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The Struldbruggs, the Houyhnhnms, and the Good Life

JOHN B. RADNER

At the end of Chapter IX in Book III Gulliver writes that despite the king's "very honourable Offers" he thought it "more consistent with Prudence and Justice" to leave Luggnagg and "pass the remainder of my Days with my Wife and Family" (p. 206).[1] Then he hears about the immortal Struldbruggs. He is "struck with inexpressible Delight," and cries out:

> Happy Nation, where every Child hath at least a Chance for being immortal! Happy People who enjoy so many living Examples of ancient Virtue, and have Masters ready to instruct them in the Wisdom of all former Ages! But, happiest beyond all Comparison are those excellent *Struldbruggs*, who being born exempt from that universal Calamity of human Nature, have their Minds free and disingaged, without the Weight and Depression of Spirits caused by the continual Apprehension of Death. (p. 208)

He is puzzled that the "most judicious" king has no "wise and able" Struldbruggs as counselors, and he resolves to give him some good advice. And whether or not the king takes this advice, Gulliver is determined to accept "an Establishment in the Country . . . and pass my Life here in the Conversation of those superior Beings the *Struldbruggs*, if they would please to admit me." He describes at length what he has often imagined he would do if he could live forever. Then he is told how the real Struldbruggs live, and later he sees several of them. He grows "heartily ashamed of the pleasing Visions I had formed," and reflects that "no Tyrant could invent a Death into which I would not run with Pleasure from such a Life" (p. 214).

The Struldbrugg chapter is a grim and effective satire on what Gulliver calls "the natural Desire of endless Life and sublunary Happiness" (p. 194). But Gulliver's sudden and surprising decision

[1]All quotations are from *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1959).

to spend the rest of his life with the Struldbruggs is not needed for this satire. For the first time this ever-restless traveller is willing to stay put. As soon as he suspects that there are truly superior beings—"living Examples of ancient Virtue," people happy "beyond all Comparison"—he wants to live with them forever. In substance, and to some extent in language, this decision clearly anticipates his later "Resolution never to return to human Kind, but to pass the rest of my Life among these admirable *Houyhnhnms* in the Contemplation and Practice of every Virtue, where I could have no Example or Incitement to Vice" (p. 258).[2] We know that Swift wrote Book III after he had finished Book IV, and possibly wrote the Struldbrugg chapter last of all.[3] Perhaps he included Gulliver's decision to stay with the Struldbruggs to illuminate the later decision to stay with the Houyhnhnms and to help guide readers through the final voyage.

I

The Struldbrugg episode seems designed to emphasize Gulliver's limitations when he first decides to settle with superior beings. It shows that he is at best a nominal Christian (I will discuss this later). It also shows that he lacks virtue, and is not really interested in virtue and wisdom.[4] For the first time in Book II he explains in moral terms his decision to leave a country: "I thought it more consistent with Prudence and Justice to pass the Remainder of my Days with my Wife and Family."[5] (Prudence seems the dominant motive here; at least Gulliver is not shocked by injustices he has just seen.) But when he hears of the Struldbruggs, he promptly puts prudence and justice aside. He will lick his way to the throne and scold this whimsical and cruel king for not surrounding himself with Struldbruggs; and he will desert wife and children (for whose benefit he ostensibly undertook this voyage [p. 153]) in order to live with these superior beings. Gulliver's language suggests that he will risk his life and abandon his family because the Struldbruggs are "living Examples of ancient Virtue" who can teach him "the Wisdom of all former Ages." But any suspicion that Gulliver wishes to stay with the Struldbruggs because he admires ancient virtue or desires to learn ancient wisdom

[2]This anticipation was noticed by John Middleton Murry in *Jonathan Swift* (New York, 1955), p. 135.

[3]Herbert Davis, *Jonathan Swift* (New York, 1964), p. 155.

[4]My discussion complements Ira Dawson Traldi's "Gulliver the 'Educated Fool': Unity in the Voyage to Laputa," *PLL*, 4 (1968), 35-50.

[5]Gulliver leaves Laputa because the natives neglect him (p. 173), and he leaves Lagado because there is nothing left to see (p. 192).

is quickly banished by his account of how he has frequently planned to "pass the Time if I were sure to live for ever." He seems totally ignorant of what it means to be virtuous, and either he cannot imagine being better than he is or he is not interested in becoming more virtuous. Instead his scheme of immortal life, like his other common visions of being "a King, a General, or a great Lord," is primarily a dream of amoral power and prestige.

