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GULLIVER AND THE STRULDBRUGGS

By J. Leeds Barroll, III

THE STRULDBRUGG incident in *Gulliver's Travels* has been relatively neglected. Scholars either allude to the Struldbruggs only in passing or omit the incident entirely from their comments on Book III. The last sustained treatment is that in the notes of Emil Pons's edition of twenty-seven years ago.[1] Pons's comments, however, attempting as they do to connect the hideous Struldbruggs with Swift's possible fear of old age, reflect a manner of approaching Swift which has become rather out of date. The purpose of this article is to consider three aspects of the Struldbrugg episode: (1) old age and the fear of death as conventional subjects for moral reflection and satire; (2) a desire for immortality in the light of the homiletic tradition; (3) the significance of Gulliver's conversations with his host. Such a study will attempt to show that Swift's treatment of the Struldbruggs conforms to a traditional background as regards both his literary method and his intellectual milieu.

I

The tendency to regard the episode of the immortals as a comment on the hideousness of old age has led even the source finders to restrict their scope of inquiry. W. A. Eddy believes the Tithonus myth and Lucian's *On Funerals* are possible precedents for the Struldbrugg episode,[2] and to these may be added such other possibilities as Juvenal's *Satire X* and Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, which also convey mere loathing for the physical facts of old age. No doubt senility is unattractive to people in any century, and Swift's contemporaries were no exception. Sir William Temple, Swift's patron, remarked that "Youth [is] naturally most inclined to the better passions; love, desire, ambition, joy. Age to the worst; avarice, grief, revenge, jealousy, envy, suspicion."[3] Addison, in *Tatler* 120, agreed "youth is devoted to lust, middle age to ambition, old age to avarice." Steele, in *Tatler* 46, wrote that "all who exceed . . . [60 years of age], except the latter part of it is spent in the exercise of virtue and contemplation of futurity, must necessarily fall into an indecent old age, because, with regard to all the enjoyments of the years of vigour and manhood, childhood returns upon them." Pope, too, in his comment on the ruling passions, drew an unsentimental picture of old age in politicians who "chew on wisdom past,/ And totter on in bus'ness to the last;/ As weak, as earnest, and as gravely out,/ As sober Lanesb'row dancing in the gout" (*Epistle to Cobham*, ll. 248–251).[4]

Swift's remarks, in the light of the foregoing, are obviously not extreme. Noting that the Struldbruggs have all the "Follies and Infirmities" of old age, he merely describes his immortals as "opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative,"[5] and remarks later that "Avarice is the necessary consequent of old Age" (HD, XI, 198).

Swift was not the only writer, furthermore, to depict the idea of abnormal old age. The recording of the famous cases of Thomas Parre and Henry Jenkins who lived at least "157 Years"[6] and the depositions of Dr. Mather with regard to cases of longevity in America[7] suggest the interest of the amateur scientists.[8] The "macerated form" of the immortal Martinus Scriblerus who passed his life "under several disguises and unknown names" in order to screen himself "from the envy and malice which mankind express against those who are possessed of the *Arcanum Magnum*" also recalls contemporary interest in the appearance of well-known old men and also suggests that Swift's subject matter was not unique.[9]

A distaste for the physical debilities of old age is universal, yet Swift's account of the Struldbruggs has been too often dismissed as only a horrifying picture of senility, motivated by the

[1] *Gulliver's Travels* (*Extraits*) (Paris, 1927), pp. 279–280, n. 2; 287, n. 1.

[2] *Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study* (Princeton, 1923), p. 165.

[3] *Works*, [ed. Jonathan Swift] (Edinburgh, 1754), II, 466.

[4] Cf. also Temple's essay *Of Health and Long Life* and *Tatler* 266, *Guardian* 26, and *Spectator* 336.

[5] *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1941), XI, 196. Hereafter this edition will be referred to as HD.

[6] *The Philosophical Transactions and Collections to the End of the Year MDCC Abridg'd*, ed. John Lowthorpe (London, 1716), III, 302–304.

[7] *The Philosophical Transactions . . . to the Year MDCCXX Abridg'd*, ed. Benjamin Motte (London, 1721), IV, 155.

[8] See also *The History of Man* (Edinburgh, 1790), I, 53–60: "Of Age, great, memorable, and Renewed."

