

- J. Leeds Barroll's "Gulliver and the Struldbruggs"
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## Main Arguments of the Essay:

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### 1. Fear of old Age and Death:

- Mere loathing for the physical facts of old age. Senility is unattractive to people. A horrifying picture of senility.

### 2. Moral and political satire:

remedied by man. The real subject of this section of Swift's satire, as most readers will recognize, is to be found elsewhere—in the statement of the Luggnaggian to Gulliver. "Although few Men will avow their Desires of being immortal upon such hard Conditions [eternal senility], yet . . . every Man desired to put off Death for sometime longer, let it approach ever so late" (HD, XI, 195). One might be expected to welcome death in circumstances of debilitating senility, yet, according to the Luggnaggian, with most of mankind this is not so. The desire to live longer appears to persist. Since the fear of death will always be present, however, one will continually desire to live "for sometime longer," and this continual wishing will be tantamount to a desire to live forever. The Struldbruggs are a *reductio ad absurdum* since they represent the logical consequences attendant on the granting of such a wish.

The temporizing and fear involved in a desire to live "sometime longer" is an aspect of the irrational in man, and such an impulse therefore becomes legitimate prey for the moralist. It is a subject which received much attention in classical satire.<sup>10</sup> Lucian devotes much of his dia-

haustive nor is it meant to be. It shows, however, that Swift's use of senile figures or overanxious younger men as moral exemplars to preach against the fear of death is not without precedent.

# "The Struldbruggs, and Houyhnhnms, and the Good Life"

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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

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