

UNIVERSIDAD DE ALMERÍA



GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

**THE CLASSICAL TRADITION
IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*:
GULLIVER AS A NEW ODYSSEUS**

**LA TRADICIÓN CLÁSICA
EN *LOS VIAJES DE GULLIVER*:
GULLIVER COMO UN NUEVO ODISEO**

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Abstract: This project outlines both the differences and similarities between Swift's novel, its 1996 film adaptation, and Homer's masterpiece, *The Odyssey*. On the one hand, the classical tradition provides the foundation for reception studies, which are essentially concerned with the democratic metaphor. These studies are very relevant since they have made it possible to identify the intertext of the aforementioned adaptation. For its part, film studies emphasize the important role that this adaptation (as well as many others) plays from an educational point of view. On the other hand, the similarities between Gulliver and Odysseus are successfully traced, thus reaching the purpose of this project. To summarise, both characters have been shipwrecked several times and they have spent a long time away from their families and homelands. In addition, they discovered all kinds of unknown lands and people during their unfortunate travels. They also managed to survive when their companions passed away. And, finally, they had to reclaim the place that was rightfully theirs. It can be said that director Charles Sturridge chose the Homeric character, Odysseus, to remake an already brilliant work. To do so, he had to be the receiver of both classical works.

Keywords: classical tradition; Charles Sturridge; film studies; *Gulliver's Travels*; intertext; *The Odyssey*; reception studies.

Resumen: Este proyecto esboza tanto las diferencias como las similitudes entre la novela de Swift, su adaptación cinematográfica de 1996 y la obra maestra de Homero, *La Odisea*. Por un lado, la tradición clásica sirve de base para los estudios de recepción, que se ocupan esencialmente de la metáfora democrática. Estos estudios son muy pertinentes, ya que han permitido identificar el hipotexto de la ya citada adaptación. Por su parte, los estudios cinematográficos destacan el importante papel que desempeña esta adaptación (al igual que muchas otras) desde el punto de vista educativo. Por otra parte, se trazan con éxito las similitudes entre Gulliver y Odiseo, alcanzado así el propósito de este proyecto. En resumen, ambos personajes han naufragado varias veces y han pasado mucho tiempo lejos de sus familias y tierras natales. Además, descubrieron todo tipo de tierras y personas desconocidas durante sus desafortunados viajes. También lograron sobrevivir cuando sus camaradas fallecieron. Y, finalmente, tuvieron que reclamar el lugar que les correspondía por derecho. Puede decirse que el director Charles Sturridge eligió al personaje homérico, Odiseo, para rehacer una obra brillante. Para ello, tuvo que ser receptor de ambas obras clásicas.

Palabras clave: Charles Sturridge; estudios cinematográficos; estudios de recepción; hipotexto; *La Odisea*; *Los viajes de Gulliver*; tradición clásica.

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1. Introduction

1.1. *Classical tradition and reception studies*

It is known, fortunately, that the first time the adjective “classical” appeared to refer to the best authors was in the second century in a book called *Attic Nights*, by Aulus Gellius. However, this concept has a social nature, as it was originated to represent the members of the highest class, because society was divided into different strata. Thus, the word *classicus* was intended to imply only the people who belonged to the first social class and, metaphorically, it also referred to a brilliant and atemporal literary society. In that sense, the term *proletarius* was created to refer to the lowest stratum of society. This later acquired a negative denotation as it also referred to the worst authors. Nevertheless, what we understand nowadays as classical authors, which are the ones who are the best regardless their literature or period, for Aulus Gellius was understood as the most ancient Latin authors: from Plautus (third century BCE) to Virgil (first century BCE).

For its part, the classical tradition can be ironic, poetic (from Greek ποιήσις, *poiēsis*, which means ‘creation’), and even become fictitious according to Francisco García Jurado (2016). In other words, if we do not know the classical works directly but through modern references, we may have certain convictions about some classical authors and their legacy that are not well grounded.

In the field of reception studies there are two fundamental aspects to consider: what reception means and how it is described, analysed, or valued. Reception has three meanings: the first is understood as the sum of artistic and intellectual processes in the adaptation of ancient works, as well as how the text was received and how later works relate to the source. It also deals with the relationship between this process and the contexts in which it takes place —i.e., external factors to the prime source, such as the receiver’s knowledge about that source— contribute to its reception, and it may introduce new dimensions. There is also a purpose for the realisation of a new work or the appropriation of ideas or values which, for example, can be used as a way to legitimise something or someone in the present, whether artistic, cultural, educational, political or social.

As many other concepts, such as freedom, the classical tradition does not have a fixed meaning either. This is because human beings have different ways of

understanding, as, according to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), our thinking is based on metaphors. The first metaphor is the HEREDITARY, specifically, the one that conceives the classical tradition as a “legacy” or a “heritage” which is transmitted from one generation to another. In this case, tradition is not understood as art, but rather as an academic and/or an educational resource.

Regarding the transmission of the classical tradition, it is worth asking whether it has survived uninterruptedly or not; thus, the metaphor of IMMORTALITY becomes relevant. Its prevalence can be understood as something continuous throughout the ages or as something that has been revived thanks to our efforts.

On the other hand, the influence of these ancient texts is visible in later literature, and this concept is key to understand the metaphor of INFECTION. This means that the modern authors have been influenced (from the Italian and mid eighteenth-century English word *influenza*, which means “gripe” in Spanish) —that is, infected— by the ancient ones and that they have acquired more and more knowledge, but without forgetting the previous one.

It is known that the receivers of tradition can also be the protagonists, in that they discover in a literary work new meaning that its author may have not clearly devised. However, this gives it a DEMOCRATIC twist from a historical and philosophical point of view. Authors begin to question the superiority of classical texts, which seems almost an argument of authority for them, and they make visible the value of new uninfluenced works.

