CRITICISM OF SWIFT'S "VOYAGE TO THE
HOYHNNMNS," 1958-1965

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE CRITICAL LEGACY

Bitterness and humor, dogmatism and tolerance, unprofessional negligence and scholarly care characterize recent criticism of Swift's "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." Many scholars have based their conclusions on the findings of earlier commentators rather than on Swift's work itself. Others have imposed a system of their own upon the fourth voyage, sometimes without regard for incontrovertible evidence against their views. Consequently, these scholars often reveal more about themselves than about Swift and his work. Although only a few really new ideas have been presented since 1958 which help to explain the Dean's motivation and intentions, a number of new interpretations of the fourth voyage of Gulliver's Travels clarify some of Swift's purposes. Generally, recent critics can be divided into three groups: those who believe that the Houyhnhnms are Swift's moral ideal for mankind; those who contend that the Houyhnhnms are not Swift's moral ideal; and those who suggest that Swift's moral ideal for man lay somewhere between the Houyhnhnm and the Yahoo.

The source of much of the controversy surrounding the nature of Swift's ideal for mankind is related to each critic's idea of what kind of man Swift was—a madman, a misanthrope, a concerned Englishman disturbed by his country's follies and vices, a critic of intellectualism or deism. As early as 1752
Lord Orrery, one of Swift's early biographers, complained of Swift's misanthropy and of the scathing indictment of mankind which he says appears in the fourth voyage. Later critics followed his lead, the rising tide of anti-Swiftism culminating in the ravings of Thackeray in his "English Humorists" series. Not until the early twentieth century, almost two hundred years after publication of the work, did anyone dare to contradict the by then traditional view of Swift's hatred of mankind. Though a few commentators still cling to the old image of Swift and suggest that his writing reflects his misanthropy, most modern writers recognize that Swift's opinion of mankind was not entirely pessimistic, that he really did perceive and value the good in man. Many of these later critics, however, have made the mistake of their nineteenth-century predecessors. They support their arguments, not with Swift's work, but with the remarks of other critics. The noteworthy exceptions made a study of recent criticism of the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" worthwhile, for they stimulate new ideas and competently re-evaluate old, established one.

Before considering recent trends in Swift criticism, it seems necessary that one understand the critical favor and disfavor which the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" has stimulated since its publication. Often, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critical opinion either illuminates recent criticism, or reveals that a writer has neglected earlier commentary.

The correspondence of Swift and his circle gives at least some indication of the contemporary popular reaction to Gulliver's
Travels. The book was published on October 25, 1726, and almost immediately Swift, who was in Ireland at the time, began to hear reports of his work from the members of the Scriblerus Club. On November 5 Arbuthnot wrote, observing that he believed Gulliver's Travels would eventually be as popular as John Bunyan's work.\(^1\) "Gulliver is in every body's Hands," he says and tells a story from Lord Scarborough, a prominent political figure of the time, about a sea captain who claimed to know Gulliver but suggested that the printer must have gotten his place of residence confused. Swift's friend reported that another man read the book and immediately went to a map to look for Lilliput.\(^2\) Dr. Arbuthnot's judgment, that "Gulliver is a happy man that at his age can write such a merry work,"\(^3\) has been ignored or overlooked by numbers of critics since his time. Arbuthnot was not merely trying to appease Swift with a favorable report on the book's success. On November 16 he wrote to Oxford: "There has been a vast demand for Gulliver the first impression was sold off in a moment every body has been mightily delighted with him." Evidently pleased, he adds, "The Book has made very good diversion to all the town." Arbuthnot noted that he was present when the Queen laughed at reading parts of it and that clergymen were also impressed with it. They deemed the book "pleasant" and

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 180.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 179.
"humorous," but they also suggested that "it was pity he descended so low, as some Little satyr, that is too particular." 4

Pope also returned promising reports to Swift. In a letter of November 16 he congratulates him on Gulliver, notes that everyone is reading it, and predicts that in the future all men will admire it; he has been diverted during the preceding fortnight by watching the reactions of its readers. "I find no considerable man very angry at the book: some indeed think it rather too bold, but too general a Satire: but none that I hear of accuse it of particular reflections," except the "mob of Critics" who are of no consequence and who have poor judgment anyway. 5

John Gay, perhaps better informed than Pope and Arbuthnot, wrote to Swift on November 17 about the great financial success of the work and indicated what individuals and groups thought of Gulliver's Travels. The Travels, says Gay, have been the topic of conversation since they were published. He notes that the first impression was sold within a week and that "nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extreamly." He points out that it is read by everyone, high and low, from the "Cabinet-council to the Nursery" and that politicians agree that it does not make particular reflections but that "the Satire on general


5 Ibid., p. 412.
societies of men is too severe." A friend of Bolingbroke, Gay says that Bolingbroke approves it least, "blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes most offence, being himself the most accomplish'd of his species, and so losing more than any other of that praise which is due both to the dignity and virtue of a man." Gay also reports that Lord Harcourt likes it but that "he thinks in some places the matter too far carried." Turning to those who "frequent the Church," Gay finds that they believed Swift's design was "an insult on Providence, by depreciating the works of the Creator." Quite early, then, men were concerned about the work's "moral" character. Gay also wrote on November 22 to Brigadier James Dormer, telling him that Gulliver's Travels had been the main topic of conversation in the town and that opinions about the book varied widely because some thought it had "a great deal of wit, but others say it hath none at all."

Swift himself was concerned about the publisher's alterations of the manuscript and says so in a letter to Pope on November 27. He also repeats to Pope what he has heard about his book: Arbuthnot likes least the projectors; others, the flying island; "some think it wrong to be so hard upon whole Bodies or Corporations, yet the general opinion is, that reflections on particular persons are most to be blam'd: so

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6 Ibid., p. 413.  
7 Ibid., p. 414.  
8 Ibid., p. 416.
that in these cases, I think the best method is to let censure and opinion take their course." By February 14, 1727, he could note that the book is "very much censured in this kingdom of Ireland which abounds in excellent judges; but in England I hear it hath made a bookseller almost rich enough to be an alderman." It is evident that from the moment Gulliver's Travels was printed it was a widely-read, discussion-provoking book. Opinions as varied as Arbuthnot's "a merry work" and Bolingbroke's "design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature" foreshadow the critical judgments of the years to follow. The "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," which many believe the "key" to the entire work, has stimulated more discussion and controversy than any of the other books. In 1752 Lord Orrery initiated the school of criticism which objects to Swift's opinion—or what is conceived of as Swift's opinion—of mankind. In Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Orrery suggests that Swift takes notice of the less-than-human Yahoos only so that he can "assert the vindication of human nature" and pay his "duty to the great author of our species." He proposes that Swift's intolerable misanthropy affected Swift's view of human nature, which "must terrify, and even debase the mind of the reader who views it." The reader, Orrery contends, is

9Ibid., p. 417.  
10Williams, p. 198.  
shocked and disgusted, not entertained and instructed, by the
fourth voyage.  

For several pages Orrery expounds his own
view of the dignity of human nature, concluding that in the
fourth voyage Swift viewed the body as master of the soul, that
the Houyhnhnms act rationally only because they have "neither
the motive nor the power to act otherwise," and that Swift's
attempt to make them more reasonable than man fails because
he gives them no reason for being irrational.  

In 1754, a friend of Swift's, the Reverend Patrick Delany,
wrote Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks, generally defending Swift against Orrery's charges of misanthropy. However, he disliked the fourth voyage even more than did Orrery and did not hesitate to censure his friend's work. He disliked the Houyhnhnms because he believed they lacked true physical, mental, and moral character. The picture of the Yahoos he thought "too offensive to be copied" because it debased "the human form to the lowest degree of defiled imagination." He concluded that the work itself is of no value because the "exaggerated satire" is erroneous and disagreeable. 

Without mentioning Houyhnhnm or Yahoo, Edward Young, in his Conjectures on Original Composition (1759), made clear his
opinion of Swift's work. In urging authors to compose "with the spirit and in the taste of the ancients, but not with their materials," Young points out that distinction can be found only when the author leaves the ordinary, well-traveled literary paths: "the more remote your path from the highway the more reputable; if, like poor Gulliver . . . , you fall not into a ditch in your way to glory."  

Young believed that Swift's genius needed to be supplemented by learning so that it might "shine." He says that Swift's imperfect learning smothered his common sense and misled him "with pedantic prejudice," which vitiated his understanding, and that Swift's great admiration of the ancients caused him to "set up their authority or example against reason."  

Clearly, Young assumed that Swift believed his Houyhnhnms to be superior in every respect to mankind.

Dr. Johnson's adverse criticism of the Travels is compatible with his contemporaries as noted again and again. He says, speaking of the period immediately following publication of the work, that Gulliver's Travels was "so new and strange that it filled the reader with a mingled emotion of merriment and amazement." He points out that critics were lost at first and "no rules of


18 Ibid., p. 1149.
judgement were applied to a book written in open defiance of truth and regularity." 19

Despite what Orrery, Young, and others had to say, not all of the criticism concerning the fourth voyage was unfavorable. The notable exception is Thomas Sheridan's Life of Swift, published in 1787. Sheridan, whose father was a close friend of Swift's, admired Swift and believed that Swift's "parallel is not to be found either in the history of ancient or modern times" because Swift "was perhaps the most disinterested man that ever lived. No selfish motive ever influenced any part of his conduct. He loved virtue for its own sake, and was content it should be its own reward." He was "perfectly free from vice, with few frailities, and . . . exalted virtues." 20 If anything, Sheridan falls overboard from the other side of the ship of criticism. The purpose of Sheridan's Life was to answer charges of misanthropy leveled at Swift by critics and readers. He says that the charges are based on the mistaken idea that the Yahoos represent mankind: "This opinion has been so universally adopted by almost all who have read Gulliver's Travels, that to controvert it would be supposed to act in opposition to the common sense of reason of mankind." 21 Nevertheless, he disputes the popular opinion.


21 Ibid., p. 432.
Unlike his predecessors, Sheridan refers constantly to the text of *Gulliver's Travels* as he asserts his critical opinions and advances his own interpretation. In his analysis he seeks to prove that the contrast between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo was designed to show, not the bestial elements of human nature, but the "true dignity and perfection of man's nature." He suggests that the fourth book is an integral part of the *Travels*: in the first three books Swift gives various portraits of the vices of human nature, together with the virtues; in the last book are two new portraits: "one, of pure unmixed vice; the other, of perfect unadulterated virtue." Sheridan adds that Swift presents these portraits in order that the native deformity of the one, might excite in us a deeper abhorrence of evil; and the resplendent charms of the other, allure us to what is good." Sheridan says that Swift's Yahoo, the picture of pure vice, "is a creature of fancy, the product of the author's brain, which never had any thing similar to it upon earth."22 Contrary to assertions of previous critics, Sheridan contends that the Yahoos don't resemble men in the least because they don't possess the "universal properties" of mankind: reason, speech, and walking upright.23 He suggests that only because the Yahoo form vaguely resembles that of man do readers assume that the Yahoo is man.24 Swift, says Sheridan, had a

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perfectly good reason for setting up the Houyhnhnm-Yahoo contrast: in order to show the bestial elements of man's nature, Swift placed these elements in a brute governed only by instinct with no control from a superior faculty; the form of the brute was human so that man would realize that his own and not another creature's being was under scrutiny.25 Sheridan suggests that through the Yahoos Swift showed man how brutal he would be without reason. In the Houyhnhnms, conversely, Swift presented the picture of an animal with a rational soul which man could imitate.26 Sheridan concludes that authors, proud of their human forms and envious of the Dean's great talents, were Swift's chief opponents and the ones who charged him with misanthropy.27

Sheridan's attempt to understand and not simply to criticize is perhaps the most important work of pro-Swift criticism to be written in the eighteenth century. However, other writers also struck positive notes. For instance, in 1797 William Godwin noted that "it has been doubted whether, under the name of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, Swift has done any thing more than exhibit two different descriptions of men, in their highest improvement and lowest degradation; and it has been affirmed that no book breathes more strongly a generous indignation against

26 Ibid., p. 437.
27 Ibid., p. 445.
vice, and an ardent love of every thing that is excellent and honourable to the human heart."  

Despite efforts by Sheridan, Godwin, and a few others, Swift as the author of the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnmns" continued throughout the nineteenth century to be viewed as a misanthrope or a madman whose story was not fit to be read by anyone. Sir Walter Scott, together with many nineteenth-century critics, generally admired, or at least respected, much of Swift's work. He believed Gulliver's Travels to be a masterpiece and says that Swift enlivened "the morality of his work with humor," relieved "its absurdity with satire," and excelled in gravity and verisimilitude of narrative. However, when considering the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnmns," critics turned on Swift. Scott says that Gulliver's Travels offers "maxims of deep and bitter misanthropy to neglected age, and disappointed ambition." The "diatribe against human nature" in the fourth voyage, says Scott, results from Swift's feeling of indignation toward mankind, which abused the independence and freedom which he so prized; his decaying health and the death and decay of beloved friends; and his being banished to a country which he disliked, away from his friends and hopes.

