



Cappadocia University

School of Graduate Studies and Research

Department of English Language and Literature

**DENUNCIATION OF HUMANITY: A POSTHUMANIST
READING OF JONATHAN SWIFT'S *GULLIVER'S
TRAVELS***

Volkan TÜMER

Master's Thesis

Nevşehir, 2023

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ÖZET

TÜMER, Volkan. *İnsanlığın Feshi: Jonathan Swift'in Gulliver'in Gezileri Adlı Eserinin Posthümanist Bir Okuması*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Nevşehir, 2023.

Hümanizmin yetersizliğine bir tepki olarak ortaya çıkmış olan Posthümanizm, temel olarak, hümanist düşüncenin zaaf gösteren yanlış değerlerini eleştirir. Posthümanizm kuramının bünyesinde gelişmiş olan eleştirel posthümanizm, teknolojik inceleme yerine söylem incelemesi üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Posthümanist kuram, insan-merkezcilik ve türçülük kavramlarını reddetmektedir. İnsanın merkezde olduğu Batı düşüncesi ve uygulamaları kuramın eleştiri odağını oluşturmaktadır. Kuramda, özellikle, dil ve akıl kapasitelerinin insana özgü olmadığı öne sürülür ve bu öğelerin insan tarafından insan dışı hayata hükmetmek için kullanılması eleştirilir. Bu bağlamda, bu tez *Gulliver'in Gezileri* adlı eseri eleştirel posthümanist kurama göre inceler ve eserin insan bedeni ve mantığına dışarıdan bakıp onu yeniden inşa ederek, 18. yüzyıl gibi erken bir dönemde bir posthümanist bakış açısının öncüsü sayılabilecek yaklaşımlar sergilediğini öne sürer.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Posthümanizm, eleştirel posthümanizm, insan dışı, dil, akıl, Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver'in Gezileri*

ABSTRACT

TÜMER, Volkan. *Denunciation of Humanity: A Posthumanist Reading of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels*, Master's Thesis, Nevşehir, 2023.

Posthumanism is a theory that has been put forward as a reaction to the failing aspects of humanism. It is basically a response to the alleged shortcomings of the humanist thought. Critical posthumanism focuses on the critical discourses rather than technological aspects of posthumanism. The theory is anti-anthropocentric, and is against speciesism. It criticizes the humanist ideology by rejecting the notion of the human as the focal point in Western thought and practices. It rejects the humanist idea that language and reason are human-specific characteristics, and it asserts that these two characteristics are utilized in order for the human to dominate the nonhuman. In this context, this thesis analyzes *Gulliver's Travels* from the perspective of the posthumanist theory, and aims to exhibit how the work presages posthumanism as early as in the eighteenth-century by deconstructing and defamiliarizing human bodies and reason.

Keywords

Posthumanism, critical posthumanism, nonhuman, language, reason, Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

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INTRODUCTION

Posthumanism has been put forward as a reaction to some problematic aspects of humanism, which, according to the posthumanist thought, centers the human in the middle of the universe and basically omits from its realm of focus everything that is nonhuman. The position of the human in the universe is reconsidered and rearranged in the posthumanist thought. As Rosi Braidotti puts it, “[t]he posthuman condition introduces a qualitative shift in our thinking about what exactly is the basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet” (*Posthuman Knowledge* 1). In reference to this statement, a critical posthumanist analysis of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), which attempts to examine the human from a non-anthropocentric perspective, reveals how Swift envisages posthumanism long before the theory was formulated, through deconstructing the human body and cognition. In this context, this thesis analyzes *Gulliver’s Travels* in the framework of critical posthumanism, which radically shifts the status of the human in the universe with regards to other forms of life. The thesis proposes through the adventures of Gulliver that the socially constructed boundaries between the nonhuman and the human are bound to disappear once the so-called uniqueness and exceptionality of the human in the traditional humanist thought is challenged from a critical posthumanist perspective.

Although *Gulliver’s Travels* is renowned as a political satire of the British monarchy and imperialism, it also deals with human nature generically on a deeper level. The novel has been chosen as the object of this study on the grounds that it appears easy to be simplified as a sole critique of the British politics. Through a critical posthumanist analysis, the thesis aims to display how Swift exposes the defects in human nature and reasoning through Gulliver’s voyages, and how the notion of the human, as identified by the humanist ideology, is deconstructed and reconstructed in the narrative from biological and cognitive angles. In this respect, Swift’s work corresponds to the theory of posthumanism since they both deconstruct the human from a bodily and cognitive perspective as it will be demonstrated in chapters one and two, respectively, following the presentation of the theoretical background in this introductory chapter.

Concerning what Swift really says about human nature through Lemuel Gulliver, it is dubious whether it is utter misanthropy, or he is solely critiquing the human of his time through resembling them to the race of Yahoos that live among Houyhnhnms, the race of rational horses. What Swift wrote in his letter to Alexander Pope may cast some light on the matter:

I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is toward individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians—I will not speak of my own trade—soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years, but do not tell, and so I shall go on till I have done with them. I have got materials toward a treatise, proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*, and to show it would be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy ... the whole building of my Travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion. (“Swift” par. 1)

What the lines above signify is that although Swift himself calls his criticism of the human as a superior rational being as an act of misanthropy, the essence of his criticism is that human beings are not as rational as they think themselves to be. They have the capability to reason (*rationis capax*); however, they are not necessarily rational beings (*animal rationale*). He states that he detests man generically although he loves the human individual John, Peter, Thomas, etc. This seemingly contradictory message could be taken to mean that he is not an utter misanthrope, but a severe critic of the humankind. In this regard, the way Swift denounces humanity in *Gulliver’s Travels* aligns with the posthumanist thought as they both criticize the humanist assumption of human uniqueness and exceptionality through exhibiting that the human is not the “center around which the world turns,” as Karen Barad puts it (“Posthumanist Performativity” 134). Before the analysis of the novel from a critical posthumanist angle that deals with the deconstruction of the human, critical posthumanist theory needs to be explained.

Critical posthumanist theory is used in this thesis to explain the “entanglement of the human with the nonhuman” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 27), and the disappearance of the borders that have been thought to exist between the two. The traditional dichotomies of animal/human, environment/human, and mechanical/organic are challenged in this theory. The use of posthumanism in the thesis mainly focuses on the bodily and cognitive deconstruction of the human and underscores the potential of the nonhuman world in destabilizing the boundaries between the nonhuman and the human. The objective of the thesis is to display how Swift indicates his anxieties regarding the critical line marked

between the human and the nonhuman. To this end, the critical posthumanist analysis in the study focuses on how the adventures of Gulliver exhibits that the human condition is not a constant as it is suggested in traditional humanism.

