Swift Justice: Gulliver's Travels as a Critique of Legal Institutions," Law and Literature Perspe...
Anonymous
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Kniezsa's view, only that applied linguists pay little attention to the poetry. She calls the poems in the *Miscellanies* "early" (in 1727, Swift was 60), and everything after that "late." So in the "early poetry" Swift "followed the requirements of heroic poetry both in topic and form," but then "In his late poetry topic, style, rhyme, verse form changed into ironically phrased occasional pieces expressed in everyday terms in couplets."

All of this leads to a linguist's comparison of the "late" poetry with the bits of prose in which Swift discusses language. Most of the conclusions are earned but obvious: Swift's works "complement each other and represent Swift the stylist" and shape an "admirable union of form and content."

"It would be," says Ms. Kniezsa with questionable logic, "too much to expect Swift to write on pronunciation; his age still was a transitory one where sound changes had just settled. . . . Moreover, Swift himself was a Hiberno-English speaker and could not be in an easy position to expound on the question of pronunciation." Begorrah. Instead of looking at Struldbruggs confounded by a changing language, Ms. Kniezsa might do better to examine the weirdest-looking, unpronounceable names of Lilliput and Brobdingnag, or Gulliver's successful efforts to speak the language of the Houyhnhnms.

PENCAK, WILLIAM. "Swift Justice: *Gulliver's Travels* as a Critique of Legal Institutions," *Law and Literature Perspectives,* ed. Bruce L. Rockwood (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 255–267.

Mr. Pencak draws a bland conclusion from *Gulliver's Travels:* "The decent people trying to do their best in an ab-surd world are sometimes hard to spot, but unless they find each other and work for justice within the limits of reality the alternatives are the alienated, hateful Gulliver the author and the tyranny of impossible Utopias." Or as Mr. Pencak would have it, " 'A Modest Proposal' on the one hand; work, charity, and concern for the PUBLICK GOOD on the other."

The "foremost message" from the *Travels* is that "humans do not really desire, or have not thought through the implications of, the Utopias they think they yearn for." The "remedies were far more deadly than the social diseases they purported to cure." Lilliput comes closest to satisfying Mr. Pencak because it offers "the least potential for destruction." Despite Lilliput's history—and the history of Europe—Mr. Pencak astoundingly proposes that "traditional European societies . . . are no real danger to humanity."

In "terms of destructive capability," the Houyhnhnms are "the worst of all." They are "fanatics" who would "sacrifice everything in united pursuit of *their* common good." Mr. Pencak dismisses Brobdingnag as a Utopia because its "laws would be . . . utterly unpalatable for a commercial, complex society such as eighteenth-century England"— the same argument another of Swift's narrators employed against "primitive Christianity."

A minor point: Mr. Pencak mistakenly states that the *Travels* "was written in 1726 although not published until 1735." A major point is his misleading warning about the "lures of the false Brobdignian [sic] *past"* and Swift's dismissal that a " 'merry old' England with its 'antient Constitution' similar to Brobdingnag really existed." That

"merry old" and the dismissal are Mr. Pencak's excess baggage.

ROSENBLUM, MICHAEL. "Swift's *Holyhead Journal* and Circumstantial Talk in Early Modern England," *ECS,* 30 (Winter 1996–1997), 159–172, and WWW.

Mr. Rosenblum is "interested" in the *Holyhead Journal* "because of the way that Swift straddles the genres," blending a letter with "elements of journal and travel narrative." But Swift was "uneasy" about it, perhaps because his text was too "circumstantial" to be "acceptable." Invoking Gerald Prince's notion of a "threshold of narratibility," Mr. Rosenblum finds that the ordinary, everyday activities, thoughts and routines scattered through the journal fall "below the threshold," and so account for Swift's "apologetic tone." Apologetic yes, and self-deprecating, yet Swift was accomplished at straddling genres and he wrote reams about the ordinary and everyday.

Mr. Rosenblum asks why Swift should "'sound' neither like a seventeenth-century narrator nor a late eighteenth-century one." Enter Watt, Hunter, Miller, Barrell, Bender and Eagleton, whose views on the boundaries of discourse "turn on questions about the acceptability of circumstantiality and the placement of thresholds." Opt for continuity, and "the culture is marked by a preference for high thresholds and a suspicion of circumstantiality." Opt for "change," and the period lowers thresholds and admits the ordinary. Swift's problem: the *Journal* "mistrusts the here and now as a source of talk, but ventures it anyway." Even if the "here and now" is an unworthy literary category, people who write journals are obliged to engage with it. As Swift writhes in discomfort at his own piece of everyday writing, Mr. Rosenblum sees cultural shifts.

ROSS, J. C. "The Framing and Printing of the Motte Editions of *Gulliver's Travels.*" *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin,* 29 (1996), 5–19.

"What is here undertaken is an exploration of the modes of framing the text, as a means used to manipulate contemporary reader responses, along with a re-visiting of the printing history, employing ornament-study and other techniques to identify the various printers involved." Mr. Ross delivers on this promise in two ways.

First, remarking on the way *Gulliver's Travels* is multiply framed textually, Mr. Ross demonstrates that the Motte editions were also framed physically as belonging to the tradition of the travel book. He argues that the early editions looked like travel books and suggests that this likeness fulfilled two aspects of Swift's and Motte's desire to obscure the *Travels'* true satirical nature: 1) to pursue the parodic dimension of the text as a mock travel book; and 2) to distance the book from its palpable political implications in its physical as well as its generic appearance.

Second, by paying close attention to printers' ornaments, Mr. Ross demonstrates that there were five printers involved in the first edition, six in the second, three in the third, and two in the fourth. While the high number of printers involved in the first edition may merely reflect Motte's desire to print quickly (as was presumably the case for the second edition), it may also indicate a desire to reduce the prepublication rumors about the advent of a substantial