[9] *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, ed. Charles Kerby-Miller (New Haven, 1950), pp. 91–92, and Kerby-Miller's comment, pp. 175–176.

author's hidden, personal fears. It is elementary to point out, however, that *Gulliver's Travels* is a moral and political satire. Mere physical degeneration, which is the common lot of all men, no matter what their moral or political convictions, can hardly lend itself to Swift's purpose, if only because old age is an evil which cannot be 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.[10] Lucian devotes much of his dialogue in *The Ferry-Boat: Or the Tyrant* to the ruler Megapenthes who implores Chiron: "Suffer me to go up again to the light for a little while: then I will come of my own accord, without any one summoning me," a statement received with much scoffing. Seneca, in his essay "The Shortness of Life (Ch. xi), notes that "decrepit old men beg in their prayers for the addition of a few more years; . . . when at last some infirmity has reminded them of their mortality, in what terror do they die, feeling that they are being dragged out of life, and not merely leaving it." Seneca devotes Epistles IV, XII, XXIV, and XXVI to this same subject. Juvenal's *Satire X* on *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (ll. 188–272) inveighs against those who are inordinately afraid of death, and Horace devotes two odes (Bk. I, 28 and Bk. II, 14) and the last part of an Epistle (Bk. II, 2) to the same subject. In Horace's third Satire (Bk. II) one of the various kinds of madnesses is that of the freedman who rushes out into the street imploring the gods to save only him from death.

Among later satirists, Erasmus, in his *Encomium Moriae*, has Folly describing the "old fellows of Nestor's age, with hardly the shape of a man left them, babbling and silly, toothless, whitehaired, bald—or better . . . still enjoying life so much and trying to be young so hard that one of them dyes his white hair, another covers his baldness with a wig."[11] Montaigne in his essay "Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir" (*Essais*, Bk. I, Ch. xx) discusses at length the fear of death, and at one point envisions nature as saying "Imagine, indeed, how much more grievous and insupportable everlasting life would be to man than the life I have given him. If you had not death you would eternally curse me for having deprived you of it."[12] Later Bishop Hall scoffs at the general purpose of doctors in *Virgidemiae* (Bk. II, Satire iv) and discusses the fear of death in *Heaven upon Earth* (§xv–xvi). Boileau imitates Aesop's fable of the woodsman and death in *Poésies diverses* and LaFontaine devotes two fables (Bk. I, Fable 15; Bk. VIII, Fable 1) to this same general subject.

Addison, finally, in *Spectator* 391, tells a fable of a prayer offered up to Jove by

> a very aged Man of near an hundred Years old, begging but for one Year more of Life, and then promising to die Contented. This is the rarest old fellow! says Jupiter. He has made this prayer to me for above twenty years together. When he was but fifty years old, he desired only that he might live to see his son settled in the world; I granted it. He then begged the same favour for his daughter, and afterwards that he might see the education of a grandson.

This list of writers, most of whom are chiefly known as formal satirists, is by no means exhaustive 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. Swift, in the Struldbrugg episode, manifests no greater interest in old age than did many of his contemporaries and many of his satirical forebears dating back to the period of Augustus.[13]

[10] It would be erroneous to state, however, that the fear of death was regarded as one of *the* conventional satiric themes such as avarice and ambition. J. W. Duff, *Roman Satire* (Berkeley, Calif., 1936), p. 203, under "Traditional Themes," fails to mention this subject, and Bishop Hall in his list of subjects appropriate to satire also omits it.

[11] *The Praise of Folly*, trans. H. H. Hudson (Princeton, 1941), pp. 41–42.

[12] *The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. E. J. Trechmann (London, 1927), I, 89.

[13] See also G. R. Coffman, "Old Age from Horace to Chaucer," *Speculum*, IX (July 1934), 249–277.

II

Deane Swift saw the Struldbrugg episode as a lecture in religious morality, and such a comment, coming from one of Swift's contemporaries, is well worth considering.[14] Jonathan Swift, as a churchman, can hardly have been insensible to the religious implications in his work, implications which are furnished not only by the Struldbruggs themselves, but also by the depiction of Gulliver whose first words establish a definite point of view.