Special attention is given to the democratic metaphor within reception studies, as it fits perfectly with this trend. In the same way that happens with the classical tradition, there is no definite description for reception; yet there are three theoretical approaches from the seventies that Lorna Hardwick (2003) has enquired into these studies. First, Hans Robert Jauss (1976[1967]) argued that the historical context of a work could not be perceived only by its description. It is necessary a dialogue between producer/artist and reader/consumer for the receiver to cultivate himself/herself within social and cultural contexts. Contrary to Jauss, who relies on literary history, Wolfgang Iser (1987[1972]) develops his theoretical framework in relation to English literature. It is based on the consumer’s response stimulated after reading or becoming immersed in a work, as it can contribute significantly to its final interpretation. For his part, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975[1965]) indirectly contributed to reception studies with his theory that the meaning we attribute to an ancient work is due to the historical impact of its reinterpretations.

In general terms, the sender is the one who transfers the classical tradition, which is understood as an object. From the point of view of the hereditary metaphor, the sender is the one who bequeaths tradition, which is also understood as an object. The metaphor of immortality encompasses the fact that the work survives, and tradition is understood as a ghost. On the other hand, in the metaphor of infection, the work is contagious, as if it were a living organism. And finally, in the democratic metaphor, tradition is seen as a kind of raw material that the receivers are able to transform as they please.

In short, the reception of classical works confirms their continuity and, at the same time, their changes throughout history. Moreover, when analysed, reception reveals both common and different characteristics between ancient and modern authors/texts. It should not be overlooked that, in antiquity, reception is of equal importance, and it should be investigated in the same way as it is nowadays, as this is the only way to clearly recognise the diversity of ancient cultures and their impact on modern ones.

1.2. *Film studies*

Although the very first film was successfully made at the end of the nineteenth century, film studies did not appear until the decade of the 1950s, and approximately ten years later they entered university as a branch of literary studies. However, some critics consider them not as a subdivision of literary studies but as an independent branch. In fact, that very first film from the late 1890s was in fact educational, as well as many others from the 1920s and 1930s after the First World War. Unfortunately, due to different circumstances as a bad preservation, they are not solely accessible nowadays.

This area of study and, more precisely, the field focused on educational purposes, has always been of secondary importance. The reason is, as Dudley Andrew explained, that “from the perspective of the academy, movies could have the effect of devaluing the humanities, while from that of cinephiles the university might very well tamper with the organic rapport of audiences with movies, stunting or unnaturally twisting the development of both” (879). And furthermore, according to many people, at a time when technology had not reached its climax yet, “what cannot be read threatens” (Ray 63).

Nevertheless, film studies started being a more prominent discipline in the 1990s with its own learned society, the so-called “The Society for Cinema Studies”, its

own critics and journals, and even its own departments in some places, as any other traditional field of study.

According to Dennis Cutchins in 2003, film adaptations of literary works used in the classroom can have two main pedagogical purposes. Both film adaptations and literary analyses are acts of interpretation, thus “films can offer both good and bad examples of literary interpretations” (295). And, furthermore, “educational films are spaces and representations of pedagogical knowledge” (Bruch 125).

Moreover, another interesting benefit relies on the changes that writers and directors are forced to do in order to adapt a literary work to the screen. These changes present the limitations of both media and, what is more, students can learn what are the literary and cinematographic distinctions. Differences with literary works are totally necessary in adaptations, which “function in the liminal space between what is ‘literature’ and what is ‘popular culture’, and some adaptations even seem purposefully designed to blur the line between literature and film” (Cutchins 296).

It was to be expected that after an overwhelming demand for films, a field of study about them would finally emerge. These studies have evolved academically over “three ages” (Dudley 341). The first was the Stone Age (from the early twentieth century to the 1960s) where there were few essays and little interest in film studies. In fact, neither cinema nor its study had a fixed identity. It was not until later and thanks to these studies that cinema became “the cinema” (Dudley 342) as an institution on the same level as other arts.

The Imperial Age dates back to the 1970s when students began to be drawn, among other things, to the intertext in films. They were studied from a semiotic, Marxist and/or psychoanalytical point of view. Furthermore, it became a popular topic of discussion in the humanities. And finally, in the Present Age the former approach of focusing exclusively on the three points of view mentioned before has been replaced by several subdivisions, as the feminist film theory, for example.

1.3. *Hypothesis*

The 1996 cinematographic *Gulliver* is considered to be the contemporary Homeric *Odysseus*. In other words, the similarity with the Greek work is much more remarkable in this film than in the novel, which implies that it must be carried out an in-depth study about Swift’s work and its film adaptation, in contrast to the *Odyssey*.

1.4. Methodology

The theoretical basis of this project is focused on the reception studies of classical tradition, as well as on film studies. Therefore, the aim is to highlight intertextuality, which in general terms is the relationship between two literary texts.

For that purpose, it is necessary a comparison between Jonathan Swift's novel and Charles Sturridge's film adaptation. And finally, after identifying the similarities with Homer's *Odyssey* it can be concluded that in the 1996 version intertextuality is more noticeable, since the director has transformed Swift's work in accordance with Homer's masterpiece.

1.5. Status quaestionis

García Jurado (2015) contributes with a study on the different metaphorical conceptualisations of "classical tradition", as well as with its origins and nature. Based on the democratic metaphor, Lorna Hardwick (2003) offers various positive aspects about the study of classical reception and explains three important theoretical approaches.

In the case of film studies, Andrew Dudley (2009) provides the basis for understanding the importance of this field of study. He describes its evolution over time as well as the three different ages (2000) through which it has evolved into what we know nowadays.

Jonathan Swift's biography and way of thinking are captured in the anthology by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (2006). In fact, with this information hidden motives can be identified behind his great satirical works, including *Gulliver's Travels* (2001), whose plot helps to highlight the differences in the 1996 film version.

The translation of *The Odyssey* (2003) by D.C.H. Rieu is the intertext of the adaptation mentioned above. This reveals the similarities between the main characters, allowing us to consider Gulliver as a new, or a modern, Odysseus.