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30 Ibid., p. 306.

31 Ibid., p. 314.
Swift's personality and viewpoint is limited by his assumption that Swift detested mankind. Scott also complains about Swift's Yahoos and Houyhnhnms. He admits that the Yahoos serve a moral purpose: they show us to what depths man can descend when he allows animal instincts to govern him. He adds that they were not "designed as a representation of mankind in the state to which religion, and even the lights of nature, encourage men to aspire." Swift, says Scott, evidently believed that the more disgusting the portrait of degradation, the more impressive would the moral be. Scott believed, however, that the moral purpose does not justify the nakedness with which Swift portrayed mankind degraded to a bestial state. Crimes of impurity should be concealed, he says, not displayed for all to see.32 The nature of the Houyhnhnms also mars Swift's masterpiece, so far as Scott is concerned. The voyage lacks verisimilitude, he says, because the Houyhnhnms are not credibly suited to their environment, or even their society.33 They cannot build their own houses, grow their corn, milk their cows; in other words, they cannot function in their society because their "external structure altogether unfits them."34

Such evaluation of Swift was not lost on the readers and critics of the nineteenth century, to whom Scott was popular. Original thinking was not then unheard of, but most critics

32Ibid., p. 315  
33Ibid., pp. 315-316.  
34Ibid., p. 316.
followed the lead of Scott and many of the eighteenth-century writers. One of these, despite his customary independence, was Coleridge, who believed that Swift contemplated only the follies and vices of mankind and that his work reflects his preoccupation. Coleridge believed that Swift's misanthropic tone was also colored by "his obtrusion of physical dirt and coarseness." Although Coleridge says that *Gulliver's Travels* is Swift's greatest work, he contends that in the Houyhnhnms Swift presents man governed by understanding only, not at all by moral feeling or by reason; "in his horse he gives the misanthropic ideal of man . . . , a being virtuous from rule and duty, but untouched by the principle of love."35

Hazlitt, however, speaking faintly against the full tide of critical opinion, did not believe that Swift was misanthropic. He says that in viewing human nature Swift "has tried an experiment upon human life, and sifted its pretensions from the alloy of circumstances; he has measured it with a rule, has weighed it in a balance, and found it, for the most part, wanting and worthless--in substance and in shew. Nothing solid, nothing valid, nothing valuable is left in his system but virtue and wisdom." However, he says, there is no harm, immorality, misanthropy, or degradation in *Gulliver's Travels*: Swift has merely attempted to make men see themselves, and those who can

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see only vice object most heartily to his suggestion. Striking a neglected note, Hazlitt suggests that Swift invented the characters in *Gulliver's Travels* in order to distract his attention from the evils of *real* men and women. His characters could make him laugh, but people could only make him mad.

In 1851 Thackeray delivered a lecture on Swift in his "English Humorists" series—perhaps the most savage attack ever made on the Dean's reputation. Thackeray begrudgingly commends the humor and style of *Gulliver's Travels*; but he goes on. "As for the moral, I think it horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous; and giant and great as this Dean is, I say we should hoot him." He advises those readers who have not read the fourth voyage not to. Swift, he says, is "a monster gibbering shrieks, and gnashing imprecations against mankind—tearing down all shreds of modesty, past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in words, filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene." Like Scott, Thackeray looks for a motive and attributes to Swift's "frightful self-consciousness" his writing about man as an utterly despicable imbecile who deserves nothing more than to be the servant of animals.

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literary powers were, the whole lecture could have been written only by an utterly uninformed or an utterly prejudiced observer.

After Thackeray, any critic would seem tame by comparison. The conception of Swift as a misanthrope was not mitigated in the least by Thackeray's excesses, however. In 1882, Sir Leslie Stephen published his biography of Swift, following the familiar pattern of admiring or respecting the body of Swift's work, except for the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." He suggests that macabre thoughts fascinated Swift and that Swift dwelt upon facets of man's character which were hateful because he sought to justify his hatred. "he nurses his misanthropy, as he might tear his flesh to keep his mortality before his eyes." The Yahoos, says Stephen, exemplify the bestial element in man, which Swift believed predominant. He contends that Swift indicates the disgusting aspects of the Yahoo character to be in mankind, though on a larger scale. To Stephen, the Houyhnhnms represent Swift's ideal. Stephen also looks for the motivation of Swift's misanthropy and finds that the Dean's personal frustrations have a direct bearing upon the ideas expressed in the fourth voyage. He recommends that those who are reading for pleasure should not read the third and fourth books because of Swift's oppressive misanthropy, which resulted from his wrath


41Ibid., p. 180.
against corrupt mankind and against his own fate and unhappiness. The last two books, says Stephen, "were wrung from him in later years, after a life tormented by constant disappointment and disease," and he "mixed an amount of egoism with his virtuous indignation which clearly lowers his moral dignity." Stephen makes Swift an utterly selfish individual when he states that although Swift hated to see men abused, he was more aroused when he was the injured one. By "nursing grudges against inexorable necessity," says Stephen, "he limits our sympathy with his better nature." And Stephen's final judgment is that "we should be rather awed than repelled by this spectacle of a nature of magnificent power struck down, bruised and crushed under fortune, and yet fronting all antagonists with increasing pride, and comforting itself with scorn even when it can no longer injure its adversaries."  

Close to Stephen's position is that of Edmund Gosse, who states that the fourth voyage "banishes from decent households a fourth part of one of the most brilliant and delightful of English books." Gosse believed that this voyage shows us "the darker side of Swift's genius" and must have been written during Stella's last illness when Swift knew that Stella was dying and when he began to feel remorse for the way he had treated her. Gosse, perhaps juggling the time sequence a bit,  

42Ibid., p. 181  43Ibid., p. 182.  
cites Delany as saying that Swift began to degenerate mentally and physically "from the time of her death, and probably from a few months earlier." Gosse suggests that Swift's misanthropy became chronic and that, most likely, the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" was the literary result of his despair and rage. "With the horrible satisfaction of disease" Swift wrote a story which enabled him to describe men as beasts, and "there is something which suggests a brain not wholly under control in the very machinery of this part of the romance," says Gosse. He thinks the satire to be unbelievable because of "the wild pleasure the author takes in trampling human pride in the mire of his sarcasm." Gosse, too, reveals the typical reaction of the nineteenth-century critic.

Sir Henry Craik, perhaps Swift's first authoritative biographer, does not differ from the majority of critics when he discusses Gulliver's Travels. The Yahoos, he says, typefy humanity more closely than do the beings in the previous voyages; consequently, the pointedness of the satire increases. Craik believed that Swift's heart was "torn by that fierce anger that he vented on his kind" and that in the Yahoos the reader sees human nature which does not have a particle of the reason which can be dangerous. Craik finds certain faults in the

fourth voyage: its coarseness, on which Craik refuses to
dwell; its clumsiness, because the idea of horses ruling men
holds no great satiric force; and its attack on particular in-
stead of general subjects. To Craik, its central feature is
the contrast between the Houyhnhnm, who is "the negation of
all human attributes" and who represents Stoic, impassive
dignity, and the Yahoo, who is the epitome of man's degradation.
As the contrast emerges, says Craik, "it throws down the fancied
dignity of humanity, strips off the trappings and disguises
with which we deceive ourselves, and leaves us face to face with
the stern realities of our nature and our lot."48

Such judgments are common to most of the eighteenth- and
nineteenth-century critics who allowed themselves to be con-
cerned with Swift. Since reading the fourth voyage aroused
their indignation, they struck back at the Dean with charges of
misanthropy and madness. Swift said in a letter to Pope on
September 29, 1725, that he wanted "to vex the world rather
then [sic] divert it."49 The notions of these commentators in-
dicate that the Dean surely accomplished his purpose. Although
they often made attempts to account for his attitude, they
always based their conclusions on preconceived notions of his
personality and character.

By early in the twentieth century, however, different at-
titudes about the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" began to emerge
from the welter of Swift criticism. Perhaps taking advantage

48 Ibid., p. 125. 49 Williams, p. 102.
of advances in scholarship or perhaps reacting to the Victorian
narrowness, new critics began to challenge traditional ideas.
In 1910 Sophie S. Smith, still partly bound to the traditional
view, asked again whether Swift really intended that the Yahooos
represent mankind. Her study makes no attempt to answer the
question, but asserts that Swift probably meant what he said
and that he did not suggest that any of the bitterness should
be alleviated. She suggests that he was an altruist who could
not bear disappointments and failures one after the other and
that his mind was enraged against those men and women who kept
his plans from maturing.50 She adds, "His spirit is torn
asunder by its very bitterness, his heart, once overflowing
with love of mankind, now forced to drink of its own rejected
fount, recoils upon itself, and the greatest altruist known to
history earns the title of misanthropist."51 Her conception
of Swift's altruism is certainly not consistent with the opinions
advanced by her predecessors.

In 1914 R. D. O'Leary suggested that didacticism, not mis-
anthropy, is the key to understanding the Swift of the fourth
voyage. Merrell Clubb, in a study of the criticism related to
the "Voyage to the Houyhnhmns,"52 states that O'Leary's was the
first interpretation which soundly challenged the traditional

50 Sophie S. Smith, Dean Swift (New York, 1910), p. 234.

51 Ibid., p. 235.

52 Clubb, pp. 203-232.
view of Swift. O'Leary believed that the Dean really meant it when he said, "I hate and detest that animal called man." Swift, says O'Leary, thought that man was an animal of the most detestable and hateful sort and that the most important part of *Gulliver's Travels* was the fourth voyage, which showed man to be a despicable creature. O'Leary sees in the Yahoos man stripped of his externalities and concealments, which he often uses to hide his true nature. O'Leary suggests, however, that Swift writes about nastiness not to show that he revels in it but to make men realize that it is an integral part of the human make-up. He believes that Swift did not swell on the subject because his mind was decaying, as was suggested by many nineteenth-century critics. Concerning the Houyhnhnms, O'Leary writes that since they are "embodied rationality and virtue," no nastiness is revealed in them. This critic's conclusion about Swift is markedly different from the ones drawn by his predecessors. He says that although the Dean believed man to be entirely detestable, he did have intercourse with society; his motivating idea was that men should not forget their hideous nature. O'Leary suggests finally that Swift "felt that those enemies of all common sense and honesty, sentimentalism, and human vanity and conceit, could only be kept within bounds by men's perpetually reminding themselves of the ugly facts."

53 Williams, p. 103.


55 *Ibid.*, p. 188.


Another of the early critics who turned away from the conventional portrait of Swift was Theodore Wedel, who found in the history of ideas of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries a more than adequate explanation for what had so long been called Swift's misanthropy or madness. Quoting parallels to Swift from Pascal and La Bruyère, Wedel suggests that Swift's view of man was rigorous yet no more so than that of the seventeenth century. Swift's is the prevailing judgment on man which philosophers from Montaigne to Locke believed in,\(^5\) Wedel says, and "then he adds that Swift's view followed in the Christian and classical tradition and that "almost any fair definition of that tradition would absolve *Gulliver's Travels* from the charge of being an isolated example of misanthropy."\(^6\) Wedel points out that because of the philosophical revolution which was in progress *Gulliver's Travels* was not accepted heartily in 1726. Men believed in their benevolent instincts and held an optimistic creed,\(^61\) for unlike most seventeenth-century philosophers, early eighteenth-century thinkers had decided that man was really virtuous and that he had a moral sense; the deity and his creation were good,\(^62\) and men were beginning to deny the doctrine of original sin.\(^63\) Wedel points out that in the light of


\(^6\)Ibid., p. 450.

\(^61\)Ibid., p. 434.

\(^62\)Ibid., p. 439.

