

## **Abstract**

This essay explores how Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* has evolved through updates and adaptations, revealing a pattern in excision. Although Swift's novel is a social satire, the work also contains elements appropriate for children's literature. When adapted for children, the text is sanitized by editors who cut and modify passages that relate to bodily functions or satire; parts III and IV are often wholly omitted, altering perceptions of Gulliver. In the original, Gulliver's character develops gradually throughout the text and the shift in his character concludes in misanthropy. As a contrast, in abridged editions for children, Gulliver is often portrayed as a heroic adventurer, which exposes how editors tailor the text to suit young readers. Perhaps surprisingly, however, study of the aforementioned frequent targets of excision also reveals that children enjoy the very parts that are frequently cut out. Furthermore, this pattern suggests that *Gulliver's Travels* is not censored so as to make the novel more enjoyable for children, but rather to maintain a division between children and adults. That is, adults use revision to censor elements that reveal their faults; they do not want children exposed to the frailty of human nature. Lastly, this essay examines all six abridged versions of *Gulliver's Travels* available in Icelandic. Those editions all vary in size and content but a comparison nonetheless shows that the small sample of Icelandic adaptations of *Gulliver* essentially follows the same patterns as the larger historical sample. Passages that relate to grotesque elements of the body and excrement are cut, while descriptions of violence are conspicuous in the texts, again underlying that revisions of *Gulliver's Travels* do not reflect what is or is not suitable for children, but rather what adults are comfortable or uncomfortable with. The essay concludes that abridgements tend to undersell the importance of satire.

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# 1. Introduction

*Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift is an account of the extraordinary travels of the narrator Lemuel Gulliver. The book is divided into four parts, and in each part Gulliver travels to a remarkable place and meets its inhabitants. *Gulliver's Travels* is also, as Jackie E. Stallcup puts it, "savage social satire that concludes with the narrator's descent into madness and misanthropy" (Stallcup 87). Be that as it may, the book has lived on in the culture through many adaptations in print, TV, film, theatre et cetera, and it is noteworthy that Swift's novel has never been out of print since it was published almost three hundred years ago, in 1726. That said, the way in which Gulliver is portrayed varies greatly between each adaptation and retelling, and some editions barely resemble the original. In abridged editions, satirical elements are often sacrificed in favor of an emphasis befitting the travel literature genre, and the work is liable to become an adventure story rather than a biting satire on humanity. In this essay, I explore which parts and passages are often excised from children's books and abridged editions of *Gulliver's Travels*, and speculate on why certain decisions were made in the process of adapting the work. I studied abridged editions of *Gulliver's Travels* available in Icelandic, which are translations from English, Danish and Spanish, and compared them to other studies of abridged editions, made by Stallcup, Kosok, Menzies and Smedman. They all found that Parts III and IV, and passages that mention excrement or have anything to do with bodily functions, are frequently left out. In the original, Gulliver's character changes and develops gradually throughout the text; he is not the same man in Lilliput as he is in the country of the Houyhnhnms. However, this shift in Gulliver's character may seem odd to those who read abridged editions, because understanding Gulliver's behavior relies on significant passages and parts of the books which are often modified, or even cut out. I argue that those parts, to paraphrase Sólrún (2016), are unwanted but essential.

## 2. General Trends in Adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels*

### 2.1 Gulliver for Young Readers

*Gulliver's Travels* is a fitting and enduring book for young readers, which explains its many adaptations which play up different aspects of its potential appeal. Some argue that it is necessary to retell stories every so often, even though the stories may be timeless, to prevent children from finding them “stale” (Weldy 65). Furthermore, in his introduction to the 2008 Oxford World's Classics edition of *Gulliver's Travels*, Claude Rawson says about Swift and children's literature:

[Swift] took care, in *Gulliver's Travels* and elsewhere, to disabuse gullible readers of any ‘illusion’ that they were witnessing life rather than reading fiction. But the power to create what he was eager to neutralize may be part of the appeal of *Gulliver's Travels* as a children's book, usually, in that format, stripped of the bleaker satiric content and the aggressions against the reader. [...] The sarcastic idiom which undermines this, to a sensitive reader's discomfort, tends to be dropped in children's adaptations, which perhaps helps partly to explain why one of the world's most disturbing satires has also survived as a children's classic. (xlili)

He is saying that without Swift's more biting satiric voice, it is natural to focus on the more imaginative aspects of the book. The countries and the inhabitants of those countries Gulliver visits are quite extraordinary—there are tiny human beings, giants, floating islands, talking horses, et cetera. Also, as Lionel Basney describes Gulliver, he is “an accessible narrator. He goes, sees, wonders, and reports; he is curious, credulous and energetic” (152, quoted in Stallcup 99). Those elements make a good children's book, and Swift's vivid imagery and detailed descriptions of Gulliver's adventures to remote islands make the story eligible as a modern fantasy.

