

## The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956

*Author:* Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

*First published:* *Arkhipelag GULag, 1918-1956: Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniya*, parts 1-2, 1973; parts 3-4, 1974; parts 5-7, 1975 (English translation, 1974-1978)

*Type of work:* Memoir

*Type of plot:* Historical

*Time of plot:* Twentieth century

### The Story:

A string of prisons and labor camps scattered throughout the Soviet Union is called the gulag archipelago because its administrative title, the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps, forms the acronym “gulag” in Russian and because its far-flung prisons and camps, with their own laws and their oppressed population of *zeks* (prisoners), resembles a separate country made up of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of islands. Vladimir Ilich Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the first head of the Soviet state, established this extensive prison system in 1918, ostensibly to detain and “rehabilitate” Soviet citizens suspected of anti-Soviet or counterrevolutionary activity. The system was greatly expanded by Lenin’s successor, Joseph Stalin, the ironfisted ruler of the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953. Under Stalin, the secret police arrested millions of people, nearly all of whom received either the death sentence or lengthy prison terms in the gulag archipelago.

A decorated captain of artillery in the Soviet Red Army during World War II, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is arrested for anti-Soviet activity in 1945 because he criticized Stalin in letters to a friend. Solzhenitsyn’s “guilt” was already established in his letters, so the secret police interrogators try to persuade Solzhenitsyn to implicate other anti-Soviet “conspirators” rather than to confess. The interrogators use only sleep deprivation, the mildest of their thirty-one documented methods of torture. He refuses to sign the fabricated “confession” but relents when investigators threaten to begin the interrogation all over again. Sent to Butyrki prison in Moscow, he begins his eight years as a *zek*.

At Butyrki, Solzhenitsyn watches in horror and sadness as thousands of repatriated Soviet soldiers, liberated from German prisoner of war camps, are imprisoned as traitors by their own country. In need of scapegoats, Stalin blames them for his own enormous wartime blunders, including surrenders at Kerch (120,000 prisoners) and Kharkov (150,000 prisoners). Stalin also fears that returning prisoners of war

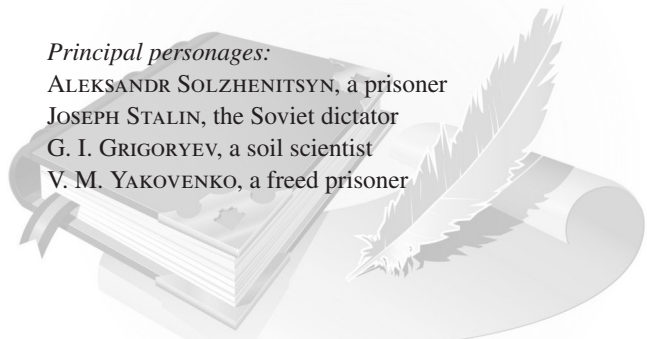
*Principal personages:*

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN, a prisoner

JOSEPH STALIN, the Soviet dictator

G. I. GRIGORYEV, a soil scientist

V. M. YAKOVENKO, a freed prisoner



might sow unrest among their countrymen by describing the relatively high standard of living they had seen in Europe and the greater degree of personal freedom enjoyed by the Germans, even under the wartime rule of the dictator Adolf Hitler. Reasoning that anyone who could survive a German prisoner of war camp must have collaborated with his captors, Stalin has many of the returning prisoners charged with “aiding and abetting the enemy” and given “tenners” (ten-year sentences).

In 1945, Solzhenitsyn is sent to a hard labor camp, from which he is miraculously saved in 1946 when he lies on a camp registration form; he lists his civilian occupation as nuclear physicist. He is removed to a special prison, a scientific research institute, or *sharashka*, near Moscow, one of the gulag archipelago’s “paradise” islands, legendary among the *zeks*, where prisoners are well treated because of their value to the state.

Successfully impersonating a scientist, Solzhenitsyn remains there until 1950. From this special prison, he is taken to a camp for political prisoners in Ekibastuz, Kazakhstan. At Ekibastuz, Solzhenitsyn becomes part of a team of laborers building a new disciplinary barracks, a prison within a prison. He also witnesses a number of failed escape attempts. Some of the escapees are shot, and many are imprisoned in the unfinished disciplinary barracks even while Solzhenitsyn and other prisoners are still building it.