\(^63\)Ibid., p. 441.
seventeenth-century thought, Swift's distinction among Houyhnhnm, man, and Yahoo is not merely scholastic. In fact, says Wedel, it reflects the intellectual battle of Swift's time: in attacking man's pride in his reason, Swift was attacking the new optimism and its exaltation of man's reason.65

In addition to placing Swift within the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophical thinking, Wedel attempts to show that the reader is not wholly without indication of Swift's philosophical beliefs. Swift, says Wedel, did not often reveal opinions without a cloak of irony; yet some of Swift's works do give insight into his ideas. A Tale of a Tub shows that he distrusted metaphysics and hated mystical enthusiasm. His Letter to a Young Clergyman indicates that he disapproved Locke's attack on innate ideas. The Sermon on the Trinity helps define the anti-rationalism of Gulliver's Travels and of Swift's attacks on deists.65 And his correspondence shows that he opposed the optimism of Pope and Bolingbroke.66

"If Swift's own hints regarding the meaning of his book are heeded," says Wedel, the thesis of the Travels lies in the contrast between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo. "Gulliver is neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm. He cannot attain to the rational felicity of the Houyhnhnms. Neither has he sunk to the level of the Yahoos, though this is a doubtful advantage. He lacks the strength of a healthy animal, and his glimmering of reason has unhappily

64 Ibid., p. 444. 65 Ibid. 436.

66 Ibid., p. 437.
burdened him with responsibility of conscience." Wedel concludes that Gulliver is part beast and part reason and represents Swift's picture of man's dual nature.67

Although O'Leary and Wedel did point out the inadequacy of earlier Swift criticism, it was Ricardo Quintana's The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift which did most to encourage new ways of looking at Gulliver's Travels. In writing of the history and background of the work, Quintana says that there are no thoughts or ideas expressed in Gulliver's Travels which are not expressed elsewhere in Swift's work.68 He suggests that the "single theme" of the fourth voyage is the contrast between rational and irrational aspects of human nature,69 between man with and man without reason. In Gulliver's Travels Quintana says, Swift does not express primitivism, Libertinism, or anti-Christianity, as did many other travel writers of his time. Quintana sees Swift's expression of belief in the universality of reason, ethical rigidity, anti-rationalism, and anti-intellectualism, and at the same time the illustration of Swift's theory of human pride.70 The letters written by Swift and his friends, says Quintana, indicate that ideas in Gulliver's Travels were not the product of Swift's old age, as previous critics had

67Ibid., p. 443.


69Ibid., p. 293.  
70Ibid., p. 298.
mentioned, but of his "clear-headed analysis of human nature." In the fourth voyage Quintana sees an attack on man's pride, which Swift implements through the Houyhnhnms and which is intended to undermine man's confidence. Quintana discerns two themes throughout the voyage: one saying that when he is irrational, man is bestial; and the other describing the life of reason. The disgusting Yahoos illustrate the first theme, for their "moral degradation" is "emotionally repulsive" to the reader. The "admirable Houyhnhnms" live the life of perfect reason, yet do not move us because Swift's concept of ideal civilization is "an emotionless thing," says Quintana. He believes that through Gulliver, Swift makes "an indictment of man and society perhaps as comprehensive and detailed as was ever penned by a satirist." When Gulliver recognizes his kinship with the Yahoos, says Quintana, he begins to despise himself and his race and at the same time to admire and appreciate the Houyhnhnms virtues, which serve as "a foil for the loathsomeness

71Ibid., p. 302.  
72Ibid., pp. 319-320.  
73Ibid., p. 320.  
74Ibid., pp. 320-321.  
75Ibid., p. 321. By 1955, however, in his Swift: An Introduction Quintana has moved the emphasis in his ideas about the Dean's "indictment of man and society." He stresses that Gulliver's Travels is a masterpiece of comic art and that Gulliver himself is a figure in comedy. "Swift's comic vision has found perfect expression" (Ricardo Quintana, Swift: An Introduction London, 1962, pp. 163-165).  
76Ibid., p. 321.
of Yahoos and corrupt men."\textsuperscript{77} However, Quintana continues, because Swift had to emphasize man's bestiality in order to make the attack on pride most effective, readers have often overlooked the other theme which describes the life of perfect reason and have concluded that "man is all Yahoo." Quintana further suggests that the artistic flaw in the fourth voyage\textsuperscript{78} is aggravated by Swift's allowing parts of the end of the book to degenerate into sensationalism. As he devises "incidents which will convey his hero's disgust for his kind,"\textsuperscript{79} says Quintana, Swift diverts the reader's attention from the concurrent exposition of the life of reason.\textsuperscript{80}

In 1941, with the publication of "The Final Comedy of Lemuel Gulliver," John F. Ross began to open critics' eyes and minds to the unmistakable comic satire in the \textit{Travels}. First, Ross shows how absurd is Gulliver's acceptance of whatever befalls him. He points out that throughout the first and second voyages Gulliver identifies himself each time so completely with his hosts that he accepts their scales of value as easily as the human scale. For example, he defends himself and the

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 322. Again Quintana has moved his emphasis--this time from the virtues of the Houyhnhnms to their probable role as the butt of indirect satire. From the \textit{Introduction}: "The Utopia of horses . . . is a rational community, true enough, but in outdoing all other Utopias in point of consistency the satire directed at man's irrationality suggests that it might extend itself to include his dreams of the good society" (Quintana, \textit{Introduction}, p. 160).

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 321.  
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., p. 325.  
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p. 327.
Lilliputian lady as if it were actually possible for them to have had an affair. In Brobdingnag he retains his pride and self-esteem, which would be normal if he were among people of ordinary size. Since he lives with giants, however, his whole outlook is absurd.\textsuperscript{81} Ross sees this same limited mentality when Gulliver visits the horses. Wishing to prove himself not a Yahoo, Gulliver accepts the Houyhnhnms and models himself after them. He concludes that all men are Yahoos, forgetting that he himself, as well as Don Pedro, the crew, and his family, is neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm.\textsuperscript{82} In other words, concludes Ross, Gulliver cannot accept evidence which contradicts what the Houyhnhnms have told him.\textsuperscript{83} Ross also proves that the Houyhnhnms were not wholly Swift's moral ideal, despite what almost everyone before had said. Swift severely, literally, and directly attacks the Yahoos and the part of man which is Yahoo, says Ross, but he obviously visualizes the Houyhnhnms "very definitely as horses"\textsuperscript{84} and often has fun at their expense. Ross points out that they are completely assured of their own complete knowledge and experience: they criticize the human form and sincerely believe that on every point where horse and human body differ the horse has the advantage. Swift, explains Ross, does not make them absurd, but he does indicate to the


\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., p. 191. \textsuperscript{83}Ibid., p. 193.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 188.
attentive reader that he is not taken in by them as Gulliver is. That the rather simple horses should be visualized as superior to the Yahoos and to Gulliver, Ross believes to be another stroke of comedy. Ross concludes that corrosive, Juvenalian satire permeates the entire fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, but that in the last three chapters Swift inserts elements of comic satire which show how inadequate is Gulliver's view of man as all Yahoo. Ross believes that Swift realized that Gulliver's misanthropic convictions were too unrealistic and unbalanced to be a final attitude toward man. Swift allows Gulliver's corrosive attack to continue until the last page of the voyage, says Ross, but he also shows how absurd is Gulliver's attitude and how insufficient it is. Swift recognized that his own satire, through Gulliver, was severe and often one-sided and that his attitude was properly a subject for mirth, Ross believes. Swift thus makes an "elaborate and subtle joke at the expense of a very important part of himself." Ross suggests finally that Swift smiles at the ridiculous view which can see only the Yahoo in man.

Turning now to the criticism of the past few years, one can use the knowledge of earlier judgments to distinguish between those studies which suggest obviously false or illogical

85 Ibid., p. 189
86 Ibid., p. 190.
87 Ibid., p. 195.
88 Ibid., p. 194.
89 Ibid., p. 195.
90 Ibid., p. 196.
conclusions about Swift's opinion of the Houyhnhnms and those which provide fresh and stimulating ideas. For most recent critics the key to understanding Gulliver's Travels, as well as other of Swift's work, is the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." The most important scholarly question involving this last voyage concerns the nature of Swift's moral ideal: whether he believed that man's true nature was or was not similar to the Houyhnhnm nature or whether it lay somewhere between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo.
CHAPTER II

THE HOYHNHNMS: IDEAL CREATURES

Sheridan, Stephen, and O'Leary, different though they were in approach and attitude, held in common at least one critical tenet in relation to "The Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." Each believed that, for Swift, the horses represented a moral ideal. Many recent scholars have come to the same conclusion, and like their predecessors, the later commentators have been unable to agree about Swift's character: whether Swift was a misanthrope or a lover of mankind. Some recent critics say that since Swift believed that man is unable to attain the perfection of Houyhnhnm society, his conclusion is misanthropic; others contend that since Swift suggested in the fourth voyage that man can achieve the rational felicity of the Houyhnhnms, Swift's purpose is not misanthropic. Since 1958 a number of scholars have supported one or the other of these propositions.

George Sherburn attempted in 1958 to correct misconceptions about Gulliver's Travels which he felt were being perpetrated by scholars who thought that Swift was not really misanthropic or that the Houyhnhnms represented deism. Although he specifically directed his essay against an article written by Irvin Ehrenpreis, Sherburn intended that other critics who held similar views should take notice. Because of its immediate
effect upon Sherburn and its long-range effect upon Swiftian criticism, Ehrenpreis's article is worthy of note even though it was written in 1957, beyond the scope of this work. In attempting to prove that the Houyhnhnmms were not Swift's moral ideal for mankind, Ehrenpreis presents three arguments. First, he points out that the Houyhnhnm maxim "Reason alone is sufficient to govern a rational creature" is contrary to traditional Christian thought and that in two sermons, "Upon the Excellency of Christianity" and "On the Testimony of Conscience," Swift says that virtue is impossible without Christianity. Ehrenpreis insists that "Swift wished men to be as rational as possible; he believed that religion helps them to become so, and that reason leads them toward revelation." However, adds Ehrenpreis, Swift regarded morality without religion as an absurdity. In his second argument, Ehrenpreis suggests that since Swift had suffered from many accusations of impiety, he could not bring religion openly into a satire like Gulliver's Travels. In a final argument, Ehrenpreis proposes that Gulliver is misled by the Houyhnhnm "rule of nothing-but-reason" when he rejects all human contact. "In their way—which is not the human way—the Houyhnhnmms are perfect, and do not want religion. As absurd creatures, they represent the deistic presumption that mankind has no


2 Ibid., p. 892.
need of the specifically Christian virtues." That the Houyhnhnms are deistic has been the most provocative view in continuing the controversy. Ehrenpreis supports his contention by relating the Houyhnhnms' emotionless serenity, benevolence, and reliance on reason to a Swift-Bolingbroke correspondence on friendship and a quarrel about Christianity which they were having when Swift was writing *Gulliver's Travels*.

Ehrenpreis also tells a story which he feels may shed even more light on Swift's intentions: Swift once had a horse named Bolingbroke who, while on a journey, threw a drunken valet of Swift's. The horse was English; the servant, Irish. A few years later Swift traded Bolingbroke for another horse: "We never hear of him again, unless perhaps in *Gulliver's Travels*." As a controversialist, Swift, says Ehrenpreis, "did not invent a set of values to defend, or objects to attack; he started from human embodiments of those values or vices, and he addressed himself to people [such as Bolingbroke] whom he wished to encourage, refute, or annihilate." Therefore, Ehrenpreis says, Swift through Gulliver does not extol the values of the Houyhnhnms, and in the fourth voyage when Swift says that whoever believes in the adequacy of reason without faith sees "himself as a Houyhnhnm and the rest of mankind as Yahoos," Swift is saying that the deists cannot believe their own doctrines with any consistency.

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Sherburn's objections to Ehrenpreis's opinions about the Houyhnhnms constitute the bulk of his article. Sherburn suggests, in the first place, that Swift was not satirizing the deists. Ehrenpreis quotes the following passage from Wollaston, which Ehrenpreis believed that Swift would have disagreed with: "To act according to right reason, and to act according to truth are in effect the same thing... To be governed by reason is the general law imposed by the author of nature upon them, whose uppermost faculty is reason." Sherburn questions whether Swift would have objected to the passage since the same ideas are present in Swift's "Thoughts on Religion": "I am in all opinions to believe according to my own impartial reason; which I am bound to inform and improve, as far as my capacity and opportunities will permit." Sherburn also contradicts Ehrenpreis further by suggesting that the fourth voyage is not at all concerned with religion. He points out that there is nothing present in "The Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" which indicates any attitude toward revealed Christianity, favorable or unfavorable. There seems to be no point in Swift's making his satiric vehicle horses if they are to represent deists, says Sherburn, and because they are horses, they cannot be Anglicans. Religion is therefore excluded. Alternatively, Sherburn suggests that Swift turned to his "favorite animal" to create "beings definitely extra-human and superhuman" and that he treated them with playfulness,

at the same time portraying their "control, composure, affection, and intelligence." 8

Sherburn's third objection is to Ehrenpreis's assertion that Houyhnhnm reason was obnoxious to Swift. Sherburn quotes a letter from Swift which states that he hates Yahoos of both sexes and that only a few women are tolerable company since he cannot have Houyhnhnms near him. Sherburn concludes from the passage that for Swift, as well as for Gulliver, the Houyhnhnms were a ne plus ultra. In the fourth voyage Gulliver says that the Houyhnhnms have all virtues, and Sherburn suggests that there is no evidence to the contrary to indicate that Swift did not share Gulliver's opinion. For Sherburn, the foregoing evidence is proof that Swift was not satirizing the Houyhnhnms in any way. 9 He further points out that contrary to what Ehrenpreis says, Swift did not give the Houyhnhnms only reason as conscience. In saying that "Reason alone is sufficient to govern a rational creature," Sherburn proposes, Swift would have put the emphasis on govern, stating a commonplace to Anglicans, deists, even atheists since ancient times. He "simply places reason in a hierarchy above the emotions... and gives, by implication, reason something other than itself to govern. It is not 'alone' in the mind." Moral and psychological concepts are under consideration, says Sherburn, not religious ones. 10

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8 Ibid., p. 93  
9 Ibid., p. 94.  
10 Ibid.
Sherburn also takes issue with Ehrenpreis's suggestion that Swift was quarreling with Bolingbroke about religion. He says that Swift did not argue about religious doctrine because the altercations tended to bore or infuriate him and that the letter which Ehrenpreis quotes from Bolingbroke about the subject is "confused and confusing." Since Swift once stated that every man is entitled to his own opinions in private, Sherburn says, he surely decided to leave Bolingbroke alone.