In regard to this, Ruth Menzies points out in her essay “Children's versions of *Gulliver's Travels* and the question of horizons of expectation: from biting satire to exciting adventure story” that those who read Gulliver today have a different conception of the text from those who read Gulliver in 1726 (45). The details Swift provided, such as his date of departure and arrival, and the map of Gulliver's travels, serve a purpose other than precision: he meant to mock travel literature (43-45). Because of how

popular travel literature was in the eighteenth century, some gullible readers believed *Gulliver's Travels* was an actual travel log (45) although it later became indisputable that the book is fiction. Interestingly enough, some of the details attributable to Swift's satire of travel literature are apparent in abridged editions. In fact, out of the six edited editions I examined (see below), four include the date when Gulliver starts his trip (1913, 1939, 1951 and 1990). Those same editions mention the name of the ship on which Gulliver sets out on his first voyage.

That being said, when the text is tailored to such an extent that it has become obvious, the magnitude of what is left in becomes significant. In abridged editions of *Gulliver*, the adventure element is empathized by maintaining the details regarding the impossible journey. Menzies holds that this method of revision stresses the aspect that Swift meant to mock, and casts a shadow on Gulliver's actual encounters and exploration in foreign countries (Menzies 49). Although Swift's satire of travel narratives is obscure, the once-satiric details now serve to reinforce the adventure and travel elements in *Gulliver*. Gulliver becomes an adventurous character that goes on sea voyages, is shipwrecked, nearly drowns and ends up stranded on an island; he then, against all odds, heroically survives:

Abandoning Swift's critical stance, the editors make his text into something that ultimately resembles the targets of his satire: a dramatic, first-person travel account, presenting a hero the reader is encouraged to identify with, and whose exploits are primarily intended to divert and amuse. (Menzies, 50)

As a result, Gulliver becomes an adventure story rather than a satire; through revision, Gulliver is reduced to a mere reporter.

Granted that the adventurous elements of the story make *Gulliver* ideal for abridged children's versions, this appeal is also due to the way in which the novel "invites children to revel in a world that corresponds to their own" (Stallcup 87). Stallcup found that in the first two books of *Gulliver's Travels*, children relate to Gulliver as he is either a giant or a tiny person, as they are themselves: "giants among their dolls action figures" and tiny when "at the mercy of beings much larger and more powerful than themselves" (Stallcup 88). This merely demonstrates further why editors attempt abridgements for children. Altogether there is something about the logic in

Swift's writing that is appealing to children, and the way in which he describes everything he encounters in an observant, often neutral way is amusing when applied to bodily functions (Menzies 48).

However, it is these descriptions that are most often excised from abridged editions. Passages regarding excremental and sexual imagery are the ones that are most often cut.

## 2.2 A Pattern of Excision

Stallcup's essay "Inescapable Bodies, Disquieting Perception: Why Adults Seek to Tame and Harness Swift's Excremental Satire in *Gulliver's Travels*" examines changes commonly made to the text. After looking into various versions of *Gulliver's Travels* and reading scholarly articles dealing with the revisions, she found which passages were frequently edited or excised and that "similar measures were used to patch the gaps that these excisions leave" (89). Menzies argues that those passages that have been either cut or modified are left out because they are unflattering to humankind (47).

The passages which are cut or modified more often than other passages are the ones having to do with desire, Gulliver's bowel movements or the revolting physical appearance and habits of the Yahoos; notably, "many children's versions of *Gulliver's Travels* are limited to just the first two journeys, the last two being deemed less appropriate, accessible or pleasing to a juvenile public" (Menzies 46-47). Here is a list adapted from Stallcup's summary of common changes in children's editions:

1. Two passages concerning Gulliver's bowel movements in the opening chapters of Lilliput.
2. Gulliver pees on the Lilliputian palace to extinguish the fire.
3. Ministers walk on tightropes and do stunts to please the king of Lilliput, to get into high office.
4. A detailed description of a huge Brobdingnagian breast which Gulliver finds revolting.
5. Street beggars in Brobdingnag.
6. Brobdingnagian maids using Gulliver as a sexual play toy.
7. The king of Brobdingnag's critique of the human race, likening it to a race of

vermin.

8. The excremental experiment in the Academy of Lagado.
9. Excremental passages regarding the Yahoos of Houyhnhnm country.

(Stallcup 90)

These passages are often toned down or excised completely in children's versions of the work. Nonetheless, the claim that *Gulliver's Travels* is censored to make it more enjoyable for kids collides with the fact that kids enjoy those same parts that are frequently cut out. To enumerate, Stallcup says, referring to the second item on the list, "[i]f, in fact, editors are concerned with retaining those elements of the text that are 'most likely to appeal to children' as some argue, then one would expect this scene to remain" (Stallcup 95). That is, the filthiest details in Swift's text are actually things that make the story appealing to young readers (Lund 49). Thus, eliminating the detail that Gulliver puts out the palace fire by urinating on it eliminates an amusing scene (Stallcup 95).

