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“The projecting species”: Reading Swift’s critique of the scientific project in Book 3 of “Gulliver’s Travels"

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"The Projecting Species": Reading Swift’s Critique of the Scientific Project in Book 3 of Gulliver’s Travels

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

"The Projecting Species": Reading Swift's Critique of the Scientific Project in Book 3 of Gulliver's Travels

by

Margaret Wong

Book 3 of Jonathan Swift's Travels into the Remote Nations of the World offers a thorough critique of the eighteenth-century scientific world — a world marked by systematization, theoretical speculation, stories of "progress," and innovation, which people have commonly embraced and into which the "modern" mind had un resistingly and perhaps unconsciously placed itself. Because Book 3 appears to indulge in a transparent attack on some specific eighteenth-century events, ridicule seems to be the primary device used to undermine the practices of the scientific community. However closer inspection reveals that Swift's satire is not grounded in the topical particulars of the Eighteenth Century, but addresses such general problems, such as moral deficiency, intellectual arrogance, tyranny, which are common to human experience. Moreover, his attack, not dependent upon ridicule, involves complex rhetorical strategies, including some subversive reader-indicting techniques that challenge and ultimately compel readers to take an active role in resolving the
dilemma (intellectual, philosophical, moral, etc.) into which he has placed them. Thus the process of reading Book 3 makes the reader both an active supporter and sympathetic critic of scientific practices. The resulting tension is a primary contributor to the textual problems that have troubled the critics of Book 3 since the *Travels* first came out, but it is also what makes scrupulous attention to the text worthwhile.
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Introduction

This study of Book 3 of Jonathan Swift's *Travels into the Remote Nations of the World*\(^1\) began as a one-paragraph transitional statement meant, in part, to help establish the theoretical context for a seminar paper about how to "read" the Houyhnhnms in Book 4 of the *Travels*. To deal adequately with Book 4, I had planned to argue, readers need to question exhaustively the appropriateness of the terms Gulliver used to describe the Houyhnhnms.\(^2\) The failure to do so would lead a reader to as extravagant a misinterpretation of the Houyhnhnms as Gulliver's and, consequently, to a misreading of the satiric travel narrative as a whole; for the *Travels* culminates in Book 4 — a position that allows Gulliver's fourth voyage to present itself to readers as Swift's final judgment about humanity. On the other hand, Book 4 was not, chronologically, the last book written. Book 3 (or at least most of it) was written after Gulliver had completed his work on the Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, and Houyhnhnms.\(^3\) The significance to my inquiry of this chronological fact coupled with the placement of Book 3 in the *Travels* was the intriguing possibility that Swift wrote the third voyage with an eye toward teaching his readers how to read Book 4.\(^4\)
Because Gulliver's third voyage offers, conspicuously, such items as a language machine and several absurd projects in the "School of Languages" (158) to problematize, among other semantic concerns, the connection between words and their meanings, it seemed possible that Book 3 might help persuade readers to pay particular attention to the issues of language in Book 4. Nevertheless, although a careful consideration of Book 3 undoubtedly adds tremendously to a reader's experience of the fourth voyage, upon closer examination of the *Voyage to Laputa*, it became clear that the cost of reductively packaging and dismissing Book 3 as a pedagogical tool for reading Book 4 is high; one must deliberately ignore the skillful and nuanced textual maneuverings that particularly characterize Gulliver's narrative of the third voyage — ignore, that is, ironically, the very lexical strategies that make Book 3 a helpful guide to reading Book 4 in the first place. On the contrary to investigate these strategies is to discover that there is more at stake in Swift's critique on science than the possibility of arriving at a correct reading of Book 4. In fact, what Book 3 offers is the possibility of arriving at an accurate reading of the current (i.e., current to Swift) scientific world which people have commonly embraced and into which the modern mind had unresistingly and perhaps unconsciously placed itself.

* * * * *

* * * * *
During the Middle Ages, natural science, or alchemy as it would have been termed, was a marginalized field, its practitioners subject to the typical fate of marginality; depending upon the degree to which they were perceived as threats to the established church-governed authority, they were dismissed as fools and ignored, or denounced as heretics and punished. One such punishment, the Condemnation of 1277, severely limited the "Aristotelian natural philosophers," and, according to Edward Grant, "as the powers of natural reason and experience were circumscribed, reliance on God's omnipotence was increased" (214). Despite such setbacks however, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century in most of Europe but especially Britain, natural science was firmly institutionalized, entrenched and empowered. Preeminent members of society — Bacon, Newton, Boyle — were natural scientists. The members of the Royal Society, the newly founded (1662) testament to science's importance and power, could no longer be dismissed easily when they seemed foolish or denounced when they threatened church authority. In this context it is not difficult to imagine that clergymen — even those who were themselves scientists — suspected that the rise to predominance of science would present an increasing challenge to church — i.e., Anglican — hegemony.

Against this admittedly reductive and simplistic, though generally acknowledged, view of the relationship between the Anglican church and the natural sciences, Swift's attack on
contemporary science in Book 3 of the *Travels into the Several Remote Nations of the World* can be seen as a naive and/or reactionary text. It is naive because, empowered as science had become, it is the option to issue any general dismissal and denouncement of the practices and practitioners of science had ceased to be viable; and reactionary because it is the product of a Tory High Churchman (an Anglican priest and Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin), who, invested in preserving church authority, issued an attack on science because he desired to check science's increasing power.

For many of Swift's critics therefore, Book 3, a product of reactionary naïveté, illustrated Swift's misguided capacity to produce a selfishly motivated attack on a field he little understood. This type of criticism naturally produced a host of apologists who reacted by issuing forth proof about how well Swift in fact understood the field of science. Because of this focus on Swift's knowledge of science, Book 3 has often been the object of critics' condemnation or pardon depending on how much they could prove that Swift did or did not understand science. Yet even among those who granted Swift's superior knowledge of science, it is generally agreed that Book 3 fails of its purpose; its contemporary failure as a topical satire is suggested by the lukewarm reception Book 3 received in comparison to the other Books when the *Travels* first came out; and it seems that Book 3 must be read as a narrow exposure of human folly because of its topical sub-
ject.\textsuperscript{17} For Swift's contemporaries and many of the subsequent Swiftian scholars, Book 3 is a disappointment — a disappointment made more acute because, the final book composed in the Travels, Book 3 is the chronological culmination of the talent that produced the apparently more brilliant Books 1, 2 and 4.\textsuperscript{18}

Although this dissertation focuses on Swift's scientific critique, it adds little to the diminishing but ongoing debate about the extent to which Book 3 demonstrates how much or little knowledge Swift had about experimental science or natural philosophy; nor do I add much to the debate about how good a work of literature it is according to standards set in Swift's time or ours. In short, my study is not concerned with Book 3's capacity to serve as a biographical or artistic contribution, but for its value as a testament to Swift's keen awareness of what a scientific world view entails. The third voyage of the Travels demonstrates how an eighteenth-century non-scientist, "man of letters" imagined his role as a satirist and clergyman in an increasingly scientific world and what he saw as the relationship between religious and scientific authority.\textsuperscript{19} Ultimately, Swift's decision as a clergyman to hold scientific practices up for public scrutiny was not simply motivated by a reactionary desire to preserve his own power base, but by a wish to expose the deficits in morality that typically underlie scientific endeavors — deficits grounded in intellectual arrogance. This is not to
say that Swift was oblivious to the issues of power. On the contrary, Book 3 reveals a mind well aware of the complexities of power and authority involved in the scientific enterprise, and offers a complex and effective critique of this enterprise by exploding, through careful textual maneuvering and a calculated reimagining of the scientific project, science's claims to power.

For the most part, this compelling critique of science has been ignored because previous considerations of this work have neglected to undertake an examination of the complex textual maneuvers and rhetorical strategies employed in Book 3. Indeed, although Nicholson and Mohler, Fitzgerald, Renaker, and Potter have examined, to some extent, Swift and science in their respective articles\(^20\), their studies focus primarily on extra-textual concerns and do not engage in a close scrutiny of the text — an endeavor which is at the heart of my study and which, if this dissertation has concluded correctly, is necessary in any attempt to arrive at an accurate portrait of Swift's critique of science. The critics' failure to examine carefully Swift's critique of science can also be explained in terms of the notably central issue of unity in the criticism on Book 3. Generally, critics have argued that Book 3 is ununified and artistically unsalvageable and thus not worth close analysis (e.g. Eddy, Quintana); or ununified but salvageable yet still not worthy of devoted analysis (e.g. DePorte, Hunting);\(^21\) or unified and worthy of serious analysis
but only if one sees that Book 3 is not really about science. For this third group of critics, Book 3 is unified because it is really about identity (Koch, Munroe, Sutherland, Tialdi), utopian visions (Mezciems), or politics (Fitzgerald, Case). Serious considerations of Book 3 and science have thus taken the form of the standard historical approach of tracing elements and episodes back to their "original" sources or mounting a biographical study of Swift and/or the world in which he lived — an approach that does not involve much textual analysis.

This study therefore, unlike the previous critical considerations, which sacrificed the principal subject of Book 3 (i.e. science) to achieve textual unity, makes the issues of science the chief concern. But unlike those who engage in the typical historical approach, I emphasize the extent to which Book 3 transcends the temporal particulars of the eighteenth century and is something more than a topical, referential satire on the specific practices of the Royal Society and eighteenth-century scientists — that is to say, the extent to which the objects of attack go beyond particular referents to point to general problems, such as moral deficiency, intellectual arrogance, tyranny, which are common to human experience.

* * * * *

The opening chapter of this study establishes the con-
text for Swift’s critique of science by taking on and problematizing the attempts by the critics of Book 3 to establish a context for their respective analyses of Book 3. To demonstrate the extent to which the satire in Book 3 is not grounded in the topical specifics of the eighteenth century, I invert the normal relationship between a primary text and its critics. Rather than allowing the critics’ analysis to inform my reading of Swift’s text, I use a method of critical analysis gleaned from his text to inform my reading of his critics. The opening of Swift’s Book 3 in the Travels calls into question the practice of establishing context by exposing the self-indulgent desires and self-serving schemes that go into persuading a reader to acknowledge the credibility of the speaker. Because the critics of Book 3 indulge in such desires and employ such schemes in their attempts to establish the context for their critiques of Book 3, Swift becomes, albeit anachronistically, a critic of his own critics. In effect, Swift’s satire effectively exposes problems rooted in twentieth-century institutional practices, demonstrating that its impact has not diminished, and that those who maintain today’s institutions are no less full of pride or less foolish than their eighteenth-century counterparts whom Swift had satirically attacked.

Illustrating some of the methods Swift used to produce his critical examination of science, the second chapter focuses on Swift’s exposing of the dangerously reductive ten-
encies of readers who have failed to engage actively with the texts they read. Previous critics of Book 3 have assumed that the rhetorical strategy used in Swift's attack on science consists primarily if not solely of ridicule.\textsuperscript{26} Under this assumption an accurate assessment of Swift's scientific knowledge became an important issue because it would determine whether his strategy was ill or well chosen and his satire on science salvageable or not. In this chapter I illustrate instead how the rhetorical strategies Swift uses in Book 3 are much more subtle and nuanced than the single-focused practice of ridicule that seems to dominate in the work. The focus is on Swift's use of contradiction. In the hands of a skillful manipulator of language like Swift, contradiction is a powerful device which, because it creates a condition of self-cancellation, engenders a state of nonsense and chaos — a state that was particularly offensive to an eighteenth century mind that holds as ideal common sense.\textsuperscript{27}

In chapter three I take on what has been seen as the most obviously referential section of the \textit{Travels}; namely, the satire on the scientific innovation in the chapters on Balnibarbi. Numerous commentators have noted that the experiments presented in this section have actually been conducted by members of the Royal Societies of Ireland and London.\textsuperscript{28} Because of the care Swift took to use authentic experiments in this section, it appears that the principal intent of the Balnibarbi episode is to engage in direct attacks on some of
the specific practices — attacks which have been accused of being reductively unfair because they do not account for the many effective experiments that have been conducted by the two branches of the Royal Society. I argue, however, that the Balnibarbi episode is much more encompassing — that the world of the projectors represents what Swift envisions as the consequence of an intellectual enterprise unchecked by good sense and moral scrutiny. The authentic relationship Swift created between the projectors and their historical counterparts, an authentic connection therefore between the world of the readers and the fictional world governed by scientific tyranny, involves the readers directly and challenges them to examine the wisdom of permitting their own world to come increasingly under the domination of an unexamined intellectual authority.

In the final chapter I examine the episodes on Glubbdulcrid, Luggnagg, and the Struldbrugs to determine Swift's final evaluation of the scientific project. These latter chapters in Book 3, because they appear to deal chiefly with the questions of life after death, immortality, illusion and magic, appear to have nothing at all to do with science. I argue however that the questions previously raised about science are not neglected in these episodes, and that these final chapters in Book III reveal what Swift suggests constitutes the allure of the scientific project — namely, power akin to that which pervades governmental tyrannies. In fact,
in Gulliver's journeys to Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg, Swift's contends that what drives people to embrace science is not the overly optimistic desire to change the world, but the desire for absolute, tyrannical power. If we want to know what a world overwhelmed by a blind embracing of the scientific project is going to be like, we need only look as far as the tyrannies that currently exist and have existed in the past. Yet Swift does not reject completely the possibility for the scientific project to contribute to the common good. The very existence of Book 3 attests to this partial acceptance.

* * * * *

Ultimately, Book 3, like Books 1, 2 and 4 is a satire on humanity in general, or more accurately, a philosophical critique of the general shortcomings of human-kind of which Book 4, which examines the essential nature of man, is exemplary. Book 3, as a study of arrogance generally, can then offer a basis for comparison between it and the other Books. Unlike that of the Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, and Houyhnhnms, the self-involved arrogance of scientists, as it is inescapably coupled with the fact of technological advancement, leads not merely to smug judgments about others, but to a kind of objective indifference that allows them to perpetuate, through utopian promises, a stranglehold on people's minds and use the products of science to bring about
mass tyranny. I believe Swift felt compelled to call into question the field of science, because the scientific project, fully vested in bringing into actuality the objects of its conceit, is dangerous to the human community as a whole. The projecting species are fundamentally a morally uninhibited, tyrannical, and destructively irresponsible people. The Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, and Houyhnhnms possess no weapons of mass destruction and are thus limited comparatively; but the Laputans, with the help of science, can crush an entire people. This makes Book 3, at least in its implications, a culmination of Swift's satire of humankind.
Notes

1 All citations from the *Travels* are in Jonathan Swift, *Travels into the Several Remote Nations of the World*, *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis.

2 In his article, "The Scope of Discourse in Berkeley and Swift," William Bowman Piper (in whose seminar I arrived at this conclusion and for whose seminar the paper was being written) analyzes some specific instances of Gulliver's linguistic "mistakes" in Book 4. Among other concerns, the article points out the need for readers to pay close attention to Gulliver's use of words. As an example of how the "practice upon the discrepancies between language and experience is a recurrent and, indeed, a pervasive element of the *Travels*" (335), Piper presents the following:

In telling the humane and observant Portuguese sailors, who had found him hiding behind a stone, that he was "a poor *Yahoo*, banished from the *Houyhnhnms*," Gulliver no doubt made a number of mistakes. The basic one, however, which is emphasized by his addressing these men, as Gulliver reports, "in their own tongue," he himself points out to this readers: the sailors were "at a loss to know what I meant by *Yahoos* and *Houyhnhnms.*" These words, to use the language of Berkeleian empiricism, occasioned no ideas in their minds. It could not have been otherwise, of course, since unlike
Gulliver -- and us -- they had had no prior experience of these words nor of the species of creatures from which these words stood. (334)

3 Irvin Ehrenpreis in Swift: The Man, his Works, and the Age, (vol. 3) states that “[Swift] had completed Part Four by the end of 1723. He was approaching the end of Part Three in April, 1724” (444). Ehrenpreis' evidence for this comes primarily from a letter Swift wrote to Charles Ford on January 19, 1724 that states “I have left the Country of Horses, and am in the flying Island, where I shall not stay long, and my two last Journyes [sic] will be soon over; so that if you come here this Summer you will find me returnd [sic]” (Williams, vol. 3, 5).

4 Ehrenpreis (Vol. 3) suggest something similar with his statement that “When [Swift] decided to place Part Four at the end, although written before Part Three, he also indicated a desire for the sequence to have its own power” (444).

5 John Read, in Through Alchemy to Chemistry: A Procession of Ideas and Personalities, points out that although “alchemy” was later distinguished from the more reputable practices of “natural philosophy,” the term, “alchemy,” during the Middle Ages referred generally to that field of study that was primarily influenced by the experimental and natural philosophy of Aristotle (12ff).

6 For the most part, the esoteric practices of natural philosophers such as the search for the philosopher stone or
attempts to change base metal into gold, although not condoned by the Church, were not expressly condemned either. In fact, as James J. Walsh in *The Popes and Science: The History of the Papal Relations to Science During the Middle Ages and Down to Our Own Time* points out, celebrated theologians—e.g. Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas—have produced such dubious works as “Many Sources, with Regard to the Philosopher’s Stone [Magnus]” and “The Intimate Secrets of Alchemy [Aquinas]” (134-5). Apparently, Aquinas’ interest in Alchemy did not conflict with his service to the Church. However, as Edward Grant contends in *Physical Science in the Middle Ages*, in the middle of the thirteenth century, when natural philosophy arrived at principles that “conflict[ed] directly with revealed religious truth,” Pope John XXI issued the infamous Condemnation of 1277 which “set excommunication as the penalty for all who held even one of the damned errors” (26-27).

7 In “The Condemnation of 1277, God’s Absolute Power, and Physical Thought in the Late Middle Ages” in *Studies in Medieval Science and Natural Philosophy*.

8 In using this term, I am in accord with George Reuben Potter’s who states in “Swift and Natural Science” that, “the terms ‘natural sciences’ and ‘natural science’ are used for convenience. Swift and his contemporaries would, of course, have used such terms as ‘natural history,’ ‘natural philosophy,’ or ‘mathematical knowledge’ (96)
9 The institutionalization of natural philosophy is discussed in David Knight's "The Birth of Modern Physics" (96-112) and "The Heroic Age of Chemistry" (78-95) in The Physical Sciences Since Antiquity, ed. Rom Harré.

10 The rise and growth of the Royal Society is recounted in the Record of the Royal Society For the Promotion of Natural Knowledge.

11 By "science" I mean that area of study, which in Swift's time would have been characterized by systematic, generally non-theological speculation, heavily involved in experimentation, and chiefly founded upon the principles of empirical philosophy. See also Potter's statements about this in n8 above.

12 Apparently Newton, the unchallenged primary authority in science by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth-century, unsuspectingly put science in the service of forces that could lead to economic disaster in Ireland when he conducted and stood behind the assay that established the value of William Wood's coin. Since this incident occurred just as Swift was writing Book 3, it may have proved to be the catalytic event for Swift's attack on science — specific demonstration of just how dangerous scientific authority can be. An account of Newton's role is given in volume 3 of Ehrenpreis' biography on Swift.

13 For example, John Boyle, fifth Earl of Orrery and one on Swift's contemporaries states in a letter, "Swift was lit-
tled acquainted with mathematical knowledge, and was prejudiced against it" (124); Kathleen Williams in "Gulliver in Laputa" (Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise) contends that "considered as an attack on science, the third book must seem wrongheaded and unfair" (1958, 165); and W. A. Eddy in Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study writes, "for this attack on theoretical science I can find no literary source or analogue, and conclude that it must have been inspired by one of Swift's idiosyncrasies" (158).

14 The major work done in this area are the two articles by Marjorie Nicholson and Nora M. Mohler's "The Scientific Background of Swift's Voyage to Laputa," Annals of Science 2 (1937) and "Swift's 'Flying Island' in the Voyage to Laputa," Annals of Science 2 (1937), who were primarily inspired by Eddy's attack on Swift's scientific ignorance. Robert P. Fitzgerald's "Science and Politics in Swift's Voyage to Laputa" (Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 1988); David Renaker's "Swift's Laputians as a Caricature of the Cartesian" (PMLA, 1979); and George Reuben Potter's "Swift and Natural Science" (Philological Quarterly 1941) have also contributed to the study of Swift and science.

15 It is not clear how much Swift understood science. Irvin Ehrenpreis writes about the influence of St. George Ashe, Swift's tutor at Trinity College Dublin and "lifelong friend": "To the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, Ashe contributed a number of papers, some while Swift
was an undergraduate" (vol. 1, 51). But Potter perhaps sums it up best with the following:

It is obviously absurd ... to accuse Swift of ignorance concerning the science he satirized.

His knowledge, while it was extensive, was nevertheless not the technical knowledge of a practitioner or professional. (113)

16 Summing up the reception Book III received when it first came out, Michael DePorte writes, in "Teaching the Third Voyage," "not even Swift's Scriblerian friends were very fond of this most Scriblerian of Gulliver's voyages: Arbuthnot called it the 'least Brilliant'" (57). DePorte's judgment of Book 3's critical reception, as well as that of other critics mentioned above and in the notes below, are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter One.

17 For example, Eddy states that "the satire [in Book III] is of contemporary rather than abiding interest" (157); and Potter contends that with the satire in Book III, Swift "missed universality" (97).

18 Here is a sampling of such responses: Samuel Taylor Coleridge describes Book 3 as "a wretched abortion, the product of spleen and ignorance and self-conceit" (130); Sir Walter Scott states that Book 3 "was the part in which the world took the least pleasure" (311); Ricardo Quintana contends that "in comparison with the rest of Gulliver's Travels, [Book 3] is of marked inferiority; This was the judgment of
the first readers of the satire and it has never been re-
versed" (315); and L. J. Morrissey, echoing Arbuthnot, argues
that Book 3 is the "least brilliant part of Gulliver's
Travels" (98).

19 The question of the "reception of science by
'nonscientists'" is the subject of Pamela Gossin's disserta-
tion, entitled "Poetic Resolution of Scientific Revolutions:
Astronomy and the Literary Imaginations of Donne, Swift, and
Hardy." According to the dissertation abstract, her focus is
on the "revolutions in the history of science"; she con-
figures these revolutions as "eclectic personal moments in
the intellectual evolution of the individual thinkers." Swift, she contends, "create[s his] own 'resolutions' and
'revolutions' in contemporary science, and [his] literary works
reflects this synthesis" (273A).

20 Nicholson and Mohler examine the records of the Royal
Society primarily to establish the source material for Book 3. They have proven to the satisfaction of most critics that
Swift was acquainted with a wide range of scientific
specifics. Fitzgerald's article examines eighteenth-century
British political philosophy, paying particular attention to
the Lindalinnian revolt and suggesting that the Laputan
episode is a straightforward condemnation of "liberal" poli-
tics. Renaker focuses on the philosophy of Descartes and
attempts to prove that Swift's hatred for Cartesian thinking
is what led to his portrayal of the Laputans. Finally,
Potter's "Swift and Natural Science" follows in the footstep of Nicholson and Mohler's work, adding to their assessment of how much Swift knew about natural philosophy, by examining some specific Royal Society experiments that their articles directed him to. (See also n13 above).