His sentence completed, Solzhenitsyn is released from Ekibastuz in March, 1953; he is sent into permanent exile in the Kolk-Terek district, a desert region in central Kazakhstan. There he seeks work as a teacher of mathematics and physics, but he is rebuffed by the district education department, even though he is the only available teacher in the district with a university degree. On March 6, his second day in Kolk-Terek, he hears the news that Stalin—the man who had murdered millions of Soviet citizens and imprisoned millions more—is dead. Astonished by the grief of the free peo-

ple around him, Solzhenitsyn realizes the extraordinary success of Stalin and his minions in keeping their barbarism secret. He begins editing what little he managed to write in the camps, and he writes what he can remember, burying his work every evening in order to hide it from the secret police. In the spring of 1956, he applies for a review of his case. The sentence of exile is lifted in 1957, and Solzhenitsyn returns to Russia as a teacher.

### **Critical Evaluation:**

*The Gulag Archipelago* is a modern epic. It is not a scholarly history and it is not fiction, though it is to an extent fictionalized. Denied the tools of the historian (he was forbidden paper and pencil during his entire sentence, and he had no access to libraries or government archives), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was forced to rely on his memory to store nearly all the material that makes up this massive, eighteen-hundred-page work. Accepting Solzhenitsyn's metaphor of the gulag as its own nation of islands within the Soviet Union, one might say that he single-handedly constructed the literature of the gulag.

Using his own experiences as a narrative thread tying together the stories he heard from other *zeks*, he manages to weave a tapestry depicting the cruelty and sorrow of the Soviet penal system. That tapestry is vast and filled with horrors. Few people in the West realize that Stalin's victims, perhaps as many as thirty million, far outnumbered Hitler's. In addition to the innocent millions murdered in the camps and in the prisons, fifteen million peasants died as a result of a single national program: the brutal resettlement that established the Soviet Union's network of collective farms. Solzhenitsyn's own story seems innocuous by comparison. He was but lightly tortured during interrogation; other prisoners were starved, beaten, or shot. Many women prisoners were raped. He served a single eight-year sentence; other prisoners had extra "tenners" given them for minor infractions of camp rules. He hoodwinked his captors and so spent half his sentence in the relative comfort of a *sharashka*; other prisoners served ten, fifteen, or even twenty years—though few survived that long—in Siberian hard labor camps. Nevertheless, his story is the thread by which the others are bound. All the political prisoners in the gulag suffered under a penal code that was administrative rather than legislative. The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs established three-person Special Boards throughout the Soviet Union, with the power to imprison and execute "socially dangerous" people without trial. These Special Boards, abolished after Stalin's death in 1953, applied their own criminal code containing eleven indictable offenses ranging from "anti-Soviet

agitation" to "nurturing anti-Soviet feelings" to merely being a "member of the family" of an indicted person. Under such a code, no one was safe.

The evil of such a system is Solzhenitsyn's target. Through the testimony of 227 fellow prisoners, he pieces together a comprehensive history of the gulag, explaining various methods of arrest and interrogation, the often incongruous modes of transport between prisons—*zeks* sometimes traveled on the public railways with unarmed escorts, mixing with free citizens who frequently had no inkling that there were "enemies of the state" among them. Solzhenitsyn describes the character of his interrogators (the blue-caps), the endless variety of brutality practiced by the guards, and the seemingly inadvertent psychological torture built in to the system. The banality of evil reveals itself in the details involved in running such a far-flung empire of prisons and labor camps. For example, arrests and interrogations nearly always took place at night, partly to heighten the terror of the victims and partly to exploit the vulnerability of arrestees deprived of sleep. Another reason for night arrests: The police and interrogators were paid extra for night work. Mixed among the horrifying statistics of death—forty thousand prisoners died from overwork, exposure, and disease at a single camp during the winter of 1941-1942—are the depressing statistics of life. Throughout the gulag, women prisoners were routinely forced into prostitution by the guards, and their tens of thousands of children were sent to state orphanages.