Conversely, some editors make changes based on personal preferences, like William Dean Howells, who did not include satire in his edition because he himself had a hard time understanding it when he was a child; and May Lamberton Becker, who did not include all parts in her edition, simply because she preferred the first two parts when she was a child but did not like or even finish the third and fourth (Stallcup 97-98). With this in mind, Menzies found that one of the editions she looked into, a graphic novel, has notes on the side to explain what is happening in the story, and gives insight into historical references. One of those notes says: "Cut! We've saved you the trouble of reading this chapter. Short, isn't it!" and the reader is given only the title of the chapter that was excised (Menzies 46-47). In this chapter Gulliver sees Brobdingnagian beggars, sick and without limbs—item number five on the list above. The description of the beggars is vulgar and perhaps not suitable because it does not flatter humankind. Similarly, in the short 1998 edition for children, Gulliver engages in a playful game with Lilliputians, who shoot arrows at Gulliver, which he appears to enjoy (8). This is a frivolous take on a passage in which Lilliputians are indeed hostile towards him (Swift 18). In other editions, Gulliver remarks that getting shot with arrows is painful (1913 11, 1951 54) but this modification reflects what editors consider appropriate for children.

### 3. Gulliver in Icelandic: Consistency in Excision

It is interesting to compare the aforementioned list of passages that are often excised from the text to editions of *Gulliver* in Icelandic. Doing so shows that the same patterns are visible in some of the translations and adaptations of *Gulliver's Travels* available in Icelandic. There are six abridged editions of *Gulliver's Travels* in Icelandic, and one full translation. The first version was published in 1913, 187 years after Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was first published. A full-text Icelandic edition came out in 2011; up until then, Icelandic readers were only familiar with expurgated versions of *Gulliver*. Hence, it was not until 285 years after the novel came out that the full text became available to Icelandic readers. For this reason, many readers are only familiar with certain parts of the book: although *Gulliver* is in four parts, the first two parts have been published and adapted more often than the latter two. In Icelandic, two out of seven editions include all four parts. In fact, other than the full-length translation from 2011, only one other edition includes all parts, yet this edition, *Ferðir Gullivers um ókunn lönd* (1951), is divided into only three rather than four parts; thus, even though all parts are included, the third and fourth parts are compressed into one.

Of the five remaining Icelandic versions, there are four books about Gulliver in Lilliput. The oldest one, *För Gúllivers til Putalands*, is from 1913; it is followed by *Gúlliver í Putalandi*, an edition from 1939. There is also a 28-page edition from 1990, *Ferð Gúllivers til Putalands*, and an even shorter edition for young children learning to read, *Gúlliver í Putalandi*, from 1998. There is one abridgement that only includes Gulliver in Brobdingnag, the land of giants: *Gulliver í Risalandi*, from 1940. It is important to realize that these abridgements lack the third and fourth parts, which are often omitted in English as well. As a matter of fact, *Gulliver's Travels* was published in an abridged form “as early as 1727, with the last two journeys often excised from the text” (Menzies 45). It is not surprising that this is also the case with editions translated into Icelandic. What is also noteworthy is that in the 1939 edition of *Gúlliver í Putalandi*, the other three parts are mentioned in the book's frontmatter. In fact, this volume advertises that the second part, about Gulliver in Brobdingnag, will be published shortly after, and then the latter two parts: “Annar kaflinn: *Gúlliver í Risalandi*, kemur út mjög bráðlega, prýddur úrvalsmyndum, og síðar hinir tveir kaflarnir.” The second part was published in 1940, the aforementioned *Gulliver í Risalandi*, but interestingly enough, the third and fourth parts were never published.

However, the first two books were both reprinted within five years of the first publication, with a slight change in the title; there is a lack of consistency in where, or whether, the acute accents in Gulliver's name is placed, e.g. Gulliver, Gúlliver, Gúllíver, not even written consistently the same way within the same publishing house.

Only the 1998 edition fails recognize Swift's authorship; the 1990 edition identifies itself as a retelling and the 1951 edition implies it is abridged, by claiming that all later editions of *Gulliver* are shorter than the original (8). Yet, those who read *Gulliver's Travels* in Icelandic will not know the whole story, only parts of it, unless they read the unabridged translation of 2011. Before 2011, Icelandic readers were only presented with bits and pieces of Gulliver, without even being aware of the changes that were made. That being said, in the reprint of the 1939 edition, and the 1940 edition and its reprint, the editor or translator is not even acknowledged. The reader could reasonably be unaware that any material was excised from Swift's original.