If he were lucky enough to be born a Struldbrugg, Gulliver would prepare for immortal life in three ways. With seeming indifference to morality, he would procure riches "by all Arts and Methods whatsoever," until he became "the wealthiest Man in the Kingdom." He would study the arts and sciences and eventually would "excel all others in Learning." And he would keep a careful record of public events, princes and ministers, and changes in customs, and so would become "a living Treasury of Knowledge and Wisdom, and . . . the Oracle of the Nation." (He reduces "the Wisdom of all former Ages" to a record of the characters of rulers and "the several Changes in Customs, Languages, Fashions of Dress, Dyet, and Diversions.") This completes his education. He would then teach "hopeful young Men . . . the Usefulness of Virtue in Public and Private Life." And along with other Struldbruggs he would strive to arrest the continual degeneration of human nature "by giving perpetual Warning and Instruction to Mankind" and by "the strong Influence of our own Example."

Readers may wonder, however, how the example of this extremely rich and learned man—this compiler of a treasury of historical facts—could prevent corruption. Gulliver seems to assume that he would embody ancient virtue; but at what point and how would he acquire virtue, and what would this virtue be like? Readers may also wonder how Gulliver could become the richest and most learned man—the nation's sole oracle—when there would be other, older Struldbruggs. Here, as at other points in the *Travels*, Gulliver simply does not assimilate new information and experiences with old. He has often dreamed of being the only person to live forever. Now he hears about the Struldbruggs, and adds the existence of other immortals to his dream. But he does not notice that their existence should make it difficult for him to be uniquely superior (unless he assumes that he alone would have the skill and persistence to take full worldly advantage of immortality). Much the same sort of addition without assimilation occurs concerning virtue. On Glubbdubdrib Gulliver saw Brutus and other examples of consummate virtue, and also saw that in ancient times Europeans were generally more virtuous than at present. When he hears about the Struldbruggs, he seems to conclude

that since some of them were born in ancient times, all of them must embody ancient virtue. When he then imagines himself a Struldbrugg, he naturally takes for granted that he, too, would possess this virtue, but he seems to have nothing specific in mind—nothing but the phrase "ancient Virtue." His assumption that the education he outlines would somehow prepare him to curb corruption indicates how little he knows about virtue, how little he is thinking of actually becoming another Brutus, and perhaps how little he cares.

Even what might look like benevolence or public spirit in Gulliver's plan for immortal life is suspect. He does describe how his words and example will teach others, but he seems more attracted by the security and unquestionable superiority of a Struldbrugg's life, and its freedom from emotional involvement with mortals. He would "entertain" himself instructing promising young men, but his constant companions would be older Struldbruggs. He and his companions would admit a few of the most valuable mortals to dine with them, but length of time would harden Gulliver to lose these mortals with little or no reluctance, and to treat the next generation likewise, "just as a Man diverts himself with the annual Succession of Pinks and Tulips in his Garden, without regretting the Loss of those which withered the preceeding Year." He and his immortal companions would together oppose corruption, but they would still have their entertainment—"the Pleasure of seeing the various Revolutions of States and Empires; the Changes in the lower and upper World; ancient Cities in Ruins, and obscure Villages become the Seats of Kings. Famous Rivers lessening into shallow Brooks; the Ocean leaving one Coast dry, and overwhelming another: The Discovery of many Countries yet unknown. Barbarity overrunning the politest Nations, and the most barbarous becoming civilized." They would watch with total detachment, their minds "free and disengaged."

At the end of Book III, therefore, Swift carefully emphasizes that Gulliver thinks the ideal life that of a secure, prestigious, emotionally detached immortal, and assumes that the next best thing to being such a Struldbrugg is living with Struldbruggs. Sight of the real Struldbruggs curbs his "keen Appetite for Perpetuity of Life," for he realizes that long life would mean physical and mental decay. He grows "heartily ashamed" of his "pleasing Visions," because he sees that they foolishly "supposed a Perpetuity of Youth, Health, and Vigour" (p. 211). But he does not recognize that these visions show that he is radically complacent, and unable to conceive of a fully virtuous life. Then he meets the Houyhnhnms, grows to love and venerate them, and decides to live with them for the rest of his life.