Solzhenitsyn observes all these horrors and more, expressing outrage at the unfeeling brutality of the system, wonder at the strength and courage of the *zeks*, and immense sadness for the tragedy that has befallen his country. A Marxist, Solzhenitsyn revered Vladimir Ilich Lenin, although he hated Joseph Stalin. Still, rather than blame Stalin alone for the inhuman gulag, Solzhenitsyn explores his idol's part in its creation. Rather than make scapegoats of the thousands of policemen, interrogators, guards, and bureaucrats responsible for the day-to-day running of the gulag, Solzhenitsyn recognizes that they were not monsters; instead, they were Soviet citizens molded by his beloved Soviet state. In their arrogance and conviction, he can recognize traits he himself developed as an officer in the Red Army. Despite the pain and humiliation suffered at the hands of his captors, he retains the humanity that allows him to admit that in different circumstances he—or anyone—might have become one of them.

There are stories of courage, as well. Some *zeks* were never defeated by the system. G. I. Grigoryev, a soil scientist, was captured by the Germans during World War II, and he

was imprisoned by the Soviets immediately upon being repatriated. Despite being offered comparatively easy camp jobs, such as supervising other workers, Grigoryev refused to cooperate with his captors, choosing, instead, the hardest of manual labor. Another *zek*, V. M. Yakovenko, was released after twenty years; he was exiled to Vorkuta. In 1949, the authorities in Vorkuta began arresting former *zeks* and handing out new sentences. Yakovenko, though he could be arrested again at any moment, fearlessly delivered packages of food to friends already in custody. Following the 1953 execution of Lavrenty Beria, head of Stalin's secret police and of the gulag since 1938, the *zeks* began to rebel. In 1954, more than a thousand *zeks* at Kengir prison camp in Kazakhstan went on strike against armed guards with a well-deserved reputation as murderers of prisoners; the strike paralyzed the camp for forty days. Solzhenitsyn recounts numerous examples of *zeks* fighting back. *The Gulag Archipelago* is a sprawling record of inhumanity; it is also a monument to human courage and determination.

“Critical Evaluation” by Craig A. Milliman

### Further Reading

- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2001. A collection of critical essays, including comparisons of Solzhenitsyn's work with that of Leo Tolstoy and Boris Pasternak, an analysis of the representation of detention in the works of Solzhenitsyn and Fyodor Dostoevski, and a discussion of Solzhenitsyn's experiences as a creative artist in a totalitarian state.
- Dunlop, John B., Richard S. Haugh, and Michael Nicholson, eds. *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution, 1985. Includes three critical essays on *The Gulag Archipelago*: Susan Richards's “*The Gulag Archipelago* as Literary Documentary” argues that the work transcends the genre of history by means of the voice of Solzhenitsyn, the narrator. John B. Dunlop's “*The Gulag Archipelago*: Alternative to Ideology” discusses the positive social implications of the many examples of Soviet citizens rebelling against the system. Elisabeth Markstein's “Observations on the Narrative Structure of *The Gulag Archipelago*” maintains that the interweaving of different *zeks*' narratives and styles gives the work a highly complex narrative structure.
- Ericson, Edward E., Jr. *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993. Examines Solzhenitsyn in light of the collapse of Communism in Russia. Answers some of the common criticisms that are leveled at his writing.
- Ericson, Edward E., and Alexis Klimoff. *The Soul and Barbed Wire: An Introduction to Solzhenitsyn*. Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2008. Two major Solzhenitsyn scholars provide a detailed biography of the writer and analyses of all of his major fiction. Includes a chapter on *The Gulag Archipelago*.
- Feuer, Kathryn, ed. *Solzhenitsyn: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976. Includes “On Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*,” a historian's assessment of Solzhenitsyn's factual accuracy by Marxist writer Roy Medvedev. “On Reading *The Gulag Archipelago*,” by Victor Erlich, is an argument for Solzhenitsyn's literary skill.
- Kodjak, Andrej. *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978. Commentary on *The Gulag Archipelago*. Kodjak argues that Solzhenitsyn's narrative style transforms the work from mere documentation to artistic investigation.
- Mahoney, Daniel J. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Ascent from Ideology*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001. Focuses on Solzhenitsyn's political philosophy and its impact on twentieth century thinking. Analyzes Solzhenitsyn's writings to demonstrate how they represent the political condition of modern man.
- Thomas, D. M. *Alexander Solzhenitsyn: A Century in His Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. A personal portrait of Solzhenitsyn, providing insights into his struggle with the Soviet authorities and his relationship with the two women who provided strong support for his efforts to expose the evils of the Communist regime. An imaginative, well-documented, and at times combative biography, which includes a discussion of Solzhenitsyn's return to Russia in 1994.