As shown above, there is general consistency in what is excised from *Gulliver's Travels*, and this extends to the Icelandic editions as well: all Icelandic editions skip the two passages in the opening chapters of the Lilliput section concerning Gulliver's urge to relieve himself. This is actually the only passage from Stallcup's list that is excised from the 1990 *Ferð Gúllivers til Putalands*. In this same edition, even the passage describing how Lilliputians appoint candidates for high office based on their skills in line dancing (10-11) is included, as is Gulliver's observation that this method is indeed no worse than the one used in England, implying that the officers in England are corrupt. The line dancing is also present in the 1939 edition (28) and the 1951 edition (37-39), but is cut from the 1913 edition. Meanwhile, the 1940 edition of Gulliver in Brobdingnag leaves out everything on Stallcup's list aside from the passage about beggars (38).

The 1951 edition contains two of the nine items identified as frequently cut but everything else on the list is cut or changed. Those passages that are kept in the 1951 edition are the aforementioned passage about how Lilliputians obtain high office by performing hazardous line dancing, and the conversation Gulliver has with the Brobdingnagian king, in which the king criticizes Western society (139). In this passage, Gulliver engages in conversations with the king and compares his nation to the Brobdingnagian nation, their customs and society. As noted, this is a passage that is frequently cut; in fact, most passages containing this kind of comparison, between England and whatever country Gulliver is visiting, are cut or modified. Yet, as Menzies

puts it, “these passages play a key part in the dialectic discourse between the real world and the imaginary one, highlighting either differences or similarities between the two, usually to the detriment of our world” (47). She further explains that although some of those dialectic passages are kept, the way in which societies are compared often results in an amusing scene rather than satirical critique (48). An example of this is that the passage about Lilliputians burying their dead upside-down, because they believe that on doomsday, the earth will turn around and so the dead will stand up straight, which is included in the 1939 (47) and 1951 (61) editions. The reader understands that Lilliputians strongly hold beliefs that do not make sense but again, this reads as quirky rather than satirical. Additionally, the passage on breast feeding is included in both editions covering Gulliver’s adventures in Brobdingnag, 1951 (96) and 1940 (17), but there is no mention of how disgusted (Swift 82) Gulliver is by the large and hairy nipple, half the size of his head.

Another scene that is often modified is the passage in which Gulliver extinguishes a fire by urinating on it. This scene is described in all the relevant particulars in the 1990 edition and there is even a large picture to demonstrate what is happening: Gulliver is facing the fire and the reader can see his back and the spurt of urine (22-23). The 1951 edition cuts this scene completely, but in all other editions, the scene is modified. In the 1913 edition, Gulliver puts the fire out with soapy bathwater (50-51); in the 1939 edition he uses a cask filled with sewage from the whole town (45-46). In both cases it is strongly forbidden to throw anything impure on the palace and this crime carries a penalty of death, as it does in Swift’s original (61-63). The crime committed is thus similar to the actual crime and Gulliver’s acts result in the disapproval of the Lilliputians.

Overall, this shows that the small sample of Icelandic adaptations of Gulliver basically follows the same patterns as the larger historical sample discussed above. This applies to Gulliver’s descriptions of the Projectors in the Academy of Lagado and their insane ideas. When Gulliver visits the Academy of Lagado, one of the Academy’s chambers smells so horrible that, had it had not been rude, Gulliver would have refused to go in. Once he is inside, Gulliver is embraced by a Projector whose “Face and Beard were of a pale Yellow; his Hands and Clothes dawbed over with Filth.” This Projector is working on “an Operation to reduce human Excrement to its original Food” by doing things like “making the Odour exhale, and scumming of the Saliva”; to work on the project he receives a weekly government allowance: a vessel filled with human feces

(Swift 167-68). This encounter is on Stallcup's list of common changes, and is cut from the 1951 *Ferðir Gullivers um ókunn lönd*, the only abridged edition that includes Lagado. The Projectors that are described in the 1951 edition try to detach sunbeams from cucumbers and store the warmth of the sun for later; build houses starting from the roof; teach blind men to recognize color by touch and smell; and dye cobweb by feeding colored flies to spiders (182-183). Not all Projectors and experiments are included, but passages that include excrement are not the only ones that are omitted. A passage about a Projector who, in the midst of an experiment, accidentally blows up a dog (Swift 169) is also left out. All in all, the reader gets the idea that the projectors are engaging in time-consuming, expensive and stupid ideas; thus, what is left out does not alter the plot, although it could be argued that these changes affect the readers' perception of Gulliver as a character. Gulliver is critical of all the Projectors and his interactions give an account of his person. At this point, Gulliver is not merely observing, but rather criticizing the inhabitants of the country. The 1951 edition thus appears to reflect the notion that young readers are capable of comprehending Swift's satire; the reader may understand that Swift is poking fun at the way in which society operates.

Another example of social critique is a passage in the Lilliput section concerning child upbringing: the Lilliputians believe that "Parents are the last of all others to be trusted with the Education of their own Children" and at "the Age of twenty Moons" they are sent to nurseries (Swift 54). This is included in both the 1951 (61) and 1990 edition (23); the 1939 edition says that Lilliputians are exemplary when it comes to upbringing, although nurseries are not mentioned (49).

