver's strenuous labors to gain the sympathy of his interpreters of intention and win them to his authorized meanings. Likewise, most soft-school readings have testified to the strength of critic-of-Gulliver suspicions of the narrator's motives.

Among the most notorious bones of contention has been whether to interpret Gulliver as a character with sufficient psychological consistency to be distinguished crisply from Swift or whether, as C. J. Rawson has perhaps stated most emphatically, he is less a character in a novel than "a satirist's stance of ultimate exasperation," treated externally as a satirical device (27–29). Still, it makes as little sense to ignore the sometimes gigantic evidence of Gulliver's unstable identity as to deny his powerful efforts to create an exploitably plausible image of himself in his readers' minds. Although any reader, by conscious or unconscious critical decision, may see Gulliver as rabbit or duck, either perception is smaller than the conditions of representation—the topic of this analysis—that generate these alternative illusions. Nor does this analysis seek out the author's consciousness, not even to identify it as confused or paradoxical, at least not to imply a definable whole anterior to and outside the text of *Gulliver's Travels*. And yet such phenomenological interpretation is also highly relevant, in fact is essential, to this reading, since the text of *Gulliver's Travels* plays quite knowledgeably on expectations of author-oriented meanings.

Nor, finally, does this reading want to privilege "the reader," except as defined by a network of unstable relations, inseparable from other elements of textual transmission, including other readers. This is not a "strong misreading," or an allegorical reading, or a "grid" (in Foucault's terms) imposed on the text without reference to the vocabulary used in the text or by its author. Rather, it is a reading rooted in the text's language and also in the text's implication in historical sites, as perceived nonpositivistically through the ways reading has gone on, both within and outside the text (see McGann). By contrast, tradi-

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tional reader-response critics of Swift, from Booth to Rawson, have tended to hypostatize the reader into a formal rhetorical element that they sooner or later offer in support of "hard" (Rawson) or "soft" (Booth) thematics. And yet these approaches too are a sine qua non of a reading that seeks to understand a little more about how 264 years of intelligent reading has both revealed and sought to conceal such multiplicity.

This sort of attention to *Gulliver's Travels* suggests that, in his most brilliant acts of artistic creation, Swift understood very well certain inevitabilities about the paradoxical nature of texts in the world, of authorship and reading. With a nod to the perils of sea travel, the text of *Gulliver's Travels* might best be described not as "pearls that were his eyes"—or even as the ocean floor stretching firmly, though apparently infinitely, below—but as what the ocean water itself is to the finny creatures that are buoyed up by it, ingest through it, live because of it, and die within it, all without ever recognizing that it is there.

Notes

[1] See K. Williams; Berwick; Clubb; Tobin and Landa; Stathis; Clifford; Rodino, *Studies* xxx–xxxvi, 179–238.

[2] See, for example, Holly; Barnett; and Castle, "Houyhnhnms." Poststructuralist essays written in French—e.g., Bony; Ehrmann—appeared a few years earlier.

[3] See Said's 1969 "preliminary investigation of how Swift's work can be approached and characterised as the highly dramatic encounter between the anarchy of resistance (agraphia) to the written page, and the abiding tory order of the page" (48–49): see also Eagleton, esp. 58.

[4] The system of relationships in the *Travels* lends itself to vast schemes of description. Quintana, for example, distinguishes five Swifts with reference to the book: the historical personage, the writer, the satirist, the author of the *Travels*, and the commentator on the *Travels* (297–98). Aikins describes three categories of readers.

[5] Bony suggests that the "character" of Gulliver has no objective reality independent of the reader's own illusions and needs; see also Brady; and Prince 16–26, 125–32.

[6] See Holly: "What is it that the beholder sees but fails to recognize in the glass but his own beholding, i.e., the process by which the text as an empty signifying is given a face by his reading" (145). On the signified as illusory, see also Reiss: "The assumption of objectivity and the consequent exclusion of whatever cannot be brought to fit its order are necessarily accompanied by the occultation of the enunciating subject as discursive activity" (42).

[7] See, for example, H. Williams, Introduction and *Text*; Davis; Woolley; Lock; Treadwell; and Hubbard.

[8] According to Dalnekoff, Gulliver illustrates Berkeley's theories that new perception creates relative senses of truth.

[9] In "Why the Houyhnhnms Don't Write," Castle relates Gulliver's infatuation with Houyhnhnm orality to Derrida's critique of the central myth in Western culture that separates speech from the written word and privileges a natural connection between speech and reality, while nurturing suspicion of writing as an unnatural imposition and corruption of meaning.

[10] In contrast to Gulliver, Swift would force his words down the throats of others, as Pope perceptively noted: "I find you would rather be employ'd as an Avenging Angel of wrath, to break your Vial of Indignation over the heads of the wretched pityful creatures of the World; nay would make them *Eat your Book*, which you have made as bitter a pill for them as possible" (Swift, *Correspondence* 3: 108). Ehrmann studies reversals of interior and exterior, with particular reference to medical practices in the fourth voyage. For a penetrating discussion of betrayal by metaphor, with a discussion of the subversiveness of Locke's language against his own criticism of figurative language, see de Man, "Epistemology."

[11] Kelly points out that this theory of language is reminiscent of John Wilkins's elaboration of Francis Bacon's theory of "real characters" (73–82).

[12] For example, although the Houyhnhnms lack a word for power, the Yahoos run away at their approach; the Yahoos are tied by the neck, continually watched, forced into servitude, and—after Gulliver's eviction—perhaps subjected to castration or extermination. The Houyhnhnms have often seen Yahoo battles, and so on. See Reiss 345.

[13] In the work of linguists and ethnolinguists such as Quine, Whorf, and Saussure, language provides the conceptual scheme by which a given community of speakers will habitually interpret their world. Rorty suggests that the "Wittgenstein-Sellars-Quine-Davidson attack on distinctions between classes of sentences is the special contribution of analytical philosophy" to this anti-Platonist insistence on the ubiquity of language (xvii–xxi). For example, following Heidegger, Gadamer argues that "language speaks its own being"; it is "a universal ontological structure." The truth of objects "comes-to-be" in the activity of language. The "being which can be understood is language"; that is, language is the possibility condition of truth (*Truth and Method* 431–32). In a later essay Gadamer denies that linguistically articulated consciousness determines the material being of life praxis, yet points out that no social reality fails to bring itself to representation in language ("Scope"). See also Held 307–17; Mendelson 66.

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