To better understand the posthumanist theory, it is crucial to discuss humanism and its failing aspects that are critiqued by posthumanism. Humanism is the study of the subject that is known as the human and the complex components that have been socially constructed to identify it. It is a “philosophical stance” that highlights the human individual, which simply “places the human in the center of the world” (Herbrechter 59). The free will of the moral human to use ‘his’ perfect reason to achieve his destiny is fundamental to human subjectivity. “Self-awareness” and “consciousness” are the basic elements that define what is human in this ideology (Pepperell 159). In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, humanism is defined as “a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs” (“Humanism,” def.). As the definition suggests, reason is associated with the human individual. Reason as a uniquely human capacity forms the basis of the humanist ideology. In this ideology, the basic nature of humans is supposed to be good. However, as suggested in the posthumanist thought, the main problem with humanism is that “man” is considered as “the measure of all things” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 13). In this ideal representation of man, he is perfectly rational and ethical, and is allowed to dominate all that is nonhuman in the universe. Critical posthumanism deconstructs this idea of the perfectly rational and moral subject mainly through arguments regarding consciousness, language, human uniqueness, and reason. The anthropocentrism of the ideology of humanism is the focus of the critical posthumanist criticism. In this vein, critical posthumanism aims to have a critical look at the notion of the human with a perspective shift away from the anthropocentrism of humanism. In this endeavor, posthumanism calls for a redefinition of what a human is. The need for a redefinition has arisen from the “scientific and bio-technological developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries” (Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism* 1).

The posthuman that posthumanism theorizes on is quite broad a concept that leads to confusion as it has come to be an umbrella term to mainly include Posthumanism and Transhumanism together with New Materialism (which basically questions the position of the embodied humans in a material world) and Object-Oriented Ontology (which

asserts that objects are connected together in networks of changing relations, with or without humans). The reason the notion of the posthuman cuts across this many realms of theories is that it has strong oppositions to the notion of the human from ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives. The larger section of this chapter deals with how critical posthumanism as a theory discerns itself from the other movements that are associated with posthumanism. Since humanism and transhumanism adopt a similar approach to the human individual in that they both see the human as superior to the other forms of life, some paragraphs deal with them both to distinguish the views of critical posthumanism regarding the uniqueness and superiority of the human. The major works that establish the theory are introduced accordingly.

Critical posthumanism came to prominence in the domain of literary criticism, with the publication of N. Katherine Hayles' book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). The theory is based on the attempt to radically deconstruct the notion of the human, as has been constructed in humanist thought. In posthumanism, the human is considered to be a social construct. Drawing from this argument, as a major side note, one significant aspect of the theory is that it emphasizes its epistemic constraints as well. All the major contributors to critical posthumanist theory (Cary Wolfe, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, N. Katherine Hayles, Neil Badmington, Rosi Braidotti, and Stefan Herbrechter among others) articulate that the theory has been developed by and for humans, therefore, it is epistemically constrained (Nayar 14). The impossibility of an absolutely objective analysis of the human and the posthuman condition is explained with the above-mentioned epistemic hindrance. However, by rejecting human primacy and the hierarchy of beings that was constructed in humanism, the allegedly exceptional status of the human is thwarted, and the nonhuman is regarded as equal to the human. Consequently, the theory considers the nonhuman world as a vast field of learning that the human can gain knowledge from (Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism* 16). Aside from the nonhuman animals, the nonhuman includes robotics and artificial intelligence as well, from which we have a lot to learn (Badmington *Alien Chic* 28). The subject 'we' is all inclusive in critical posthumanist theory, as it recognizes the differences that constitute our species as humans. All the elements of ethnicity, gender, and social, as well as biological, differences are considered to be the riches of what makes us human. As Ferrando puts it, "human alterities raise nonhuman alterities" and help us recognize and respect them too

(*Philosophical Posthumanism* 2). All these layers of what constitutes a human and posthuman make a difference in how posthumanism analyzes the way humanism defines its subject matter: the human individual.

The concept of the human in the humanist ideology is an exclusive one, which means it excludes certain groups from the ideal representation of the human. In the Western humanist practice, the human referred to white heterosexual male. In this context, posthumanism, in general, exposes the ideological problems and discriminative practices caused by humanism, such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and ageism (Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism* 4). Critical posthumanism, specifically, is the decentering of the allegedly autonomous, perfectly rational, and logical human. It is a political thought as well as a philosophical one which emphasizes the idea that the human is a dynamic concept that is always evolving with the nonhuman. The notion of the nonhuman includes all forms of life and machines, and the theory puts forth the idea that the human is “*constituted by and constitutive of*” the nonhuman (Nayar 11; italics in the original). According to the theory, the concept of the human needs deconstruction as it is a social construct that has been invented and idealized since the Renaissance.

The socially constructed nature of the human is a major issue in the posthumanist thought, which favors the idea that the human is what it is because of the nonhuman. The artificial borders between the human and the nonhuman are questioned and critiqued emphatically by this theory. Therefore, what makes the human unique is under the scrutiny of the critical posthumanist theory. Contrary to what humanism promotes, in the critical posthumanist theory, the so-called unique human qualities such as “consciousness,” “language” and “altruism” are claimed to be shared by nonhuman animals as well (Nayar 3). What forms the human and, with scientific advancements, how the human is evolving to be more advanced as a posthuman is a matter of debate. In this discussion of the posthuman, there are two significant notions to be explained to better understand posthumanism. The first one asserts that posthumanism is an ontological condition. It focuses on the body and deals with how humans are biologically and technologically evolving with machines (Fukuyama 54). This side of the argument is called Transhumanism. The other aspect of posthumanism is the critical one, which fundamentally deals with the cultural aspects such as social representation of the human, power relations among humans, and the superior position of the human above other

beings (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 102). Critical posthumanism, in contrast with traditional humanism, asserts that the human is not a self-willed, perfectly rational, autonomous, and moral agent. It is, however, an “assemblage,” embedded in the environment with other life forms and is continuously “co-evolving” with them (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 102). Critical posthumanism, therefore, categorically opposes the notions of human uniqueness and exceptionalism.

In rejection of the humanist, and transhumanist, idea of the uniqueness and exceptionality of the human, critical posthumanism highlights the vulnerability of the species and “the boundedness of the human to other life forms” and the environment (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 13). Its focus is not the agency and the ability of the human as it is in traditional humanism. The idea of the normative human is criticized and the exclusion of what is not normal according to it is widely discussed. The need for a more comprehensive definition of the human is called for, and the ways of deconstructing the notion of otherness are sought after in the theory. In this search, “animal studies,” “disability studies,” “consciousness studies,” and “cybernetics” contribute to posthumanism, as they also question the human/nonhuman divide and the hierarchy between them (Hayles 4). When speciesism is at play, for instance, there is a cross-over practice that excludes other human beings as expendable, which causes racism. The idea is that if humans use animals to their advantage due to the belief that they are ontologically superior to them, then this practice is extended to other human beings that are of different “gender, or race, or class, or sex” (Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism*, 8). In more violent forms, for instance, there have been “slavery and genocides” in human history (Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism* 8). Critical posthumanism criticizes such (mal)treatments and draws attention to the connection between humanism and the discriminatory practices such as sexism and racism. In contrast to transhumanism, which deals with the biological enhancement of human qualities that it considers unique to humans, critical posthumanism sees these properties in connection with other life forms, the environment, and technology. The human is not considered as the center of everything, rather it is regarded as an “assemblage,” a network that is evolving with the nonhuman (Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* 58). It is against the categorization of the human as a distinct entity, based on difference and exclusion. In opposition to that idea, critical posthumanism views the human as a “becoming,” (Braidotti, *Posthuman*

Knowledge 12) which refers to the fluid status of the human against the humanist notion of the human as a fixed/stable entity.