Swift was not an ordinary man to Sherburn, and the latter does not tolerate the attempts of Ehrenpreis and others to rehabilitate the Dean of St. Patrick's for modern readers. Instead of rejecting Houyhnhnm society as cold and devitalized and suggesting that Swift was satirizing it, Sherburn submits the opinion that the Houyhnhnms represent "Swift's clearly imperfect concept of 'perfection of nature.'" He points out that Swift was obsessed by the imperfections of man and society and that he may have felt psychologically compelled to portray something supernatural. Sherburn admits that the Houyhnhnm life is austere, but he reminds the reader that one drops from a higher to a lower order when he turns to man's well-known imperfections. When Sherburn states that Gulliver was not being foolish when he praised the Houyhnhnms as highly rational

11 Ibid., p. 96.  
12 Ibid., p. 95.  
13 Ibid., p. 96.
creatures, the critic reiterates his opinion that the horses were not obnoxious to Swift. Gulliver, he believes, speaks for Swift in the passages of the fourth voyage which satirize political, social, and moral corruption in England, and Sherburn points out that only through conversations with his Houyhnhnms master does Gulliver come to see the baseness of English life.\textsuperscript{14}

In his final argument Sherburn contradicts critical opinions which suggest that Gulliver's reaction to the Houyhnhnms' pronouncements is clear evidence that Swift did not intend the horses to be ideal creatures. He supposed, says Sherburn, that his readers would recognize the misanthropic conclusion: man can see perfection, as Gulliver does, but because of his nature, he can not obtain it. Sherburn points out that in the same manner that many men have been exposed to perfection or the ideal, so is Gulliver, but he receives no command to follow the lead. "As a character in a static narrative, Gulliver was the victim of a misanthropic author." Such contacts between man and perfection are often likely to result in unhappiness, concludes Sherburn, and with Swift's "low views of man's potentialities," it is not surprising that Gulliver remains unhappy.\textsuperscript{15}

Sherburn's article was for a time the definitive essay which supported the arguments of scholars who believed that the Houyhnhnms were Swift's moral ideal for mankind. Other

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 97.
critics, however, were not deterred from contributing their opinions on the subject to the mass of Swiftian criticism. Some of the articles are perhaps more ingenious than convincing or valuable. For instance, in 1960 Jeffrey Hart proposed that Gulliver's Travels is a defense of political and social order. He says that the Houyhnhnms define what Swift believed to be an absolute of social and political order and are able to maintain their order because they are free from passion and self-interest; they also suggest an "ideal of inner discipline" which mankind should attempt to achieve.\(^\text{16}\) Swift suggests, Hart believes, that if men are virtuous like the Brobdingnagians they can hope to hold in check their own Yahoanness and preserve the "moral order."\(^\text{17}\) By viewing Gulliver's Travels through a "frame of reference," Hart believes that he has explained away many of the problems of the work.

Maurice Johnson is another critic who began with an assumption about the fourth voyage and then set out to prove that the text validates that assumption. In an article published in 1960, he theorizes that Gulliver's Travels is a series of imaginary explorations into the narrator's mind. After each excursion Gulliver is supposedly changed, but after the fourth voyage his assumptions about human nature have been destroyed. To Johnson, Gulliver makes this journey

\(^{16}\)Jeffrey Hart, "The Ideologue as Artist: Some Notes on 'Gulliver's Travels,'" *Criticism*, II (1960), 128.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 126.
because he believes that an "unbridgeable gulf" exists between him and other people. Gulliver believes, says Johnson, that having discovered a "cautious, devitalized, 'reasoning' ideal," he alone among men can appreciate true values. However, when he discovers that his ideal is unattainable,¹⁸ says Johnson, Gulliver realizes that he is a "member of the unideal animal world," and he turns into a misanthrope who despises the state of humanity but who recognizes that he cannot hope to reform mankind by offering his "case-history" to the public.¹⁹

In 1962 Ralph Hitt attempted to show that Gulliver's Travels is unified by certain of Swift's philosophical ideas. The cohesive element in the work, says Hitt, is Swift's "negative philosophy of history," which suggests that man was once in a near perfect state but that he and his institutions have degenerated with the passage of time.²⁰ The Houyhnhnms, he says, are in "Swift's ancient, primordial, perfect state" because they are pure reason with no pride and lower passions at all.²¹ Hitt suggests that the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos are the symbolic representations, respectively, of the perfect

¹⁹Ibid., p. 302.
²¹Ibid., p. 167.
state in which man once existed and of the condition of man just before extinction, "should he refuse moral regeneration." For Swift, the future was worse than the present, says Hitt, because if man continued to pervert and ignore the reason which he did have, it would eventually vanish like the unused appendages of prehistoric man. To Hitt, then, Swift is as much pessimistic as misanthropic, and Hitt believes that with Gulliver rests the character of Swift's modern man, "who is both Houyhnhnmm and Yahoo and neither wholly one nor the other."\(^{22}\)

Also in 1962, in an article which repudiates his earlier statements, Irvin Ehrenpreis expresses the opinion that the Houyhnhnms were Swift's moral ideal for mankind after all. When writing the earlier essay, Ehrenpreis assumed that Swift's satire was based upon individuals, the Houyhnhnms representing the deist Bolingbroke. Many scholars snatched up his suggestion about the horses and built an elaborate case for it.\(^{23}\) However, by 1962 Ehrenpreis had decided that for several reasons it is evident that Swift was attacking mankind as a whole, not Europeans, Christians, deists, or any other particular group of people: \(^{24}\) "man may be a valid concept though men never

\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 169.

\(^{23}\)Some of these scholars were Martin Kallich and Calhoun Winton, who will be considered in the next chapter.

quite . . . fit it."; \(^{25}\) Swift used some fantastic examples of humanity to make the reader test accepted definitions of man; \(^{26}\) the antithesis between horse and man was accepted as valid in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; \(^{27}\) and Swift's contemporaries recognized that the human form was an insufficient sign of humanity. \(^{28}\) To Ehrenpreis, "the problem seems to be to induce from the assemblage of specimens of mankind a definition which will not only comprehend [men] but will distinguish them from Yahoos without granting them the properties of Houyhnhnms." In order to make the satire more forceful, says Ehrenpreis, Swift makes his readers acknowledge that they cling to an ideal concept of man which excludes themselves. \(^{29}\) The Houyhnhnms invariably react rationally, and men seem as irrational as possible. Taking just the opposite of his previous stand with regard to possible satire of the Houyhnhnms, Ehrenpreis this time suggests that they are a positive ideal despite passages which seem to make them absurd. The characters are not consistently portrayed, says Ehrenpreis, for Swift presents them seriously or ironically as he wishes, and only his implicit tone can designate particular passages as ironical or serious. \(^{30}\) Ehrenpreis adds that the Houyhnhnms seem absurd because Swift was a "joker": they are ideal when Swift contrasts them with man's irrationality; they comic when he smiles at "bestowing concrete life upon unattainable —

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 20. \(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 22. \(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 24. \\
\(^{28}\) Ibid., p. 25. \(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 33. \(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 34.
abstractions." Ehrenpreis also suggests that even though Gulliver behaves absurdly when he returns to England, the Houyhnhnm influence is still admirable. The lesson, says Ehrenpreis, is that man cannot directly copy the Houyhnhnms: he must search lower for the examples to follow. "We may replace the equine symbol by what ideal we please: Swift's reproach is not alone that our conduct falls short of the mark within our reach, but as well that we regard the ultimate mark as attainable." Ehrenpreis says that Swift wanted man to turn to the Brobdingnagians; instead he turns to the Houyhnhnms.

Although Ehrenpreis's later statements suggested the inadequacy of his former opinions, some scholars in 1962 still believed that the Houyhnhnms represented deists. Edward Rosenheim attempted to answer some of their arguments in an article which takes issue not only with critics but also with critical methods. That the Houyhnhnms could represent Swift's idea of deists, he says, "is a proposition which it is hard to believe could ever have occurred to the common reader, however acute, who has, for centuries, enjoyed the Travels without benefit of learned insight." He points out that if there is any attack on deism in the fourth voyage it is oblique, restrained, and jocular,

31 Ibid., p. 35. 32 Ibid., p. 36. 33 Ibid., p. 37.

a sharp contrast to the "harsh forthrightness" of Swift's famous attacks: The Sentiments of a Church of England Man, An Argument against Abolishing Christianity, or Remarks upon a Book Intitled "The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted." Rosenheim also suggests that recent attempts by critics to defend Swift from the charge of misanthropy are inadequate, for there is no hint in the text of Gulliver's Travels to indicate that Swift wished to mitigate in the least the picture of man as Yahoo, no suggestion that the reader should not share Gulliver's reaction to the depravity of the Yahoos and the perfection of the Houyhnhnms. "The emphasis upon the Houyhnhnms' infirmities and Gulliver's folly . . . fails to clarify anything in the text which has hitherto been obscure; it adds no new magnitude to Swift's achievement, whether satiric, imaginative, or philosophic," but it "taxes him with obscurity as a satirist and diffuseness as a literary artist." One literary method which Rosenheim does consider valid is that of R. S. Crane, who does not impose a set of ideas upon the Travels. Rosenheim agrees with Crane's suggestion that since men of the eighteenth century were conditioned to


37Ibid., p. 108.

38R. S. Crane,"The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas," Reason and the Imagination, edited by J. A. Mazzeo (New York, 1962), pp. 231-253. This article will be considered in Chapter III.
accept the horse as the embodiment of irrationality, Swift's choice of this creature was remarkably appropriate. The Houyhnhnm, who uses true reason properly, serves as a "metaphorical rebuke to mankind." Through this hypothetical image of a truly rational creature, says Rosenheim, mankind is to learn how far he has fallen short of his potential. Rosenheim believes that Swift wanted his readers to admire the Houyhnhnms only enough so that they would feel revulsion for their own species. Swift, says Rosenheim, intended that readers should recognize the imperfections of the Houyhnhnms, and he deliberately emphasized the animal nature of the horses. Again concerned with critical method, Rosenheim points out that if the reader loses his perspective and begins to view the Houyhnhnms as ideal virtue or as the embodiment of some "dangerous phenomenon," such as deism, then the entire point of Swift's purpose—"even a horse, given true reason, could put mankind to shame"—is lost. Rosenheim concludes that even though many recent critics look for some kind of reassurance in the Travels, such reassurance Swift had no intention of providing. Since the work is "a shocking exposure and a bitter attack," there is no exposition in it of systematic beliefs or positive, helpful convictions.

In a book about satire written in 1963, Rosenheim suggests additions to his earlier theories. In commenting about Swift's

39 Rosenheim, p. 116. 40 Ibid., p. 117. 41 Ibid., p. 118.
evaluation of human nature, he notes that throughout *Gulliver's Travels* when Swift questions human morality and intelligence, he emphasizes destructive and unsettling ideas. By the beginning of the fourth voyage, the reader is "already aware of the bleak and terrible assumptions implicit in Swift's assessment of human works and ways."  

Rosenheim also points out that Gulliver makes certain discoveries about mankind: man is physically less powerful than a Yahoo; man has distorted and perverted his measure of reason; a genuine rational society is not within man's grasp, even if the citizens are horses. These discoveries present a devastating picture of humanity, says Rosenheim, and incidents involving Pedro de Mendez and Gulliver's family only show how extreme is Gulliver's alienation from his own society. To Rosenheim, the Houyhnhnms' rational standards seem inaccessible to humans. Throughout the fourth voyage, says Rosenheim, Swift's satiric force is directed against man's pride in believing that he is the ultimate, except for God, of rational existence. Rosenheim adds that Swift wanted to convince his readers that they are vain and unworthy and that they should realize their inadequacy and false pride. Since Swift offers nothing which

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can assure his readers that there is any way for them to attain the ideal, the fourth voyage "is a savage indictment of mankind" which is based upon "the vision of human depravity, the damning measurement of the unbreachable gap between man's systematized Yahoodom and the life of reason—as, hypothetically, even a horse could live it."  

