The Rhetoric of Paradox in "Gulliver's Travels."

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THE RHETORIC OF PARADOX IN GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of English

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rhetorical strategies that affected Jonathan Swift's use of paradox in Gulliver's Travels. Each paradox studied is examined in the light of one of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion, ethical, emotional, and logical persuasion.

Under the category of ethical appeal two paradoxes are examined. First, "A Letter from Capt. Gulliver, to His Cousin Symson" serves on one level to establish ethical appeal for Gulliver as the fictional author of the Travels, whereas Swift undercuts that appeal on another level by means of the paradoxical encomium that pervades the letter. Swift is employing paradox satirically to attack Gulliver's ethos, thereby insuring that the reader is not converted by Gulliver's visionary schemes for the moral reformation of man. Second, the Liar paradox is also used by Swift to undermine the reader's confidence in Gulliver's simplistic reforms and in his alleged dedication to truth. Gulliver's reforms are for Swift not only inadequate but dangerous because they rely upon an unassisted self-esteem for the
redemption of mankind from his essentially corrupt nature.

Under emotional appeal, two paradoxical encomiums are examined. As in the case of ethical appeal, Swift's rhetorical strategy involves making Gulliver a satiric victim and implicating the reader, thereby evoking the emotions of fear and hope when that reader himself falls victim to Gulliver's own emotional appeals. Gulliver's encomium of England before the King of Brobdingnag is rendered paradoxical when the King concludes the bulk of the English "to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth."

If the reader is to escape the King's general condemnation, he must pronounce judgment upon himself just as Gulliver does when he says that he has removed infernal habits from his soul; but the very pronouncement that seems to free Gulliver from the prospect of an afterlife in hell, because it is based on a pride even more damnable than lying and shuffling, paradoxically renders his soul all the more subject to the infernal regions. Swift applies a similar rhetorical strategy to Gulliver's encomium on immortality during the Struldbrugg episode of his visit to Luggnagg: in view of Gulliver's fear of an immortality of debilitated senility, death becomes, paradoxically, worthy of praise. Swift uses the emotions of hope and fear in these two paradoxical encomiums as mainsprings to move the reader toward a morality based on the restraints of future rewards and punishments in the afterlife.
Under rational appeal, Swift's satirical use of Francis Bacon's paradox, antiquity is the youth of the world, is examined. The satire is part of the then ongoing quarrel between Ancients and Moderns. Gulliver, in his youth full of Modern optimism, gradually loses belief in the inevitability of moral progress and despairs of the human condition. In his old age Gulliver the most Modern of authors becomes a satirically absurd reduction of one who espouses the cause of the Ancients. The paradoxical nature of the plotting of Gulliver's account of his voyages allows for further attacks upon Modern arguments on behalf of progress in the form of such Modern inventions as printing, gunpowder, and the compass. Swift's attacks argue against those tendencies of Modernism to replace the Christian concept of human nature with one that denies original sin and the existence of an afterlife. Swift's achievement, among others, seems to be that in Gulliver's Travels the guns of paradox are effectively turned against the Moderns in whose arsenal they more rightfully belong.
CHAPTER I

PARADOX, RHETORIC, AND SWIFT

The Renaissance inherited and developed a tradition of paradox, the existence of which has been documented by literary historians like Rosalie L. Colie, Sister M. Geraldine, C.S.J., Henry Knight Miller, and others. Colie, after tracing this tradition into the late seventeenth century, says that although paradoxy went out of favor after that time, Jonathan Swift still felt the influence of this tradition. If Swift did employ paradox, and it is evident from both his prose and poetry that he did, we need first of all to establish the different senses of the word "paradox" that Swift had knowledge of and that apply to this study. This

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2 Colie, pp. 508, 325-328.
information will, hopefully, serve as a basis for understanding the specific problem (to be developed later on in this chapter) which this study tries to resolve--the rhetorical purposes or strategies that Swift might have intended in his use of paradox in *Gulliver's Travels*.

One sense of the word "paradox" relevant to this study is taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "a statement or tenet contrary to received opinion or belief; often with the implication that it is marvellous or incredible." It is in this sense that Aristotle uses the word "paradox" in his discussion of maxims in his *Rhetoric* when he says that "all those that state anything that is contrary to the general opinion [paradoxon is the original Greek] or is a matter of dispute, need demonstrative proof."\(^3\)

It is also in this sense that the word was used by Cicero, for example, in his collection of Stoic paradoxes composed prior to 46 B.C., a work which Swift had in his library at the time of his death.\(^4\) Each paradox is supported by a brief essay combining exposition, argument, and illustrations to make the issue persuasive. The six paradoxes treat the following subjects: "That only what is morally noble is good"; "That the possession of virtue is sufficient


for happiness”; “That transgressions are equal and right actions are equal”; “That every foolish man is mad”; “That only the wise man is free, and that every foolish man is a slave”; “That the wise man alone is rich.” Cicero called these statements paradoxes (he used the Greek word *paradoxa*) because, as he said, “These doctrines are surprising [‘admir-abilia’ can also be translated as ‘astonishing’], and they run counter to universal opinion.” According to Cicero, the purpose of these brief essays was to persuade: “I wanted to try whether it is possible for them to be brought out into the light of common daily life and expounded in a form to win acceptance, or whether learning has one style of discourse and ordinary life another; and I wrote with the greater pleasure because the doctrines styled *paradoxa* by the Stoics appear to me to be in the highest degree Socratic, and far and away the truest.”

In what sense, one might ask, is the statement “that only what is morally noble is good” a “less commonly accepted view” or a statement “contrary to received opinion”? Colie suggests that Cicero’s paradoxes “appear to be defenses of the obvious . . . about which official opinion cannot be divided, until we realize that his use of the truism as paradox is profoundly ironic; he criticizes his society for

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6 Cicero, p. 257.
its manifest loss of values, so that the Stoic truism seems a novelty or paradox." Swift, we shall see, was to use much the same technique in some of his paradoxes in Gulliver's Travels.

Cicero was the most important of the early Romans to adopt the paradoxical mode of writing. Largely due to his influence, the fashion was adopted by the Renaissance Humanists. The first major introduction of paradox into English was a work by Anthony Munday entitled The Defence of Contraries. Paradoxes against common opinion, debated in the forme of declamation in place of publike censure, only to exercise yong wittes in difficult matters (1593). Munday's work was a translation of the Frenchman Charles Estienne's Paradoxes (1553) which was itself a translation of the Italian Ortensio Landi's Paradossi (1543). These paradoxes argue the benefits of poverty, ignorance, blindness, drunkenness, and so forth, all of them arguing against received opinion in favor of ostensibly undeserving subjects. Significant also is the fact that these essays converge in this instance with the paradoxical encomium.8

Paradox as statement contrary to received opinion has had an important role in the development of scientific knowledge. W. V. Quine writes that

7Colye, pp. 11-12.
8Miller, pp. 156-157.
more than once in history the discovery of paradox has been the occasion for major reconstruction at the foundations of thought. For some decades, indeed, studies of the foundation of mathematics have been confounded and greatly stimulated by confrontation with two paradoxes, one propounded by Bertrand Russell in 1901 and the other by Kurt Gödel in 1931.\(^9\)

Other, much earlier scientific paradoxes are discussed by Colie, particularly those paradoxes by Robert Boyle who published in 1661 The Skeptical Chymist: Or Chymico-Physical Doubts and Paradoxes.\(^10\) In another work Hydrostastical Paradoxes (1666) Boyle explains the sense in which he uses the word "paradox":

> For (first) the Hydrostaticks is a part of Philosophy, which I confess I look upon as one of the ingenionsest Doctrines that belong to it. Theorems and Problems of this art, being most of them pure and handsome productions of Reason duly exercis'd on attentively consider'd Subjects, and making in them such Discoveries as are not only pleasing, but divers of them surprising, and such as would make men wonder by what kind of Ration-cination men came to attain the knowledg [sic] of such un-obvios Truths.\(^11\)

Colie writes that

> in the history of scientific thought the life-history of an hypothesis is often a series of the meanings of paradox: an hypothesis presents itself as a paradox contrary to public opinion; accepted, it becomes 'truth' and incites other


\(^10\)Swift's "A Meditation upon a Broomstick: According to the Style and Manner of the Honourable Robert Boyle's Meditations" (1710) is, according to Colie (p. 309), a parody of the austerity and ponderousness of Boyle's works.

\(^11\)Quoted in Colie, p. 309.
investigatory paradoxes; supplanted, it turns out to have been a paradox after all, the defence of a thesis subsequently 'proved' to have been indefensible. All this because scientific paradoxes, like any others, operate at the edge of knowledge, at the limits of man's relations to his physical universe. Swift used paradox in this sense of the word, a meaning whose scientific applications as we shall see he was well aware of, as a base for his attacks on scientific abuses in *Gulliver's Travels*. We can see Swift's use of the word "paradox" in this first sense as a statement contrary to received opinion when he writes in "A Trical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind" (1707):

> But what I blame the Philosophers for, (although some may think it is a Paradox) is chiefly their Pride; nothing less than an ipse dixit, and you must pin your Faith on their Sleeve. And, although Diogenes lived in a Tub, there might be, for ought I know, as much Pride under his Rags, as in the fine spun Garment of the Divine Plato.13

The proposition is apparently not paradoxical to the author who would have it that received opinion agrees with his belief (that philosophers are proud persons) but who admits that there are some who may disagree with him on this point and it is these persons who may think his proposition a


paradox.

One particular type of paradox which falls within this first sense of the term as a statement or tenet contrary to received opinion is the paradoxical encomium. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "encomium" as "a formal or high-flown expression of praise; a eulogy, panegyric." According to Arthur Stanley Pease, "in addition to those [Greek and Roman encomiums] actually preserved, we learn not a little about this type of composition from the ancient rhetorical theorists, who show that panegyric laudations... might concern themselves not only with gods, heroes, rulers, or other persons, and with such dignified themes as countries, rivers, cities, or mountains, but also with professions, arts, abstract virtues, ages of life, and even with humbler topics, such as the lower animals, plants, or inanimate objects." The paradoxical encomium with which we are here concerned is a form of expression in which, according to Pease, the techniques of the encomium are employed upon unpraiseworthy subjects.14 In his study of the paradoxical encomium Henry Knight Miller takes as synonymous the terms "paradoxical encomium," "pseudo-encomium," "ironic encomium," and "mock encomium" because, as he writes, they "all imply that the author intended to praise an object or idea that he actually considered not entitled to that honor;
hence . . . [the different types of encomiums reflected in the different terms] clearly belong to the same tradition."15 Miller's point here is crucial, I believe, to understanding some of Swift's paradoxical encomiums in *Gulliver's Travels*; that point being that if Swift is concerned about what received opinion ought to be (and it is the contention of this study that he is concerned), then Swift's encomiums are at times contrary to received opinion in a general sense only after the encomiums have worked rhetorically to persuade his readers that the object of praise is in fact unworthy of such praise. An example of this is Gulliver's praise of England before the King of Brobdingnag, a paradoxical encomium that will be dealt with later in this study.

The various uses of the paradoxical encomium can be seen in part, I believe, from the reasons for the development of the form during the ancient Greek and Roman period, reasons listed by Pease as "the search for a form combining brilliancy and safety, the striving for novelty by the path of paradox, the sophistic desire to present the inferior side of a case, the tendency of the age toward greater realism and the consequent exploration of the undiscovered possibilities of the commonplace, and, finally, a real scientific interest in the microscopic."16 Miller lists the uses to which the paradoxical encomium could be put:

15Miller, p. 145, n. 1.

16Pease, p. 33.
It could be employed for satiric attack through ironic commendation . . . ; or for parody . . . ; or, again, for pure comic effect, sometimes with the praise half-seriously intended. . . . It could be a sheer exercise in rhetorical ingenuity . . . , or, at the opposite pole, it could involve the exploitation of a paradoxical subject to arrive at valid insights into the human situation.

Miller goes on to add in the concluding remarks of his study that the paradoxical encomium placed in a different context things customarily viewed from a contrary perspective, thereby creating ironic tensions that often produced thought-provoking laughter. This irony served as one remedy for what Miller calls the "disease of intellectual rigidity." 17

According to Miller, no exact set of guidelines for composing the paradoxical encomium is known to have been established. Usually, it was modeled on the form of the regular panegyric, as provided for by the major rhetors. 18 For Aristotle the methods of praise involve amplification or elaboration on the superiority of the objects praised, attributing to them "beauty and importance." 19 The Greek theorist Aristides, according to Pease, provides us with the following methods of praise: "exaggeration of meritorious . . .

17 Miller, p. 172


19 Aristotle, pp. 103-105.
features, suppression of the undesirable ones, favorable contrasts with something else, and . . . the clever turning of an unpleasant fact to a pleasant one."  

These traditional methods were used to develop the most often used arguments, those having to do, according to Miller, with the "antiquity, the nobility or dignity, and the utility of the object praised."  

However, the paradoxical encomium did, according to Pease, differ in two respects from the traditional encomium: it exhibited much more freedom of arrangement (a point particularly relevant, I believe, to Swift's use of paradoxical encomiums in Gulliver's Travels), and the main emphasis was placed "upon the number, variety, and unexpected character of the arguments adduced for praise."  

Aristotle had written about the three divisions of rhetoric: (1) political or deliberative, (2) forensic or judicial, and (3) the ceremonial or epideictic. But with the overthrow of the Roman Republic the first two divisions of rhetoric declined significantly in importance, and ceremonial rhetoric not only became dominant but also in time subsumed to a great extent the roles of both judicial and deliberative rhetoric.  

Thus, the paradoxical encomium

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20 Pease, p. 37.
21 Miller, p. 148.
22 Pease, p. 36.
23 Miller, p. 148.
which falls under the category of ceremonial rhetoric has not only a history going back at least to the fifth century B.C. but also one of increasing significance, reaching its most celebrated height in 1509 with the writing of The Praise of Folly by Desiderius Erasmus. In its use of the paradoxical encomium for satirical purposes, it is a literary ancestor of the work we are here concerned with, Gulliver's Travels. The tradition which Erasmus represents is that of Christian Humanism, and his praise of folly is indebted particularly to St. Paul, Thomas à Kempis, and Nicholas Cusanus. St. Paul, for example, says at one point, "Let no one deceive himself. If any one of you thinks himself wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may come to be wise" (I Corinthians 3:18). Western medieval culture received its final theological arguments for the fool particularly from Thomas à Kempis and Nicholas Cusanus, Kempis in his Imitation of Christ (1441) preaching holy simplicity and Cusanus in Of Learned Ignorance (1440) laying the groundwork for the wisdom and the praise of folly.

Unlike The Praise of Folly, however, Gulliver's Travels cannot actually be categorized as a paradoxical encomium. But the book does contain examples of the mock encomium which contribute significantly to Swift's rhetorical intentions. That using epideictic forms in larger works was not a violation of propriety but rather a generally accepted

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24 See Sister M. Geraldine, C.S.J., cited above.
practice is attested to by Theodore C. Burgess in his study *Epideictic Literature*, and he cites for example Nicolaus Sophista, a Sophist rhetorician of the fifth century A.D., as saying that the encomium may be taken as something complete in itself or as one element in another form.\footnote{Theodore C. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1902), p. 95.}

Miller provides evidence of Swift's awareness of the tradition of paradoxical encomium by citing his "loose mock panegyric of Bishop Fleetwood" and the "Digression in Praise of Digressions" in *A Tale of a Tub* (1704).\footnote{Miller, pp. 168-170.} Charles Allen Beaumont notes the affinity of "A Vindication of Lord Carteret" to the paradoxical encomium,\footnote{Charles Allen Beaumont, *Swift's Classical Rhetoric* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 153, n. 3.} and Swift himself reveals an early awareness when on May 3, 1692, he writes to his cousin Thomas Swift, "igad I can not write anything easy to be understood tho it were but in praise of an old Shoo."\footnote{The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), I, 10.}

Miller's examination of popular miscellanies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries uncovers a preference for the loose or informal mock encomium in the seventeenth century, whereas he finds no examples of the mock encomium in the two most popular collections of poetry in the eight-
teenth century. His conclusion is that in time, then, the paradoxical encomium, while losing some of its popular appeal, had achieved greater dignity.  

Granted the accuracy of Miller's conclusion, I believe Gulliver's Travels can be seen as a reflection of both popular and classical traditions. Both of these traditions had emphasized the humorous and the serious side of paradoxical encomiums. Erasmus, for example, in his Dedication to Thomas More barely attempts to hide the serious nature of The Praise of Folly under the guise of literary jesting but concludes by asking "whether the satirist of mankind who names no names does not really teach and warn rather than bite." It would seem that in this context teaching and warning would be concerned with received opinion and with working contrary to that opinion in order to change it. In 1600 Sir William Cornwallis the Younger in the preface to his paradoxical encomiums had attacked "Opinion" which, he claimed, had grown "so mighty that like a Monarchesse she tyrannizeth over Judgement." One reason for this attack

29 Miller, pp. 170-171.

30 For a discussion of humor in the popular literature of praise, see Miller, p. 161.


upon popular opinion, a reason I believe capable of demonstration in Gulliver's Travels, can be found in Pierre Charron's statement in A Treatise of Wisdom (1601), a work in Swift's library at the time of his death,\textsuperscript{33} that

the means that it [the spirit] useth for the discovery of the truth, are reason and experience, both of them very weake, uncertaine, divers, wavering. The greatest argument of truth, is the general consent of the world [that is, received opinion]; now the number of fools doth far exceed the number of the wise, and therefore how should that generall consent be agreed upon, but by corruption and applause given without judgment and knowledge of the cause, and the imitation of some one that first began the dance.\textsuperscript{34}

"To convince an audience of its own frailty,"

Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., writes, "is as imposing a task as the satirist can undertake."\textsuperscript{35} This persuasion is what Rosenheim argues Swift is trying to accomplish in "An Argument To prove, That the Abolishing of Christianity in England, May, as Things now Stand, be attended with some Inconveniences, and perhaps, not produce those many good Effects proposed thereby" (1708). Swift's declared method is by way of paradox, the proposition contrary to received opinion; but he uses a fictional author or persona to advance the proposition, "I do not yet see the absolute Necessity of

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Williams}, p. 16.


extirpating the Christian Religion from among us." And he adds, "This perhaps may appear too great a Paradox, even for our wise and paradoxical Age to endure: Therefore I shall handle it with all Tenderness, and with the utmost Deference to that great and profound Majority, which is of another Sentiment."36 The paradox is satiric and ironic: Swift is understating the case in the proposition advanced; but he defers to that "profound Majority" because, as Rosenheim contends with regard to the "Argument," "the improvement of morality, the enforcement of piety, the suppression of heresy and license can only be accomplished by those who have hitherto been weak, selfish, and shortsighted in these respects."37 John Richard Clark calls such paradoxes as that used in "An Argument" satiric paradoxes. And satiric paradox, he writes, "bears about it a greater degree of seriousness; it argues a thesis that is shocking and untenable and, by so doing, calls striking truths to our attention, exposes faulty logic and corrupted opinion."38

This is not to say, however, that Swift's attitude toward received opinion was necessarily a negative one. He


37 Rosenheim, p. 46.

is even willing to appeal to it for corroboration of his own side of an argument, as he does in his "Remarks Upon a Book" (1708), the book referred to here being Mathew Tindall's The Rights of the Christian Church which was an attack upon Tindall's former High Church allies. In his "Remarks" Swift writes:

A noble Notion started, that Union in the Church must enslave the Kingdom; reflect on it. This Man [Tindall] hath somewhere heard, that it is a Point of Wit to advance Paradoxes, and the bolder the better. But the Wit lies in maintaining them, which he neglecteth, and formeth imaginary Conclusions from them, as if they were true and uncontested.39

Here we begin to see Swift's attitude toward paradox: he distinguishes between the inept use of paradox (here by Tindall, later we shall see by Francis Bacon), and the adept use of paradox. With regard to Swift and paradox James Aldrich Wyman Rembert writes:

Perhaps because the modern paradoxists were so poor at their art Swift criticizes paradox in general. Or perhaps paradox, like irony, was a Kingdom where he felt he ruled alone; or he simply remained inconsistent and self-contradictory throughout his life, now using a technique or an idea, now discarding it and criticizing it.40

Just how familiar Swift was with paradox in the sense of the word being discussed here can be seen, I be-

39 Jonathan Swift, "Remarks upon a Book, intitled, the Rights of the Christian Church, etc.," Prose Works, II, 101.

live, in his use of the word on several other occasions. For example, in his "Ode to the Honourable Sir William Temple" (c. 1692) Swift writes:

But what does our proud Ign'rance Learning call,
We odly Plato's Paradox make good,
Our Knowledge is but mere Remembrance all. . . .

What Swift has called a paradox is what Cebes in Plato's Phaedo calls Socrates' "favourite doctrine" "that knowledge is simply recollection," the paradox resulting simply from the proposition's being contrary to received opinion. Or again, in his poem "Daphne" (c. 1730) Swift writes:

Never woman more devis'd
Surer ways to be despis'd:
Paradoxes weakly yielding,
Always conquer'd, never yielding.

When a paradox you stick to,
I will never contradict you.

Another sense of the word "paradox" relevant to this study is as "a statement or proposition which on the face of it seems self-contradictory, absurd, or at variance with common sense, though, on investigation or when explained, it may prove to be well-founded (or, according to some, though it is essentially true)" (OED). It is in this sense that Swift uses the word in his "Ode to the Athenian Society" (1692):

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43Poems, III, 906, 908.
Yet shall these traces of your wit remain
Like a just map to tell the vast extent
Of conquest in your short and happy reign;
And to all future mankind show
How strange a paradox is true,
That men, who liv'd and dy'd without a name,
Are the chief heroes in the sacred list of fame.

Here the paradox only seems to be self-contradictory, for the contradiction results from the equivocal idea of fame in the proposition: (1) fame comes to one usually only during life; (2) fame comes to one even after death as a result of what one did during one's life. Thus, there is no actual self-contradiction here. Swift is simply trying to get his reader to redefine "fame" by suggesting the convergence of the dichotomy between unknown and famous so that the members of the Athenian Society, whom he addresses as the "great unknown," will be seen or will see themselves in a new light.

The skill with which Swift does this by fitting paradox to theme here needs calling attention to. Earl Delbert Bader suggests that paradoxes "are rather 'stagey' things. They have the look of things that know they are being looked at. They call attention not only to their own artificiality, but to the artificiality of all language." But fame in Swift's "Ode" shares much the same qualities; the writings of the members of the Athenian Society provide a map that when looked at and studied reveal the art, the artifice, the man-made

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44 Poems, I, 25.

qualities that insure that degree of everlastingness which can be characterized by the word "fame." Swift is thus able to justify life lived "without a Name," whether it be that of a member of the Athenian Society or his own for that matter, by emphasizing the "Traces of . . . Wit" that endure beyond the grave.