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 The Fourth Part

Although Victorians were eager to adapt just about everything (Hutcheon XI), picture books of *Gulliver's Travels* that include all four parts are hard to find. Part four of *Gulliver's Travels*, which criticizes human nature rather than merely politics or society, has had to endure the most excision of all parts, as it is seldom included in adaptations and abridgements of *Gulliver's Travels* (Stallcup 90). Swift satirizes Western society by pointing out similarities between humans in Europe and Yahoos, the humans of the Houyhnhnm country. Furthermore, this part of the novel satirizes human ideals and colonialism by elaborating on the relationship among Gulliver, the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver is so blinded by ethnocentrism that the resemblance between himself and the Yahoos does not occur to him; instead, Gulliver remarks that during his travels he never saw such an ugly animal and that he could not resist hatred towards it. In other words, Gulliver is full of contempt and aversion towards Yahoos and even refers to them as “ugly Monster[s]” (209). This is ironic, since Gulliver later realizes that in the Yahoo there is a “perfect human Figure” (214). There are multiple references to men in descriptions of Yahoos; an example of this is a passage about greed: if five Yahoos are given enough food for fifty Yahoos they will still fight, because they want all the food for themselves (242). Moreover, the Yahoos have passionate, prideful natures and seem to reflect, in an exaggerated manner, the negative aspects of humankind: although Yahoos seldom succeed in killing each other, because they lack the tools to do so, internally battles have been fought among the Yahoos, and the Houyhnhnms note that this seems to happen without any visible cause (242). Gulliver later reveals, when explaining why men fight, that these wars are not causeless but rather, “sometimes our [n]eighbours, *want* the *Things* which we *have*, or *have* the *Things* which we *want*; and we both fight, till they take ours or give us theirs” (229). According to Menzies, this is an example of a passage serving educational purposes, that is, it shows others doing the same mistakes we do ourselves, or “our failings embodied in others” (Menzies 48). It may sound absurd that Yahoos fight because they want something that is not theirs, but when this is applied to humans, it becomes apparent that this is something men frequently do. This example enables us to understand and become critical of the things we do. Menzies refers to Swift's definition of satire, which is that it is as “a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover

every body's Face but their Own" (Swift 375, quoted in Menzies 46). *Gulliver's Travels* elucidates the wrongdoings we usually disown.

Another example of this, provided by Menzies, is the passage in which "Lilliputians perform acrobatics in order to win high office" and the fact that Big-Endians and Little-Endians fight over which end of an egg to crack (48). Those passages show faults in the Lilliputians and the way in which they reason. This disturbs adults "who do not wish children to be exposed to such anarchic and fragmented views of authority" (Stallcup, 88). Furthermore, in the Houyhnhnm country there are certain shiny stones that have caused conflict between the Yahoos, and "in the Fields where the *shining Stones* abound, the fiercest and most frequent battles are fought" (Swift 243). Such stones are comparable to the use of money and the value of metal among men. Yahoos are a reminder of the depths to which humans can and do sink, which perhaps is too much for a young reader to comprehend, but the question is whether this judgement should be made pre-emptively. This passage shows humanity at its worst but Stallcup wonders why "Swift's satirical attacks on human nature in general and authority figures in particular [are] toned down or deleted" (Stallcup 88). Perhaps those passages that expose children to the unfortunate aspects of human nature would enable children to understand the absurdity of greed. Too, those passages that some adults believe are too vulgar remind us that Gulliver too is a physical being, which is crucial to Swift's satire on human pride.

The fourth part of *Gulliver's Travels* illuminates dark facets of humanity: gluttony, violence and imprudence. While Yahoos of Houyhnhnm country and English Yahoos are portrayed as ruthless beasts, the Houyhnhnms, in contrast, embody wisdom and are blessed with pure reason. They are superior to men, both in intelligence and integrity; they do not lie and are not even familiar with the concept of falsehood. With this in mind, Gulliver knows that the Houyhnhnm is being earnest when he, after listening to Gulliver's descriptions of Western society, concludes that modern reasoning is the root of all problems—the way in which humans use their intelligence for malicious purposes. The Houyhnhnm acknowledges humankind as an animal that is bestowed with a small portion of reason, which makes them dangerous because it provokes their "*natural Corruptions*" (Swift 241). Yahoos of Houyhnhnm country were however not allotted reason, but in almost every other way, Yahoos of those two countries are the same. This knowledge disturbs Gulliver greatly and ultimately he would rather be in the company of a Yahoo than a man. More than anything, Gulliver

longs for the company of the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver realizes how much greater men could be, and strives to become more like a Houyhnhnm but when he fails, he is absorbed in the faults of men.