25 This is the approach taken by Nicholson and Mohler,

26 Deane Swift, Swift's cousin and biographer writes, "the design of Gulliver in his voyage to Laputa is to ridicule the vain pretensions of chymists, mathematicians, projectors, and the rest of the speculative tribe" (143). W. H. Dilworth wrote in 1758 that "The third part . . . is designed to turn into ridicule the absurd and vain pretensions, of projectors, chemists and mathematicians" (168). Sir Walter Scott aligning himself with what he believes was Arbuthnot's opinion, states that the "Voyage to Laputa" "is intended to ridicule the pursuits of philosophy" (289).

27 By "common sense" I do not mean that mysterious notion of an innate sense of the obvious. Eighteenth-century "common sense" referred to that empirically-based foundation of understanding shared by people as a result of their commonly shared experiences. This view is put forth by Piper, who writes, "The Augustans . . . believed, first, in the empirical reference of all questions, however abstract or general, to sense experience — hence the term 'sense'; and, second, in the sharing of all questions, however abstruse or important, with society — hence the term 'common'" ("Common Sense as a Basis of Literary Style" *Texas Studies in Literature and*
Language: A Journal of the Humanities, 624)

28 Nicholson and Mohler are the main contributors to this endeavor. Their articles remain the primary source for scholars who wish to examine the connection between Swift and the Royal Society.

29 Some critics consider the Struldbrugg (see n2 in Chapter Four below for a note on the spelling of this term) episode the most memorable and artistically sound segment in Book 3, especially because of its difference from the rest of Book 3. "Here is sound philosophy, and real pathos," writes Eddy (165). Quintana states that this episode is the most effective "being the only part free from that diffusion" which persists throughout Book 3 (317).
Chapter One

"The Apotheosis of Pedantry": Narrative Authority
and the Critics of Gulliver's Travels, Book 3

The third part of Gulliver's Travels is at once the
longest and the worst. It is a miscellany of unrelate
d situations that are . . . uninspired and
dull. There is no attempt to create an agreeable
world of the imagination, but only a collection of
brief and imitative voyages, in which the satire is
of contemporary rather than of abiding interest.
When we add to this statement, the further one that
the contemporary readers themselves were bored, it
is not surprising that posterity has been indiffer-
ent. In short, it would be the apotheosis of
pedantry for me to attempt to enlist interest where
Swift himself has failed.

W. A. Eddy (1923)

Perhaps the most acceptable (decidedly the most common)
way to begin a scholarly analysis of a text is to issue some
statements about the past response to the text in question.
Certainly, the critics of Book 3 of Swift's Travels into the
Remote Nations of the World seem to offer ample support for this general rule. W. A. Eddy, in the passage quoted above from his 1923 Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study, engages in this practice with his statement that "contemporary readers ... were bored [with]" and "posterity has been indifferent [to]" Book 3 (157). In their famous 1937 articles on Book 3, Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler, following Eddy's lead, allude to the contemporary readers and posterity mentioned by Eddy as well as to Eddy himself.¹ Reuben Potter, pursuing the same course, makes reference to Swift's contemporaries, later critics, Nicolson and Mohler, and Eddy.² And so on.³ One recognized aim of this practice is to give credit to past work. Yet there is more that motivates the establishing of context than the dispassionate, selfless desire to acknowledge other critics' works. Indeed, the attempt to signal the presence of a critical history is not merely a gesture to record historical fact, but a personally invested process of creating that viable context into which one's own commentary can have justifiable existence — a process of constructing the foundation upon which the argument is to derive its credibility, importance, and persuasive force.

When Eddy states that "contemporary readers ... were bored [with]" and "posterity has been indifferent [to]" Book 3 (157), he has not simply recorded statements of fact to give us information. Instead, invested in imagining a context that best serves his argument, he has imported significant testimo-
nial elements necessary to construct the story of the critical heritage of Book 3. In other words, Eddy literally establishes the critical context, creating, with his allusions to the previous responses, the critical history (his story) within which his furious displeasure with Book 3 can be vented and his argument given the desired coercive eloquence. As Eddy sets it up, because he holds that the "third part of Gulliver's Travels is . . . the longest and the worst . . . a miscellany of unrelated situations, . . . uninspired and dull" (157), the "bored contemporary readers" and "indifferent posterity" are positive presences. Any attempt to challenge the boredom and indifference of these "primary characters" is to become kin to the negative presence in Eddy's story — a deified nemesis named "the apotheosis of pedantry." Given the choices of either being bored and indifferent or becoming an apotheosis of pedantry, who would choose the latter? Yet if we, as Eddy does, reject identification with this pedant incarnate, we have made the move toward identifying with and validating his views as well as the boredom and indifference of the early critics of Book 3. Thus are we made actively to implicate ourselves in Eddy's story and subsequently to come into agreement with his opinions about the third part of Gulliver's Travels.

Clearly the forceful eloquence and credibility of Eddy's hyperbolic denunciation of Book 3 derive not so much from his presentation of argument or evidence as they do from his
story — the dynamic textual construction — within which he maneuvers his argument. Eddy is thus essentially invested in a textual project similar to Swift’s, engaged in the enterprise of telling a convincing story. Unlike Swift however, Eddy positions his text within the parameters of “scholarly writing” which are presumably at a safe remove from the practice of fabricating the textual apparatus necessary to engender a compelling illusion of truth. From his position as scholar, Eddy can issue his statements of fiction as though they were fact and peremptorily insist that those who do not agree with his views about Book 3 are unconscionable pedants, thus paradoxically demonstrating himself the kind of intellectual arrogance which Book 3 openly attacks. Paradoxically, therefore, the tables are turned, and Eddy’s criticism of Book 3 becomes the object of Book 3’s criticism. Hence, from the perspective generated by an analysis of the critics’ involvement in a process normally attributed to writers of fiction — namely, the use of narrative structures to establish a believable semblance of history — Swift’s text presents an intriguing affront to the normative view of the relationship between a text and its critic. To arrive therefore at an accurate portrayal of the past response to Book 3 as well to achieve a better understanding of the nature of Swift’s satire, it is useful to begin an examination of Book 3 by focusing first on the story of the critics and Book 3, or more precisely, the story that critics have told about other
critics.

As though the key to entry into the scholarly conversation about Book 3 were to issue some statements about the poor critical reception Swift's tale of the third voyage has had, critic after critic made reference to it. In 1936, Ricardo Quintana overstates in a style reminiscent of Eddy's 1923 statement: "in comparison with the rest of Gulliver's Travels 'A Voyage to Laputa' ... is of marked inferiority; this was the judgment of the first readers of the satire and it has never been reversed" (emphasis added, 315). Five years later, Reuben G. Potter published a similar statement: "Swift's ridicule of human activities in the natural science, which occurs in the third Voyage of Gulliver's Travels, is artistically the least effective part of his satire in that work. Readers have felt thus about it ever since the book was first published" (emphasis added, 97). Similarly, Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler open their 1937 article on Book 3 with the statement: "Among the travels of Gulliver, the Voyage to Laputa has been most criticized and least understood" ("Scientific Background" 299). And John H. Sutherland in 1957 wrote, "many modern critics have felt that Voyage III is neither a strong nor a necessary part of Gulliver's Travels" (45), with Munroe in 1968 reiterating, "in the past many critics have complained that Book 3 of Gulliver's Travels is imperfectly organized" (429). To sum up, in terms that give the best expression of this story,
"Once upon a time, Book 3 of *Gulliver's Travels* was not liked by the critics or readers."

It would seem that the urge to retell this basic "story" about Book 3's negative reception was strong even though its function in the critical essay altered. With Nicolson and Mohler's articles at the forefront, the story of the previous critics and Book 3 quickly came to function as something other than support for one's own poor opinion about the work. By combining the statement about *The Voyage to Laputa*'s being the "most criticized" with the contention that it is also the "least understood," Nicolson and Mohler generated a construction that was meant evidently to stand in diametric opposition to Eddy's. Simply put, unlike Eddy, who argued that critics have always censured Book 3, and they are right, Nicolson and Mohler argued that the critics have indeed censured Book 3, but they are wrong. From a practical standpoint, it was necessary for Nicolson and Mohler to overturn Eddy's basic story: they could hardly proceed to write two full-length articles about Book 3 if they held that critics were correct about its being inherently unworthy of careful consideration.

However Nicolson and Mohler's investment in setting up a critical context that would structurally imitate yet in content oppose Eddy's is not as unproblematic as it seems. For the negative critical context Eddy establishes is largely a fabrication — a conflation of fact and fiction. By footnot-
ing his allusion to the bored contemporary readers, he seems to be providing evidence for their existence, even though the note, which states merely "see, above, ch. 4. note 24" (157), does not make for easy access to this evidence. As it turns out, note 24 in chapter 4, cites a passage from a letter in which Swift is told by Gay and Arbuthnot that "as to other critics they think the flying island is the least entertaining,"5 and it includes a "see also" reference to another letter in which Swift wrote to Pope, "Dr. Arbuthnot likes the Projectors least, others you tell me, the Flying Island."6 That Arbuthnot liked the projectors least, however, is not to say that he did not like them at all; nor can we conclude that the critics who found the flying island least entertaining did not find it entertaining at all. In other words, relative dislike is not equal to absolute boredom. Moreover, these two statements made peripherally in letters devoted primarily to other matters, do not constitute evidence enough to generalize with any certainty about the attitude of Swift’s contemporaries.

Nevertheless, to slant evidence is perhaps more sincere than to offer no evidence at all. Eddy’s mention of the "posterity [that] has been indifferent" goes entirely unref- erenced; besides perhaps himself as one of these indifferent critics, we are given no indication of anyone else who held these views. In fact, a different story is possible; posterity had not been altogether indifferent to Swift’s Voyage to
**Laputa.** Lord Orrey writing in 1752 appeared to have enjoyed it. "However wild the description of the flying island, and the manners, and various projects of the philosophers of Lagado may appear, he writes, "yet it is a real picture embellished with much latent wit and humour" (Williams, *Critical Heritage* 124). Others including Deane Swift (1755), W. H. Dilworth (1758), William Monck Mason (1819), even Sir Walter Scott (1814), who basically disliked the third voyage, offered engaged and insightful analyses of it.\(^7\) It would seem that Eddy's wholly indifferent posterity was a character with no actual historical counterpart, created to establish the necessary context, the textual starting place, for his essay on Book 3.

In their attempts to establish the critical context for their article, Nicolson and Mohler, fare no better. In fact, because they choose to invest themselves in a context made up largely of non-existent (except for Eddy) "modern critics" who are said to have reached a consensus about the literary worthlessness of Book 3, they do worse. Caught up in the discourse they have created about the negative reception of Book 3, they are forced to offer their readers a host of entirely unreferenced "critics who disparage the tale," who have arrived at some "general agreement that in interest and literary merit [the third voyage] falls short of the first two voyages," and who are involved in issuing criticism "constantly . . . against the *Voyage of Laputa*" (emphasis
added, 299). This failure of specificity becomes reinforced in Nicolson and Mohler's next paragraph where they, ironically, make an effort to become more specific by enumerating the "three themes in the Voyage to Laputa [that] have been particularly censured by modern critics" (299). "Some [critics]," they argue, "are repelled by the Laputans" (299). Surprisingly, given the previous lack of citations, this passage is footnoted. However in the note, instead of naming "some" of the modern critics who were "repelled by the Laputans" they tell us where in Swift's Travels we can locate the Laputans. Similarly, in the note for the next sentence, "others are disturbed by the apparent lack of both unity and significance in the Balnibarians" (299), they tell us where the Balnibarians can be found in the Travels — Ibid., Chap. V" — instead of identifying some of these "others" to whom they alluded. Then, just as we begin to doubt Nicolson and Mohler's understanding about the aim of footnoting, they alter their method. The note attached to their next sentence about "puzzled commentators who have dismiss[ed the Flying Island] as a 'piece of magical apparatus,'" does not tell us in what chapter of the Travels we can locate the flying island; instead, this note actually specifies one of these commentators (300). Not surprisingly, the name they give us is Eddy's. In fact Eddy is the only commentator named in their entire account of the "modern critics" who have responded negatively to Book 3.
Apparently, Nicolson and Mohler are more committed to establishing their own story than in improving the prevailing story. Like Eddy’s indifferent posterity, Nicolson and Mohler’s host of negative modern critics is largely non-existent, “created” to give a semblance of a currently existing and extensive negative reaction to Book 3. For such a context was necessary to Nicolson and Mohler’s project to reverse the “least understood” status of *The Voyage to Laputa* — a reversal that, by definition, can be achieved only by showing that there existed many critics who misunderstood Book 3 in the first place. Interestingly, because they aim to prove the critics wrong, Nicolson and Mohler become participants in a narrative structure which allows them to imagine themselves to be in the position of enlightened scholars heroically struggling against pedantic shortsightedness. Just as Eddy, in agreement with the negative critics, concocted “the apotheosis of pedantry” to achieve the semblance of struggle, Nicolson and Mohler, fabricated an extensive modern tradition of negative reaction to Book 3 in order to have a similar bipartite structure in which they could take on the role of righteous challengers combating a host of wrong-minded critics. Hence, although Nicolson and Mohler and Eddy make diametrically opposed arguments, both seeing the other as pedant, they are motivated by the same story of scholarly heroism, and are thus allies in a common cause to preserve the [hi]story of Book 3’s negative critical reception.
All this however is not to argue that there was no negative criticism about Book 3. Gay, Arbuthnot, Scott, and John Middleton Murray did make comments about Book 3 that are negative.\footnote{10} Francis Jeffrey did write that "even as a satire, [Book 3] is extremely poor and defective" (Williams, 320), and Coleridge did state that Book 3 is "a wretched abortion, the product of spleen and ignorance and self conceit" (334). And of course there is Eddy himself as well as those critics who followed Eddy’s lead: namely, Ricardo Quintana, Arthur Case, and Herbert Davis.\footnote{11} Nevertheless this does not account for the critics’ overwhelming assumption that Book 3 was predominantly disliked. For aside from Eddy and Quintana who devoted essays of some length to pointing out the weaknesses of Book 3, the negative comments cited make up no more than one or two sentences (Gay, Arbuthnot, Coleridge, Jeffrey, Murray), or a couple of paragraphs at most (Scott, Case). Essentially, there did not exist enough evidence of negative criticism for Philip Pinkus to assume in 1976 that he could claim, without citing proof, “Book III of Gulliver’s Travels has always presented the reader with considerable difficulties” (64); or Jenny Mezciems to forgo naming any critics, while stating “in the case of . . . particularly The Voyage to Laputa there still hangs the critical imputation that Swift’s ordering energies were flagging” (1); or Ila Dawson Trialdi to name only two yet assert, “many critics . . . claim that [Book 3] is a failure” (emphasis added, 35). In short, the negative
criticism that exists historically is not substantial enough for critics to assume unproblematically that the allegations about the critics' general disdain for Book 3 are historically accurate.

Yet no historical "fact" about Book 3 was as persistently recorded as that of its being generally deplored by critics. After Nicolson and Mohler, after positive commentary had come to greatly outweigh the negative, the claim about the general negative response to Book 3 continued to play a key role in establishing the textual starting place for its critics. In 1967, Robert Hunting started his discussion of Laputa with "Book 3 is not generally so highly regarded as other sections of the Travels" (108). Wrote Trialdi in 1968, "many critics who have attempted to evaluate Book III . . . claim that it is a failure" (35). Eight years later, despite a serious lack of supporting evidence, Pinkus nevertheless declared that "Book III of Gulliver's Travels has always presented the reader with considerable difficulties" (64). And he is not alone in the 1970s. For there is L. J. Morrissey who stated in 1978 that "from the beginning, Book III has been recognized as the weakest of the four voyages of Gulliver's Travels" (97), and David Renaker one year later echoing the same sentiments: "Book III was generally characterized, and deplored, as a pointless satire" (936). Even as late as 1988, despite the positive criticism of Nicolson and Mohler, Potter, Trialdi, Pinkus, Morrissey, Mezciems, Renaker,
etc., Michael DePorte continued to assert that "from the beginning Book 3 has been the ugly duckling of the Travels" (57).

What is compelling about a statement like DePorte's is that it seems to be unquestionably true even though we have not yet been offered proof that it is historically true; and certainly it is not literally true (Book 3 is not really an "ugly duckling"). Yet the apparent validity of narrative statements is not entirely dependent upon the existence of supporting evidence. Moreover, to say that a statement possesses the semblance of truth is not to say that we accept the statement as true. In other words, the truth value of DePorte's statement does not derive from the capacity for his words to reflect accurately an extra-textual event but from the textual structure itself — namely, narrative — in which the statement is cast. At the basic linguistic level, what primarily distinguishes narration, the principal mode of fiction, from exposition, the dominant mode of scholarly writing, is narration's use of the preterite tense; this tense transforms a descriptive statement of opinion — Book 3 is the ugly duckling of the Travels" — into a narrative statement of an event — from the beginning Book 3 has been the ugly duckling of the Travels."12

As DePorte's statement as well as that of the others quoted above indicate, literary narration is the predominant mode for a primary non-fiction enterprise — the recording of
events in the writing of history. In fact, at the level of the sentence, recording history and writing a story are indistinguishable projects. There is, for example, no structural difference between Pinkus's statement that "Book III of Gulliver's Travels has always presented the reader with considerable difficulties" (64) and Gulliver's statement at the outset of Book 3 that "[Captain William Robinson] had always treated me more like a Brother than an inferior Officer" (127). Narrative inevitably conflates the resultant semblances of reality from both fiction and non-fiction texts, making fiction seem to have reference to real-world events and involving non-fiction statements in the construction of storytelling. This conflation of the fictive with the non-fictive discourses, makes literary narration a powerful reality-generating device, perhaps the single most important agent in creating that suspension of disbelief so critical to literary fiction. At the same time, this confusion inherently undermines the project of recording history because it exposes the endeavor to write historical non-fiction as an inescapably deliberate process of fabricating a time/space structure in which one could maneuver or position an argument to one's own advantage.

Such is the predicament of the critics' statements about other critics' response to Book 3. Because the establishment of context is inherently a narrative endeavor, a history of the critics' disdain for Book 3 is unavoidably a story about
the critics' disdain for Book 3. The narrative statement about the past reception to Book 3 inescapably does more than inform the reader about a historical truth. It acts as a powerful story element in a fictive construction, engendering a perception of virtual time and space, and involving the reader in interaction with an accompanying cast of characters: an "apotheosis of pedantry," "puzzled commentators" or an "ugly duckling." As the critics repeated the "history" of Book 3's poor reception by the critics and then proceeded to offer positive responses to the work, this "history" became less and less connected to actual historical events while its position as fiction became more firmly established.\textsuperscript{14} The story about the critics' disliking Book 3 had engendered a truth evidently more compelling than historical fact — a truth that secured a powerful hold on the imaginations of the critics of Book 3. By the time DePorte transforms Book 3 into an "ugly duckling," the historical accuracy of his story is a moot point. His retelling of the oft-repeated story of Book 3 achieves a compelling semblance of truth not because of its historical value, but because as fictional narrative it possesses the capacity to suspend our disbelief.

Herein perhaps lies the paradoxical nature of the relationship between literary narration and the way in which we sense its power to reflect truth. We understand intuitively, if not intellectually, that the linguistic representatives we generate to reflect lived experiences are at best an inexact
reduction of these experiences. Only when a narrative construction ceases to seem like an attempt to transform actual experiences into communicable language — when it achieves, in effect, the illusion that it is itself an event to be experienced — does it persuasively comprise an accurate reflection of historical truth. As the story of Book 3 and the critics demonstrates, history is more compelling, not when it is supported by fact, but when it is sustained by fictive constructs (an heroic struggle, for example) with its accompanying dynamic system of desires or tensions. The suggestion is that ultimately, a narrative construction may seem a better reflection of historical truth if it does not appear to be a reflection of historical truth. In other words, the nature of literary narration is that it can seem more true when it is false than when it is true. Hence, because it possesses this singular capacity to allow, indeed to encourage, a conflation of fact and fiction, making indistinct the projects of historians and story tellers, literary narration is the locus of tremendous power and abuse. This is something of which the opening passages of Book 3 seem to demonstrate an understanding.

At the outset of the third part of the Travels, Gulliver is, like the critics of Book 3, engaged in the enterprise of setting up a context that best serves to give credibility to the claims he makes. It is important here to underscore the distinction between Swift and Gulliver in their projects of
telling a story. Although both Swift and Gulliver endeavor to tell a convincing story, Swift, writing fiction, strives to create a compelling illusion; whereas Gulliver, writing an autobiographical history, aims at convincing his readers that what he writes is literally true. And although in both their stories Gulliver is the featured character, in Swift's story Gulliver is a wholly fictional creation, whereas in Gulliver's story, he is a non-fictional historical presence. Swift, in other words, is writing a story — not history — with no pretensions to recording actual historical fact. Gulliver, however, is writing history, attempting accurately to record facts. In terms of their writing tasks, therefore, the proper counterpart to the critics of Book 3 is Gulliver rather than Swift. For like the critics, Gulliver imagines that the type of writing he does resides in the realm of "serious scholarship" a realm safely distinct from that of fictional fabrication.

And like Eddy, Gulliver involves his history in a narrative construction that make his history compelling despite its obvious exaggerations. One day, Gulliver tells us, out of nowhere, a wealthy, successful, and important sea captain "comes to [Gulliver's] House" and begins a rigorous campaign to recruit the surgeon for employment on his ship (137). As Gulliver would have us believe, he is such a sought-after candidate for the job that the captain is willing to "double the usual Pay," put "another Surgeon under [him]," and "follow
[Gulliver's] Advice, as much as if [he] had a Share in the Command" (137). The only explanation Gulliver offers for Captain Robinson's preferential treatment of him is that they had been formerly acquainted with one another "in a Voyage to the Levant" (137) during which the captain "had always treated [him] more like a Brother than an inferior Officer" (137). But such an explanation — Robinson offers Gulliver preferential treatment now because he offered it to Gulliver in the past — begs the question. For we are not offered any explanation as to why the captain chose to treat Gulliver like a brother in the first place. Apparently, we are expected to take Gulliver at his word and accept his claims without verification.