II

There are two ways in which the Struldbrugg chapter, as just described, might illuminate Book IV. First, those who think that the Houyhnhnms represent an ideal might conclude that the Struldbrugg episode is designed to emphasize that Gulliver is truly enlightened in Houyhnhnmland. According to this claim, Gulliver finally sees what virtue really is, finally sees himself as indicted by the satire of Books I-III, and perhaps even learns to be virtuous. Even in Luggnagg he leaps at a chance to live with virtuous men; but he does not understand virtue, and can only picture these "living Examples of ancient Virtue" as so many wealthy, learned, well-informed Gullivers. He decides to stay with the Houyhnhnms, however, only after he has lived with them for almost a year, and discovered that they embody all the virtues he once thought he understood and even possessed. The Struldbruggs, as he imagines them, would tell him that virtue is important, would keep him and other people from degenerating, but would not challenge him to change. The Houyhnhnms, on the other hand, do fundamentally challenge and reform him by pointing out his many faults, by showing him he is a Yahoo, and by surrounding him with examples of virtue. He sees what virtue really is and he begins to imitate this virtue. When he discovers he must leave, he fears "relapsing into my old Corruptions, for want of Examples to lead and keep me within the Paths of Virtue" (p. 280), so he decides to find a solitary island where he can "reflect with Delight on the Virtues of those inimitable Houyhnhnms, without any Opportunity of degenerating into the Vices and Corruptions of my own Species" (p. 283). And when he is forcibly rescued, he is disgusted by the sight and smell of even the best of men, for he now knows what perfection really is, and he has learned that all men are Yahoos.

But whether or not the Houyhnhnms actually embody every virtue (as Gulliver says they do), a much stronger case can be made that Gulliver's decision to stay with the Houyhnhnms parallels his earlier decision to stay with the Struldbruggs. There seems to be ample evidence that throughout Book IV Gulliver remains essentially ignorant about virtue, and basically blind to his own limitations. And here, too, Gulliver's decision to stay seems to arise less from a love of virtue (however he understands this word) than from a desire for security, superiority, and emotional detachment.

Gulliver's description of the Houyhnhnm virtues is confused and unreliable. He blurs the distinction between moral virtues and physical attributes, and forgets the differences between horses and

human beings. He admires the Houyhnhnm strength, comeliness, and speed, and seems to include these among their virtues, as they themselves do.[6] And two pages after he solemnly reports that the Houyhnhnms "are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues" (p. 267), he writes a passage about Houyhnhnm education that comically testifies to his confusion about these virtues: "In educating the Youth of both Sexes, their Method is admirable, and highly deserveth our imitation. These are not suffered to taste a Grain of *Oats*, except upon certain Days, till Eighteen Years old; nor *Milk*, but very rarely; and in Summer they graze two Hours in the Morning, and as many in the Evening, which their Parents likewise observe" (p. 269). What does Gulliver mean by holding this up for our imitation? (Significantly he does not notice that his own diet differs from that of both Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, and that he does not graze even the two hours a day allotted to his "Fellow-Servant" the sorrel nag.) After living with the Houyhnhnms for three years, Gulliver seems no wiser about virtue and moral education than he was before.

Gulliver also seems no more virtuous, despite his efforts to imitate the "inimitable Houyhnhnms" and despite his assumption that his Houyhnhnm education sets him above the rest of mankind. The only things Gulliver unquestionably learns from the Houyhnhnms are a trot and a whinny. "By conversing with the Houyhnhnms, and looking upon them with Delight, I fell to imitate their Gait and Gesture" and their "Voice and Manner" (pp. 278-279). Nothing else about his behavior seems changed—or at least improved.

The only virtue he specifically claims to have learned is honesty (p. 258), but the chapter that opens with his declaration of achieved honesty is filled with confessions of equivocation and deceptive silences that mock his determination to sacrifice everything to truth.[7]

[6]Early in his account of England Gulliver yokes together moral and physical qualities when he tells the master that English horses "were the most generous and comely Animal we had" and "excelled in Strength and Swiftness" (p. 241). Later he forgets that there is any distinction. "I admired the Strength, Comeliness, and Speed of the Inhabitants," he writes, "and such a Constellation of Virtues in such amiable Persons produced in me the highest Veneration" (p. 278). Gulliver may also have his own bodily "defects" in mind when he says that his master "daily convinced me of a thousand Faults in my self, whereof I had not the least Perception before, and which with us would never be numbered even among human Infirmities" (p. 258). At least flaws of this sort—"the Flatness of my Face, the Prominence of my Nose, my Eyes placed directly in Front, so that I could not look on either Side without turning my Head" (p. 242)—are the only ones he ever specifically reports his master's pointing out.

