

Introduction

Daniel Cook and Nicholas Seager

The hero of *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts* (1726), Lemuel Gulliver, was barely five years old when the plague of 1665 terrorised London in real life; six, when the Great Fire tore through the capital city. As a young man he trained in medicine at Leyden, in the same period that his creator, Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), had entered Trinity College Dublin as an undergraduate. The Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars lumbered on during Gulliver's youth. And he was still a teenager when the Exclusion Crisis alarmed Britain – Swift was barely twelve. As a twentysomething Gulliver would have heard a succession of major news stories about the death of Charles II, the Monmouth Rebellion, James II's deposition and exile, the accession of William and Mary, and the Battle of the Boyne, which scarred the Irish landscape and imagination. Swift, during this period, also entered his twenties, and would later reflect on these and many other events in his political pamphlets and histories. While Gulliver spent the early 1690s voyaging to the East and West Indies, his creator had settled in England, and undertook postgraduate studies at Oxford. By 1694, the landlubber Swift had returned to Ireland in pursuit of an ecclesiastical career. A year later, as a newly ordained priest, he became a prebendary at Kilroot near Belfast.

Increasingly restless, like Gulliver, Swift soon returned to England, where he spent the rest of the decade working as personal secretary in the grand rural home of Sir William Temple. At this time, Gulliver opened his own medical practice just north of the Thames, though it soon proved unsuccessful. (In the yet-to-be-fabricated world of *Gulliver's Travels*, meanwhile, war breaks out between Lilliput and Blefuscu.) Shortly after this, Gulliver survives a shipwreck on the unchartered coast of Lilliput, on 5 November 1699, after six months at sea. In the first of the four voyages that comprise his *Travels*, Gulliver resides for nearly two years among people only six inches tall. Back in the real world, Swift had joined the staff of the Earl of Berkeley by this point, roughly six months after the

death of his employer and friend, Temple. Six months after that, he took up a vicarship in County Meath, and then became a prebendary at St Patrick's Cathedral in his hometown, Dublin. When, in 1701, Gulliver summered in Blefuscu, Swift was back in England. Swift returned home in September while Gulliver was lost at sea, and then finally rescued by Captain Biddel. In February 1702, Swift gained the advanced degree of D.D. – Doctor of Divinity – at Trinity College Dublin and seemed set for advancement in the Church. Gulliver, meanwhile, could not slake a thirst for further travel overseas.

The author and his most famous character were both in England that April, but Gulliver had begun his second major voyage by June. This voyage proved particularly treacherous: after enduring storms and monsoons, the fantastical voyager finally landed in Brobdingnag almost exactly one year later. Giving *Gulliver's Travels* an extra whiff of historical veracity, the violence of the weather, which places Gulliver in a land of giants twelve times his height, roughly coincided with the Great Storm which struck Britain in November 1703. The fictional rebellion of Lindalino against Laputa, the flying island inhabited by abstract philosophers that Gulliver will encounter on his third voyage, coincided with the real Battle of Blenheim (1704), Marlborough's greatest victory over the French in the War of the Spanish Succession that had started in 1702. Gulliver would embark on that third voyage on 5 August 1706, just months before the ratification of the Anglo-Scottish parliamentary union. Although situated in south-east Asia, Laputa might feasibly be construed as an imaginary iteration of Ireland. Lindalino puns on the name Dublin (double-lin). On Ireland's behalf, Swift was dismayed by the Union. As he argued in a posthumously published religio-political fable, *The Story of the Injured Lady*, Ireland might have been the more logical partner for England. Written from the perspective of a woman (representing Ireland), the story mocks the rival mistress (representing Scotland), who is 'of a different Religion, being a Presbyterian of the most rank and virulent Kind'. More egregiously, the rival enters into a union with the wealthy Gentleman (representing England) though 'she still beareth him an invincible Hatred; revileth him to his Face, and railleth at him in all Companies'. Growing 'pale and thin with Grief and ill Usage' after being spurned, the Injured Lady wastes away.¹ Channelling Swift's increased Hibernian pride,

¹ Jonathan Swift, *Irish Tracts 1720–1723 and Sermons*, ed. Louis Landa (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), 3–9 (4).

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the residents of Lindalino take matters into their own hands by rebelling against Laputa.