However, we have more to go on than Gulliver's word in Book 3, for we have mention of his voyage to the Levant in Book 1. In the opening to "A Voyage to Lilliput" Gulliver states that under the command of "Captain Abraham Pannell," he "continued three Years and a half" on "the Swallow" as a Surgeon, making "a Voyage or two into the Levant." (3). Evidently, since Gulliver offers no other mention of travel to the Levant (and since he makes it a point to give a very detailed account of all the places he had traveled), it was on one of these voyages that Gulliver met Captain Robinson who treated him "more like a brother than an inferior officer."15 But if Robinson meant anything to Gulliver on one of these voyages, there is no indication of it. In fact Robinson
receives no mention at all — a curious omission since Gulliver goes to some lengths to name the person who gave him a recommendation (Mr. James Bates), the captain of the ship (Abraham Pannell), even the ship itself (the Swallow). Also, since Gulliver's voyages to the Levant were among the first he made, and thus would have come at a time in his life when any kind treatment, certainly brotherly treatment by someone as important as Captain Robinson, was unlikely to go unmentioned, it is stranger still that Gulliver failed to mention Robinson.16

Moreover, it is unlikely that Gulliver's seamanship on one of those voyages would have been very impressive. Gulliver was a novice seaman on the voyages to the Levant, and, by all accounts, it does not appear that Gulliver distinguished himself as a seaman during his first "three Years and a half" at sea. In fact the suggestion is that, in spite of his youthful dreams to travel and the various preparations he made in anticipation for such a life, his first experience at sea ended in failure; it ended, indeed, with Gulliver "resolved to settle in London, to which Mr. Bates [his] master, encouraged him" (3). Even if Robinson, the "Master, and a fourth Part Owner" of the ship on which Gulliver served as surgeon, did take pity on Gulliver and show him brotherly kindness, it was unlikely that Gulliver was accomplished enough to impress Robinson with his skill as a seaman — certainly not to the extent that Gulliver could truthfully
claim Robinson had "experienced [Gulliver's] Knowledge in Sea-Affairs to be at least equal to his," leading him later to "follow [Gulliver's] Advice, as much as if [Gulliver] had a Share in the Command (137).

Clearly Gulliver is being less than truthful and/or accurate about the circumstance that led to his decision to take on the third voyage. Nevertheless, the context Gulliver sets up does succeed in achieving a credible semblance of authenticity — an achievement due in part to this "history's" participation in a powerful textual construction — the courtship story. The captain "came to my house," Gulliver tells us, "repeating his Visits often" until "at last" Robinson proposes to enter into an "Engagement" with Gulliver and "Share" his command with the surgeon. To these overtures, Gulliver responds, "I knew him to be so honest a Man, that I could not reject his Proposal" (137). In effect, relating Captain Robinson's flattering pursuit of him in terminology typically used to describe behavior leading toward a proposal of marriage, Gulliver invokes one of humanity's most compelling narratives. The courtship story is convincing in part because the basic struggle between the pursuer and the pursued comprises one of the most common conflicts in our cultural psyche. Yet the believability of the story is also dependent simply upon the familiarity and by extension the acceptability of its basic components. The primary characters in this story are an object of desire (the "wooed") and
one who desires the object (the "wooer"); and the chief action of this story consists of the relentless pursuit of an object of desire and the ultimate achievement or loss of that object.

Because the courtship narrative is supported by its own internal framework and possesses its own logic, Gulliver's invoking of this narrative allows him to position his history (his story) of the events that led to his third voyage in a construct, the rules of which supersede those properly governing the writing of history. Gulliver's claims about his status seem credible because he is placed in the role of the object of desire — an object whose definitive characteristic is its possession of great intrinsic value, worthy of being pursued. Moreover, because the story of courtship is the story of single-minded pursuit, Captain Robinson's overtures toward Gulliver are believable; indeed they are expected. Essentially, Gulliver's history has the appearance of truth in part because Gulliver and Robinson play their roles apropos to what is expected of them in the narrative of courtship — a narrative that obscures Gulliver's obvious neglect of the facts.

Yet the capacity for Gulliver's account to appear true is due also to Swift's rhetorical maneuvering. Swift has Gulliver begin Book 3 with what appears to be a somewhat unwieldy list of facts concerning a person who came calling one day: "I had not been at home above ten Days, when Captain
William Robinson, a Cornish Man, Commander of the Hopewell, a stout Ship of three Hundred Tuns, came to my House" (Swift's italics, 137). For no apparent reason, we are given the person's name and rank, his place of birth, his current avocation, the name of the ship he commands, and some features about the ship. The information offered seems to be a simple itemization of facts, straightforward and objective, divested of any personal involvement.

However if we examine closely the textual structure into which the information has been positioned, it becomes apparent that a great deal of care went into the designing of Gulliver's "list." Following the name, "Captain William Robinson," we are offered three clauses in a grammatically parallel series — nominal phrases functioning adjectivally to modify other nouns. Strictly speaking however, because the first two phrases in the series ("a Cornish Man, Commander of the Hopewell") pertain to Robinson, whereas the third ("a stout Ship of three Hundred Tuns") pertains to the ship he commands, they should not be drawn together into a structurally parallel series. That they are, however, indicates an attempt to suggest a parallelism where one does not exist. For, when items are drawn together into a series as they are here, it inherently engenders an illusion of an underlying structural parallelism that establishes an equivalency among the items placed in the series. Indeed, since the statements describing Robinson, straightforward appositives that offer
either negative nor positive information about him, are
clearly not designed to predispose us to formulate any judg-
ments about him, the description of the 

Hopewell appears to be
uninvested statements of facts, offering neutral information
about the ship.

Nevertheless, because the description of the 

Hopewell functions as part of the portrait being drawn of Robinson, the
information about the ship is ultimately not impartial. To
say that Robinson commands the 

Hopewell is to issue a neutral
statement of fact that, by reason of its neutrality, seems
unquestionably trustworthy. But the inclusion of the ship's
description in the portrayal of Robinson is meant to assert
the weight of the Captain's command and to impress upon
Gulliver's imagined readers Robinson's stature. In effect, to
say that Robinson commands "a stout Ship of three Hundred
Tuns" is to allege Robinson's power and prestige — an allega-
tion Gulliver has some personal investment in setting up.
For such an image of Robinson predisposes Gulliver's imagined
readers to judge Gulliver favorably. In other words, we
should be impressed with Gulliver, since someone like Captain
Robinson, obviously an important man because he commands a
three hundred tun ship, is actively trying to recruit Gulliver
for employment on his ship, and moreover, treats Gulliver like
a brother and considers the surgeon his equal in seamanship.
Because the description of the ship takes a structural posi-
tion equal to the statements describing Robinson, it masquer-
ades as a neutral statement and achieves by association the trustworthiness ascribed to its structural counterparts.

Hence Gulliver's failure to produce exact parallel structure is not merely sloppy composition technique but manipulative subterfuge. His placement of the fictive and non-fictive texts in structurally equal positions enforces an equivalency between his story and history and disables the impulse to hold up his text for scrutiny. In case we fail to notice this subtle "art" of textual deception, Swift underscores the practice by having Gulliver repeat it several times in various forms in the opening paragraphs of Book 3. The statements that make up the basic narrative of Gulliver's past association with Robinson, for example, bear an obvious structural similarity to one another: "I HAD not been at home above ten Days, when Captain William Robinson . . . came to my House"; "I had formerly been Surgeon of another Ship where he was Master"; and "He had always treated me more like a Brother than an inferior Officer" (137). The parallel construction of the statements is signaled by their being cast in the same grammatical configuration, a similarity emphasized by the repeated use of a subject pronoun (I and he) followed by the word "had" to begin each statement. However, as was the case with the example discussed above, despite their structural similarity, the statements are far different in terms of their reliability. The first two statements seem unquestionably tenable simply because there is no personal
investment involved and thus no reason for Gulliver to lie about these facts. The third statement, on the other hand, is clearly a personally invested claim that should not be accepted without proof. However, because of its structural similarity to the other two statements, the unreliability of Gulliver's claim that he was treated like a brother by Robinson is concealed.

As though Swift does not quite trust his readers to realize the point being made in the previous example, he has Gulliver offer another series of three statements in which the third item is again clearly less unreliable than the other two. Writes Gulliver:

That I should have another Surgeon under me besides our two Mates; that my Sallery should be double to the usual Pay: and that having experienced my Knowledge in Sea-Affairs to be at least equal to his, he would enter into any Engagement to follow my Advice, as much as if I had Share in the Command. (137)

Like the preceding example, the structural similarity between these statements is signaled and reinforced by a key word — "that" — repeated in each instance. And like the first example above, these statements, juxtaposed in a series, generate an illusion of an equivalency among all the items despite the obvious substantial difference between an offer of an assistant and extra pay and an offer of a veritable share in
the command of a ship. Moreover, as was the case in the examples above, the final unsubstantiated statement in the series achieves an undeserved measure of credibility by association to the other items.

Yet another structural parallel is at work in the text that allows Gulliver to assert his ultimate obviously exaggerated statement. For the three unsubstantiated statements that conclude each group of statements comprise their own parallel series. And like the local cases, this global one discloses a similar progression toward increasingly extravagant claims. The amount of personal investment Gulliver has in his first unsubstantiated statement about the "stout Ship of three Hundred Tuns," is not great, the statement itself being not seriously dubious. It is a statement we might grant to Gulliver even if we are aware that it is designed to predispose us to judge him favorably. Gulliver's personal investment in the second statement, which asserts Robinson's past treatment of him as a "Brother," however, is more considerable, and we might be less ready to accept Gulliver's claim without some evidence. But the third statement claiming not only "Knowledge in Sea-Affairs" equal to a veteran sea Captain but also this captain's willingness to share his command with Gulliver expresses such extravagant personal prerogative that, without substantial proof, we should not accept it at all.

Nevertheless, because Gulliver's first statement is not
so very unreasonable, we may consent to it with little diffi-
culty, even though to do so is to acknowledge in effect
Gulliver's assertion of his own stature. Once we have made
this initial move to grant him his self-portrayal, the second
statement in the series, alleging Captain Robinson's brotherly
treatment of him, begins to seem like a consistent and reason-
able element in his story. And thus, the second allegation
conceded, the third statement comes to appear less like an
isolated outrageous claim and more like confirmation that
Gulliver is indeed the famous sea-faring prodigy he presents
himself to be. In short, as was pointed out in the example of
Eddy's "apotheosis of pedantry," once we have made the initial
move to accept part of the story being told, we are but a
short distance away from accepting the whole story. Indeed
to the extent that it exposes the practice of creating
personally invested stories masquerading as objective history,
the opening of Book 3 permits a reading of Eddy's story as an
object of Swift's attack. For the impulse behind Eddy's for-
mulation of his "apotheosis of pedantry" constitutes the
problem in scholarly practice to which the textual maneuver-
ing in the opening of Book III directs our attention. When
Eddy put his argument in service to his hyperbolic figure,
supporting his assertions with a fictive construction rather
than evidence, he, like Gulliver, made the move to obscure
rather than clarify his claims and prompt his readers to
accept his claims even though they are unsupported.
Of course my suggestion is not that in the field of scholarship Eddy's generation of the self-serving fictive construction, upon which his argument to a significant extent depends, is an isolated instance. In fact, as I have tried to indicate above, disclosure of authors' personal investment in the setting up of their contexts, rarely fails to reveal their involvement in an amount of subjective textual maneuvering to set up their imagined narratives. However, what is problematic about this activity — that is to say, the moral problem which would have provided the impetus for Swift to issue an attack on the practice — does not lie in the fact of its prevalence. Rather, the need to question this practice is founded upon the general failure of its participants to recognize the dubiousness of the "truths" they generate — a failure which nevertheless results in their peremptory insistence on these truths primarily because they possess the authority to insist.

I began this chapter with a focus on the critics, illustrating their complicity in the art of textual misdirection, partly to identify, give credit to, and assess the past responses. But I also wanted to point out the scope and insight of Swift's attack as a far-reaching general exposure of the questionable scholarly practice of engaging unproblematically and unselfconsciously in narrative constructions. The problem is that there do exist (in Swift's time and ours) those who fail in self-scrutiny and who insist that others
accept as truth the products of this failure. In the early to mid-eighteenth century, the intellectual authority emerging predominant was that of science; and the stories this intellectual community was generating about itself constituted the controlling institutional narrative — the story of scientific progress. To the extent that the third part of Swift's *Travels* attempts to address the general failure in intellectual scrutiny and the accompanying abuse of authority exercised by the predominant intellectual institution, Book 3 is an attack on science or a habit of mind — illustrated as fully by Eddy as by Hobbes or Newton — that reaches well beyond not only eighteenth-century science but beyond science altogether.
Notes

1 Marjorie Nicholson and Nora M. Mohler published both "The Scientific Background of Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*" and "Swift's 'Flying Island' in the *Voyage to Laputa*" in the *Annals of Science* in 1937.

2 Reuben George Potter 1941 article, "Swift and Natural Science" was published in *Philological Quarterly*.

3 David Renaker's 1979 article "Swift's Laputians as a Caricature of the Cartesians" in *PMLA* adds Arthur E. Case (Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels) to this list, and Robert P. Fitzgerald's 1988 article, "Science and Politics in Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*" in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, mentions all the previous critics as well as Renaker.

4 Nicolson and Mohler's work has been so influential in Book 3 criticism that Renaker in 1979 declared, "there have been two main stages in the development of our thinking about the scientific satire in Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*: the periods before and after the publication of Marjorie Hope Nicolson's "The Scientific Background of Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*" (936; the failure to cite Mohler is Renaker's omission).

5 In the 17 November 1726 letter, John Gay writes to Swift, "as to other critics they think the flying island is the least entertaining; and so great an opinion the town have of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing below himself, that
‘tis agreed that Part 3 was not writ by the same Hand’ tho’
this hath its defenders too” (emphasis added, Correspondence
III, 183). The underscored portion was omitted by Eddy in his
version of the passage quoted (55).

6 The complete statement in the 27 November 1726 letter
from Swift to Alexander Pope reads as follows: “Dr. Arbuthnot
likes the Projectors least, others you tell me, the Flying
island; some think it wrong to be so hard upon whole Bodies
or Corporation. yet the general opinion is, that reflections
on particular persons are most to be blamed: so that in these
cases, I think the best method is to let censure and opinion
take their course” (Correspondence III, 189).

7 All are quoted in Kathleen William’s Swift: The
Critical Heritage: Deane Swift (143-4), W.H. Dilworth (168-
70)’ William Monck Mason (337-8), and Sir Walter Scott (389-
2).

8 Here is the complete text:

Among the travels of Gulliver, the Voyage to Laputa
has been most criticized and least understood.
There is general agreement that in interest and
literary merit it falls short of the first two
voyages. It is marked by multiplicity of themes;
it is episodic in character. In its reflections
upon life and humanity, it lacks the philosophic
intuition of the voyages to Lilliput and
Brobdingnag and the power of the violent and savage
attacks upon mankind in the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*. Any reader sensitive to literary values must so far agree with the critics who disparage the tale. But another criticism as constantly brought against the *Voyage to Laputa* cannot be so readily dismissed. Professor W. S. Eddy, one of the chief authorities upon the sources of *Gulliver's Travels*, has implied the usual point of view when he writes... (299)

9 The following is Nicolson and Mohler's complete text (the footnote references are Nicolson and Mohler's):

Some are repelled by the Laputans with their curious combination of mathematics and music and their dread of a comet and the sun\(^2\). Others are disturbed by the apparent lack of both unity and significance in the Balnibarians, particularly in the Grand Academy of Lagado\(^3\). Most of all, the Flying Island has puzzled commentators who dismiss it as a "piece of magical apparatus", a "gratuitous violation of natural laws"\(^4\) which offends the reader's sense of probability\(^5\). (299-300)

10 According to Scott, "The 'Voyage to Laputa' as it was the part in which the world took the least pleasure, is that in which the author most required assistance" (Williams 311).

11 None of the critics of Book 3 cite any other examples of negative criticism.
To change exposition into narration is therefore to transform a semblance of self-contained, subjective truth, removed from considerations of time and space into a semblance of an objective system involving an event and the accompanying existence of past time and space necessary to support this event. Narration, statements of events, in both generating and supporting virtual time and space is perhaps the foundation of our concepts of contiguity and sequence and thus our understanding of cause and effect.

When the existing institution supports the illusion that fiction and non-fiction projects are mutually exclusive and insists that there exists an unequivocal distinction between the projects of history and story telling—truth essentially becomes a question of genre. Operation within the genre of "historical narrative" allows a claim to truth that operation within, say, an epistolary novel does not. To the extent that Gulliver's Travels, a fictional historical narrative, is a direct affront to this rule, it generally calls the project of establishing genre boundaries into question.

Meanwhile a more accurate history/story of Book 3 and the critics had emerged. Although it may have been an exaggeration to say, as the critics have maintained, that Book III was generally disliked, it is no overstatement of historical fact to say that critics have generally claimed that Book 3 has been generally disliked by critics.
15 Swift's deliberate use of the same referent the "Voyage to the Levant" also underscores this fact.

16 Since Gulliver is supposedly writing his narrative after all his voyages were finished, it seems that he did not find his friendship with Robinson important to mention until his third voyage — that is, until such information could become useful to him to his project of creating the persona he wants. In Book 1, the kindness of Captain Robinson would undermine the picture he was trying to create of himself as an initially luckless surgeon who, despite adversity, succeeded finally in fulfilling his dreams of traveling. In Book 3, his project has changed, and he wants to show himself as a successful seaman. Hence Captain Robinson's pursuit of him now is meant to suggest an increase in his stature.

17 The capitalization of "HAD" in the first statement, is Swift's.
Chapter Two
Shifting Perspectives: Good Sense and Nonsense
in Gulliver's Account of Laputa

If the analysis of Swift's *Travels* in the previous chapter has not misdirected our concerns, what is exciting about an intense scrutiny of Gulliver's verbal inaccuracies in Book 3 is an apprehension of the textual maneuvers themselves—Swift's rhetorical sleights-of-hand that, for example, first invite readers to presume they are free from Swift's satiric attack, and then compel them to recognize, upon closer examination, that this very presumption is the object of censure. In this way, Swift implicates the readers in his satire, equating them with the foolish, blind, prideful objects of his satiric attack, forcing his readers to take an active role in resolving the dilemma (moral, intellectual, philosophical, etc.) into which he has placed them. When Gulliver gives his account of the people of Laputa, an account marked by apparent, even conspicuous, inconsistencies, readers would do well to remember the lessons learned in the previous chapter. Indeed, staying focused on Swift's reader-implicating strategies when we examine Swift's critique of abstract science in the Laputa episode, we find that Swift satire here involves
much more what is immediately obvious — namely, exposing the foolishness of the natural philosophers and their speculative practices. Rather, Swift imitates precisely, and ultimately parodies, the complex methods used by these philosophers to show us how we are tricked into accepting “scientific” nonsense unchallenged.

In his account of the Laputans,¹ Gulliver tells us that the “Persons of Quality” give their minds continually to reflection on mathematics and music, completely unaware of what is going on around them. Yet he states that these same people are “perpetually inquiring into publick Affairs,” worried about natural affairs to the point of suffering “continual Disquietitudes” because they believe their world is in constant danger from the comets and the sun (148). Unceasingly indifferent to yet at the same time perpetually anxious about external circumstances, overly concerned yet equally unconcerned about their world, the Laputans constitute an impossible contradiction. They are, in effect, the “stuff” of abstract theory — unaccountable nonsense which can be reasoned into existence in theory but have no likeness to anything that can be supported by nature or common sense.² It becomes clear, as we extend our focus, moreover, that the Laputans represent only one example of the complex network of contrary evidence that human culture raises in opposition to common sense and nature. In fact, contradictions and inconsistencies abound in the chapters on Laputa, all of which
serves to demonstrate, reflect, and reinforce Swift's apparent
thesis in *The Voyage to Laputa*; namely, that abstract science
divorced from common sense results in unacceptable nonsense.

* * * * *

At the outset of Gulliver's account of Laputa, Swift
presents the reader with an impressive, albeit implausible,
product of technology: a floating island. Although Gulliver
greets this island with an astonishment equal to that which
he exhibits when he meets the extraordinary creatures in the
other Books of the *Travels*, he follows his surprise here with
a scientific conjecture about how the island is able to move
about. He tells us that the men on the floating island "were
able (as it should seem) to raise, or sink, or put it into a
progressive Motion, as they pleased" (130). The existence of
this incredible contraption is not therefore in the same
order as that of the Lilliputians, Brobdingnagians, or
Houyhnhnms for whom we must simply suspend our disbelief and
accept. ³ There is never any question about the actual exist-
tence of six-inch people, sixty-foot giants, and talking
horses; they cannot exist. But in Gulliverian theory, a
floating island can indeed exist. Described in scientific
terms the island may become as believable as an object in our
world. And in such terms Gulliver later gives a full scien-
tific description of the island's inner workings — a descrip-
tion meant to parody a scientific paper of the kind put out
by the Royal Society:

By Means of this Load-stone, the Island is made to rise and fall, and move from one Place to another. . . . Upon placing the Magnet erect with its attracting end towards the Earth, the island descends; but when the repelling Extremity points downwards, the Island mounts directly upwards. When the Position of the Stone is oblique, the Motion of the island is so too. For in this Magnet the Forces always act in Lines parallel to its Direction. (152)

Hence, the floating island becomes plausible. Related in scientific jargon, the account displaces the fantastical nature of the island and suggests that the fact of its floating is theoretically reasonable.

Herein lies the problem with the jargon of scientific description; it renders nonsense of the most obvious kind into something that seems to make sense. Such language can potentially lead people to ignore the suggestions of experience and common sense, which tells them that a floating island is contrary to anything in nature, and to accept Gulliver’s account as truth. If we do not believe in the possibility of such an incredible contraption, it is presumably because we are not as easily fooled as the “intended objects” (i.e., everyone but the present reader) of Swift’s satire here who accept nonsense because it is stated in the language of
his detailed account of the island's magnetic system, the theorists' language, which is so abstruse it almost defies anyone to make any sense of it. 4 Also, in the jargon expressly developed to present an exacting account of facts, Swift has Gulliver give us a description of something that, because it does not exist, is completely contrary to fact. Clearly Swift's objection to the scientific theorist in this parody lies not so much in the impractical nature of abstract science (a theme which he explores more fully in the chapters on Balnibarbi) as it does in the discourse theorists have adopted; for this language easily disguises the inherent contradictions which otherwise would be rejected as nonsense. 5

In addition to the island, an obvious opposition to nature, other contradictions and inconsistencies exist in Gulliver's account of Laputa, often occurring unobtrusively, so that they are almost unnoticeable. At the beginning of chapter two, Gulliver states that the people of "better Quality . . . beheld me with all the Marks and Circumstances of Wonder" (132). However, at the end of the next paragraph he remarks that these same people "appeared altogether unmoved by the Sight of my foreign Habit and Countenance" — a direct contradiction (133). To maintain consistency with later statements and with what we know about the cogitating tendencies of the Laputans, we might simply ignore the first assertion.
But to discount it is to overlook a crucial feature of Gulliver’s account of the Laputans. For given what we know about the Laputans when Gulliver makes this remark, it is not unreasonable that they might have beheld him with curious wonder. Indeed, the Laputans would not have taken the time to pull Gulliver up to their island if he did not incite their curiosity. For if the Laputans care only for abstract cogitation, as Gulliver later informs us, his presence on the island below can hardly have caused a crowd to gather on the floating island and “four or five men [to run] in great Haste up the Stairs” for his benefit (141). Were Gulliver in Lilliput, Brobdingnag, or Houyhnhnmnland, his size or appearance might have caused enough surprise to make people as indifferent and proud as the Laputans to wonder who he is. But because Gulliver is not different in appearance from the Balnibarbiians, he should not have incited more curiosity than any miserable, ill-clothed, starving Balnibarbian of the realm for whom the Laputans had very little regard.7

Nevertheless, when Gulliver narrates the events about his first encounter with the Laputans, we do not question his veracity. That the people on the island are motivated by curiosity to help him seems likely. They react in a way we might if we were to see a miserable human being alone on an island. Since we are not yet given any reason to shun an identification with the Laputans — we do not yet know about their odd habits and countenance — we might well assume they
are as curious as we would be at the sight of Gulliver. Thus, we do not find it difficult to believe Gulliver's description about the commotion he causes with his presence on the island below. And if we accept his account up to this point, we accept without much question his assessment that the Laputans "beheld me with all the Marks and Circumstance of Wonder" (132). In fact, we might expect such a statement.