No bibliography has been found about the influence of the classical tradition in the big screen adaptation of Swift's novel. This is the gist of the following analysis and, thus, a field yet to be explored.

2. Specific sections

2.1. Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745)

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin in 1667. He studied at Trinity College but was unable to finish his career there due to the invasion of Ireland, so he moved to England. For several years he read widely and realised his brilliant talent for satire (from Latin *satura/satira*, which means ‘poetic blending’), thus he wrote his famous works against the corruption of learning and religion, *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*, which were published together in 1704.

Years later, he returned to Ireland. Most of his works have great significance as he was a controversial clergyman who supported the Anglican Church. He criticised everything that opposed those ideas, such as the Whig party. With the Tories, he became a great political journalist and was well known and admired. Still in politics, in 1724 he was the leader of the Irish resistance against the English invasion. He was and still is considered a national hero, referring to himself as “a vigorous defender of liberty” (Greenblatt 2302).

His prose is simple, clear, and concise, avoiding the use of ornamentation and, of course, he unleashed his satirical ideas. Swift’s works are made to discover new information each time they are further explored.

He has been called a misanthrope, a hater of humanity, and *Gulliver’s Travels* has been considered an expression of savage misanthropy. It is true that Swift proclaimed himself a misanthrope in a letter to Pope, declaring that, though he loved individuals, he hated “that animal called man” in general and offering a new definition of the species not as *animal rationale* (“a rational animal”) but as merely *animal rationis capax* (“an animal capable of reason”). (Greenblatt 2302)

Essentially, he was against the optimistic view that society had about human nature, i.e., the philanthropic sentimentalism and rationalism. His thinking was more inclined towards the moral and intellectual limitations of the human being, rather than the adulation of our species. Perhaps this was because if we do not recognise our weaknesses or ignore them, we will not be able to improve ourselves.

Nowadays, he is still an admirable and outstanding author, although he was also admired and loved by many coetaneous authors: “Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, John Arbuthnot, John Gay, Matthew Prior, Lord Oxford and Lord Bolingbroke” (Greenblatt 2302).

2.1.1. *His work*

Swift’s satirical work *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is divided into several sections, alternating digressions and the tale itself. The digressions parody several modern authors, whereas in the tale Swift criticised those who relied their thinking on reason, leaving aside what for him was a very important institution: the Church of England. The tale is based on a father who had three sons. The way in which they dressed their inherited clothes represents different religious groups: Peter (Catholic) added more ornaments, including gold, Martin (Anglican) removed all the ornamentation without tearing his clothes, while Jack (Puritan) tore his clothes to get rid of it.

Swift himself explained the following about the choice of that title, showing his disagreement with some of the modern authors, in particular, Thomas Hobbes:

The title refers to the large tub that sailors would throw overboard to divert a whale from ramming their boat. In Swift’s satire, the whale is Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651), a political monster born of Descartes’s mathematical philosophy. Institutional Christianity is the ship that might be sunk in such an onslaught, and its timbers have already been loosened by schismatic factions. (eNotes Editorial par. 1)

Swift’s satirical essay *The Battle of the Books*, which was published together with *A Tale of a Tub* in 1704, deals with the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Both lived on a mountain called Parnassus, but the first ones occupied the highest summit. Thus, the latter were envious because the one where they lived was not so high. This dispute continued all the way to the books in St. James’ Library.

One of the ancient authors there claimed that the group to which he belonged was owed more respect as they were wiser than the modern ones, because of their antiquity. Swift also proposed a metaphor: the dispute was now between a bee and a spider. One produces honey and has the ability to fly, while the other only produces poison, even though it had a great palace, specifically, its cobweb. After this, Aesop claimed that the bee represented the Ancients and, the spider, the Moderns. He explained

that, although the Moderns had skills, their works were not preserved and had little value. In contrast, the Ancients had great imaginative skills and mastered language. Continuing with the metaphor, they, as well as bees, collected materials from nature and produced things that have helped humankind greatly. The battle involved great authors, both ancient and modern: Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Homer, Virgil, Dryden, Boyle, and Bentley, among others.

Swift was a defender of religion and nation. Thus, it could be said that he was in favour of the Ancients as he criticised Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and the atheistic, immoral philosophy in his previous works. This is even more noticeable in *Gulliver's Travels* where there are numerous critiques against different ways of thinking and politics that were contrary to his own. Moreover, he also defended Christianity in his visit to Japan, the only real place in the novel. He did all this in a satirical way as he could not accept the complexity and seriousness of the Enlightenment thought when discussing certain issues.

In his influential book *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature*, Gilbert Highet placed *The Battle of the Books* in the context of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, "a very famous and very long-drawn-out dispute in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which agitated not only the world of literature but the worlds of science, religion, philosophy, the fine arts, and even classical scholarship" (261). This means that Swift was not the initiator of the quarrel that is disputed in his book, yet he actively participated, together with Pascal, Boileau and Bentley, in a debate in which issues of great relevancy were taken into account. In fact, they have survived to the present day. Highet wondered whether the Moderns should be modelled on the classical Greek and Latin authors, or whether the classical canons of taste had become obsolete.

For their part, Moderns had several arguments in favour of themselves. First, they claimed that their poetry was better since it was based on Christian values. As the Ancients were pagans, their poetry was not written with noble emotions and it did not deal with noble topics. However, the greatest modern heroic poems, for instance Dante's *Divine Comedy*, are a mixture of Christian and pagan thought. Even so, they also argued that since human knowledge was continually improving, it was not possible for the Ancients to have been more intelligent than Moderns were: "therefore, anything we write, or make, is better than the things written and made by the ancient Greeks and Romans" (Highet 264). Unfortunately, all the achievements and innovations that the Ancients had

made (whether in science, art or literature) seemed to have been forgotten by society. However, during the Baroque period, the Ancients and their works became more familiar. They also argued that, since nature does not change, the ones are not better than the others, but they are equal. Finally, they criticised the Ancients for having bad taste and writing illogically.

Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly a receiver of classical tradition, specifically, of satire, which dates back to ancient Greek literature and was very popular in Latin culture as well. Irvin Ehrenpreis stated about Swift's satirical methods that "he writes the opposite of what he means, in a tone which indicates the real intention. But he can also be ironic about an irony" (309).

Some thinkers claimed that Homer was "a repository of all known wisdom (a theory amusingly burlesqued by Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*); and among them up rose Zoilus, who tore the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to pieces for bad taste and improbability. A common expression of this reaction is parody" (Hight 270). Therefore, it can be said that Swift has used satire for his advantage: to criticise the arguments that the Moderns made against the Ancients, as well as he did in *The Battle of the Books* ridiculing the battles in Homer's *Iliad* to mock the thinking of the Moderns. Moreover, in the following paragraph of *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift recognised that it was because he disagreed with many of Homer's ideas that he was encouraged to write this work, in which it is obvious that he was familiar with Homeric work:

I must needs own it was by the assistance of this arcanum that I, though otherwise impar, have adventured upon so daring an attempt, never achieved or undertaken before but by a certain author called Homer, in whom, though otherwise a person not without some abilities, and for an ancient of a tolerable genius; I have discovered many gross errors which are not to be forgiven his very ashes, if by chance any of them are left. For whereas we are assured he designed his work for a complete body of all knowledge, human, divine, political, and mechanic, it is manifest he hath wholly neglected some, and been very imperfect perfect in the rest. (Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* Chapter 7)

2.2. *Gulliver's Travels plot*

Lemuel Gulliver was a surgeon who set sail for the first time and experienced a shipwreck. Luckily, he swam ashore. The tiny people of that land, called Lilliput, brought him much of their food and drink. They treated him as a prisoner, because they did not let him walk to the temple and carried him among nine hundred people on a wooden board with wheels.

In a little time I felt something alive moving on my left leg, which advancing gently forward over my breast, came almost up to my chin; when bending mine eyes downwards as much as I could, I perceived it to be a human creature not six inches high, with a bow and arrow in his hands, and a quiver at his back. (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 13)

The only way for him to be set free is helping the Lilliputians in times of war and with the land, to which he agrees. A rebellious group, Tramecksan, together with the island of Blefuscu threaten Lilliput. In the end, Gulliver helped the Lilliputians to win the war, but he had to escape, as the emperor ordered his execution because he had urinated in public (to extinguish the fire in the emperor's wife's quarters) and for accepting the invitation to visit the enemy kingdom.

A few months later, Gulliver arrived at another unknown land, called Brobdingnag. There were giants and one of them took him. At the queen's palace, he explained that he came from a land where everything was proportionate to his size, but the great scholars did not believe him and thought he could not survive. The queen wanted his company at all dinners, while the king used to ask him about his land and customs, ridiculing them. In fact, Gulliver also began to see his world as ridiculous.

The court dwarf was jealous of Gulliver, as before his arrival he was the smallest person in the kingdom, so he tried to murder him on several occasions:

Nothing angered and mortified me so much as the queen's dwarf, who being of the lowest stature that was ever in that country, (for I verily think he was not full thirty foot high) became so insolent at seeing a creature so much beneath him, that he would always affect to swagger and look big as he passed by me in the queen's antechamber, while I was standing on some table talking with the lords or ladies of the court; and he seldom failed of a smart word or two upon my littleness; against which, I could only

revenge myself by calling him brother, challenging him to wrestle (...)
(Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 80)

Gulliver had been living in this land of giants for two years when he was brought to the south coast. There, an eagle grabbed the box in which he used to dwell, flew away and then dropped it to the sea. He saw a floating island, i.e., Laputa, and when he began to shout at them a chain was thrown to pull him up: “the reader can hardly conceive my astonishment, to behold an island in the air, inhabited by men, who were able (as it should seem) to raise, or sink, or put into a progressive motion, as they pleased” (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 118).

The inhabitants of the island seemed strange to Gulliver, with one eye looking in and the other looking up, and they wore clothes decorated with celestial bodies and musical instruments. Their language was based on musical and mathematical concepts because they were people who placed great value on these theoretical disciplines; in the same way they were fascinated by astrology. They also thought that geometry was vulgar, that is why there were no right angles in their buildings.

Gulliver did not want to spend much more time with the intellectual Laputans, so he went to a city called Lagado, which was on earth. There, the people dressed in poor clothes and lived miserably. This was because a few decades ago some people have gone to Laputa and came back with new theories and ideas about agriculture and construction, thus they formed an academy to implement them, but none of the theories was successful: “The only inconvenience is, that none of these projects are yet brought to perfection; and, in the mean time, the whole country lies miserably waste; the houses in ruins, and the people without food or cloaths; (...)” (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 134).

Gulliver wanted to travel to Luggnagg, but he had to wait a month for the next ship, so he visited Glubbudubdrib, also known as the island of magicians. He learnt a lot about the Struldbrugs, immortal people who were born with a red dot on their foreheads. He was excited by the idea of being immortal, but he also discovered that these people became sad in their thirties and after the age of eighty they were incapable of feeling affection, in fact they were envious of those who could die.

During another travel, many of the sailors died and Gulliver had to hire more people, who influenced the others to become pirates, leaving Gulliver on an unknown shore. There he saw some animals that looked very ugly to him, an “ugly monster” (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 169), with long hair, goat's beards and sharp claws that help them climb

trees. He realised that these animals had run away from a horse. Another one arrived and as Gulliver was leaving, one of them called out to him. He thought they were magicians transformed into horses because they were very intelligent. They led him to a house, where he expected to meet people, but there were more horses. They spoke another language, but he learnt the words “Yahoo” (one of the horses called him that way) and “Houyhnhnm”. In the courtyard, they had some of the strange animals he had seen before tied up, and he realised that they looked like humans. In short, they were savage humans that the horses called Yahoos. After a few months, Gulliver had learnt a little of their language, which amazed the horses, as they thought he had a great intellect. Even so, they thought he was a superior kind of Yahoo.