On a more personal level, Gulliver, like Swift, seemed unsettled in the new century. During its first decade, both creator and creation flitted to different destinations: Swift back and forth between Ireland and England, Gulliver, in the remainder of the third part of his *Travels*, to Luggnagg, and even as far away as Japan, despite the Emperor's pronounced distrust of Europeans. The 1710s were no less restless for Gulliver, who, within five months of returning to England, took his fourth and most shocking voyage. After being marooned by his mutinous crew, he eventually arrived in Houyhnhnm-land on 9 May 1711, where he encounters rational horses and is himself categorized as a Yahoo, one of the bestial humanoid creatures that the Houyhnhnms have struggled to domesticate (and which they consider exterminating). In the real world, Swift was working as a propagandist for the government of Robert Harley, who was ennobled as the Earl of Oxford and made Lord Treasurer on 23 May 1711. Swift revelled in the role until the ignominious fall of the leader and the death of Queen Anne in August 1714. Before then, Swift batted away Harley's enemies in vicious prose and verse satires, and even foiled the Bandbox Plot, an attempted assassination of the Lord Treasurer. Gulliver during this time had become a self-loathing disciple of the Houyhnhnms. Even though they dubbed him a 'gentle' Yahoo in recognition of his apparent advantages over the native species, the Houyhnhnms ultimately dismiss Gulliver from their austere utopia on 31 December 1714. Gulliver's long, celebratory accounts of military conflict, the nefarious practices of the legal profession, and other mainstays of European society had proven too much for an intelligent if unimaginative race for whom lying does not exist (*the thing which was not*). Swift sailed for Dublin in August 1714, before the Hanoverian King George I arrived from Germany, and commenced a six-year abstinence from publishing.

Gulliver was back in England by December 1715, just after the surrender at Preston of Jacobite rebels, whose uprising sought to restore the House of Stuart. Unable to settle among his own kind, Gulliver spent the rest of the decade penning his account, evidently changed by his extraordinary experiences and yet reluctant to concede his own monstrosity. After all, to the Lilliputians he is a murderous giant akin to a one-man plague, to the Brobdingnagians he is vermin, and to the Houyhnhnms he may be worse than a Yahoo. The Houyhnhnm-land Yahoos do not hide their nakedness, for one thing, and a smidgen of rationality could prove dangerous were the interloper to incite an uprising. Circumstances had taken Gulliver the

English sea captain and Swift the Irish churchman in vastly different directions. Swift had in June 1713 been installed as Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, putting an end to any lingering hopes of securing a position in the Church of England. Apart from occasional trips back to England, including the trip to deliver the manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*, Dean Swift spent the rest of his life in Dublin, reinventing himself as a Hibernian patriot through a series of potent political pamphlets and economic satires. Politics *always* mattered to Swift. As the Dean, though, his satire became even sharper, less guarded, and more socially driven. A court favourite of sorts under Queen Anne, he faced a much riskier future under George I. His reputed authorship of a potentially blasphemous satire, *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), caused hushed alarm among religious figures, and even the queen. A decade later, his attack on the Whig opposition, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (1714), was declared seditious and libellous because of some animadversions on Scotland, and rendered him *persona non grata* when the Whigs swept to power in 1715. Some commentators even implicated Swift in various Jacobite plots against the state. The treatment of Swift's friend Bishop Francis Atterbury, who was put on trial and exiled in 1722–3, offered a chastening example of how Tory churchmen might fare in the new Hanoverian regime.

That political uncertainty did not hinder Swift's increased attention to Irish affairs. In 1724–5, while finishing his first draft of *Gulliver's Travels*, he composed and published (at his own expense, for a wider circulation) *The Drapier's Letters*. Across five epistolary commentaries on Irish manufacture – the Wood coinage scandal, among other things – Swift as M. B. Drapier attacked the British government's abuse of the people of Ireland. A bounty of £300 (the same as for *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs* a decade earlier) was offered to anyone who could expose the identity of the Drapier. Swift's authorship of the *Letters* had become an open secret, but few, if any, dared to name and shame the Dean. Created a freeman of the City of Dublin the following April, Swift enjoyed greater local esteem than ever before. While keeping up with his day job and other writing tasks, Swift worked quickly and with renewed vigour in Dublin. He had completed Part IV of *Gulliver's Travels* by January 1724, before turning to Part III. The full manuscript appears to have been finished by 14 August 1725.² Corrections kept the author occupied over the next few weeks: 'I have employd my time (besides ditching) in finishing correcting, amending, and Transcribing my Travells, in four parts Compleat newly Augmented, and intended for the

² Swift to Charles Ford, 14 August 1725, *Correspondence*, II, 586.

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press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a Printer shall be found brave enough to venture his Eares'.³ That brave publisher would be the thirty-two-year-old Benjamin Motte Jr, who was quietly enlisted to the project by Swift's friends in London during August 1726. Roughly two and a half months after receiving the full manuscript, Motte and a team operating independently across five different printing houses produced the book on 28 October in two standard-sized, octavo volumes, at the hefty price of eight shillings and sixpence.⁴ It quickly sold out.