However, Gulliver immediately follows this statement with a description of the Laputans' "singular . . . Shapes, Habits and Countenances" which conjures up a picture so absurd it persuades us to disavow any identification with them and to identify completely with Gulliver (132). Therefore we accept Gulliver's description. Each statement he makes is congruous with the previous ones. The portrait of the Laputans is outrageous, but the account seems reliable. Thus, when he subsequently tells us that the Laputans were, "altogether unmoved by the Sight of my foreign Habit and Countenance" we find it consistent with what he has told us about the Laputans, and we accept it, unaware that it directly contradicts his earlier assertion and our former observations. But if we reject now all similarity with the Laputans and accept Gulliver's description, we must also reject the logic of their previous actions which we granted as a result of our earlier identification with them as fellow concerned beings interested in helping Gulliver. For they can hardly have been aware enough to notice and rescue Gulliver if "the
Minds of these People are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they neither can speak, or attend to the Discourses of others, without being rouzed by some external Taction," (132).

All of this is not to suggest that Swift has made Gulliver unreliable in a covert attempt to persuade his readers to approve the practices and beliefs of the Laputans. What is at issue is the subtle contradiction itself — the method by which Gulliver is able to relate contrary "truths." That a contradiction exists is clear. If we take note of it, and admittedly most readers do not, we can see that Swift has given us a demonstration of how the contents of a discourse, seemingly reasonable and logical, can lead us to accept contrary accounts. We embrace the contradictory nature of the Laputans hardly aware that we have done so. And in case we do not notice the contradiction in the Laputans, Swift gives us other reminders. Gulliver later tells us that these intensely absent-minded, absurdly inept, musico-mathematicians have built a telescope of amazing power and succeeded in contriving the magnetic core which allows their island to fly. Moreover, soon after we are made to believe that the Laputans are irresistibly curious about news and politics and perpetually inquire after publick affairs, we are told that the King "discovered not the least Curiosity to inquire into the Laws, Government, History, Religion, or Manners of the Countries where I had been; but confined his Questions to the
State of Mathematicks" (139). That a contradiction exists is clear. But one may easily neglect it, and I suspect that most simply accept both statements without noticing the inconsistency.

I do not believe that Swift meant here simply to trick the reader, but rather to illustrate a serious problem inherent in abstract speculation. Abstract philosophers, unlike the inept Laputans, do not speculate and encumber only themselves; they bring forth the products of their mental labor in scientific treatises — a practice which becomes a serious problem because these products can lead to a widespread acceptance of things that are contrary to nature and reason. Ironically, because it is Gulliver who relates the contradiction — a product of his speculation about the Laputans — he takes on momentarily the role of the contemporary abstract philosopher. In his account of the Laputan island, Gulliver essentially describes the absurdities of abstract thought in the discourse of an abstract philosopher. Hence Swift doubles his attack and reinforces his satire on abstract science. We should see not only how foolish the Laputans are with their heads in the air; we should also recognize how foolish Gulliver is to engage in this practice and, perhaps, how foolish we are to be taken in by abstract thinkers who are not all as simple-minded as the Laputans but can in fact be as clever as Swift himself.

Evidently, Gulliver's account of Laputa does not serve
merely to illustrate the foolishness of the abstract theorists; it also calls attention to the methods by which these "thinkers" lead us away from common sense. If we examine Gulliver's involvement in another inconsistency, we can see Swift's ulterior purpose manifest itself. Part of our reason for believing in Gulliver has to do with his parenthetical additions. The added pieces of information serve, to a certain extent, to convince us of his reliability since these explanatory remarks account for statements which might otherwise puzzle the reader. For example, when he first describes the motions of the floating island he adds parenthetically "(as it should seem)" to assure his reader he is not pretending to knowledge he does not at that moment possess (130). This is also true when he describes the flappers. Since, at the moment of his account, he does not know what is inside the flappers, he adds in parenthesis, "(as I was afterwards informed)" (132). The effect of his parenthetical information is to lead us to believe that he is giving us a strict account of facts and is not speculating about what he does not know at the moment.

And if we do believe Gulliver, we do not notice that he begins to go beyond a strict factual description. He follows this last account of facts with an observation that it seems the Laputans "are so taken up with intense Speculations," that they need flappers to arouse them (132). His conjecture here is still acceptable since he qualifies it with "seem." But
to this assumption, he juxtaposes the following: "for which Reason, those Persons who are able to afford it, always keep a Flapper, (the Original is Climenole)" (133). These latter statements lay claim to knowledge he does not have at this point. He has jumped from a guess about the Flapper's use to authoritative factual statements about its origin and function in Laputan society without giving any indication that he has done so. The oversight is especially conspicuous because he gives us a parenthetical statement - a device which heretofore served to account for how he came by the facts not at the present moment known to him or to explain some information which might confuse his readers.¹⁰ But this parenthetical addition, "(The Original is Climenole)," instead of accounting for the source of his knowledge in the previous statement, as we have been led to expect, is itself unaccountable information. He cannot know at this point "the Original [of Flapper] is Climenole." More importantly, we do not know what "climenole" means.¹¹

The statement about the origin of Flapper serves no functional purpose here. It is merely an imitation of the practice of alluding to etymological roots — a parody on Swift's part, a pretense on Gulliver's part.¹² Nevertheless, as with the other instances of his parenthetical additions, the information about "climenole" asserts Gulliver's authority, but in a markedly different way. When he tells us that some presently unknown fact is known to him because he was
later informed, we agree to accept his authority since he
gives a reasonable explanation for how he came by his infor-
mation. However, when he states the etymological root of
flapper, we must accept his authority — if we do — not
because of the reasonableness of the facts themselves, but
because we cannot know better. Nor can we argue with him on
this point, for we are unable to dispute unaccountable infor-
mation when we know nothing ourselves. We must simply
acknowledge his assertion because he has a monopoly on the
information. This is clearly unreasonable authority — the
basis of tyranny. It is because we are at a disadvantage
that we grant Gulliver this authority; and in doing so, we
take for granted that he is narrating fact. Thus, what is
absurdly contrary to anything in nature — the behavior of
the Lappans, ridiculous and laughable as it is — becomes,
like "climenole," accepted fact.

The authority of abstract philosophy, Swift seems to be
suggesting here, is founded upon our ignorance. We accept the
authority of the "learned" without checking what they profess
against common sense. The theme receives fuller expression
when we examine another of Gulliver's discrepancies — this
having to do with Gulliver's knowledge of music, asserted
almost parenthetically. In chapter two he tells us that "the
Knowledge I had in mathematics gave me great Assistance in
acquiring their Phraseology, which depended much upon that
Science and Musick; and in the latter I was not unskilled"
However, although he follows this assertion of his skills with mathematical phrases and terms — Lines, Figures, Rhombs, Circles, Parallelograms, Ellipses — to demonstrate his knowledge in math, he neglects to prove his skill in the other science and dismisses it with, “Words of Art drawn from Musick, needless here to repeat” (136). This oversight should seem striking because, although he later endeavors to give an extended demonstration of his skills in math with his calculation of Laputa’s size and his pseudo-algebraic description of how the flying island works, the only proof he offers about his knowledge of music is a few remarks about the shapes of musical instruments (132, 136). From this we can only be sure that Gulliver is able to recognize the shapes of a few instruments and name a few of them — hardly enough to prove that he “was not unskilled” in music. Yet he talks about music as if he is an authority on the Laputans’ involvement in music.

Again, my aim here is not to contend that the Laputans are not heavily into music, but to point to the method Swift has Gulliver use to implicate us in accepting Gulliver’s unproved statements. Gulliver makes two assertions — he has knowledge of math, and he is not unversed in music — but he only proves one of them conclusively. Yet somehow we believe the other as well. This is the result of our neglecting to give full consideration to Gulliver’s initial oversight. When he states he knows both music and math, we can grant both
Statements equal status; unproved, both are as yet tenuous but reasonable. However, when he proceeds to demonstrate his knowledge of math and dismisses the need to provide a similar demonstration of his musical knowledge, we should no longer accept both statements on equal terms. His dismissal destroys the balance of his two assertions; the validity of both is no longer equal. But if we dismiss Gulliver's dismissal, we continue to equate Gulliver's proven authority in math with his unproved authority in music and accept equally both his statements about the two sciences when in fact we should remain skeptical about anything he says concerning music.

Hence Swift's satire is double-edged. For it can serve to reprove both those who leave out crucial evidence, hoping that others will not notice the oversight and take for granted the truth of their assertions, as well as those who are taken in by such manipulating devices. And if we examine another discrepancy in Gulliver account, other problems with the abstract scientist become apparent. This discrepancy consists in Gulliver's engaging in acts for which he condemns the Laputans. In his speculation about the etymology of "Laputa," although he does not "approve of their Derivation, which seems to be a little strained," he proceeds to offer an even more strained "Conjecture of his own" (135, emphasis added). Also, even though he criticizes the Laputans for their miscalculation when they make his clothes, he is guilty
of a similar act when he miscalculates the size of the island by more than twenty thousand acres.\textsuperscript{14} With careless use of the formula to calculate the area of a circle he concludes that the island is one third the size it actually is. For, proceeding basically with an inadequate understanding of his information, he reaches hastily drawn conclusions and then fails to question his accuracy.

Swift's use of Gulliver to demonstrate the very thing he condemns, reinforces and drives home the point that abstract speculation divorced from adequate experience, no matter who engages in it, is bound to lead to meaningless conclusions and mistakes. To be sure, trusting his "very faithful Memory," and even though he has only studied the Laputan language for a few days, Gulliver believes he has enough "Insight into their language" to challenge the native speakers of the language. Personal pride clouds his judgment and has him offer to us a conclusion as nonsensically inconclusive as theirs.\textsuperscript{15} However, it is not likely that Swift found abstract mathematics to be in itself bad and would necessarily lead to an erroneous result.\textsuperscript{16} Direct measurement is preferred, if it is possible — the Laputans \textit{should} have directly measured Gulliver when they made his clothes — but it would be impractical, if not impossible, for Gulliver to measure the whole floating island itself. Nevertheless Gulliver should check his conclusion against others' to see if it follows the common consensus. For, clearly what is wrong with the
Laputans' speculation consists in their practice of closing themselves off from further sensory experience — a practice which opposes working towards common sense.

To emphasize this point, Swift gives us a person on the flying island who is contrary to the rest of the Laputans. This "great Lord of the Court" is interested in gathering new information and has not lost the use of his senses. He listens to Gulliver's information about "the Laws and Customs, the manners and Learning of the several Countries where [Gulliver] had travelled" (128); and consequently he is described as someone who has "performed many eminent Services for the Crown, had great natural and acquired Parts, adorned with Integrity and Honor" (129) — a description strikingly consistent with his considerate treatment of Gulliver. On the other hand, "His Majesty discovered not the least Curiosity to enquire into the Laws, Government, History, Religion, or Manner of the countries where [Gulliver] had been" (139). Yet it is the king who should be listening to Gulliver's accounts of his travels because such knowledge would help him to govern more effectively. But the Laputan King is interested only in theoretical mathematics which, being a closed and abstract system, cannot have anything new added to it; he reaches conclusions therefore which invariably oppose the common good and common sense.

If the end result of empty speculation were simply bad music, poorly fitting clothes, ill built houses and personal
awkwardness, Swift might not be so intent upon a satirical attack on abstract philosophy. For if this were the case, the Laputans cause no one discomfort but themselves. But we sense this is not the case when Gulliver, tired of the contempt with which his Laputan hosts treat him, abruptly moves away from an objective account of their peculiar appearance and behavior to an overt, frontal attack on the people he has observed:

I have not seen a more clumsy, awkward, and unhandy People, nor so slow and perplexed in the Conceptions upon all other Subject, except those of Mathematics and Musick. They are very bad Reasoners, and vehemently given to Opposition, unless when they happen to be of the right Opinion, which is seldom their case. (136)

Yet we only get the full effect of the Laputans' unceasing cogitation — how truly terrible their world is — when we examine their relationship with the women. Wrapped up in their cogitation, the men have no sense of others thus forcing their wives and daughters to endure their endless indifference. They have become literally senseless and lacking in common experience with their women. And without an interest in other people — the necessary component of humanity — the Laputan men have become less than human. The reactions of the wives and daughters to their husbands and fathers serve to illustrate this. The women are not simply bored and
restless as any human being would be if forced to constantly suffer the presence of someone who gives no attention to his or her existence. The Laputans who have become a contradiction to humanity have driven the women to be the same. The men's inhuman indifference compels their women to nonhuman extremes — a "great Court Lady, who had several Children" to prefer being beaten every day like a beast to remaining with her over-reasoning husband even though he is "the prime Minister, the richest Subject in the Kingdom, [and] a very graceful Person" (139). Essentially, the Laputan women have become bestial in necessary reaction to the men's becoming, in terms befitting them, insensible "air-heads."

But worse yet, for reasons Gulliver admits he finds "altogether unaccountable," the Laputans, although "least adapted either by Study or nature," possess a "strong Disposition . . . towards News and Politicks" (137). For, although there is not "the least Analogy between the two Sciences [math and politics]," the Laputans have reasoned away this inconsistency by supposing that "the Regulation and Management of the World require no more Abilities than the handling and turning of a Globe" (137). To build upon a previous statement, the real problem with abstract theorists lies not in the fact that their heads are in the air but in what they produce as a result of their heads' being in the air. For the Laputans put into practice their speculations. They apply their mathematical theories, untempered with common
sense, to other fields — to politics and government. Here is where the worst abuses occur. The true evil lies in the transformation of political problems into abstract theory. The crushing of a people becomes an abstract problem to contemplate in deep cogitation without concern for humanity. What ultimately characterizes the Laputans as a result of their contrary nature and lack of common sense is their complete disregard for humanity. The application of abstract and objective principles does not result in harmless nonsense but in inhumanity of the worse kind — a "universal Destruction both of Houses and Men" (144).

It is important to recognize that Swift implies this total annihilation has been attempted with success in the past. Gulliver tells us that using the island to crush the people below is an "Extremity to which the Prince is seldom driven"; he does not say it is something to which they have never been driven (144, emphasis added). Although the king fails against the Lindalinians, it is evident that he has previously succeeded elsewhere since the Lindalinians know well his methods. Also, the King's demonstrated surprise at his failure with the Lindalinians suggests that he had been successful with this method in the past. Thus the incredible destruction is not simply theory but was theory put into practice at the unquestionable cost of countless lives. The dangers of scientific theory made actual must therefore be seriously considered.
To get us to recognize the destructive potential of abstract nonsense is, I believe, the intent of Swift's satire of Laputa. Critics have noted that of the four Books, Gulliver in Book 3 is most like Swift himself (See note 7). Our easy identification with Gulliver's viewpoint makes the satire here seem obvious to a fault. However, it is probably necessary that we are led by a narrator who appears to be unquestionably well-judging and with whom we can seem to safely align ourselves; for this allows Swift to implicate us in the manifest contradictions and inconsistencies. The contrary evidence cannot suggest that what Gulliver says is untrue about the Laputans; we must know beyond a doubt that the Laputans are the objects of Swift's obvious satire since this lets us know in no uncertain terms that the focus of Swift's attack here is abstract speculation. However, it does not give due credit to the text or Swift to insist that the full extent of Swift's attack on abstract speculation lies in the small-minded, transparent satire of the Laputans. Indeed, such a reading can be achieved only at the expense of ignoring the inherent contradictions.\textsuperscript{17} But if we overlook the contrary evidence, we participate in precisely the kind of activity Swift attacks here; namely, the failure to recognize the evil, even if we see the foolishness, of speculative nonsense.

Clearly, there is an agenda here, eclipsed by the obvious satire on the Royal Society, but pointed to by the contradic-
tions — a more complex and serious satire on the actual state of abstract science which engages in the potentially harmful activity of reasoning away contradictions and ignoring humanity.\textsuperscript{18} Evidently, all of us, not just the small community of scientists, are the objects of Swift's satire here because of our propensity to accept the products of abstract speculation even though they are contrary to common sense. The chapters on Laputa then are not meant simply to get us to laugh at the members of the Royal Society, but to persuade us to laugh at ourselves for being fooled by their discourse, which Swift imitates, not merely parodies, here. If the members of the Royal Society are the foolish Laputans, how much more foolish are we to be fooled by them. Here Swift's moral vision asserts itself; after we finish laughing at ourselves, we should stop and reconsider the dangers of nonsense, not just its silliness. For if abstract theorists can convince us of their nonsense, they need to be more seriously reckoned with; they are a real threat to the common good and should not be simply dismissed as harmlessly foolish.\textsuperscript{19}

Hence, an analysis of the instances of contrary evidence in the chapters on Laputa reveal that what seems to be Swift's transparent satire of the Royal Society actually goes far beyond this simple theme. Swift was not merely a bitter man, nursing a grudge against abstract reasoning left over from his days at Trinity College. Nor was he foolishly uninformed about science.\textsuperscript{20} He was fully aware of the real dangers
involved when abstract speculation is engaged upon without common sense — as probably all too often is the case (in his time as well as ours). And he foresaw the dangers of the application of theories when divorced from common sympathy, for such practice necessarily ignores the common good; and the potential for total destruction is real. In our present nuclear age, we should not find this sentiment difficult to accept. We should not then take lightly Swift's warning here — that to think abstractly without common sense can only lead to unaccountable nonsense which in turn leads to great evil.
Notes

1 Critics cannot seem to agree on whether Laputian or Laputan is the correct designation of a citizen of Laputa. Greenacre, Wood, Wheeler and Rawson use "Laputian" and Eddy, Pinkus, and Hunting use "Laputan" I have opted to use the shorter form.

2 The term "common sense" is discussed in n29 above in the Introduction.

3 Others have noted, albeit in a negative way, this difference. Eddy, for example, finds the "pygmies, giants, or horses . . . indispensable to the satire," but he finds that "there is not . . . any need for the magical apparatus of Laputa" (158).

4 Gulliver continues his account with an "explanation" of the island's "Manner of Progress," which is as (if not more) abstruse and jargon-ridden as his description of the island's load-stone mechanics. This statement has a geometric diagram of the island's movement to accompany it:

To explain the Manner of its Progress, let A B represent a Line drawn cross the Dominions of Balnibarbi; let the Line c d represent the Load-stone, of which let d be the repelling End, and c the attract End, the Island being over C; let the Stone be placed in the Position c d with its repelling End downwards; then the Island will be driven upwards obliquely towards D. When it is
arrived at D, let the stone be turned upon its Axle till its attracting End points towards E; and then the Island will be carried obliquely towards E.

\[ \ldots (152) \]

5 Eddy contends that Swift’s use of the flying island was a failed attempt to “sustain the marvellous interest already created in the first two voyages” (158). I would argue that Eddy is looking at the wrong thing. I think Swift wants us to focus on how a flying island is made an object of serious belief rather than to believe ourselves in the possibility of flying island.

6 Gulliver tells us later that the king treated him “with great Contempt and Indifference” (139. And in Chapter 4 he confesses that “[he] thought [himself] too much neglected” (147).

7 In fact, because of the Balnibarians’ mad propensity for wild experimentation, one of them, as far as the Laputans are concerned, could very well have made his way to the island to try out a new theory. And it is unlikely that his presence on the island would have caused the Laputans, “being too much taken up in their own Speculations, to have Regard to what passed here below” (160) to stop their flying island in curious wonder about who he is.

8 Wood notes that we tend to align ourselves with Gulliver with whom we feel a “common humanity” (62). Before we are told of the Laputan’s abnormalities, they seem to be
acting humanely because of their "rescue" of Gulliver. But as soon as Gulliver depicts the Laputans for us, he seems to become once again (although this perception is always suspect), as Wood contends he is "throughout much of Book III," the "constant reminder of Human norms of behaviour, and we come to identify once again with Gulliver" (62).

There is no doubt Swift objected to the kind of science the Laputans practice. Case points out Gulliver's hatred of some political practices as a basis for his depiction of the Laputan inner court circle (112). Moreover, as critics have noted, in Book 3 Gulliver speaks for Swift and gives Swift's own opinions. Hunting argues that certain portions of Book 3 "actually seem to be the angry dean Jonathan Swift himself" (110). Williams goes so far as to say that Gulliver "ceases to have any character and, in effect vanishes, so that for the most part the satire speaks directly to us" (175). The general consensus is as Ward contends: "Gulliver remains an outsider in a crazy fantasy society, possessed of all his senses and able to see clearly and judge well" (154).

The function of other earlier parenthetical additions have served to clarify statements the reader might have found puzzling. In chapter one, when Gulliver tells us that he and his men were "all prostrate upon our Faces," he also adds "(for so I gave Order)" to explain their being in that position (138). Also, to his statement, "that malicious Reprobate, having often endeavoured in vain to persuade both the cap-
tains that I might be thrown into the Sea," he affixes "(which they would not yield to after the Promise made me, that I should not die)" to account for the reason they do not kill him (139). And again, when he states that he built a fire "the next Day and roast my Eggs as well as I could," he is careful to add "(For I had about me my flint, Steel, Match, and Burning-glass)" to explain how he was able to do so if he was set adrift with so few provisions (130).

11 Neither the OED nor Webster's Unabridged recognizes the existence of the word, "climenole." Nor have I found any critic who have attempted to assign this term any meaning.

12 Fitzgerald offers a slightly different reading of this practice: "Gulliver's remarks on the meaning of 'Laputa' are a parody of fanciful etymological speculation, but may at the same time point us to the true source" (222).

13 In case we forget this assertion, in chapter four Gulliver repeats it: "They were indeed excellent in the two Sciences [mathematics and music] for which I have great Esteem, and wherein I am not unversed" (147, emphasis added).