[7]His honesty resembles that of his Houyhnhnm master, who will not actually "say

The Struldbrugg chapter also helps readers to notice that Gulliver simply learns to rationalize his continuing injustice to his children and to the "poor Wife" he left pregnant as he started this voyage. As in Luggnagg, he does not mention his family when he tells of resolving to stay in the country (though he earlier tells the master that he left England "to get Riches, whereby I might maintain myself and Family when I should return" [p. 243]); and eventually he can dismiss his family by reflecting that they are simply "*Yahoos* in Shape and Disposition" (p. 278). Even after he leaves the Houyhnhnms and Don Pedro argues "as a Point of Honour and Conscience, that I ought to return to my native Country, and live at Home with my Wife and Children," Gulliver still wants to live alone. He returns home not because of honor or conscience but because he "could not do better," it being "altogether impossible to find such a solitary Island as I had desired to live in" (pp. 288-289).

Swift also shows Gulliver losing all traces of good-will towards men while living with the Houyhnhnms, whose chief virtues are benevolence and friendship. When Gulliver describes the bloody effects of modern warfare, he is not "wholly unmoved," as he is in Brobdingnag (p. 135), but recalls having been diverted (as a Struldbrugg might have been) by the sight of dead bodies dropping "in Pieces from the Clouds" (p. 247). He imagines that men and Yahoos are the same species, and he routinely announces using the hairs of Yahoos (his "Brethren") to trap birds, and using "the Skins of *Yahoos* dried in the Sun" (p. 278) to make his shoes. (He adds that these and various other things he did verified the proverb "that Necessity is the Mother of Invention" [p. 278]). And in case we think that these skins came from Yahoos who died a natural death, he reports covering his boat with Yahoo skins, and using for his sail the skins "of the youngest I could get, the older being too tough and thick" (p. 281). So when the compassionate sorrel nag says, "Take Care of thy self, gentle *Yahoo*" (p. 283), we might recall that this gentle Yahoo has just skinned (and perhaps killed) enough other Yahoos to make a boat and a sail, and to get tallow to seal its chinks, after which other Yahoos were forced to draw it "very gently" (p. 282) to the sea.

Despite his talk about Houyhnhnm virtue and his own education, therefore, Gulliver seems no wiser about virtue and no more virtuous than he was in the Struldbrugg chapter. And his decision to stay with

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the Thing that is not," but who graciously consents to keep the secret of Gulliver's "having a false Covering" (p. 237) to his body, and to command the sorrel nag to do likewise.

the Houyhnhnms may largely arise from his discovery, in his first year, that life with them comes as close as a mortal life can to fulfilling his dream of the good life. He knows he will die (as will the Houyhnhnms), but he is as secure from death and the fear of death as a mortal can be. His salt-free diet produces perfect health; for the first time on his travels there are almost no external threats to his life; and he is surrounded by creatures who do not fear death, do not talk about it, and do not grieve. More important, though he is shocked to see that he resembles the Yahoos, and though he grows increasingly deferential towards the Houyhnhnms, he nevertheless comes to assume that he is a truly superior human being. The Houyhnhnms regard him as unique—superior to the Yahoos, and their oracle on human affairs. And because of Houyhnhnm attention (and because he does not see that he is just a diversion to them, as he was in Brobdingnag), Gulliver easily concludes that he really is an oracle, and that he actually is superior not only to Yahoos but to all men.

For three months all the members of the master's household make special efforts to teach Gulliver their language. Then when he begins to talk—or whinny—he promises to tell "Wonders" (p. 225) and is rewarded with two months of even more intensive language-teaching, including two or three hours of daily instruction from the master himself. Then he gets to tell his wonders. In Brobdingnag, when Gulliver tried to win the king's respect by describing England, he got to talk and answer questions for six days and on the seventh heard the English dismissed as "the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth" (p. 132). In Houyhnhnmland things are different. The man who left Laputa because no one listened to him and whose chief complaint about the real Struldbruggs was that they were not interested in learning about his travels is given day after day of attention for more than two years; and he himself gets to dismiss mankind in reductionistic and unsympathetic descriptions that reveal his decision to cut all ties with humanity. During this long period Gulliver is the oracle on human affairs, and naturally sees himself as even more knowledgeable than his wise and acute master. (He uses his special insight into human nature to make discoveries concerning the Yahoos [p. 265], just as he assumed that as a Struldbrugg he would use his longevity to make discoveries in astronomy.) Later Gulliver wishes to stop playing the oracle ("I never presumed to speak, except in answer to a Question; and then I did it with inward Regret, because it was a Loss of so much Time for improving my self" [p. 277]). He prefers to let his master tell about mankind, and he marvels that the master has made his own