When Gulliver learns of the existence of an immortal race, he is filled with joy. He cries out "as in a Rapture" and exclaims:

> Happy Nation, where every Child hath at least a Chance for being immortal! . . . 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. (HD, XI, 191–192)

Then, as he tells us, he enlarges upon a great many topics which "the natural Desire of endless Life and sublunary Happiness could easily furnish" (HD, XI, 194).

Swift could not have been unaware that these raptures which he gave to Gulliver were reprehensible in a Christian and flew in the face of many utterances by divines on the subject of immortality. Such utterances, regarding rewards and punishments, the natures of God and man, and the role of divinely implanted desires in mortals, constitute, figuratively speaking, a homiletic atmosphere in which, as I will attempt to demonstrate, both Gulliver's talk and the existence of the Struldbruggs are revealed as satiric depiction of views which were antithetical to eighteenth-century Christian thought.

The system of rewards and punishments, the idea of a prudential morality, was a favorite subject of Swift and his fellow divines when they argued for the existence of a future state.

> Another Argument for a *future State* [says Samuel Clarke], may be drawn from Mens *Conscience* or *Judgment* of all their *Actions*, *good* or *bad*. The one being necessarily attended with Hope of Reward, the other with fear of Punishment; and hence, it is not probable, that God should constitute the Mind of Man so, as to pass a *Judgment* upon itself, that shall *never be verified;* and be convicted by a *Sentence*, that shall never be *confirmed*.[15]

For a good Christian, the wish to avoid a future life where such reward and punishment were meted out was a violation of his religion, nature, and faith. Richard Bentley's first sermon, *A Confutation of Atheism* (1692), makes this clear:

> No question if an Atheist had had the making of himself, he would have framed a Constitution that could have kept pace with his insatiable Lust, been invincible by Gluttony and Intemperance, and have held out vigorous a thousand years in a perpetual Debauch. [The religious man, however] is willing to believe, that our present condition is better for us in the Issue, than that uninterrupted Health and Security, that the Atheist desires; which would strongly tempt us to forget God and the concerns of a better Life. [As good Christians] we are so far from repining at God, that he hath not extended the period of our Lives to the Longævity of the Antediluvians; that we give him thanks for contracting the Days of our Trial, and receiving us more maturely into those Everlasting Habitations above, that he hath prepared for us.[16]

Swift, like his contemporaries, put unusual emphasis upon the doctrine of rewards and punishments—as is obvious from his sermon *The Excellency of Christianity*. A great defect of classical philosophy, he maintains, was that "it wanted some suitable reward proportioned to the better part of man, his mind, as an encouragement for his progress in virtue" (HD, IX, 244). This "notion of rewards and punishments in another life," as he calls it, figures also in *The Testimony of Conscience*.

> The Fear of Punishment in this Life will preserve Men from very few Vices . . . But when Conscience placeth before us the Hopes of everlasting Happiness, and the Fears of everlasting Misery, as the Reward and Punishment of our good or evil Actions, our Reason can find no way to avoid the Force of such an Argument, otherwise than by running into Infidelity. (HD, IX, 155)

As can be gathered from various fragmentary and passing remarks, Swift felt, then, that to avoid contemplation of death and the future life betokened guilt. Citing scriptural truisms in the beginning of his sermon *On the Poor Man's Contentment*, he mentions "the Shortness of his [man's] Life; his Dread of a future State, with his

[14] *Essay upon . . . Jonathan Swift* (London, 1755), sigs. P4^{v}–P5: "[It] is the finest lecture that ever was conceived by any mortal man, to reconcile poor tottering creatures unto a chearful resignation of this wretched life, and perfectly agreeable to that sentiment of the inspired prophet. *The days of our life are threescore years and ten; and though men be so strong, that they live to fourscore years; yet is their life then but labour and sorrow.*"

[15] *Boyle's Lectures* (London, 1765), II, 147. Hereafter this work will be referred to as *Boyle*.

[16] *Eight Sermons* (Cambridge, 1724), pp. 100–103.