W. B. Carnochan in 1963 suggested another approach to the fourth voyage. He contends that various elements in the story reflect facets of Swift's personality. Recent critics, he says, have come too far in their efforts to rehabilitate Swift's reputation, for in their insistence that Swift was not a monster, they have neglected the complexity of his personality. He suggests that Swift did intend for the horses to be ideal: there is no sign that they were not ideal and much evidence to prove that they were. Carnochan cites the example of the letter to Charles Ford of January 19, 1723/24, in which Swift notes that even Stella and Bolingbroke's wife "are onely tolerable at best, for want of Houyhnhnms." Carnochan also explains Houyhnhnm tranquillity in relation to Swift's personality. He asserts that the Houyhnhnms do have passions: the


master resents how the English treat their horses; he is amazed and indignant on hearing about European vices; he is concerned when Gulliver leaves. Although the horses do have fewer wants and passions than men, says Carnochan, those passions which they do have they carefully restrain. He feels that Swift was inevitably attracted to the Houyhnhnm world where one could with relative ease attain inner calm because Swift often wished to free himself from his tyrannical passions, but was unable to do so. Carnochan points out that Swift longed for the philosophic cloak which Bolingbroke used to attain a tranquil life but that Swift did not believe that man's reason alone could achieve peace. In another attempt to connect Swift's personality and the fourth voyage, Carnochan shows that the lack of personal attachments among Houyhnhnms was to Swift a strength rather than a flaw, as some Houyhnhnm detractors have suggested. Carnochan has found that Swift wished that his close friendships might carry over into heaven but that he was aware that they probably would not. Says Carnochan, Swift realized that human frailty made him dependent upon others and that the horses, in contrast, were strong and self-sufficient.

For other controversies regarding the Houyhnhnms, Carnochan does not hesitate to provide further discussion. In arguing

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50 Carnochan, p. 25.  
52 Ibid., pp. 27-28.
that the Houyhnhnms are not deistic in outlook, he agrees with Sherburn's statement: "By the fundamental metaphor, religion is excluded." Carnochan says that there is no analogue in the Houyhnhnms to traditional Christianity: they have not fallen and need no revelation; they reject no revelation; any that could be offered to them would be ludicrous. He concludes that Swift intended no parallel between the Houyhnhnms and the deists. Raising another point, Carnochan says that flaws in the Houyhnhnm character result from Swift's attempt to make a satiric point. Carnochan says that Swift does not allow the Houyhnhnm master to believe Gulliver's tales of a land across the sea so that Swift can emphasize the Houyhnhnms' innocence, can show their ignorance of the outside world, and can point out the difficulty of spanning the gap between Houyhnhnm and man. In this instance and when the reader recognizes that the master is "dull-witted" in not being able to see the advantages of the human form, Swift was not concerned with the Houyhnhnms as anything but a means to an end; his intention, says Carnochan, was to "ridicule man's pride in his own physical endowments." Carnochan adds that Swift did not consider or did not deem important the possibility that his satiric technique might reflect on the intelligence of the Houyhnhnms. Backtracking a bit, Carnochan says that if Swift does at times


54Carnochan, pp. 28-29.
satirize the Houyhnhnms, he acts in character, for "very little in Swift's range of vision entirely escapes his satire, not even, perhaps, this ideal of his own creation." After defending the horses with one argument after another, Carnochan turns to their often-condemned decision to expel Gulliver from their society. He says that their decision is justifiable, for "fallen man has within him the potential for corruption." Swift sympathizes with Gulliver, says Carnochan, and as he does so, he reveals his concern for fallen man and "qualifies the case he has made for the society of the Houyhnhnms."

Carnochan did not want to brand Swift as an incorrigible misanthrope, but John Traugott had no such reservation concerning Swift's character. He begins by noting that the recent criticism which has tried to keep "this violent man in the straitjacket of his canonicals, to make him a proper Anglican" has failed to be convincing. The ordinary reader "in his simple moments" has always sensed "Swift's outlawry." "In a spasm so violent as to suggest his own insanity," says Traugott, Swift satirizes the failure of man to employ his "rational will." As a "disaffected" moralist, he saw a reality which was "indistinguishable from nightmare." Traugott concedes that Swift did

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55 Ibid., pp. 29-30.  
56 Ibid., pp. 30-31.  
recognize the "possibility of human dignity in rational simplicity," but that this simplicity can make one appear ridiculous in the real world is the tragic overtone of the end of *Gulliver's Travels*.  

Nigel Dennis, on the other hand, attributes Swift's "outlawry" to his habit of ignoring the middle between the two extremes of men. As an example, Dennis cites Swift's admiration for the accomplishments of Esther Vanhomrigh and then notes that Swift regarded the rest of womankind as "beasts in petticoats," the subjects of *The Progress of Love* and *The Progress of Beauty*. By the time he had started to write *Gulliver's Travels*, "it was his expressed determination to laud selected human beings while damning the mass of men as odious, and though this act of will was often contradicted by his personal behavior, Swift upheld it on paper with fierceness and stubbornness."  

Dennis adds that Swift had resolved to see the world in extreme terms and that he attempted to make everyone believe through his writings that he was totally indifferent to humanity.  

Two other critics in 1965, William Halewood and Marvin Levich, who at times adapted ideas suggested by earlier scholars,

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concluded that Swift truly detested mankind but realized that the possibility existed that men could be rational. Halewood and Levich believe that Swift intended that the Houyhnhnms should be regarded as humans, and they have found that the satire of Book IV results from the lack of the "necessary correlation between human appearance and the intellectual and moral qualities appropriate to man." They point out that Swift was not the first to suggest that if all men are rational and if many humans are not rational, then many humans are not men. Aristotle, they say, proposed this idea, and his irrational man is closely akin to Swift's Yahoos. Of the famous letter to Pope in which Swift states his hatred of mankind and his love for individuals, Halewood and Levich suggest that one should remember that it was Swift's habit to assume masks and that perhaps the letter was an ironic expression of his attitude. They also note that Swift's distinction between animal rationale and animal rationis capax was not really revolutionary because Swift was merely trying to distinguish human perfection from potentiality; perfection, he believed, did not inevitably develop from potentiality. Turning to the text, Halewood and Levich show that the Yahoos are human beings in a degenerate condition: Gulliver recognizes early that he resembles Yahoos


62 Ibid., pp. 276-278.
in every way; he early gives up trying to distinguish between Yahoo and European; Yahoos and Europeans are degenerate because they all lack virtue and reason. Halewood and Levich also show that the Houyhnhnms represent perfected man: Gulliver begins by calling them beasts, ends by calling them people; they have reason, which Gulliver assumes to be peculiar to man. The horses are sometimes ludicrous because Swift did not "withhold his irony from causes he served most devotedly," but Swift's condemnation of Yahoo imperfection would mean little without his belief in an attainable ideal, the Houyhnhnms. "Thus one benefit to be derived from the view that the Houyhnhnms are essentially rational man is the restoration of Swift's terribilità; for he was as terrible in his condemnation of the animal called man as his XIXth-century critics saw."

The mark which distinguishes the conclusion of Halewood and Levich from the conclusions of nineteenth-century critics is that the later writers contend that Swift believed that man had the potential to become the embodiment of the rational definition of man.

As this survey of criticism indicates, a large number of scholars agree that Swift's Houyhnhnms are supposed to be ideal creatures. Whether the ideal is within man's reach is the controversial point. However, another group of critics solve the problem altogether by denying completely the perfection of the horses.

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63 Ibid., pp. 278-279. 64 Ibid., pp. 280-281.
CHAPTER III

THE HOUYHNHNMS: OBJECTS OF SATIRE

During the first two hundred years after the publication of *Gulliver's Travels*, no scholar seriously considered the possibility that the Houyhnhnms could represent anything but Swift's moral ideal for mankind. As has been previously mentioned,¹ John F. Ross, in 1941, was one of the first critics to suspect that Swift might have been satirizing the Houyhnhnms or the life of perfect reason which the horses were thought to embody. Together with the essay which Ehrenpreis wrote in 1957, which suggested that the Houyhnhnms represent deists, Ross's article and a few others form the basis for the school of criticism which seeks to prove that the Houyhnhnms did not represent Swift's ideal for humanity. Unlike the commentators who believe that the horses are ideal creatures, most of the critics who have elaborated on the theories of Ross and Ehrenpreis seem little concerned with arguments based on Swift's personality, his philosophy, or his religion, and usually these critics do not base their judgments upon what they believe to be Swift's attitude toward mankind.

In 1958 A. E. Dyson presented what seems to be the most substantial contribution to this school of criticism. He begins

by pointing out that Swift was a satirist and that as a satirist Swift measured human conduct against an ideal, not against a norm; he intended to reform his readers by shocking them with a picture of themselves. Dyson also suggests that Swift often directed his satiric irony against human flaws which can be mended but that when he was concerned about limitations which are inevitable, his ironic intensity was most fierce. Dyson goes on to explain how Swift's irony works and how the reader comes to realize that the horses are not ideal creatures. First, says Dyson, Swift leads the reader to follow the changes in Gulliver's attitude toward the societies which are presented. Dyson points out that in Book IV Gulliver and the reader gradually begin to admire the Houyhnhnms and to accept their judgments upon mankind. However, says Dyson, the reader does not go so far as Gulliver does in accepting the Houyhnhnms' contemptuous view of mankind. With satiric exaggeration Swift says that man is truly Yahoo and cannot become Houyhnhnm: near enough to the truth to jar the reader, "but not intended to be taken literally," says Dyson. To keep from betraying his own nature, continues Dyson, the reader assumes that only Gulliver has been converted to the Houyhnhnm beliefs. Dyson adds, however, that when Swift, later in the

3 Ibid., p. 58.
4 Ibid., p. 60
book, gives a more detailed description of the Houyhnhnms, the reader recognizes their limitations, but he also recognizes two other truths: first, that the horses are not at all human and that their life is wholly irrelevant to the ideal for mankind; and, second, that their rational, yet dull and impoverished life does not appeal to human beings. "So plausibly does Swift offer the Houyhnhnm life as the ideal of Reason and Nature which his own age believed in, so cunningly does he lead us to think that this is the positive against which a satiric account of the Yahoos is functioning," that the reader often does not recognize Swift's irony, says Dyson. In a final argument Dyson suggests that the reader recognizes that Gulliver and the Houyhnhnms are not alike, physically or morally. The real shock comes, he says, when the reader realizes that the horses are "literally not human: they are inaccessible to Gulliver not because they are morally superior, but because they are physically non-existent." 

In another set of arguments Dyson attempts to explain where Swift placed man in the order of the universe. Dyson points out that Gulliver, who represents man, has no distinctive place between the nebulous, abstract Houyhnhnms and the savage, bestial Yahoos. Swift, Dyson says, "drives a wedge between the intellectual and the emotional, makes one good, the other

5Ibid., p. 62. 6Ibid., p. 63.
evil," and pushes them far apart, as "moral opposites." He believes that Swift was in the midst of a dilemma, unable to achieve the ideal and repulsed by the alternative, at a loss to decide which one he disliked more. Dyson suggests that the picture is complicated because of Swift's portraying the concepts of reason and nature, which were so important to his age, in the form of the Houyhnhnms: he must have realized that he was betraying his own "positives" and those of his contemporaries, for he left the Yahoos in possession of all reality and vitality, and he denied man the possibility of escape through the use of reason or through his natural abilities. However, Dyson has devised a comforting solution to Swift's and the reader's dilemma. Swift could not have thought that his readers were Yahoos, says Dyson, because Yahoos would not have responded at all to Gulliver's Travels. Dyson adds that Swift wrote for pleasure: he wanted to give pleasure to his gentleman readers and he enjoyed exhibiting his mastery of irony. "Very often, even at the most intense moments," contends Dyson, the reader of Gulliver's Travels "may feel that pleasure in the intellectual destructiveness of the wit is of more importance to him than the moral purpose, or the misanthropy, that is its supposed raison d'etre."