Two more octavo editions followed within the next two months. In December, John Hyde brought out a Dublin edition in duodecimo (a smaller, cheaper format) that introduced minor alterations supplied by Swift. Back in London, in 1727, Motte hurriedly issued another two editions, one referred to as the 'Second' edition on the title page, in the usual octavo size, and one in duodecimo. Evidently, Motte was not afraid of losing his ears over sedition – but he did want to cut the text. The Reverend Andrew Tooke, a schoolteacher with a financial interest in the business, advised the publisher to censor overt criticisms of the government and to insert a new passage praising the late queen.⁵ Resetting the text, Motte's team corrected numerous errors identified by Swift and his circle but retained many of Tooke's alterations. With Charles Ford's help, Swift took the opportunity to update the work yet more substantially for George Faulkner's 1735 *Works of J. S., D.D., D.S.P.D.*, the 'official' multivolume edition of Swift's writings printed in Dublin. Faulkner probably used the first 1726 edition as his basic copy text for *Gulliver's Travels*, but the new version looks markedly different, not just typographically; even the portrait of Gulliver and the maps were redrawn. Faulkner issued a revised edition in 1738.

Modern editors (and commentators) typically use the 1735 Faulkner edition, as Swift seems to have had greater involvement in its production. 'Authoritative' implies singularity, even finality, but the Faulkner publication presents a version of the work that relied on multiple sources. (Amid the hustle and bustle of the printer's workshop, the team also endorsed old slips, or introduced new ones.) Reversing Tooke's censorship, in any case, would remove only in part, and messily, material consumed by many readers.⁶

³ Swift to Alexander Pope, 29 September 1725, *Correspondence*, II, 606.

⁴ Michael Treadwell, 'Observations on the Printing of Motte's Octavo Editions of *Gulliver's Travels*', in *Münster* 3, 157–77.

⁵ Michael Treadwell, 'Benjamin Motte, Andrew Tooke and *Gulliver's Travels*', in *Münster* 1, 287–304.

⁶ On Motte and Tooke's alterations, and other textual matters, see James McLaverty, 'The Revision of the First Edition of *Gulliver's Travels*: Book-Trade Context, Interleaving, Two Cancels, and a Failure to Catch', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 106 (2012), 5–35.

Regardless of Swift's role, Faulkner would have had to make quick adjustments using the materials and tools available to him. Literature might be written for a target audience, or for the ages, but books are produced for a marketplace under specific conditions. Far less squeamish than Motte and Tooke, the Dublin-based bookseller sensibly kept the Lindalino Rebellion (II, iii) and other passages off the page. Swift may have had an ideal version of *Gulliver's Travels* in mind during the overlapping periods of composition and production and reproduction, over thirteen years or more, but so did Faulkner and the other agents of the book trade who worked on it. Tellingly, Swift took pains to locate Ford's interleaved copy as late as October 1733, suggesting the author felt the amendments still had significant editorial value at the time.

Ostensibly an aggravated justification for the new version of the text, Swift added in 1735 an 'Advertisement' and 'A Letter from Capt. Gulliver, to his Cousin Sympson', both of which include famous in-character attacks on Motte's treatment of the manuscript, as well as a commentary on *Gulliver's Travels* as a print event. Gulliver draws attention to unofficial sequels and extensions, even while disavowing their authorship. Criticising the 'mangled' Motte version, along with the derivatives proliferating across the marketplace, is all part of the same textual game. Throughout the book itself, our narrator keeps alluding to unwritten memoirs and treatises, as well as passages cut short (for now, at least). The new prefatory materials also alter our view of Gulliver the character. Can the man tortured in Lilliput and Brobdingnag ever be in his right mind again? Perhaps his account of all the voyages becomes increasingly compromised by the misanthropy developed by the end; or perhaps the whole book is the product of a delusional scribbler? In real life the experienced author certainly shrouded the origins of the book in mystery, arranging for intermediaries to transcribe and drop off the manuscript in London after he had retreated to Dublin, and using the alter ego Richard Sympson in correspondence.⁷ There was method in the madness.

An at turns humorous and harrowing indictment of human behaviour, *Gulliver's Travels* has been reinterpreted in many different ways. Divided into four parts (appropriately enough, after the structure of *Gulliver's Travels* itself), this collection maps out a range of intellectual and generic contexts, examines pertinent passages in each of the four parts of Swift's text, and

⁷ See Stephen Karian, 'The Texts of *Gulliver's Travels*', in *Les voyages de Gulliver: Mondes lointains ou mondes proches*, ed. Daniel Carey and François Boulaire (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2002), 35–50.