14 A circle with a diameter of 7837 yards contains 31311 acres not ten thousand as Gulliver contends. 7837 yards = 4.45284 miles. Gulliver rounds this off to "about four Miles and an Half" (140). Since he is figuring in miles, the approximation can lead to a miscalculation of 666 acres. Yet this is not his major oversight. He arrives at the figure of 10,000, it seems, by simply guessing. If he used the formula (A
to determine the area of the island he would have found that the radius (2.22642 mi.) \times \pi (3.1416) = 48.923 sq. mi. Since one square mile equals 640 acres the area of the island expressed in acres (48.923 \times 640) would be 31311.9. The equivalent of 640 acres to 1 square mile, which is still true today, dates back as far as the Anglo Saxon period and is unlikely to have been different in the Eighteenth Century. On the other hand, Nicolson and Mohler contend that Gulliver (Swift) was very exacting with 7837 yards as the diameter of the island:

Swift may have attempted to work out his own estimate for the diameter of the earth at 46° N., where his imagination had placed the Floating Island. Swift was only too capable of having slyly split the difference of Newton's average and least diameter of the earth — which happens to work out at exactly 7837 miles! (418)

Nevertheless, they did not bother to check 10,000 acre figure to determine its accuracy.

15 He comes up with a theory that is no more acceptable than the Laputans'. Because we, as well as Swift's audience would know that "Laputa" means "the whore" in Spanish, we know Gulliver's speculation here is just as unreliably foolish as the Laputan's.

16 Sutherland suggests something similar to what I have stated with his argument that "Swift does more than attack
the excesses of would-be scientists: he attacks science itself. . . . This does not mean he opposed scientific investigations, particularly when it might lead to useful discoveries" (46).

17 On various levels, besides the obvious parody of the scientific paper, the chapters on Laputa imitate a written product of abstract scientists. The subject of its discourse points to it; the contradictions reveal it. But if the reactions of subsequent critics is an accurate indicator of the present ability to see beyond nonsense, Swift had reason to be worried about abstract science. For the contradictions in the account of Laputa have been universally ignored, overlooked, or simply explained away, and nonsense accepted without realization. Perhaps Swift over-estimated our ability to decipher abstract nonsense, for his contemporaries seemed no more to notice the contrary nonsense here than they did in an actual scientific paper. This realization must have indeed be a disappointment if not despairing to Swift.

18 Williams also argues that Book 3 "[goes] beyond the merely topical: beyond particular scientific discoveries or the relation of the kingdoms of England and Ireland" (166). However, she contends that Book 3 is really an "allegorical presentation of the evils of a frivolous attitude of life" because she finds that Swift's opinion the scientific achievement of his day to be inadequate (166). I believe, on the other hand and have argued so in this paper, that Swift under-
stood well the implications of our failure to look more carefully at the dangers involved in the scientific achievement of his day.

19 It is important that we recognize the moral vision of Swift's satire formulated in the Chapters on Laputa for it informs the later chapters. Subsequent chapters unfold other evils as a result of people's turning away from common sense. We can laugh at the foolish projects of the Lagado Academy but we should focus on the real evils here. The scatological humor of the farting dog should not let us ignore the fact that an animal has been negligently killed as a result of a scientist's attempt to put into practice abstract nonsense. We should recognize also the inherent evil in this pseudo-scientist's earnest desire to practice this same experiment upon a human being. Pinkus makes a similar point when he argues that Swift "shows how Laputan rationalism seeps into every corner of society, and he piles up one sequence of examples after another to illustrate that in the name of reason a madness is spreading over the earth" (65).

And if we do not forget what chapters on Laputa teaches us, we will remember that we must remain skeptical about the "truths" abstract reasoning would want to force upon us. For neither the seemingly immutable past or the brightest wish — eternal life — for the future can be accepted without question as is demonstrated later in the chapters on Glubbdubdrib and Struldruggs. Thus, it is not simply Swift's clumsy
attempt to connect unrelated episodes that Book 3 is called *The Voyage to Laputa*. The Laputans are the supreme expression of abstract reasoning in all its foolishness and potential for harm; in Book 3, Gulliver travels into the world of abstract nonsense — the whore of common sense.

20 Nicolson and Mohler illustrate in their article, "The Scientific Background of Swift," that Gulliver did indeed know a great deal about science and studied the papers put out by the Royal Society with seriousness.
Chapter Three
Equally Driven by Hope and Despair:
Putting into Practice Lagado's Program of Innovation

To drive home the potential for destruction of scientists which he drew for us in his portrayal of the Laputans, Swift gives us in the chapters on Balnibarbi the manifestation of Laputan speculation. Shortly after Gulliver arrives in Lagado, the Metropolis of Balnibarbi, Swift has him offer some general observations about this peculiar land and people. Because the Balnibarbians "[have fallen] into Schemes of putting all Arts, Sciences, Languages, and Mechanicks upon a new Foot," the land "lies miserably waste, the Houses in Ruins, and the People without Food or Cloaths" (160-1). In sharp contrast to the typical Balnibarbian is Lord Munodi, the conservative holdout, who, "content to go on in the old Forms; to live in the Houses his Ancestors had built, and act as they did in every part of life without Innovation" (160), possessed a "delightful Prospect" — "a most beautiful Country; Farmers Houses at small Distances, neatly built, the Fields enclosed containing Vineyards Corngrounds and Meadows" (159-60). One lesson among many others that readers could learn from this satiric portrait of
Balanibarbi and its lone outcast is that: "new is not necessarily better" (with its colloquial modern corollary "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."). Although this lesson seems uninspired and pedestrian, a cliched over-generalization about circumstances hardly worthy of a writer of Swift's considerable literary talent,\(^1\) it serves to point to a critique, not of science and technology per se, but of the notion of the "new and improved," specifically of the role it has played in making the products and ideas of natural scientists a part of the reality of common experience. In other words, it is not the actual products of the grand Academy of Lagado that concern Swift; what is of greater concern is the notion itself, the rhetoric of innovation that is apparently capable of persuading the mind to abandon common sense and to re-imagine him/herself in uniquely improved situations and to act toward achieving what is ultimately a self-destructive reality.

Prior to their receiving their first taste of Laputan science, the inhabitants of Balnibarbi (if Lord Munodi is an accurate representative of a Pre-Laputan Balnibarbian) seem to have led comfortable, even idyllic, lives. Their fields produced ample crops; their houses were well built; the people were generally well fed and clothed. However, they apparently have become so invested in achieving a "new and improved" life, that, despite the intense misery brought on by consistent and inevitable failure to realize the projects
they imagined, "instead of being discouraged, they are Fifty Times more violently bent upon prosecuting their Schemes, driven equally on by Hope and Despair" (161). Apparently, as critics have pointed out,² Swift is suggesting the main problem with the Balnibarbians is that they have imagined for themselves unachievable innovations. With eagerness unchecked by practical sense, they have come to desire, among other things, that "one Man shall do the Work of Ten; a Palace may be built in a Week, of Materials so durable as to last for ever without repairing. All the Fruits of the Earth shall come to Maturity at whatever Season we think fit to chuse, and increase an Hundred Fold more than they do at present" (161). It would seem that the once sensible and productive Balnibarbians have become a host of useless dreamers, seduced by the wonderful but unattainable projects of their imagination — persuaded, like chronic gamblers ready to risk all and suffer any amount of discomfort, by the hope of eventually hitting the jackpot and bringing a project to fruition, and driven by despair at the knowledge that such things as they have imagined have not yet been, but should be achieved.

Compelling as this critique of Balnibarbian obsession might be, as a satire of early 18th-century society and its increasing interest in natural science, it is not without its problems — the chief of which is that the "impossible" innovations have proved not in fact to be impossible.³ The problem, a scientist might argue, is not with Balnibarbian
over-imagination but Swift's failure of imagination — his overcautious refusal to recognize the myriad possibilities of technological advances. The charges of "Pride, Singularity, Affectation, Ignorance, Caprice" (176) made against Munodi with the satiric intent of implying the opposite could be brought nonsatirically against Swift for his willful shortsightedness. However, to insist that Swift opposes scientific innovation per se is to confuse unproblematically Swift's viewpoint with Gulliver's or, more precisely, Lord Munodi's. As Gulliver's principal guide to Balnibarbi, Munodi necessarily influences the way Gulliver perceives Balnibarbi and its inhabitants. And Munodi's presentation of Balnibarbi is not without an amount of self-serving bias, notwithstanding his transparent attempts to appear otherwise.

* * * * *

Because of the way Munodi is presented to us, we are inclined to like and trust him. "This great Lord, whose Name was Munodi" (158), Gulliver proclaims, "was a Person of the first Rank, and had been some Years Governor of Laqado; but by a Cabal of Ministers was discharged for Insufficiency. However the King treated him with Tenderness, as a well-meaning Man, but of a low contemptible Understanding" (159). Despite the obvious discrepancy between the laudatory appellations Gulliver has affixed to Munodi and the negative opinion Gulliver alleges the Ministers and King have of the former governor, there is little doubt as to how we should assess
this contrary account. Quite simply, we are meant to dismiss the judgment of the King and the "Cabal of Ministers" and assume that Munodi is a "great Lord" and a "Person of the First Rank." One reason we do so has to do with the statement of Munodi's having served a number of years as Governor, a verifiable fact attesting objectively to his merit as opposed to the others' subjective opinions about his incompetence. Another is the transparently obvious "cabal" used to describe the ministers — a word denoting a small group of plotters with connotations of intrigue, conspiracy, machination — serving almost to advise readers to discount their opinions.

Yet what persuades us to dismiss those who judge ill of Munodi is textual maneuvering more subtle than the factual statement about Munodi's governorship and the connotations and denotation of "Cabal." When Gulliver uses "cabal" to describe the Balnibarbian ministers, he no doubt expected his readers to disregard the inappropriateness of his importing this English term into his description of a people for whom the term is meaningless. Instead, in using it he may have hoped to bring to his readers' minds specific English political conspirators, past and present, driving home a more powerful negative reaction toward the ministers. He may have also desired once again to impress readers with his expertise on English politics by demonstrating both his capacity to point out political types and his ability to work with the jargon
of English politics. If successful, and the readers are impressed, the effect would be a folding back of the text upon itself. For use of the term "cabal" adds credibility to Gulliver's political statements, which in turn makes "cabal" appear to be an accurate choice of words and his description of the ministers therefore a more accurate one.

Yet Gulliver's rhetorical sleight-of-hand would not be successful if there were not already a network of other items predisposing us to judge Munodi favorably long before Gulliver offers us the Cabal of Ministers as final testament to Munodi's goodness. When we are first introduced to Munodi, even before we are given his name, we are told, without any qualification or explanation, that he rates the commendatory title, "great lord." The omission of an explanation is significant because we have just been introduced (on the previous page) to another "great Lord" whose title derives from his being a "near relative to the King" and from his having "performed many eminent Services for the Crown, had great natural and acquired parts, [and was] adorned with Integrity and Honor" (157). This unnamed Laputan Lord, who had an ill ear for music, lacked any talent for mathematics and rarely made use of his Flappers was, much to his credit, not like the other Laputans. Not only was he the sole Laputan "Person of quality" who treated Gulliver with kindness or respect, he alone of the Laputans recognized the worth of Gulliver's experience and had discerning foresight enough
to take advantage of the opportunity which presented itself with Gulliver's fortuitous presence on Laputa.

Making a serious effort to learn from Gulliver, "listen[ing] to [Gulliver] with great Attention, and [making] very wise Observations on all [Gulliver] spoke," this great Lord "desired to be informed in the Affairs of Europe, the Laws and Customs, the Manners and Learning of the several Countries where [Gulliver] had travelled" (158). And despite his having been "universally reckoned the most ignorant and stupid person among [the people at Court]" (158), he is able to maintain his position there, not, as Gulliver suggests, simply due to his being a near relation to the king, but because he has prudence enough to show respect for the customs of his country — however foolish they might seem to outsiders. Although he has no need for the two Flappers who attend him, he nevertheless uses them "at Court, and in Visits of Ceremony, . . .[but] always command[ing] them to withdraw" when he is no longer in the public eye (158).

The introduction of Munodi as a "great Lord" in the following episode (if we have not forgotten the lessons gleaned from an examination of Gulliver's rhetorical maneuvering in previous chapters) issues an invitation to the reader to compare him to Gulliver's Laputan benefactor. Has Gulliver accurately used "great Lord," which linguistically equates Munodi with the "great Lord" from the juxtaposed episode, or is the term merely the result of misuse by a much mistreated
traveler who has become overzealously ready to affix the title "great Lord" to anyone who treats him with kindness? For no sooner does Gulliver state that he was "received with much Kindness" than he proclaims Munodi "a great Lord" as though the criterion for this designation were kindness to Gulliver (158), rather than kinship to royalty and "adorn[ments of] Integrity and Honor" (157). In fact, as far as we know, (apparently as far as Gulliver himself knows) Munodi does not possess the attributes of birth or distinguished service analogous to that of his structural "predecessor" and titular counterpart that would make it accurate for Gulliver to designate him a "great Lord."

Nevertheless, once the textual equation has been made, placing Munodi in a position parallel to the Laputan Lord, other circumstances, which would otherwise be unique to each individual, become associatively connected. In other words, what is true of the Laputan "great Lord" will, because of the parallel structure, seem true of the Balnibarbian "great Lord." It is hardly noticeable that the "House" (158) of this former Governor of Lagado becomes transformed by Gulliver into a "Palace" (159), as befits a great Lord, four paragraphs later. More importantly, Gulliver might expect us to dismiss the judgment of the Cabal of Ministers who discharged Munodi, just as we dismissed their structural counterparts in Laputa who mistakenly judged Gulliver's Laputan Benefactor to be the "most ignorant and stupid Person among
them" (157). We might also be expected to assume that the King in Lagado, who regards Munodi "as a well-meaning Man, but of a low contemptible Understanding" is as insensible and undiscerning as the Laputan King, a near relative to the great Laputan Lord (157). And finally we might be expected to think that Munodi, like the Laputan Lord, is alone among his insensible countrymen who possesses an amount of discerning good sense.

All this — namely, the examination of what is elliptically suggested by the parallel drawn between Munodi and the Laputan Lord — is not to suggest that, in specifics more significant than the want of distinguished service or royal blood, Swift is implying that Munodi is not the Laputan Lord's equal. My aim here is to point out the source of Gulliver's biases in his presentation of Balnibarbi and its inhabitants and to distinguish between Swift's and Gulliver's perspective on the issue of Balnibarbian innovation. It is important to remember that Gulliver has just spent a considerable amount of time (long enough to learn their language) in Laputa trying, but failing, to impress the Laputans with his knowledge of mathematics and music in which he considers himself "not unversed," and managing finally to "rend[er] himself extremely contemptible" (157). He has done his fair share of trying to be civil with them — learning their language, accepting their strange customs, engaging in their national obsession with mathematics and music — but, except for the
above-mentioned great Lord, no one acknowledged his presence much. Understandably he came to have a low opinion of them and desired to leave “with the first Opportunity” (157). Understandably too, he would come to have a disproportionately high opinion of anyone who shows him “Marks of Favor” (157), and an equally disproportionate low opinion of anything that has been tainted by Laputan science, all of which would make him an especially agreeable companion to Lord Munodi who has been resisting Laputan “progress.”

Clearly then, Gulliver’s portrayal of Munodi is problematic. Shortly after arriving in Balnibarbi, Gulliver decides to “[give] free Censure of the Country and its Inhabitants” to Munodi, declaring that he “never knew a Soil so unhappily cultivated, Houses so ill contrived and ruinous, or a People whose Countenances and Habit expressed so much Misery and Want” (159). Seemingly prudently, Munodi answers Gulliver’s somewhat rude charges with an 18th-Century equivalent of a politically correct statement of cultural relativism, “telling [Gulliver] that [he] had not been long enough among them to form a Judgment; and that the different Nations of the World had different Customs” (159). Munodi is right to maintain that Gulliver has not been there long enough to “give free Censure of the Country and its Inhabitants” however accurate his judgment might subsequently prove: passing judgment after having been at a place for only a few hours predisposes a person to reinforce his/her first impression and removes the
possibility of further discovery and of ever getting beyond that initial reaction. However, because Gulliver’s initial reaction is in agreement with Munodi’s own judgment of things, Munodi has some vested interest in reinforcing this reaction. Hence, instead of discouraging further judgment of this sort, as soon as they “returned to [Munodi’s] Palace,” he asks Gulliver, “how [he] liked the Building, what Absurdities [he] observed, and what Quarrel [he] had with the Dress and Looks of his [i.e., Munodi’s] Domesticks” (159).

Instead of answering the questions put to him, Gulliver, with astute, if not entirely dissembling, political savvy, offers his opinion of Munodi himself: “that his Excellency’s Prudence, Quality, and Fortune, had exempted him from those Defects which Folly and Beggary had produced in others” (159). Understandably, since Munodi has gone so long without admirers, although hardly the mark of a discerning, sensible great Lord, he is pleased with what appears to be transparently obvious, sycophantic flattery of him. And evidently he desires more of the same. For he responds to Gulliver’s assessment of him by inviting his guest to “go with him to his Country House about Twenty Miles distant, where his Estate lay, [and where] there would be more Leisure for this Kind of Conversation” (emphasis added, 159). Nor does Gulliver seem unwilling to oblige. At leisure in Munodi’s country home, presented with “Fountains, Gardens, Walks, Avenues, and Groves [that] were all disposed with exact Judgment and Taste,”
Gulliver does indeed continue "this Kind of Conversation," giving "due Praises to every Thing [he] saw" (160).

The above critique is not meant to fault Munodi for desiring praise for, or Gulliver for praising things that are, by any discerning judgment, praiseworthy. Nor is it meant to suggest that Swift is unsympathetic toward Munodi's position as social "pariah" for preferring a more sensible "tried and true" method of doing things. Indeed, as his critics have pointed out, Swift as well as some close friends have suffered fates similar to Munodi's for reasons similar to his. Nevertheless this does not mean that Swift was unselfconsciously oblivious to an amount of self-interestedness in Munodi's desire to preserve a pre-Laputan world, admirable as this desire might be. In fact, as much as Swift might empathize with the plight of this unfairly discharged former Governor of Lagado, and as much as he might want to convince his reader to sympathize with Munodi's position, Swift's reason for opposing Balnibarbian innovation is not the same as Munodi's.

Munodi has specific reasons for opposing specific innovations, particularly those that have made his life uncomfortable; whereas Swift's satire takes on the general task of exploring the idea of innovation as a human shortcoming and exposing what underlies its seductive force. Munodi dislikes the changes in Lagado because they have resulted in his being discharged for "Insufficiency," his being treated by contempt
by his countrymen, and the destruction of a “convenient Mill . . . [that had been] sufficient for his own Family as well as a great Number of his Tenants” (161). Swift opposes innovation as it has come about in Balnibarbi because these once sensible and practical people have sold themselves to a self-destructive ideology of progress derived from a mistaken unproblematic conflation of the idea of “new” with the idea of “improved.”

It is significant that when the “certain Persons” came back from Laputa full of “volatile Spirits,” they are said to put things in Balnibarbi, not on a “better” foot, but on a “new” foot. They erected Academies of Projectors to “contrive new Rules and Methods of Agriculture and Building, and new Instruments and Tools for all Trades and Manufactures” not better rules and better methods. (emphasis added, 161). Their primary aim was to put into effect the ideas they had picked up during their sojourn in Laputa. “Improvement” was an afterthought, a convenient ideology wantonly appropriated to serve their own obsessive ends. By accusing those who prefer the “old Forms” to “innovation” of “preferring their own Ease and Sloth before the general Improvement of the Country,” essentially equating all pre-Laputan methods with “Ease and Sloth” and their own “new” methods with “the general Improvement of the Country” (161), the Laputan-struck Balnibarbians succeed in constructing the rhetorical bludgeon with which to beat nonconformist
Balanibrians like Munodi into compliance. Munodi’s refusal to accept the ridiculous changes proposed by his Laputan-struck fellow Balnibarians brings on him the charges of “Pride, Singularity, Affectation, Ignorance, Caprice” (160), and makes him an “Enem[y] to art, ignorant, and [an] ill Commonwealths[man]” (161).

Yet the calamity of this whole affair lies not so much in what Munodi and the other members of the “old guard” suffer at the hands of their fellow Balnibarians as in what these obsessed tyrannical innovators suffer at their own hands. Munodi, after all, despite his having been discharged from his governorship and his being held in general contempt by the others, lives comfortably, almost lavishly in his “palace” and country estate. Meanwhile the Balnibarians, victims of their own “enterprizing Spirit,” suffer immensely: the whole Country lies miserably waste, the Houses in Ruins, and the People without Food or Cloaths” (160-1). Believing in the correctness of their Laputan vision and empowering themselves with the ideology of progress to achieve this mirage, they have developed a relentless compulsion toward self-improvement that has led to an increasingly unalterable spiraling downward toward self-destruction.

Certainly, if we have not already been persuaded to identify with Munodi by Gulliver’s handling of the narrative, this alternative, (i.e. the frightful consequences of choosing the path of the other Balnibarians) ought to have been
enough to convince us to desire to be nothing like Munodi’s countrymen. However, if we adopt Munodi’s conservative position and reject the Balnibarbian position of progress because we do not want to be like the Balnibarbians, we may have fallen victim to Gulliver’s biased reporting. Moreover, we have adopted Gulliver’s carelessness, censuring Balnibarbian customs and habits because Munodi, who treats him well, is ill-treated by his fellow Balnibarbians. But readers are not let off the hook that easily. Although we would like to dismiss the Balnibarbians because of our disinclination to identify with them, ultimately, not only are the Balnibarbians not as different from us as we might hope, but our easy identification with the wealthy Munodi and his modest preference for old forms is a luxury we cannot afford.

It is not insignificant that Swift has Gulliver decline to relate anything specific about the kind of circumstances the Balnibarbians suffered or enjoyed before they began to instigate the Laputan-influenced changes. We are merely expected to assume, by analogy of the pre-innovation Balnibarbians to the as yet pre-innovation Munodi, that the other Balnibarbians lived lives comparable to Munodi’s, and that they had little reason to desire change. Certainly anyone enjoying the kind of luxury Munodi did would be foolish to want to change things. And in fact, someone with this luxury — namely, Munodi — did not want things changed. He was the Governor of Lagado, where he possessed a house that
Gulliver describes as a "Palace" and "magnificent" (159). His vast country estate (among apparently many other such "plantations") contained flourishing "Vineyards, Corngrounds and Meadows" and a "noble" house lavishly furnished with "Fountains, Gardens, Walks, Avenues and Groves [that] were all disposed with exact Judgment and Taste" (176). It is not merely out of a sense of disinterested or nostalgic contentment with "old Forms" that Munodi desired things to stay the way they were; he had a great deal to lose if things changed, and it is reasonable for him to suspect that any change in his excellent circumstances would more likely be for the worse than for the better.