Carelessness to prepare for it" (HD, IX, 190). In his sermon *Upon Sleeping in Church*, he speaks of men "loaded with the Guilt of old rooted Sins" who do not come to church because they "can expect to hear of nothing but Terrors and Threatenings, their Sins laid open in true Colours, and eternal Misery the Reward of them." Swift concludes: "therefore no Wonder they stop their Ears, and divert their Thoughts, and seek any Amusement, rather than stir the Hell within them" (HD, IX, 215–216). "If we have an entire Confidence in Him [God]," he remarks in his sermon *On the Testimony of Conscience*, "*that* will enable us to subdue and despise all the Allurements of the World" (HD, IX, 155).[17] One does not, however, despise the "Allurements of the World" if one, like Gulliver, has a deep desire to live forever.

The second argument which would have made immortality on earth seem especially implausible was that touching the difference between the natures of God and man. Swift himself made few statements on this specific subject, but we are here concerned once again with establishing the climate of opinion in which Swift was writing and in indicating how, in general implications, Gulliver's desires are sharply antithetical to contemporary homiletic literature.

There is good reason for God to hinder any one from existing immortal, at least on earth, as Dr. Burnet's *A Demonstration of true Religion* (1726) makes clear. Since mankind has fallen from his *moral* perfection, in his inability to subordinate his "inferior Faculties," one of the designs of Providence is for mankind to regain this moral perfection. But men had another perfection to regain. "Instead of the Perfection, and Immortality of their bodily Nature, they [men] are now become corrupted and mortal; . . . if this natural Perfection of our bodily Faculties be necessary to our Happiness, it must be the Design of that Government to restore us to such a natural Perfection again." Burnet then shows how these two perfections can both be regained. Man must try himself to attain to as much moral perfection as he can. If he falls short, God will supply what is lacking in an afterlife. Then, concerning *natural* perfection, Burnet continues:

> Tho' it is the general Design of Providence, that Mankind should be restored to a State of Immortality, yet since the Nature of Man is become mortal, we must conceive, that the general Method of restoring Mankind to Immortality, will be such as consists with this natural Necessity of Death. And if so, then since the Restoration of Mankind to Life, is the very Notion of a Resurrection; it will follow, That the general Method of restoring Mankind to Immortality will be a Resurrection from the Dead. (*Boyle*, III, 492–493)[18]

Our mortality is thus in our deepest nature and for a definite reason.

More specifically considering the idea of earthly immortality which is the subject of Gulliver's wishes, John Scott's *Christian Life* (1681) explains that when man was innocent, he "enjoyed the pleasures of a pure mind inhabiting a sensitive and animal body" (I, 25–27).[19] He lived "in a State of earthly Immortality." After the fall, however, the scene of man's happiness had been transferred from "an Earthly Immortality, to an Heavenly." To enjoy heavenly immortality, however, the mind of man must be so elevated that it can conform to those other aspects of God's nature aside from immortality. Unless the "*Carnal Mind*," which is so far removed from God, alters its nature to come to Him, the gulf between man and God will always remain (I, 34–35).[20]

This fundamental difference between God and man is due to God's perfection and man's imperfection. The idea is suggested by Swift in several places. He alludes to our "imperfect State" in his sermon *The Duty of Mutual Subjection* (HD, IX, 143), and, elsewhere, equating sin with the "Allurements of the World," he speaks of man's sin as "what is of all Things most contrary to his [God's] Divine Nature" (HD, IX, 155). He applies to himself in a characteristically light manner the doctrine of a fall from grace and the penance of death in a letter to Deane Swift, October 1735, where he speaks of his own body as "his poor little house of clay" on which he has a short "lease" because his "great-grandfather," that is, Adam, forfeited his "grand privileges."[21]

Gulliver's wish for immortality on earth is thus

[17] Fear of death as tantamount to a fear of eternal punishment is again suggested by Swift in his letter to Pope, 1 June 1728. Speakings of Mrs. Pope's illness, Swift remarks: "If I were five-and-twenty, I would wish to be of her age, to be as secure as she is of a better life" (*Correspondence*, ed. F. Elrington Ball, London, 1913, IV, 34).

[18] Cf. John Tillotson, *Sermons* (London, 1757), Vol. VI, Sermon 110.

[19] The original reading of this clause in the 1681 edition (I, 33), is "to enjoy a *Sensual, Animal Happiness* in a state of *Earthly Immortality*." The passage and future passages in the text are taken from the London, 1747, edition.

[20] Robert South stresses this same point in his sermon *The Impossibility of Man's Meriting of God* (*Sermons*, NewYork, 1867, II, 15–17).