discoveries concerning human vices. But despite his extreme self-abasement at this point ("I should be prouder to listen [to the Discourses of him and his Friends], than to dictate to the greatest and wisest Assembly in *Europe*" [p. 278]), Gulliver still regards himself as special, because the Houyhnhnms "condescend to to distinguish me from the rest of my Species." He conveniently forgets that any civilized human being would be similarly distinguished. Other human beings are "*Yahoos* in Shape and Disposition." But because the Houyhnhnms single him out and let him imitate them, he fancies that he is a Yahoo only in shape; and he overlooks this fact, as he overlooked his embarrassingly small size in Brobdingnag, by turning away from his own reflection.[8] He endorses Houyhnhnm attacks on the dignity of human nature because he thinks that his own dignity is not under attack and because his endorsement establishes his own superiority.

So Gulliver's life in Houyhnhnmland comes as close as a human life can to fulfilling his dream of immortal delight. (With truly superior Struldbruggs his satisfaction would have been far less complete.) He is as secure from death and the fear of death as a mortal can be. He has the pleasure of analyzing all of human life from a position of supposed moral superiority, while remaining emotionally detached from everything human. He even satisfies what seemed an irrational desire in the Struldbrugg chapter to be set above the whole human race and yet to have other truly superior beings as his "choice and constant Companions." No wonder he wants to stay, and is "struck with the utmost Grief and Despair" (p. 264) when he hears that he must leave.

III

The Struldbrugg chapter seems designed not only to show that Gulliver is wholly unaware of what virtue is (and wholly complacent), but also to emphasize that he is at best a nominal Christian. Throughout the first two books Gulliver's vision is strikingly secular.[9] Swift frames the third book with references to Christianity:

[8]Even after he returns to England and announces his plan "to behold my own Figure often in a Glass, and thus if possible habituate my self by Time to tolerate the Sight of a human Creature" (p. 295), Gulliver still assumes that only his "Figure" is Yahoo, that his disposition is that of a Houyhnhnm.

[9]Gulliver's secular character has been most fully documented by Charles Beaumont, *Swift's Use of the Bible* (Athens, Georgia, 1965), pp. 53-63, and Martin Kallich, *The Other End of the Egg* (Bridgeport, Conn., 1970), pp. 14-15, 35-37, 41-42, and 59. My reflections on Swift's use of Gulliver's secular character parallel Calhoun Winton's in

in the first chapter Gulliver calls himself a Christian, and in the last chapter he refuses to trample on the Crucifix. But in the Struldbrugg episode Swift reveals how little Gulliver appreciates the significance of the Cross.[10]

It is somewhat odd, for instance, that the Christian Gulliver seems to assume that the world will never end, and that there will never be a day of judgment, despite explicit statements to the contrary throughout the Bible.[11] Second, and more important, there is something deeply ironic about the Christian Gulliver's talking about what he would do "*if* I were sure to live for ever." His "inexpressible Delight" when he hears that some people in Luggnagg never die parodies a true Christian's response to the good news that Christ has died and risen. The Struldbruggs seem to assume that the world will exist forever; and even if they imagined that it might end someday (perhaps when the sun dies), they would not know about the Resurrection and the possibility of eternity in heaven (or hell). As a declared Christian, however, Gulliver should see what they do not, and should realize that if he must abandon his "keen Appetite for Perpetuity of Life" (p. 214) on earth, he need not give up hope for eternity.[12] But Gulliver is presented here as a man who thinks of neither the Fall nor the Resurrection and whose chief fantasy is earthly immortality.