But it is hardly possible that the average Balnibarbian enjoyed the kind of wealth and social position that Munodi had. Yet he seems to want Gulliver to believe that they enjoyed circumstances as satisfactory to themselves as his were to himself, which is understandable if he is to gain the support and sympathy of Gulliver, an "ambassador" from Laputa (the rulers of Balnibarbi) and carrying letters of recommendation from near a relative to the King. Indeed, it serves Munodi's interest to illustrate not only how misguided his countrymen were to want to change things, but also how foolish the changes have been; for such a take on things, among other things, would suggest that Munodi is the wronged party in the sad affair of his being discharged for insufficiency from his Governorship of Lagado. Hence despite his "melancholy Air"
of resignation and censure of himself as "old and wilful, and weak" (170), when Munodi tells Gulliver "that he doubted he must throw down his Houses in Town and Country, to rebuild them after the present Mode [and] destroy all his Plantations, and cast others into such a Form as modern Usage required" (160), he is not merely offering a disinterested observation about the possible fate of his property. Instead he is offering with apparent ingenuousness (i.e., apparent to Gulliver), an indictment of the mode of behavior to which he is expected to conform and to which his fellow Balnibarbi have already conformed. For he knows that connecting Balnibarbian progress with the possible destruction of his possessions, on which Gulliver has openly lavished praise, would draw Gulliver's censure of the innovations.

Having thus predisposed Gulliver to dislike the "present Mode" and "modern Usage," Munodi can safely say to his guest before he gives him the story of Balnibarbi's fall into Laputan nonsense, "that the Admiration [Gulliver] appeared to be under, would cease or diminish when [Munodi] had informed [Gulliver] of some Particulars (160). Significantly, Swift lets us know that these "particulars" about Balnibarbi, "which probably [Gulliver] never heard at Court" (160), cannot be contradicted by Gulliver or the readers. In other words, Munodi — who believes that as a result of the "present Mode" he has lost his Governorship, been looked upon with hatred and disgust by his own countrymen, suffered the loss of his Mill
and stands to lose a great deal more — has absolute control over the story about the how the “present Mode” came to prevail in Balnibarbi. Not surprisingly, therefore, Gulliver's presentation of Munodi's “history of Balnibarbi” leaves readers with a sense that the dire circumstances currently suffered by the Balnibarbi are either the indirect result of neglect due to their obsessive focus on their projects or the direct result of miscarried projects.

* * * *

My pointing out the self-interestedness inherent in Munodi's assessment of the deplorable conditions in Balnibarbi is not meant to imply that things were better in Balnibarbi before the program of Balnibarbian innovation was instigated or that Swift covertly believes or expects his readers to believe Balnibarbian behavior to be admirable. However, to assume, as Munodi would like to have Gulliver assume, that the Balnibarbi were initially comfortably well off enough to have no more reason to desire change than Munodi did himself, is to presume that Swift failed to deal adequately with the complexities of the desire for things new — that he simplistically created outrageous caricatures for easy ridicule and then proceeded to ridicule them. In fact, as I have attempted to point out by calling into question the suggested causes for the current conditions in Balnibarbi, Swift has not made things so simple. Specifically, he does not allow us to forget that it is in fact the Balnibarbi, and not the rela-
tively comfortably well off Munodi, who are the true objects of our pity and sympathy, notwithstanding Munodi's and Gulliver's attempt to portray the situation otherwise.

Although we are not told, nor can Gulliver know beyond what Munodi tells him, what the average Balnibarbian's lot really was like before they began to change things, what we are offered when Gulliver goes to visit them is an image of a land distressed by failed crops and decrepit buildings and a people on the brink of starvation. Possibly, as Munodi would have Gulliver believe, 40 years ago things were just fine. Then, for no reason other than their own lack of judgment and a perverse lust for new things, the people decided to change things and the misery in Balnibarbi was the result. However, it is also possible, as a close examination of Munodi's motives reveals, that 40 years ago things were not that good. The people were exploited by the despotic Laputans above. Below, wealth and power were unevenly distributed, concentrated in the hands of a few individuals like Munodi. Yet this system had been in place so long there was no hope of changing things. Hence, the people lived their lives without hope that things could be different, compelled by the system to be "content to go on in the old Forms" of their ancestors. This all changes when several people return from Laputa with ideas heretofore unknown to the Balnibarbians, which, for the first time, makes it conceivably possible for anyone to achieve a standard of living comparable to Munodi's.
* * * * *

Apparently to put into effect these new schemes and projects, their vision had to be granted official sanction — i.e., institutionalized in the form of the "Academy of PROJECTORS" where the "Professors contrive new Rules and Methods of Agriculture and Building, and new Instruments and Tools for all Trades and Manufactures" (160-1). Our initial reaction to their projects, when Gulliver takes us into the Academy's buildings devoted to them, might be to dismiss them as nonsense. Certainly, the foolishness of the first experiment that Swift has Gulliver describe, a "Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers," is immediately apparent — the descriptive title itself, a conspicuous affront to common sense, probably sufficient in convincing readers to reject the experiment as unforgivably preposterous. When we add to this the professor's beggarly conduct, there seems very little indeed that can recommend the experiment for serious consideration. Nevertheless if we look at the project with a sympathetic eye, it is not without merit. It bespeaks the academic community's not altogether unadmirable desire to transcend the belief that nature is a divinely sanctioned, irresistible force whose affects must be simply accepted. The project is an early attempt at climate control — an effort to harness the sun's energies and have it yield according to the needs of man, rather than the caprices of nature. Moreover, the professor's wish to be able to supply the har-
nessed "Sun-shine at a reasonable Rate" (613) anticipates the modern-era energy industry's goal to provide energy abundantly and cheaply to as many people as it can — a goal the successful achievement of which has gone a long way toward improving the quality of life in general.

When we look with the same eye at the professor, it is possible to sympathize with, if not entirely admire, this eager "scientist," who obviously believes in the worth and potential of his project with an enthusiastic and unalterable stubbornness that defies all sense. Having spent eight years on his project, apparently working ceaselessly and obsessively, he is "of a meagre Aspect, with sooty Hand and Face, his Hair and Beard long, ragged and singed in several Places. His Clothes, Shirt, and Skin were all of the same Colour" (163). This failure of personal hygiene proclaims his neglect to allot himself enough time away from his work even to change his clothes or clean himself. His "meagre Aspect" suggests that, in pursuit of his project, he has removed himself from exposure to sunlight, the object of his obsessive study. Ironically his study rests tacitly on the premise that sunlight is worth harnassing because it is beneficial and necessary to the overall good health of human beings. Hence, tragically, after the "Eight Years more" to which the projector is so eager to commit himself, the study will likely terminate, not with the project's success, but in the projector's demise from malnutrition and neglect.
My pointing out the conceivable worth of the "Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers" and the possibility for the project's circumstances to inspire sympathy rather than dismissive contempt are not attempts to contradict a reading of the project as an attack on the foolish behaviors of Royal Academy scientists. Rather, the perspective is meant to suggest that Swift's satire of the projectors extends beyond a simplistic portrayal of the academy to persuade us to condemn the projects and projectors. Ostensibly, if Swift's satire of the "Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers," is successful, Gulliver's description of the Projector's behavior will induce, in members of the Royal Academy (as well as current writers of grants proposals), a sense of uncomfortable familiarity with this innovative "scientist". For the patronage system that supported the work at the Royal Academy, a descendent of the feudal practice of largess, did ultimately put the recipients of government funding in the position of begging for support. Moreover, the patent absurdity of the project itself, no matter what its impetus might be, cannot be overlooked.

Nevertheless, although this inducing of self-recognition in some Royal Academy members and of our recognition of their foolishness are undoubtedly part of the satiric effect, Swift does allow us to escape so easily our own implication in the satire. Indeed, if we align ourselves with Gulliver, the
implied purveyor of good sense, and condemn the absurdities of
the projectors, secure in our belief that we know better, we
have placed ourselves in the ultimately more damning position
of foolishly contributing to the cucumber project's continu-
ation. Persuaded by the projector to "give him something as
an Encouragement to Ingenuity, . . . [Gulliver makes] him a
small Present, for [Gulliver's] Lord had furnished [Gulliver]
with Money on purpose" (163). In fact, Gulliver does not
give money to "encourage" the projector's "ingenuity"; he has
no stake in the success or failure of the project. Rather, he
offers his contribution indifferently, unthinkingly, simply
because he has been "furnished . . . with money on purpose."
Nor can Lord Munodi who furnished the money pretend to any
benevolent concern for the Lagado projectors. He has already
made it clear that he does not support the innovations of his
fellow Balnibarbians. He condescends to enable Gulliver to
make an offering only "because he knew their Practice of beg-
ging from all who go to see them" (163). He contributes
funds to the academy, not out of belief in any of the pro-
jects' value but like a feudal lord demonstrating his generos-
ity toward his lowborn serf; he gives perhaps in order to
reinforce his position of superiority over them and ostensi-
ibly to help Gulliver, his guest, minimize the discomfort and
inconvenience of being accosted by beggars.

Yet what is troubling about Gulliver's and Munodi's
indifferent "generosity" is not its inherent arrogance, but
rather the institutional structure that has led both giver and recipient to assume the appropriateness of contributing money toward the continuation of a project no matter what it entails. In current idiomatic terms, the projectors and its patrons have gotten the problem of funding "down to a science" — a twentieth-century, but nevertheless accurate, phrase asserting that an efficient systematization of complexities has taken place. Indeed, with the complications of responsibility and gratitude, of accountability and emotional expenditure, removed from the exchange between the Gulliver and the projector, money changed hands with almost practiced efficiency, the project's continuation assured without anyone giving a thought to its viability. Evidently, getting things "down to a science" involves removing the obligation to test for common understanding. Gulliver does not support the cucumber project, even though his offer of money suggests otherwise. This tacit approval in turn leads the projector to surmise that he does not need to criticize the premise of his study. The obligatory conversation that would establish the inaccuracy of the projectors' perceptions has been sacrificed to the efficiency of their economic exchange.

Hence, what is most troubling in this "age of innovation" in Balnibarbi is this trend toward approaching things scientifically — i.e. toward getting things "down to a science." As an example of the absurdity that can occur from the attempt to conceive of a problem "scientifically," the
“Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers” exposes science’s tendency toward vapid simplification. The projector of this study has apparently reduced the problem of how to harness the sun’s energy to a matter of semantics; he need only to redefine the sun-beam as something embedded in cucumbers from which it can be extracted. Ridiculous as this reduction is, it possesses the seductive virtue of allowing the projector to transform something as monumentally complicated as controlling the sun into an ostensibly achievable task. Once this is done, the institutional structure erected by the academy of Lagado steps in to “normalize” the task, setting it up as a “project” and sanctioning his approach. The projector can then proceed to solve the problem of harnessing the sun’s energy as systematically as if he were to address queries on a standardized form: he can offer the project’s rationale (to “warm the Air in raw inclement Summers”); its goal (“to supply the Governors Gardens with Sun-shine at a reasonable Rate”); the method for storage (“Vials hermetically sealed”); the projected time frame for its completion (“Eight Years more”); the funding it requires (a “small present” from every visitor); the possible obstacles to its completion (low stock especially when it has been “a very dear Season for Cucumbers” (163).

Because this “scientific” inanity has achieved institutional authority, its projector is able to attribute his constant failure to inadequacies in the specifics he offered
to standardize his project. That is to say, he does not think he fails to extract sunbeams from cucumbers because the project, based on erroneous precepts and wrong premises, is fundamentally unworkable; he thinks he fails because of the scarcity of cucumbers and insufficient funding. Thus, inasmuch as it engenders the essentially self-deceiving apparatus of "standardization" (i.e. the reduction of complexities to a simplified, standard form), the Academy of Lagado (like the benefactors with their monetary support) sanctions the projector's failure to question his basic assumptions. What results is a contradiction. As long as the projector declines to question his basic faulty premises, he cannot fail (i.e., he cannot perceive his failure); his project will continue into perpetuity (or until the projector dies from self-neglect and exhaustion). However, since the premises are wrong to begin with, he and his project can never succeed. In effect, the institutionalization of his idea for innovation, both in terms of funding support and standardization, removes the possibility both for success and for failure, generating both hope for possible success and despair at possible failure, and forcing the projector forward in pursuit of a project that cannot succeed.

Because of this, the projectors' certainty about the potential success of their respective projects is absolute. One of the projectors "at work to calcine Ice into Gunpowder" is ready to publish a "Treatise . . . concerning the
Malleability of Fire” (164). Another attempting to plow the Ground with Hogs, despite the demonstrated failure, is sure that “this Invention may be capable of great Improvement” (164). The “great Physician . . . who was famous for curing [Cholick] by contrary Operations from the same Instrument” is so sure of his method to cure patients, that when he kills a dog to whom he applied this “cure,” he loses no time before “endeavouring to recover him by the same Operation” (165). Moreover, Gulliver’s reaction to the projectors suggests that he might be becoming increasingly convinced as well. When he give his observation of the cucumber project, the first pro- ject he visits, he recounts it in suitably neutral terms and appropriately describes the human excrement of the next project as “horrible.” After the next visit, however, he begins to react more positively toward the projects and projectors. He attributes the label “most ingenious” to the Architect trying to build houses from the roof down and later asserts that he “is highly pleased” with the “Projector plowing the Ground with Hogs” and is “wholly convinced” of the potential success of the projector trying get spiders to spin colored thread by feeding it “Flies most beautifully coloured” (165).

Nevertheless, if we recognize that the point of contention lies not with conspicuous foolishness of the projects, but with the self-deluding mechanism that seduces the academy’s “scientists” into embracing the potential “success” of
their unworkable projects, it becomes clear that the principal failing of the Academy of Lagado (and with the innovations in general) is the legitimizing device of “getting things down to a science.” When Gulliver visits the second project, an “Operation to reduce human Excrement to its original Food,” the “horrible Stink” that nearly overcomes him receives no notice from the projector whose “Hands and Clothes [were] dawbed over with Filth” (163). Apparently, the projector has acquired the ability to regard human excrement “scientifically.” And, evidently, achieving such objectivity depends on a rejection of sensory perceptions. For, disregarding the “horrible Stink” that suggests otherwise, the projector views his “weekly Allowance” of “Filth” as potential food and proceeds to deal with it as though it were food, processing it as if he were making soup: “removing the Tincture . . . making the Odour exhale, and scumming off the Saliva” (164).

Evidently, the Academy of Lagado not only legitimizes and offers institutional support for the projectors' whimsically extravagant fantasies, it also frees these scientists from having to acknowledge or react to sensory input. In effect, the “system” of reducing things to an academic “project” prevents those engaged in its pursuit from being able to arrive at an understanding in common with others; for common understanding arises from the sharing of sensory experiences.11 To be sure, such understanding is in part thwarted
by the projectors' being isolated from one another as completely as if they were in a prison, the metaphor evoked by Gulliver's use of the terms "Warden" and "Cell" to describe respectively the person who receives Gulliver and a projector's laboratory (163). Yet their failure to react appropriately to sensory input assures the impossibility of their ever arriving at a sense of things in common with others even if they were to meet. Gulliver cannot convey his perception of the "Filth" to the projector engaged in transforming it into food, not simply because he does not want to give offense, but because the projector, crippled by his "scientific" perception of human excrement, is no longer able to discern the accuracy of Gulliver's experience.

Because they have abandoned themselves to a system of thinking and acting that runs completely contrary to common sense, the Professors in the Academy, despite their confidence that their experiments will contribute to the common good, are engaged in projects that will ultimately contribute to their common destruction. Tampering with the things that are fundamental to survival — food, shelter, clothing — their foolish, impractical, unworkable experiments have only the potential to destroy. The projects to produce food by transforming human excrement or to save the "Charges of Plows, Cattle, and Labour" by the "Device of plowing the Ground with Hogs" — a device that yields little or no Crop — cannot but lead to their starvation (164). Their attempts to build
houses "by beginning at the Roof and working downwards to the Foundation" will render them finally without shelter (164). Experiments like the one in which the projector tries to save on the "Charge of dying Silks" by feeding "Flies most beautifully coloured" to spiders will leave them without clothes.

Therefore, despite, and indeed, because of their desire to better their lot (no matter how justified this desire might have been) the Balnibarrians do no better than those who were formerly empowered. Instead, obsessively committed to pursuing their new projects, they have engendered a kind of systemic despotism worse than anything they might have previously suffered. Rather than actually putting into effect anything that is better, they have simply managed to dismantle what was good about the old forms and augment the bad. Herein lies the primary hazard with the ideology of progress. It focuses on the imperfection of everything that currently exists; and foremost in the agenda of this ideology, is a commitment to the dismantling of "old Forms," with all other concerns — e.g., the — usefulness or necessity of the old form — being of distant secondary importance. Yet its promise of change seduces the Balnibarrians, trapping them midpoint between hope and despair — in a resplendent vision of potential bounty too good to pass up and an increasingly bleak reality too horrible to acknowledge.

Clearly, the specific object of Swift's attack in the Lagado episodes has not been the Balnibarbian desire to
improve things but their tendency to destroy things in the name of improvement. When this distinction informed our reading of Gulliver's meanderings through the "grand Academy of Lagado," it became clear that far from being meaningless episodic and having at best topical significance, the individual projects offered a systematic critique of the connection between humanity's programs of innovation and its proclivity for destruction. In other words, Swift did not offer the hilarious experiments of the Lagado scientists — their attempts to undo, unravel and reverse processes — as random indicators of harmless misguidedness; rather, these representative products of the Balnibarbian ideology of progress reveal the self-destructive potential in their program for improvement, with the grand Academy of Lagado to provide a safe forum for the institutionalization of this program.

In the end, we cannot presume our difference from the Balnibarbians even though we recognize their foolishness. (Nor, can we indulge in the luxury of identifying with Munodi, who, as I have suggested above, is the beneficiary of another, perhaps invisible, institution.) Escaping the entrapping mindset similar to the one that the Balnibarbians have set up for themselves is not simply a matter of discerning and laughing at the absurdity of the Balnibarbian projects. For the main problem in Balnibarbi is not innovation, ingenuity, or technology, but the notions that gain a tyrannical hold over their minds when such things achieve institutional
sanction. Essentially, the Balnibarbi episode challenges us, the readers, to examine critically the systems within which we ourselves have been inscribed, our own systems whereby new knowledge becomes institutionalized. And if we have done so with clearheaded discernment, we will find that ultimately, in their pursuits, in their spiraling ever downward toward madness and self-destruction the Balnibarbians are rather like us.
Notes

1 It was in part this apparent weakness of the chapters on Balnibarbi that led Coleridge to describe Book 3 as "a wretched abortion, the product of spleen and ignorance and self-conceit" (130); Sir Walter Scott to state that Book 3 "was the part in which the world took the least pleasure" (311); Quintana to contend that "in comparison with the rest of Gulliver's Travels, [Book 3] is of marked inferiority" (315); and Morrissey to note that Book 3 is the "least brilliant part of Gulliver's Travels" (98).

2 Rowse suggests this when he exclaims, "Oh, for a Swift to describe what is happening today!" as he points out the failed innovations of his own era (175-7).

3 Technological advances in, for instance, farm machinery have in fact made it possible for one man to do the work of ten. Various polymers and plastics do last, for all practical purposes (to the dismay of green earthers and the like), forever. Technological advances in Biosphere control, greenhouses, crop rotation etc. have made planting no longer governed by the caprices of whether. etc.

4 When Gulliver first mentions Munodi's place of residence, he calls it a "House" (158).

5 Ehrenpreis makes a case for Swift feeling that, like Munodi, he did not receive adequate recognition for his service to the English government — that he was being castigated with the appointment to the deanship of St. Patrick's in
Ireland, a "post delivering [Swift] back to a country he had been trying to avoid" (Vol. 2, 634). Arthur E. Case points out that lord Munodi has been "variously identified with Bolingbroke and Lord Midleton" and he himself want to make a case for Oxford:

Munodi is represented as having been discharged from office for inefficiency by a cabal of ministers — a close parallel with Oxford's dismissal from his post in 1714 and his trial on the charge of treason between 1715 and 1717. (87)

6 That is to say, the difference is something other than the obvious and necessary difference between the writer and the subject of his writing.

7 The call for "change" in current political rhetoric is expected to assume that alteration is inherently better. This is something with which the current television generation is very familiar. Indeed, in common modern parlance, the phrase "new and improved" almost presents a redundancy; new implies progress.

8 Obviously, I am not as confident as John H. Sutherland when he asserts, "the satire on . . . the ridiculous excess of the virtuosi on Balnibarbi is too well understood to need discussion here" (47).

9 The is not however, to suggest that Swift supported this project. My pointing out the possible merit is meant to question the automatic, almost cliched reaction against this
cucumber project by readers.

10 Nicholson and Mohler have shown that the Lagado projects are based on actual experiments by members of the Royal Society. They point out, for example, the similarity between Swift’s projector and Stephen Hales who “had reported to the Royal Society experiments on the respiration of plants and animals” including some experiments with sunbeams (328-9).

11 John Locke explores this concept in his Essay Concerning Human Understand maintained, a work with which Swift was very familiar. According to Fitzgerald, “Swift’s own views follow those of Locke so closely that we can either assume a direct influence or an influence from the climate of Whig opinion which Locke drew upon” (215).

12 See also Chapter Two and n29 in the Introduction above.
Chapter Four

In Pursuit of Wild Impossible Chimæras:
Swift’s Evaluation of the Scientific Project

Gulliver’s journeys to Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg (Chapters 7-10)¹ are, for many critics, different from and, in some instances, better than the earlier ones. Indeed, despite their divergent readings of Book 3, these critics exhibit in common an urge to disassociate all or a part of Chapters 7-10 from the earlier and, in Eddy’s and Quintana’s minds (at least with regard to Chapter 10), weaker chapters.² However, surrendering to this urge prevents us from examining further Swift’s critique on science which would be incomplete without a full consideration of conditions under which the institutionalization of science needed to thrive. In fact, Swift did not abandon this inquiry. Chapters 7-10 critically investigates the mind sets — i.e. the biases and desires — that created the conditions under which scientific innovation flourished. As with most undertakings in which human beings choose to become involved, the fundamental incentive is the promise of power — that is to say, of the ability to fulfill one’s desires. But the allure of science — as its prime symbol, the “philosopher’s stone”³ indicates — consists also
in its capacity first to invent desires impossible to fulfill, a chief of which is immortality, and then to proceed systematically to fulfill them. In effect, the allure of science consisted in the anticipation of power over "wild impossible chimæras" (to borrow the appropriate term from Swift). What Swift offers in Chapters 7-10 is a critique of the scientific project as a process of pursuing, becoming accustomed to, mastering, and ultimately embracing "wild impossible chimæras," and in so doing, although he exposes the project's desire for absolute power and the resulting indifference necessary to enable a psychologically unencumbered pursuit of these desires, he nevertheless ultimately acknowledges the project's possible merit.