Unlike the posthumanist view of the inclusive human, the humanist thought sees the human as a self-conscious, moral, and rational subject that is able to decide his own destiny and produce history (Ferrando, *Philosophical Posthumanism* 1). The human is traditionally ‘constructed’ as white and male and is referred to in the singular. Independence and the individual capability to create “his own history” is considered as one of the main features of the human subject (Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* 57). Self-awareness and being cognizant of his abilities are other fundamental features of being a human in traditional humanist thought (Hindess 103). The human condition is taken to be universal, and its essence lies in the idea that the human exercises reason through his mind, which is totally separate from his body. Through his reason, he can distinguish himself from other life forms. This Cartesian Dualism¹, which denotes that the body and the mind are distinct entities that operate separately from one another, is rejected in the posthumanist thought. In the critical posthumanist thought, the mind does not govern or dictate the body; rather, it is embodied. Embodiment is a crucial notion in critical posthumanism, which separates the theory from transhumanism.

The disembodied nature of the human as favored by transhumanism allows the body to be identified separately from its environment and all other forms of life as well. Transhumanism, in this regard, in a similar manner to the humanist practice, assigns a unique nature to the human individual. Transhumanism proposes that biological and technological improvements will enhance the human (Bostrom 221). By failing to see the human as embedded in its environment and in organic connection with other forms of life, transhumanism regards the human as a distinct entity that can be updated to a better version of itself through technology. From this perspective, transhumanism is basically human enhancement on the pursuit of human perfection. It tries to generate the perfect human with great intelligence, with “disease-proof body that can live longer” (Miah 73).

¹ Cartesian Dualism is the idea that man has dual existence in that he consists of matter and mind. Matter is the physical body, mind is denoted to be the non-physical that does the thinking. According to Descartes, man was a semi-mechanistic entity, as his body interacted with his mind. He believed animals were solely mechanistic as they acted only instinctively, without a thinking mind. His philosophy of *Cogito er sum* (I think, therefore I am) meant that man existed because otherwise he could not doubt his own existence, as doubting is a thought process (Descartes, *Meditations* 34). Thus, irrespective of his body and the physical world around him, he saw his mind as a whole that is separate from his body.

Transhumanists believe in the idea that humans can be improved “mentally, emotionally, and physically” with science (Moravec 114). According to transhumanists, such as Nick Bostrom, the current forms of the human are “intermediary” before the arrival of the enhanced humans with superior bodies and intelligence (232). Similar to humanism, transhumanism considers rationality as a distinct feature of the human as well. The body is a limiting factor in the utilization of the mind, which means the body fails humans as it stores the mind in it as a separate entity. Thus, transhumanism is a continuation of humanism in that it considers that the human qualities of reason and emotion can be enhanced with the intervention of technology, holding the view that reason and morality are uniquely human attributes. The critical point is that these features can be enhanced. Critical posthumanism, on the other hand, postulates that these qualities are not innate to the human, and the human is “entangled” and is “co-evolving with other forms of life” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 178). Therefore, the human is a dynamic notion in critical posthumanism since it is co-evolving with the nonhuman and technology is a constituent of the human identity rather than “a sole prosthesis” to it (Hayles 19). Critical posthumanism, in this context, emphasizes the idea that the biological body, the machine, and other forms of life are dependent on one another, and that they are evolving together. The autonomous subject is replaced by the notion of the “non-unitary subject” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 14). Thus, critical posthumanism considers embodiment essential to the human being and does not try to overcome the human form as transhumanism does.

In critical posthumanism, embodiment is also essential in connecting the human to the environment and erasing the humanist boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. Epistemically, we understand our environments through our bodies. The human body is an “organic system” that exists in the environment and is “constitutive” of it (Hayles 34). This embodiment is not disintegrated from other organisms. It is embedded embodiment, which also includes animals, plants, and machines in its existence. The environment consists of all these forms of existence, which makes it embedded in nature. Consequently, critical posthumanism recognizes the complicated nature of the human system and considers that the complexity is a result of the fact that it is embedded in the environment, where no clear boundaries exist between the internal organization of the system and its surroundings. Organisms and systems are emergences, or “becomings” as opposed to “beings” as they are always in interaction with the

environment constituting one another with continuous “information flows” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 67). What we learn from the science of biology, for instance, indicates that bacteria help maintain what is considered to be the closed physical human form, and a great deal of the biological properties of the human have been evolutionary reactions to other organisms (Bennett 45). This leads to the belief that the human system must be recontextualized as an element of the environment that comprises the human.

In contrast to the autonomous status of the human in the humanist and transhumanist perspective, critical posthumanist view of the embedded nature of the human in its environment provides a new form of ontology. In critical posthumanism, the human is a “congeries” and is in “symbiotic” relation with other life forms (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 20). Human survival depends on these relations and the human has a “multispecies origin” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 20). Thus, critical posthumanism rejects a self-contained, autonomous status of the human, and instead suggests a co-evolving and symbiotic condition of the human that is in constant interaction with other life forms. Bacteria and germs in the environment, for instance, live in the human body, which makes human biological processes possible. What is conceived to be uniquely human is actually hybridization of humans and other organisms caused by the trading of information, both material and immaterial (Bennett 21). In this critical posthumanist vision, the human is a hybrid that is composed of different elements. Critical posthumanist thought, therefore, focuses on “pathways,” rather than “borders,” and the interaction among all the systems that make the human “a congeries” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 21). The human is not a closed, self-sufficient organism. It is situated in the environment and is a dynamic system of a network of information exchange among other systems and their interactions. Autonomy is in fact the human’s reaction to the environment that it is embedded in. The human is constantly in a process of self-regulating, engaging with the environment that it is embedded in and has no clear-cut boundaries. Its subjectivity depends on the interactions with the environment, which makes it “a dynamic and emergent condition” in Braidotti’s terms (*The Posthuman* 66), rather than a self-contained and autonomous entity. Therefore, unlike humanism, which has assumed an exclusive, autonomous, and self-contained individual, critical posthumanism puts the human subject into its environment and recontextualizes it in entanglement with other forms of life. On the other hand, building upon the ideology of humanism, transhumanist thought attributes some

distinct qualities to human beings, such as reason and compassion, and treats the human individual as the core of the universe as in the humanist tradition. While transhumanist thought posits that specific human features can be enhanced for the good of life, critical posthumanism regards the allegedly ‘essential’ attributes of human beings as shared with other life forms. As a result, the fundamental human attributes that cover biology and consciousness are co-evolving with other life forms according to the critical posthumanist thought (Nayar 22). Unlike transhumanism, which attempts to enhance the so-called innate human attributes, critical posthumanism rejects the idea of innateness of human qualities and asserts that these qualities are “an accumulation of continuous interactions” that have occurred over centuries (Nayar 22). The constant interaction with the environment and other forms of life assigns ethical responsibilities to the posthuman being.