When Gulliver describes how, as an immortal, he would help "prevent that continual Degeneracy of human Nature, so justly complained of in all Ages" (p. 210), he obviously is not thinking of the Christian explanation for this "Degeneracy" (the Fall) or the Christian cure (the Incarnation, and religious hope and fear).[13] Swift

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"Conversion on the Road to Houyhnhnmland," *The Sewanee Review*, 68 (Winter 1960), 20-33.

[10]For general reflections on Gulliver's wholly unchristian attitude towards death, see J. Leeds Barroll, III, "Gulliver and the Struldbruggs," *PMLA*, 72 (1958), 43-50.

[11]The Biblical predictions are reinforced in Book III by reference to the death of the sun (the being to whom Gulliver raises his eyes the first two times he asks assistance [pp. 23, 87-88]). The Laputan worry that the sun will die (pp. 184-185) is recalled in Luggnagg when Gulliver greets the King with the wonderfully comic formula, "*May your coelestial Majesty outlive the Sun, eleven Moons and an half*" (p. 205). So even people unfamiliar with the Bible anticipate an end to the world, if not a final judgment.

[12]An oblique comment on Gulliver's lack of Christian hope comes when he is told that the life he imagined as a Struldbrugg "was unreasonable and unjust, because it supposed a Perpetuity of Youth, Health, and Vigour, which no Man could be so foolish to hope, however extravagant he might be in his Wishes" (p. 211). As a Christian Gulliver can hope for much more than this, but of course he does not.

[13]In Book I, Chapter 6, Gulliver explains the discrepancy between Lilliputian principles and practice by referring to "the degenerate Nature of Man" (p. 60), without indicating what he has in mind. In Book II, Chapter 6, when the topic of degeneration

seems to highlight Gulliver's secular muddle and call attention to the true cure by having Gulliver say that his "choice and constant Companions"—the men with whom he would save the world from "Degeneracy"—"should be a Sett of my own immortal Brotherhood, among whom I would elect a Dozen from the most ancient down to my own Contemporaries" (pp. 209-210). This seems to allude to Christ and His twelve apostles, and so recalls the Christian belief that fallen men were not simply suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth, but were redeemed by a God who became man, died on a Cross, and rose from the dead. The allusion, coming where it does, emphasizes how little this Christian belief means to Gulliver. He calls himself a Christian, but imagines that the world can be saved from degeneracy simply by the instructions and examples of a number of virtuous men. More important, he imagines that he can become a "living Example of ancient Virtue" without a Redeemer, if he only has a chance to live forever in this world. The real Struldbruggs indicate that left to themselves—without the good news of Jesus and without hope and fear of a final judgment—people actually grow worse and worse, the longer they live. But Gulliver characteristically misses the full significance of the episode.

In the final chapter of Book III, Swift underscores these defects in Gulliver's Christianity by concentrating on his successful effort to be excused from trampling on the Crucifix while travelling in Japan. On the surface this is a biting satire on the Dutch: Gulliver's request is so singular that the Emperor "began to doubt whether I was a real Hollander or no; but rather suspected I must be a CHRISTIAN" (p. 216). But Swift has just shown us how little Christ and his Crucifix mean to Gulliver; and he seems to provide a final comment on this subject by having Gulliver arrive in England on April 10, 1710, and land the next day, April 11. For April 10, 1710, was Easter Monday, and the Collect read on that day and the next day (and on Easter, too) begins with these words: "Almighty God, who through thine only-

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next arises, Swift seems to provide an allusion to the Biblical account of the Creation by having Gulliver's conversation with the King take place in seven audiences, presumably on seven consecutive days. For the first five Gulliver describes the ostensibly flawless institutions of England. On the sixth—the day when man was created—the King asks his questions. On the seventh—the day when God rested, having seen that the created world was "very good"—this giant King recapitulates all that had been spoken (reviews the whole creation), then takes Gulliver into his hands, gently strokes him, and speaks his harsh judgment on what the English have made of their noble institutions and of themselves. (Swift earlier prepares for this allusion to Genesis by having Gulliver twice tell us that Brobdingnag is a land with a Sabbath [pp. 98, 106].)

begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life."[14] Gulliver will not trample on the Crucifix, but he overlooks the liturgical commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection, and he totally ignores the significance of Easter as spelled out in these Collects. He is as blind to the meaning of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection as he is to the meaning of the Fall.