Gulliver's attitude is wildly exaggerated as he completely withdraws from society. Gulliver is ashamed of his kin and how men misuse their intellect (260). As some scholars have argued, when Gulliver sees his own image, he sees fallen humanity (357n). The Yahoos presents a vision of how an ordinary human being can degenerate into hatred for his or her own species. When Gulliver is back home, he faints at the touch of his wife, who he refers to as an "odious Animal" (271). It stands to reason that their domestic life became quite peculiar; Gulliver cannot drink from the same glass as his family members nor dare they touch his food (271). This shift in Gulliver happens gradually throughout the text but in abridged editions it might seem odd, or "wildly out of whack without understanding of his behavior as modified by cuts and excisions" (Stallcup 101). However, the previous parts prepare the reader for the fourth and final part, where Gulliver descends into misanthropy. At first it is physical, starting as early as in Brobdingnag where he sees men's faults enlarged as if looking through a magnifying glass: their huge pores, hairy skin and other parts of the body. Then there is the Academy of Lagado, where Gulliver encounters men who engage in ludicrous ideas—a mental defect. At last, the sum of all his voyages is his misanthropy, and rather than trying to better himself further, he concludes that men will never be as regal as the Houyhnhnms.

Yet, the reader can find a moral in the story, by focusing on improving those attributes that led Gulliver to hatred. The fourth part sheds light on many of the foolish decisions men make, driven with greed. Do not lie, steal or fight; rather, do reduce behavior that inclines to misuse of reason. Stallcup found that "Swift is indicating that, unlike Gulliver, one should reach out to the world, even with all of its faults, rather than retreat from it" (97). She admits this message may not get across unless the reader is "able to understand subtle satire on the first-person narrator" (97). If children are not spared from disturbing elements but rather, those elements are embraced, the story may not only appeal to children but also help able to clarify a moral.

Furthermore, Stallcup and Kosok find that some alterations may be necessary to make the text "accessible for a very young audience" (Stallcup 101-2) but that this "places a responsibility on the editors that many of them apparently cannot shoulder" (Kosok 138, quoted in Stallcup 102). However, the editor cannot predict how the reader

will react, nor can he control it (Stallcup 103). Thus, it may be interesting to introduce children to the work without adulterating it.

## 4.2 Satire for a Certain Age

Given the aforementioned points, it makes sense that *Gulliver's Travels* “can be read as threatening on many levels, including but not limited to, challenging authority and disrupting conventional concepts” (Stallcup 91). For those same reasons, passages about the functioning of society are often cut or modified. There is an example of this in chapter ten, part three in Swift's original, when Gulliver meets with Luggnuggians, the inhabitants of the country Luggnagg. They tell Gulliver about Struldbrugs, immortals that are born once every blue moon. Gulliver is very excited to hear about these immortals, and gives a detailed account of what he would do if he had been born a Struldbrug (Swift 193-196). He is later corrected, told that being immortal is not equivalent to always being in the “Prime of Youth.” In fact, “At Ninety [...] they lose their Teeth and Hair; they have at that Age no distinction of Taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without Relish or Appetite,” they become forgetful but live in misery for hundreds of years—or forever. “They are despised and hated by all Sorts of People” because they are both disgusting to look at and a burden on society. At funerals, they are extremely jealous of those who died, because they yearn for death; to rest peacefully (197-99). These pages demonstrate how eager Struldbrugs are to die but also how poorly the Struldbrugs are treated in the community. As Gulliver learns that being immortal doesn't mean that one is forever young and prosperous, he becomes ashamed of his foolishness and unrealistic fantasies about the eternal life. He concludes that there is actually no death worse than the fate of the Struldbrugs. Furthermore, he wishes he could take a couple of Struldbrugs with him to England to get it across to people that fearing death is irrational (199). This is a quite interesting standpoint and as a result of his encounter with the Struldbrugs, Gulliver no longer fears death. Although Gulliver is critical of others in the third part, he is also confronted with his own frivolous behavior and grows as a character—yet Struldbrugs are not included in the 1951 edition.

### 4.2.1 Satire and Excrement Excised

In most children's versions of *Gulliver's Travels*, the text has been modified, but what disturbs Stallcup are the underlying reasons for many excisions. Stallcup explains that

“[h]istorically, theories of satire suggest several broader reasons why adults feel uncomfortable in linking children and satire” (100), and that adults excise from the text those passages that reveal our “faults and foibles [...] in embarrassing clarity” (101).