It should also be noted that paradox in the first sense as a proposition contrary to received opinion is related to the second sense under discussion here, paradox as apparent self-contradiction, if one accepts as received opinion the notion that to live "without a Name" is to be unknown and therefore not famous. The first sense can be labeled as etymological, the second sense as derivational, that is, having been derived in time from the first sense. And while the second sense does not exclude the first, the first meaning does not necessarily exclude the second. In this regard, for example, Rosalie L. Colie writes that "the paradoxical encomium raises a question in logic which is of the most profound importance: can a thing unpraisable in fact be praised? If it can, then it is not unpraisable; if it cannot, then a vast number of pieces of paradoxical prose do not exist."46

The OED cites the first use in English of paradox as apparent self-contradiction by one named Crowley who wrote in 1569, "Your straunge Paradox of Christes eating of his

46 Colie, p. 5.
owne fleshe." According to John Richard Clark, Christian paradoxes were popular during the Renaissance, and he cites as examples a work by Francis Bacon entitled "The Character of a Believing Christian, In Paradoxes and Seeming Contradictions" (1648), and Ralph Venning's Orthodox Paradoxes Theoretical and Experimental, or a Believer Clearing Truth By Seeming Contradictions (1647). 47 Venning, for example, writes that "the Christian believes that he cannot be saved by his working; and yet he believes that he is to work out his owne salvation with feare and trembling": "He is willing to dye daily, yet daily prayes to live longer"; "He dares not put himselfe to death, least he sinne, and yet he thinkes he sinne if he dye not daily." 48 The function of these paradoxes is not to make the reader choose between two extremes but to make him modify one by means of the other, so that the contradictory elements of the paradox exist only at the initial stage of apprehension. It is in this way that Swift's paradoxical aphorism "Every Man desires to live long; but no Man would be old" works. Or again: "Vision is the Art of seeing Things invisible." 49 This last aphorism holds together by means of the balancing, centri-
petally as it were, of the polar concepts visible and invisible; the paradox only seems to be a self-contradiction because once the concealed equivocation is revealed the polarity disappears and a tertium quid, a third something, results—in this case, a metaphorical statement concerned with human knowledge. Still another way to get at the way in which this paradox works upon the reader is by seeing how it insists upon the two concepts visible and invisible as synonymous rather than antonymous. To understand the paradox, one must temper his idea of vision so that it includes the notion of invisibility. In this way he masters the paradox only when he reaches the point where it seems to be no longer paradoxical. Rosalie L. Colie writes that this self-destructive aspect of paradox was noted by John Donne when he wrote, "if they [paradoxes] make you to find better reasons against them, they do their office."50

A third sense of the word "paradox" relevant to this study is as "a proposition or statement that is actually self-contradictory, or contradictory to reason or ascertained truth, and so, essentially absurd and false" (OED). John Richard Clark records that Plato often used this type of paradox for satirical purposes in his dialogues: "in the Parmenides, the Protagoras, or the debate at the outset of the Republic between Socrates and Thrasymachus, the funeral oration in the Menexenus, or the defeat of the poor rhapsode

50Quoted in Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica, p. 37.
in the Ion -- in all of which men's strong opinions lead to logical absurdity or comic impasse."51 Socrates, according to Richard McKeon, "builds his numerous refutations of the doctrines of the Sophists on admissions he elicits from them of a distinction between true and false or better and worse, reducing their problem to the paradox, embodied dramatically in the dramatis personae of the dialogues, of deeds and words, of men who know the arts and virtues in the sense of practicing them without the ability to explain them and men who talk about the arts and virtues without the ability to relate their statements to effective practice."52 Aristotle used "paradox" in this third sense in his *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Again there is the difficulty raised by the argument of the Sophists. The Sophists wish to show their cleverness by entrapping their adversary into a paradox, and when they are successful, the resultant chain of reasoning ends in a deadlock: the mind is fettered, being unwilling to stand still because it cannot approve the conclusion reached, yet unable to go forward because it cannot untie the knot of the argument. Now one of their arguments proves that Folly combined with unrestraint is a virtue. It runs as follows: if a man is foolish and also unrestrained, owing to his unrestraint he does the opposite of what he believes he ought to do; but he believes that good things are bad, and that he ought not to do them; therefore he will do good things and not bad one.53

51 Clark, p. 316.


How Swift's attitude toward this third type of paradox developed is unknown to this writer. It is certainly possible that Swift adopted Aristotle's attitude toward this type as sophistical or that he adopted Plato's strategy in using it satirically. But a combination of these attitudes as exemplified in Swift's writings do not seem to be inconsistent either with one another or with Swift's rhetorical strategies.

One well-known paradox which falls within the scope of this third sense of the term as actual self-contradiction is the Liar paradox. Swift could have found one version of it in St. Paul's Epistle to Titus. Titus was a bishop on the island of Crete, an island whose inhabitants must have been difficult to minister to for St. Paul writes, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.' This statement is true" (Titus, I, 12-13). According to Alan Ross Anderson, a similar statement was later attributed to Epimenides, a native of Crete, so that the paradox is known either as the Liar paradox or the Epimenides paradox. However, it should be noted here that there is an actual, as opposed to apparent, contradiction involved. If a Cretan says Cretans are always liars and he is telling the truth, then he is lying. In other words, he is telling the truth if and only if he is lying. The paradox as it stands involves an unresolvable

logical contradiction. Swift, as we shall see, was to use it as a satirical vehicle for his *Travels*.

The fourth and final sense in which paradox will be used in this study is as "a phenomenon that exhibits some contradiction" (identified as a transferred sense by the *OED*). This sense is stated somewhat differently by *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* as "something (as a human being, phenomenon, state of affairs, or action) with seemingly contradictory qualities or phases." For purposes of this study I will use "paradox" to refer to phenomenon with qualities that are either seemingly or actually contradictory. The emphasis in this sense is on the phenomenon, state of affairs, or action rather than on the statement or proposition asserting contradictory qualities. This sense is applicable to *Gulliver's Travels*, I believe, because as a technique of language it allows a man to express the contradictions of the world around him, and yet one can perceive reality as full of paradoxes without writing about them in a paradoxical style. One option available to the writer is to imbed paradox into the very fiber of his fiction, and in the case of *Gulliver's Travels* to bring the allegory and paradox together so that Swift's audience can experience, however imaginatively, the logical conclusions and the convictions resulting from those conclusions that emerge from paradoxical phenomena.

Giving paradox dramatic embodiment is a method that *Rabelais, Cervantes, G. K. Chesterton, G. B. Shaw, and other*
writers of fiction have utilized. In this sense "paradox" is a word that describes the nature of what is perceived and refers to that which is perceived. The point is significant because, as Leroy Kay Seat has pointed out, ambiguity has resulted from a failure to distinguish between "paradox" as a referent to a state of affairs, for example, and "paradox" as a referent to a statement. Both of these uses can be found in the Bible, a work which Swift was extremely well grounded in. A paradox whose referent is a phenomenon can be seen in Luke 5:26 when, after Jesus had healed the paralytic at Capharnaum, the people said, "We have seen wonderful things [paradoxa] today." A paradox whose referent is a statement is Christ's statement in Matthew 16:25, "Whoever would save his life shall lose it; and whoever would lose his life on My account shall find it." Thus The New Testament would have provided Swift with paradoxes used in both ways.

But what good could paradox do for Swift's audience; what service could it render? Miller has pointed out signifi-

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significant uses and these have been noted above in the discussion of the paradoxical encomium. We can, however, get closer to Swift's overall intentions if we see that because of a national desire for stability during the Restoration period, there was a tendency to return to the old forms, to restore the boundaries once operative in religion, society, politics, and philosophy. These boundaries are challenged in *Gulliver's Travels* because they had been established by the human mind, established by that species believed by Swift's audience to be *animal rationale* (rational animal) rather than by *animal rationis capax* (animal capable of reason). As James Aldrich Wyman Rembert has pointed out, "If the common denominator of our mental and social systems is beyond reason, then this denominator may lie in the realm of faith; and that is where paradox [in *Gulliver's Travels*, I shall argue] leads us." It is Rembert's contention, and this study supports that contention, that

Swift did not want to discard the traditional institutions, but he wanted men to think about the reasons for their existence. He suspected progress and change as enemies of what was admirable in the old institutions. Perhaps if the wits, atheists, free thinkers, and Whig innovators were encouraged or made to inspect the "common Forms," they would see the necessity of preserving the traditional institutions of civilization, however seemingly outworn or hypocritical those institutions might be. The rabble, of course, would follow the lead of their betters. The bright but, to Swift, perverse innovators in philosophy, religion, and politics had to be silenced . . . before they destroyed the commonwealth by seducing the rabble to join them in attacking the state
Swift's intentions in much of his writing and specifically in *Gulliver's Travels* were to convince his audience that these innovators endangered its own well-being and to persuade it to act in accord with the old forms that protected that well-being.

In a letter to his friend Charles Ford, August 14, 1725, Swift writes: "I have finished my Travells, and I am now transcribing them; they are admirable Things, and will wonderfully mend the World." Even though one can agree with W. B. Camoehan that this assertion is self-satiric, it is nevertheless revealing of Swift's conscious intentions. It indicates, for one thing, that he is directing his attention to no less an audience that "the World" itself. This would seem to establish the nonsectarian nature of the patients or clothes (to stay within the metaphor) Swift intends to "mend." This idea is reemphasized in a letter from Swift to the Abbé des Fontaines in the summer of 1727: "Si donc les livres du Sieur Gulliver ne sont calcules que pour un tres pitoyable Ecrivain, les memes vices, et les memes follies regent par tout, du moins, dans tous les pays civilises de l'Europe, et l'auteur qui n'ecrit que pour une ville, une province, un Royaume, ou meme un siecle, merite

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57 Rembert, pp. 137, 118-119.
58 Correspondence, III, 87.
59 Camoehan, p. 93.
Swift's use of the word "mend" in the letter to Ford is revealing for it indicates a conscious recognition that whatever is wrong with his audience needs to be repaired. The qualifier "wonderfully" insures against a serious, literal reading which would have us believe that Swift believed he was capable of putting Humpty Dumpty together again. But "wonderfully" if taken ambiguously could, perhaps, indicate how Swift intended to go about mending the world, that is, with a travel book full of wonders, marvels. These wonders, it is true, are figments of Swift's artistic imagination, at work to counter satirically a world growing full of modern, scientific wonders such as gunpowder and the magnetic compass. These inventions, we will see, Swift attacked as not only illusory progress but also harmful to the body politic. By working opposing wonders (artistic paradoxa satirically intended), he startles his audience to an awareness of what has been hidden from it behind a facade of optimism about the destiny of man as rational animal. And by mending the organ of intellectual perception, Swift hopes

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60 Correspondence, III, 226. Translated by Arthur E. Case in Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 123, as follows: "If the volumes of Gulliver were designed only for the British Isles, that traveler ought to pass for a very contemptible writer. The same vices and the same follies reign everywhere; at least in the civilized countries of Europe; and the author who writes only for one city, one province, one kingdom, or even one age, does not deserve to be read, let alone translated."
his audience will see the human condition differently, will see it more truly, and will act in accord with its new perception.

How else, one asks, does Swiftian paradox mend? Swift himself provides a clue when in a letter to Alexander Pope, September 25, 1725, he writes, "the chief end I propose to my self in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it." Vexation is not limited to the effects of paradox since satire, for one, is just as capable of vexing, but paradoxes vex by annoying, alarming us not so much because they make us confront what we would rather not but because they involve us in a departure from those very habits which secure us from confusion. Once the bonds of convention are broken, however, we tend to fear that we are losing our grip on the otherwise cohesive reality we have experienced. "We are," as John Wisdom writes about paradox and its audience, "losing the light of reason and drifting from freedom to licence, and from licence to confusion with madness as an unmentioned limit." This is the drift of Swift's Gulliver.

To understand what paradox is, it is necessary to have some idea of its effects on the audience, for the word itself describes the effect of real or apparent contradiction

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61. *Correspondence*, III, 102.

or positions taken against received opinion. By manipulating point of view or the standard of comparison, paradox can indicate the simultaneously different and contradictory identities of things. Thus paradox continually questions our capacity for knowledge of anything in any absolute sense and thus the vexation of our sense of security, the raising of our fears.63

If what has been said so far is an accurate description of how paradox works on its audience, vexation could hardly seem capable of mending anything. One critic of Swift has, I believe, pointed the way to a solution of this problem when he writes that for Swift

he who would have men virtuous must make use of "the two greatest natural motives"—fear and hope [see Swift's sermon "On the Testimony of Conscience"]. . . . What a man may think will vary with his education, the occasion, and his passions. It is the affective qualities in man which are the constant elements in human nature; on these qualities must be based any ethics which hopes to be successful.64

Swift expresses this idea in "A Letter to a Young Gentleman, Lately enter'd into Holy Orders" when he writes, "Reasoning will never make a Man correct an ill Opinion, which by Reasoning he never acquired."65 Thus, in order to correct

63Bader, pp. 14-17.


"ill Opinion," that is, to mend the world, Swift must motivate through fear. This is accomplished by vexing, that is, by disturbing those feelings of security which derive from a sense of satisfaction with oneself and one's world. Vexing disturbs one's sense of place and sets one adrift, however temporarily, upon the waters of the unknown, with fear of those waters as a natural consequence. Also, paradox vexes us by indirection to the extent that it denies us the comfort of such definite categories as "either . . . or" in favor of "both . . . and." It may be possible then to see a broad overall coherence in the consistency and progression of the attack of Gulliver's Travels upon its audience's sense of bearing and self-esteem, an attack in which paradox is a significant although admittedly not the sole weapon that is used.

But Swift must also motivate through hope, and here is where another effect of paradox makes paradox particularly suited to Swift's rhetorical purposes. In other words, because paradox vexes, the audience is reminded that its ideas, beliefs, or whatever need mending (otherwise it would not be vexed); but paradox can also effect something contrary to vexation, some relief from vexation and fear, by offering that hope which soothes and heals (or mends) the vexation. Richard Rothscchild in Paradoxy: The Destiny of Modern Thought has pointed to that hope which paradox, in Western thought at least, sustains, to that hope which, this study will try to show, underlies the paradoxes of Gulliver's
Travels:

Children will always cry out for the moon. Yet once we realize that the social structure into which we are born comprises merely the dead symbols and materials for us to mold and fashion to our purposes, we begin to discern an opportunity for the winning of individual significance and for the achievement of that inner contentment which we know as "the peace that passeth understanding." Nor is this mere resignation to the world as we find it, in the weak-kneed sense in which the term resignation is usually used. For we have . . . arrived at our paradox--namely, that our only chance of individual salvation is through the very forms, customs and prejudices against the restrictions of which we protest.66

While Rothschild may point to a solution to the relationship between paradox and Gulliver as a whole, there are, nevertheless, individual instances of paradox that can be described as working in another way--because of the multiple perspectives through which paradox operates it can serve as a corrective to human vice and folly that results from the lack of self-knowledge. Paradox can be seen working in this way, for example, in Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel in those scatological passages that praise, in opposition to conventional opinion, the bodily functions, the "low things" of the body. To the extent that these paradoxical encomia are overturned by the reader, that is, when the reader accepts the physical act of elimination for example as not being "low," then the restoration of the

reader to a proper balance occurs; for balance is important, Rabelais argues, if the body is to generate and function properly and naturally. 67

In Rabelais this restoration occurs by means of paradox, when it is employed, working rhetorically to persuade in much the same way that Swift is later to use paradox in Gulliver's Travels, that is, either as mock encomia or as provided with flesh, so to speak, and embodied in the progress of narrated events. In this latter case "paradox" as phenomenon or a state of affairs with seemingly contradictory qualities is the sense in which the term is used. The phenomenon or state of affairs can then be reduced to a paradoxical statement for a clearer understanding of the contradictory elements involved, but then it becomes expressional paradox. 68 Writers like Oscar Wilde preferred this latter type of paradox. In The Picture of Dorian Gray, for example, Wilde writes:

Perhaps one never seems so much at one's ease as when one has to play a part.

... Ernest Harrowden, one of those middle-aged mediocrities so common in London clubs who have no enemies, but are thoroughly disliked by their friends.

Nowadays all the married men live like bachelors, and all the bachelors live like married men.

Moderation is a fatal thing.

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67 Colle, Paradoxia Epidemica, p. 64.

68 See Seat, pp. 34-36.
Romantic Art begins with its climax.\textsuperscript{69} Gulliver's Travels, on the other hand, is written using almost exclusively the former method, that is, paradox embodied dramatically within the narrative.

Swift uses paradox rhetorically in Gulliver's Travels. Aristotle had defined rhetoric as the "faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever."\textsuperscript{70} Why should Swift have found a persistent need for this art? One hypothesis is offered by Charles Allen Beaumont in Swift's Classical Rhetoric:

No one in his century had as little confidence in or respect for the reasoning powers of man or his ability really to know, as Swift had. Having come of age with the New Philosophy, he rejected both scholasticism and the new science and with a medieval faith held firm to Christian orthodoxy. Since he believed he could not depend upon man's using his capacity to reason, it is not surprising that Swift quite naturally turned to the persuasive power of ancient rhetoric to convince man of his sins and follies and to indicate right action—quite naturally, because Swift's whole grammar school and university training was in this rhetoric. Swift used it both consciously as an Art of Rhetoric and by second nature.\textsuperscript{71}

Swift seems, for example, to be well aware of Aristotle's dictum that "those who practise [sic] this artifice must conceal it and avoid the appearance of speaking artificially instead of naturally; for that which is natural persuades,}


\textsuperscript{70}Aristotle, Rhetoric, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{71}Beaumont, p. 147.
but the artificial does not\(^2\) when he writes in "A Letter to a Young Gentleman":

A Divine hath nothing to say to the wisest Congregation of any Parish in this Kingdom, which he may not express in a Manner to be understood by the meanest among them [that is, using language that is "natural" to the meanest]. And this assertion must be true, or else God requires from us more than we are able to perform.\(^3\)

What both Aristotle and Swift are indicating here is the necessity to bridge the gap between speaker and audience because of some barrier between the two parties: a prejudiced form of hostility according to Aristotle which is not so different from the barrier between the minister, on the one hand, who is God's spokesman, and the congregation, on the other, whose hostility may be said to arise out of "Ignorance in Things sacred."\(^4\)

If Swift, then, is to use paradoxes persuasively in *Gulliver's Travels*, he must disguise the artistic manner of presentation so as to achieve the effects desired of paradoxes without the necessity of calling undue attention to his artistry. Because surprise is an important effect achieved by paradox, difficulty was encountered during the Renaissance in developing new paradoxes with new surprises. Essentially two solutions were arrived at: increased complexity such as that found in *The Praise of Folly*, and the embed-

\(^3\)Swift, "Letter to a Young Gentleman," IX, 66.
ding of paradoxes within a more expansive structure, for example, Gargantua and Pantagruel. 75 Swift uses the first solution in A Tale of a Tub; it is the argument of this study that he uses the second solution in Gulliver's Travels.

Gulliver's Travels relies extensively upon other modes of writing, satire particularly. In his Preface to The Battle of the Books, Swift writes that "Satire is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover everybody's Face but their Own." 76 Taken seriously, this statement tries to show just how satire if used rhetorically can be inadequate. Satire fails when the reader is not vexed—he would be vexed, one can infer, if he were to behold his own image in the satiric glass. Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., sees this statement as a reflection of Swift's despair over satire's lack of power to influence its victims. 77 That satire has traditionally been used rhetorically can be seen in a revision of Rosenheim's definition of satire by Jae Num Lee: "'satire consists of an attack,' 'directed either to persuading us to look or act unfavorably toward the satiric victim or to pleasing us by the representation in a degrading manner of an object.' " 78 Swift's "despair" over the power

75 Colie, Paradoxa Epidemica, p. 36.
77 Rosenheim, p. 59.
of satire to vex the world would, I contend, have led him to other traditional modes, such as paradox, which together with satire would be more successful in achieving his stated intentions. Careful examination of a specific mode should, hopefully, shed more light on the still somewhat darkened world of Gulliver's Travels.

If much of Swift's artistry in Gulliver's Travels can be said to be directed toward persuading his audience to conform to those laws, social conventions, and established institutions that would insure as much order and stability for mankind as possible, then the paradoxes in the Travels can be studied to determine in what way they help to promote Swift's overall rhetorical strategy. This study will be organized generally along the lines of Aristotle's three kinds of persuasion: the ethical mode (ethos) which "depends upon the moral character of the speaker," the emotional or pathetic appeal (pathos) which depends "upon putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind," and the logical proofs (logos) which depend upon the "speech itself, when we establish the true or apparently true from the means of persuasion applicable to each individual subject."\(^{79}\) I say "generally" because, as Richard I. Cook has reminded us, seldom will any attempt at persuasion be limited solely to one of the three methods. An appeal to the emotions, for example, may often be accompanied in the same breath by evidence of the author's

\(^{79}\text{Aristotle, Rhetoric, p. 17.}\)
good character. In view of this problem, a paradox will be discussed under that particular mode of persuasion which seems from the evidence to be the dominant rhetorical strategy in that instance.

The scope and rationale of this study preclude discussion of all or most of the paradoxes in *Gulliver's Travels* (granted that all the paradoxes could be discovered). This study is limited, first of all, to those paradoxes that can be established as working rhetorically. Second, paradoxes have been selected to provide evidence of Swift's encompassing rhetorical strategy, that is, a strategy which relies upon Aristotle's three modes of artistic persuasion. And third, within each rhetorical category the examples selected for discussion have seemed to this writer particularly significant in light of Swift's overall intentions in the *Travels*--the upholding of old secular and political traditions as well as the more orthodox beliefs of Christianity in the face of a modernity shaped by excessive human pride and by a belief in the inevitability of a progress in human affairs that would supposedly lead to utopia.

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CHAPTER II

PARADOX, GULLIVER, AND ETHICAL PERSUASION

This chapter will be primarily concerned with those paradoxes in Gulliver's Travels (two specifically: the paradoxical encomium embedded in the prefatory letter from Gulliver to Richard Symson, and Swift's rendering of the Liar paradox that pervades the Travels) which, working either through or upon or by means of the personal character of the fictional narrator Lemuel Gulliver, that is, by means of the ethical mode, try to persuade the reader to believe in and act according to those principles which Swift promotes as in the best interest of social order and stability.

Ethical appeal is directed toward the audience's impression of the speaker, toward increasing the audience's confidence in the speaker's character, in his good sense, for example, his good will, his virtue, his honesty, and so on. In Gulliver's Travels Swift generates this confidence in his own character by creating the narrator Gulliver who by means of ironic inversion is persistently stripped of these very qualities so that as Gulliver is "found out" by the reader
the latter transfers his confidence to that author who persistently maintains his distance from the narrator he created. Ethical appeal, in other words, is used by both Gulliver and Swift, and as Gulliver's appeals not only fail to generate confidence but also lead the reader to a lack of confidence in Gulliver's character, those same appeals by means of ironic inversion increase the reader's confidence in the character of Swift as implied author.

"Implied author" is used here in the sense that Wayne C. Booth uses the phrase in The Rhetoric of Fiction where he makes a distinction between the real and implied author of a work: the implied author we can know through his work; the real author we may never get to know. Booth writes that

our sense of the implied author includes not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form.1

The distinction between real and implied author is particularly significant in a discussion of the rhetoric of Gulliver's Travels because of the anonymity of the work when it first appeared. Anonymity was the method favored by eighteenth-century writers who sought to prevent their persons from intruding upon their audience, and that ano-

nymity also served to protect a writer from political persecution, libel suits, or personal ill-treatment. As Richard I. Cook points out, the writer who remained anonymous was more inclined to get a fair reading than one whose prejudices and social relationships were known.\(^2\)

Anonymity, then, was from Swift's point of view desirable because it eliminated the prejudging of the *Travels* that would certainly result from the reader's associating the person of Swift with his work. One obvious result of such association would be the loss of whatever verisimilitude and authenticity *Gulliver* might have as a travel book, and with that loss the topical satire would be diminished. However, another particularly desirable effect of anonymity was the eliminating of the real author's identity as a distracting element for that reader who might, in spite of the merits of Swiftian rhetorical strategy, refuse to concede to Swift the ethical proofs requisite to what Booth calls "the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole."

The use of a fictional narrator, or persona or mask as Gulliver has often been described, can be seen then as, to use Gerry H. Brookes' words, "a mode of speaking implicitly."\(^3\) First of all, it is a mode of *speaking*, because the narrator is delivering his words by means of written


address to an audience. According to Brookes,

fictional devices . . . seem to be a natural way
of establishing a basis for written, as opposed to
spoken, rhetoric. In oral delivery, the conditions
of the speech are usually set by the time, place,
and occasion. In written delivery, some fiction, or
bitter pretence, is often needed to establish for
the reader the manner and conventions with which he
is to be addressed.4

For example, Milton is not really addressing Parliament
in "Areopagitica" although this is the pretence of the essay,
just as the pretence of corresponding with a young Frenchman
is the rhetorical basis for Burke's Reflections on the Revolu-
tion in France. Second, the use of a fictional narrator
is a mode of speaking implicitly because the real author
does not speak to the audience in his own voice. In Walden,
for example, Thoreau speaks explicitly rather than implicitly
for he speaks in his own voice.5 In Gulliver's Travels it
is Gulliver who speaks in his own, although fictional voice;
and what Swift says must be understood as implied by means
of a large number of fictional devices and pretenses, one of
them being the narrator Gulliver who is most important be-
cause, for one reason, he persists from the very beginn-
to the very end of the Travels.

Gulliver's dramatic presence throughout his own nar-
rative is one reason for thinking that ethical appeal is
very important to Swift's rhetorical strategy in the Travels.

4Brookes, p. 177.
5Brookes, p. 177.
Charles Allen Beaumont recognizes Swift's heavy reliance on ethical appeal in certain of his essays when Beaumont writes that "one can use Aristotle's tripartite division to show how heavily Swift valued the ethical proof as the basic, sustaining, and unifying device of classical rhetoric in the creation of the irony of these essays." It does not seem improbable that Swift relied as heavily on ethical appeal in the *Travels* as he did in his political tracts, for, as Cook has pointed out, the rhetorician cannot afford to neglect ethical appeal unless the writer generates within his audience sufficient confidence in himself, convincing pathetic and logical appeals may likely be received with skepticism. Swift seems to be well aware of these problems for he writes in "Remarks upon a Book" that

although a Book is not intrinsically much better or worse, according to the Stature or Complexion of the Author, yet when it happens to make a Noise, we are apt and curious, as in other Noises, to look about from whence it cometh. . . .