## Gulliver's Travels

*Author:* Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

*First published:* 1726, as *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts, by Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships*

*Type of work:* Novel

*Type of plot:* Satire

*Time of plot:* 1699-1713

*Locale:* England and other lands

### The Story:

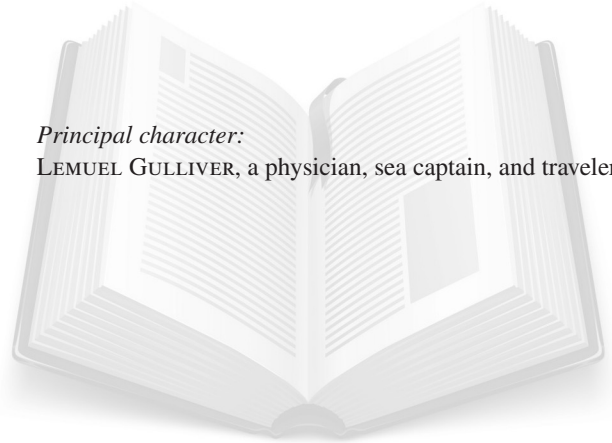
Lemuel Gulliver, a physician, takes the post of ship's doctor on the *Antelope*, which sets sail from Bristol for the South Seas in May, 1699. When the ship is wrecked in a storm somewhere near Tasmania, Gulliver has to swim for his life. Wind and tide help to carry him close to a low-lying shore, where he falls, exhausted, into a deep sleep. Upon awakening, he finds himself held to the ground by hundreds of small ropes. He soon discovers that he is the prisoner of humans six inches tall. Still tied, Gulliver is fed by his captors; then he is placed on a special wagon built for the purpose and drawn by fifteen hundred small horses. Carried in this manner to the capital city of the small humans, he is exhibited as a great curiosity to the people of Lilliput, as the land of the diminutive people is called. He is kept chained to a huge Lilliputian building into which he crawls at night to sleep.

Gulliver soon learns the Lilliputian language, and through his personal charm and natural curiosity, he comes into good graces at the royal court. At length, he is given his freedom, contingent upon his obeying many rules devised by the emperor prescribing his deportment in Lilliput. Now free, Gulliver tours Mildendo, the capital city, and finds it to be similar, except in size, to European cities of the time.

Learning that Lilliput is in danger of an invasion by the forces of the neighboring empire, Blefuscu, he offers his services to the emperor of Lilliput. While the enemy fleet awaits favorable winds to carry their ships the eight hundred yards between Blefuscu and Lilliput, Gulliver takes some Lilliputian cable, wades to Blefuscu, and brings back the entire fleet by means of hooks attached to the cables. He is greeted with great acclaim, and the emperor makes him a nobleman. Soon, however, the emperor and Gulliver quarrel over differences concerning the fate of the now helpless Blefuscu. The emperor wants to reduce the enemy to the status of slaves; Gulliver champions their liberty. The pro-Gulliver forces

*Principal character:*

LEMUEL GULLIVER, a physician, sea captain, and traveler



prevail in the Lilliputian parliament; the peace settlement is favorable to Blefuscu. Gulliver, however, is now in disfavor at court.

He visits Blefuscu, where he is received graciously by the emperor and the people. One day, while exploring, he finds a boat from a wreck washed ashore. With the help of thousands of Blefuscu artisans, he repairs the boat for his projected voyage back to his own civilization. Taking some cattle and sheep with him, he sails away and is eventually picked up by an English vessel.

Back in England, Gulliver spends a short time with his family before he boards the *Adventure*, bound for India. The ship is blown off course by fierce winds. Somewhere on the coast of Great Tartary a landing party goes ashore to forage for supplies. Gulliver, who wandered away from the party, is left behind when a gigantic human figure pursues the sailors back to the ship. Gulliver is caught in a field by giants threshing grain that grows forty feet high. Becoming the pet of a farmer and his family, he amuses them with his humanlike behavior. The farmer's nine-year-old daughter, who is not yet over forty feet high, takes special charge of Gulliver.