Gulliver began to love the Houyhnhnms so much that he no longer wanted to return to Europe. However, the horses concluded that the people where Gulliver came from were not so different from the Yahoos in their selfish and malicious nature. Contrary to them, who were benevolent and valued friendship and community more than their own interests. He was forced to return to England, where his family thought he had died. For more than a year he could not be near his family and he preferred to buy two horses with whom he could talk for hours. Finally, he had to tell the government about his discoveries, and he said that they would not get any profit from attacking those places and, moreover, he wanted to protect the Houyhnhnms by all means:

Having thus answered the only objection that can be raised against me as a traveller; I here take a final leave of my courteous readers, and return to enjoy my own speculations in my little garden at Redriff; to apply those excellent lessons of virtue which I learned among the Houyhnhnms; to instruct the Yahoos of my own family as far as I shall find them docible animals; to behold my figure often in a glass, and thus, if possible, habituate myself, by time, to tolerate the sight of a human creature: to lament the brutality of Houyhnhnms in my own country, but always treat their persons with respect, for the sake of my noble master, his family, his friends, and the whole Houyhnhnm race, whom these of ours have the honour to resemble in all their lineaments, however their intellectuals came to degenerate. (Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* 223)

2.3. *Specific adaptation*

Charles Sturridge directed *Gulliver's Travels*, which was released in 1996. It is considered as a miniseries because it is divided into two parts due to its long duration (186 minutes in total). It has innovative special effects, and it is the only adaptation that deals with the entire novel. Nevertheless, there are lots of visible differences between the novel and the television version.

From the very beginning, the adaptation differs from the novel as it starts with Gulliver returning home nine years after his shipwreck, whereas in the novel the protagonist narrated his origins and how he first set sail and then married his wife, Mary. It is after this that he was shipwrecked for the first time and arrived at Lilliput. In the novel, Gulliver returned to England several times between his travels, while in the film he did a single long journey. He narrates the story in short mental lapses, which blur the line between his present, when he is being treated like a madman, and his past, when he visited all those fictional places. In other words, scenes from the present were mixed with those from the past, making the experiences during his travels merge with what he was living in England.

Several scenes in Lilliput are different: in the novel some of the guards disobeyed orders and tried to harm Gulliver, and he was offered six of them as punishment. Instead of eating them he decided to release them, and this pleased the emperor, who treated Gulliver with great hospitality and tried to get professors to teach him their language, because they did not speak the same, while in the film they could greet each other without any problem. However, in the adaptation a Lilliputian was offered to him as food, and he did not hesitate to eat him. He could only be heard roaring as the emperor was speaking. The scene in the film in which he was tied up and driven to the emperor's palace, takes place simultaneously with the one in the present England in which he was carried out to a room by Doctor Bates and his comrades. Thus, he thought he was still in Lilliput and asked:

LEMUEL: Why do you tie me up?

MARY: Nobody is tying you up Lemuel.

(Sturridge Part 1 00:13:03)

In order to leave the country, in the novel he escaped to Blefuscu and travelled to England from there. Nevertheless, in the film he built himself a small raft and arrived at an unknown land; the land of the giants: Brobdingnag.

LEMUEL: Giants are so ugly! Their skin was so crinkled and popped and boiling fest that it made me wonder what I looked like to the Lilliputians.

(Sturridge Part 1 00:51:05)

After the eagle grabbed the box in which he used to dwell, flew away and then dropped it to the sea, in the novel a ship rescued him and took him home, while in the film he encountered the floating island of Laputa, and he was rescued by them. In the adaptation, Prince Munodi lived on the island and his mother, who lived on earth, was the major enemy of the Emperor and the Laputans. She refused to pay tribute and the emperor wanted war, thus she placed a giant magnet to precipitate the island but thanks to Munodi's idea of reversing the magnet they did not fall, and the island flew away. However, Gulliver fell into Munodi's mother's palace. In the novel, there was no quarrel, and he was the one who decided to go down to earth to visit Lord Munodi's island.

In both cases there was a major problem in this kingdom: scholars had many ideas but none of them was implemented. In fact, in the film there was an Academy where Gulliver went to ask for help to return to England. First, he entered the language school where the intellectual said that people should not speak because it could damage our lungs. Instead, we should carry a lot of things with us and point at them so that they can be understood, but it did not seem to work. According to Gulliver, they were all lunatics obsessed with their world that they had forgotten about reality. As none of the ideas were carried out, the country laid in ruins.

At last, he found the room he was looking for, which was covered up and in visible disuse. When he entered, he started to talk about how he wanted to return to England and when the man turned around, he was himself and told him that he knew how to go back, but he would never know the answer because he did not really want to. He grabbed himself by the throat in a rage. In the present, he was grabbing Doctor Bates, thus they lock him in a very dark room.

Luggnagg, Japan and Glubbudbrib are not even mentioned. His encounter with the magician who offered him hospitality also differs; in the film he had to escape by invoking the ghosts of historical figures as Michelangelo or Leonardo, among others.

This did not happen in the novel and, what is more, after this he travelled to Japan, from where he returned to England. After he ran away in the film, the Struldbrugs imprisoned him.

While in the film he began to relate his experience with the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver was being taken to court to determine whether all what he told was real or he needed to be locked up in a hospital for mentally ill people. His wife Mary was there to defend him.

When the Houyhnhnms concluded that he was a Yahoo and he had to leave, Gulliver by no means wanted to return to England and be in contact with humans. In the novel he went to another unknown land before he was rescued, while in the film he was saved by a French ship after leaving the country.