Another critic who proposed that the horses are not a moral ideal for mankind is James Wilson. He does admit that

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7 Ibid., p. 64.  
8 Ibid., p. 65.  
9 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
they are partially ideal: they represent in part "an ideal
that Swift would certainly wish us to work toward." However,
says Wilson, Swift did not want his readers to become like
the Houyhnhnms even if it were possible. Gulliver's imita-
tion of the Houyhnhnms had disastrous consequences, and Wilson
believes, without citing evidence, that Gulliver was not in-
tended to be a model for human behavior. Wilson believes that
he understands Swift's purpose in portraying the horses as
at least partially ideal: the reader is "to be amused, warned,
and made wiser" through the appeal to his own reason, and he
is to be disgusted at the failure of humanity and, conversely,
at the achievement of the animals. Again, Wilson provides no
examples or textual proof. Turning next to the line of rea-
soning suggested by Ross in 1941, Wilson points out that since
the Houyhnhnms and their actions are described humorously,
they are not "wholly representative of an ideal." He cites
several examples of comic touches in "The Voyage to the
Houyhnhnms" which he believes indicate that the horses are
not ideal creatures, such as the tenderness and wonder with
which the horses first examine Gulliver, Gulliver's neighing,
his gait, and the farewell scene between Gulliver and his master.
Wilson further suggests that Gulliver is duped into believing
that only Houyhnhnms and Yahoos exist. He does not realize,

10 James R. Wilson, "Swift, the Psalmist, and the Horse,"
Tennessee Studies in Literature, III (Knoxville, 1958), 18.
says Wilson, that man is in between, and just as in the preceding voyages, he is unable to "retain the human sense of relativity." Wilson concludes that Swift created Gulliver's state of mind in order to prove that something more than reason is necessary to govern man. Wilson raises one final argument in his attempt to prove that Swift did not intend for the horses to be the ideal for mankind; he points out that in Psalms it is several times mentioned that man should not rely on a horse for salvation but on God. To Wilson, such a correspondence between Swift and the Psalmist clearly indicates Swift's intention.

The arguments presented by Calhoun Winton in 1960 seem to be only a little more convincing than those of Wilson. Winton begins by stating that Gulliver's Travels is a satiric presentation of deism and a defense of Augustinian Christianity and that Gulliver, like Bunyan's Christian, is a pilgrim who moves from a position of religious ignorance to one of "conversion" to the reasonable faith of the Houyhnhnms. Winton attempts to prove, first of all, that Swift wrote Gulliver's Travels to defend the Christian religion. Several years before, Swift had observed keenly the temporal state of Christianity; the result, says Winton, was A Tale of a Tub. A few years later, Winton continues, Swift was no longer concerned with

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11 Ibid., p. 19.  
12 Ibid., p. 20.  
13 Ibid., pp. 22-23.  
sectarian controversy, but with religious apathy; the literary result at this point was *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*.\(^{15}\) Winton goes on to say that the increasing apathy of the intellectual leaders toward institutional religion was the result of a changing view of the nature of man, which was in turn associated with the impact of new scientific discoveries on Western thought. These intellectuals, says Winton, began to assume that man was essentially good, "to emphasize the reasonable, the virtuous qualities of mankind," and to avoid old-line Christianity.\(^{16}\) Winton concludes that Swift opposed this new view of man because it was opposite to the orthodox Christian view.\(^{17}\) Turning to Gulliver, Winton finds no religion whatsoever; Gulliver never calls upon God for help, and he does not notice the lack of religion in the countries which he visits. To Winton, he "is symbolically Swift's modern man, ignorant of tradition, both literary and religious, but hopeful and confident, benevolent and reasonable, naturally generous, naturally unreflective. . . . A potential Shaftesburian, in harmony with the universe."\(^{18}\) In the remainder of the article, Winton explains how Gulliver, as the "new man," becomes disillusioned and turns to the Houyhnhnms for consolation. At the beginning of his travels, says Winton, Gulliver is a self-assured Englishman, confident in his country and in himself,

but by the end of the third voyage, he is disillusioned. Winton observes that in Lilliput Gulliver has little difficulty, for he can view the Lilliputians and their folly objectively. The King of Brobdingnag reveals aspects of human nature which stagger Gulliver, but the traveler remains unconvinced. In the third voyage, Winton continues, many of Gulliver's personal ideals are shattered, and his confidence as an essentially good Shaftesburian man is seriously shaken. In support of his arguments, Winton points out that Gulliver also recognizes that the supposedly civilized Europeans have become increasingly hostile toward him.19 In the last three voyages he is abandoned by his fellow man in an increasingly barbaric manner. "His optimism and innate generosity" do not help him when he is forced to look closely at man's nature and the products of man's ingenuity, Winton concludes.20 In his final arguments, Winton analyzes Gulliver's attraction to the Houyhnhnms. He says that after realizing that he is a Yahoo, that the Lilliputian pettiness is his own, and that the mathematical absurdities of Laputa are England's, Gulliver is unable to "face the paradox of man's duality," and he turns to the Houyhnhnms, who are governed by reason, an enlightened religion.21 Winton believes that had Gulliver been familiar with the Christian concept of

19 Ibid., pp. 25-26.  
20 Ibid., p. 27.  
21 Ibid., p. 28.
man's baseness, "he might have been better prepared for the animality of the Yahoos."22 With the Houyhnhnms, Winton suggests, Gulliver finds a Garden of Eden: an enlightened country and religion. His experience in such a country, says Winton, causes Gulliver to react violently to men and their Yahoonees when he returns to the world and attempts to make converts.23 In conclusion, Winton points out that when men fail to respond to Gulliver's overtures, the reader realizes that Gulliver's religion, suitable for the Houyhnhnms in a paradise which has the evil forces under control, cannot work in this world.24

The opinions of Martin Kallich, also expressed in 1960, are almost identical to those of Calhoun Winton. Kallich attempts to "provide perspective" for the heart of his essay by making a "frankly unhistorical" analysis of the relationship between Houyhnhnms and Yahoos and Western culture. He sets up a series of contrasts between the culture of the horses and that of the Yahoos: Yahoo society is anarchistic, individualistic, chaotic, disorganized, whereas the Houyhnhnms' is stable and ordered; the Yahoos practice equality modified by force, but the Houyhnhnms accept subordination; Yahoos have no culture, but the Houyhnhnms' culture is simple, static, and economically and technically backward. Kallich believes that the "fatal flaws of horse culture from the contemporary point

22 Ibid., p. 27.  
23 Ibid., pp. 29-31  
24 Ibid., p. 32.
of view are . . . its absence of certain fundamental values and ideals, such as progress, freedom, independence, political equality, and an individualism somewhat tempered by social consciousness." These values are ones which a contemporary society cultivates but which Swift in his day did not particularly care for, Kallich states.25 Having proved to his own satisfaction that neither Swift nor the modern reader approves of the society of the horses, Kallich then employs an anachronistic fallacy by imposing Freudian psychology on the Houyhnhnms' control of passion and sex life. He points out that the horses are superficially agreeable, temperate, and placid but that they have no depth or strong will power: they are "incapable of passion." From the modern viewpoint, says Kallich, passion is close to sexual love and cannot be "entirely purged away." He adds, "In the Age of Freud the Houyhnhnms' inner check and restraint, careful birth control and eugenic breeding suggest frigid austerity and almost puritanical inhibition, despite the curious contradiction of their psychiatrically modern nudism." In further attempts to confirm that the Houyhnhnms are not ideal creatures, Kallich proposes that the horse sense which the Houyhnhnms have is not the same as wisdom, that the Houyhnhnms live according to nature and only accept their lot, that theirs is a "spineless prudence" which modern men do not

admire, and that sometimes the Houyhnhnm master's statements come "dangerously close to the sin of pride, an odious type of human arrogance that Swift particularly enjoyed satirizing." In another sequence of arguments Kallich uses Swift's religious beliefs to discredit any assumption that the Houyhnhnms were, to Swift, ideal creatures. Swift rejected the reasonable existence of the Houyhnhnms, says Kallich, because they lacked any religious life. He goes on to say that Swift, who believed that faith was necessary for the truly religious life, intended his "irony to indicate that the life of horse sense is imperfect because irreligious, no less than arid and rigorous." Bringing up the deist controversy again, Kallich points out that Swift "would have detected more than a faint resemblance between [the Houyhnhnms'] religious views and practices and those of the deists." Kallich further suggests that Gulliver is deceived by the appearance of the horses and that he becomes the object of Swift's satire in order to show that the life of reason which the Houyhnhnms lead is inadequate and absurd in human society. Kallich then reveals the reasoning process which he used to arrive at his conclusion: "If Gulliver under the influence of a misapplied horse sense is shown to be a misanthropic fool rendered unfit for normal human society, it is only right to infer that because he doesn't adopt Gulliver's worshipful attitude Swift intimates at the close of Voyage Four that common-sense

26 Ibid., pp. 100-110.
is not enough to live by and that the horses are not utopian models of virtue and piety." 27 Finally, to support all of his arguments, Kallich explains how the Houyhnhnms parallel the deists of Swift's time. First, he says that directly contrary to what Swift believed, the deists and the Houyhnhnms thought that the Scriptures and Christian doctrine were not necessary to establish religion and morality. 28 Second, says Kallich, both the Houyhnhnms and the deists believed that a moral life could be achieved by living in accord with natural, reasonable principles and that men, or the Houyhnhnms, were essentially able to do so. Swift believed, however, Kallich says, that man was incapable of living well unless he received divine assistance in overcoming his frailties. 29 Third, Kallich notes that Swift often went to reactionary extremes to protect religious doctrine: Swift believed that in order to avoid a charge of heresy, the deists did not openly disavow the divinity of Christ. Since Swift could not be unambiguous about statement of what he thought was deistic heresy, says Kallich, he indirectly damned the deists of his day by providing no Christ-figure for the horses. 30 Kallich's final argument is similar to his third. He says that Swift believed that the clergy was essential for order and purity and that to be without the church, as the Houyhnhnms were, was to be discredited. 31

27 Ibid., pp. 112-113.  
28 Ibid., p. 114.  
29 Ibid., p. 117.  
30 Ibid., pp. 119-120.  
31 Ibid., pp. 121-122.
In 1960 Richard Dircks also sought to prove that the Houyhnhnms were not Swift's moral ideal for mankind. His "reading" of the fourth voyage is based on the assumption that through the Houyhnhnms Swift was satirizing the way of life to which the social theories of the Whigs might lead if these theories were carried to excess. Dircks presents in his article a number of disjointed arguments which he feels prove his point. First, Dircks suggests that in *Gulliver's Travels*, as well as in other works, Swift acknowledges little difference between a philosopher and a fool. Since the Houyhnhnms are often compared to philosophers in the fourth voyage, Dircks assumes that Swift intended for the horses to be viewed ironically. In a second argument Dircks points out that the Whigs based their social theories on Locke's philosophical speculations and that Locke's ideas were similar to those of the Houyhnhnms'. For instance, both societies—Locke's and the Houyhnhnms'—precluded any consideration of feelings or emotions in personal relationships; both applied reason to social conduct to eliminate all worry and disturbance; both concerned themselves with the preservation of the species; both supported the caste system in which servants were of a separate class. Dircks suggests that if one follows "to a

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completely logical conclusion" the two basic principles of Locke's thought, "the purely rational approach, and the concern for the proper preservation of the species," the resulting society, similar to the one envisioned by the Whigs who interpreted Locke's teachings, will be like that of Swift's Houyhnhnms. Concerning the caste system advocated by both Locke and Houyhnhnms, Dircks points out that during the early eighteenth century the government paid little attention to the plight of the poor members of the lower class and that the Whig interpretation of Locke's ideas encouraged the austerity of the government. That Swift should portray the Houyhnhnms' society in terms which were applicable to the Whig administration is to Dircks certain proof that the horses did not represent Swift's moral ideal.36

In another argument designed to prove that the Houyhnhnms are not ideal creatures, Dircks points out that in Gulliver's Travels Swift violently condemns the use of precedents in courts of law and that Gulliver is expelled from Houyhnhnmland partly because a Yahoo had never before lived with a Houyhnhnm.37 Dircks next explains the similarities between the English parliament of Swift's day and the general assembly of the horses, noting that neither accomplished much and that neither decided

36 Ibid., pp. 140-141.
37 Ibid., p. 142.
anything of real importance. Even though Gulliver thought the Houyhnhnms' governing body effective, says Dircks, Swift and the reader, who sympathize with Gulliver, believe it to be unjust because it voted to expel Gulliver. Finally, Dircks believes that Gulliver's deterioration as a human being after his fourth voyage suggests that Swift is satirizing the utopian society, which eighteenth-century philosophers advocated, and the effect of this society upon mankind. Gulliver emerges misanthropic, says Dircks, because the ideal society which he has viewed is not available to the rest of mankind and because he becomes proud of his knowledge of what he believes to be a better life.