Regarding the inclusion of ethics to the notion of the (post)human, Barad’s “ethico-onto-epistemology” (*Meeting the Universe* 13) creates a critical posthumanist perspective by emphasizing the inseparability of ethics, ontology and epistemology in the production of knowledge. The term underscores the need for ethical knowledge production that is accountable when we try to understand the world that we inhabit. She argues that we cannot see ourselves as “innocent bystanders,” observing the world objectively from a distance. Donna Haraway calls it a “god trick,” a falsely neutral, over-arching point of view (*A Manifesto for Cyborgs* 401). In Barad’s terms, “otherness,” as in the form of Self/Other, does not originate from below or above; therefore, there is no hierarchy between the interacting parties. In the form of human/nonhuman relations, this perspective gives the human an ethical “response-ability,” which is defined as the ability to respond to the other. In this respect, Barad’s ethico-onto-epistemology lays the foundation for one of the main ethical standpoints critical posthumanism takes by rejecting the humanist practice that excludes races and minorities from the human category. Critical posthumanist ethics points out that the notion of the universal human is based upon the practice of exclusion in which various groups of people, such as ethnic minorities, women, and non-white races, are considered less than human. What seems to be a global category of the human subject is not in fact global since it is constructed by way of exclusion and other life forms are thought to be subordinate to the human. They are classified as “nonhuman, inhuman or subhuman” (Nayar 23). According to critical

posthumanist thought, slaves, homosexual individuals, women, Jews, people with mental illnesses have been referred to as nonhuman in the human history, and they have been treated as “less-than-human” (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15). In the same vein, the white male is taken to be the universal human in humanism, and other human beings of different ethnicities, genders, and bodies are considered as the inferior variants of the standard model of the human. Critical posthumanism, therefore, considers humanism as a philosophy that helped Europeans to deem some groups of individuals inhuman so as to deny them rights, and criticizes the fact that humanism based its notion of the human upon the practice of exclusion. Critical posthumanism attempts to deconstruct this socially-constructed nature of the human. In deconstructing the human as classified by humanism, critical posthumanism refers to various sources of thought such as poststructuralism, feminism, and critical race studies (Ferrando, “Towards a Posthumanist” 2). The three basic domains in humanism that are critiqued by these movements include the subject, the body, and the rational human individual. The criticism is based upon the understanding that human nature is a result of social construction and that there are not any essential properties of the human. Also, as knowledge is socially constructed, it cannot be attributed to the human subject either.

The critique of social construction has its roots in deconstruction. Mich  l Foucault states in *The Order of Things* (1971) that man is a social construct, a “recent invention” (388). He posits that the concept of the human as idealized in humanism emerged in the Enlightenment period. What Foucault refers to as invention is the way human cognition and behaviors are studied in the social sciences. There are three aspects that Foucault focused on regarding the study of the human: biological, economic, and cultural (388). The biological aspect studies the human as an animal; the economic perspective deals with the productive value of the human in labor; and the cultural aspect studies language. Human cognition and behaviors which shape the human into a subject and construct its subjectivity are regarded as the basis of all knowledge in the humanist thought. In Foucault’s argument, the belief that these behaviors and human cognition can be studied is the foundation of humanism. This belief, he suggests, creates the human sciences. Thus, human nature, according to Foucault, is a social construct, and the notion works differently in different cultures. Social sciences define what human nature should be rather than what it is; therefore, it is open to discussion. He suggests that understanding

the truth is not independent from the subject and that knowledge is a collective practice rather than an individual capacity that the human subject can autonomously possess (390). By bringing up the concept of collectivity in the act of understanding and producing knowledge, Foucault dismisses the view that the human individual is a sovereign subject. Instead, he situates the human subject in a complex web of power relations and social forces. In his view, knowledge originates from power relations. This view opposes that of humanism in that it considers that the subject does not produce meaning; it is, rather, the institutions in the society that permit the individual to consider things as true or false (389). The truth varies in each society as each society establishes differently the rules of what is of truth value and what is not. In this regard, by deconstructing the autonomous status of the human, Foucault provides a basis for a posthumanist vision.

Foucault's deconstruction involves questioning humanism's overemphasis on rationality by denying that the human subject has authority over meaning. He criticizes the idealization of the human by suggesting that what is considered to be the norm is established by the regime through social and scientific institutions. The police, the church and medical doctors define the criteria in who qualifies as sane and who does not. Groups of people who do not comply with the so-called norms or fit into the clearly set up categories are seen as "deviant others" (391). His criticism is based upon the argument that human rationality is not natural as it has evolved as a set of social criteria which decides between the sane and the insane. The faculty of reason for him is fundamentally a social construct. As the truth is controlled by the regime, the human subject has no centrality in knowledge production and the human is subjected to discourses which always reflect power relations. Discourses shape the human individual, which dismisses the fundamental idea of humanism that the human is an autonomous subject. Drawing from the work of Foucault, critical posthumanism rejects the allegedly autonomous, coherent, self-contained and unified human subject. In this sense, the subject, as well as biology, is considered a social construct that is built through discourse. Reason, consciousness, and normalcy are treated as the elements of power relations. The end of the self-governing human subject leads to the creation of the posthuman, as the new version of the human. Critical posthumanism deconstructs the institutional and discursive practices and structures that reflect the human as a unique being that is separated from all other forms of life (Nayar 22). The theory also unravels the cultural representations and

displays how disability, animality and monstrosity have been utilized by the human to distinguish itself from the Other as materialized in the animal and alternate body forms. These cultural representations are put to use through discourse.

Critical posthumanism studies the above-mentioned cultural discourses and representations that place the human on top of other beings and grant the human a unique and exceptional status. These discourses and representations show the human as the dominant species by attributing some properties to it (such as physiological, linguistic, and intellectual) to make it uniquely and truly human. The theory calls for a non-anthropocentric approach to making sense of life and favors the idea that human life has always been dependent on other life forms, the environment and technology. Critical posthumanism is, therefore, a discourse as well which emphasizes the blurredness of borders, interconnections, interdependency, crossovers, and mutuality among species in contrast to uniqueness, autonomy, independence, and agency (Nayar 47). Posthumanist discourse considers life as a becoming of mergers and connections among species and technology. It reiterates as a philosophy that life forms have collective histories, that all species have always lived with others and shared common origins. It is indicated in the theory that the hierarchization of life forms by humans has caused animals, plants, the environment, and fellow human beings to suffer the exclusionary practices at the hands of the human (Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 38). It is this standpoint that grants critical posthumanism an ethical position which brings with it a responsibility towards all life forms and the variety that they represent. Humans should empathize with the sufferings of others and respond accordingly. This response stems from evolution which has enabled human beings to possess our consciousness, as stated by Ferrando, “by being embedded among species” (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 4). From a critical posthumanist perspective, this evolution alters human ontology, as a consequence of which there is a need to redefine the human as the posthuman.

Concerning the definition of the posthuman, N. Katherine Hayles points out in her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) four critical elements that make up the posthuman. First of all, the posthuman perspective favors “informational pattern over material instantiation,” which considers “embodiment an accident of life rather than an inevitability of life” (2). Secondly, posthumanism regards consciousness an “epiphenomenon” and denies that it forms the core of the human identity as humanism

has suggested, based on René Descartes' proposition that he was "a mind thinking" (*Discourse 2*). Consciousness is in fact merely a "minor show" and an "evolutionary upstart" in contrast with the Western tradition that regards it as "the whole show" (2). Thirdly, in her crucial argument on embodiment, Hayles reiterates that the posthuman thought regards "the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" (2), which means upgrading the body or "replacing it with new prostheses is the continuation of a process that began before we were born" (3). Lastly, she posits that from a posthumanist perspective, "the human being can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines and that there are no essential differences" (3) between the biological body and the intelligent machine. These elements altogether eradicate the humanist view that human beings have superiority over nonhuman animals and machines on the grounds that they have consciousness and reason to decide their fate unlike animals and machines. This posthumanist view that predicts intelligent machines appears to be a cause of concern for the future of the humankind.