At the end of the film, his son Tom played a very important role as he entered with the little Lilliputian sheep that he had found in his father's suitcase and thus, the trial ended on good terms for Gulliver. He also bought horses to take care of them and to talk with them. Many months passed away until he could look at himself in the mirror without feeling repulsion for being a Yahoo.

2.4. *Gulliver as a new Odysseus: the film intertext*

Most of the differences explained in the previous section are due to the fact that the director used Homer's *Odyssey* as the intertext for his film adaptation. This will be followed by an account of all the similarities that make Gulliver the new Odysseus.

The most striking similarities are that both Gulliver and Odysseus made their travels and suffered their misfortunes over a long period of time, never once returning home. The first spent nine years away, while the second spent twenty: ten of them besieging Troy and other ten wandering the "wine-dark sea" (*Odyssey* 5.222). Moreover, Gulliver related his adventures through flashbacks as he was experiencing new things in the present, for instance, when he was already in the hospital and was telling his story in front of all the patients and the other spectators present there. The same happened with Odysseus while he was staying at the palace of King Alcinous in Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, and spoke about his experiences.



I Gulliver recounting his stories in Bethlehem, which is a hospital for mentally ill people.

It was from there and with their help that Odysseus set off to Ithaca, although when he arrived, he did not recognise his land because the goddess Athene had a better plan for him: to turn him into a beggar so that no one would know it was him; in that way he could defeat all his enemies, who were many more than he could face alone. As a matter of fact, the goddess of war and wisdom was the only companion who was by his side during all the years he had been away from home. On several occasions, without Odysseus even being aware of it, she guided him in such a way that he managed to survive and succeed against all his adversities. In general terms, all the gods except Poseidon, who stirred up the seas so that Odysseus would die, were benevolent towards him. Curiously enough, it was because of Poseidon that Odysseus finally reached Ithaca since Pallas Athene had changed his appearance and that of his land. Thus, the god of the sea did not recognise him or Ithaca, which meant that Odysseus did not know where he had landed.

In the first pages, some connection with the film is already visible. The young giant girl named Gloom, who took care of Gulliver, wanted to marry him and kept him locked in a box. This is very similar to the following line from the Homeric work: *“the Nymph Calypso, who longed for him to marry her, and kept him in her vaulted cave”* (*Odyssey* 1.14–15). However, Calypso helped Odysseus to leave Ogygia making a raft, thus he could return to Ithaca, his native land. However, the nymph did not help him by her own free will, but Hermes brought her the message that Zeus had ordered her to release

him. Thus, in order to not suffer the wrath of the father of gods, Calypso agreed to free him, yet not before enjoying his company one last time. In the following scene from the film, we can see Gloom and Gulliver on the beach, where they have a conversation that reminds us of that between Calypso and Odysseus before leaving Ogygia:

GLOOM: You won't leave without saying goodbye to me, would you?

LEMUEL: How can I leave? What will I do? Flap my arms and fly away?

GLOOM: I know you're very homesick.

LEMUEL: Oh Gloom, someday you'll meet someone your own size and you'll forget all about me.

GLOOM: I won't, I'll never forget you.

(Sturridge Part 1 01:24:17)



2 Gloom and Gulliver on the beach before the eagle would grab the box with him inside.

After he left the home of Calypso, Odysseus arrived at an unknown land in the same way as Gulliver did after he left Lilliput in a raft, also made by himself, in contrast to the novelistic version.



3 Gulliver sighting land in his own-made raft.

In both the film and *The Odyssey* the main characters had only one son: Tom and Telemachus. They did not know their fathers and it was only through their mothers that they came to know something about them. Moreover, neither of them was influenced by their fathers' enemies (Doctor Bates and The Suitors, respectively), who tried to turn them against their fathers. This is visible in the following conversation between Doctor Bates and Tom:

DOCTOR BATES: What are you doing in my study?

TOM: I wasn't doing anything.

DOCTOR BATES: I've never taken my strap on you but please don't lie to me, or I will.

TOM: You're not my father, you can't beat me!

DOCTOR BATES: Thomas, I don't want to beat you. I know you are glad to see your father again, but he's a sick man, a violent and disturbed man. Do you know how you can help him most?

TOM: No.

DOCTOR BATES: By forgetting everything he has told you. All his silly stories, all his nonsense.

(Sturridge Part 1 01:22:45)

The enemies needed the wanderer's family to accept that he was dead, thus they could force Mary/Penelope to marry. In fact, both sons were curious to know about them: Tom read Gulliver's diary while he was in the hospital for mentally ill people, whereas Telemachus embarked on a quest to find out what had happened to his beloved father; he stated that *"I am trying to find out what has happened to my long-lost father"* (*Odyssey* 15.70–71). His suffering was notorious when he said that Odysseus *"has gone where he cannot be seen or found and to me has left nothing but sorrow and tears"* (*Odyssey* 1.242–244).

When Gulliver was in Lilliput, he ate one of the little inhabitants and he was also heard roaring. This can be related to the episode of the Cyclops Polyphemus as an inversion-continuation of it. However, it is worth mentioning that Swift's novel is more faithful to this Homeric book, since Lilliputians finally decided that instead of being executed, Gulliver would have his eyes removed as well as Polyphemus, to whom Odysseus said that *"Cyclops, if anyone ever asks you how you came by your blindness, tell him your eye was put out by Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca"* (*Odyssey* 9.501–504). The Cyclops locked Odysseus and his companions in a cave and devoured several of them. Therefore, Odysseus, with the help of his people, blinded him. Then, they left the cave holding to the bellies of the animals. On the other hand, there were no language barriers in either the film or the *Odyssey*, in contrast to the original text where Gulliver had to learn a lot of different languages to communicate with the locals of the lands he visited by a whim of fate.