IV

Swift probably stressed Gulliver's nominal Christianity at the end of Book III in order to assist readers in judging Gulliver's reactions and transformation in Book IV. (Having Gulliver announce in the

[14]Of course this date could be just a coincidence, but for a number of reasons I think not. First, Swift seems to take some pains to make readers attend to the final date in Book III, and also to the starting date of the Voyage. Both the first edition and the Faulkner edition have Gulliver arrive in Amsterdam on April 16, 1710, and then arrive in England *six days earlier*, on April 10. And both these editions have Gulliver declare that he had been gone for "five Years and six Months compleat" (p. 218), when he really was gone for only three years and eight months. (The comment in Gulliver's letter to Sympson, added to the Faulkner edition, that the printer has been "so careless as to confound the Times, and mistake the Dates of my several Voyages and Returns; neither assigning the true Year, or the true Month, or Day of the Month" [p. 7], seems to represent another attempt to call readers' attention to these dates and others.) Of course these mistakes may be simply mistakes, or may only be meant as humorous examples of Gulliver's unreliability. But if we look back to the start of Book III to check Gulliver's "five Years and six Months compleat" we find that Gulliver "set out on the 5th Day of *August*, 1706, and arrived at Fort St. George, the 11th of *April*, 1707" (p. 154). Another coincidence: Gulliver arrived at Fort St. George exactly three years before he lands back in England. And the coincidence is even greater, for April 11, 1707, was Good Friday; so Gulliver's time in foreign lands is framed by the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

August 5—the date he left England—is nowhere near Easter; but the Book of Common Prayer indicates that had Gulliver attended morning prayers before sailing, he would have heard a lesson (Acts 3) that provides a Christian commentary on the whole of this voyage. It describes how Peter cures a lame beggar and then preaches to a crowd about the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and looks ahead to "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). The same lesson is assigned for evening prayers on Easter Monday, the day Gulliver returned to England. That Swift chose the starting and ending dates with Acts 3 in mind seems indicated by the way this passage is alluded to in the last chapter of the book, when Gulliver leaves Luggnagg with a letter bearing the seal of the King—*"A King lifting up a lame Beggar from the Earth"* (p. 216). This unnecessary detail is a cleverly ironic comment on this cruel King (and a comment on Gulliver's blindness to his cruelty). But it also echoes Acts 3: "Then Peter said . . . In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:6-7). The King's seal seems clearly to allude to Acts 3—to the central Christian sermon whose meaning Gulliver simply ignores.

Of course if Swift did choose these dates with the Book of Common Prayer in mind, he could hardly have expected most readers to notice what he had done. The allusions

first paragraph that his replacement as surgeon was named Robert Purefoy also seems designed to alert readers that one concern in this book will be faith.) Gulliver sees that Yahoos perfectly resemble men in shape, and discusses with his Houyhnhnm master why Yahoos are worse than men (Chapter 3), and later why men are worse than Yahoos (Chapter 7); but he never asks these questions as a Christian. He hears the Houyhnhnm explanations for the origin of Yahoos (Chapter 9)—stories that call to mind the Biblical account of the Creation and the Fall (among other things),[15] and so suggest one basic reason why men might degenerate into Yahoos and why civilized men in so many ways are worse than Yahoos. But he misses the allusion and characteristically fails to see men from a Biblical perspective. Instead he views them as the Houyhnhnms do—as "*Yahoos* in Shape and Disposition, perhaps a little more civilized, and qualified with the Gift of Speech; but making no other Use of Reason, than to improve and multiply those Vices, whereof their Brethren in this Country had only the Share that Nature allotted them" (p. 278). Nor does he see himself from a Christian perspective. He claims to see certain of his faults, but he does not see his evil inclinations and his need for a Redeemer and religion. He imagines that the source of evil is external to him, and that he will become virtuous if only he separates himself from every "Example or Incitement to Vice" (p. 259) and contemplates the Houyhnhnms. He comes to regard the Houyhnhnms with "the highest Veneration" and "Awe" (p. 278), and he tries to imitate them. But in the process he becomes much worse than a Yahoo.

The self-sufficient, unfallen Houyhnhnm may be a pattern of virtue, but Houyhnhnms offer no cure for fallen men. By imitating them Gulliver simply learns to talk and walk like a horse—in Yahoo-skin shoes; and all those tendencies in him that manifest his share in man's fallen nature—including his selfishness, cruelty, and pride—instead of being overcome, are fostered and justified. Even more clearly than the Struldbruggs, therefore, Gulliver illustrates in his moral degeneration the inevitable state of fallen man without religious hope and fear.