Hayles addresses the concern with the cybernetic construction of the posthuman with regards to the issue of (dis)embodiment. Although the criticism of the humanist notion of the human by different theories focuses on the deconstruction of the human, she points out that none of them are as radical as that of the cybernetic posthumanist one. Feminist theorists rejected the liberal humanist individual as being "white European male" (4); postcolonial theory criticized the humanist idea of the human as having a universal, "unified, consistent identity," and emphasized instead that it has a hybrid identity; postmodern theorists associated it with capitalism referring to the "body without organs"² argument of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (4). The main difference, according to Hayles, in the way the humanist subject is deconstructed is that the cybernetics focused on "the human as a set of informational processes," and as information is independent of the body, this kind of deconstruction posited that "embodiment is not essential to human being" (4). This is a major concern for Hayles as the cybernetic construction of the posthuman disregards embodiment, which radically differs from the criticism that feminist and postcolonial theories brought against

² The term that is discussed in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), in this context, basically refers to the unregulated potential of a body without organizational structures imposed on its constituent parts: a body that operates free of its constituents.

humanism. According to her, the information has “lost its body” (4) and she fears that there will be a culture where the posthumans see their bodies as accessories. She envisions “a posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies” (5) with no illusions of disembodiment, absolute dominion over other species, and immortality. Her vision of the posthuman recognizes the embeddedness of human life “in a world of great complexity,” where we are dependent on other forms of life for our “continued survival” (5). On the question of what is human and what is posthuman, Hayles points out that the definitions of the human are based on various “configurations of embodiment, technology, and culture” (34). She argues that man was defined as a tool-user by the Western anthropologists of the nineteenth century, and using tools shaped the human body as was then claimed by the anthropologists. The tool was a separate object from the body, which could be utilized and manipulated at will. In the early twentieth century, this distinguishing property of man evolved into a definition in which it was stated that man was in fact a tool-maker (with the intention that this definition would exclude the nonhuman animal, which were also shown to use tools but, allegedly, could not make them). In her view, what points to the arrival of the posthuman is the belief that tools are mechanical and informational expansions of the body—prostheses that change the human ontology.

The ontological change that the human undergoes in their journey into the posthuman is not a negative issue for Hayles. In regard to the subject, she asserts that “the prospect of becoming posthuman both evokes terror and excites pleasure” (283). The fear originates from the thought that the ‘post’ in posthuman means it supersedes the human, and the advent of the posthuman is seen as the end of the human species. She points out some transhumanist researchers, such as Hans Moravec, who believe that the age of the posthuman means the end of humanity and that humans will be “displaced as the dominant form of life on the planet by intelligent machines” (283). Transhumanists presume that the age of the human is ending. According to her, these dismal scenarios naturally cause negative and pessimistic reactions; nonetheless, they do not reflect the comprehensive meaning of the posthuman. She emphasizes that the embodied and embedded nature of the human is so complicated that it would not allow disembodied consciousness to make cybernetic machines intelligent. The modern human is a tiny stage in the history of life and evolutionary biology suggests that the human body is a product

of a long history of evolution (Hayles 284). In her view, the arrival of the posthuman is not a sign that the humanity is drawing to a close. It, rather, marks “the end of a certain conception of the human” (284) which would be defined as an autonomous being with agency and will.

Hayles states that in the posthumanist thought, “conscious agency has never been in control” (288). The way the organism, consciousness, and the environment are aligned does not allow only one component to have control over the others. The autonomous will is an illusion in this sense, which leads to the false belief that consciousness is the cause of what is in fact achieved by means of “chaotic dynamics and emergent structures” (288). Unlike the humanist desire for subduing the nature and utilizing science for imperialist purposes, the posthuman thought offers a different account in which “distributed cognition replaces autonomous will; embodiment replaces a body seen as a support system for the mind; and a dynamic partnership between humans and intelligent machines replaces the liberal humanist subject's manifest destiny to dominate and control nature” (288). The emergent and distributed nature of subjectivity that is embedded in the complicated world does not grant it a controlling position in the universe. In reference to Bruno Latour, who suggested that “we have never been modern” (94), Hayles suggests that “we have always been posthuman” as suggested by “the seriated history ... of cybernetics” (291). According to her, cybernetics emerges from networks that are regulated socially and constructed discursively. She also emphasizes the fact that human beings have always used prosthetics, as tool-makers and tool-users. The reason for the posthuman to be seen as a transformation to be alarmed at is in fact a reaction to how the posthuman is reflected as the end of the human. She highlights the posthumanist need for a new definition of the posthuman that should be crafted to focus on the harmonious survival and life of humans with other organic and inorganic forms in our shared planet.

Another reference to Latour comes from Rosi Braidotti in her prominent work in the posthumanist literature, *The Posthuman* (2013). Rejecting the humanist notion of the Enlightenment, she suggests that we may never have been human: “None of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that” (*The Posthuman* 1). She refers to the Cartesian individual that has property and rights, and allegedly perfect reason. Critiquing the discriminatory practices, she posits that some of us are still not regarded as completely human. In her view, the anxiety about the

posthuman stems from the probability of a decentering of “‘Man,’ the former measure of all things” (*The Posthuman* 2). She defines the posthuman theory as a means that helps us reconsider “the basic unit of reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as ‘Anthropocene³’” (*The Posthuman* 5), which she refers to as the period in which humanity as a geological force has the capacity to affect all life in the planet. She points out the idea that “the human is a historical construct that became a social convention about ‘human nature’” (*The Posthuman* 26), and therefore, a deconstructive approach is needed to overcome humanism as a normative frame that imposes problematic institutional practice (30). She argues that ecology and environmentalism are a source of inspiration for critical posthumanism in deconstructing the humanist concept of the human and establishing a connection between the self and others. This sort of relation to others, in her view, entails a “rejection of self-centred individualism” (*The Posthuman* 48). It paves the way for interdependence among all life forms for the well-being of the earth and everything on it. Environmental theory, therefore, is an influence on the posthuman thought as the theory links the exploitation of nature by humans to the conception of a man-as-the-measure-of-all-things attitude adopted by humanism, which utilizes science for the exploitation of nature as well. The European Enlightenment ideal of reason is associated with the “epistemic and physical violence” against others (*The Posthuman* 48). This worldview promotes control over others through rational science and does not respect the diversity of life forms on our shared earth. This anthropocentrism must be overcome according to the posthumanist view. In anthropocentrism, there is the ethical belief that only human beings have inherent worth. All the other beings, the nonhuman, have instrumental value in that they serve human needs. Anthropocentrism, thus, gives humans a moral status in which the nonhuman is a means to human needs—a source to be exploited. Anthropocentrism, in this sense, helps man to place himself in the center of the universe as supported by the humanist ideology and impose his will on the nonhuman as a form of domination. In this respect, all ethics are anthropocentric, as only humans have the cognitive capability to make and follow moral value.