If a theological Subject be well handled by a Layman, it is better received than if it came from a Divine; and that for Reasons obvious enough, which, although of little Weight in themselves, will ever have a great deal with Mankind.

. . . If any Man should write a Book against the Lawfulness of punishing Felony with Death; and upon Enquiry the Author should be found in Newgate under Condemnation for robbing a House; his Arguments would not very unjustly lose much of their Force, from the Circumstances

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7 Cook, p. 33.
Applying Swift's remarks here to Gulliver's Travels, one can readily understand Swift's reliance on anonymity, and the mask of Gulliver to effect ethical appeals. If, for example, the Travels involves theological subjects, as I will argue in the next chapter that it does, then the appeals in that work, whether those appeals are ethical, pathetic, or logical, would surely be suspect if the audience knew the author to be the Anglican minister Dean Swift, just as certainly suspect as appeals on behalf of revoking the death penalty in a work written by a convicted felon who had been sentenced to die. From the layman Gulliver or from an implied author not suspected of ecclesiastical affiliations, theological argument would be "better received" by the general reader.

In Gulliver Swift has created a putative or fictional author who is apparently concerned that his audience should find him highly credible and trustworthy. For example, at the beginning of Part I "A Voyage to Lilliput" Gulliver provides the reader with the kind of information that would tend to instil in him confidence in Gulliver's character. Gulliver in his youth had been a serious student at Emanuel College in Cambridge. Later trained as a surgeon and being unwilling to follow the corrupt practices of his fellow

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English surgeons, he was forced to make his living as a surgeon aboard ship. Before going to sea he married Mrs. Mary Burton, and his marrying seems to assure the reader that he at one time at least belonged to the normal world. James R. Wilson writes that at the beginning of the first voyage "we are under the influence of an apparently sane, honest, conscientious, matter-of-fact, well-educated surgeon. We know that he is about thirty-nine years old. Who would not trust such an honest man?"^9

The answer to this question is, neither Swift nor the reader if he is wary. Swift wrote in a letter to Mrs. Howard (November 27, 1726): "I am not such a prostitute flatterer as Gulliver, whose chief study is to extenuate the vices, and magnify the virtues, of mankind, and perpetually dins out ears with praises of his country in the midst of corruption, and for that reason alone has found so many readers, and probably will have a pension, which, I suppose, was his chief design in writing."^10 Thus, Gulliver's "patriotism" is obviously not what Swift considers true patriotism to be. This is just one example of the distance, whether one labels that distance intellectual, moral, or what have you, that separates Swift from Gulliver in the Travels.


One way of characterizing this distance between Swift and Gulliver is in terms of irony. Martin Price has pointed out that the extent of this irony depends directly upon the degree of rhetorical separation between the reader and the object satirized. The more Gulliver comes under attack from Swift for his prostitute flattery or whatever, the more powerful the effect of the irony in inverting the ethical proofs put forward by Gulliver and in generating reader confidence in the ethos of the implied author Swift. Essential to irony then is the reader's participating creatively in a literary game of wits, a game in which he too may become the object of satire if he fails to use his wits sufficiently, if, for example, he grants to Gulliver the ethical proofs that Gulliver demands of him. Gulliver then is very important in the rhetorical scheme of the Travels as an ironic pretense by which Swift not only addresses but implicates the reader.

In Gulliver's Travels this pretense begins with "A Letter from Capt. Gulliver to his Cousin Sympon" which opens the narrative. It provides us with the first example of paradox working rhetorically in the ethical mode. The ostensible reason for the letter itself is a "vexatious Occasion": Gulliver blames Richard Symson, the fictitious publisher of Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Nations

of the World, for publishing "a very loose and uncorrect Account" of his Travels and for inserting without his consent a "Paragraph about her Majesty the late Queen Anne, of most pious and glorious Memory."\(^{12}\) Thus, as Robert C. Elliott points out, the letter is useful in a number of extra-literary ways\(^ {13}\): For one, the letter was first published in the 1735 Faulkner edition of the Travels, and provides the first public testimony by Swift to the reader of his dissatisfaction with the changes to the Travels made in the first edition of 1726 by the original publisher Benjamin Motte. Also, even though the letter bears the fictitious date of April 2, 1727, it was written by Swift for inclusion in the 1735 edition; and, as Harold Williams maintains, "unless Swift felt something more than acquiescence in the book, it is impossible to believe that he would have written a new introduction for it."\(^ {14}\) The "more than acquiescence" here refers specifically to Swift's attitude toward George Faulkner's efforts to publish a corrected edition of the Travels, but I would like to consider the phrase, for a moment, as indicative of the significance of what it was Swift hoped to impress upon the reader of the Travels. As

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an addition to and therefore an alteration of the original
*Travels*, the letter as both preface and actual beginning
provides direction finders to the reader looking for clues
to Swift's intentions and to the meaning of the work as a
whole. For example, it provides significant emphasis to the
third of three "faces" that Jon S. Lawry finds distinctive
about the character of Gulliver (first, as "guller" of
others; second, as one gullied by others; and, third, as
"guller" of himself), for it is this "face," as we shall
see shortly, that finishes the last book of the *Travels* and
writes the opening letter, thereby giving us the most per-
sistent control of the work and the most all-inclusive sense
of Gulliver's character.15 Without this 1735 addition to
the *Travels* then, the reader might easily make much less of
the significance of this third "face" of Gulliver to the
meaning of the work as a whole. The reader of the 1726
edition might have been influenced overwhelmingly by the
first "face," the Gulliver who gulls others and whom Swift
refers to in his letter to Mrs. Howard of November 26, 1726,
as a "prostitute flatterer." The prefatory letter to Sympsor.
seems to have been Swift's way of redressing a previous
imbalance or even of creating a different imbalance that
points more directly to his intentions.

The fictive pretence of the *Travels* is set in motion

15 Jon S. Lawry, "Dr. Lemuel Gulliver and *The Thing
Which Was Not*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*,
when Gulliver complains in his letter to Symson that it was not "decent to praise any Animal of our Composition before my Master Houyhnhnm." But Gulliver's letter is important here not so much for its panegyric on "my Master Houyhnhnm" (whoever that is) as for its encomium of his Travels and, even more specifically, for its praise of himself. As a result of his work, "These, and a Thousand other Reformations, I firmly counted upon by your Encouragement," Gulliver writes Symson; and reformation, even if exaggerated a thousand-fold, would certainly seem to be a laudable undertaking.

What Gulliver is trying to do here falls under that mode of persuasion which Aristotle categorized as the ethical mode; he is trying to inspire his Cousin Symson with confidence in his own character. Aristotle had written that "there are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character——the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill." Good sense is apparent in Gulliver's opinion against that of Symson's, that publishing his Travels would not mend the species, as indeed, Gulliver writes, it has not "produced one single Effect according to mine Intentions" in the six months since publi-
These intentions include the following reformation: "Party and Faction . . . extinguished; Judges learned and upright; . . . the Female Yahoos abounding in Virtue, Honour, Truth and good sense; . . . Wit, Merit and Learning rewarded. . . . These, and a Thousand other Reformations . . . ." Gulliver's good will, on the other hand, is evident in his being prevailed upon by Symson out of a motive of public good to allow publication. And Gulliver attests to his own good moral character by insisting that it was Symson who was responsible for making Gulliver "say the thing that was not," that is, state a falsehood; and that he still improves "in some Virtues, without any Mixture of Vice" even though "some corruptions" (italics added) have revived in him since his last return.

Swift seems to imply that Gulliver intended his letter for Symson's eyes only, without any intention that Symson should preface it to the next printing, for the general reader would have no way of knowing beforehand what was specifically referred to, for example, by "Houyhnhnm," "Yahoo," and "Academy of Projectors." Besides, once the reader has learned what a Yahoo is, his reaction to the letter would probably be anger at Gulliver for calling him a

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19 Gulliver's Travels, p. 6.
20 Gulliver's Travels, pp. 6-7.
21 Gulliver's Travels, p. 6.
22 Gulliver's Travels, pp. 5,8.
Yahoo, one among "so many Thousands in this City" (presumably Newark in Nottinghamshire if Cousin Richard Symson is correct\textsuperscript{23}). The only difference between them and their "Brother Brutes in Houyhnhnmland" is that "they use a Sort of Jabber, and do not go naked."\textsuperscript{24} Gulliver's praise of himself here is indirect, by means of contrast. It is "they" not "we," he implies, who "jabber." It is only he who has managed, he writes, "to remove that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the Europeans."\textsuperscript{25}

This attitude of Gulliver's toward his readers would go far in destroying whatever rapport with them he might otherwise have achieved, rapport necessary even though he wrote his \textit{Travels} "for their Amendment, and not their Approval."\textsuperscript{26} What could Gulliver expect from his readers as a result of such an open attack upon their "infernal" habits? If they are pricked, they will bleed; and, like Shylock in Shakespeare's \textit{The Merchant of Venice}, they too will seek revenge. And it comes to Gulliver every week from Symson's mail carrier in the form of "libels, keys, and reflections, and memoirs, and second parts; wherein [Gulliver writes] I

\textsuperscript{23}Gulliver's \textit{Travels}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{24}Gulliver's \textit{Travels}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{25}Gulliver's \textit{Travels}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{26}Gulliver's \textit{Travels}, p. 7.
see myself accused . . . "

It is indeed a "vexatious Occasion" to be burdened by so much public attention, and Swift sees to it that Gulliver is foresighted enough not to let this attention he is receiving go unheralded.

Another reason why Gulliver's ostensible motives in writing the letter are suspect is that Gulliver protests too much. He maintains that he is above allowing the censure of Yahoos, as he calls mankind, to affect him: "If the Censure of Yahoos could any Way affect me, I should have great Reason to complain, that some of them are so bold as to think my Book of Travels a meer Fiction out of mine own Brain. . . ." But Gulliver's use of the conditional here allows for the possibility that in fact the censure of Yahoos does affect him, and so he does complain here as he did previously ("I do in the next Place complain") and as he will do in the last paragraph of the letter ("I have other Complaints").

One can suspect then that Gulliver is not really above it all, in spite of his apparent assertion that that sort of thing is somehow beneath him. Moreover, his attitude toward public approbation is no different: "The united Praise," he writes, "of the whole Race would be of less Consequence to me, than the neighing of those two degenerate Houyhnhnms I keep in my Stable; because, from these, degenerate as they

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27 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 7.
29 *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 6, 8.
are, I still improve in some Virtues, without any Mixture of Vice.\textsuperscript{30} If by indirection we must find direction out, then what Gulliver is doing here strikes one as self-praise, generated by a sense of superiority over his fellow man (Gulliver's Yahoos) and by excessive pride, qualities by general consent unpraiseworthy.

But what, one asks, is Swift's rhetorical strategy in "allowing" Cousin Sympson to publish something which the reader would have difficulty in at first comprehending? This problem is in a sense called to the reader's attention when Cousin Sympson in his prefatory remarks "The Publisher to the Reader" says that "I was resolved to fit the Work as much as possible to the general Capacity of Readers."\textsuperscript{31} But talk of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos before the reader has encountered them in the fourth voyage does not "fit." Symson's prefatory remarks were published in the 1726 edition of the \textit{Travels} and therefore were not intended as a response, even in part, to problems raised by Gulliver's letter to Symson first published in the 1735 edition. It may be that Symson, like so many real life eighteenth-century English publishers, abandoned principle in favor of money, in Symson's case the money coming from a new edition of the \textit{Travels} that would be updated by a letter from the now famous author Gulliver himself. For Swift, however, Gulliver's letter did indeed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{Gulliver's Travels}, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{Gulliver's Travels}, p. 10.
\end{itemize}
"fit" into his overall rhetorical strategy.

First of all, Swift as implied author, by insuring that the reader remains emotionally distant from Gulliver the fictional author and narrator of the *Travels*, also insures that the reader will not eventually be converted by Gulliver's visionary schemes and become like Gulliver a misanthrope. It is Gulliver, not Swift, who is "now done with all such visionary Schemes for ever,"\(^{32}\) schemes, that is, for moral reformation of man.

It would seem that Swift, far from allowing Gulliver's praise to go unchallenged, is indicating that Gulliver may have joined the devil's party. This indictment of Gulliver is worked in by means of a reference to hell when Gulliver describes the "Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating" as "infernal."\(^{33}\) But Gulliver claims to have removed himself from Satan's dominion, if we would believe Gulliver: "Do these miserable Animals presume to think that I am so far degenerated as to defend my Veracity; Yahoo as I am, it is well known through all Houyhnhnmland, that by the Instructions and Example of my illustrious Master, I was able in the Compass of two Years (although I confess with the utmost Difficulty) to remove that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the

\(^{32}\)Gulliver's *Travels*, p. 8.

\(^{33}\)Gulliver's *Travels*, p. 8.
Europeans." This "removal" is further signified by Gulliver's mental and physical separation from humanity that we learn takes place upon his return from Houyhnhnmland. Gulliver insists upon this point when he describes humanity as "your" rather than "my" species in the final paragraph of his letter to Symson. But since he had, in the previous

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34 Gulliver's Travels, p. 8. There are good reasons for understanding "infern" here in the literal rather than metaphorical sense of the word. In light of Swift's stated intentions to vex and anger the world (Correspondence, III, 102, 107), any reading of "infernal" as excluding the idea of hell would not seem to fall within the scope of those intentions. Also, as a minister of the Church of England, Swift, I believe, would use such a potentially explosive word with extreme caution and with full awareness of its implications. In his poems, for example, Swift uses "infernal" in each instance to refer specifically to hell. In "On Dreams" (1924) he writes:

Those Dreams that on the silent Night intrude,
And with false flitting Shades our Minds delude,
Jove never sends us downward from the Skies,
Nor can they from infernal Mansions rise;
But all are mere Productions of the Brain,
And Fools consult Interpreters in vain.
    Poems, II, 363.

In "Traulus" (1730):

In Scripture, to the Dev'il assign'd;
Sent from the Dark infernal Region
In him they lodge, and make him Legion.
    Poems, III, 798.

In "The Legion Club" (1736):

Never durst a Muse before
Enter that Infernal Door.
    Poems, III, 834.

This last poem attacks the Irish House of Commons for its attempts to deprive the clergy of tithes that were legally due to them. The name "Legion Club" comes from the reply of the devil in Mark V, 9: "My name is Legion, for we are many."
paragraph, talked about "my Species," he is being shown by
Swift in the act of shuffling, an act not only unworthy of
praise but also, by Gulliver's own admission, damnable.

One function, then, of Gulliver's "Letter" is to
serve as a paradoxical encomium or, to use Henry Knight
Miller's phrase, a "loose mock panegyric." Gulliver, in
trying to inspire confidence in his own character by implicit-
ly praising his good sense, his good will, and his good
moral character, exhibits that excessive pride and therefore
praises that which by Swift's standards is unpraiseworthy.
One of the uses of the paradoxical encomium, we noted earlier,
was for satiric attack through ironic commendation. Milton
Voight notes the irony of the letter when he writes about
its "mock pontification," adding that the letter provides
"an invaluable illumination of Swift's singularly complex
intentions." The pontificating points, of course, to
Gulliver, whereas the mocking points to Swift's strategic
intention here to attack Gulliver himself.

35 Milton Voight, Swift and the Twentieth Century

36 I use the word "intention" here in the sense in
which O. B. Hardison, Jr., has defined it in his The Enduring
Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 188: "... if we deny that the
work itself represents an intention—that is, an objectively
ascertainable and definable unifying element in terms of
which the parts of the work are related—we are reduced to
critical impressionism and to the repudiation of the idea of
artistic form. Without intention, a literary work would mean
all things to all men... To avoid this dilemma, we must
speak of an intention that is embodied in the work itself."
This reading of Gulliver's "letter" takes into account two other points noted earlier: (1) that the paradoxical encomium exhibited much more freedom of arrangement than did the traditional encomium, so that what we have here should be called "loose" rather than formal arrangement; and (2) that the encomium can be an element in some other form. Arthur Stanley Pease has pointed out that the paradoxical encomium developed as an element, for example, in the essay as it passed "more and more into strictly written rather than purely oral form." In a footnote Pease cites examples of paradoxical encomiums in antiquity found in the guise of epistles: "Thus Fronto's works of this class; Philostr. Ep. 16 . . . ; the first part of Julian Ep. 80 . . . ; while the pseudo-Clementine Homil. v. 10-19 contains, in the form of a fictitious letter written by one Appin to an imaginary woman . . . [an encomium on adultery], the reply to which is given by the author of the homily himself in sec. 21-26."37

According to Martin Price, "the rhetorical end Swift typically sets himself is teaching men to distinguish their true interest from plausible deceptions." To prevent plausible deception, whether self-deception or deception by unprincipled persons, one needs self-knowledge.38 And if Swift's goal is to persuade his readers of the need for self-


knowledge, one method of persuasion is to provide proof of the consequences of the lack of self-knowledge. This type of proof is embodied in the persona of Gulliver as Gulliver moves through his narrative providing an example for the reader of this absence of self-knowledge and the consequences of this absence. One can call the self-deception which Gulliver embodies an example in the sense that Aristotle used the word "example" to mean an induction; that is, the example in inductive reasoning points beyond itself to some generalized conclusion. Aristotle had written in his *Rhetoric* : "Every one who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples; there is no other way."\(^{39}\) John M. Bullitt sees the example as one of the cornerstones of the *Travels* : "It is imbedded in the very matrix of a half comic and wholly intellectual allegory."\(^{40}\)

What we have here then is a merging of at least two of the three types of rhetorical proofs, ethical and logical proof, a condition that would seem inevitable in a rhetorical work where the author (albeit putative) is a central figure in his own production. As Sister Miriam Joseph, C.S.C., has pointed out, "both logos and pathos promote ethos, for people more readily believe and trust a speaker who reasons clearly and cogently and who creates in them a friendly and


sympathetic attitude toward himself and what he has to say. Gulliver's "Letter" reveals that the reader does have just such a problem of belief and trust in Gulliver, a problem in ethos that seems to derive from self-deception and a lack of self-knowledge on Gulliver's part.

The letter, although first published in 1735, is dated and so ostensibly written by Gulliver on April 2, 1727, or approximately five months after the first edition of the Travels published on October 28, 1726. In his account of his voyage to the Houyhnhnms Gulliver expresses a belief that closely resembles the statement just quoted from the letter; he writes of lying as a faculty "so perfectly well understood, and so universally practiced among human Creatures." These two statements are Gulliver's version of the Liar paradox: All human beings are liars. I am a human being ("my Species"). Therefore, I am a liar. But this conclusion that Gulliver is a liar affects the first proposition that all human beings are liars because if Gulliver is lying then the first proposition is false. If the first proposition is false, then not all human beings are liars, and as a result Gulliver may be telling the truth when he says that all human beings are liars. The contradiction is a real one and can only be resolved by altering

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42 Gulliver's Travels, p. 240.
the statements so that, for example, human beings lie but not always. The fact that Gulliver stated the paradox twice without any essential alteration, using the word "universally" in Book Four and the word "all" in the letter, serves to emphasize Swift's intention of leaving the paradox intact. The Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata (120-180 A.D.) in *A True Story* which is, as described by J. A. K. Thompson, an "account of an imaginary voyage to the west, in the course of which the travellers arrive at the Islands of the Blest and similar places, all described with an air of candour and veracity such as we associate with *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*,"43 prefaces his narrative with these words:

As I myself, thanks to my vanity, was eager to hand something down to posterity, that I might not be the only one excluded from the privileges of poetic licence, and as I had nothing true to tell, not having had any adventures of significance, I took to lying. But my lying is far more honest than theirs, for though I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar. I think I can escape the censure of the world by my own admission that I am not telling a word of truth. Be it understood, then, that I am writing about things which I have neither seen nor had to do with nor learned from others—which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in the nature of things, cannot exist. Therefore, my readers should on no account believe in them.44


Swift in *Gulliver* may be "travelling" in Lucian's footsteps, but Swift's method is much more one of indirection. By nature of what Gulliver is or says he is, that is a liar, we have reason to doubt that what he says is true. This is so in spite of Gulliver's repeated assertions that he is telling the truth, because the problem arises when he generalizes about his own species, which includes himself. This type of generalization is another way of describing self-reference, or assertion turning in upon itself. Examples of self-reference can be found in literary works prior to *Gulliver*. Rosalie L. Colie cites two: "Like Erasmus' *Encomion*, where Folly calls her own discourse into question at the end, and the reader is left wondering, like Pilate, about the nature of truth, so Montaigne, another wise fool, intransigently followed his skeptical logic to question the questionable enterprise to which he had devoted most intensely the most selfless energies of his noticeably selfish life."45

Is the reader, then, to regard Gulliver as a liar? The answer is yes, and no. Upon focusing directly upon the text of *Gulliver* for support of this reply we confront immediately the portrait of Gulliver as a frontispiece in the 1726 edition with the caption "Captain Lemuel Gulliver of Redriff Aetat. suae 58" (that is, at the age of 58). In the 1735

edition the caption was changed to "Capt. Lemuel Gulliver Splendide Mendax. Flor." Mendax, of course, is Latin for "liar," or "lying," or "false," depending on its use as noun or modifier. So immediately Gulliver becomes associated with the idea of someone who is splendidly false, and one conjures up visions of great liars like Psalmanazar whom Swift mentions in *A Modest Proposal* or the Greek Sinon who convinced the Trojans that the giant wooden horse filled with Greek warriors hidden inside was left behind as a peace offering by the departed Greek army. The problem of "Splendide Mendax" cannot be resolved so easily, however, because the phrase was taken from one of Horace’s *Odes* (III, xi, 35) and refers to Hypermestra, one of the fifty daughters of Danaos who in ancient times ruled Libye. Danaos’ brother Aigyptos who ruled the land to the east, Arabia, had fifty sons who wanted to marry their cousins. Danaos and his daughters were opposed to the marriages but were somehow forced to agree to the unions. On the wedding night Danaos gave each of his daughters a dagger, and all but Hypermestra murdered their husbands by decapitating them. Hypermestra had fallen in love with her young husband, and in failing to assassinate him had proved faithless to her own father and sisters. Danaos imprisoned her and brought her to trial. But Aphrodite (Venus) appeared in person before the court to defend Hypermestra and, according to C. Kerenyi’s study, argued that "pure Heaven . . . longs to fill Earth with love, Earth is seized with desire for love, the rain from Heaven
makes her fruitful and thus she brings forth the plants and animals by which men are nourished. This is the example which the love-goddess used to free Hypermestra from any conviction of wrongdoing. In other words, she was not only blameless but also praiseworthy because in saving her husband she was participating in the natural cycle of life itself. Reunited with her husband Lyrken, Hypermestra became the ancestress of Perseus and Herakles, both great heroes. According to Horace's brief account, the forty-nine sisters who obeyed their father's instructions were punished in Hades by having to carry water to try to fill a jug with no bottom. Horace writes:

The fate which, though long deferred, awaits wrongdoing even in Orcus' [Pluto's] realms. Impious (for what greater crime could they have compassed?), impious, they had the heart to destroy their lovers with the cruel steel. One only of the many was there, worthy of the marriage torch, gloriously false [splendide mendax] to her perjured father, a maiden noble for all time to come.  