[21] Cited by Martin Price, *Swift's Rhetorical Art* (New Haven, 1953), p. 85, n. 8.

highly presumptuous—and untenable in the light of that view which stressed man's imperfection and mortality in contradistinction to God's own perfection and immortality. Obviously, Gulliver's desire in this framework is essentially illogical because he wants to invest himself with *one* of the divine attributes. He wishes for immortality, but he does not concern himself with the fact that immortality is only one of an indivisible *set* of interdependent attributes which constitute the total Christian idea of God. "There is therefore Originally *an Eternal, Immaterial, Intelligent Creator,*" says Dr. Bentley in his second sermon against atheism, "all which together are the *Attributes of God alone*" (*Eight Sermons*, p. 78).

Because man is antithetic to God in respect to moral perfection and immortality, the Struldbrugg episode leads us to consider what becomes of the person who does attain immortality without the necessary concomitant of *moral* perfection. John Scott in his *Christian Life* discusses such a case. Speaking to the unrepentant sinner who has entered into the afterlife, Scott says:

> You are condemned to wander *for ever* in a *woful Eternity*, tormented with a *restless* Rage, and *hungry unsatisfied* Desire, after these *sensual Goods* you have left behind you, and to which you shall never return more; the Consideration of which will render the Loss of Heaven as *grievous* to you, as if it were a Heaven over-flowing with *sensual* Delights, and abounding with *such Joys*, as you will then hunger after, but can never enjoy. For how will it sting you to the Heart, when you shall thus ruminate with yourselves, as you are wandring through the Infernal shades; *Ah besotted Fool that I am! now I see too late, that Heaven is a State wherein a Soul may be infinitely happy . . . whilst I, through my own Sensuality and Devilishness, am utterly incapable of those sublime Delights whereof their Heaven is composed; and like the forlorn Wretch, am left for ever destitute of those sensual Pleasures, which are the only Heaven I can now enjoy.* (IV, 305–306)

South speaks of such an afterlife as eternal "death," as he describes the future existence of the sinner in much the same terms as Scott. Eternal death

> bereaves a man of all the pleasures and comforts which he enjoyed in this world; the loss of which, how poor and contemptible soever they are in themselves, yet surely must needs be very afflictive to him who had placed his whole entire happiness in them: and therefore to be stript of all these, and to be cast naked and forlorn into utter darkness and desertion, cannot but be infinitely tormenting, though a man should meet with no other tormentors in that place. For to have strong, eager, immense desires, and a perpetual bar and divorce put between them and their beloved objects, will of itself be hell enough. (*Sermons*, V, 261–262)[22]

The principle, then, which makes futile the wish for immortality without heavenly purity is man's incapability of enjoying a state such as this unless he is carefully prepared. Swift's descriptions of the Struldbruggs suggests his conformity to this type of thinking. Those who have attained an impure immortality are set off like Cain from other men by a mark over the left eyebrow. They are freaks and monsters to look at. They suggest, in their revolting oldness and never-dying impotency, the unreformed sinner in the afterlife whose hell is an eternity of wishing for the sins which he can no longer enjoy. "Envy and impotent Desires, are their prevailing Passions. But those Objects against which their Envy seems principally directed, are the Vices of the younger Sort . . . they find themselves cut off from all Possibility of Pleasure." In a sense they *are* dead: "As soon as they have compleated the Term of Eighty Years, they are looked on as dead in Law" (HD, XI, 196), and "death" is the terminology by which we have seen South describing the eternal afterlife of the morally corrupt sinner.

The "natural desire of endless life," such as Gulliver says he exhibited, was interpreted in a different sense by divines, who of course had in mind an endless life in heaven. "Another Argument for a future State," says Samuel Clarke in his sermon *The unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*, "may be drawn from Men's natural Desires of Immortality: For it is not at all probable, that God should have given Men *Appetites*, which were never to be *satisfied; Desires* which had *no Objects* to answer them" (*Boyle*, II, 147). Tillotson sounds the same note. "There are many considerations apt to persuade good men of another life after this; as, that man-