The latest statement that the Houyhnhnms' society is not ideal was presented in 1961 by Jim Corder, who, like James Wilson, extended the critical theories of John F. Ross. Corder's thesis is that "the idea of perfection is alien to most great comic works, which by their very nature do not treat perfection directly." In support of his hypothesis, Corder asserts that since Swift is not the Gulliver who "is perpetually seizing fragments of human nature as if they were the whole truth," Houyhnhnmland is not Swift's utopia. Corder sees the work as


comic because Gulliver is constantly changing his point of view to agree with that of his hosts, whether Lilliputian, Brobdingnagian, or Houyhnhnm, who, all, Corder believes, act like Englishmen. "Both the hideousness of the Yahoos and the rationalism of the Houyhnhnms are the satirically effective misconceptions of a misguided man seeing normal situations from the wrong point of view." Most of the arguments presented by these critics, who believe that the Houyhnhnms were not Swift's moral ideal for mankind, are generally tenuous and unconvincing. Those who suggested that the horses embody deistic principles seemed to have been inspired by Ehrenpreis's essay of 1957. In 1962, when he denounced his earlier statements, these critics were left with almost no support. Perhaps the greatest weakness in this school of Swiftian criticism is that only negatives, few positives, are emphasized. The next group of critics, agreeing that the horses are not ideal, offers at the same time a positive alternative.

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41 Ibid., p. 103.
CHAPTER IV

MAN: THE COMPROMISE

Just as with most controversial issues there are proponents of both extremes and at least one faction in the middle, so it is with Swiftian criticism, especially regarding the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." Disagreements arise when scholars attempt to define Swift's attitude toward mankind. On one side are those scholars who believe that the Houyhnhnms represent Swift's moral ideal for man. On the other are scholars who believe just the opposite. Both of these parties have already been considered. The critics who have chosen the middle way, however, have shifted their concern from the nature of the Houyhnhnms to the nature of man. They believe that, for Swift, man's rightful position in the universe lay somewhere between the pure reason of the Houyhnhnms and the pure bestiality of the Yahoos. However, among these critics there is little agreement about what Swift thought of the beings at each extreme and about his attitude toward man's place between the two extremes.

The need for a reappraisal of Swift and his writings caused Kathleen Williams, in 1958, to set forth her findings in a book entitled Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise. She assumes that most misunderstandings about Swift arise when
his works are considered in isolation, that the Houyhnhnms embodies deistic principles, that Swift was a "responsible satirist" who made his meaning sufficiently clear to the careful reader, and that a spirit of compromise rather than of extremism dominates Swift's work.\textsuperscript{1} In the chapter devoted to Gulliver's Travels, she considers each of the voyages in turn and then takes up the fourth voyage, immediately defending Swift's satiric genius and denouncing the possibility that the Houyhnhnms could represent Swift's ideal.\textsuperscript{2} She examines the similarities between the characters in the utopian voyages of the seventeenth century and the characters in Gulliver's Travels. She says that Swift is true to his tendency to compromise when he bridges the traditional gap between the reasonable and the unreasonable beings of the utopian voyages with a character, Gulliver, who is neither rational nor irrational, but both.\textsuperscript{3} Williams suggests that the Houyhnhnms, reasonable though they may be, have negative as well as positive significance. Positively, she says, they are "creatures of nature and reason," and they are also horses, which were considered the "noblest of animals" and symbols of passion and power. Negatively, Swift's horses lack the fire and life which their shape traditionally suggests, and their rational

\textsuperscript{1}Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise, (Lawrence, Kansas, 1958), "Preface."

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 178-180.
virtue is "alien to mankind": they are not human beings in any sense. 4 Williams says that their life of reason is "instinctive, inborn and all-embracing." 5 She points out that Swift constantly insists that the Houyhnhnms are reasonable creations of nature and that their actions follow logically from their natural state. It is not conceivable, maintains Williams, that man would ever be able to attain an existence "different not in degree simply, but in kind, from anything possible to man." 6

In support of her assertion that the Houyhnhnms represent deistic principles, Williams suggests that Swift chose "one of the noblest of the animal creation as a symbol of self-sufficient reason" in order to discount the traditional seventeenth- and eighteenth-century view--deistic and rationalistic--of the uniqueness of man. 7 The "chief characteristic" of deism, says Williams, is the insistence upon reason as a sufficient guide for man's actions. She points out that Swift, well acquainted with the writings of two prominent deists, Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury, recognized the folly of living by reason and nature alone, with no religious principles on which to base a virtuous life. 8 Swift was certain, says Williams, that man's passions and opinions could not be totally discounted, that nature and reason did not teach

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4 Ibid., p. 184.
5 Ibid., p. 186.
6 Ibid., p. 187.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 188.
detachment, benevolence, serenity, and the difference between right and wrong, and that only religion could control and guide man's natural instincts. Williams then points out that Swift purposely made the Houyhnhnms unsympathetic targets of ironic treatment so that the reader might recognize the true nature of the philosophy which the horses represent. Williams adds, however, that Swift also uses the Houyhnhnms to serve as a contrast to Western man, whose activities Gulliver recounts, and to embody reasonable virtues, such as honesty and truthfulness.

In contrast to the Houyhnhnms, who are inhuman because they lack passions and affections, the Yahoos, says Williams, are at the opposite extreme: they react to nothing but bodily passions and sensations. She says that Swift set up this absolute contrast between the "hideously physical Yahoos" and the coldly rational Houyhnhnms in order to show that the deistic attempt to consider reason as a sufficient guide for human conduct must fail because of the elemental forces which reason has to contend with. Gulliver's relationship with the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, says Williams, points directly to the conclusion about mankind which Swift wished the reader to draw. Gulliver's most humiliating experience is the

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9 Ibid., pp. 190-191.  
10 Ibid., p. 192.  
11 Ibid.  
12 Ibid., p. 193.
recognition of his physical resemblance to the Yahoos,\textsuperscript{13} and Williams adds that when Gulliver tries to live like a Houyhnhnm, ignoring bodily instincts and passions, he "loses himself in a world of extremes, seeing nothing of the larger, more inclusive truth to be gained by moving between them." As often in his other works, says Williams, Swift presents extreme moral values--in the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos--for satiric purposes. She suggests that when Gulliver accepts these values as absolute, supposing that man cannot be Houyhnhnm and must be all Yahoo,\textsuperscript{14} he becomes a fool for he does not identify himself with the rest of mankind and does not feel disgust for himself as he does for other men.\textsuperscript{15} She also proposes that because Gulliver chooses to judge men by standards which are not really applicable to mankind, he becomes a misanthrope. Williams suggests at this point that Swift believed that Gulliver's fate is the only one which can await the deists, who Swift felt held illusory dreams which mankind could never live up to.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, says Williams, in the letter from Gulliver which Swift prefaced to the 1735 edition of \textit{Gulliver's Travels}, Gulliver reveals his "extremism, with its unrealistic view of what man can achieve followed by utter pessimism when he does not achieve it." Williams adds that

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 194. \hfill \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., pp. 198-199. \hfill \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 199. \hfill \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 200.
Swift had evidently found that he had to underline the meaning of Gulliver's conclusions about mankind.\(^{17}\)

Unlike the critics who contend that the Houyhnhnms were not Swift's moral ideal for mankind, Kathleen Williams suggests that Swift intended for his readers to work toward another goal, a lower one. She believes that Swift established the Brobdingnagians of the second voyage and most of the minor characters of the fourth voyage as the standard for mankind. Swift, she says, tells the reader not to expect too much of mankind.\(^{18}\) She says, "The proper life for man is not that of Yahoo or of Houyhnhnm, for he has in him something of both, and in the blending of passion and reason, body and mind, something different from these simple, natural creatures is engendered." She suggests that the Brobdingnagians and Don Pedro are "a compromise between extremes" and represent an ideal which is not beyond man's reach. Swift marks the limits, she says, and indirectly presents the "right course," which is "to avoid extremes and the distortions to which they give rise."\(^{19}\) For Swift, Williams believes, the middle way was the Christian way, which provided the necessary morality for what he believed to be a good life.\(^{20}\)

In an article written in 1959 which is mostly concerned with Swift's place in "the happy beast tradition," Albert Ball

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 201.  \(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 204.  \(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 205.  \(^{20}\)Ibid., pp. 208-209.
finds that Swift believed "brute nature" to be distinct from human nature. Swift assumed, says Ball, that brutes maintain their position in the universe, but that man, riddled with sin, can easily degenerate to a baser condition. However, Ball adds, Swift thought that brutes will never surpass human beings, even though the animals can teach man how to live a more nearly rational life. The fact that animals could help man constitutes most of Swift's satiric attack upon mankind, Ball suggests. Ball then points out that Swift often attacked man's pride in believing himself far above animals on the great chain of being but that Swift also made fun of man's tendency to identify human nature too closely with animal nature. In Gulliver's Travels, Ball believes, Swift carries the admiration of animal nature to its logical extreme by making the beast the master and man the servant. Ball also proposes, however, that the Houyhnhnms are comic figures because they are not suited for many activities in which they engage. Swift's juxtaposition of Yahoo and Houyhnhnm, says Ball, is an illustration of his often-used method of displaying extremes and implying that a preference lies between the two. Ball believes that Gulliver chose the rational animal


22 Ibid., p. 243.  

23 Ibid., p. 246.  

24 Ibid., p. 247.
rather than the bestial Yahoo as a pattern for his behavior because Gulliver in his innocence decided that it would be better to imitate a rational beast than an odious, irrational man. But the incongruity of Gulliver's proposed way of life, says Ball, does not occur to him because he can see only one side of the question. He cannot see that he lies between the extremes, an insight that Swift wished to impart to his readers.25

In the following year, Charles Peake published an essay which, like Ball's, is not primarily concerned with the controversy regarding Swift's concept of mankind. Peake attempts to prove that Swift did not condemn human passions but that Swift recognized that man without passions and sensibilities would be an impossibility. In speaking of the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," Peake contends that the horses were not Swift's ideal for human society. The Houyhnhnm way of life, he says, "represents imaginatively a point of view from which human behaviour and human society can be profitably examined." Peake believes that the Houyhnhnms and men are fundamentally different and that Swift placed horses and Yahoos on either side of the human psyche just as he placed Brobdingnagians and Lilliputians on either side of man's physique. Gulliver, says Peake, was to occupy the central position between the two extremes.26 Peake believes that Swift's purposes in writing


were to contrast the life of so-called civilized man with a higher order of beings and also to point out similarities between man and a disgusting race of brutes in order to show how men really live. In agreement with Williams, Peake states that Houyhnhnm reason is not like man's reason, for that of the horses is infallible, perfect; their lack of passions and the quality of their reason make them different from men.  

In conclusion, Peake suggests that the general purpose of Gulliver's Travels was to attack man's pride: "The comparison with the Houyhnhnms humbles man's pride in his rationality by presenting a genuine animal rationale; the comparison with the Yahoos destroys man's pride in the use he has made of his capacity for reason."  

The Power of Satire, written in 1960 by Robert Elliott, deals largely with the origin and achievements of satire, but the author does devote several pages to Swift and to Gulliver's "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." Elliott's approach is different from that of other critics of his school. Unlike Williams, who proposes that the Houyhnhnms embody deistic principles, and unlike Williams, Ball, and others, who suggest that Swift presented two extremes and expected his readers to choose the middle way, Elliott tries to show that Swift plainly indicates in Book IV that neither the Houyhnhnms nor Gulliver is fit to

27 Ibid., p. 178.

28 Ibid., p. 179.
judge mankind and that the Houyhnhnms, therefore, do not represent Swift's moral ideal. Elliott points out, first of all, that Gulliver, not Swift, views the horses as physically, mentally, and morally perfect.\textsuperscript{29} The scene in which the Houyhnhnms denigrate the human body is "very funny," says Elliott; it is true comedy.\textsuperscript{30} However, Elliott adds, the Houyhnhnms' attitude "undercuts their authority" and raises doubts in the reader's mind about their adequacy as judges of human conduct. Similarly, says Elliott, Swift urges the reader to question Gulliver's authority. Elliott points out that Gulliver's "capacities in matters requiring moral and intellectual discrimination have not been such as to inspire confidence":\textsuperscript{31} he cannot distinguish morally between the savages whom he meets immediately after leaving Houyhnhnmland and the kind Portuguese sailors, especially Don Pedro; he stuffs his nose to ward off the hated smell of humanity; he talks willingly only to horses.\textsuperscript{32} In other words, says Elliott, Gulliver's behavior is absurd: he "persistently moulds the world according to his idea of it, instead of moulding his idea according to the reality of things." Swift further discredits Gulliver's vision of mankind, says Elliott, by having the weary traveler discourse violently against pride, a sin

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\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 212.
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 213.
which he flagrantly violates, and by having him exalt for the edification of mankind a faculty—Houyhnhnm reason—which is "unmistakably supra-human."  