Thus the phrase "splendide mendax" was meant by Horace as one of praise and acclaim for Hypermestra who was willing to suffer in her husband's stead. On her wedding night she pleaded with her husband to flee:

Me let my father load with cruel chains, for that mercy I did spare my hapless husband! Let

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him with ships send me in banishment to the
farthest lands of the Numidians! Go whether
thy feet and the breezes hurry thee, while night
and Venus are propitious! God speed thee!
And carve upon my sepulchre an elegy in memory
of me!°

Steele Commager notes the proleptic quality of Horace's poem, that is, the poem itself is the fulfillment of Hypermestra's request for an elegy. "Certainly," Commager writes, "she could have hoped for no finer epitaph than splendide mendax (35). Horace himself helps to make her "a Maiden noble throughout all the ages to come."°

Hypermestra was false to her father because she remained true to a "higher cause." And if Swift intended us to understand Gulliver's mendacity in terms of the allusion to the story of Hypermestra, then we too must look to some "higher cause" to which as his own brand of truth Gulliver is dedicated. In the final analysis, it may turn out to be no higher a cause than an intense pride which blinds him to truth and self-knowledge and for which he willingly banishes himself from human society, only returning to write his own prose elegy, his Travels, with its ambiguous epitaph "Splendide Mendax." The caption may also point to Swift's concern with the verisimilitude of his narrative by forewarning the reader just as Lucian of Samosata had warned his readers at the beginning of A True


Story: "My lying," Lucian writes, "is far more honest than theirs [that is, the lying of writers like Ctesias, Iambulus, and Homer], for though I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar."\(^{50}\)

I use the word "epitaph" because of the Latin word "Flor." which concludes the caption in the 1735 edition of the *Travels*. *Floruit* and its abbreviated form *flor.* signify "flourished" and are used when the dates of a deceased person's birth and death are not known. If, according to Swift's design, Gulliver was fifty-eight in 1726, then had he been "alive" in 1735 he would have been sixty-seven. The "Flor." in the caption of Gulliver's portrait in the 1735 edition indicates that Gulliver was "deceased." The fictional author of "Splendide Mendax" than may not be known, but the real author Swift could have intended the caption to induce in the reader ambivalent attitudes toward Gulliver: a liar yes, but one whose "visionary Schemes" deserve at least some momentary sympathy from him whom Gulliver addresses as the "gentle Reader"\(^{51}\) if by chance he too has a visionary scheme for the moral reformation of mankind. However, even if the reader misses the allusion to Hypermestra, that may be no big matter for he is still confronted by Gulliver's mendacity; and, as Irvin Ehrenpreis has pointed out,

the last paradox, which nobody faced more directly

\(^{50}\) Lucian, p. 253.

\(^{51}\) *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 291.
than Swift, was how one of the damned themselves could retain sufficient integrity to recognize the general condition. Normally, Swift's resolution is ironical. By classifying himself among the accused, he forestalls the accusations of others; he also intimidates the reader into assuming the opposite; for one intuitively attributes virtue to the prophet who—even ironically [or paradoxically]—chastises himself. 52

While Gulliver may in fact be one of the "damned," does he know that he is? It would appear that he does not, for in his letter to Sympson Gulliver writes, "Do these miserable Animals [his readers] presume to think that I am so far degenerated as to defend my Veracity." 53 This veracity is under attack, Gulliver tells us, by those readers who are "so bold as to think my Book of Travels a mere Fiction out of mine own Brain; and have gone so far as to drop Hints, That the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos have no more Existence than the Inhabitants of Utopia." 54 Gulliver says he has heard no one dispute the veracity of his account of his first three voyages (to Lilliput, Brobdingnag, and Laputa); "is there less Probability," he writes, "in my Account of the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos." 55 But probability is not the same as truth, and Gulliver raises logical problems here that he is not aware of. If the truth of his


53Gulliver's Travels, p. 8.
54Gulliver's Travels, p. 8.
55Gulliver's Travels, p. 8.
account of the first three voyages rests solely on his testimony, as it in fact does, then it is no more than probable truth, and Gulliver's contention that "the Truth [of this testimony] immediately strikes every Reader with Conviction" should also apply to his account of his fourth voyage, to Houyhnhnmland, because the only evidence that readers have of any one of Gulliver's voyages is his testimony. To suggest that there is no less probability for one voyage is also to suggest that there is no more probability for the other three. As W. B. Carnochan, Jr., maintains,

if the truth of Lilliput, Brobdignag, and Laputa does strike every reader with immediate conviction, so should the truth of Houyhnhnmland; and evidently it does not. That is one difficulty. In the second place, Gulliver reminds us (unintentionally) that fiction aspires to probability (though in the interests of higher truth) and that fact aspires to the truth of things as they are. Is the "Account" of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos somehow different, then, from the "Facts" related of his earlier voyages? These uncertainties point to the possibilities . . . that when Gulliver insists on his truthfulness and his utter aversion to falsehood, Swift has in mind more than a spoof on travelers who come home and tell outrageous lies—that he has in mind, also, the very meaning of truth and falsehood.56

If Gulliver, then, is confused about the difference between truth and probability, it is only reasonable to suspect his confusion of truth and falsehood also. It is this confusion which the Liar paradox as Swift uses it in the Travels would seem to confirm.

Gulliver lies. There is no doubt about that. Gulliver himself tells us he lies. Yet which reader is going to

56 W. B. Carnochan, Jr., Lemuel Gulliver's Mirror for Man (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), pp. 119-120.
pick up the first stone to cast at him. In Brobdingnag, the land of the giants, Gulliver falls to his neck in a molehill and coins "some Lye," he says, "not worth remembering, to excuse my self for spoiling my Cloaths." In answering the King of Brobdingnag's questions about England, Gulliver writes, "I artfully eluded many of his Questions; and gave to every Point a more favourable turn by many Degrees than the strictness of Truth would allow." He must admit that he lies if he is to tell the truth at the time that he writes his account of the voyages (five years after the last voyage); as he says, "Nothing but an extreme Love of Truth could have hindered me from concealing this Part of my Story" which includes his admitting having lied to the king. During Gulliver's third voyage, he lies to a custom-house officer of the Kingdom of Luggnagg: "I . . . made my Story as plausible and consistent as I could; but I thought it necessary to disguise my Country, and call myself a Hollander; because my Intentions were for Japan, and I know the Dutch were the only Europeans permitted to enter into that Kingdom." One hesitates to make much of a moral issue of Gulliver's lie here inasmuch as it is motivated by the desire to return home. Like T. S. Eliot's J. Alfred

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57 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 117.
58 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 133.
59 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 133.
60 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 203.
Prufrock, Gulliver too will tell all, even that he lies; and readers, put off guard by such honesty as Prufrock and Gulliver display, will sympathize with such men of good will. The lying is, after all, not motivated by any insidious intent. Toward the end of Gulliver's account of his fourth voyage, Gulliver protests heartily against fabulous accounts of other travel writers, and he supports his protest by citing Sinon's defense of his veracity before King Priam of Troy: "Nor, if Fortune has moulded Sinon for misery, will she also in her spite mould him as false and lying." Sinon's lie resulted not only in the wooden horse with the Greek warriors inside being accepted by the Trojans for something that it was not but also in the destruction of Troy. Sinon then is remembered as the most treacherous liar in legend, and Gulliver's quoting Sinon's lie from Virgil's *Aeneid* is paradoxical. For if we understand Swift here to be saying that his book is a lie, then the *Travels* is trivial in the same sense as the works of the very travel liars Gulliver attacks. If, on the other hand, Swift's book is true, then Gulliver has to be a simpleton for giving Sinon's defense of his veracity in Gulliver's own defense. But the last chapter is evidence that Gulliver is not simple. Douglas Ripley Hotch appears to be correct in asserting that "the only resolution is to assume that the 'truth' is on

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another level altogether.\textsuperscript{62}

There is perhaps a motive behind Gulliver's lies that may offset whatever harm is done by them to his moral character, and that motive is the practical usefulness of lying in a given situation. Swift seems to make an explicit point of this when he has the Governor of Glubbdubdrib, an island visited by Gulliver during his third voyage, assure his visitor that the spirits of dead persons called up to answer Gulliver's questions will certainly provide him with truthful responses, "for Lying was a Talent of no Use in the lower World."\textsuperscript{63} It simply does not make good sense, the Governor implies, for someone to lie if lying is not going to serve some useful purpose. Good sense, we need to recall, is one of the three things, according to Aristotle, that inspires confidence. Aristotle said of good sense that it makes "us go after what is useful."\textsuperscript{64} Gulliver apparently accepts the validity of the Governor's enthymeme (Lying occurs only when it is useful. In the underworld lying is of no use. Therefore, spirits from the underworld do not lie.), because of the gullibility which marks Gulliver's reaction to his meeting Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Brutus, and Caesar. "It is impossible," Gulliver writes, "to express the Satisfaction


\textsuperscript{63}Gulliver's Travels, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{64}Aristotle, p. 209.
I received in my own Mind upon being so honored by the spirits of such famous men.

"And one Thing I might depend upon," Gulliver recalls the Governor telling him, "that they [the spirits of the dead] would certainly tell me Truth; for Lying was a Talent of no Use in the lower World." The passage bears repetition for two reasons: first, because it supports what Martin Price has written about one of Swift's methods:

The common dupe Swift invents, like his counterpart in the reader, is not clear sighted in selfishness; he is neither a rebel nor a Machiavel [that is, he has no insidious intent]. A man of middling virtue, he would recoil from an accurate recognition of the ends he is promoting, and Swift, of course, never allows him that recognition but demands it instead of the reader. Rather, the fool among knaves is somewhat vain, somewhat proud, and very gullible. . . . This kind of man is both too dense to be morally alert and too naive to disguise his folly.

The second reason for the significance of the passage just quoted from the Travels is that Swift seems here to be pointing to Gulliver's own motives for the lies he tells during his voyages: Gulliver lies when lying is useful to him. As we have seen, lying is a means of saving face over the mole-hill incident in Brobdingnag and a means of insuring his passage homeward in Luggnagg. Both lies, then, represent Gulliver's attempts to persuade the reader of Gulliver's own good sense. If these attempts fail, the reason for their failure lies with Swiftian rhetoric insuring that good sense

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65 Gulliver's Travels, p. 195.
66 Price, pp. 87-88.
is ultimately reserved for the implied author rather than for the fictional author.

After having arrived in Japan, Gulliver lies again, this time telling the Japanese Emperor through an interpreter that he is a Dutch merchant. Among Dutch sailors in Nangasac, Japan, Gulliver in order to maintain his cover says,

"I made up a story as short and probable as I could, but concealed the greatest part. I knew many persons in Holland; I was able to invent names for my parents, whom I pretended to be obscure people in the Province of Gwelderland."

Asked by the Dutch if he had performed the ceremony of trampling on the crucifix required of Dutchmen by the Japanese, Gulliver says that he "evaded the question by general answers." This lack of complete honesty is necessary if Gulliver is to preserve his life, for he had been warned by the Emperor that the Dutch would cut his throat if they discovered that he had not trampled on the crucifix. This "business of the crucifix," as Gulliver calls it, not only provides Swift with an opportunity to satirize those who will violate religious and moral principles for the sake of gaining wealth but also allows Swift to show Gulliver with some moral scruples when he seeks and gets exemption from the trampling ceremony—moral scruples that inspire our confidence in his good moral character that is scarcely

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67 Gulliver's Travels, p. 216.
68 Gulliver's Travels, p. 217.
blemished in the reader's eyes by the lies he must tell afterwards to preserve his life. Gulliver does eventually recoil from a recognition, however limited, of the ends he is promoting when in his "Letter" to Symson he calls this habit of lying "infernal," but the reader at this point in the final stage of Gulliver's third voyage is too apt to have forgotten the letter and instead is more apt to nod in acquiescence at Gulliver's good sense in lying to save his life. It is not that Swift here is necessarily attacking the reader for his middling sort of virtue, because it is a "virtue" that has been encrusted on mankind in general and Gulliver in particular by the exigencies of survival on this planet. Moreover, if the reader does mentally acknowledge Gulliver's good sense in lying his way out of difficulties, then Swift can later charge that reader with moral complicity, however imaginative that complicity might be, in Gulliver's dishonesty.

There are other intentional deceptions during the voyages that can be considered as lies. Gulliver in Brobdingnag pretends to be more ill than he really is in order to have an excuse for fresh air along the seashore where he then is rescued and returns home. During the voyage from Lisbon to England after his years in Houyhnhnm-land, Gulliver, in order to avoid contact with human beings,

69Gulliver's Travels, p. 140.
pretends to be sick and so remains secluded in his cabin.  

In his discourses with the King of Brobdingnag concerning England and English politics Gulliver writes,

I artfully eluded many of his Questions; and gave to every Point a more favourable turn by many Degrees than the strictness of Truth would allow.

... I would hide the Fraillies and Deformities of my Political Mother, and place her Virtues and Beauties in the most advantageous Light.

In this respect Gulliver has not changed by the time we encounter him conversing with his Houyhnhnms Master in their conversations during the fourth voyage:

In what I said of my Countrymen [Gulliver writes] I extenuated their Faults as much as I durst before so strict an Examiner, and upon every Article, gave as favourable a Turn as the Matter would bear. For, indeed, who is there alive that will not be swayed by his Bysgs and Partiality to the Place of his Birth?

Here Gulliver makes an appeal to the reader's patriotic emotions that will generate a sympathetic attitude toward Gulliver for having to deviate from honesty. Pathos is promoting ethos here.

Gulliver's middling sort of honesty is a kind of focal point balanced by two extremes. On the one hand, there is the honesty of the Houyhnhnms who maintain, according to Gulliver,

that the Use of Speech was to make us understand

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70 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 289.
71 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 133.
72 *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 258-259.
one another, and to receive Information of Facts; now if any one said the Thing which was not, these Ends were defeated; because I cannot properly be said to understand him; and I am so far from receiving Information, that he leaves me worse than in Ignorance, for I am led to believe a Thing Black when it is White, and Short when it is Long. And these were all the Notions he [the Houyhnhnm Master] had concerning that Faculty of Lying, so perfectly well understood, and so universally practiced among human Creatures.73

Perhaps "honest" does not give a precisely accurate description of the use of speech in Houyhnhnmland, for "honest" suggests something about the intentions of the speaker, that he intends to tell the truth in a situation where he has a moral choice of telling or of not telling the truth. Master Houyhnhnm here suggests that no such choice exists for Houyhnhnms because the nature of Houyhnhnmland precludes the use of speech for any purpose except transmitting and receiving facts. It seems to be in an idealistic sense then that "to say the thing which is not" is "so little known"74 in Houyhnhnmland. I use the word "idealistic" because while it may be "unnatural" for Houyhnhnms to lie, man by contrast is naturally prone to lying (a "Habit . . . so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species," Gulliver maintains;5); and therefore in creating a fiction where the quality of life can only exist in the minds of readers, Swift has created an ideal world, a world where contradiction is not possible.

73 Gulliver's Travels, p. 255.
74 Gulliver's Travels, p. 240.
75 Gulliver's Travels, p. 8.
In Plato's *Euthydemus*, the sophist by that name tries to prove that it is impossible to lie. If lying is speaking what is not, then, according to Euthydemus, it is impossible "for anyone whatever so to deal with these things that are not as to make them be when they are nowhere." In a footnote, the translator W. R. M. Lamb points to the equivocation here involving the verb "to be": "(a) in predication, where it has nothing to do with existence, and (b) by itself, as stating existence." Once the apparent contradiction is resolved, the contention that it is impossible "to say the thing which is not" is seen as sophistic merely and itself a thing "which is not."

When Don Pedro de Mendez, the captain of the ship that returns Gulliver to Europe from Houyhnhnmland, is told by Gulliver the story of his last adventure, he looked upon it all as if, Gulliver writes, "it were a Dream or a Vision; whereat I took great Offence; For I had quite forgot the Faculty of Lying." But as W. B. Carnochan points out, the issue that Don Pedro raises is not one of lying in the normal sense, that is, involving intentional deception, but instead is Gulliver's story real or imaginary? Carnochan writes that by apparently missing the point, Gulliver in

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78 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 287.
fact stresses it. . . . Certainly he thinks he is reporting a reality; and we are face to face with the fact that his motives [intentions] are never seriously in question, as we might expect from the logic of a satire on lying travelers. . . . And if the "Account" of Houyhnhnmland is different from the "Facts" related of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, and Laputa, may we not be confronted with the impossibility of discerning what is true in a world of representative perception? 79

Certainly Gulliver does not recognize the problem of how to relate truth to perception as his problem. His letter to Symson indicates the simple plan of moral reform he had for the degenerate human race: the example provided by his account of the Houyhnhnms. His plan has failed and now he says he is "done with all such Visionary Schemes for ever." 80 In this regard, James Aldrich Wyman Rembert writes:

It is his Yahoo nature which makes him attempt to reform the Yahoo nature of his countrymen. Again we encounter self-reference, like a liar speaking of his fraternity of liars. . . . The paradox . . . confuses but intrigues the reader. What Gulliver has said is that the pure Reason he absorbed during his two years' stay in Houyhnhnmland instructs him not to attempt reformation of a totally degenerate species like the European Yahoos. In light of this observation, where does the statement, "I wrote for their [the European Yahoo] Amendment, and not their Approbation," fit into Gulliver's logical scheme? The answer is that it does not fit in. The relationship between the two statements is contradictory and thus confusing. 81.

79 Carnochan, pp. 159-160.
80 Gulliver's Travels, p. 8.
Swift's strategy seems to be one of convincing the reader, by dissecting the supposed framework of his thinking—logic and reason—that human understanding is not the bulwark that many divines and philosophers see it as. The Liar paradox is particularly well suited for this purpose because as Swift has used the paradox in the Travels, the consequences of self-contradiction are embodied in Gulliver's state of mind which reflects the failure of human understanding. We see another example of this failure when Gulliver writes in Book Four:

The Reader may be disposed to wonder how I could prevail on my self to give so free a Representation of my own Species, among a Race of Mortals [the Houyhnhnms] who were already too apt to conceive the vilest Opinion of Human Kind, from that entire Congruity betwixt me and their Yahoos.

But I must freely confess, that the many Virtues of those excellent Quadrupeds placed in opposite View to human Corruptions, had so far opened mine Eyes, and enlarged my Understanding, that I began to view the Actions and Passions of Man in a very different Light; which, besides, it was impossible for me to do before a Person of so acute a Judgment as my Master, who daily convinced me of a thousand Faults in my self, whereof I had not the least Perception before. . . . I had likewise learned from his Example an utter Detestation of all Falsehood or Disguise; and Truth appeared so amiable to me, that I determined upon sacrificing every thing to it. 82

Again we encounter the Liar paradox, for if truth is one part of "every thing" then truth too must be sacrificed to truth. The apparent guileless quality in Gulliver's statement tends to disarm the reader and thereby deceive him just

82Gulliver's Travels, p. 258.
as Gulliver is deceived by the guilelessness of the Houyhnhnms. The rhetoric of self-deception is embedded in such presumably noble concepts as "Truth... so amiable" and "sacrificing." The problem involves our liability to get carried away by appearances ("Truth appeared") toward that state of mind symbolized by Houyhnhnmland where understanding is simplified because appearances can be absolutely categorized (black vs. white, short vs. long). It is in this context, then, that Gulliver, according to Robert M. Philmus, "embodies a serious threat to the Houyhnhnm universe. He does not easily fit into the classifications that the neat dichotomies of that universe afford." In the allegory of Book IV, if the Houyhnhnms represent logic and reason (the supposed framework of man's thinking), then the problem of man represented by Gulliver serves as a constant reminder to the reader as it does to the Houyhnhnms of the inadequacy of the unaided mind to deal with reality.

It is this idea that paradox with its contradictions can portray with such persuasive force. Richard Rothschild writes:

83 Gulliver's Travels, p. 240.


The French have a saying, "All generalizations are false, including this one." Surely it would be a daring man who, amid all the complexities of present-day problems, would declare that the trouble with us today is this or that, or that the outstanding characteristic of modern life is one thing or another. More and more we are coming to realize the inadequacy of such summaries, and the catchphrase panaceas to which they give rise. Rapidly are we becoming immune to the simplicities of reformers' propaganda.

It is just such simplicity of Gulliver's schemes for the moral reformation of mankind that Swift, in using the Liar paradox, would warn us against. There is at least one other dimension to the problem of lying presented here that should be noted. According to Robert M. Philmus, for Gulliver to abjure saying "the Thing which was not" is to contradict his own being, most obviously because without "false Representation" or fiction he would not exist in any sense. Moreover, the refutation of his theories about directly communicating truth justifies Swift's own mode of proceeding through the mediating persona of Gulliver-as-author. Through Gulliver's failure, Swift demonstrates his discovery that the ironic indirection of saying "the Thing which was not" as a means of saying what is can rightly be called a necessary strategy.

Swift, I believe, is able persuasively to instruct us, particularly if we come to his *Travels* with that middling virtue which is already acclimated to half-truths and to the habit of lying because of their essential utility for accommodation and survival. We may then be little better off than Gulliver in distinguishing truth from falsehood.

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87 Philmus, p. 75.
and falsehood from intentional deceit. If, like Gulliver, we then become unable to distinguish between appearance and reality, how can we presume that visionary schemes, whether ours or schemes of other reformers, are not merely the machinations of pride, of a willful desire to impose our ideas upon the world when there is no certitude that those ideas are not merely reflections of the things that are not.

Swift, we have seen, appears to employ ethical appeals consciously in the Travels by his creation of a fictive author toward whose "character" those appeals are directed: self-serving praise in "A Letter from Capt. Gulliver to His Cousin Symson" and an alleged dedication to absolute truth on Gulliver's part that is not borne out by the lies that prevail. As a result, the ethical proofs put forward by Gulliver are intentionally subverted by Swift as one means of maintaining distance, which ethical appeal tries to reduce if not eliminate, between the nominal author Gulliver and his audience. And as the distance between Gulliver and his audience increases, the distance between Swift and that same audience is reduced proportionately. Thus paradox and ethical appeal seem to be inextricably woven into the rhetorical fabric of Gulliver's Travels.
CHAPTER III
PARADOX, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, AND EMOTIONAL APPEAL

In distinguishing between the three modes of persuasion Aristotle writes that "the first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself." It is evident that the audience's frame of mind will be affected by and so depend in part on the personal character of the speaker and on the words of the speech itself, but Aristotle had more specifically in mind with regard to this second mode of persuasion the stirring up of an audience's emotions; for, as he writes,

when people are feeling friendly and placable, they think one sort of thing; when they are feeling angry or hostile, they think either something totally different or the same thing with a different intensity; when they feel friendly to the man who comes before them for judgment, they regard him as having done little wrong, if any; when they feel hostile, they take the opposite view. Again, if they are eager for, and have

good hopes of, a thing that will be pleasant if
it happens, they think it certainly will happen
and be good for them; whereas if they are indif-
ferent or annoyed, they do not think so. 2

Swift is well aware of the significance of this kind
of appeal; and in "A Letter to a Young Gentleman, Lately
entered into Holy Orders," which Charles Allen Beaumont calls
Swift's "Ars Rhetorica," he writes that emotional appeal or
_pathos_ "is in Esteem and Practice among some Church Divines,
as well as among all the Preachers and Hearers of the
Fanatick or Enthusiastick Strain." 4 He then proceeds to make
his point by comparing the speeches of Demosthenes with those
of Cicero. Demosthenes in his speeches emphasized rational
rather than emotional appeals because his audiences were,
relatively speaking, polite, learned people. Cicero, on the
other hand, emphasized mostly emotional appeal because his
audiences were not so cultivated. Each one, in other words,
fit the speech to the audience; "But," Swift writes, "I do
not see how this Talent of moving the Passions, can be of
Use towards directing Christian Men in the Conduct of their
Lives, at least in these Northern Climates; where, I am
confident, the strongest Eloquence of that Kind will leave
few Impressions upon any of our Spirits, deep enough to last

2Aristotle, p. 91.

3Charles Allen Beaumont, _Swift's Classical Rhetoric_

4Jonathan Swift, "A Letter to a Young Gentleman" in
_The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift_, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford:
Basil Blackwell, 1963), 11, 68.
till the next Morning, or rather to the next Meal." It is not that Swift rules out the use of emotional appeal; he is simply concerned with its excessive and inept use: "I therefore entreat you," Swift writes, "to make use of this Faculty [of moving the passions] (if you be ever so unfortunate as to think you have it) as seldom, and with as much caution as you can." 

Those occasions where emotional appeals are necessary would occur when the audiences are composed of what Swift calls the "several Tribes and Denominations of Free-Thinkers" who in my Judgment, are not to be reformed by Arguments offered to prove the Truth of the Christian Religion; because, Reasoning will never make a Man correct an ill Opinion, which by Reasoning he never acquired. For, in the Course of Things, Men always grow vicious before they become Unbelievers; But if you could convince the Town or Country Profligate, by Topicks drawn from the View of their own Quiet, Reputation, Health, and Advantage; their Infidelity would soon drop off: This, I confess, is no easy Task; because it is almost in a literal Sense, to fight with Beasts." From these observations we might expect that in Gulliver's Travels both Swift and Gulliver would out of necessity have to employ emotional appeals: Swift to deal

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5 "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," p. 69.

6 "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," p. 70.

7 "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," pp. 78-79.
with that animal man who is only capable of reason, and
Gulliver not only to fight off the Yahoo beast of Houyhnhnm-
land that remained even after the fourth voyage as a blot on
Gulliver’s scutcheon but also to fight with (almost in a
literal sense) the beasts of his own kind in England in
trying to reform their morals. As in the case of ethical
appeal, we find that Swift’s rhetorical strategy involves
making Gulliver a satiric victim and implicating the reader,
thereby evoking, as we shall see, the emotions of fear and
hope when that reader himself falls victim to Gulliver’s
own emotional appeals.