4 Gulliver right before devouring a Lilliputian.

Doctor Bates is the film's representation of Penelope's suitors in *The Odyssey*. Both heroes must return home and reclaim their wives' love. Furthermore, neither she nor Mary (Gulliver's wife) could forget their husbands and they did not want other men. In fact, Penelope "*hates the idea of remarrying*" (*Odyssey* 1.247–248) and Mary, although she did not believe Lemuel's stories at first, eventually did everything she could to get him out of the hospital and prove that he was not mentally ill, since what she wanted was to return home with him and become a family after so long. Both women had the hope that their husbands would return home one day. Moreover, Odysseus family was seen as "*loyal Penelope, and Telemachus whom he left a new-born baby in his home*" (*Odyssey* 4.112–113). In fact, Penelope promised her suitors that she would marry one of them when she had finished sewing a shroud. However, every night she would undo what she had done. In the film version, Mary wrote several letters to Gulliver and asked Doctor Bates to take them to him in the hospital. Nevertheless, he did not deliver any of them and, in the following conversation, he made Lemuel believe that his wife no longer loved him:

LEMUEL: How is Mary? When is she coming to visit me?

DOCTOR BATES: Give her time Lemuel. This has been very disturbing for her.

LEMUEL: Were she not even write to me?

DOCTOR BATES: I'm afraid not. In truth I think she is frightened of you, of what you've become.

LEMUEL: I need to see her. I know she'll understand, if I can only see her and explain.

DOCTOR BATES: I think I can change her mind but, you must play your part as well. And accept that you're not yet well enough to receive visitors. Not today, nor the day after, nor the day after that. Your recovery will take some considerable time.

(Sturridge Part 2 00:18:52)

While Odysseus was in the palace of Alcinous, he began to tell them how he and his companions arrived at the home of the sorceress Circe, daughter of the god Helios, on the island of Aeaea. Some of his companions were drugged and turned into swine by her. The god Hermes, disguised as a young man, gave him something to eat that would protect him from Circe's drug. He also advised him to attack her because she would try

to kill him with her sword. He did so and the sorceress surrendered; she undid the enchantment on his companions. They lived comfortably with her for a whole year, but finally Odysseus asked her for help to return home. She points him the way to go to the underworld to find what he was looking for. Thus, Odysseus' descent into the Hades in search of Teiresias, the Theban prophet who would show him his way back home, is similar to Gulliver's travel to The Academy. Both went to those places for the same purpose. Gulliver entered the "Room of Answers" and met himself:

FIRST LEMUEL: Is this the room of answers? Please! I have to know my way home.

SECOND LEMUEL: You know the way home. But you'll never find it because deep in your heart you don't want to!

(Sturridge Part 2 00:25:10)



5 An illustration of the Academy.

Once Odysseus arrived there, to the "House of Hades" (*Odyssey* 11.627–628), he met his mother Anticleia, Persephone, Ajax, and Heracles, among others. Moreover, he stated that "*the mourning ghosts of all the other dead and departed pressed round me now, each with some question for me on matters that concerned him*" (*Odyssey* 11.541–543). This is an inversion of the invocations episode in the film, in which the ghosts were the ones who answered the questions and when Gulliver left that place, the guards at the gate were ghosts, a fact that is remindful of the sentence "*the porch is filled with ghosts*"

(*Odyssey* 20.355). However, that episode was essentially based on *A True Story*, by Lucian of Samosata.

By the end of the story, Gulliver was imprisoned by the Struldbrugs, which were immortal beings. They took him out of the prison to talk to the queen of immortality. The door of the immortal world was opened, and he could see the source of the life everlasting. It turned out that those who drank from the source became immortal but blind, so he ran away. In short, the queen offered him eternal life, as well as Calypso to Odysseus, but he refused it because, just as Odysseus, he preferred to return home to see his beloved wife:

QUEEN: Drink. Taste immortality.

LEMUEL: Why is your hand shaking so bad? What's wrong with her?

QUEEN: Nothing!

LEMUEL: What's wrong with everyone?

QUEEN: Drink the water. You will define nature, you'll outlive the stars themselves, you'll be like a god.

LEMUEL: You can't see me, can you?

QUEEN: I'm alive! The water keeps us alive.

LEMUEL: You're blind. You're all blind!

(Sturridge Part 2 00:47:45)

QUEEN: We'll never die, that's all that matters: cheating death.

(Sturridge Part 2 00:48:38)



6 *The Queen offering Gulliver immortality.*

There are more similarities, for instance, in the second book it is mentioned Ilium, the city of horses, which is another way to refer to city of Troy, which reminds us to the Houyhnhnms. In addition, when he left Ogygia he reached land after almost being killed by Poseidon's fury. It was Scheria and there, near a river, was Nausicaa, the daughter of King Alcinous, and some other young ladies. Odysseus behaved as a savage Yahoo:

So the noble Odysseus crept out from under the bushes, after breaking off with his great hand a leafy bough from the thicket to conceal his naked manhood. Then he advanced on them like a mountain lion who sallies out, defying wind and rain in the pride of his power, with fire in his eyes, to hunt down the oxen or sheep or pursue the wild deer. Forced by hunger, he will even attack flocks in a well-protected fold. So Odysseus, naked as he was, made a move towards these girls with their braided hair; necessity compelled him. Grimy with salt he was gruesome sight, and the girls went scuttling off in every direction along the jutting spits of sand. (Odyssey 6.127–138)



7 Gulliver realising that he looks like a Yahoo after his encounter with the two female Yahoos.

And, on the other hand, the floating island of Laputa which Gulliver visited can be related with the “floating island of Aeolia” (Odyssey 10.1) in the *Odyssey*.

In the epic, Leocritus stated that, on his way back, Odysseus would fight “alone against so many” (Odyssey 2.250–251). He was referring to Penelope's suitors and he also added that “nor have they any inkling of the dark fate that is stalking so near and

will strike them all down in a single day” (*Odyssey* 2.282–284). To this we can relate the final trial that Gulliver had in the film, where he was alone, except for Mary, against all those who thought he was mentally ill. In fact, after the massacre of the Suitors there is also a final trial, although both are of different nature. In addition, Pallas Athene warned Odysseus about “*all the trials you will have to undergo within your palace*” (*Odyssey* 13.306). Fortunately, in the end it was “*established peace between the two sides*” (*Odyssey* 24.547–548) both in the film and in the Homeric epic.