[22] Cf. Tillotson, *Sermons*, VI, 457–459. William Sherlock also sums up the argument in his *Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (1689), a popular work translated into French and Welsh. "A Soul, which is wholly sensualiz'd by living in the Body," says Sherlock, "if it be turn'd out of the Body without any change, cannot ascend into Heaven, which is a state of perfect Purity. . . . Death which is the Punishment of Sin, is not meerly the death of the Body, but that state of Misery to which Death translates Sinners" (1705 ed., London, pp. 241–246). Sherlock enlarges on this later: "Some men are wholly sunk into flesh and sense . . . Now these men have great reason to be afraid of Death; for when they go out of this World, they will find nothing that belongs to this World in the next" (pp. 333–334).

kind is generally possessed with this hope and persuasion" (*Sermons*, v, 178). This view occurs frequently in the pulpit literature of the period.

Such "appetites" should not, of course, be interpreted by the subtle as a justification for the instinctive fear of death, which is also given by God. "The natural fear of Death," says William Sherlock, "results from Self-preservation, and the Love of our own being." The only reason that "God should imprint this Aversion to Death on Human Nature" is for the moral purposes of insuring discipline by law and to keep us from "all fatal and destructive Vices" (pp. 328–329). Swift himself, in a different but religious context, reflected on this divinely given instinct for life, and came to a conclusion which, if not similar to Sherlock's, is similarly moral. In his *Thoughts on Religion* he writes that God needed to insure the "being and continuance of the world" which otherwise "every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning." Yet that Swift felt this divine instinct was not to be used to make us dread any danger in death, we may infer, for in another "thought" he says: "It is impossible that any thing so natural, so necessary, and so universal as death, should ever have been designed by providence as an evil to man kind" (HD, IX, 263). Thus, if there was a "natural desire of immortality" divinely implanted in men, we may imagine, it was a desire for heavenly immortality, and not a desire, based on fear of death, for a never-ending life.

Against the divines, who saw in man a natural longing for heavenly immortality, is set Gulliver, who thinks he sees in himself a natural longing for *earthly* immortality. He puts precisely the wrong interpretation on his own "natural" desires. Furthermore, he has not expressed his wish on impulse; by his own admission he has persisted in this foolishness for some time. "I had frequently run over the whole System how I should employ myself, and pass the Time," he tells us, "if I were sure to live for ever" (HD, XI, 193).

The idea that man as a Christian should not value this life underlies all of the concepts thus far examined.[23] Swift's acceptance of this simple orthodoxy which decried the corrupt world is revealed in his *Evening Prayer*.[24] Of particular relevance are the few lines in which he implores God:

> O fill our minds every day more and more with the happiness of that blessed state of living for ever with thee, that we may make it our great work and business to work out our salvation,—to improve in the knowledge of thee, whom to know is life eternal. . . . O that every night may so effectually put us in mind of our last, that we may every day take care so to live, as we shall then wish we had lived when we come to die; that so when that night shall come, we may as willingly put off these bodies, as we now put off our clothes, and may rejoice to rest from our labours, and that our war with the world, the devil, and our own corrupt nature, is at an end. (pp. 316–317)

For Gulliver to wish to live on earth forever is contrary to all the opinions we may gather Swift held.

Swift stresses his essential point from another direction when Gulliver's host makes what may seem to us a strange distinction. The system of immortal living contrived by Gulliver is "unreasonable" and "unjust" because it supposes not only a perpetuity of life, but also a perpetuity of youth, health, and vigor. This latter state of affairs, the Luggnaggian points out, is one for which "no Man could be so foolish to hope, however extravagant he might be in his wishes." Why was eternal youth more wildly improbable to Swift as a hypothetical proposition than the idea of eternal life in general? Why was it any more foolish for Gulliver to dream of eternal vigor than to long for eternal life?[25] It is worth calling attention to the fact that, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinking, there was a basis for regarding eternal, earthly youth as, if possible, even more unnatural, in terms of God's plan for men, than mere earthly immortality.

Space does not permit expansion on what, to many scholars of the period, are well-known facts. It will be sufficient to recall that man's punishment which resulted from the Fall was, among other things, that physical imperfection and constant degeneration which eventually resulted in death. This, as even those "scientific" writers of the eighteenth century reasoned, defined the essential nature of man's lot in the

[23] All of these ideas about earthly immortality may also be found combined in Sherlock.