The phrase "wild impossible Chimæras," which comes up in Chapter VI when Gulliver goes to the "School of political Projectors," is, interestingly, applied to a most desirable and practical set of proposals:

Schemes for persuading Monarchs to choose Favourites upon the Score of their Wisdom, Capacity and Virtue; of teaching Ministers to consult the publick Good; of rewarding Merit, great Abilities, and eminent Services; of instructing Prince to know their true Interest, by placing it on the same Foundation with that of their People; Of chusing for Employments Persons qualified to exercise them; with many other wild impossible Chimæras, that
never entered before into the Heart of Man to conceive. (171)

Obviously, Swift is not in accord with his ingenuous narrator who is leveling an undisguised attack against the projectors for coming up with these schemes — these “unhappy People” who, Gulliver says, “[appear] in my Judgment wholly out of their Sense; which is a Scene that never fails to make me melancholy” (171). On the contrary, Swift has obviously cast Gulliver in the role of the foolish undiscerning commentator, proclaiming sentiments that are directly opposite from his. In fact, the assertion that these very reasonable, beneficial governing practices are nothing but “wild impossible Chimæras” can be read as Swift’s rather embittered indictment of the current Whig government, newly formed around King George, which resulted in, among other things, securing the preferment of his rivals and the loss of power for himself and his friends.5

No doubt some of the court ministers and favorites, perceiving it to be a satiric attack on them,6 might have bristled at the implied suggestion that they not only lack “Wisdom, Capacity and Virtue,” but that they are unqualified for the employments for which they have been chosen. Additionally, those who benefited from George I’s patronage might have felt insulted by what seems to be an insinuation about the current monarch’s self-serving failure to “consult the publick Good” because his “interests” are not “on the
same Foundation with that of his People," and as a result, he has neglected to duly reward "Merit, great Abilities, and eminent Services" (171). Nevertheless, not merely a complaint against incompetent and injudicious governorship, the passage does more than call into question certain acts of specific historical persons. Swift complicates the issues. The "impossible" schemes that "never entered before into the Heart of Man to conceive" identifies, not problems of governing, but of pedagogy — of "persuading," "teaching" and "instructing" respectively "Monarch," "Ministers" and "Princes." The problem is not that the rulers govern badly, but that they are not adept at learning how to govern better. In other words, they are bad governors because they are bad students.

Focusing the question of how to govern well on the issue of learning how to govern well, Swift thus draws attention to the task upon which he is engaged as a writer and satirist — to persuade, teach, and instruct. Essentially, the point of this satire bemoaning the difficulty of judicious appraisal is not to chastise the governors for governing badly, but to teach good governorship to "Monarchs," "Ministers" and "Princes." Interestingly therefore, Swift is taking on to himself this self-admittedly hopeless pedagogical task, this "wild impossible Chimera," and in doing so, he implicates himself in his own satire. Seduced by the possibility of a better society, attempting the impossible, and thus placed in
a structural position parallel to that of the political projectors (rather than Gulliver), he becomes the object of his own critique. The risks of self-implication are considerable; at stake is his credibility. He can hardly censure his scientific colleagues for chasing “Chimæras” if he is pursuing them himself.

Although it would be easy here to condemn Swift for hypocrisy, to do so would be tantamount to insisting that his critique of science involves nothing more than a rejection of optimism and hope in favor of pessimism and despair. In fact, the simplistic cynicism of a statement asserting that attempts to bring about a better government are but “wild impossible Chimæras” is hardly something Swift would embrace fully. For, as I have argued in the previous chapter, Swift is not entirely out of sympathy with the Balnibarbian attempts to better their lives.\(^8\) On the other hand, if we grant a grain of the sincerity of Swift’s commitment to his own project to “wonderfully mend the World”\(^9\) and his recognition of the value of the scientists’ commitment to theirs, then it becomes possible to perceive that, while Swift does not openly advocate the pursuit of “wild impossible Chimæras,” he does not wholly condemn such pursuits. Indeed, the existence of the \textit{Travels} signals a qualified commitment to human aspiration, for the satire subsists on some belief (if not blind trust) in the possibility of achieving the ostensibly unachievable task of “mend[ing] the world.”
Yet Swift's involvement in the seemingly unrealizable project of teaching rulers to govern better is not an invitation to readers to embrace a pursuit of the impossible. Rather it serves as an oblique reminder of the difference between a worthwhile though apparently hopeless task and a real "wild impossible Chimæra." To drive home this distinction, Swift has Gulliver take us in the next chapter to "GLUBBDUBDRIB . . . the Island of Sorcerers or Magicians" (Swift's Italics, 177) and offers a portrayal of the real ones — true chimæras that "with a turn of [a] Finger . . . van[ish] in an Instant, like Visions in a Dream, when we awake on a sudden" (178). Apparently these spectres, unlike the political spectres Swift raised in the previous chapter, are quite accommodating. Although the rules for their use are rigidly precise — each spectre can be commanded for "twenty four Hours, but no longer," once every three Months, "except upon very extraordinary Occasions" — these regulations seem to present no real problem for the Governor of Glubbdubdrib (and his family), who "hath Power of calling whom he pleaseth from the Dead" and uses them as his "Domesticks" (178).

If the Governor and his family ever experienced any squeamishness at being served by ghosts or had any difficulty living alongside these ghostly servants, they have obviously gotten over it. Yet when we look on with indifference and accept as matter-of-fact this outrageous accommodation and domestication of ghosts, we become guilty of the mindless
inattention that is at the heart of Swift's satiric attack here. In fact, Swift goes to some effort to have Gulliver describe his process of becoming accustomed to "domestic Spectres," as if to invite and challenge his readers to examine and apprehend the process whereby Gulliver comes to accept familiar interaction with the undead. Gulliver's first reaction to these ghosts is, appropriately enough, one of unspeakable horror. When he arrives at the Governor's palace, he is confronted by guards whose "Countenances," he says, "made my flesh creep with a Horror I cannot express" (178). When his host made his attendants vanish with a "turn of his Finger," Gulliver "could not recover [himself] in some Time" (178). Soon, he says, "I began to take Courage," and before long he "grew so familiarized to the Sight of Spirits, that after the third or fourth time they gave me no Emotion at all" (179).

To make sure the focus is on the process of Gulliver's becoming used to ghosts, Swift makes Gulliver's account markedly introspective and self-analytical. Although Gulliver begins describing his initial encounter with the Governor and his undead servants, focusing on outward details — of the palace, the apartments, — after the Governor "dismisses" his attendants, Gulliver begins to focus on himself — specifically, on the progress he is making toward becoming accustomed to the spirits. He makes a note of his attempt to "take Courage" from his companions, who were "under
no concern" with the attendants' vanishing into air, and of
the continuing jittery nervousness he feels as he tells his
host about his travels. While he is dining with the Governor
and his ghostly attendants, displaying almost clinical detach-
ment toward his emotive responses, he states, "I now observed
myself to be less terrified than I had been in the Morning"
(179). This self-reflective narrative culminates in his
boast that ultimately the spirits "gave him no Emotion at
all" (179).

Gulliver's shift from experiencing inexpressible Horror
to "no Emotion at all" at the sight of the spectres betokens
a movement from crisis back to normalcy. The urge to normal-
ize his experience with the uncanny becomes evident in his
attempts to yoke the extraordinary together with the
ordinary. The first time he mentions the ghosts, he calls
them "Domesticks of a kind somewhat unusual" (emphasis added,
178). He then remarks on the Governor's "skill in Necromancy"
as though it were no more than a common and perhaps useful
ability for governing. Instead, he uses the term,"extraordinary," to describe the occasion in which a person is
called back from the dead more than once in three months,
neglecting to perceive that it is out of the ordinary to call
anyone back from the dead for any length of time. When he
describes the skin crawling horror of his first personal
encounter with one of the ghosts, he immediately follows it
with a detailed report full of insignificant specifics about
his meeting with the Governor. He gives the number of Obeysances offered (three) and Stools present (three) and on which step (the lowest) they were permitted to sit near the Throne. He then tells us about the Governor's knowledge of languages, informing us that the "he understood the Language of Balnibarbi," and adding "although it were different from that of his Island" (178) as though the Governor's capacity with languages were of primary concern here, with the ghosts inspiring merely distant secondary interest.

Gulliver apparently hopes to deal with his fright by making an extraordinary situation seem ordinary. Hence he adopts his standard mode of discussing languages and manners as is customarily the case whenever he has a chance to talk with strangers in a new land, expecting perhaps to ignore the ghostly attendants. However, the plan miscarries. Apparently attending to Gulliver's manifest desire not to be waited upon with "Ceremony" and accepting his guest's offer to give an account of his travels, the Governor "dismiss[es] all his Attendants with a Turn of his Finger, at which to [Gulliver's] great Astonishment they vanished in an Instant" (178). The experience literally incapacitates Gulliver with fright. And despite the Governor's assurance that he "should receive no Hurt; and observing [his] two Companions to be under no Concern," Gulliver nevertheless is unable to relate the "short History of [his] several Adventures . . . without some Hesitation, and frequently looking behind [him] to the Place
where [he] had seen those domestick Spectres" (178).

Although Gulliver proceeds casually to remark on the "new Set of Ghosts [who] served up the Meat, and waited at Table" and despite his assertion that he was "less terrified than [he] had been in the Morning," he has not gotten over his fright. We can discern the dissimulation of his feigned indifference in his excessively self-deprecating rejection of his host's offer to spend the night: he "humbly desired his Highness to excuse [him] for not accepting his Invitation of lodging in the Palace" (178-9). Indeed, for the duration of his stay on the Island, although Gulliver is willing to spend "most Part of every Day with the Governor," at night he stayed at his own lodging. As a matter of fact, at night, he apparently did not even want to be in the same town as this necromancer, preferring to lodge in "a private House in the Town adjoining" (179).

Unable to overcome completely his fear of the spectres, Gulliver nevertheless boastfully declares his absolute indifference toward them. "I grew so familiarized to the Sight of Spirits" he asserts, "that after the third or fourth Time, they gave me no Emotion at all" (emphasis added, 179). Aside from the hubristic arrogance of the declaration, which almost invites censure, the statement can be challenged for Gulliver's curious remark that he became indifferent to the Spirits after "the third or fourth Time." Gulliver's choice of "Time" as the standard of measurement in this statement is
conspicuous because it immediately follows a remark that they “continued in the Island for ten Days” (179). Because Gulliver opens a new paragraph with the statement of his staying for ten days, it gives rise to certain narrative expectations, ones which Swift, a master narrative craftsman, would be well aware. The statement tacitly implies that the narrative has progressed — i.e., that the first day’s experiences (from “Eleven in the Morning . . . till Sun-set”) is part of the past, and Gulliver’s account will now no longer be measured by increments of specific incidents from that day. Indeed, the readers might well expect Gulliver to follow the remark about his spending ten days with the Governor with an observation that after the third or fourth day, he got so used to the sight of the spirits, he no longer felt any apprehension towards them. However, Gulliver uses third or fourth Time, referring back to the first-day sightings of the spirits, and, as a result, he presents an affront to the expectations of narrative movement, drawing attention to his continuing effort to convince readers about how little the ghosts had affected him that first day.

In short, Gulliver is protesting too much. He is trying too hard to assure himself and us of his indifference toward the spirits. When he compromises his unequivocal assertion that he felt “no Emotion at all” with the conciliatory “or if I had any Apprehensions left, my Curiosity prevailed over them” (179), he ultimately fails to convince himself or, if we
are paying attention, the readers. Nevertheless the effort he puts forth to convince us otherwise is telling. His narrative maneuvers betray a vested interest both in becoming and being perceived of as indifferent to the spirits. It would seem that from Gulliver's perspective indifference is empowering. Conquering his fear of the unknown and allowing his curiosity to prevail grants him uncommon insight — i.e., a perception of things not shared by other people. This viewpoint confers to him immense, "magical" power, not unlike that which alchemists have devoted their lives to achieving.\textsuperscript{11} Notwithstanding the "Condition, that [his] Questions . . . be confined within the Compass of the Times they live in," Gulliver is granted comprehensive command over the dead. He may "call up whatever Person [he] would chuse to name, and in whatever Number among all the Dead from the Beginning of the world to the present Time, and command them to answer any Questions [he] should think fit to ask" (emphasis added, 179). In effect, because Gulliver is able to observe sights with "scientific" objectivity and detached curiosity the common reaction to which is unspeakable skin-crawling horror he is rewarded with the "uncommon" experience of a chance to command the great commanders: Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Pompey.

Although this "first Inclination . . . to be entertained with Scenes of Pomp and Magnificence" indicate Gulliver's eagerness to indulge in his new "command," it is the report of
his "conversation" with Brutus that reveals what is at stake when he embraces his new role as necromancer. In the description of his encounter with Brutus, Gulliver places this former Roman statesman in a group which includes Junius, Socrates, Epaminondas, Cato the Younger, Sir Thomas More, all of which make up what Gulliver terms a "Sextumvirate to which all the Ages of the World cannot add a Seventh" (180). On the surface, this statement is a straightforward declaration of Gulliver's unqualified admiration for "the most consummate Virtue, the greatest Intrepidity, and Firmness of Mind, the truest Love of his Country, and general Benevolence for Mankind" that he perceives in Brutus and confers onto the other five (180). The obvious satiric suggestion of Swift is that no philosopher, scholar, soldier, statesmen, etc. in the modern age possesses or in the future will ever possess again such fine qualities as these six men did. Still, although Swift's contemporary statesmen, churchmen, men of letters, etc. might find vexing the allegation that they do not possess these qualities, it is ultimately Gulliver who is being indicted here. For if we recognize that Gulliver assembles the Sextumvirate, not for their mutual possession of fine qualities, but for the fact of their being "perpetually together," and that he precedes this observation with a hint of his perpetual togetherness with Brutus (his boast that he "had the Honour to have much Conversation with Brutus") it becomes clear that Gulliver is putting forth his candidacy to
be considered a seventh in this exclusive "club," his statement to the contrary notwithstanding (emphasis added, 180).

It would appear that Gulliver's uncommon access to the dead, achieved through the suppressing of the common reaction to these ghosts, yields, finally, little more than a self-deluding affirmation of his pride. Moreover, upon closer inspection it becomes evident that his command over the dead is nothing but an illusion. Although Gulliver has unlimited freedom to choose among the dead — to converse with whomever he wants — he does not have a choice about calling up the dead in the first place: "For his Highness the Governor ordered [him] to call up what Persons [he] could chuse to name" (emphasis added, 179). Gulliver's use of the term, "command" is thus inappropriate to describe his relationship to the dead because it creates a deceptive textual parallel that structurally equates him, in terms of authority over the dead, with the Governor who has the power to "command" the service of the dead for twenty four hours (178). In fact, Gulliver is not the necromancer that the Governor is. He does not command but is commanded: he is "command[ed]" to return to the Island after he leaves it the first night and "ordered" to converse with the dead. Although Gulliver tries to palliate the affront of a peremptory command to return to the island to "pay [his] Duty to the Governor" by insisting that the Governor "was pleased to command us" and he tries to make a virtue out of a necessity, by asserting that it is his
prevailing curiosity that prompted him to talk with the dead rather than his having been "ordered" to do so, he is, finally, deluding himself. Ultimately, instead of granting him power over the dead, Gulliver's indifference merely puts him among the dead, to be "commanded" by the Governor like the other domestick spectres under his "governorship."

In effect, the "uncommon" perspective of scientists that allows Gulliver to regard his own fear with systematic disinterestedness — the singular vision that Gulliver believes will bring him singular power — urges a dismissal of experiences and engenders an indifference akin to death. Here, science intersects politics. The scientific community's "project" to transcend the common perception of things is analogous to the pride of singular power that encourages political tyranny. The objective distance required for scientists in the academy of Lagado to regard excrement as potential food is what allows a Hannibal or Alexander to think of people as dismissible objects to be enslaved or destroyed by the conquerors in their efforts to amass power. In short, natural philosophy is promoting a kind of disregard for sensory experiences that hinders common understanding and encourages unconcern for the common good — a perspective, the historical counterpart of which is the systematic indifference responsible for the horrifying excesses of bad government. Offering perhaps a glimpse of what science has in store for humanity Swift has Gulliver cry out against govern-
How many innocent and excellent Persons had been condemned to Death or Banishment, by the practising of great Ministers upon the Corruption of Judges, and the Malice of Factions. How many Villains had been exalted to the highest Places of Trust, Power, Dignity, and Profit; How great a Share in the Motions and Events of Courts, Councils, and Senates might be challenged by Bawds, Whores, Pimps, Parasites, and Buffoons: How low an Opinion I had of human Wisdom and Integrity, when I was truly informed of the Springs and Motive of great Enterprizes and Revolutions in the World, and of the contemptible Accidents to which they owed their Success. (183)

Gulliver's statement about "accidental" nature of the world's processes is worth noting. Fourth in a series of statements beginning with "how," this one presents a conspicuous deviation from the previous ones, giving its contents emphatic value. In the first three sentences, "how" introduces rhetorical questions about quantity, to imply and lament the multitude of excellent and innocent people who have been "condemned to Death or Banishment" and the host of villains who have been "exalted to the highest Places of Trust, Power, Dignity, and Profit," and to suggest that an extensive number of "Motions and Events of Courts, Councils, and Senates might
be challenged by Bawds, Whores, Pimps, Parasites, and Buffoons” (183). In the last one, however, “how” is not used to introduce a question, but to emphasize the depth of Gulliver’s negative opinion about “human Wisdom and Integrity,” an opinion based on his learning the truth about the “Springs and Motive of great Enterprizes and Revolutions in the World, and of the contemptible Accidents to which they owed their Success” (183). Apparently, upon discerning that human virtues have no effect upon the great affairs of the world, instead of putting into proper perspective his regard for worldly affairs and recognizing their limited value, Gulliver learns disdain for human Wisdom and Integrity. In effect, Gulliver’s impassioned complaint against corruption in government, draws attention to and places great value upon the “contemptible Accidents” to which the “great Enterprizes and Revolutions in the world” owe their successes.

Although Gulliver proceeds to offer some non-specific examples of contemptible accidents that have influenced events, it is the accident in “Traldragdubb or Trildrogdrib, (for it is pronounced both Ways as near as I can remember)” (Swift’s italics, 188)” that is most strikingly memorable — the accidental “execution” of a “young Lord of great Hopes” which occurs as a result of a page’s negligence (189). In Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib) there is a custom that requires anyone admitted to an audience with the King to “crawl upon [his] Belly, and lick the Floor as [he] advanced”
(188). The custom apparently serves the king well, since it allows him to control and punish his nobles:

When the King hath a Mind to put any of his Nobles to Death in a gentle indulgent Manner; he commands to have the Floor strowed with a certain brown Powder, of a deadly Composition, which being licked up infallibly kills him in twenty-four Hours. (189)

Although the king is careful to have the "infected parts of the Floor well washed after every such Execution," one day, because of a page's failure to have the floor cleaned, the above-mentioned "young Lord of great Hopes coming to an Audience was unfortunately poisoned, although the King at that Time had no Design against his Life" (189). The Page, who should have been whipped for this malicious omission, is forgiven "upon Promise that he would do so no more without special Orders" (189).

What is perhaps most disturbing about this account is the way in which this "digression" is reported to us. Gulliver focuses on the "great Clemency" of the King and the graciousness with which he is able to forgive his page's negligence. The young Lord is a relatively minor character in this display of the king's capacity to compassionately and wisely dispense Justice. The young man's death is conveyed in passive voice, a sentence construction that allows Gulliver to omit the agent responsible for this "unfortunate poison[ing]" and thus to displace concern for culpability in favor of
interest in the incident itself, which, since it is offered to us, peripherally, parenthetically, the incident does not in fact command much interest. Not since Gulliver’s report about the dog’s death in Chapter 5 (165)\textsuperscript{13} have we come across so detached a description of a death resulting from negligence. In fact, the king’s indifference to the death of the young Lord, the unfortunate victim of the monarch’s irresponsibly dangerous method of execution is strikingly similar to the Lagado doctor’s detached objectivity toward his deceased subject, the hapless victim of his irresponsibly dangerous experiments. Like the doctor, who continues to believe in the efficacy of his project despite an alarming demonstration of its failure,\textsuperscript{14} the king has no intention of abandoning his method of execution, despite the danger it poses to the innocent.

Instead, like a good scientist, the king is able to view the unfortunate accident as an opportunity to refine his method of execution — hence his great Clemency toward the negligent page. It is significant that the king lets the page escape punishment, not simply with a warning “to do so no more,” but “to do so no more without special Orders” (emphasis added, 189). The king has obviously discerned the usefulness of the page’s act. In fact, the page is forgiven his whipping because he has presented to the king a new method of putting his nobles to death — namely, unfortunate poisoning or, more accurately, accidental execution. Given what we know about
this Traldragdubbian (or Trildrogdribbian) custom, an accidental execution might proceed as follows: upon receiving "special Orders" — presumably covert ones contrary to the official "Strict orders" — the page will neglect to give "Notice about washing the Floor after an Execution" and thus cause an "unfortunate" death for which no one can be held responsible. This method of execution has the virtue of allowing the king to execute his enemies with complete impunity — not only without fear of punishment, a prerogative of monarchical authority, but also without concern about public censure since he can disavow responsibility by proclaiming the death an unfortunate accident.

Despite appearances to the contrary, the king's readiness to perceive the potential usefulness in his page's negligent act does not betoken native corruption or a personal desire for power. Rather, it indicates his embracing of a systematic opportunism — a science of politics — the inevitable product of which is the reduction of people to expendable components and thus also patent indifference toward individuals. The young lord's untimely death does not provoke the king's "Royal Displeasure" because the worth of the individuals who serve this "Prince" is measured by the proportion to which they contribute toward the advancement and maintenance of the king's authority and power. Notwithstanding Gulliver's claims about the "Prince's great Clemency, and Care he hath of his Subject's Lives" (189), there is no place in
this monarch's systematically determined mathematics of government for emotional commitment to a young lord's being alive. If his death does not threaten the continuation of the king's power, his dying is no cause for displeasure. Hence, with a coolness equal to that which Gulliver exhibited when he observed with clinical detachment the progress of his fear of ghosts, the king is able to transform the contemptible accident of his noble's death into an opportunity to discover a new method of destroying his enemies, succeeding, at the same time, to impress at least one international world traveler, Gulliver, with his show of regal clemency.