The farmer displays Gulliver first at a local market town. Then he takes his little pet to the metropolis, where Gulliver is put on show repeatedly, to the great detriment of his health. The farmer, seeing that Gulliver is near death from overwork, sells him to the queen, who takes a great fancy to the little curiosity. The court doctors and philosophers study Gulliver as a quaint trick of nature. He subsequently has adventures with giant rats the size of lions, with a dwarf thirty feet high, with wasps as large as partridges, with apples the size of Bristol barrels, and with hailstones the size of tennis balls.

He and the king discuss the institutions of their respective countries, the king asking Gulliver many questions about Great Britain that Gulliver finds impossible to answer truth-

fully without embarrassment. After two years in Brobdingnag, the land of the giants, Gulliver miraculously escapes when a large bird carries his portable quarters out over the sea. The bird drops the box containing Gulliver, and he is rescued by a ship that is on its way to England. Back home, it takes Gulliver some time to accustom himself once more to a world of normal size.

Soon afterward, Gulliver goes to sea again. Pirates from a Chinese port attack the ship. Set adrift in a small sailboat, Gulliver is cast away upon a rocky island. One day, he sees a large floating mass descending from the sky. Taken aboard the flying island of Laputa, he soon finds it to be inhabited by intellectuals who think only in the realm of the abstract and the exceedingly impractical. The people of the island, including the king, are so absentminded that they have to have servants following them to remind them even of their trends of conversation. When the floating island arrives above the continent of Balnibarri, Gulliver receives permission to visit that realm. There he inspects the Grand Academy, where hundreds of highly impractical projects for the improvement of agriculture and building are under way.

Next, Gulliver journeys by boat to Glubbdubdrib, the island of sorcerers. By means of magic, the governor of the island shows Gulliver such great historical figures as Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Thomas More. Gulliver talks to the apparitions and learns from them that history books are inaccurate.

From Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver ventures to Luggnagg. There he is welcomed by the king, who shows him the Luggnaggian immortals, or Struldbrugs—beings who will never die. Gulliver travels on to Japan, where he takes a ship back to England. He has been away for more than three years.

Gulliver becomes restless after a brief stay at his home, and he signs as captain of a ship that sails from Portsmouth in August, 1710, destined for the South Seas. The crew mutinies, keeping Captain Gulliver prisoner in his cabin for months. At length, he is cast adrift in a longboat off a strange coast. Ashore, he comes upon and is nearly overwhelmed by disgusting half-human, half-ape creatures who flee in terror at the approach of a horse. Gulliver soon discovers, to his amazement, that he is in a land where rational horses, the Houyhnhnms, are masters of irrational human creatures, the Yahoos. He stays in the stable house of a Houyhnhnm family and learns to subsist on oaten cake and milk. The Houyhnhnms are horrified to learn from Gulliver that horses in England are used by Yahoo-like creatures as beasts of burden. Gulliver describes England to his host, much to the candid and straightforward Houyhnhnm's mystification. Such things as wars and courts of law are unknown to this race of intelli-

gent horses. As he did in the other lands he visited, Gulliver attempts to explain the institutions of his native land, but the friendly and benevolent Houyhnhnms are appalled by many of the things Gulliver tells them.

Gulliver lives in almost perfect contentment among the horses, until one day his host tells him that the Houyhnhnm Grand Assembly has decreed Gulliver either be treated as an ordinary Yahoo or be released to swim back to the land from which he had come. Gulliver builds a canoe and sails away. At length, he is picked up by a Portuguese vessel. Remembering the Yahoos, he becomes a recluse on the ship and begins to hate all humankind. Landing at Lisbon, he sails from there to England; on his arrival, however, the sight of his own family repulses him. He faints when his wife kisses him. His horses become his only friends on earth.

### **Critical Evaluation:**

It has been said that Dean Jonathan Swift hated humanity but loved the individual. His hatred is brought out in this caustic political and social satire aimed at the English people, humanity in general, and the Whigs in particular. By means of a disarming simplicity of style and of careful attention to detail in order to heighten the effect of the narrative, Swift produced one of the outstanding pieces of satire in world literature. Swift himself attempted to conceal his authorship of the book under its original title: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts, by Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships*.