Stallcup, Menzies, Smedman and Kosok have provided detailed analyses of the changes made to Swift’s work and the effects those changes have on the text. Smedman examined fifty-five versions of *Gulliver’s Travels* published between 1727 and 1985 and acknowledges “that these changes reflect ‘an adult’s conception of childhood and of what is or is not suitable material for children, both in content and in difficulty of language’ (Smedman 83-93, quoted in Stallcup 89). Given this information, the text reflects what adults find appropriate for young readers; it may be a bit odd to leave in a part about murder and torture but cut out parts about feces and lust. In Brobdingnag, Gulliver slays a rat in the 1940 and 1951 editions, but in these same editions, descriptions of Brobdingnagian maids, their bodies and lust for Gulliver (Swift 108), are cut. Another example of this is a passage that describes how the Lilliputians plan to get rid of Gulliver: they do not want to kill him because they are afraid of a pest or a sickness that would adhere his decaying body and eventually spread to the town. His body is huge; when dead, he would become a mountain of rotten flesh (Swift 64). This passage is kept in three of the five Icelandic editions covering Lilliput (1939 56, 1951 28, 1990 23). Moreover, in the 1939 edition there is a detailed description of how the Lilliputians plan to kill Gulliver and get rid of his body: starve him to death and then carve the meat from his bones and bury it deep in the ground, far away, to prevent infestation. Then his bones could become ornament. At last, they decide to starve and blind Gulliver, out of mercy (54-56). This scheme of blinding Gulliver is also included in the 1913 edition (56) and 1951 edition (71-73). Yet, in those same editions there is nothing about Gulliver’s need to go the bathroom; which would be a problem for him, granted that there is no toilet for a man of his size. To underline this further, in the 1939 edition, there is a mention of some of the problems Gulliver is faced with due to his size, such as that there is no house in Blefusco large enough for him and no bed linen for a man of his size (58). Yet his trouble of relieving himself is not listed. Furthermore, Stallcup points out that cutting out these sections does leave out “one of the most important things anyone would want to know.” Thus, “[w]hen we limit children to expurgated editions of *Gulliver’s Travels*—watered down and sanitized—we eliminate many of the elements that actually may appeal to children” (Stallcup 91). Although “[i]t makes sense that satirical jokes about bodily functions will be of great interest and

amusement to [children]” (100), Stallcup notes that of course one can argue that

children will not understand topical satire that turns on allusions to a specific historical moment, but there are many, many adults who will not understand this level of satire in *Gulliver’s Travels*, either—and who may enjoy the unabridged text anyway. (98)

It seems as though editors assume that children lack the capacity to understand satire. Moreover, in her essay Stallcup explores, as its title states, “Why Adults Seek to Tame and Harness Swift’s Excremental Satire.” She finds that the same elements that disturb adults “may also contribute to the text’s appeal to children” (88); that is, not only do the adventurous elements appeal to children, but also the disturbing elements. Stallcup proposes that leaving in passages that include excrement and other bodily functions challenges the idea of getting children to “repress their animal/bodily natures *and* to revere adults as pure, wise, kind, and in control” (100). In fact, Stallcup concludes that it is possible that Swift’s satire is exactly as dangerous as some adults fear it may be, but for the child reader, Swift’s timely satire is both liberating and eye-opening (105).

Thus, adults may fear that the way in which Gulliver behaves could normalize the same behavior that adults try to repress, both in children and adults and this “challenges our cultural practices of civilizing children” as “Swift renders visible those elements that we wish to make invisible” (Stallcup 94). In other words, this is adult prudery. Stallcup believes that “the things that we excise from children’s versions of *Gulliver’s Travels* says more about us as adults and our assumptions about children than it does about children themselves” (91). She points out that “[a]s many children’s literature theorists recently have argued, adults are heavily invested in creating and maintaining a division between adults and children in order to ensure that adult power structures remain unchallenged” (89). Menzies stresses a similar point: that adults change the text not only in order to cut out satire that children likely would not understand, but also to make themselves look good, because ultimately it is adult weaknesses and shortcomings in character that are revealed (Menzies 46).

By and large, arguments that children cannot grasp satire are flawed; there are reasons why adults censor Swift’s text, beyond believing that children simply lack the ability to understand satire (Stallcup 99). Stallcup proposes that “a reader

might justly be suspicious that editors are underestimating children's abilities when making and defending the excision" (103). Examples from educators' classroom experiences have shown that one doesn't have to be highly educated to get satire; it has been demonstrated that some students are capable of understanding satire and even "apply it to their own worlds" (98-99). Kosok notes that rather than making Swift's satire accessible, the common changes in children's editions tend to reverse Swift's ideas (Stallcup 90). Kosok emphasizes that due to those changes "the satiric messages regarding human nature and culture are lost," in Stallcup's words (99). He calls this transformation a "lethal amputation" of the book (Kosok 144, quoted in Stallcup 99).

However, it is by no means Stallcup's intention to rail against adaptations or editors that attempt them; relatively, she stresses the importance of notifying the reader which changes have been made. In other words, the editor informs the reader which parts are left out and why, then cites the original; this way the reader does not think he knows the story when he has only been introduced to parts of it. Also, notes may be helpful to elucidate obscure passages. As Stallcup so brilliantly puts it: "[a]dapt, not to dumb down because we assume children will not get it, but so that children can enjoy the story at different ages and reading levels" (Stallcup 102).