It is important, therefore, to continue to distin-
guish between Swift’s intentions and Gulliver’s. We can,
for example, be misled by Gulliver in this matter of emo-
tional appeal if we are not careful of his indirections
when toward the end of his Travels he writes:

Thus, gentle Reader, I have given thee a faithful
History of my Travels for sixteen years, and above
Seven Months; wherein I have not been so studious
of Ornament as of Truth. I could perhaps like
others have astonished thee with strange improbable
Tales; but I rather chose to relate plain Matter
of Fact in the simplest Manner and Style; because
my principal Design was to inform, and not to
amuse thee.⁸

The “gentle Reader” can easily be misled by this statement
in a number of ways, two of them I would like to consider
here. First, Gulliver denies any design to work on the

⁸Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels in Prose Works,
XI, 191.
reader's emotions by means of "strange improbable Tales"; but there are other ways of "astonishing" the reader. Gulliver here does not deny attempts to astonish by other means. Second, he writes that his principal design was not to amuse but to inform. Could not his secondary, since not his primary, purpose be to amuse, or arouse, or vex the reader? Again, in other words, Gulliver does not preclude emotional appeal. Even Gulliver's stated contention of informing does not exclude designs on the reader's emotions. If, for example, a physician informs his unsuspecting patient that the patient has terminal cancer, the consequences of that information are most likely to include severe emotional disturbance. If, in other words, emotional responses are a natural consequence of certain kinds of information imparted, then Gulliver in this statement does not in fact disavow all attempts to persuade the reader by means of emotional appeal. The reader could, however, correctly infer that this type of appeal has been used in the Travels even though the principal emphasis, according to Gulliver, has been on rational appeals. C. J. Rawson sees this passage as itself evidence of an emotional atmosphere with which the Travels are charged: it belongs, Rawson writes, "with the well known (and perhaps more light-hearted) remark to Pope about vexing the world rather than diverting it, emphasises Swift's fundamental unfriendliness by a characteristic astringency (that tone is partly Swift's though Gulliver may overdo it), and by a use of the second
person singular which is aggressively contemptuous.9

How and to what end, we ask next, does paradox in the Travels work in evoking the emotional responses of fear and hope from a supposedly gentle reader? In order to answer this question we must first try to determine a specific historical context for Swift and the Travels that could have provided Swift with the particular rhetorical scheme that he exploits here. It is my contention that there was such a body of ideas widely familiar at the time.

Paul C. Davies writes that

in his DICTIONARY Dr. Johnson defines "religion" as "Virtue, as founded upon reverence of God, and expectation of future rewards and punishments." The extent to which this expectation was supposed to govern conduct in this life was very much a bone of contention in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.10

According to D. P. Walker in The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment, the doctrine of hell had gone practically unchallenged until the seventeenth century when it began to lose its hold. One reason it was upheld so tenaciously was that it was believed that if the fear of hell were removed as a motive for human conduct social order would collapse. There existed at this


time a double standard with regard to "unorthodox" opinions, and it is a double standard that the King of Brobdingnag invokes on behalf of social and political stability when, according to Gulliver, the King said that

he knew no Reason, why those who entertain Opinions prejudicial to the Publick, should be obliged to change, or should not be obliged to conceal them. And, as it was Tyranny in any Government to require the first, so it was Weakness not to enforce the second: For, a Man may be allowed to keep Poison in his Closet, but not to vend them about as Cordials.

The context of these remarks would allow the reader to interpret "Opinions" as either religious or political since Gulliver had provoked them by "reckoning the Numbers of our People by a Computation drawn from the several Sects among us in Religion and Politics."  

With regard to this double standard for expression of religious opinion, D. P. Walker writes:

The peculiar dangers attached to any discussion of the eternity of hell were such that they produced a theory of double truth: there is a private, esoteric doctrine, which must be confined to a few intellectuals, because its effect on the mass of people will be morally and socially disastrous, and a public, exoteric doctrine, which these same intellectuals must preach, although they do not believe it.

Among those who refused to comply with this theory and who could have been cause for serious concern to Swift were the atheists, who denied the existence of the supernatural and

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12 Gulliver's Travels, p. 131.
of a life after death, the Socinians who denied the divinity of Christ and believed in the annihilation of the wicked, and others like the Philadelphians who preached universal salvation. 13

A particularly relevant example of Swift's involvement in this controversy is his satire entitled "Mr. Collins's Discourse of Free-Thinking, Put into plain English, by way of Abstract, for the Use of the Poor" (1713). In his Discourse of Freethinking Anthony Collins had argued for the need of free inquiry as a basis for all sound belief and also, as a corollary of rationalist principles, for the abandoning of a belief in the supernatural. Swift's abstract of Collins's book is pointedly satirical; but, according to Sir Leslie Stephen, "his arguments only require toning down to make them an accurate copy of the original." 14 According to Swift's parodist, "There is not the least hurt in the wickedest Thoughts, provided they be free; nor in telling those Thoughts to every Body, and endeavouring to convince the World of them; for all this is included in the Doctrine of Free-thinking." 15 In countering this kind of thinking, then, the Brobdingnagian king is

13Walker, pp. 8-9, 218ff.


saying essentially the same thing that Swift says in his
"Thoughts on Religion":

To remove opinions fundamental in religion is impossible, and the attempt wicked, whether those opinions be true or false; unless your avowed design be to abolish that religion altogether.

. . . The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed when it cannot be overcome. . . . I am not answerable to God for the doubts that arise in my own breast, since they are the consequence of that reason which he hath planted in me, if I take care to conceal those doubts from others, if I use my best endeavours to subdue them, and if they have no influence on the conduct of my life.16

Collins's opinions concerning the existence of hell become evident in "Mr. Collins's Discourse of Free-Thinking" as Swift's satirical abstract of Collins's own Discourse progresses:

If you are apt to be afraid of the Devil, think freely of him, and you destroy him and his Kingdom. Free-thinking has done him more mischief than all the clergy in the World ever could do; they believe in the Devil, they have an interest in him, and therefore are the great supports of his Kingdom. The Devil was in the States General before they began to be Free-thinkers. For England and Holland were formerly the Christian Territories of the Devil; I told you how he left Holland; and Free-thinking and the Revolution banish'd him from England; I defy all the clergy to shew me when they ever had such success against him. My meaning is, that to think freely of the Devil, is to think there is no Devil at all. . . .

And again:

Our Priests differ about the Eternity of Hell-Torments. The famous Dr. Henry Moor, and the most pious and rational of all Priests Doctor Tillotson, (both Free-thinkers) believe them to be not eternal. They differ about . . .

Doctrine of Original Sin; which is the Foundation of the whole Christian Religion; for if Men are not liable to be damned for Adam's Sin, the Christian Religion is an Imposture.

Finally:

I will tell you my meaning in all this; the Priests dispute every Point in the Christian Religion, as well as almost every Text in the Bible; and the force of my Argument lies here, that whatever Point is disputed by one or two Divines, however condemned by the Church, not only that particular Point, but the whole Article to which it relates, may lawfully be received or rejected by any Free Thinker. For instance, suppose Moor and Tillotson deny the Eternity of Hell Torments, a Free Thinker may deny all future Punishments whatsoever. 17

From these passages two conclusions that are relevant to this discussion can be arrived at: (1) Collins denies the existence of hell, and (2) This denial is in part justified by Collins on the basis of apparently free and open expression of religious opinions by religious leaders like Henry More and John Tillotson.

Swift in attacking Collins in this essay does not share with Collins an optimistic belief in man's rational power to discover truth. According to Paul C. Davies, man, in Swift's scheme of things,

is not intrinsically rational and clear-sighted, but a frail and feeble creature, enveloped in original sin. The acceptance of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments is a matter of obligation rather than choice. 18

Davies cites as corroborating evidence a statement by

18 Davies, p. 264.
Swift in "A Sermon upon the Excellency of Christianity, in opposition to Heathen Philosophy": "Human Nature is so constituted, that we can never pursue any thing heartily but upon hopes of a reward." The "bone of contention" here, as Davies points out, is not "an abstruse theological point, but radically differing conceptions of the nature of man"; and Swift's position is "perfectly conformable to Augustinianism, or that side of Christianity that strongly affirms the fact of original sin." In his sermon "On the Testimony of Conscience" Swift writes: "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." What Swift is doing here and in numerous other references in his writings to heaven and hell is appealing to the emotions of fear and hope as sources of motivation for human conduct. These two emotions are a central force in his rhetorical efforts for, as he himself states, "Fear and Hope are the two greatest natural Motives

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19 Jonathan Swift, "A Sermon upon the Excellency of Christianity" in Prose Works, IX, 244.

20 Davies, pp. 262, 265.


22 See, for example, P. M. Darnall, "Swift's Belief in Immortality," Modern Language Notes, 47 (June 1932), 448-451.
of all Men's Actions."^23

Because the Houyhnhnms of Book Four are represented as animal rationale or rational animals, their chief natural motives are rational rather than passional. Gulliver writes of the Houyhnhnms:

As these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues, and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is evil in a rational Creature; so their grand Maxim is, to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is Reason among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction, as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest.25

However, the case is different for those Houyhnhnms in England "whom," Gulliver tells his Master Houyhnhnm, "we called Horses" because, in using them to draw chariots, to ride upon, and to do all kinds of drudgery, the English trained them using reward and punishment as the motivating forces. Gulliver has to explain to his Master Houyhnhnm that the English horses "were indeed sensible of Rewards and Punishments; but his Honour would please to consider, that they had not the least tincture of Reason any more than the Yahoos in this country."26 What Swift and Gulliver acknowledge here


^26Gulliver's Travels, p. 241.
is the need for a system of reward and punishment for creatures, from horses to men, who are not totally rational.

And Gulliver also is "indeed sensible of Rewards and Punishments" in spite of his efforts to become a "naturalized" citizen of Houyhnhnmland, efforts such as imitating the gait, gesture, voice, and manner of the Houyhnhnms as well as efforts at moral improvement, as Gulliver implies in his letter to Symson when he writes about having removed infernal habits "so deeply rooted in the very souls of all" his species, habits such as lying and deceiving, in other words, that make one subject to the punishment of hell.

If we detect in Gulliver here as Robert M. Philmus does, "the Calvinistic notion that man is the most degraded of all creatures, and at the same time . . . [the exemption of himself] as one of the elect," the logical response from the reader would be something in the nature of Swift's question to the Rev. Thomas Sheridan on September 11, 1725: "How came you to claim an Exception from all Mankind?" This logical response, however, has emotional reverberations for the reader because having once at the very beginning of the Travels attacked Gulliver for excluding himself from the punishment that sin is heir to the reader is forced by Swift


into an emotional assent that rooted in his own soul are "infernal" habits. This would be particularly true of those readers identified by Gulliver as "especially the Europeans" to whom could be attributed knowledge of Christian teaching regarding Original Sin and the Fall of Man. Those readers would be reminded of the Fall in Book Four by Master Houyhnhnm who, according to Gulliver, "looked upon us as a Sort of Animals to whose Shame, by what Accident he could not conjecture, some small Pittance of Reason had fallen [italics added], whereof we made no other Use than by its Assistance to aggravate our natural Corruptions, and to acquire new ones which Nature had not given us."29 The inherent pessimism of this statement, I believe, reflects rhetorical strategies at the heart of Gulliver's Travels. Pessimism here has to do with man's hopes and man's fears, emotions that Swift is appealing to in order to put the reader into a particular frame of mind for reasons that go to the meaning of the work itself. Davies asserts that if one has an optimistic view of man then one can afford to loosen such restraints as rewards and punishments. But for the Augustinian Christian, with his low estimate of human rationality and his fear of the human potential for evil, the "inhibitions" of . . . eternal punishment in the next [world], are absolutely necessary for the preservation of some semblance of order.30

There are two particularly significant examples of

29Gulliver's Travels, p. 259.
30Davies, p. 276.
paradox working rhetorically on the hopes and fears of the readers of *Gulliver's Travels* which this chapter considers. The first example occurs in "A Voyage to Brobdingnag" when Gulliver is asked by the giant king to give him an account of the government of England.

The ensuing "Discourse," as Gulliver calls his account, begins with an address by Gulliver to the reader: "Imagine with thy self, courteous Reader, how often I then wished for the Tongue of Demosthenes or Cicero, that might have enabled me to celebrate the Praise of my own dear native Country in a Style equal to its Merits and Felicity." If the reader is courteous enough to trust Gulliver's patriotism and to believe that the merits of England are praisable, he will be caught in the snares that Swift has laid for him, snares that, if they are to be avoided, require an awareness of the ambiguity of the statement (the style could be high or low depending on the degree of merit that it must equal), and that also require the reader to wait patiently until all the evidence is in before deciding just what the "Merits and Felicity" of England are. It is this gullible tendency in the reader which Swift exploits by means of the encomium of England that follows Gulliver's statement so that the reader's reactions would be ambivalent: vexation when he discovers that he has been gulled, and satisfaction when he realizes that another (Gulliver) has also been gulled.

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31 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 127.
We also note in Gulliver's statement that whereas the King of Brobdingnag had only asked Gulliver for an account, Gulliver intends much more than that—he intends to "celebrate the Praise" of England. The element of celebration which characterizes Gulliver's intentions here would seem to indicate a consciousness that the praise of England will be in the form of an encomium, which the OED defines as "a formal or high-flown expression of praise" [italics added]. As Ernst Robert Curtius notes, epideictic rhetoric (or ostentatio in Latin) has historical connotations relating to the element of display, while panegyric involves a festal gathering. Gulliver's intended "celebration," then, with "celebration" connoting both display and festivity, can be seen as an accurate description of the discourse which from one point of view Gulliver is about to deliver and which from another point of view, that of the nominal author looking back in time, has already been delivered.

The discourse that Gulliver delivers has the King as its audience, but Gulliver only provides his readers—his other audience—with a summary of what he told the King. In view of this, if the reader considers the discourse to him as actually beginning with the statement "Imagine with thy self . . . .," then that statement becomes a kind of intro-

duction or exordium, as the opening of an oration was traditionally called; and one characteristic of the exordium is what Ernst Curtius calls the "modesty formula." The rhetorical system included topics which can be characterized as a kind of stockroom where all sorts of ideas could be found for every purpose and occasion. The "modesty formula" involved such topics that the speaker might call attention to, topics such as his feebleness, his inadequate preparation, his general inadequacy, or his uneducated speech. The idea behind the "modesty formula" is to put the audience into a favorable frame of mind, but, according to Curtius, "one has to draw attention to this modesty oneself. Thus it becomes affected." It is not so clear, however, that Gulliver's wishing for the rhetorical skills of Demosthenes or Cicero is affected because of the problem of interpreting the time that the wishing takes place. When Gulliver says, "how often I then wished . . . ." does the "then" refer specifically to that time prior to the discourse, or, since Gulliver as author is looking back in time, to that period following the discourse when the King makes him well aware, as we shall see, that his speech has not produced those effects in the King which Gulliver had intended by way of praise. And in wishing for the "Tongue of Demosthenes or Cicero" Gulliver is indicating the nature of the abilities desired, that is, if we may take Swift's citing these two

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33 Curtius, p. 83.
orators in "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," as we noted earlier, as examples of orators highly skilled respectively in rational and emotional persuasion. There is indeed persuasion, but it is not, as Gulliver would say, "according to mine Intentions." Thus, Gulliver indeed had reasons for his modesty, in spite of the appearance of affectation which the "modesty formula" often gives. And yet one can argue Gulliver's conscious awareness of the "modesty formula" so often used as part of an exordium, because of his use of another topic which falls within the same category of topics in his opening letter to Cousin Sympson. The idea that one writes only because of pressure from another person becomes in Gulliver's letter the acquiescence to publication of his Travels as a result of Sympson's insisting "on the Motive of publick Good." In each instance it is possible to perceive Swift's intention in using the "modesty formula" as a satirical device whereby Gulliver's own mock modesty is being mocked.

Gulliver's encomium of England and its government extends through five long audiences with the King of Brobdingnag. Of particular interest to this study is Gulliver's description of England's religious leaders, the bishops of the Church,

whose peculiar Business it is, to take care of

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34 See Curtius, p. 85.

35 Gulliver's Travels, p. 6.
Religion, and of those who instruct the People therein. These were searched and sought out through the whole Nation, by the Prince and wisest Counsellors, among such of the Priesthood, as were most deservedly distinguished by the Sanctity of their Lives, and the Depth of their Erudition; who were indeed the spiritual Fathers of the Clergy and the People.36

During Gulliver's sixth audience with the King, the latter questions the accuracy of Gulliver's discourse, including the question, "Whether those holy Lords I spoke of, were constantly promoted to that Rank upon Account of their Knowledge in religious Matters, and the Sanctity of their Lives, had never been Compliers with the Times, while they were common Priests or slavish prostitute Chaplains to some Nobleman, whose Opinions they continued to follow after they were admitted into that assembly [the House of Peers]."37 Gulliver indicates the emotional nature of the King's reaction to his discourse when he writes that the King "was perfectly astonished with the historical Account I gave him of our Affairs during the Last Century; protesting it was only an Heap of Conspiracies, Rebellions, Murders, Massacres, Revolutions, Banishments; the very worst Effects that Avarice, Faction, Hypocrisy, Perfidiousness, Cruelty, Rage, Madness, Hatred, Envy, Lust, Malice, and Ambition could produce." And lest the reader miss Swift's mock encomiastic artistry, Swift has his spokesman the King compliment

36*Gulliver's Travels*, p. 128.

37*Gulliver's Travels*, p. 129.
Gulliver on his performance in praising England:

My little Friend Grildrig [the name Gulliver goes by among the Brobdingnagians], you have made a most admirable Panegyric upon your Country. You have clearly proved that Ignorance, Idleness, and Vice are the proper Ingredients for qualifying a Legislator. . . . It doth not appear from all you have said . . . that Priests are advanced for their Piety or Learning. . . . I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth. 38

Except for Gulliver’s description of the King as “perfectly astonished,” we have only his words by which to judge the emotional intensity of his reaction. But it is difficult to imagine anything less than fever-pitched intensity here. So that Gulliver’s praise of England turns out in the King’s mind to be praise of that which is not worthy of praise with a highly emotional effect upon its audience of one, the King of Brobdingnag.

But what of that other audience, Swift’s readers? Arthur Stanley Pease’s study of paradoxical encomium at one point raises the problem of how to distinguish between the encomium and the paradoxical encomium, 39 and Henry Knight Miller points to the author’s intention as one means of solving that problem. 40 If the King can be taken here as

38Gulliver’s Travels, p. 132.
Swift's spokesmen, then Swift is apparently trying to make sure that what the reader originally might have concurred in during Gulliver's speech is completely overturned, with the result that England becomes a thing unpraisable. Praise of one's native land, it should be noted, is one of the traditional topics of ordinary encomiums, so that for readers conscious of the tradition, the reversal would be all the more effective because Gulliver's intentions do not lead the reader beyond ordinary encomium. It is Swift's intentions, revealed by means of the King, that point to paradox.

Gulliver's "most admirable Panegyric," because it leads ultimately not to an exalting of England but to damning conclusions from the King which can only provoke the reader to assent in those conclusions, deserves closer scrutiny. Gulliver's desire to deliver a panegyric of England had been whetted earlier during his stay in Brobdingnag when the King had, Gulliver writes,

observed, how contemptible a Thing was human Grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive Insects as I. And yet said he, I dare engage, those Creatures have their Titles and Distinctions of Honour; they contrive little Nests and Burrows, that they call Houses and Cities; . . . they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray. And thus he continued on, while my Colour came and went several Times, with Indignation to hear our noble Country, the Mistress of Arts and Arms, the Scourge of France, the Arbitress of Europe, the Seat of Virtue, Piety, Honour and Truth, the Pride and

Envy of the World, so contemptuously treated. Since Gulliver at this point realizes himself in no condition to resent an injury, he and the reader have to wait for a more opportune moment to defend "our noble Country."

When that moment comes, the reader is led by the King to a frightening discovery, that the bulk of Gulliver's "Natives" are the "most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth." The reader's discovery carries with it fearful implications for the reader, I contend, because the very act of excluding oneself from the bulk of mankind is morally reprehensible as an act of pride. The reader is left with no alternative but to acknowledge, however subconsciously, his moral degeneracy with the attendant prospect of punishment in the life hereafter.

Allied to questions concerning the afterlife is the problem of death and man's general reluctance, to say the least, that individual life should have an end. In Book Three during his visit to the island of Luggnagg Gulliver hears about a people known as the Struldbruggs who never die. What ensues is Swift's paradoxical encomium on death which is presented in the ironic form of Gulliver's encomium on eternal life. It is the second of the two paradoxes which this chapter studies. "I could not forbear," Gulliver writes.

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42 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 107.
breaking into Expressions perhaps a little too extravagant. . . . Happy Nation. . . . Happy People. . . . 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 disengaged, without the weight and Depression of Spirits caused by the continual Apprehension of Death.

Then Gulliver proceeds to reveal to his Luggnaggian host the visions he has had of what it would be like if he were immortal, the usefulness of life without end to himself and his nation, the dignity and nobility that would come with such a life. "I enlarged upon many other Topics," Gulliver writes, "which the natural Desire of endless Life and sublunary Happiness could easily furnish me with." 43

But Swift again refuses to let Gulliver have it his way, and he allows the Luggnaggians to put the Struldbruggs on display for both Gulliver and the reader's benefit: ghastly, diseased, and aged, sans teeth and taste, sans everything but life. With that Gulliver writes, "I grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing Visions I had formed; and thought no Tyrant could invent a Death into which I would not run with Pleasure from such a Life." 44 This realization on Gulliver's part would seem to provide one more example to support Edward W. Rosenheim's contention that "though, as I have previously argued, its [that is, Gulliver's Travels] purely fictional aspect is not without power to move us we

44 Gulliver's Travels, p. 214.
are left in no doubt as to the substance of Gulliver's discoveries; what Gulliver learns, we learn as well, and it is to his 'discoveries' that we look if we, too, are to discover and grasp the doctrine on which the book is ultimately based." \(^{45}\)

In his "Thoughts on Various Subjects" Swift writes that "every Man desires to live long; but no Man would be old." \(^{46}\) This statement which Harold E. Pagliaro classifies as a paradoxical aphorism can be taken as an abstract summary of Gulliver's reaction to the Struldburggs. Pagliaro explains the paradox in this way:

In implying its paradox, the aphorism does not choose between extremes; instead it tempers one with the other. In short, the elements of paradox . . . are contradictory only at the most ordinary level of apprehension. \(^{47}\)

Although the Struldburggs episode is conveyed to the reader by means of narrative and not by aphorism, to the extent that the impression which the episode makes upon the reader can be stated in terms similar to Swift's paradoxical aphorism cited above to that extent it would seem that Pagliaro's conclusions about the paradoxical aphorism and how it works are applicable also to the Struldburggs episode:


\(^{46}\) Jonathan Swift, "Thoughts on Various Subjects" in Prose Works, IV, 246.

In its own way, within the limits imposed by its logical and psychological nature, the aphorism teaches well. It is the young man’s goad and the mature man’s reminder. Its individualized paradoxical assault stimulates a breath-taking analytical arrest and examination of feeling. How is an opinion altered unless it is caught between what was and what can be? All learning worth the name involves the murder of an old idea by a new one. Paradoxical aphorisms are among the beneficent executioners of decrepit ideas, and they do their work in a handful of orderly ways.48

Among the decrepit ideas executed in the Struldbrugg episode are Gulliver’s "pleasing Visions."49

One reason for the "unreality" of what Gulliver calls his "pleasing Visions" lies in Swiftian rhetoric denying any logic to those visions. This time Swift uses the Luggnaggians to fence for him when they tell Gulliver "that the System of Living contrived by [him]... 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."50 From their point of view Gulliver's "system" is unreasonable and unjust because it violates a universal fact of life as they know it, the process of aging. Since the Struldbruggs do not die, death is not for the Luggnaggians a universal condition. But for Gulliver death is a universal condition; and if by some miracle or law of

48 Pagliaro, p. 50.
49 Gulliver’s Travels, p. 214.
50 Gulliver’s Travels, p. 211.
nature one universal condition can be dispensed with, it is only logical and reasonable for him to assume that another universal condition, aging, can also be eliminated.