³ *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as “the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment” (“Anthropocene,” def.).

Braidotti's emphasis of the need for an anti-anthropocentric approach in critical posthumanism draws from the environmental theory. She highlights the need for welcoming diversity and respect for all human and nonhuman life forms as well as the environment. "Sacredness of life" needs to be recognized, and "respect for all that lives" needs to be established (*The Posthuman* 48). In her definition, the posthuman subject is "constituted in and by multiplicity" in an "eco-philosophy of multiple belongings" (*The Posthuman* 49). The posthuman embodies differences and is embedded in the community and the environment with a robust sense of collectivity. She asserts that critical posthumanism favors a "move beyond anthropocentrism" (*The Posthuman* 50). This view promotes hybridity, diasporas, and nomadism, altering the definition of subjectivity in such a way that it is redistributed among all forms of life, rather than the human species exclusively. It extends the notion of life to the nonhuman. She asserts that monism, the idea that all living matter is in unity, and post-anthropocentrism, breaking away from human-centered thinking, are strongly connected in re-establishing the novel notion of subjectivity (*The Posthuman* 57). As for the anxiety about the future of the humanist legacy caused by the posthuman turn, she claims that the advanced technologies are the reason for the anxiousness. She partly shares those concerns; however, she also posits that she is not concerned about "a displacement of the centrality of the human," and argues that the favors of that evolution are significant (*The Posthuman* 64). The post-anthropocentric practices will mean the blurring of the dichotomies such as human/animal, male/female, black/white, and the human will be embedded into a network of connections that take life as the center of it as opposed to the human subject itself. She claims that even the individual elements of these binaries are problematic in the humanist vision because they do not represent what they are thought to signify⁴. She takes the example of the human, reiterating the critical posthumanist view that the universal notion of "man" is considered to be white, urbanized, and able, which she criticizes as being "non-representative" (*The Posthuman* 65).

Braidotti sees the posthuman aspect of "post-anthropocentrism" as deconstruction that eradicates "species supremacy" (*The Posthuman* 72). For her, post-anthropocentrism

⁴ Braidotti also claims that ethically and intellectually it is almost impossible to detach the positive facets of humanism from their precarious binaries. She believes that "individualism breeds egotism and self-centredness; self-determination can turn to arrogance and domination; and science is not free from its own dogmatic tendencies" (*The Posthuman* 30).

diminishes the notion of the so-called human nature by denying a border between the human and the nonhuman. Instead of the boundary, “a nature-culture continuum” (*The Posthuman* 65) emerges as the embodied self extends into the nature, displacing any clear-cut boundaries between the two. This also means the end of species hierarchy and the beginning of a hybridization process according to her. When the centrality of the human is dismissed and the hierarchy is gone, “animals, insects, plants and the environment, in fact the planet and the cosmos as a whole” (*The Posthuman* 65) gain equality with the human species. She argues that this brings about novel responsibilities for the human species as we need to maintain our shared earth and compensate for the bad consequences of the Anthropocene. Making a similar point to Hayles, she criticizes that humanism supposes “transcendental grounds for human consciousness” (*The Posthuman* 66) and posits that all forms of life are part of nature as embodied and embedded entities, which is a counterargument against anthropocentrism. She challenges the uniqueness and exceptionalism of the human and the “anthropocentric arrogance” (*The Posthuman* 67). She favors an alliance and solidarity with the nonhuman instead. Therefore, critical posthumanist vision changes the way we think about ourselves and everything that we are embedded in around us. It rejects that humans are ontologically superior to nonhuman animals and emphasizes that we share vulnerability with them. Elimination of the so-called human superiority enables the deconstruction of the human and paves the way for the posthuman.

Braidotti elaborates on the decentering of the human by proposing that it can be realized by having a “*zoe*-centered⁵” and egalitarian approach to life that aims to oust the *anthropos*-dominated way of life (*The Posthuman* 88). She argues that a post-anthropocentric move away from the structure of hierarchies to a decentered position of the human is a challenging task that needs “a form of estrangement and a radical repositioning on the part of the subject” (*The Posthuman* 88). The dominant vision of the subject must be given up and defamiliarization must be done by the human. This also means abandoning familiar habits of thought to create alternatives. She adopts monism as the conceptual frame of reference in the process of defamiliarization. It means “the open-ended, interrelational, multi-sexed and trans-species flows of becoming through

⁵ In Braidotti’s terms, *zoe* in this context refers to all the nonhuman life as opposed to *bios*, which refers to the life of the human animal.

interaction with multiple others” (*The Posthuman* 69). This vision of the posthuman, in her view, goes beyond the boundaries of humanism and anthropocentrism, and it acquires a “planetary dimension” (*The Posthuman* 69). She, therefore, argues that “man as the measure of all things” is a thing of the past and she has no nostalgia for it or the knowledge it produced (*The Posthuman* 195). She welcomes the “downfall of andro-centric and Eurocentric Humanism” (*The Posthuman* 195), and the opportunities that arise with it. Humanity can redesign itself and focus on building ethical relations and embrace the vulnerability that it shares with the nonhuman.

Another major posthumanist work that criticizes anthropocentrism is Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), in which she denounces the exceptional status of the human, arguing that although “Man” is only a tiny speck in the vast universe, “he” considers himself the “center around which the world turns” (134). She criticizes human exceptionalism and uniqueness stating, “Man is the sun, the nucleus, the fulcrum, the unifying force, the glue that holds it all together” (*Meeting the Universe* 134). In this notion of the human, “separateness is key” (*Meeting the Universe* 134) for the human, since ‘he’ is an individual that is conceived to be distinct from the rest in a superior position. In her view, posthumanism reveals humanism’s anthropocentric practice of drawing and maintaining boundaries to define the human and separate him from “his” others (*Meeting the Universe* 134). She is, however, “not interested in postmodernist celebrations (or demonizations) of the posthuman as living testimonies to the death of the human” (*Meeting the Universe* 134). According to her, posthumanism is not fine-tuned to the human. It is against human exceptionalism and is supposed to assume a role in ending the anthropocentric practices of the human. The main difference in approach of Barad from other deconstructive moves is her focus on the agential role of nature. She suggests that in posthumanism, the task of change is not assigned to culture and that the nature/culture divide is artificial. In her view, posthumanist theory should highlight how this boundary has been designed and maintained.