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explores the work's critical and creative receptions. Part I, 'Contexts', comprises four chapters. Joseph Hone demonstrates that contemporary political controversies over the nature and conduct of government run through the text. Ian Higgins attends to the subtleties of contemporary religio-political controversy that seeped into the satirist's thinking over the years, as evident in the many biblical analogies, allusions, and phrases that pervade the book, despite Gulliver's apparent lack of faith in God's mercy. Liz Bellamy addresses Swift's portrayal of bodies and gender, including Gulliver's monstrous maleness in Lilliput and the grotesqueness of the Brobdingnagian women. And Gregory Lynall considers the range of scientific writings with which Swift engaged, often abrasively, here and elsewhere, teasing out positions Swift takes on empiricism and empire.

Part II, 'Genres', places the text within several generic contexts. Addressing the ongoing concern about the validity of classifying *Gulliver's Travels* as a 'novel', J. A. Downie draws on contemporary works by Daniel Defoe and Mary Davys, among others, to reveal common narrative strategies to which readers would have been alert. Reading *Gulliver's Travels* within an expanded purview of imaginary voyages, most notably Lucian's *True History* and its many modern imitations, does not detract from its fictionality. On the contrary, such a purview enhances Swift's complex gamesmanship. Pat Rogers stabilises our understanding of the different satirical models at play while unlocking the sheer pervasiveness of it in the book's form, plotlines, narrative style, language, allusions and, above all, its purposeful humour. Paddy Bullard makes the case for reading *Gulliver's Travels* as a philosophical tale. Beyond the farcical physics or absurd humour, each voyage raises profound questions about how we perceive and understand the world. Such explorations, as Bullard shows, even trouble our everyday assumptions about what is hugely significant or minutely trivial within it. Dirk F. Passmann grounds the book among a proliferation of sincere and fantastical travel writing in the period. After all, Swift had been interested in travel literature since at least 1696. Tales of difficult journeys, savage nations, hardships, and tempests evidently stayed with him, and coalesced around his insistently satirical mind.

After two parts that refresh significant historical and literary contexts, Part III, 'Reading *Gulliver's Travels*', shifts the focus to controversial, famous, or otherwise important episodes in each of the four voyages. Before this, Brean Hammond demonstrates the importance of considering the prefatory matter alongside the text proper in any comprehensive understanding of Swift's project, particularly for its playfulness with fictionality and truth. 'A Voyage to Lilliput', the subject of Melinda Alliker Rabb's chapter, establishes the vexing narrative strategies Swift uses

throughout *Gulliver's Travels*. At the same time, Lilliput, like each of the worlds, is utterly unique. In Lilliput the charm of the miniature proves deceptive, as Rabb has it. Nicholas Seager's chapter on 'A Voyage to Brobdingnag' shows that this part of the narrative radically unsettles notions of human superiority in both physical and moral terms. Barbara M. Benedict ranges over the most miscellaneous part of *Gulliver's Travels*, 'A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, &c'. This part of the story offers a comprehensive yet compressed satire on the abuses of Modern learning, as Benedict demonstrates, as well as excoriating political corruption and illustrating the vanity of human wishes. In the final chapter in this section, Judith Hawley identifies significant moments in 'A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms'. One critical school of thought, which emerged among Swift's own circle, viewed the rational Houyhnhnms as an embodiment of Swift's ideal view of humanity, and the Yahoos our baseness. A coterminous school found the Houyhnhnms cold and insipid, and therefore dismissed the ideal as false. Houyhnhnms or Yahoos or neither: Swift's vision of humans, especially of eighteenth-century Europe, is far from flattering. For some, it amounts to blasphemy. The chapters addressing each of the book's voyages also tackle the debated question about the overall coherence of *Gulliver's Travels*: is Swift's work a collection of four separable episodes or a cogent whole?

Part IV, 'Afterlives', explores what critics and artists have done with *Gulliver's Travels* in the time since it was published. Jack Lynch digests the extensive body of scholarship produced all the way from the dominant eighteenth-century man of letters Samuel Johnson and his peers, up to the present day. This includes a highly useful account of significant debates such as the 'hard' and 'soft' schools of interpretation. Daniel Cook considers the difference between Gulliveriana and the Gulliveriad, amid discussions of fictional clones, sequels, spin-offs, and other creative engagements that appeared within weeks of the first publication of *Gulliver's Travels*, and which show no sign of abating even now. Ruth Menzies explores the extraordinary breadth of visual reworkings of Swift's materials, in satirical cartoons, paintings, comics, and other diverse media. Addressing filmic reworkings of *Gulliver's Travels*, Emrys Jones takes stock of perhaps the most prominent modern engagements with Swift's text in the public consciousness.

Collectively, the seventeen chapters that make up this *Companion* address anew longstanding debates that have circled around, and often invaded, the world of *Gulliver's Travels*. Even as we near the 300th anniversary of the first appearance of Swift's satirical masterpiece, its impact continues to pinch.