[24] *Works*, ed. Temple Scott (London, 1898), III, 315–320; called to my attention by Prof. L. A. Landa to whose supervision in the preparation of this article I am greatly indebted.

[25] John Hawkesworth, who raised the same objection in a note, explained the disparity in terms of technique (Swift, *Works*, New York, 1812, IX, 237, n.). The Luggnaggian, living with the "fact" of the Struldbruggs, regarded immortality as a reality, whereas eternal youth had no place in the fictional universe which Swift created for him. Hawkesworth then is aware of what George Sherburn has called "the infinite playfulness of Swift's mind" ("Methods in Books about Swift," *SP*, XXXV [Oct. 1938], 635–656), and has interpreted the incident accordingly.

Christian universe.[26] A man who would not deteriorate physically was one who did not come under God's decree for the rest of mankind and was not paying for the sin of Adam. This, obviously, could only be possible if God had given such a man special dispensation or if the man were not subject to God: both impossible situations. It is in the context of such a well-known frame of reference that I suggest we consider the Luggnaggian's distinction between eternal youth and mere eternal life on earth, for this, in the final analysis, is the problem of the Struldbruggs. Through some anomaly they have immortality, but they have not escaped God's sentence on fallen man. They deteriorate biologically, as do all men, and thus suffer the common affliction of all mankind. The particular horror of their position lies in the fact that they have to endure this sentence indefinitely. By means of the Struldbruggs, Swift presents us with the proposition of a fallen mankind, suffering for the sin of Adam, gradually returning to dust, but utterly deprived of God's last and greatest mercy. Eternal youth is a privilege which mankind has lost with the fall; eternal life is an additional punishment which God has been kind enough not to inflict. Roland Frye has suggested that in endowing the Yahoos with deformities, Swift has merely adopted a homiletic device traditionally used for representing man without grace.[27] It is possible to view the Struldbruggs in a similar manner, as in their deformities they may suggest man deprived not only of grace, but also of death and resurrection.

III

Gulliver's first reaction to the news of the Struldbruggs' existence is enthusiastic: "Happy People who enjoy so many living Examples of antient Virtue, and have Masters ready to instruct them in the Wisdom of all former Ages!" (HD, XI, 192). In a similar vein, outlining his course of action if he were to be a Struldbrugg, he remarks later:

> These STRULDBRUGGS and I would . . . remark the several Gradations by which Corruption steals into the World, and oppose it in every Step, by giving perpetual Warning and Instruction to Mankind; which, added to the strong Influence of our own Example, would probably prevent that continual Degeneracy of human Nature, so justly complained of in all Ages. (HD, XI, 194)

Can cultures be preserved by the means Gulliver has proposed? It is certainly laudable, as an ethical guardian, to "oppose [corruption] in every Step" but for Gulliver to expect to implement this project by convincing "hopeful young Men" of the usefulness of "Virtue in publick and private Life" from his *own* "Remembrance, Experience and Observation" (HD, XI, 193), is nothing but folly.

Though it would appear to be a laudable intent, what makes Gulliver think that he can himself become a teacher of virtue? He expects to qualify himself for such a task simply by acquiring vast learning and by living a long time. Nothing else, it would seem, is necessary. The "strong influence" of his own example will then be the means of instruction. That Swift himself could see the weakness of Gulliver's position is clear from his sermon *On the Testimony of Conscience:*

> Great Abilities, without the Fear of God, are most dangerous Instruments when they are trusted with Power. . . . Unless Men are guided by the Advice and Judgment of a Conscience founded on Religion, they can give no Security that they will be either good Subjects, faithful Servants of the Publick, or honest in their mutual Dealings; since there is no other Tie thro' which the Pride, or Lust, or Avarice, or Ambition of Mankind will not certainly break one Time or other. (HD, IX, 156–158)

Swift's statement may thus suggest the pitfalls which await Gulliver's projected way of life, and it also suggests the controversy which raged between the orthodox churchmen and the "freethinkers." The debate between those who supported the primacy of an official church with a revealed religion and "deism" was the issue underlying the sermon, and in a sense it also appears to be one issue underlying Swift's description of Gulliver's exaggerated plans. The program which Gulliver supports when he speaks of teaching the "Usefulness of Virtue" based on his own "Remembrance, Experience and Observation" (HD, XI, 193) is, in effect, a composite of the assumptions which divines attributed to Stoics, Epicureans, and other "gentile philosophers" including the Deists.