If one's point of view is so important, what then is Swift's "point of view"? In order to get at Swift's intentions here, we need to look more closely at the Luggnaggian argument. It can be summarized as follows: Perpetual youth is an impossibility. Now, since everyone in Balmibarbi, Japan, and, by implication, Gulliver's own country wants to put off death to another day, the only hypothetical choice left is how, granted immortality, one is going to live under the misery of eternal old age.

Presented with this "choice," the reader really has no choice but to do as Gulliver says: "The Reader will easily believe, that from what I had heard and seen, my keen Appetite for Perpetuity of Life was much abated." What Swiftian rhetoric has done within the framework of this narrative incident is to use an encomium on eternal life, and by turning immortality into a thing unpraisable to move the reader's emotions toward an acceptance of Christian orthodoxy. Death is good because it is reasonable and just, reasonable and just because man merits by reason simply of his birth neither an immortality of youthful happiness nor the miseries of an eternity of old age. Thus, for the truly rational person, Swift seems to be arguing, Gulliver's enco-

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51 Gulliver's Travels, p. 214.
mium on immortality is paradoxical because eternal life is a thing unpraisable. However, Swift, in a letter to Alexander Pope, September 29, 1725, writes that man is not truly rational ("animal rationale"), only capable of reason ("rationis oapax"). It is only, according to Swift, to the extent that man is governed by his passions that love of life is desirable and praiseworthy, a point he makes in his "Thoughts on Religion" when he writes:

Although reason were intended by providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which, from the dictates of reason, every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning.

But love of life and fear of death may, in a sense, be said to be opposite sides of the same emotional coin, so that the Struldbrugg episode can be seen as being related, however unintentionally, to Socrates' statement in Plato's Apology:

"For the fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good."

According to Paul Plass,

52 Correspondence, III, 103.
53 "Thoughts on Religion," p. 263.
One of Plato's basic convictions is that the man who has lived philosophically passes through death into a mode of existence far better than anything he knows on earth. . . . Belief in a blessed hereafter leads to a paradoxical reevaluation of "life" and "death." In the Gorgias, Socrates quotes Euripides' lines on this point: "Who knows whether 'to live' is really 'to be dead' and 'to be dead' is 'to live'?"55

Literary precedents for Swift's paradoxical encomium on death include the praise of death by the Greek chorus in Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus,56 by Alcidamus,57 a fourth-century sophist, and the proposition by Ortensio Lando in his Paradossi (1543) that a speedy death is preferrable to long and tedious life.58 Michel de Montaigne, in his essay "That to Philosophize Is to Learn to Die," personifies Nature who instructs man concerning life and death. "Imagine honestly," Nature is made to say, how much less bearable and more painful to man would be an everlasting life than the life I have given him. If you did not have death, you would curse me incessantly for having deprived you of it. I have deliberately mixed with it a little bitterness to keep you, seeing the convenience of it, from embracing it too greedily.

57 Pease, p. 29.
and intemperately.\textsuperscript{59}

For Swift and for the reader who believes in the absolute necessity for human welfare of the existence of an afterlife of rewards and punishment, Gulliver's encomium on immortality would be paradoxical; not so for the nominal Christian who would delight in contemplating Gulliver's "System of Living." It is in Swift preaching to an audience only capable of reason and only nominally Christian, if indeed Christian at all, that we find the rhetorician trying to convince them that what they consider an ordinary encomium is in fact a paradoxical one.

Among other things, the Struldbrugg episode can be seen as a kind of narrative sermon by Swift against the fear of death. The persuasive technique used is the displacing of one fear (of death) by the imposition of another, much more awesome fear (of debilitated senility). The King of Luggnagg seems to point expressly to Swift's intentions here when he wishes, Gulliver writes, that "I would send a Couple of Struldbruggs to my own Country, to arm our People against the Fear of Death."\textsuperscript{60} Unfortunately, the laws of the Kingdom prohibit such a project; in other words, there is no way for Swift's fictional world to transgress into the real world,


\textsuperscript{60}\textit{Gulliver's Travels}, p. 214.
but Swift does "export" the Struldbruggs to us by means of Gulliver's narrative. In this way Swift works upon the imagination of his readers and as a result he delivers what a contemporary of his, his cousin Deane Swift, calls "the finest lecture that ever was conceived by any mortal man, to reconcile poor tottering creatures unto a cheerful resignation of this wretched life." According to J. Leeds Barroll, III, the Struldbrugg 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.' Barroll's discussion of this episode tries to establish the connection between the Struldbruggs and Original Sin by examining the homiletic tradition of Swift's day. The conclusions that Barroll draws shed more light on just how Swift's rhetorical strategy here works:

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.

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62 Barroll, p. 50.
63 Barroll, p. 49.
There is a sense, however, in which Swift would seem to have intended the Struldbrugg episode to be more rhetorically successful as a paradoxical encomium on death than as a lecture or sermon against the fear of death. In the first instance the episode succeeds to the extent that the reader is persuaded that death is not only not unworthy of praise but is even worthy of praise. On the other hand, if, as Swift says, God for the continuance of the world intended our love of life to prevail over reason, then the Struldbrugg episode can at best only mitigate the fear of death, not eradicate it. In this regard the utter fearlessness with which the Houyhnhnms of Book Four face death serves as a perspective on the problem of death. Their way of life is not presented to us with the intention that we can or should imitate them. Their fearlessness in the face of death provides an imaginative perspective for examining profitably the behavior of man and the society he inhabits. 64

Gulliver writes in Book Four that when Houyhnhnms die they "are buried in the Obscurest Places that can be found, their Friends and Relations expressing neither Joy nor Grief at their Departure; nor does the dying Person discover the least Regret that he is leaving the World, any more than if he were returning home from a Visit to one of

his Neighbours." Then Gulliver gives the example of a female Houyhnhnna who was a little late in keeping her appointment with his Master Houyhnhnna: "Her Excuse for not coming sooner, was, that Her Husband dying late in the Morning, she was a good while consulting her Servants about a convenient Place where his Body should be laid; and I observed she behaved herself at our House, as cheerfully as the rest: She died about three Months after." Human behavior in the face of death, however, is in stark contrast to that of the Houyhnhnmas if Montaigne's description of that behavior can be considered as generally accurate. In his Essays, a copy of which Swift possessed at the time of his death, Montaigne writes, "I truly think it is those dreadful faces and trappings with which we surround it [that is, death], that frightens us more than death itself: an entirely new way of living: the cries of mothers, wives, and children; the visits of people dazed and benumbed by grief; the presence of a number of pale and weeping servants; a darkened room; lighted candles; our bedside besieged by doctors and preachers; in short, everything horror and fright around us." And although Montaigne's implied suggestion that we moderate the "trappings" of death in order to lessen our

65 Gulliver's Travels, pp. 274-275.

66 Harold Williams, Dean Swift's Library (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1932), Item no. 21.

67 "That to Philosophise Is to Learn to Die," p. 68.
fears of death is a different approach to the problem from Swift's method of displacing fear with fear, both writers are working toward the same end--restraint of the passions so as to minimise their harmful effects. To achieve this restraint Swift plays off one emotion against another, hope against fear. I can only agree with Peake when he writes:

Passions, emotions, affections, desires, spirits, instincts--Swift used all these terms to refer to the inner forces which moved mankind. . . . He believed that these forces were the ultimate source of all that was good and all that was bad in human behavior. Restraint was necessary, because when a man abandoned himself to his passions he was throwing away the specifically human faculty of the reason which was designed to guide the passions to the noble ends for which God had implanted them in man. But to suggest that Swift had an abnormal hatred of the passions, considered them "utterly reprehensible" or necessarily evil, or believed that "the life which is proper to man is a life of unimpassioned reason", is to ignore the greater part of his observations on human nature and to impose a distorting and unjustifiable interpretation upon his major satirical work. 68

The Struldbruggs serve as just such a restraining force for the Luggnaggians who, according to Gulliver's Interpreter, "from the continual Example of the Struldbruggs before their Eyes" do not look on death as the greatest evil and in whom the "appetite for living was not so eager." 69 Gulliver's own reaction is a similar one; his love of life is not eliminated; it is, as he says, simply "much abated." 70

68 Peake, pp. 179-180.
69 Gulliver's Travels, p. 211.
70 Gulliver's Travels, p. 214.
There is another emotional appeal in Gulliver's encomium on eternal life that deserves attention. "If it had been my good fortune to come into the World a Struldbrugg," Gulliver says,

... I would first resolve by all Arts and Methods whatsoever to procure myself Riches: In the Pursuit of which, by Thrift and Management, I might reasonably expect in about two Hundred Years, to be the wealthiest Man in the Kingdom. In the second Place, I would from my earliest Youth apply myself to the Study of Arts and Sciences, by which I should arrive in time to excel all others in Learning. ... By all which Acquirements, I should be a living Treasury of Knowledge and Wisdom, and certainly become the Oracle of the Nation.71

What Gulliver reveals here in this description of his pleasing visions is a strong, albeit implied desire for fame. Elsewhere Swift writes of this desire:

With regard to fame: there is in most people a reluctance and unwillingness to be forgotten. We observe even among the vulgar, how fond they are to have an inscription over their grave. It requires but little philosophy to discover and observe that there is no intrinsic value in all this; however, if it be founded in our nature, as an incitement to virtue, it ought not to be ridiculed.72

Peake comments on this passage that "love of fame was a human passion to which writers and orators had always appealed, and in doing so, it is implied here, they were not addressing themselves to man's lower self but to an instinct

71Gulliver's Travels, p. 209.
72Quoted in Peake, p. 175.
providentially designed as an "incitement to virtue." It is, for example, an "unwillingness to be forgotten" that causes the virtuous Hypermestra in the Horatian Ode III.xi. discussed in the previous chapter to request of her fleeing husband, "And carve upon my sepulchre an elegy in memory of me" (11. 51-52). Whether it is a conscious desire for fame that motivates her to disobey her father's orders to murder her young husband, Horace does not say; but in alluding to her story by means of the "Splendide Mendax" that opens Gulliver's Travels Swift could not have missed the fact that with her fame and virtue did indeed walk hand in hand.

Since, however, there is such an evident contrast between Hypermestra and Gulliver, one may legitimately ask if they both seek the same thing? In order to answer such a question, it seems profitable to turn for help to Swift's "Ode to the Athenian Society" which suggests what are for Swift the qualities of true fame:

Then tell us what is Fame? where shall we search for it? Look where exalted Virtue and Religion sit Enthron'd with Heav'ny Wit, Look where you see The greatest scorn of Learned Vanity. And when you find out these, believe true Fame is there.  

Of the four requisite ingredients for true fame set forth here by Swift, virtue, religion, heavenly wit and scorn of

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73 Peake, p. 175.  
learned vanity, Gulliver's "System" for eternal life ignores religion and wit, mentions the usefulness of virtue while implicitly denying that a virtuous life could actually be lived (Gulliver says he would use all arts and methods to acquire wealth, thereby implying dishonest and immoral means as well as honest, moral methods [Gulliver is probably naively unaware of the full implications of his statement, but Swift's conscious use of the Liar paradox in the Travels seems to point to Swift's conscious intention to implicate Gulliver, and the unwary reader, in a logical slip]), and emphasises "Learned Vanity" as the epitome of success (the reason Gulliver gives for his desire to acquire knowledge is that he hopes thereby in time "to excel all others in Learning," to become "a living Treasury of Knowledge and Wisdom" and "the Oracle of the Nation"). Thus, it is not that Swift in ultimately subverting Gulliver's "System" is attacking the desire for fame as a motivating force; it is, like so much else that Swift attacks, the perversion of a natural passion that Swift objects to. Gulliver's illusions of grandeur are received lightheartedly by the Luggnaggians, "not without some Laughter at my Expence," Gulliver writes; and Swift, slamming down hard and not so lightheartedly on Gulliver and mankind in general, has Gulliver's Interpreter say that "he was desired by the rest [that is, of the Luggnaggians] to set me right in a few Mistakes, which I had fallen into through the common Imbecility of human Nature, and upon that Allowance was less answerable for
them. But the desire to be the richest man in the kingdom, no matter what crimes must be committed to acquire this wealth, and to excel all other human beings (whether in the kingdom or on earth Gulliver fails to specify—a seemingly significant omission) is Faustian if not Satanic in its import. The incident, then, poses a question that W. B. Carnochan, Jr., considers relevant to the Travels in general: "Where . . . is the line drawn between the absurdity and the supreme ugliness of man?"76

And one might add, to whom is Gulliver answerable, even if less answerable because of "the common Imbecility of human nature"? Both questions suggest that in view of this difficulty in distinguishing evil from "common Imbecility" Swift is appealing to the fears of his readers who must eschew Gulliver-like "Mistakes" lest they be judged more harshly in the hereafter than Gulliver himself was judged by the Luggnaggians, lest, in other words, their pleasing visions and ensuing actions that result from what they might hope to have exonerated in the life hereafter as merely "common Imbecility" are not in fact the machinations of supreme ugliness and therefore all the more "answerable." And in the readers' fear of being "answerable" for their immoral actions lies hope for man, Swift appears to be

75Gulliver's Travels, p. 287.

saying, both now and hereafter.

Swift's rhetorical strategy throughout all of this is to implicate the reader, for in expressing his desires in the manner that he does Gulliver succeeds in generating similar desires, by way of imaginative sympathy, within his readers so that they too experience a momentary heightening of this desire for fame. The aura of naiveté that encompasses Gulliver's presentation and the ingénue-like qualities of this stranger in a strange land suggest to the reader that Gulliver's pleasing visions are at the very least innocuous and at their best most admirable. But these are the appearances that hide a different reality, and the reader is, like Gulliver, easily led astray by emotions. Contrary to what Gulliver states in his letter to Sympson, the truth does not strike the reader with immediate conviction. Instead, the reader, if he is to get all the truth, must look to the example of Pedro de Mendez, the captain who rescues Gulliver from Houyhnhnmiland: "The Captain, a wise Man," Gulliver writes, "after many Endeavours to catch me tripping in some Part of my Story, at last began to have a better Opinion of my Veracity." For Gulliver is telling the "truth" about himself, and it may be that like Don Pedro the reader too needs "many Endeavours" in order to perceive the truth about Gulliver, a truth that if Swift's rhetorical strategy succeeds reflects the Gulliver-like qualities in

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Gulliver's Travels, p. 287.
the reader's own inmost depths. But seeing what Swift rather than Gulliver wants him to see, the reader confronts in the *Travels* the issue of rewards and punishments and is forced to ask himself the emotionally charged question that Swift had asked of the Rev. Thomas Sheridan, "And how came you to claim an Exception from all Mankind?" The answer that Swift would provide to this question is one mingled with fear and hope.
CHAPTER IV
PARADOX, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, AND RATIONAL APPEAL

According to Aristotle, the third mode of persuasion "is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question."¹ Persuasion by means of proof is effected either by enthymeme or example; "there is," Aristotle writes, "no other way."² Swift's emphasis on rational argument can be seen in "A Letter to a Young Gentleman" when he writes:

A plain convincing Reason may possibly operate upon the Mind both of a learned and ignorant Hearer, as long as they live: and will edify a Thousand Times more than the Art of wetting the Handkerchiefs of a whole Congregation, if you were sure to attain it. If your Arguments be strong, in God's Name offer them in as moving a Manner as the Nature of the Subject will properly admit; wherein Reason, and good Advice will be your safest Guides: But beware of letting the pathetick Part swallow up the rational: For, I suppose, Philosophers have long agreed, that Passion should never prevail over

Reason. 3

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Swift's rhetorical strategy as it relates primarily to his use of paradox in Gulliver's Travels as a means of inducing a conviction of logical proof in his readers. The paradox which falls within this strategy and which this chapter undertakes to investigate is embodied dramatically in the allegory of the Travels, so that by means of this paradox Swift can provide his readers with the examples necessary to support an inductive argument. It should be noted at the outset that a discussion of rational appeal in the Travels, unless restricted, would lead to the many arguments which are a part of the Travels. This chapter, however, will deal with only one of those many arguments, that argument which tries to advance the cause of the Ancients over the cause of the Moderns.

In the Travels Swift employs argument, and particularly the example embedded in the very fabric of the allegory, to satirize the Moderns whom he had previously attacked in his A Tale of a Tub and The Battle of the Books. This attack against the Moderns runs as a major thread through the Travels. Swift's "battle" with the Moderns was part of a much larger conflict of words and ideas that raged particularly in France and England during the seventeenth century, although as Ernst Robert Curtius has pointed out such a con-

flict "is a constant phenomenon of literary history and literary sociology." Richard Foster Jones in his *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England* has provided a detailed examination of the conflict between Ancients and Moderns which ultimately provoked Swift to write his *Battle of the Books*. By way of a brief summary of the more immediate causes of the quarrel and of Swift's involvement in the quarrel between those who espoused antiquity and the upholders of modernity, we can say that especially in France the Moderns tended to reject the Greco-Roman tradition and to raise themselves, their art, and the whole Age of Louis the XIV above their classical heritage. Much of the quarrel in England, on the other hand, was limited to the question of the Moderns' superiority in the sciences. In 1690 Sir William Temple engaged in the controversy with his *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, which in a gentlemanly and rambling way praises ancient philosophy and science. This essay was countered by William Wotton's *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694); this was followed by more polemics on both sides until Swift, who had been in Sir William Temple's employment in the 1690's, entered the

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fray with his *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* in 1704. Ernest Tuveson has pointed to the tremendous significance of the quarrel between Ancients and Moderns when he writes:

Temple and Swift were not simply reacting with instinctive conservative aversion against science, and they were not merely defending a "humanistic" approach to life. These matters have importance; but of larger significance is the stirring of a new spirit in all things—we may call it "modernism." Its elements appeared recognizably in the controversy of religion and science during the 1690's: the faith in teleological progress and in a kind of "progressive" religion; the testing of revelation and authority in general by reason and scientific concepts rather than vice versa; the supremacy of materialistic physical law, even to the exclusion of miracles; the tendency to replace the Christian humanist conception of man's nature with one which tended to deny original sin, spiritual salvation, and the place of "mystery" in religion. That is to say, it was the materialist, progressivist era that Swift regarded as both imminent and degenerate. With the new world spirit he would not come to terms, however natural and easy it made things appear to be. 7


Of particular interest to this study are two passages in Swift's *Battle* that relate to paradox. In the first, a quarrel is being waged between Ancient and Modern books in St. James's Library:

Here a solitary Antient, squeezed up among a whole Shelf of Moderns, offered fairly to dispute the Case, and to prove by manifest Reasons, that the Priority was due to them, from long Possession, and in regard to their Prudence, Antiquity, and above all, their great Merits towards the Moderns. But these derived the Premises, and seemed very much to wonder, how the Antients could pretend to insist upon their Antiquity, when it was so plain (if they went to that) that the Moderns were much the more Antient of the two.

Swift's marginal notation to this passage reads: "According to the Modern Paradox." In a subsequent passage the book of Aesop's *Fables*, personified as simply Aesop, overhears a dispute between a spider and a bee. Aesop finds that this dispute has very close similarities to the argument between Ancient and Modern Books: "For, pray Gentleman," Aesop says to the two parties of books,

was ever any thing so Modern as the Spider in his Air, his Turns, and his Paradoxes? He argues in the Behalf of You his brethren, and Himself, with many Boastings of his native Stock, and great Genius; that he Spins and Spits wholly from himself, and scorns to own any Obligation or Assistance from without.

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Thus, when Swift writes of "our wise and paradoxical Age." his remark is both ironic and derogatory.

The Modern paradox specifically referred to in the first passage and included as one of the paradoxes of the Modern spider in the second passage is Francis Bacon's paradox in his *Advancement of Learning* "Antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi"; that is, according to Peter Shaw's translation of the passage containing the paradox, "And to speak the truth antiquity, as we call it, is the young state of the world; for those times are ancient when the world is ancient; and not those we vulgarly account ancient by computing backward; so that the present time is the real antiquity." In Aphorism LXXXIV in *The New Organon* (1620) Bacon provides us with a rationale for his paradox:

Again, men have been kept back as by a kind of enchantment from progress in the sciences by reverence for antiquity, by the authority of men accounted great in philosophy, and then by general consent. . . .

As for antiquity, the opinion touching it which men entertain is quite a negligent one and scarcely consonant with the word itself. For the old age of the world is to be accounted the true antiquity; and this is the attribute of our own times, not of that earlier age of the world in which the ancients lived, and which, though in respect of us it was elder, yet in respect of the world it was the younger. And truly as we look for greater knowledge of human things and a riper judgment in the old man than in the young, because of his experience

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and of the number and variety of the things
which he has seen and heard and thought of,
so in like manner from our age, if it but knew
its own strength and chose to essay and exert
it, much more might fairly be expected than
from the ancient times, inasmuch as it is a
more advanced age of the world, and stored and
locked with infinite experiments and observa-
tions.

Nor must it go for nothing that by the
distant voyages and travels which have become
frequent in our times many things in nature
have been laid open and discovered which may
let in new light upon philosophy. And surely
it would be disgraceful if, while the regions
of the material globe . . . have been in our
times laid widely open and revealed, the
intellectual globe should remain shut up within
the narrow limits of old discoveries.

And with regard to authority, it shows a
feeble mind to grant so much to authors and
yet deny time his rights, who is the author
of authors, nay, rather of all authority.
For rightly is truth called the daughter of
time, not of authority. It is no wonder there­
fore if those enchantments of antiquity and
authority and consent have so bound up men's
powers that they have been made impotent
(like persons bewitched) to accompany with
the nature of things.12

This rationale is picked up by Swift's Modern Hack Author
of A Tale of a Tub when he seizes the rights and authority
granted to him by time and proclaims that "I here think
fit to lay hold on that great and honourable Privilege of
being the Last Writer; I claim an absolute Authority in
Right, as the freshest Modern, which gives me a Despotick
Power over all Authors before me."13 The paradox that anti-

12Francis Bacon, The New Organon and Related Writings,
ed. Fulton H. Anderson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press,
1960), pp. 80-81.

13Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub in Prose Works, I.
81.
quity is the real youth of the world is merely an apparent contradiction and became all the more superficial during the seventeenth century as it was employed by Hobbes, Hakewill, Descartes, Malebranche, Wilkins, Sprat, Glanvill, Butler, Fontenelle, Perrault, Thomas Pope Blount, John Dennis, and John Dunton.  

In "Swift and the Baconian Idol" Brian Vickers documents the extensive influence which Bacon had on Swift's earliest satires, influences that affected the very core of works such as Meditation on a Broomstick, A Tale of a Tub, and The Battle of the Books. With regard to this last work, for example, Vickers writes that

in his devastating history of intellectual abuses in The Advancement of Learning Bacon describes how Luther, in his controversy with Rome and the decadent Church, found no assistance in contemporary culture and turned to the classics for help, thus starting a battle between the Ancients and the Moderns in the Sixteenth Century; Luther, [according to Bacon] "being no ways aided by the opinions of his own time to his succors to make a party against the present time; so that the ancient authors, both in divinity and in humanity, which had long time slept in libraries, began generally to be read and revolved." That is an exact parallel for the Battle that Swift was contemplating, together with a very suggestive detail--the ancients "had long time slept in libraries."  

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14 Clark, p. 330. For a résumé of the origins and subsequent spread of this paradox in the seventeenth century, see Appendix of Clark's study.

Vickers stops short, however, of investigating Bacon's influence on *Gulliver's Travels*. Allan Bloom, in "An Outline of *Gulliver's Travels*," argues that the *Travels* is "one of the last explicit statements in the famous Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns and perhaps the greatest intervention in that notorious argument." So important is this quarrel to Swift, according to Bloom, that it provides the key to an understanding of his life and literary work. Since, however, Bloom's discussion of the quarrel itself is generalized, he does not deal with specific persons like Bacon who figure so prominently in the quarrel. There is a general, implied sense in which James R. Wilson, for example, recognises Bacon's negative presence in the *Travels* when he writes that "Gulliver's account of his travels moves inductively toward pessimism" and that "seeing the spirits of the dead, he [Gulliver] is being prepared to shift his position from a Modern to an Ancient drastically." However, knowing

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17 James R. Wilson, "Swift's Alazon," *Studia Neo-philologica*, 30 (1958), 154, 160. John H. Sutherland argues that Gulliver's development is determined by Swift's satiric strategy which involves the Ancient-Modern controversy and which changes Gulliver from an optimist in the beginning of the *Travels* to a misanthrope at the end. "A Reconsideration of Gulliver's Third Voyage," *Studies in Philology*, 54 (Jan. 1957), 45-52. Ralph E. Hitt sees the *Travels* as unified by Swift's negative philosophy of history, a concept which includes belief in the moral deterioration of man and which runs counter to the optimism and progressive theories of
as we do that a recurring satiric technique of Swift's involves adopting the assumptions of his opponents and either allowing those assumptions to carry to their logical conclusions or reducing those assumptions to an absurdity, it may be possible to be more specific with regard to Francis Bacon's influence on the satiric method of *Gulliver's Travels* if we understand how both the *Travels* and Bacon's paradox involve a movement in time not unlike that movement suggested by Wilson and noted above. There seems to be ample evidence, which will be studied in the pages that follow, to warrant considering Gulliver as a Modern during the earlier voyages, and as an Ancient, or, more accurately, as a satirically absurd reduction of one, toward the end of his travels.