As mentioned above, the most significant contribution of Barad to the posthumanist theory is on the agency of matter. Combining the neologism “intra-action” (*Meeting the Universe* 33), she refers to entangled agencies. Intra-action differs from the usual “interaction” in that it is a mutual constitution of agency as opposed to an interaction in which there are distinct agencies “that precede their interaction” (*Meeting the Universe*

33). Separate agencies do not come before their intra-action; rather, they “emerge” through it (*Meeting the Universe* 33). She claims that agencies are not distinct only in their relational elements; they do not, either, exist on an individual level. The concept of intra-action changes the conventional notion of causality, which leads to the emergence of a new ontology. She calls her theory of this new ontology “agential realism,” which basically means the universe consists of phenomena that are “the ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies” (*Meeting the Universe* 44). In this novel form of ontology, the world is alive through intra-actions, which radically shifts the concepts of “space, time, matter, dynamics, agency, structure, subjectivity, objectivity, knowing, intentionality, discursivity, performativity, entanglement, and ethical engagement” (*Meeting the Universe* 44). As she puts it, agential realism has had inspiration from the physicist Niels Bohr, whose approach to understand nature taught us the lesson that “we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand” (*Meeting the Universe* 67). Barad refers to Bohr in questioning the methodology of comprehending the world around us. She states that Bohr critically examined the measurement processes to understand the world. Measurement is the encounter of the “natural” with the “social” in her view. It is “where matter and meaning meet in a very literal sense” in constructing knowledge (*Meeting the Universe* 67). She questions the accuracy of this meeting as she argues that her “agential realism rejects the notion of a correspondence relation between words and things” (*Meeting the Universe* 44) and proposes a causal account to explain material phenomena. This is major criticism of representationalism, which she describes as “the belief that words, concepts, ideas, and the like accurately reflect or mirror the things to which they refer” (*Meeting the Universe* 86).

On the issue of representationalism, Barad’s criticism focuses on language. She states that “language has been granted too much power” (*Meeting the Universe* 132). She criticizes that every “thing” except matter has been “turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation” (*Meeting the Universe* 132). Facts, as she puts it, are replaced with signification at the linguistic turn. She criticizes that “matter” does not matter, but language or discourse do in our attempt to comprehend the world around us. That language is thought to be more reliable than matter is a major problem in her argument. Matter is considered passive and abiding, yet culture and language have their own agency. Her criticism is based on the observation that materiality is “figured within

a linguistic domain as its condition of possibility” (*Meeting the Universe* 132). She refers to Nietzsche’s warning in the nineteenth century of the misguided habit of attributing too much significance to language, assuming that linguistic structure forms our comprehension of the world. This assumption leads to the belief that the design of language in the “subject-predicate” form mirrors “a prior ontological reality of substance and attribute” (*Meeting the Universe* 133). She postulates that the practice of representationalism is what deems matter passive and mute because it separates the knower and the known (*Meeting the Universe* 133). This immutable notion of matter needs “an external force like culture or history to complete it” (*Meeting the Universe* 133). The conviction that words reflect pre-existing phenomena leads to social constructivism, in her view, and it needs to be reconfigured. What challenges representationalism is a performative realization of discursive practices. A performative understanding in this sense puts us in a position to engage with and be part of the world in which we exist, unlike representationalism that grants us a superior position above and outside the world where we can reflect on the world to understand it (*Meeting the Universe* 133). This alters our ontology. Humanism and representationalism operate together as an anthropocentric force, which needs to be challenged to understand the world better.

Barad asserts that posthumanism does not tolerate humanist presumptions of the “banishment or death of metaphysics” that would attempt at the resurrection of man to measure what is intelligible and what is not (*Meeting the Universe* 136). The posthumanist thought renounces humanist explanations of the “subject that position the human as either pure cause or pure effect” (*Meeting the Universe* 137). It rejects the notion of the body being the divisive line between the interior and the exterior. As she argues, posthumanism not only denies the so-called ontological, epistemological and spatial distinction of the human, it also denies the “separateness of any-thing” (*Meeting the Universe* 137). In her proposal of the agential realist ontology, separateness is not an essential property of the way the world operates. Matter is dynamic; it is “produced and productive, generated and generative” (*Meeting the Universe* 137). It is not property, it is agential. Assigning agency to matter changes the human condition since the human, from a critical posthumanist perspective, is not separable from the environment. In this new concept of what constitutes the human, “phenomena” are the primary ontological units,

rather than “things” (*Meeting the Universe* 393). With this shift in perspective in ontological terms, the human acquires a different dimension that leads to the arising of the posthuman condition.

Robert Pepperell, in *The Posthuman Condition* (2003), states that the arrival of the posthuman does not indicate “the end of the human;” it rather refers to “the end of a human-centered universe” (171). It means “the end of humanism” for him, which he describes as the belief that the human power is “infallible,” and that humans as a species are superior to all the rest in the universe (171). He argues that the end of humanism will not be brief; rather, it will take time as the belief in humanism has existed since the fourteenth century and “will continue to exist well into the future” (171). He believes that posthumanism is related to the evolution of life that does not only concern genetics, but also includes culture and technology (171). According to Pepperell, posthumanism is concerned with how we, as humans, live and “how we conduct our exploitation of the environment, animals and each other” (172). The end of humanism manifests itself in the movements that “resist the worst aspects of humanist behaviour” (172). These movements are environmentalism, animal rights, feminism, and anti-slavery. The four movements against the exploitations of the earth, nonhuman animals, women, and other human beings, respectively, have been in existence over the last two centuries, which indicates that the gradual abolishment of a human-centered world is an ongoing act. He emphasizes the significance of the recognition that we humans are not distinct from one another, “or the world,” and this recognition will influence how “we treat each other, different species and the environment” (172). The following line summarizes the point that he makes: “To harm anything is to harm oneself” (172), as we are one with the world.

The ethical stance summarized by Pepperell is supported by Wolfe, who argues that his posthumanism is very similar in nature to the adverse reading of the postmodern by Jean-François Lyotard:

It comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture) ... and all of which comes before that historically specific thing called “the human” that Foucault’s archaeology excavates. (*What Is Posthumanism* XV)

His idea of posthumanism does not reject or surpass the human; rather, it attempts to describe the human in its social environment with its affective characteristics. This, he believes, can be done when consciousness and reason are not regarded as belonging exclusively to the human ontological domain (*What Is Posthumanism* XXV). The posthumanism that he formulates calls for a rethinking of our modes of human experience that we take for granted, which would include a whole “sensorium of other living beings” (*What Is Posthumanism* XV). It also calls for attending “to the specificity of the human” ontologically and epistemologically, through the acknowledgement that it is “fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality” (*What Is Posthumanism* XV). These forms, he writes, are not human; however, “they made the human what it is” (*What Is Posthumanism* XV). He borrows Derrida’s argument of language as the most basic prosthetic. He notes that prosthetics, the interdependence, and “the finitude that we share with nonhuman animals” bring about significant ethical responsibilities and consequences in our relations to nonhuman life forms (*What Is Posthumanism* XV).