When Swift created the character of Lemuel Gulliver as his narrator for *Gulliver's Travels*, he developed a personality with many qualities admired by an eighteenth-century audience and still admired by many readers. Gulliver is a decent sort of person: hopeful, simple, fairly direct, and full of good will. He is a scientist, a trained doctor, and, as any good scientist should, he loves detail. His literal-minded attitude makes him a keen observer of the world around him. Furthermore, he is, like another famous novel character of the eighteenth century—Robinson Crusoe—encouragingly resourceful in emergencies. Why is it, then, that such a seemingly admirable, even heroic character, should become, in the end, an embittered misanthrope, hating the world and turning against everyone, including people who show him kindness?

The answer lies in what Swift meant for his character to be, and Gulliver was certainly not intended to be heroic. Readers often confuse Gulliver the character and Swift the author, but to do so is to miss the point of *Gulliver's Travels*. The novel is a satire, and Gulliver is a mask for Swift the satirist. In fact, Swift does not share Gulliver's rationalistic, sci-



entific responses to the world or Gulliver's beliefs in progress and in the perfectibility of humanity. Swift, on the contrary, believed that such values were dangerous, and that to put such complete faith in the material world, as scientific Gulliver did, was folly. Gulliver is a product of his age, and he is intended as a character to demonstrate the weakness underlying the values of the Enlightenment—the failure to recognize the power of the irrational.

Despite Gulliver's apparent congeniality in the opening chapters of the novel, Swift makes it clear that Gulliver has serious shortcomings, including blind spots about human nature, his own included. Book 3, the least readable section of *Gulliver's Travels*, is in some ways the most revealing part of the book. In it Gulliver complains, for example, that the wives of the scientists he is observing run away with the servants. The fact is that Gulliver—himself a scientist—gives little thought to the well-being of his own wife. In the eleven years covered in Gulliver's travel book, Swift's narrator spends a total of seven months and ten days with his wife.

Gulliver, too, is caught up in Swift's web of satire in *Gulliver's Travels*. Satire as a literary form tends to be ironic; the author says one thing but means another. Consequently, readers can assume that much of what Gulliver observes as good and much of what he thinks and does are not what Swift thinks.

As a type of the eighteenth century, Gulliver exhibits its major values: belief in rationality, in the perfectibility of humanity, in the idea of progress, and in the Lockean philosophy of the human mind as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, at the time of birth, controlled and developed entirely by the differing strokes and impressions made on it by the environment. Swift, in contrast to Gulliver, hated the abstraction that accompanied rational thinking; he abhorred the rejection of the past that resulted from a rationalistic faith in the new and improved; and he cast strong doubts on humanity's ability to gain knowledge through reason and logic.

The world Gulliver discovers during his travels is significant in Swift's satire. The Lilliputians, averaging not quite six inches in height, display the pettiness and the smallness Swift detected in much that motivates human institutions such as church and state. It is petty religious problems that lead to continual war in Lilliput. The Brobdingnagians continue the satire in part 2 by exaggerating human grossness through their enlarged size. (Swift divided human measurements by a twelfth for the Lilliputians and multiplied by twelve for the Brobdingnagians.)

The tiny people of part 1 and the giants of part 2 establish a pattern of contrasts that Swift follows in part 4 with the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos. The Yahoos, "their heads and

breasts covered with a thick hair, some frizzled and others lank," naked otherwise and scampering up trees like nimble squirrels, represent the animal aspect of humanity when that animality is viewed as separate from the rational. The Houyhnhnms, completing the other half of the split, know no lust, pain, or pleasure. Their rational temperaments totally rule what passions they have. The land of the Houyhnhnms is a utopia to Gulliver, and he tells the horse people that his homeland is unfortunately governed by Yahoos.

The reader who takes all of this at face value misses much of the satire. What is the land of the Houyhnhnms really like, how much is it a utopia? Friendship, benevolence, honesty, and equality are the principal virtues there. Decency and civility guide every action. As a result, each pair of horses mates to have one colt of each sex; after that, they no longer stay together. The marriages are exacted to ensure nice color combinations in the offspring. To the young, marriage is "one of the necessary actions of a reasonable being." After the function of the marriage has been fulfilled—after the race has been propagated—the two members of the couple are no closer to each other than to anybody else in the whole country. It is this kind of "equality" that Swift satirizes. As a product of the rational attitude, such a value strips life of its fullness, denies the power of emotion and instinct, subjugates all to logic, reason, the intellect, and makes life dull and uninteresting—as predictable as a scientific experiment.