8 Gulliver and Mary during the final trial.



9 Gulliver, Mary and Tom reunited after winning the trial.

3. Concluding remarks

Humanity has received the classical tradition in many ways over a long time. It is important to be aware of what the Ancients have achieved since we make use of it nowadays. It is true that each new society is more modern than the previous one, as it discovers new and improved advances that make life easier. The same goes for literature, the Ancients laid the foundation: they created, among other literary genres, the first comical, satirical, and tragic works; whereas the Moderns took advantage of this to improve them, or even create new conceptions about literature, equally admirable as that of the Ancients. We should not conceive Antiquity and Modernity as totally different concepts, as it is thanks to what the Ancients created that the Moderns have been able to make progress in several domains.

The dispute between Ancients and Moderns was very controversial during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jonathan Swift was one of the authors who wrote about this topic. He used satire to ridicule the Moderns as he was a strong defender of the Ancients. In *The Battle of the Books*, the Ancients are considered the genuine authors and, therefore, they are the winners in the end; while the Moderns, led by Bentley, are ridiculed after each of their arguments. As a matter of fact, Swift composed the work while he was staying at Sir William Temple's home, whom as gratitude he included among the allies of the victorious Ancients. His attack on Homer in *A Tale of a Tub* is a ridicule of the kind of arguments that the Moderns made against the Ancients.

Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels* is also a satire in which it can be found some connections with Homer's *Odyssey*. Yet it is director Charles Sturridge who is the receiver, and therefore connoisseur, of the classical tradition, in this case, of Homer and Swift. The latter has also become a classic author, specifically, of English literature. What this director has achieved is to merge two brilliant works: based on the travels and misfortunes of Lemuel Gulliver, he has brought to life the Greek mythological hero, Odysseus.

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6. Annexes

6.1. Inventory of adaptations

In the following lines it is presented an inventory of all the adaptations of this famous novel. First it is mentioned the author, then the title, and the release year between brackets. It is important to note that the first two are musical adaptations.

- Georg Philipp Telemann, *Gulliver's Travels* (1728). This Baroque composition focuses on the Lilliputians and the inhabitants of Brobdingnag.
- Soufferance, "The Thoughts and Memoirs of Mike Lachaire, First a Strange Individual, and then a Philosopher" (2010). This song, lasting 65 minutes, is the only one in the album called "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the Mind", which clearly alludes to the full title of the novel, namely, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships*.
- Georges Méliès, *Le voyage de Gulliver à Lilliput et chez les géants* (1902). A silent film which lasts only four minutes.
- Aleksandr Ptushko, *The New Gulliver* (1935). This is a Soviet animated version.
- Dave Fleischer, *Gulliver's Travels* (1939). An animated classic that focuses on Gulliver's stories in Lilliput and was intended for children only.
- Ray Harryhausen, *Gulliver's Three Worlds* (1960). A vague adaptation as the presence of the novel's satire is not visible in this film.
- Yoshio Kuroda and Sanae Yamamoto, *Gulliver's Travels Beyond the Moon* (1965). A Japanese sequel.
- Pavel Juráček, *Prípad pro začínajícího kata* (1970). A satirical film based on the third part that indirectly depicts Czech communism.
- András Rajnai, *Gulliver a törpék országában* (1974). This is an adaptation for Hungarian television about Gulliver's travel to Brobdingnag.
- Peter Hunt, *Gulliver's Travels* (1977). An adaptation that mixes live scenes with animation.
- Art Scott, *Gulliver's Travels* (1979). An animated film for Australian television.
- András Rajnai, *Gulliver az óriások országában* (1980). A second adaptation for Hungarian television. In this case, it is based on the travel to Lilliput.
- BBC Classics Television, *Gulliver in Lilliput* (1981).

- Saban Entertainment, *Gulliver's Travels* (1992-1993). A television series with twenty-six episodes.
- Diane Eskenazi, *Gulliver's Travels* (1996). An animated adaptation.
- Charles Sturridge, *Gulliver's Travels* (1996). (see section 2.3.)
- Fritz Kiersch, *Crayola Kids Adventures: Tales of Gulliver's Travels* (1997). A live adaptation for children.
- Soumitra Ranade, *Jajantaram Mamantaram* (2003). An Indian adaptation for children.
- Rob Letterman, *Gulliver's Travels* (2010). A modernised version that recreates and parodies Gulliver's adventures.

6.2. *Technical data about the specific adaptation*

Original title: Gulliver's Travels (TV)

Year: 1996

Running time: 186 minutes

Country: United Kingdom

Director: Charles Sturridge

Screenwriter: Simon Moore (Novel: Jonathan Swift)

Cast: Ted Danson, Mary Steenburgen, James Fox, Ned Beatty, Edward Fox, Alfre Woodard, Peter O'Toole, Warwick Davis, John Gielgud, Geraldine Chaplin, Kristin Scott Thomas, Omar Sharif

Producer: Co-production United Kingdom-United States; Hallmark Entertainment, Channel 4, Jim Henson Productions

Genre: Adventure; Fantasy; Fairy tales / Fables; TV Film

Synopsis: Adaptation of Jonathan Swift's satirical tale about a normal man who, after returning home following nine years of absence, relates fantastical tales about how he was thought to be giant in the Land of Lilliput, but was only six inches high in the Land of Brobdingnag. He also tells of his visit to the floating island of Laputa populated by scientists who are so obsessed with reason that they act with no common sense. Finally, he tells of his journey to the land where his disturbing likeness to the bestial Yahoos and his inferiority to the intelligent horses there makes him question the very worth of his humanity.