Applying Bacon's paradox to Swift's movement of Gulliver through the four voyages, antiquity "as we call it" would refer to that time when Gulliver's voyaging first began because "those [times] we vulgarly account ancient by computing backward" from ourselves. But by Bacon's method of computation Gulliver at the beginning of his voyages


would represent the "young state of the world," and his movement in time through the four voyages would be a movement toward antiquity rather than away from it. The antiquity toward which Gulliver moves, however, is not the antiquity of the modern world (ancient, that is, by vulgar computation forward). There is a sense in which Gulliver becomes less and less a product of civilization and returns finally to the primitive state of man having to compete with the rest of the animal kingdom for survival. Gulliver at the end then can be seen as embodying Bacon’s paradox that it is the Moderns who are the ancients;\(^\text{19}\) but it is an embodiment designed to satirize Bacon’s paradox and all that the paradox entails, and so it is peculiarly Swiftian rather than an accurate rendering of Bacon’s intentions formulated by the paradox. Swift’s method here is similar, in certain respects, to that used in *A Tale of a Tub* where, according to John Richard Clark,

> the Modern, in spite of his ambition to embody at once a high-point of Ancient and Modern progress and learning in himself, succeeds instead in accomplishing a considerable retrogression; for . . . his madness transforms him into primitive and brutish beast. . . . \[T\]hese paradoxical reversals . . . are the major vehicle of satiric reduction . . . revealing in the work a considerable portion of its artistry and meaning.\(^\text{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) I use "ancient" to refer to those who live(d) during the antiquity of the world, which is according to Bacon’s paradox, however, the present time; "Ancient" refers to those participants in the quarrel who espoused the cause of ancient Greece and Rome.

\(^{20}\) Clark, p. 289.
The Baconian paradox, in this case an apparent contradiction, can be removed by eliminating the equivocation present in the concept of "Ancient," but as Swift writes in "Remarks upon a Book," the wit lies not so much in advancing a paradox as in maintaining it.21 This Swift does when he creates Gulliver with qualities very similar to those authors described by Swift in his Mechanical Operation of the Spirit: "a sort of Modern Authors, who have too literal an Understanding; and, because Antiquity is to be traced backwards, do therefore, like Jews, begin their Books at the wrong End, as if Learning were a sort of Conjuring."22 The paradox is "advanced" in the very beginning of the 1735 edition of the Travels in Gulliver's letter to Cousin Sympson with its talk of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos that from one point of view belongs at the end of the book and with its expression of disgust that the moral reformation of the world had not been conjured into existence, so to speak, by the learning contained in Gulliver's account of his voyages. How Swift "maintains" the paradox to the end remains to be explored.

However, we need first to look into the probable motives and rhetorical strategy behind Swift's attack on Bacon's paradox in Gulliver's Travels. That paradox not


22 Jonathan Swift, A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit, Etc. in Prose Works, I, 186.
only implies but also advocates the idea of progress; to
cite one example we can recall Bacon's statement "nor must
it go for nothing that by the distant voyages and travels
which have become frequent in our times many things in
nature have been laid open and discovered which may let
in new light upon philosophy." For Swift, according to
Samuel H. Monk, science deludes

men with the promises of an ever-expanding and
improving future, which to Swift seemed necessarily chimerical, man being limited as he is.
And . . . science unwittingly fostered the
secularization of society and of human values,
promising men mastery of nature and the aboli-
tion of all mysteries, and, by implication at
least, of religion.

If Bacon and his followers were to convince enough people
that "rightly is truth called the daughter of time," then
what is true today may not be so tomorrow; and since the
reality of things is so well concealed by their appearances,
who knows but that tomorrow we may all believe and live by
the "truths" that men like Gulliver bring back from their
far voyages. And if some men found comfort, security, and
hope in the idea of progress or at least the possibility
of progress, Swift, on the other hand, was more and more
convinced that the New Science and those sects and factions
that it sustained, like the Puritans, the Deists, the Whigs
and their monied-interests that supported war for commercial

23Bacon, New Organon, p. 81.
24Samuel H. Monk, "The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver,"
The Sewanee Review, 63 (Winter 1955), 50-51.
gain, were too dangerous to be diverted out of existence; they needed rather to be argued and satirized out of existence, if that was possible. For Swift the difference in strategy behind literature as diversion and literature that vexes could be measured by the differences in the separate audiences for whom The Battle of the Books and Gulliver's Travels were written. As Richard I. Cook notes, the young Swift was

 conscience writing for "those who were like himself" . . . . For the most part, in The Battle of the Books Swift is content, as he had been in A Tale of a Tub, to find his opponents more ludicrous than dangerous.25

The intended audience of the Travels is much more extensive, however, and the rhetorical impact of its argument much more awesomely trenchant.

The dramatizing of Bacon's paradox creates in the reader the impression of actual experience and thereby generates a more forceful argument against its validity as that experience comes under increasing attack, as the paradox, in other words, moves closer to that point in the work where it can no longer be "maintained" and collapses under the weight of Swiftian absurdity. If James R. Wilson is correct when he argues that "Gulliver's account of his travels moves inductively toward pessimism,"26 then we need to dis-


26Wilson, p. 154.
cover examples of an optimism in the early voyages that would not only allow for this movement but would also establish Gulliver as a Modern.

Swift seems to be giving notice to the reader that the controversy between Ancients and Moderns has not been left behind to sleep in his library of previously published works when at the beginning of the Travels in "The Publisher to the Reader" Cousin Richard Sympson writes that "The Author of these Travels, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, is my antient and intimate Friend."27 There is the obvious sense of the word "antient," meaning simply that Sympson and Gulliver have been friends for a long time. However, since the quarrel between Ancients and Moderns had occupied such a prominent part of the intellectual heritage of Swift's audience and if Allan Bloom is correct in his contention that the quarrel was a major preoccupation of Swift's, then it is not at all unlikely that Swift intended "antient" to carry more than the obvious sense, that "antient" here, in other words, describes Gulliver with respect to the quarrel at that point in time when Gulliver, his voyaging days behind him, sits down to give the world an account of those voyages. For a writer so preoccupied with the quarrel there were certainly adequate synonyms for the word "antient" that would avoid connotations of the quarrel if Swift's intention here was indeed to avoid these specific connotations. If, how-

27Gulliver's Travels, p. 9.
ever, Gulliver’s account of his voyages should touch on aspects of the quarrel, as there is evidence that it does, then the reader, Swift’s strategy here suggests, needs to be aware of any bias in the “author” that might prevent him from strictly adhering to truth. Also, the reader, once he is aware that the “author” is taking sides in a long-standing quarrel, will need to discover the extent of Gulliver’s commitment to the cause of the Ancients which, if intensive, could possibly turn the Travels into still more polemic.

According to J. B. Bury, the ancient Greeks were instinctively and thoroughly pessimistic. They held no hope of progress toward an ideal of happiness because they were controlled by the idea of Moira, that is, of “a fixed order in the universe.”

28 The Moderns of Europe, on the other hand, argued their belief in progress, in the gradual betterment of nature, society, human knowledge, the Church, the arts, and the sciences. This, of course, only describes the most general trend of Modernism. Each Modern did not argue or believe that progress was possible or inevitable in all of these areas. It was a selective movement in which specific preoccupations helped to determine the course of each man’s convictions. However, evidence of progress in one area often helped to support belief in progress in another area; for example, some orthodox Anglican divines used

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scientific progress as argument for progress in religion, philosophy, or theology. Where this tactic was adopted it was often as a counter to other, more dangerous forms of Modernism such as deism and free-thinking. Thus whether it was Swift satirically turning the weapons of Modernism upon the Moderns themselves or other Anglican ministers using Modern arguments straightforwardly, the motivating causes were often the same—to preserve the traditions of the Church and society from the threat of their enemies.

The scientific progress most heralded by the Moderns in their argument for superiority over the ancients was achieved by inventions. As part of his response to Temple's An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning (1690) William Wotton writes in his Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1694) that "there are Things [that is, the Physical Sciences] which have no Dependence upon the Opinions of Men for their Truth; they will admit of fixed and undisputed Mediums of Comparison and Judgment: So that, though it may be always debated, who have been the best Orators, or who the best Poets; yet it cannot always be a Matter of Controversie, who have been the greatest Geometers, Arithmeticians . . . because a fair Comparison between the Inventions . . . of the contending Parties must certainly put an end to the

In The New Organon Bacon recognized the most significant inventions of the Moderns when he writes:

Again, it is well to observe the force and virtue and consequences of discoveries, and these are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world; the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have followed innumerable changes, insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.

The unwritten assumption underlying this passage is that the "innumerable changes" which have resulted from these inventions have been beneficial to the human race. During the course of his travels Gulliver is quite open in his enthusiasm over these inventions. He is not like that surgeon referred to by Swift in his "A Letter to a Young Gentleman" who "after a hundred Terms of Art, if you are not a Scholar, shall leave you to seek." Swift, on the other hand, not sharing Bacon's or Gulliver's enthusiasm over the benefits of printing, gunpowder, and the compass, tries to subvert the Modern's argument by showing that the effects of these inventions are, if not downright destructive, at least

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31 New Organon, p. 118.

32 "A Letter to a Young Gentleman," p. 66.
not the great benefits the Moderns have claimed them to be.

For the Moderns printing was the most important invention. According to George Hakewill, an Anglican divine who argued in 1630, as other Moderns were later to do, against the perpetual and universal decay of nature, the result of printing is that "bookes are become both fairer, and cheaper, and truer, and lesse subject to a totall perishing." If as Roy S. Wolper suggests this was a typical argument on behalf of the benefits of printing, then Gulliver's Travels itself, along with so many other travel books of the time, stands as a testament to the fact that printing did not usher in an age of books that were "truer." Also, there was the prevailing attitude that if one book does any good, two books will do even greater good, ad infinitum. This attitude can be seen in Polydore Virgil's often-quoted saying, "tantum enim uno die ab uno homine litterarum imprimitur, quantum vix toto anno a pluribus scribi posset," a dictum often used as a rhetorical weapon.


34Hakewill, Bk. III, 276.

35Wolper, p. 595, n. 25.

by the Moderns. It is in this Baconian spirit, then, or at least what had in some sectors become of the Baconian spirit by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, that Gulliver comments that the giant Brobdingnagians "have had the Art of Printing, as well as the Chinese, time out of mind. But their Libraries are not very large; for that of the King's, which is reckoned the largest, doth not amount to above a thousand Volumes." 

Clearly, Gulliver is expressing the Modern's disappointment over small libraries, as though the mere quantity of books determines the excellence of the collection as a whole. Nevertheless, there is an implicit optimism that underlies his disappointment: the capability of printing more books is there; man only needs to be persuaded that the road to progress and happiness is paved by the printing press. It is this attempt by the Moderns to quantify excellence which is attacked here by Swift; for the King's library, containing no more books than the libraries of the ancients did, tends to cast a shadow over what has been achieved in the Modern invention of printing, particularly in light of Gulliver's comment that "the Learning of this People is very defective; consisting only in Morality.

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37 Polydore Virgil, *Urbinatis de Rerum Inventoribus* (Amsterdam, 1671), p. 102. "For as much is printed in one day by one man of letters as can scarcely be written in a whole year by many men."

38 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 136.
History, Poetry, and Mathematics; wherein they must be allowed to excel." There is another, perhaps more subtle attack on the Moderns in the passage from the *Travels* quoted above when what seems to be Swift's own voice breaks through to remind the reader that the discovery of printing belongs no less to the ancients, albeit the ancient Chinese, than to the Modern Europeans.

William Wotton, in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, argued that "moderns have hereby a vast Advantage, because . . . [books] can be printed with Indexes, and other necessary Divisions." Like other Moderns he also praised Modern abridgments because they enabled one to learn faster. John Richard Clark points out that

this is of course the teaching of Baconian induction; the foundation of such induction was to be laid by improved histories, catalogues, problemata, calendars of popular errors, comparative anatomies, etc., for the retention and slow accumulation of knowledge. To facilitate such learning, Bacon . . . strongly recommended the compilation of annotations, commentaries, and "a good digest of common-places." It was this attitude of the Moderns toward learning that Swift so vigorously satirized in *A Tale of a Tub* where the Modern Hack Author, having supposedly written the work in 1697, needs to add the footnotes and the commentaries prior to its publication in 1704. As Clark has pointed out,

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40 William Wotton quoted in Wolper, p. 593.
41 Clark, p. 211.
the Modern and his work, in an application of Bacon's paradox that the persona had not anticipated, are literally become [by 1704] antiquities. . . . All at once, in the tradition of the satirist, Swift has managed to employ the paradox, Antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi, and to bring it to bear upon the helpless Modern's own silly work.

Indeed, by 1710 [when the fifth edition was published], this necessity for comment . . . is intensified by the further enormous passing of time; and the difficulty is met by the addition of an editor's and of Wotton's footnotes. We continue to receive the impression that each year's crop of Moderns of necessity must spring up to make new commentaries upon the older commentaries upon the aged text.42

Thus, it well may be that Gulliver at the very end of his Travels is looking backward at the fate of his literary ancestor the Modern Hack Author of A Tale of a Tub and, at the same time, looking forward to his own destiny as a Modern author when he writes:

I know likewise, that Writers of Travels, like Dictionary-Makers, are sunk into Oblivion by the Weight and Bulk of those who come last, and therefore lie uppermost. And it is highly probable, that such Travellers who shall hereafter visit the Countries described in this Work of mine, may by detecting my Errors, (if there be any) and adding many new Discoveries of their own, jostle me out of Vogue, and stand in my Place; making the World forget that ever I was an Author. . . . I am not a little pleased that this Work of mine can possibly meet with no Censurers. . . . So that, I hope, I may with Justice pronounce myself an Author perfectly blameless; against whom the Tribes of Answerers, Considerers, Observers, Reflectors, Detectors, Remarkers, will never be able to find Matter for exercising their Talents.43

42 Clark, pp. 342-344.
43 Gulliver's Travels, pp. 292-293.
His *Travels* have not yet gone to press, and already Gulliver is beginning to feel posterity breathing down his neck and ready to send him down into oblivion. But true to the Modern rendering of Bacon’s dictum "Faber quisque fortunas suas" ("Each man the maker of his own fortune" or as parodied by Swift in *A Tale of a Tub* "Every Man his own Carver"), Gulliver in his pride sees only himself as the measurer of his own worth and so must attack his fellow Moderns before they have a chance to turn to measure him.

Gulliver of the fourth voyage, then, is hardly the same character who in Brobdingnag was unimpressed with the library and learning of its people as well as with the law making it a capital offense to write a comment upon any law. As he brings his *Travels* to a close, we sense that Gulliver would now welcome such a law in order to protect himself; but it is too late. He has returned to the pessimism of the Brobdingnagians, a pessimism evident in a book of theirs that he read which showed "how diminutive, contemptible, and helpless an animal was Man in his own Nature; how unable to defend himself. . . . [and how] Nature was degenerated in these latter declining Ages of the World."}

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45 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 136.

46 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 137.
It was a pessimism that contrasted with his own optimism that is evident when he writes further on in the same paragraph in Book II that

for my own part, I could not avoid reflecting, how universally this Talent was spread of drawing Lectures in Morality, or indeed rather Matter of Discontent and repining, from the Quarrels we raise with Nature. And, I believe upon a Strict Enquiry, those Quarrels might be shewn as ill-grounded among us, as they are among that People.  

James R. Wilson comments on this passage that

more than anything else, this reflection tells us of Gulliver's optimism and the progressive theories of his time. This illustrates, of course, Gulliver's zenith, from which he will begin to fall in Book III.

Gulliver, it seems, is writing with authority when he notes "how universally this Talent was spread of drawing Lectures in Morality," for printing had made books cheap and plentiful and Gulliver has come to Brobdingnag a well-read man: "My Hours of Leisure," he writes in the opening of Book One, "I spent in reading the best Authors, ancient and modern; being always provided with a good Number of Books." At the end of the fourth voyage, then, we leave Gulliver fending for himself against the inevitable pack of Moderns who in their optimism will "come last and lie uppermost."

The second invention to which Bacon attributes so much progress is that of gunpowder. Another Modern, this

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48 Wilson, p. 159.

49 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 20.
time a Frenchman, was later to argue that

as Philosophy is the noblest exercise of Man, so
Morality is the fairest part of Philosophy. . . .
The most excellent part of Morality is the Poli-
ticks, of which the noblest piece is the Art
Military, as Mechaniques are the noblest part of
this Art. . . . Since then the Gun is without
dispute the goodliest part of the Mechanicks, it
follows that the Gun and its Invention is the
goodliest thing in the World."\(^{50}\)

Modern arguments that gunpowder was a humane and beneficial
invention, attesting to the superiority of modern times
over ancient ones and to the idea of progress, followed
these general lines: that gunpowder with all its noise and
terror would prevent war, that it saved lives by reducing
the number of those engaged in battle, that it would insure
the safety of Christian lives and values and would extend
those values to the rest of the world, that it would allow
for righteous expansion and allow for the increase of know-
ledge acquired from the natural phenomena of hitherto un-
explored lands, that it was tangible evidence of God's
presence on earth just as thunder and lightning are evidence
of God's presence in the sky.\(^{51}\)

Gulliver exhibits this modern sort of enthusiasm for
the benefits of gunpowder. He delivers an encomium on gun-
powder before the King of Brobdingnag, with the King's response
being such as to make the reader aware that what is being
praised is unworthy of the praise. Swift uses the King to

\(^{50}\text{Quoted in Wolper, p. 594.}\)

\(^{51}\text{Wolper, pp. 595-597.}\)
make it clear to the reader that Gulliver’s speech falls within the category of the paradoxical encomium. Some of the benefits of gunpowder, according to Gulliver, include the fact that the largest cannon balls would not only destroy whole ranks of an army at once, but batter the strongest walls to the ground, sink down ships, with a thousand men in each, to the bottom of the sea; and when linked together by a chain, would cut through masts and rigging; divide hundreds of bodies in the middle and lay all waste before them... [or] destroy the whole metropolis, if ever it should pretend to dispute his absolute commands. This [Gulliver writes] I humbly offered to his Majesty as a small tribute of acknowledgment in return of so many marks that I had received of his royal favour and protection. 52

The topic of warfare had been dealt with before by paradoxical encomiasts, 53 but here as elsewhere in the Travels Swift has embedded his paradoxes in the very fabric of the narrative. The Brobdingnagian King’s reaction to Gulliver’s praise of gunpowder is an implied attack on Swift’s part upon the Modern’s optimistic belief that inventions automatically bring progress:

Some evil genius, [the King tells Gulliver] enemy to mankind, must have been the first contriver. As for himself, he protested that although few things delighted him so much as new discoveries in art or in nature; yet he would rather lose half his kingdom than be privy to such a secret. 54

52 Gulliver’s Travels, p. 134.


54 Gulliver’s Travels, p. 135.
The rhetorical effect of this exchange between Gulliver and the King is not only to persuade the reader, if not Gulliver, that the Moderns are not justified in their claim to superiority in this matter of the invention of gunpowder, but also to persuade the reader that he needs to examine his own attitudes in light of what Martin Price describes as Gulliver's "naive readiness [here] to assume that power confers right."\(^55\) It is this assumption that is expressed by Gulliver when the King rejects the secret of gunpowder that Gulliver offers him: "A strange Effect of narrow Principles and short Views!" Gulliver writes, "that a Prince... should from a nice unnecessary Scruple, whereof in Europe we can have no Conception, let slip an Opportunity put into his Hands, that would have made him absolute Master of the Lives, the Liberties and the Fortunes of his People."\(^56\) If one is "progressing," Swift seems to be saying here, one needs to examine carefully what it is one is "progressing" towards.

Gulliver does not blame the King for his narrow principles. The Brobdingnagians, after all, have not, as Gulliver says, "reduced Politics into a Science, as the more acute Wits of Europe have done," "reduced" politics, that is, by way of "several Thousand Books among us [the Europeans]


\(^{56}\)Martin Price, To the Palace of Wisdom: 
A Energy from Dryden to Blake (Garden C
written upon the Art of Government.  

But the King's "narrow principles" do not get through to Gulliver, for during his stay in Houyhnhnmland he again waxes enthusiastic over the benefits of gunpowder before his Master Houyhnhnm:

I could not forbear [Gulliver writes] shaking my Head and smiling a little at his Ignorance [of modern warfare]. And, being no Stranger to the Art of War, I gave him a Description of Cannons, Culverins, Muskets, Carabines, Pistols, Bullets, Powder, . . . Undermines, Countermines, Bombardments. And, to set forth the Valour of my own dear Countrymen, I assured him, that I had seen them blow up a Hundred Enemies at once in a Siege, and as many in a Ship; and beheld the dead Bodies drop down in pieces from the Clouds, to the great Diversion of all the Spectators.  

Concerning this encomium, James John Stathis writes, "Gulliver's praises are leprous. They infect everything, and human heroism is reduced to childish barbarism." Rendered in terms of paradox, Stathis's comment would reflect the equation between Gulliver's concept of human heroism and received opinion regarding that same heroism, whereas Swift is working contrary to that opinion.

C. J. Rawson believes that the rhetorical effect of the passage is more a function of logical than emotional appeal. He contends that the humor derives from what he

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57 Gulliver's Travels, p. 135.  
58 Gulliver's Travels, p. 247.  
calls the concreteness with which Gulliver generalizes, the entranced particularity with which he evokes not a real battle which happened but some sort of common denominator of war. . . . [T]here can be no question of Gulliver’s folly . . . seriously attenuating the point about war and attitudes to war which the passage makes: one [effect]. . . . is to remove Swift’s angry attack from the plane of rant. Yet we are not . . . very actively horrified at Gulliver’s feelings. . . . There is a detachment of the character from what he reveals to us . . . which the humour here reinforces. We think less about Gulliver than about war, and what Swift is telling us about our attitudes to it. The message is disturbing, and for all the fun, Swift is not, anymore than elsewhere, being very friendly.60

Gulliver’s encomium on war, furthermore, has an additional and dramatic rhetorical effect by increasing Master Houyhnhnm’s abhorrence of mankind, so that he tells Gulliver, in what seems to be another attempt on Swift’s part at logical persuasion,

when a Creature pretending to Reason, could be capable of such Encounters, he dreaded lest the Corruption of that Faculty, might be worse than Brutality itself. He seemed therefore confident, that instead of Reason, we were only possessed of some Quality fitted to increase our natural Vices.61

The effect of Gulliver’s travels on his convictions finally becomes evident here, for Gulliver at last admits, after these conversations with Master Houyhnhnm, that “the many


61 Gulliver’s Travels, p. 248.
Virtues of those excellent Quadrupeds placed in opposite View of Corruptions [which Gulliver had up to this point labeled as "the Valour of my own dear Countrymen"], had so far opened mine Eyes, and enlarged my Understanding, that I began to view the Actions and Passions of Man in a very different human Light; and to think the Honour of my own Kind not worth managing."^2

It was, according to J. B. Bury, the exploration of the earth, spurred on and facilitated by the invention of the compass, that impressed Francis Bacon most of all.63 Bacon suggested that

this improvement of navigation may give us great hopes of extending and improving the sciences, especially as it seems agreeable to the Divine will that they should be coeval. Thus the prophet Daniel foretells, that "Many shall go to and fro on the earth, and knowledge shall be increased."64

Thus the compass became for the Moderns a tool of Christianity as can be seen from a statement by John Edwards, a Calvinistic minister of the Anglican Church who toward the end of the seventeenth century became an influential figure among highly conservative religious laymen:

By the help of this Invention, [Edwards wrote] we have the Advantage of propagating the Gospel, and spreading the saving Knowledge of the True God, and of his son Jesus Christ throughout the

^2Gulliver's Travels, p. 258.
^3Bury, p. 54.
^4Advancement of Learning, p. 111.
World. The improvement of Navigation may be serviceable to this great and excellent End; yea, we hope it is partly so already, the New Voyages and Discoveries being a happy Introduction to the Conversion of the Gentiles.65

For Edwards the mariner's compass, by reason of which "un-speakable Advantages have accrued to Mankind," was simply more evidence that progress and not degeneration is the principle governing human intellects.66

Joseph Glanvill, a latitudinarian divine of the Anglican Church who had been influenced by Bacon, also championed the Modern cause and in Plus Ultra, or the Progress and Advancement of Knowledge since the Days of Aristotle (1668) wrote: "By the gaining that mighty Continent [North and South America], and the numerous fruitful Isles beyond the Atlantick . . . that Science also may at last travel into those parts, and inrich Peru with a more precious Treasure than that of its golden Mines, is not improbable."67 Part of the title of this work seems to have been inspired by Bacon who had written, "These times . . . may justly use not only plus ultra [that is, much further] where the ancients used non plus ultra."68 Just how far Swift consi-

65John Edwards, A Compleat History or Survey of all the Dispensations and Methods of Religion (London, 1699), II, 624.
67Joseph Glanvill, Plus Ultra, or the Progress and Advancement of Knowledge since the Days of Aristotle (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1958), pp. 81-82.
68Advancement of Learning, p. 111.
ders the "Peruvians" of the world to have been enriched as a result of the compass and the extensive navigation and exploration that followed remains to be developed.