Looking upon the Houyhnhnms as the perfect creatures, Gulliver makes his own life back in England intolerable:

I . . . return to enjoy my own speculations in my little garden at Redriff; to apply those excellent lessons of virtue which I learned among the Houyhnhnms; to instruct the Yahoos of my own family as far as I shall find them docible animals; to behold my figure often in a glass, and thus if possible habituate myself by time to tolerate the sight of a human creature.

When Gulliver holds up the rational as perfect and when he cannot find a rational man to meet his ideal, he concludes in disillusionment that humanity is totally animalistic, like the ugly Yahoos. In addition to being a satire and a parody of travel books, *Gulliver's Travels* is an initiation novel. As Gulliver develops, he changes, but he fails to learn an important lesson of life, or he learns it wrong. His naïve optimism about progress and rationality leads him to bitter disillusionment.

It is tragically ironic that Swift died at the age of seventy-eight after three years of living without his reason, a victim of Ménière's disease, dying "like a rat in a hole." For many

years, he had struggled against fits of deafness and giddiness, symptoms of the disease. As a master of the language of satire, Swift remains unequaled, despite his suffering and ill health. He gathered in *Gulliver's Travels*, written late in his life, all the experience he had culled from both courts and streets. For Swift knew people, and, as individuals, he loved them; but when they changed into groups, he hated them, satirized them, and stung them into realizing the dangers of the herd. Gulliver never understood this.

“Critical Evaluation” by Jean G. Marlowe

### Further Reading

- Barnett, Louise. *Jonathan Swift in the Company of Women*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Examines Swift's relationships with the women in his life and his attitude toward the fictional women in his texts. Argues that he respected and admired individual women, yet loathed the female sex in general. The references to *Gulliver's Travels* are listed in the index.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels."* New ed. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009. Collection of critical essays about *Gulliver's Travels*, including examinations of Swift's caricatures of Sir Isaac Newton, adventure tales of mutiny as a possible source of the novel, and the function of talking animals in the book.
- Brady, Frank, ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Gulliver's Travels": A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968. The essays examine the philosophical, religious, and scientific background of the novel, as well as the literary sources and traditions that the book reflects.
- Carnochan, W. B. *Lemuel Gulliver's Mirror for Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. Relates Swift's satiric intention to the epistemology of John Locke. An epilogue examines how *Gulliver's Travels* anticipates later satirists Lewis Carroll, James Joyce, and Vladimir Nabokov.
- Erskine-Hill, Howard. *Jonathan Swift: "Gulliver's Travels."* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. A concise, accessible introduction. The final chapter surveys the work's influence on fiction from Herman Melville to Nathaniel West.
- Fox, Christopher, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Collection of essays about Swift's life and work, including discussions of Swift's religion, his language and style, his representation of women, and Swift the Irishman. "Gulliver's Travels and the Later Writings" by J. Paul Hunter analyzes this novel.
- Fox, Christopher, and Brenda Tooley, eds. *Walking Naboth's Vineyard: New Studies of Swift*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995. The introduction discusses Swift and Irish studies, and the subsequent essays all consider aspects of Swift as an Irish writer.
- Glendinning, Victoria. *Jonathan Swift: A Portrait*. New York: Henry Holt, 1998. Illuminates the life and personality of this proud and intractable man. Investigates the main events and relationships of Swift's life, providing a portrait set amid controversy and paradox.
- Hudson, Nicholas, and Aaron Santesso, eds. *Swift's Travels: Eighteenth-Century British Satire and Its Legacy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Collection of essays examining the satirical style and content of Swift's work. Some of the essays discuss his work in relation to previous satirical writing by John Dryden and others; other essays compare his work with that of Alexander Pope and assess his influence on Jane Austen, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Beckett.
- Kelly, Ann Cline. *Jonathan Swift and Popular Culture: Myth, Media, and the Man*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Chronicles the creation of Swift's literary legend in his own time and in succeeding generations. Swift realized that in "a print-contracted world, texts create authors, not the other way around," and Kelly demonstrates how the writer constructed a print persona that differed from the "real" individual.
- Robinson, Elaine L. *Gulliver as Slave Trader: Racism Revealed by Jonathan Swift*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. Argues that Swift used *Gulliver's Travels* as a means of denouncing the African slave trade, pointing out quotes from the novel that advance this theory.