#### **4.2.2 Can a Picture Book Truly Grasp Gulliver?**

To sum up, Swift wrote quite a lot about excrement in his novel, in many forms. Gulliver, for example, vividly describes the Lilliputians as they use wheelbarrows to get rid of Gulliver's pile of excrement (Swift 24); he talks about a scientist who tries to change excrement into food (167); a professor working on a list "of Instructions for discovering Plots and Conspiracies against the Government," who believes that the color of one's ordure can predict one's actions (178); and Yahoos discharging excrement on Gulliver's head (210). Stallcup wrote in 2004 that "[g]iven the bathroom humor that is prevalent in recent movies for children and adults, it is perhaps not surprising that one recent picture book edition of *Gulliver's Travels* has reinserted some of Swift's excremental and bawdy humor" (Stallcup 106), referring to a 1992 retelling by James Riordan. Since then other editions and adaptations have emerged which include those elements, e.g. a retelling by Martin Jenkins from 2005, the *Gulliver's*

*Travels* movie from 2010 starring Jack Black, and an adapted and updated edition by Martin Rowson from 2012.

Stallcup observes that in Riordan's edition the text has not been sanitized. Furthermore, in this edition:

There is also more satire on the English in general and royalty in particular, more implied sex, more violence, and a greater openness about poverty in this edition than is usual in picturebook versions. The Brobdingnagian maids, for example, strip Gulliver naked and have no compunction about "changing their clothes or bathing" in front of Gulliver, who is correspondingly disgusted, and Riordan creates a horrifying description of the Brobdingnagian beggars that echoes Swift's. Some of Victor Ambrus's illustrations are equally frank. Blood drips from one of the rats that Gulliver slays in Brobdingnag [...], and the beggars are portrayed with pockmarks and missing limbs. Still, Riordan's version appears to be an exception to the general rule that such elements are glossed over or eliminated, particularly in picturebook editions. (Stallcup 107)

Another example is a version where less is excised than usual: Jenkins's 2005 retelling, illustrated by Chris Riddell. John Mullan (2005) praised this new adaptation, saying that "[T]his Gulliver for younger readers really does end up like the original: despairingly misanthropic, filled with 'horror and disgust' at the viciousness of his species." In Swift's original, Gulliver is self-centered, but Victorians tried to obliterate this aspect of his character, making his actions heroic rather than egoistic. In Jenkins and Riddell's telling, Gulliver shows his true self: he is just as laughable as the inhabitants of the countries he visits, and this edition includes most of Swift's satire. Mullan concludes by saying that this edition is perhaps not suitable for "little folks," but that it is for young readers.

By the same token, the cartoonist and writer Martin Rowson adapted and updated Gulliver in his 2012 graphic novel, *Gulliver's Travels*. His edition not only includes an excremental scene but also exaggerates it (31-33), and adds other distasteful scenes, such as Gulliver throwing up (36-38). This edition includes all parts but is not for small children, but rather preferably for youngsters or adults. This

adaptation is in fact a *Gulliver's Travels* sequel; the narrator, Gulliver, appears to be Lemuel Gulliver's ancestor—there is already a statue of a giant in Lilliput when he arrives (13).

Given these points, it is apparent that abridgments and adaptations of Gulliver vary greatly. Although the difference is extreme between Rowson's edition and the editions that follow the excisions Stallcup listed, there is undeniably a trend in excision and those editions that do cover filth are still an exception.

## 5. Conclusion

*Gulliver's Travels* has undergone various types of evolution through adaptation and it is continually received differently. However, there is evidently a pattern of excision in abridged and adapted editions of *Gulliver's Travels*. The passages that are most commonly cut are those related to excrement and bodily functions. Those passages are not removed from the text because they are unsuitable for children but rather "because," in Menzies's words, "they are unflattering to humankind." They "stress," she continues, "our basest functions and most unappealing physical features, as well as our moral and spiritual failings" (Menzies 46). It thus appears adults censor the text for their own benefit rather than in the interest of children. By cutting passages that reveal human nature we underline the fact that we are afraid to show our faults. This excision reflects the notion that adults do not want children to understand that adults are not impeccable and could be challenged.

Adults may be superior but those who govern are not always ideally those who should hold power. The story has the reader questioning things that are customary, and much of the critique Gulliver provides is both accurate and relevant.

In fact, reading through the whole book is a maturing process; as Stallcup puts it, "the process of following Gulliver through the text is the process not just of growing up, but also of leaving behind childhood and entering a disillusioning and harsh adult world" (99). Unfortunately, this effect relies heavily upon gradual proceeding of the narrative and the effect tends to get lost as parts are eliminated. The excision also effects Gulliver's character development; he is a different person in the first and the last book. Again, this change happens gradually throughout the text but is shocking to those who read a very abridged edition. As a result, adaptations and abridgements of *Gulliver's Travels* that excise excessively tend to undersell the importance of satire.

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