In his Boyle's Lecture, *The Natural Obligations to believe the Principles of Religion* (1717–18), John Leng speaks of these "gentile philosophers." Many of them were sincere enough men, but there were so few of them, and their authority

[26] See Tillotson, Sermon 184; John Leland, *A Defense of Christianity* (London, 1753), II, 416; Isaac Watts, *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind* (London, 1740), p. 193; James MacKenzie, *The History of Health* (Edinburgh, 1759), pp. 22–23.

[27] "Swift's Yahoo and the Christian Symbols," *JHI*, XV (April 1954), 201–217.

was so weak, Leng begins, that they yet could not hope to make

> any considerable Reformation in the Manners of Men: Nay, the best of them despair'd of any such Effect from mere human Endeavours; and thought it enough to keep themselves free from Contagion. [Leng then comes to his main point.] Yet this is what some modern *Deists* think sufficient to supersede the Necessity of all Revelation, as if here and there a Man of much Leisure, great Abilities, and a good Disposition, were all that the divine Goodness should be supposed to have any Concern for. (*Boyle*, III, 177–178)

Dr. Samuel Clarke speaks in much the same way. In his sermon *On the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*, he says:

> The Doctrine of the greatest Part of them [heathen philosophers] consisted in nothing but Words; and did not at all amend even their own Manners, much less was fitted to reform the World. For excepting one or two great Names, the Philosophers were very vicious, not only in secret, but in the most public Manner. None of them lived agreeably to their own Instructions, but were Slaves to filthy Lusts. (*Boyle*, II, 151)

Swift, in his *Testimony of Conscience*, emphasizes this point:

> it is found by Experience, that those Men who set up for Morality without regard to Religion, are generally but virtuous in part; they will be just in their Dealings between Man and Man; but if they find themselves disposed to Pride, Lust, Intemperance, or Avarice, they do not think their Morality concerned to check them in any of these Vices, because it is the great Rule of such Men, that they may lawfully follow the Dictates of Nature, wherever their Safety, Health, and Fortune are not injured. (HD, IX, 152–153)

Finally, in his sermon *On the Excellency of Christianity*, Swift has listed four defects which he attributes to "Heathen philosophy." These defects were: (1) the idea that "happiness" consisted in "virtue," without "virtue" being defined; (2) the ignorance of a system of rewards and punishments; (3) the inability to grasp the proper notion of a diety; and (4) "no notion at all of entirely relying and depending" on a "Divine Power" and "a Providence" (HD, IX, 243–245). I would not wish to press the point with any great confidence, yet Gulliver's optimistic plans and hopes of teaching "virtue" suggest that Swift has created him, for the time being, as a representation of these defects in heathen philosophizing, and it is thus possible to regard the exposition of Gulliver's ambitions and his subsequent disillusionment as a casual stroke against the "freethinking" position. The Struldbruggs, just as Leng, Clarke, and Swift might have predicted, are too busy, contending with their own vices and infirmities, to be able to serve as anything but ironic examples contrary to Gulliver's expectations.

It would be absurd to imply, however, that Gulliver himself, although thinking in unchristian terms, in this whole episode is endowed with any Satanic instincts. He only stands convicted of ignorance. In fact, Swift has playfully suggested in one of his random thoughts that physicians, and we must recall that Gulliver was a surgeon, "ought not to give their Judgment of Religion, for the same Reason that Butchers are not admitted to be Jurors upon Life and Death" (HD, I, 244).

Swift was a moral satirist, writing in a vital, homiletic tradition as his clerical background might suggest, and arguing against man's view of his own self-sufficiency. As part of the organization of *Gulliver's Travels*, the Struldbrugg episode fits well into the predominatly intellectual satire of Book III. Perversions of science, mathematics, and history are exposed in other parts of the work, while perversions in theological and philosophical doctrine receive their share of attention in the Struldbrugg episode. Much more than as a revulsion against old age, this episode merits the description with which Deane Swift concludes his discussion of Book IV: "the picture is the more striking, as well as the more terrible; and upon that account, more likely to enforce the obligations of religion and virtue upon the souls of men" (sig. Q1).

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