In countering arguments such as those by the Moderns we have looked at, Sir William Temple may well have laid out a plan of attack for Swift in Gulliver's Travels when he wrote: "The greatest modern inventions seem to be those of the loadstone and gunpowder; by the first whereof navigation must be allowed to have been much improved and extended; and by the last, the art military . . . to have been wholly changed; yet 'tis agreed, I think, that the Chinese have had the knowledge and use of gunpowder many ages before it came into Europe; and besides, both these have not served for any common or necessary use to mankind; one having been employed for their destruction, not their preservation; and the other only to feed their avarice, or increase their luxury." It is an acknowledgement not of any real progress that man has made since the ancient Greeks and Romans but rather of a pessimism about man's ability to improve his lot in life; to describe modern man's pursuits as motivated by a desire to feed his avarice is to suggest either that man has not changed or that he has degenerated.

It is this pessimism about the present and future of mankind that pervades Gulliver's attitude in the final chapter.

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of his *Travels*. Earlier Gulliver had shown that enthusiasm for printing and gunpowder which had been voiced by other Moderns. But in the end, finally, Gulliver more of a Modern now than ever by reason of his advanced age (it is the Moderns according to Bacon who are the ancients, who live in the old age of the world and are themselves old for this reason) becomes an Ancient by reason of his loss of optimism, his lack of faith in the idea of progress. Gulliver has traveled into the darkness of the human heart and he despairs. Modern inventions such as the compass, Gulliver implies at the end, have not brought the progress that earlier he had believed in so strongly. And so he writes:

> I had another Reason which made me less forward to enlarge His Majesty's Dominions by my Discoveries: To say the Truth, I had conceived a few scruples with relation to the distributive Justice of Princes upon those Occasions. For Instance, A Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast; they go on shore to rob and plunder ... [T]hey give the Country a new Name, they take formal Possession of it for the King. ... Here commences a new Dominion acquired with a Title by Divine Right. Ships are sent ... the Natives ... destroyed ... a free Licence given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust ... And this execrable Crew of Butchers employed in so pious an Expedition, is a modern Colony sent to civilize an idolatrous and barbarous People.70

The attitude behind this indictment of man's depravity sends Gulliver, now back home in England, out to the stables at least four hours a day to converse with two young horses he

70 *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 294.
bought to keep him company.

This involvement on Gulliver's part with animal life suggests another way in which a reversal of Bacon's paradox has occurred in the *Travels*, whereby Gulliver, rather than moving from youth to old age, has moved more and more toward what Bacon called the youth of the world, its primitive stage. The Modern understanding of the nature of life in its primitive stage can be seen in the writings of Jean Bodin, for example, a French historian of the sixteenth century who followed in the footsteps of the Ancient Greek Epicureans in rejecting the theory of degeneration and holding instead to the idea that in those ages designated as gold and silver mankind existed on the level of the wild beast, a stage out of which it has gradually evolved.\(^1\) This particular conception of primitive human existence is not to be confused with that Stoic belief in an animal-like primitive simplicity which man, according to the Senecan paradox, lost through degeneration as he developed.\(^2\)

This latter belief in human degeneration resembles in part the Biblical story which Swift espoused and which we see expressed in Sir William Temple's essay "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or, Of Gardening, in the Year 1685"

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when he writes: "If we believe the Scripture, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of a man in a garden the happiest he could give him; or else he would not have placed Adam in that of Eden; that it was the state of innocence and pleasure; and that the life of husbandry and cities came after the fall, with guilt and with labour."  

There is Swift, moreover, who writes in "Further Thoughts on Religion" that

the Scripture-system of man's creation, is what Christians are bound to believe, and seems most agreeable of all others to probability and reason. . . . [B]efore his [Adam's] fall, the beasts were his most obedient subjects. . . . After his eating the forbidden fruit, the course of nature was changed, the animals began to reject his government. . . . [T]he first [monarch] was Nimrod, the mighty hunter, who . . . made men, and not beasts, his prey. For men were easier caught by promises, and subdued by the folly and treachery of their own species. . . . Lions, bears . . . and their species never degenerates [sic] in their native soil . . . . But men degenerate every day, merely by the folly, the perverseness, the avarice, the tyranny, the pride, the treachery, or inhumanity of their own kind.  

Z. S. Fink sees Swift's belief in deteriorationism as a motif running through the Travels and as "one of the two or three most persistent motifs in the whole book."  

In support of this contention Fink provides the following

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73Sir William Temple, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus" in Five Miscellaneous Essays, p. 11.

74Jonathan Swift, "Further Thoughts on Religion" in Prose Works, IX, 264.

summary evidence: In Book I Gulliver, when describing the laudable customs of the Lilliputians, explains that he is talking only about "the original Institutions and not the most scandalous Corruptions into which these People are fallen by the degenerate Nature of Man."  

In Book II the Brobdingnagian king, at the end of Gulliver's panegyric of England, says that he observes "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."  

In Book III deteriorationism is implied, according to Pink, in the comparison of a Roman Senate and the English Parliament, and it is made explicit as Gulliver calls up further shades of departed heroes and an old English yeoman. . . . In Gulliver's first flush of enthusiasm for the struldbruggs [sic] he considers it one of their advantages that they could observe "the several gradations by which corruption steals into the world, and oppose it at every step."  

In Book IV one of the theories advanced to explain the origin of the Yahooes is that they have degenerated from cast-aways Europeans.

Pink contends that Swift used deteriorationism, in Gulliver's Travels and elsewhere, to argue in behalf of the mixed or balanced state because he believed that the best government was one in which the three elements of society, monarchical, .

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76 Gulliver's Travels, p. 60.
77 Gulliver's Travels, p. 132.
78 Pink, p. 161, n. 34.
aristocratic, and democratic, existed in equilibrium. Swift used deteriorationism, then, as an argument against just that kind of thinking which the Moderns had exhibited in their belief in progress, in their optimism for the future of man, a belief whose consequences Swift felt would lead ultimately to that democratic chaos dramatized by the modern projectors of the Academy of Lagado on the Island of Balnibarbi in Book III.

Yet, while deteriorationism may be a constant, persistent motif running through the Travels, there is a sense in which Gulliver’s account of his travels and of himself as a participant in the drama of those travels moves out of a modern optimism about the nature of man toward that pessimistic deteriorationism which Fink writes about. In turning to the primitive simplicity of the Houyhnhnms as his ideal society, Gulliver turns also to an acceptance of the idea of the degeneration of man because by accepting the Houyhnhnms as an ideal Gulliver also accepts the Yahoos as the reality to which man has degenerated. (Gulliver’s Master Houyhnhnm affirms a traditional belief that “the two Yahoos said to be first seen among them [the Houyhnhnms], had been driven thither over the Sea; that coming to Land, and being forsaken by their Companions, they retired to the Mountains, and degenerating by Degrees, became in Process of Time, much

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79 Fink, pp. 151ff.
80 See Rawson, pp. 75-76.
more savage than those of their own species in the Country from whence these two Originals came.")

To hold to the idea of human degeneration as Gulliver does in the end, however, is contrary to Modernism; but by the Moderns' own standards Gulliver cannot be faulted for doing so because he comes to this final philosophical resting place, so to speak, in the most recent time, that is, in the old age of the world where as an Ancient now Gulliver is wiser than all his Modern predecessors. He is at one and the same time the most Ancient of Moderns and the most Modern of Ancients. Swift has applied Bacon's paradox to Gulliver (that antiquity is the youth of the world) and in doing so turned the guns of the Moderns against themselves. For Swift has locked the Moderns into a Socratic paradox: Gulliver's adherence to the cause of the Ancients in their espousal of the idea of deteriorationism cannot be rejected by the Moderns unless they deny a major premise of theirs that the last in time shall be the most knowledgeable in truth. Swift has used the satiric paradox embedded in the fabric of events in the Travels to argue the self-contradictory nature of Modernism. Once an age rejects the idea of progress, it, being the latest and therefore according to the Moderns the wisest age because of the very progress which it rejects, destroys the Modern argument for progress even though the rejection of progress itself may be a sort

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81 Gulliver's Travels, p. 272.
of progress. Once Swift has made his reader recognize the contradiction, however, the rhetorical battle with the Moderns is won because the Moderns have been effectively locked within a circular paradox, leaving them, within the rhetorical framework of the Travels at least, without hope of extrication.

Sir William Temple in "Some Thoughts upon Reviewing the Essay of Ancient and Modern Learning" was to play upon a note that was later to be echoed thematically through the Travels and emphasized with crescendo effect in the very last paragraph when Gulliver writes:

But the Houyhnhnms, who live under the Government of Reason, are no more proud of the good qualities they possess, than I should be for not wanting a Leg or an Arm, which no Man in his Wits would boast of, although he must be miserable without them. I dwell the longer upon this subject from the Desire I have to make the Society of an English Yahoo by any means not insupportable; and therefore I here intreat those who have any Tincture of this absurd Vice, that they will not presume to appear in my Sight.32

Gulliver's finale here takes on added significance if read in the light of the quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns, if, that is, the Houyhnhnms are taken as the ancient ideal of primitive simplicity, while the English Yahoos and Gulliver represent Modernism. The theme is pride, and Temple had earlier attacked the Moderns for this very vice: "One great difference must be confessed between the ancient and modern

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32 Gulliver's Travels, p. 296.
learning: theirs led them to a sense and acknowledgment of their own ignorance, the imbecility of human understanding, the incomprehension even of things about us, as well as those above us; . . . ours leads us to presumption, and vain ostentation of the little we have learned, and makes us think we do, or shall know, not only all natural, but even what we call supernatural things; all in the heavens, as well as upon earth, more than all mortal men have known before our age; and shall know in time as much as angels." Temple's attack on the prideful presumption of Modernism provides an added dimension of meaning, then, when Gulliver ironically entreats those who have the least tincture of pride "that they will not presume [italics added] to appear" in his sight. The sin of presumption is all the more Gulliver's sin for his presuming an angelic-like innocence that he would deny to his fellow man. This is reinforced by his opening comments in his letter to Symson that he has removed, he says, those habits which he labels "infernal."

In reverting to the ancient simplicities of prelapsarian man, that condition of man before Adam's fall which Swift briefly describes in his "Further Thoughts on Religion" (see above p. 155), Gulliver seems to be trying to escape the fall and its consequences, human degeneration. Moral degeneration may have its physical counterpart in the illnesses that are discussed especially in Book IV. Steward

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LaCasce, in locating the medical aspects of the *Travels* within the context of the Ancient-Modern controversy, distinguishes between the two sides: one side the Houyhnhnms "who seem to represent the classical ideal of allowing nature to follow its own course"; the other side "the disease-ridden human beings that Gulliver describes who force nature out of her seat and then try to restore the balance by artificial means." The artificial means involve a theory concerning the underlying cause of all disease and its universal cure. Thus while Gulliver's fellow Modern physicians seek a universal cure for man's physical ills, those moral physicians whom Gulliver as a Modern represents also search for a universal remedy of man's moral ills.

In this Gulliver seems also to be following the Baconian dictum in trying to become the maker of his own fortune, to insure his own salvation by judging for himself the moral condition of his soul. Swift, employing his characteristic satiric irony to the very end of the *Travels*, insures the absurdity of Gulliver's project, a scheme whereby through an act of will the Moderns, following Gulliver's example, can annihilate hell by eliminating any need for it.

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85 See *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 253-254. For an extended discussion of the medical aspects of the Ancient-Modern controversy in *Gulliver's Travels*, see LaCasce, 599-606. The evidence points again toward a narrative movement from Modern to Ancient (see especially LaCasce, p. 605).
and thereby revert to that most ancient of all times before man had fallen from grace.

Gulliver's example, however, is hardly persuasive; it is more counter-productive, rather, for the Modern cause. But it is not Gulliver's example that Swift was arguing in behalf of; and even though Swift and the Ancients finally lost their battle with the Moderns, Gulliver's Travels can be seen as a rhetorically effective holding action against the onrush of Modernity and those paradoxes like "Antiquitas saeculi..." which envisioned a life of unimpeded progress for the human race.

If, as Joseph J. Moldenhauer maintains, "the first rhetorical function of paradox is to make the audience entertain a crucial doubt," then Bacon's paradox had helped the Modern cause to succeed in this, that the traditional sources of truth and authority as they had been handed down from antiquity were considerably undermined during the seventeenth century. Swift's strategy involved not only an attack upon the paradox itself by means of a sustained fiction that embodies the paradox and moves it toward an absurdity that is itself paradoxical, that is, seemingly self-contradictory, but also an attack upon the arguments, such as the benefits of Modern inventions, which helped to sustain the paradox. As Gordon McKenzie has noted, "one of the many

paradoxes about Swift is that a man who disliked his society so intensely should at the same time wish so intensely to preserve the social order. It needed only a purge, not a revolution." Bacon and his Modern followers represented that revolution, a threat that had been ominously present for a hundred years when Swift entered the battle. The battle between Ancient and Modern was tremendously significant for Swift and his age; but the tide had apparently already turned against the Ancients, for within approximately sixty years after *Gulliver's Travels* appeared the French Revolution had given the Moderns an important victory.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The rationale of this study has been the idea that by using one necessarily limited analytical method, one can separate out and isolate for closer examination important techniques of artistry that reveal probable strategies and themes of a writer and his work. More specifically, by examining from a rhetorical point of view some of the paradoxes used by Swift in Gulliver's Travels, I have tried to discover the probable rhetorical strategies that affected the employment of paradox in the Travels.

We have seen, for example, how "A Letter from Capt. Gulliver, to His Cousin Sympson" works rhetorically to establish ethical appeal for Gulliver as the fictional author of Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, only to have Swift as implied author undercut that appeal by means of the loose mock panegyric or paradoxical encomium that pervades the letter. Gulliver tries to inspire the reader with confidence in his believeability and good character, but Swift employs paradox satirically to attack Gulliver's
visionary schemes for the moral reformation of man. These schemes are for Swift not only inadequate but dangerous because they rely upon an unassisted self-esteem for the redemption of mankind from his essentially corrupt nature.

The Liar paradox as employed by Swift in the *Travels* is also used to undermine confidence in Gulliver's simplistic reforms and in his alleged dedication to truth. To the extent that it is directed at an audience already corrupted by original sin, it is particularly persuasive because of the difficulty if not impossibility which the paradox presents of distinguishing truth from falsehood, appearance from reality. Once fully aware of the problem, we as audience can hardly presume that visionary schemes, whether ours or schemes of other reformers, are not merely the results of pride and of a willful desire to impose our ideas upon a world where there is no certitude that those ideas are not merely reflections of "the Thing which was not." Thus, Swift's paradoxes convince us of our own frailty and of the need for flexible minds as a specific remedy for the disease of intellectual rigidity. In trying to resolve the contradictions inherent in the Liar paradox, the reader, if in so doing he achieves a modicum of success, is forced by Swift to dissect the supposed framework of his thinking and to discover that logic and reason are not the bulwarks of human understanding that so many divines and philosophers of Swift's age have thought them to be. The Liar paradox is particularly well suited for this purpose.
because the consequences of this paradox are embodied in
Gulliver's state of mind, reflecting as it does the failure
of that human understanding which is not assisted by divine
revelation. Gulliver in his determination to sacrifice all
to truth must by logical necessity also sacrifice that truth
on whose behalf all is sacrificed. The paradox involves
the rhetoric of self-deception, but there is a guileless
quality about Gulliver's rhetoric which belies its complexity
and would ensnare that reader who yearns for the same simpli-
cities that Gulliver discovers in Houyhnhnmland. It is for
this reason that Swift through paradox must subvert the
ethical proofs as a strategy of insuring distance between
the fictional author Gulliver and his audience.

Emotional, pathetic appeal seems to underlie
Swift's strategy when he has Gulliver deliver an encomium
of England before the King of Brobdingnag, an encomium
that the King renders paradoxical when he concludes the
bulk of the English "to be the most pernicious Race of
little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl
upon the Surface of the Earth." If there is some truth
to the King's indictment, then the reader's response is
one of fear, for how, he must ask himself, can he claim to
be the exception rather than the rule. The answer that
Swift supplies is to be found again in Gulliver who has
done just that: "I was able in the Compass of two Years
(although I confess with the utmost Difficulty) to remove
that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and
Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the Europeans." If the reader, in other words, is to escape the King's general condemnation, he will have pronounced judgment upon himself as Gulliver does; but the very pronouncement that frees him from the prospect of an afterlife in the infernal regions, because it is based on a pride even more damnable than lying and shuffling, paradoxically renders his soul all the more subject to those very regions.

Thus, the inherent pessimism of the King's statement reflects, I believe, rhetorical strategies at the heart of Gulliver's Travels, strategies which bear upon the emotions of fear and hope. And Swift in the Travels as elsewhere uses these two emotions as mainsprings to move his reader toward a morality based on the restraints of future rewards and punishments. These emotional proofs, then, are designed to counter and thereby mitigate the influence of free thinkers like Anthony Collins who argued against the existence of an afterlife; but they are also the logical points of focus for one who preaches as Swift does in "The Testimony of Conscience" that "Fear and Hope are the two greatest natural Motives of all Men's Actions."

Swift thus uses emotional appeals in the Travels to argue persuasively in the Travels on behalf of that which he uses rational arguments for in his sermons. For the Augustinian Christian, particularly, the restraints imposed by belief in an afterlife of rewards and punishments are absolutely
necessary, if the social order is to be preserved.

It is a similar rhetorical strategy that Swift applies to Gulliver's encomium on immortality during his visit to Luggnagg: death becomes worthy of praise; and the paradox plays upon the reader's emotions by displacing the fear of death with another, much more awesome fear embodied in the Struldbrugs, the fear of an immortality of debilitating senility. Moreover, by moving the reader to respond with sympathy for Gulliver when Gulliver expresses a deep-seated desire for the fame that would result if his pleasing visions of immortal life were to be realized, Swift implicates the reader in Gulliver's own general condition, a very human condition marked by pride and the illusion of grandeur. The reader is then faced with an emotionally charged truth about himself and Gulliver, one that if Swift's rhetorical strategy succeeds forces the reader to reflect upon the corrupt, Gulliver-like qualities in his own inmost depths.

The use of paradox to provide rational proofs can be seen in Swift's attack on the Moderns throughout the Travels, an attack that provides a unifying thread through the four voyages. Gulliver in the beginning is full of the optimism of the Moderns; but he gradually loses this belief in the inevitability of moral progress and comes finally to despair of the human condition. In his old age Gulliver, the most Modern of authors becomes a satirically absurd reduction of one who espouses the cause of the Ancients.
The movement, then, of Gulliver's character through the four voyages resembles the movement suggested by Bacon's paradox. Antiquity is the youth of the world. Gulliver as he moves through time becomes the embodiment of that paradox, moving backward in time toward the ancients and the past rather than forward toward Modern utopia. Gulliver's story of his voyages moves inductively toward pessimism rather than toward greater optimism.

The paradoxical nature of the plotting of Gulliver's account of his voyages provides Swift with satiric ammunition against the Moderns (they are ultimately rejected by the most authoritative, because the latest, of their own), and this movement allows for further attacks upon Modern arguments on behalf of progress in the form of Modern inventions such as printing, gunpowder, and the compass. These attacks become more explicit the closer Gulliver moves toward his final resting place as the most Modern of ancients and the most Ancient of Moderns. Swift's strategy in this context then is to attempt, at the very least, a holding action against those tendencies of Modernism to replace the Christian concept of human nature with one that denies Original Sin and the existence of an afterlife. If Swift argued that man's nature was corrupt and degenerate, this degeneracy was reflected in the Modern's pride in denying his degeneracy; like the Liar paradox it was a condition that itself approached paradox.

We have been concerned in this study with the
paradoxes of Gulliver’s Travels as Swift used them for rhetorical purposes; and we can justifiably ask why this study of a persuasive strategy, if we ourselves are not persuaded by it? Why, in other words, should a work written over two hundred years ago and intended for an audience other than ourselves call upon and deserve our attention? In a particularly well-articulated response to this problem, Gerry H. Brookes writes:

The answer lies, I think, in the ability of certain works of persuasion to move men to a kind of momentary, imaginative belief... To be moved to imaginative (but nonetheless real) assent by such a work of persuasion is of permanent value because it is an act of sympathy. For a moment we see the world from an alien point of view, through a fellow man’s eyes... We see for a moment the consequences of belief and assess them for ourselves, for the speaker, and perhaps for all men. This imaginative insight may bring relief, elevation, or despair. Several conditions seem necessary for this experience to take place. We must feel that the truths of which we are being persuaded are significant, worthy at least of consideration. We are likely to think that they are significant if they relate to permanent problems. We must know either directly or intuitively that the truths have human consequences in the real world.¹

These truths, the truths of Gulliver’s Travels, have indeed had lasting significance since their appearance in print in 1726. Man is still looking to science and modern technology as evidence of his moral progress and as the means whereby he can someday achieve a utopia. Yet there are those among us Ancients of spirit still who would

¹Gerry H. Brookes, The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), pp. 181-182.
disabuse us of our visionary, utopian schemes. For example, those schemes are being challenged by the contemporary philosopher and political scientist Eric Voegelin when they fall within what Voegelin calls the "Gnostic paradise within." The fears and the concerns that dictated Swiftian strategy in Gulliver's Travels seem also to underlie Voegelin's contention that

the death of the spirit is the price of progress. Nietzsche revealed this mystery of the Western apocalypse when he announced that God was dead and that He had been murdered. This Gnostic murder is constantly committed by the men who sacrifice God to civilization.

For Voegelin, the struggle against gnosticism and its variant modern forms such as progressivism, idealism, positivism, and scientism has by no means been lost. "Even for our own Western society," Voegelin writes, "one can hardly do more than point to the fact that gnosticism, in spite of its noisy ascendency, does by far not have the field for itself; that the classic and Christian tradition of Western society is rather alive; that the building-up of spiritual and intellectual resistance against gnosticism in all its variants is a notable factor in our society." Voegelin believes that "gnosticism as a countereexistential dream world can perhaps be made intelligible as the extreme expression of an experience that is universally human, that is, of a horror of existence and a desire to escape from it." This latter problem is, of course, Gulliver's problem; and one thinks further of Gulliver and his talk of horses and ape-like
creatures he calls Houyhnhnms and Yahoos when Voegelin continues.

With radical immanentization the dream world has blended into the real world terminologically. The obsession of replacing the world of reality by the transfigured dream world has become the obsession of the one world in which the dreamers adopt the vocabulary of reality, while changing its meaning, as if the dream were reality.

And like Swift's rendering of the fate of Modernism in Gulliver's Travels Voegelin sees modern Gnostic politics as self-defeating "in the sense," Voegelin writes, "that measures which are intended to establish peace increase the disturbances that will lead to war." What Swift attacks as acts of conjuring on the part of the Moderns, Voegelin calls "magic operations in the dream world, such as disapproval, moral condemnation, declarations of intention," operations that remind us further of Gulliver's hopes to conjure into existence the fulfillment of what he calls "mine Intentions."²

The conflict, then, between conservative and liberal ideologists continues unabated. As we noted in a previous chapter, Ernst Curtius has pointed out that every age has had its battles between Ancients and Moderns. And central to those conflicts have been paradoxes, the weapons that in the hands of the Moderns overturn established truths in the form of received opinion. Swift's achievement, among others,

seems to be that in Gulliver's Travels the guns of paradox are effectively turned against the Moderns in whose arsenal they more rightfully belong.
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