In effect, this "digression" is a critique of systematization — the methodical, objective, and utterly detached processing of sensory experience embraced and privileged by the 18th-Century scientific community. Specifically the episode illustrates how systematization, so attractive to scientist, has engendered a tyrannical "custom" that allows the king to exercise absolute authority over his nobles and make abject slaves of all those who serve him. However, this episode also offers a critique of the passivity that allows the results of systematization to establish themselves and endure. At first glance Gulliver's support for the King might not seem worth a second look. It appears to be little more than the satirist's trifling mockery of his narrator — a clumsy and uninspired device in satire whereby Swift presents us with the negligible incongruity of a narrator offering
naive praise for someone who does not merit such praise. However, Swift has implicated Gulliver in more than "innocent" misdirected support.

Although the practice of poisoning the Nobles is a "Custom, which [Gulliver] cannot altogether approve of" and despite his being given no reason to alter his criticism, he nevertheless proceeds to undermine his own opinion, transforming the king's deadly custom into an act of "gentle indulgence" (189). Even when he is made aware (he is after all, writing about this episode in retrospect) of the accident that resulted in the death of an innocent man and recognizes that the king intends, at some future point, to issue "special Orders" to reenact the accident, Gulliver fails to condemn the king. Instead, Gulliver affirms the "Prince's great Clemency and the Care he hath of his Subjects lives and is at pains to protect the king's "Honour," desiring the "Monarchs of Europe [to] imitate him," even though he can offer no better demonstration of this alleged compassion than the king's "strict orders to have the infected Parts of the Floor well cleaned after an Execution" and the his questionable pardoning of a page for malicious negligence (189).

Gulliver's failure to abide by his initial, legitimate disapproval of the king's malicious "custom" is not an act of passive oversight. It is a deliberate assertion of ignorance, arising from his disinclination to assess appropriately the evidence presented to him. To be sure, he does have reason to
resist discerning the king's malevolence. After all, for the three months that he stays in that country, he, like everyone admitted to the king's presence, is made to "crawl upon [his] Belly, and lick the Floor," knowing that he might be "unfortunately Poisoned, although the King . . . [has] no Design against his Life" (189). To avoid agonizing over the possibility that he has been poisoned each time he has an audience with the king, Gulliver must convince himself of the king's gentle indulgence, of his clemency and care for his subjects, and of his capacity to be gracious and forgiving. Hence it is for his own peace of mind that Gulliver discerns compassion and thoughtfulness in a man who has given no indication that he possesses such qualities.

In this light, Gulliver's erroneous appraisal of the king might seem understandable, even sympathetic, and readers might be inclined to forgive Gulliver his misassessment. He is (if our analysis has not misdirected us), merely engaged in a bit of harmless self-deception for the sake of his own psychological equanimity; he is not trying to deceive his readers into embracing the king's custom. However, when we sanction Gulliver's possibly self-deluding "indiscretion" — i.e., grant Gulliver the privilege of using the term "great Clemency" to describe an act of despotic cruelty — we become implicated in Swift's satiric attack. We are guilty of the same kind of misplaced sympathy that persuaded Gulliver to discern thoughtfulness where there was none, and hence become,
like Gulliver, guilty of the same willful ignorance for which he has been indicted. For ultimately, in its contribution to the custom’s continuance, Gulliver’s, however understandable, misreading of the king, is perhaps as condemnable as the King’s deadly custom. Thus are the readers drawn in, compelled to access accurately Gulliver’s culpability in the continuation of the king’s malicious custom; for at stake is an accurate assessment of the readers’ own culpability in the perpetuation of the malicious customs that infest their own society.

Ultimately, the host of literally groveling subjects, of which Gulliver becomes the chief representative, who suppose it an Honcr to “lick the Dust before [the King’s] Footstool” (188) are not free from responsibility for the persistence of king’s deadly custom. Yet their fault lies not in their apparently unquestioning acceptance of the court’s dehumanizing “Court Style” (188) nor in their disinclination to rebel against these customs, but in their willful failure to properly assess the situation. Instead of recognizing that being “commanded to crawl upon [one’s] Belly, and lick the Floor as [one] advanced toward the king” is a horribly demeaning act to which no one should be subjected, the Trildrogdribians have allowed this custom to identify and classify them. They apparently consider it a privilege when “Care [is] taken to have [the floor] so clean that the Dust [is] not offensive” and have come to accept that this level of cleanliness is a
"peculiar Grace, not allowed to any but Persons of the highest Rank" (188). By focusing on the relative cleanliness of the floor, instead of the custom itself, the visitors to court are interested only in the extent to which the amount of dust on the floor befits their rank; they do not question why the custom exists in the first place or, more to the point, by what right the king, who makes his subjects engage in this act, holds power.

Interestingly, the failure for Gulliver to question the "Court Style" is anticipated by the paragraph preceding his arrival to Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib). Gulliver writes that, "by his [Gulliver's Luggnaggian Interpreter] Assistance I was able to hold a Conversation with those that came to visit me; but this consisted only of their Questions and my Answers" (emphasis added, 189). The significant term here is "Conversation," not only because the term has been misapplied to what is more accurately termed an interrogation of Gulliver, but because the mutual exchange of ideas and observations — i.e. conversation — is precisely what is needed in this land whose people have apparently not engaged with each other in conversation enough to establish a single pronunciation of their kingdom's name. In fact, the tyrannical stranglehold at the court of Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib) is the result of what can perhaps best be described as a failure in conversation — a failure brought on by an effective disabling of the intricate signaling mech-
anism that allows one to determine if words are meant literally or metaphorically, schemes to silence its members, and the use of interrogation as the preferred mode of verbal exchange.

When we allow this examination of the Traldragdubbian (or Trildrogdribian) failure at conversation to inform our reading of the next chapter, it becomes clear that the issues of effective communication and mutual verbal exchange play a significant role in this most celebrated chapter on the Struldbrugs. This chapter begins, like the previous Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib) episode, with Gulliver’s meeting people in the new land and holding a “Conversation” with them through his “Interpreter” (191). However, unlike the previous “Conversation” which consisted only of their Questions and [Gulliver’s] Answers” (189), in Chapter 10, “the Conversation [Gulliver and his new acquaintances] had was not disagreeable” (191). When Gulliver is asked by a “Person of Quality, whether [he] had seen any of the Struldbrugs or Immortals,” he does not merely answer the question; he takes in the new information offered in the question and proceeds to formulate a question of his own (191). “I had not [seen a Struldbugg], he answers his companion “and desired he would explain to me what he mean by such an Appellation” (191). The ensuing conversation between Gulliver and his companions is ostensibly a good one, consisting of a meaningful exchange of ideas whereby Gulliver is able to learn all about the
Struldruggs, a race of Immortals.

However, there is more at stake in Swift's compelling us to determine what must exist for an exchange to be aptly termed a "conversation" than our conclusion that Luggnuggians are better conversationalists than the Traldragdubbians (or Trildorgdribians). Even before Gulliver gives us his demonstration of how a conversation should proceed, readers are given a glimpse of the complexities and potential for problems involved in attempts to achieve a meaningful and accurate exchange of ideas. The descriptive subtitle for Chapter 10 makes it clear that this section is not going to concern itself with Gulliver's encounter with the Struldruggs, but rather with "A particular Description of the Struldruggs, with many Conversations between the Author and some eminent Persons upon that Subject" (emphasis added, 191). This distinction is significant in that it prompts us to notice that the information Gulliver relates to us about the Struldruggs was told to him and not derived from first-hand experience. In other words, we would do well to remember the lesson gleaned from the Munodi episode, and, recognizing that Gulliver's account may not have come from a disinterested party whose first concern is accuracy, pay close attention the textual maneuvering through which Gulliver offers a portrayal of the Struldruggs.

As a climactic finale to a section that began with a conspicuous attack on science and scientists, the Struldrugg
episode seems to serve nicely as a straightforward debunking of the desire for immortality, which was one of the philosopher's-stone goals that eluded alchemists, the precursor to the modern (i.e. 18th-century) scientist. Like an alchemist taking for granted that the achievement of immortality is a beneficial contribution to humanity, Gulliver is initially enthusiastically positive about the prospect of achieving perpetual life. When he learns from the Luggnuggians that immortals, though rare, exist in that land, he immediately expresses a desire to learn from them, for he assumes they must be "living Examples of antient Virtue" and "Masters" possessing the "Wisdom of all former Ages" (192). When asked what he would do if he were granted eternal life, he found it "easy to be eloquent on so copious and delightful a Subject" and proceeds to give an account of the wealth he plans to acquire, his design to be the most accurate recorder of historical events, his desire to "set down the several Changes in Customs, Language, Fashion of Dress, Dyet and Diversions" (193). And so on.

However, Gulliver is soon forced to see how foolish he has been to desire immortality when his Luggnaggian hosts reveal to him what perpetual life is really like. They show Gulliver that eternal life does not manifest as unending youth but as perpetual old age. The Struldbruggs are enfeebled, monstrous, non-contributing burdens to society. With regard to a critique of science, the implication is that the
goals of modern science, like those of its predecessor (i.e., the alchemists) may possibly prove equally as foolish and misguided. Alchemists who sought after the philosopher's stone assumed that their primary obstacle was how to attain this elusive goal. Whether it would be beneficial to humanity was not considered. Yet, as the Struldbrugg episode attempts to demonstrates, immortality is a terrible burden — a curse to both the immortals who are given no rest from their wretched lives and to the mortals who have to shoulder the perpetual burden of caring for these immortals who have become too weakened by age to care for themselves. In effect with this negative portrayal the philosopher's-stone desire for eternal life Swift seems to be suggesting that the modern counterpart of alchemists should worry less about how their projects might succeed and ponder more carefully what effect their projects, if successful, will have on humanity.

While admirable in its expression of concern for the overall well-being of humanity, this "suggestion" is problematic insofar as it is perhaps too dependent upon a reading of the episode from the perspective of a narrator who has come to reject the idea of immortality as enthusiastically as he had originally accepted it, a convert to the Lugnaggian hatred of the Struldbruggs. In fact, Gulliver's judgment of the Struldbruggs, taken at face value, cannot be depended upon to provide an accurate reading of Swift's statements about the scientific project in Chapter 10. Gulliver's understanding of
the these immortals results from a failure in inductive and deductive reasoning. When he first hears that immortals exist, he immediately expresses a desire to meet them, befriend them, learn from them, and indeed, to be one of them. When he is asked to speculate about what he would do if he were a Struldbrugg, he complies, enthusiastically. Having only general knowledge about their immortality and therefore knowing nothing about the specifics that will restrict his speculations, he proceeds to conceive of all the great accomplishments that he would aspire to if he were a Struldbrugg.

It turns out however, that the Struldbriggs are immortals, but not in the sense of what the term "immortal" is commonly understood to mean, and what Gulliver had obviously thought it meant — eternally young. In other words when asked to speculate about being a Struldbrugg, having never before encountered a specific immortal, Gulliver proceeds to speculate, not about being a Struldbrugg, but about being "immortal" as the term is generally used. Essentially, Gulliver makes the mistake of equating the specific term "Struldbrugg" with the general term "immortal." And once he is told the specifics about the Struldbriggs, he makes a similar mistake in the other direction; he considers the Struldbriggs to be the only possible configuration of immortality and proceeds to condemn immortality in general along with the Struldbriggs.

Additionally, when we examine the episode, paying careful
attention to the accuracy of the verbal exchange between Gulliver and his Luggnaggian companions, it becomes apparent that Gulliver did not have to change his mind about the possibility for a man endowed with eternal life to make positive contributions to humanity. Gulliver presents a feasible ideal configuration of an ideal concept — immortality. Given all the time in the world, Gulliver might be able to “remark the several Gradations by which Corruption steals into the World, and oppose it in every Step, by giving perpetual Warning and Instruction to Mankind” (194). The problem that the Luggnaggians have with Gulliver’s imagined life as an immortal is that it does not conform to the “actual” manifestations of immortality that they have experienced. For them, immortality does not take the form of perpetual youth, but of “perpetual Life under all the usual Disadvantages which old Age brings along with it” (195). Hence, they dismiss Gulliver’s speculations about immortality as “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” (195). And they attempt to impress upon him, their own experience with immortals.

Their portrayal of the Struldbruggs to Gulliver is filled with the vehemence of youths who believe themselves cheated out of a rightful inheritance because the aged parent would not die:
[The Struldbruggs] were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative; but uncapable of Friendship, and dead to all natural Affection, which never descended below their Grandchildren. Envy and impotent Desires are their prevailing Passions. (196)

Nevertheless, Gulliver does not seem to hesitate in accepting this horrendous portrayal of the Struldbruggs. He asserts the above and other negative statements about the Struldbruggs as though he were issuing unquestionable facts, yet is careful to remind the readers that this is the “Account given [him] of the Struldbruggs, as near as [he] can remember” (197). That is, he accepts the Luggnaggian judgment of the Struldbruggs, even though it contradicts his earlier open praise for them and before he has even met any of them.

Already prejudiced against the Struldbruggs, when “five or six of different Ages . . . [are] brought to [Gulliver] at several Times by some of [his] Friends,” Gulliver displays almost open disdain for them. “Although they were told that I was a great Traveller, and had seen all the World, they had not the least Curiosity to ask me a Questions,” (197) Gulliver petulantly remarks, assuming, apparently, that the reputation he has acquired as a learned traveler should inspire questions, and is miffed to the discover that, as far as the Struldbruggs were concerned, this is not the case. They “only desired I would give them Slumskudask, or a Token of
Remembrance," Gulliver goes on to say, "which is a modest Way of begging, to avoid the Law that strictly forbids it" (emphasis added, 197), insinuating that the Strulbruggs are engaging not in an act of harmless supplication but in an act of criminal begging. In effect, as far as we can tell from their behavior, the Strulbruggs should receive no more censure from Gulliver than did the Balnibarbian projectors in their begging for money or the Laputans in their declining to be curious about Gulliver. However because of the Luggnuggians' negative portrayal of the Strulbruggs, although Gulliver offers some offhand disparaging remarks about the Laputans and Balnibarbian Projectors, the snubbing by the Strulbruggs drives him to maintain that "they are despised and hated by all Sort of People" (197) and to declare that "they were the most mortifying Sight I ever beheld" (198).

I am not trying to suggest here that the Strulbruggs are not as despicable as the Luggnuggians portray them to Gulliver. My point is that Gulliver's conclusive judgment about the Strulbruggs that led him to abandon his desire, among other things, "to prevent the continual Degeneracy of human Nature" (194), is derived mostly from a conversation with the Luggnuggians. Hence, predisposed to think the worst of the Strulbruggs, Gulliver does exactly that when he meets them. The problem here is that "from what [Gulliver] had heard and seen, [his] keen Appetite for Perpetuity of Live was much abated[, and he] grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing
visions he had formed" (198). That is to say, a specific manifestation of an ideal, negatively portrayed to Gulliver, has led him to embrace despair and to abandon his general ideal to improve the world. Although Gulliver is obviously right to reject the Struldbruggs as a desirable model for humanity, he does so at the cost of his desire to live and his aspirations to achieve a better life.

Hence, the issue being examined in Chapter 10 is not whether humankind's desire to put off death as long as possible is foolish, but whether it were possible for humanity to discover worthwhile reasons for desiring to hold on to life. Herein lies the connection between Swift's respective critiques of the scientific project and the philosopher-stone desire for immortality. Because natural philosophy which has come to constitute the parameters within which humanity pursues its wild impossible chimæras — i.e., its hopeless dreams for a more equitable and just system — it runs the danger of aspiring to no better a desire than a wish to defeat death — a wish that manifests itself in the form of a childlike desire to attain magical command over ghosts, of a tyrant hoping to garner absolute power to kill, and of the old trying desperately to live forever. The figures in Glubbdubdrib, Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib), and Luggnagg are, respectively undead (the ghosts), dying (the "executed" who have 48 hours to live), and undying (the Struldbruggs); they are all in a state that is not dead, but not alive. The ques-
tion Swift raises in these latter chapters then is to what extent can humanity — bound as it has allowed itself to be by the system of indifference and petty desire for power that characterize scientific endeavors — envision for itself wild impossible chimæras that transcend the self-deluding nonsense of Glubbdubdrib, Traldragdubb (or Trildrogdrib), and Luggnagg?

Swift probably recognized that the world in which he lived was fast becoming one bound by the language of empiricism, which was raising “scientific” questions, objective and impersonal, about process, rather than what was previously the case — the language of morality with its “religious” questions, subjective and personal, about culpability and responsibility. This is not to suggest that, as an Anglican priest, he yearned to return to an ideal pre-Newtonian world. For, much as he disliked Newton, he probably could not help but recognize that the world the natural philosopher was ushering in was engaged in a complex relationship with the previous world — its stories and social and religious iconography — that made it in many ways inseparable from the one it was replacing. Although he discerns the corruptive allure of power so much a part of this new institution and condemned the power promised by the scientific viewpoint, Swift in these latter chapters is not calling simplistically for an end to the scientists’ pursuit of wild impossible chimæras. On the contrary, when these represent worthwhile, even if seemingly impossible, reforms, he urges his readers to embrace them and
to bring about the conditions under which they would not have to seem so wild, impossible, or chimerical. And he wanted with his satire, perhaps to take a hand in helping to effect such conditions.
Notes

1 Although the Complete title for Book 3 is *A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib, and Japan*, Gulliver devotes only two paragraphs to an account of Japan, which was "so short" he was not able to learn enough of the language to make any enquiries into the apparent "perpetual Commerce between this Kingdom (Luggnagg) and the great Empire of Japan" (215).

2 Although John H. Sutherland proceeds to argue otherwise, he apparently feels compelled to remind readers in his "Reconsideration of Gulliver's Third Voyage" that, "The ... short voyages — to Glubbdubdrib and Luggnagg — are not as obviously related to the satire on science and learning" (47). Arthur A. Case contends that they are less topical: "the remainder of the third voyage [i.e. Chapters 7-10] contains only scattering references to specific events or persons contemporary with Swift" (92). For W. A. Eddy, they contain the sole episode (the story of the Strulbruggs in Chapter 10) that escapes his famous censure of *The Voyage to Laputa* as "uninspired and dull" (165). (For a discussion of the Balnibarbians, see also Chapter One above (1ff.). For more from Eddy and Quintana about the latter chapters, see n27 above in the Introduction.) He states, "the only immortal part of the third part of Gulliver is the chapter on the immortal Strulbruggs" (165). Agreeing with Eddy, Ricardo Quintana writes, "chapter x, devoted to the description of the
immortal Struldrugs, is by all odds the most effective portion of the third Voyage" (317). NB: The spelling of "Strulbrugg" is not consistent in Swift's Travels. Hence the discrepancy between Eddy's and Quintana's spelling of the name. The word takes on a double "g" ending at the bottom of the second paragraph in Chapter 10, which began with the word being spelled "Strulbrug" (191). Whether this is deliberate on Swift's part is not clear. For the sake of consistency I have used the spelling "Strulbrugg" except in cases where I am directly quoting from Swift.

3 According to Rom Harré in The Physical Sciences Since Antiquity, the philosopher's stone, purportedly capable of transforming base metal into gold, is the single-most important item that Alchemists, the precursors to modern (that is 18th-Century) scientists searched for. Their "research" provided the foundation for modern chemistry and made possible the work of such eminent scientists as Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton. Many an early "scientist" including Newton himself conducted experiments to transform base metals into gold (5-9).

4 According to Read, the "Elixir of Life" or (Elixir of Immortality) is allied with the "Philosopher's Stone," which is, in the words of Arnold of Villanova, that "certain pure matter, which, being discovered and brought by Art to perfection, converts to itself proportionally all imperfect bodies that it touches" (qtd. in Read 28).
5 Irvin Ehrenpreis in Volume II of his biography, Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age, devotes a chapter, entitled "Oxford's Fall" (728-63), to the fall from grace of Swift's friends, Lord Oxford, John Gay, Matthew Prior, and John Arbuthnot as a consequence of Queen Anne's death -- a death which "would imprison the Dean of St Patrick's [i.e. Swift] in Ireland" (756). The subsequent crowning of George I ushered in the rise to power of the Whigs, and his one time friend and fellow Dubliner, but later enemy and rival, Richard Steele, "looked like a happy man. His [Steele's] great wager had suddenly paid off. He was returned to King George's first Parliament, knighted, made Governor of Drury Lane and Surveyor of Hampton Court stables. . . . His friends were at the top, and Steele was in" (761). Note 11 in Chapter Three above discusses similar issues.

6 See Ehrenpreis, Volume III

7 In a Letter to Charles Ford on August 14, 1725, Swift gives an indication as to what the purpose of his satire is: "I have finished my Travells, and I am now transcribing them; they are admirable Things, and will wonderfully mend the World" (583 in Writings of Jonathan Swift).

8 See chapter Three

9 See also Note 5 above.

10 Swift has made such careful note of the amount time Gulliver spends with the Governor on the first day. There is no uncertainty about the specific events that constitute the
first day.

11 To an alchemist, what is attractive about the process of transforming common base metals into gold, is probably not the thought of possessing gold but the idea of having control over a commodity so overwhelmingly precious to others and thereby having control over others.

12 A Whore can govern the Back-stairs, the Back-stairs a Council, and the Council a Senate" (183).

13 See also Chapter 3 above (99-85)

14 Gulliver notes "The Dog died on the Spot, and we left the Doctor endeavouring to recover him by the same Operation" (165).

15 Gulliver starts the paragraph by calling this monarch a "King," but switches to the term "Prince" halfway through, right after the "King's" method of execution is described. This linguistic transformation of the "King" into a "Prince" is telling. There is, after all, no system (or science) of politics more famous than Machiavelli's The Prince.

16 Apparently, if Swift is not attempting to mislead his readers in Chapter 10 with regard to this point, a person from Luggnagg is a "Luggnaggian" (191). See also Note 3 above.

17 Swift has Gulliver offer the readers two outrageous expressions, each implying a level of literal improbability that suggests they are figures of speech: Having the "Honour to lick the Dust before his Footstool" (188) and "My Tongue is in the Mouth of my Friend" (189). While the former is
literally true, the latter is an "Expression [that] meant that I desired leave to bring my Interpreter" (189).

18 "Sometimes," Gulliver writes, "the Floor is strewed with Dust on purpose, when the Person to be admitted happens to have powerful Enemies at Court; And I have seen a great Lord with his Mouth so crammed, that when he had crept to the proper Distance from the Throne, he was not able to speak a Word" (emphasis added, 189).

19 The conversation between Gulliver and the King consisted primarily of Gulliver's "answer[ing] as many Questions as his majesty could put in above an Hour" (189–90).

20 See Chapter Three Above especially pp. 74–83.

21 About the Laputan's lack of curiosity, Gulliver says, "I must confess I thought my self too much neglected, not without some Degree of Contempt" (157); and terms rather disparagingly the Projectors' asking for monetary contributions to support their experiments, "their Practice of begging from all who go to see them" (163).

22 Arthur E. Case, in his essay, "The Significance of Gulliver's Travels" calls Newton "one of Swift's enemies" and argues that Swift "decries the theory of gravitation propounded by Sir Isaac Newton" in Swift's The Battle of the Books (92). (See also n12 in the Introduction above).
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