In various ways the final chapters of Book IV call to mind the Christianity that Gulliver professed in Book III but never really understood. When forced to leave Houyhnhnmland, he seeks an

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would be fairly private; but then Swift was notoriously fond of private jokes. (In another article I will discuss in detail Swift's significant use of dates throughout the *Travels*.)

[15]See Calhoun Winton, "Conversion," p. 29.

uninhabited island where he can "enjoy [his] own Thoughts, and reflect with Delight on the Virtues of those inimitable Houyhnhnms, without any Opportunity of degenerating into the Vices and Corruptions of [his] own Species" (p. 283)—perhaps an ironic parallel with the wish of an anchorite who retreats to the desert to reflect on God. When he meets the Portuguese sailors and their captain—people who (like the king of Brobdingnag) seem remarkable exceptions to everything reported in the *Travels* about degenerate man—he does not reflect on what is truly exceptional about them (their great humanity, patience, and charity), and so fails to see them as signs of hope.[16] Swift then underscores Gulliver's lack of Christian faith and hope by having him arrive in England on December 5, 1715, at the start of the second week of Advent. For instead of commemorating the child who was born in a stable in Bethelehem, Gulliver quickly buys "two young Stone-Horses"—degenerate Houyhnhnms who resemble the Houyhnhnms he has left in shape but not in intellect—and he establishes these horses as idols in his own "good Stable," where he converses with them "at least four Hours every Day" (p. 290). The nominal Christian of the first three voyages has become an idolater.[17] And as an idolater he naturally refuses to partake of communion with his family, who "To this Hour . . . dare not presume to touch my Bread, or drink out of the same Cup" (pp. 289-290).[18]

Gulliver now fully believes in the degenerate nature of man, which he only talked about before this last voyage. But he is no wiser about why men are degenerate, or what might be done for them, than Swift carefully showed him to be at the end of Book III. He still does not see that men are fallen and need the redeeming crucifix. He still imagines

[16]It is never stated that Don Pedro and his crew are virtuous because of their religion. But at this point in the book, after so many examples of the inevitable moral decay of men without religion, what other explanation can there be? These Portuguese are clearly signs of hope for mankind—but for man on his own? or for man with religion: with knowledge of the fallen nature of man, a sense of his own limitations, and a source of incentives in his hope for heaven and fear of hell?

[17]Gulliver arrives in Lisbon on November 5, 1715—sixteen years after his shipwreck off Lilliput—a date when evening prayers include a description of how the Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). He leaves Lisbon on November 24, when morning prayers include Isaiah's description of how in the last days "the Lord alone shall be exalted. . . . And the *idols* he shall utterly abolish" (Isaiah 2:17-18).

[18]For Swift's allusion here and in the final paragraph of the *Travels* to the Anglican communion service, see Herbert Davis, *The Uses of Irony: Papers on Defoe and Swift Read at a Clark Library Seminar* (Los Angeles, 1966), pp. 55-58, and Martin Kallich, *The Other End of the Egg*, pp. 87, 113-114.

that Europeans might be civilized by the examples of a few truly virtuous beings (now Houyhnhnms rather than Struldbruggs). And he simply leaves religion out of the picture as he begins "to instruct the *Yahoos* of my own Family as far as I find them docible Animals" (p. 295).

This is how Swift presents Gulliver at the end of the *Travels*. And when in 1735 he adds the letter from Gulliver to his Cousin Sympson—the letter in which Gulliver madly complains that people have not learned from his book in six months the sort of thing it took him two years to learn in Houyhnhnmland (and then "with the utmost Diffculty" [p. 8])—Swift adds one final allusion to the religious perspective that Gulliver lacks by dating the letter April 2, 1727. For in 1727, April 2 was Easter Sunday.

This argument that the Struldbrugg episode is designed to guide readers through Book IV is, of course, only the beginning of a complete reading of Book IV, or of *Gulliver's Travels*. But it seems a useful beginning. It indicates some of the ways the book is a careful but oblique argument for Christianity, and illustrates how a truly Christian reader is more likely to understand the book than is a nominal Christian like Gulliver. It suggests that if we as readers share Gulliver's perspective and do not notice the fundamental inadequacy of his secular vision, then we miss the point and become ourselves butts of Swift's satire.

George Mason University