Like the other critics who believe that Swift does urge an attainable goal upon mankind, Elliott believes that Don Pedro is the embodiment of Swift's positive standard, a man who redeems his kind from the charge of total Yahooism. Elliott also points out that "by a neat ironic twist," Swift makes Gulliver voice standards which are closer to being within man's reach. In the letter to his cousin Sympson, Gulliver despairs in the face of man's depravity:

Behold, after above six Months Warning, I cannot learn that my Book hath produced one single Effect according to mine Intentions: I desired you would let me know by a Letter, when Party and Faction were extinguished; Judges learned and upright; Pleaders honest and modest, with some Tincture of common Sense; and Smithfield blazing with Pyramids of Law-Books; the young Nobility's Education entirely changed; the Physicians banished; the Female Yahoos abounding in Virtue, Honour, Truth and good Sense: Courts and Levees of great Ministers thoroughly weeded and swept; Wit, Merit and Learning rewarded; all Disgracers of the Press in Prose and Verse, condemned to eat nothing but their own Cotton, and quench their Thirst with their own Ink. These, and a Thousand other Re-formations, I firmly counted upon by your Encouragement; as indeed they were plainly deducible from the Precepts delivered in my Book.

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33 Ibid., p. 214.  
34 Ibid., p. 215.  
Although the next two scholars agree with the earlier critics who suggest that Swift urged men to work toward an attainable ethical standard, they seem to have heeded the suggestions of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics who charged Swift with misanthropy. Instead of emphasizing the point which Williams and Peake make that men do not naturally possess the type of reason which the Houyhnhnms have, Clarence Tracy and Ernest Tuveson stress man's inability to rise any higher than his position half-way between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo. Like other modern scholars, Tracy points out that the horses' lack of warmth and affection and their pride are not faults because the Houyhnhnms are of a moral order completely beyond man's understanding. He says that they lack qualities, not essential to them, but important to man, qualities developed in man since the fall. In their world of naked, impersonal rationality, says Tracy, the upper class Houyhnhnms have no occasion for softer human emotions. Tracy goes on to explain that Gulliver's reaction to the Houyhnhnms on his return home is part of Swift's satiric attack against man's pride. Gulliver's behavior is ridiculous because he has been "spoiled" by contact with super-human beings. Tracy adds, Swift "neither satirizes nor idealizes the Houyhnhnms, but he very powerfully

37 See above, Chapter I.

saturizes the man who, like Gulliver, makes a fool of himself by mistaking them for a viable human ideal."  

Swift's message, says Tracy, is that imperfect man should not attempt to measure himself against "eternal verities."  

Like Tracy, Ernest Tuveson, in an essay written in 1964, assumes that for Swift human nature was neither angelic nor dispicable. Tuveson believes that Swift indicates that man is basically Yahoo, but that man's "recessive character" can be civilized and strengthened by such elements as religion, government, traditional wisdom, and family, so that he can be governed by goodness, instead of by his baseness. Swift suggests, says Tuveson, that if man is left to himself, he will, like the Yahoos, revert to his dominant nature.  

Tuveson also points out that Swift has Gulliver meet good people, like Pedro de Mendez and Gulliver's family, so that the reader will recognize that when he himself acts according to his true nature, he is a Yahoo, but that when he is reasonable, his Yahoo nature has been deflected. With a new twist to the old concept of Swift as the great misanthropist, Tuveson concludes that Gulliver serves as a warning that if man encounters the Yahoones in others, he should not despair but should

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39 Ibid., p. 605.  
40 Ibid., p. 609.  
42 Ibid., p. 13.
"strengthen the potentialities for good which, though weak and often defeated, do in fact exist." Ours, says Tuveson, should be "a wise and productive misanthropy."\(^{43}\)

R. S. Crane's major contribution to the scholarly discussion of Gulliver's Travels appeared in 1962. If Crane is to be believed, the arguments which state that Swift urged an attainable goal upon mankind are nothing but the result of misconceptions and poor scholarly technique. Unlike younger scholars, Crane bases his arguments on "ordinary historical evidence," independent of "any general postulates about Swift or his age."\(^{44}\) He believes that the central issue of the fourth voyage turns on the definition of man: "is man, or is he not, correctly defined as a 'rational creature'?" During his stay in Houyhnhnmland, says Crane, Gulliver realizes that his own idea of man's nature is incompatible with what man actually is. Crane has found that Gulliver reaches this conclusion by observing the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos as two distinct sets of creatures, one rational and one brutish, in which the qualities of mankind and brute are the reverse of the situation in Gulliver's own world.\(^{45}\) Crane cannot agree with those critics who believe that men should be considered the intermediate species between Houyhnhnms and Yahoo. There is no

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 14.


\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 243.
textual evidence to support the idea, he says. He points out that man is only a civilized type of Yahoo, who is fundamentally irrational, and that man's reason is only an acquired characteristic which "he is always in danger of losing and of which, as Gulliver says, he makes no other use, generally speaking, than 'to improve and multiply those vices'" which the Yahoos possessed only in the amount that nature allowed them.\textsuperscript{46}

As already noted, Crane believes that in the fourth voyage Swift was trying to make his readers re-examine their traditional definition of man. He points out that Swift's readers were aware of a body of writings which drew reason as the dividing line between man and brute. Swift knew that his readers accepted man as a rational creature, says Crane, and he proceeded to turn their idea upside down by creating rational horses and irrational men. The writings in question consisted of logic textbooks, which every literate person of the age had read, Crane says.\textsuperscript{47} Crane points out that the early eighteenth-century logicians, such as Narcissus Marsh, used as the standard example of the irrational animal the horse, who was man's opposite on the scale of reason. Crane has concluded that the whole idea of \textit{Gulliver's Travels} rests on Swift's determination to proclaim the falsity of the logicians' definition of man as \textit{animal rationale}.\textsuperscript{48} To confirm his arguments, Crane

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 244. \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 245. \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 253.
attempts to prove that Swift had the writings of the logicians in mind when he was writing *Gulliver's Travels*. Crane points out that in two letters to Pope, which were written just after Swift finished his *Travels*, Swift mentions "that definition, that is, the logicians' definition, "which states that men are rational animals, and says that he has always rejected it. Crane says that in letters Swift was not alluding to "contemporary philosophical or theological heresies," such as Shaftesburianism or deism, but to the logicians' definition of man.\(^4\) Crane also points out that in a famous letter to Pope in which Swift states his own hatred of mankind and his love for individuals, Swift uses the names John, Peter, and Thomas. Crane says that this series of names, from a text by Narcissus Marsh, suggests examples of individuals under the species of man.\(^5\) Crane believes that such "historical evidence" points directly to Swift's purposes and intentions.

Among critics who believe that Swift placed man between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo on the scale of reason the crucial points of controversy again turn on the individual's attitude toward Swift. Williams and the earlier critics explain away the ill temper and biting satire which Tracy and Tuveson make as manifestations of Swift's deep and abiding misanthropy. Crane, with his "historical evidence," negates the findings of them all.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Since the recent criticism of Swift's "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" has arisen along three fairly well-defined avenues of approach, it is relatively easy to determine what are the current opinions regarding Gulliver's fourth voyage. There is some disagreement about Swift's attitude toward mankind among those scholars who follow traditional lines and believe that Swift presented the Houyhnhnms as ideal creatures whom men were to imitate. Some of these critics--Sherburn, Rosenheim, and Traugott, for instance--believe that to Swift the idealized existence of the Houyhnhnms was beyond man's reach and that Swift, therefore, expressed a misanthropic conclusion about mankind. Ehrenpreis, Halewood, and Levich, on the other hand, assume that even though the Houyhnhnms did represent Swift's moral ideal for mankind, he thought that man could attain, if not the ideal, at least a close approximation of it. Along a second avenue are the scholars who have broken with tradition to propose that the Houyhnhnms were not Swift's ideal. Of these, Wilson and Corder suggest that the horses are comic figures and cannot, therefore, be ideal, and Winton and Kallich point out deistic characteristics among the Houyhnhnms and conclude that Swift was satirizing deistic principles through
the horses. Dissension marks even the third group of critics, those who believe that Swift thought of man somewhere between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo on the scale of reason. Williams, Peake, and Elliott believe that Swift indicates that the Houyhnhnms' life would not be desirable for mankind and that he urged a lower goal upon his readers. Tracy and Tuveson, however, revert to traditional attitudes to suggest that Swift believed man to be basically Yahoo in nature, although his nature could be improved with proper training.

Just as interesting and informative as the critical opinions expressed on the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" are the critical methods which form the basis for popular opinion. For instance, many of the scholars who wrote between 1958 and 1965 reiterated ideas expressed by earlier critics. Harkening back to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concept of Swift the misanthropist are Sherburn, Traugott, Tracy, and Tuveson, among others. Although these critics are not as dogmatic as their predecessors, they must be considered the recipients of a long tradition of Swiftian criticism. Recent critics, especially those who have rebelled against the traditional interpretation of the Houyhnhnms, have often been unmistakably influenced by twentieth-century criticism. The writings of Ross and Ehrenpreis form the basis for arguments by Kallich, Wilson, Winton, and others, but when Ehrenpreis withdrew his support in 1962, the ideas engendered by these critics began to crumble. Among scholars who contend that
man's ideal position lies between Houyhnhnm and Yahoo, the opinions expressed by Theodore Wedel in 1926 seem to be particularly valuable. Wedel was perhaps the first critic to suggest the dual nature of Gulliver, and man, and his work may have stimulated Williams, Ball, and some others to expand his ideas.

The tendency to rely upon earlier commentary for inspiration seems to have stifled true scholarly investigation in recent years, for very little evidence has been presented which can in any way be considered new. Although Ehrenpreis did, in 1957, point out that Swift had a horse named Bolingbroke, thus the connection between horses and deists, the only critic who has brought forth fresh ideas since 1958 is R. S. Crane. His essay, which illustrates the value of historical evidence in the study of literary productions, proposes that throughout Gulliver's Travels Swift attempted to explain to mankind the weaknesses of the animal rationale definition of man, which authors of seventeenth-century logic textbooks had encouraged their readers to accept. Crane's essay, however, is not the only one which is valuable for present and future study of Swift's work. Williams, for example, sees the eighteenth century as an "age of compromise." Swift, she says, offers Don Pedro and the Brobdingnagians as the compromise for man between the reason of the Houyhnhnms and the non-reason of the Yahooos. Williams also builds a solid case for her assertion that the Houyhnhnms embody deistic principles, and her stand
has encouraged contradiction and further investigation. Another scholar who has presented a valuable work, and who cannot agree with Williams, is Edward Rosenheim. In an interpretation which seems to be based only on Gulliver's Travels, that is, with no use of secondary sources, Rosenheim finds that the horses cannot possibly represent deists and that Swift conceived of man's state as only a misanthrope could. Rosenheim's attempt at being objective reflects his sincere desire to reach the heart of the problem of Swiftian criticism. Although other critics have at times suggested valuable insights, Crane, Williams, and Rosenheim have presented the most worthwhile studies of the fourth voyage.

Often, the less important critics damage their arguments by imposing a "frame of reference" upon the fourth voyage, or Gulliver's Travels in general. Such "readings" tend to deny the complexity of Swift's work, purposes, and personality. Perhaps the most extraordinary interpretation of the fourth voyage was published in 1961. Maurice Johnson assumes that Gulliver's Travels is a series of travels, not on land and sea, but through the narrator's mind. Johnson very conveniently makes a few of the details of the story fit his "reading," and he evidently believes that he has contributed much to the general understanding of Swift's work. Another critic who imposes a set of ideas upon Gulliver's Travels is Martin Kallich, who assumes, among other things, that since the Houyhnhnms control sex life and employ eugenic breeding, they are Freudian
examples of "frigid austerity" and "puritanical inhibition": Unfortunately, these are by no means the only critics who rely on such questionable critical methods.

Too often directions in critical studies are governed, not by what Gulliver's Travels says or by the temper of Swift's age, but by the writer's preconceived notion of Swift. Such notions enabled eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and some twentieth-century scholars to see Swift only as a terrible misanthrope. Scholars who believe that the Houyhnhnms do not represent Swift's moral ideal for mankind evidently want to believe that Swift, or any man, perhaps, was not as menacing as he is pictured to be. These critics are the ones who sought and found a new image of Swift to present to the modern reader.

Of the more than twenty articles and books which add to the current controversy about the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," none presents a complete, wholly accurate, sensible interpretation of Swift's attitude toward mankind, the Houyhnhnms, and the Yahoos. What seems to be the most profitable approach to the problem is present, in part, in Crane's essay. But the successful critic will have to consider, not only historical evidence, but also the intellectually shaping events of Swift's life and all of Swift's other work. In other words, he will have to know Swift and his age better than did Swift himself.
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