All the notions above that critical posthumanism deals with in its criticism against the humanist ideology are crucial in the analysis of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Lemuel Gulliver’s various ontological statuses in the lands that he visits offers a break away from the anthropocentric perspective of humanism. The ontological, epistemological and ethical perspectives that critical posthumanism adopts can be seen through the eyes of Gulliver as he becomes an animal, a machine and a hybrid in his travels. The epistemic constraints that critical posthumanism puts forward can be overcome when Gulliver violates the borders among the human, the machine, and the animal. With his experiences, we witness that the so-called humanist notions of exceptionality and uniqueness are thwarted. The exclusive nature of the human in the humanist ideology is deconstructed as Gulliver’s ontology changes with each visit. The entangled and co-evolving qualities of the human are underlined as we observe Gulliver in interaction with other creatures. Gulliver’s hybrid nature and his symbiotic relationship with other species helps us to see that the human is not an autonomous and self-contained being. We see that Gulliver as a human being is not the center of the world. His treatment as the Other by the inhabitants of the lands he visits displays that the human is not necessarily the dominant species that is superior to the nonhuman. The power dynamics in these lands deconstruct the superior

vision of the human. As a result, the human becomes no longer the coherent individual as suggested by humanism. These interactions of Gulliver with the inhabitants of foreign lands exhibit a strong posthumanist vision. He becomes the symbol of the decentered human. He is indeed “a tiny speck in the vast universe” (Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 134). We realize it clearly in the narrative that the human is not “infallible” (Pepperell 171). He is not the only conscious and rational creature to exist. The human subject, through Gulliver, is dethroned from his privileged centrality. In this respect, Gulliver is not the human, he is the posthuman. Before beginning the analysis of the work in the next chapter, it is crucial at this point to situate *Gulliver's Travels* in a historical context to display the way Swift reacts to the humanist attitudes towards human existence in his time.

The early eighteenth century is the Age of Enlightenment when profound changes were taking place in England and across much of Europe in the realms of social life and science. One of the vital characteristics of the period was that it spread the belief that the humankind could replace darkness with light and ignorance with knowledge, solely through human reason. Otto T. Wedel describes it as the age in which the “scepticism of the corrupt nature of human” was replaced by “rationalism and an optimistic faith in man” (447). It is also known as the age of exploring different cultures through overseas traveling. The emergence of natural laws that challenged the divine rights of kings, and the inventions of the telescope and microscope changed remarkably the traditional outlook on nature. It was acknowledged that there was more for discovery than what was visible to the naked eye. Acquiring new knowledge about different territories also helped people better understand different peoples and their cultures. From this perspective, *Gulliver's Travels* is a consequence of the adventurous mood of its time.

The radical change in the perception of the human led to subsequent change in various dimensions of life as well. The future did not look grim anymore for the Europeans as the increased experimental knowledge about the human anatomy and the nature paved the way for hygienic conditions that extended man's lifespan (Monk 50). Moreover, the invention of the printing machine facilitated public access to education. The public attitude towards science and its practices improved as a result of the state support for public literacy via educational institutions as in the form of the Royal Academy in Britain (Monk 50). However, as Samuel H. Monk notes, the scientific

demeanor of the Enlightenment era that advocated constant progress did not appeal to Swift (50). The advance of science as promoted by the Enlightenment meant acute secularization and the elimination of religious elements from the everyday life. Swift firmly defied it. Monk notes that Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels* in a manner that countered the belief in the faculty of reason "to attain metaphysical and theological truth" (50). The principal reason for Swift's denial of the Enlightenment is held to be his Christian predilection for the divine reason over the reason of man. Monk notes that Swift, as an ardent Christian, believed that the "fallen nature of man [could not] transcend its own limitations" (51). Contrary to Swift, however, the Enlightenment man disputed the belief in God as the almighty being which rendered man desperate on earth, and began to believe that man had the unique capacity to decide his destiny through reason. The Chain of Beings⁶ mentality that traditionally positioned God above other beings, and man just above the animals, fell out of fashion. Therefore, the Enlightenment came to be acknowledged as the time of transformation to science from religion, and therefore, to man from God. The book will be analyzed according to this historical context of the era.

Before the analysis of *Gulliver's Travels* from a critical posthumanist perspective, it is in order to lay out the organization of the novel as well. *Gulliver's Travels* comprises four books, each of which portrays the story of Lemuel Gulliver's journey to a different land. In Book One, on his first voyage, he travels to the land of Lilliput, where the inhabitants are tiny in size in relation to him. Gulliver is held captive by the Lilliputians, and is utilized as a national resource in their war against the country of Blefuscu. He travels to Brobdingnag, in Book Two, on his second voyage, where the people are giants in comparison to him. He is kept as an animal on this land and is displayed as a spectacle for the people's entertainment. Book Three includes his third journey, to the land of Laputa, which is a floating island that is inhabited by a people of science that are narrated to be impractical in their approach to the study of the world around them. Book Four consists of Gulliver's final voyage, wherein he visits the land of the Houyhnhnms, who are rational horses that govern the race of Yahoos, who are brutish humanlike creatures. Throughout these voyages, Gulliver is constantly offered a possibility of redefining his

⁶ The Chain of Beings is defined as "a hierarchical structure of all matter and life, thought by medieval Christianity to have been decreed by God. The chain begins with God and descends through angels, humans, animals and plants to minerals. The great chain of being (Latin: *scala naturae*, "Ladder of Being") is a concept derived from Plato and Aristotle" (Lovejoy 3).

sense of attachment to other species and the environment. He gradually redefines his relationship with other fellow creatures in his journeys. He goes to Lilliput and Brobdingnag with a “stability of self not easily disrupted” (Jaques 118). Nevertheless, at the end of his journeys, his re-evaluated relationship with animals makes him detest human pretension to reason.

The thesis analyzes *Gulliver's Travels* in two chapters. The first chapter deals with all four books of the novel regarding the bodily deconstruction of the human. Through Gulliver's radical anatomy, the binaries of human/machine and human/animal are investigated. It is displayed that Gulliver's shifting identities as a machine and an animal blur the distinction between the nonhuman and the human. His differing size in relation to the inhabitants of the lands he visits distorts the stabilized nature of the human. His human subjectivity is questioned as he is treated by the natives as an animal and a machine. His otherwise normal human body is seen as deficient, disabled and abnormal, which deconstructs the humanist notion of the human body. The anti-anthropocentric look on the human body decenters the human physically. The chapter aims to exhibit how the normative borders between the nonhuman and the human body disappears. The fluid and unfixed nature of the human body is underscored. Consequently, species boundaries regarding the body collapse. It is argued in the chapter that distortion of size in the narrative lays the groundwork for an exploration of the world from different angles regardless of the human perspective. Fantastical hybridity of Gulliver allows him to evaluate the human condition from different perspectives with the help of the ontological challenges that he faces in his travels. It is a means of overcoming anthropocentrism. It is a vehicle to acknowledge and understand the life of the other. Swift switches perspectives in the narrative to connect the cut between the human and the nonhuman. He shows that they are not distinct entities. The human individual is hybrid and is entangled with the nonhuman. This suggestion is contrary to the disintegrated and detached nature of human as proposed by humanism.

The second chapter of the thesis examines the cognitive deconstruction of the human, and mainly deals with Book Four, wherein Gulliver visits the land of the Houyhnhnms, the rational quadrupeds. Human superiority and rationality are questioned through these rational equines. Assumptions of humanism regarding the cognitive superiority of the human is critiqued in the chapter. Human dominance in that sense is

thwarted. Ontological distinction and superiority of the human are displayed as false. How the hierarchy between the human and the nonhuman is reversed is the focus of the chapter. The unfamiliarity of the nonhuman animal is revealed by the experiences of Gulliver in Houyhnhnmland. It is shown that the nonhuman animal has experiences independent of the human. The chapter examines how the human race is likened to yahoos and how it is questioned accordingly. It is argued in the chapter that Swift obscures the dividing lines that detach humans from animals by illustrating that nonhuman animals can have reason and language. He inverts the rational supremacy of the human over the nonhuman. In an anti- or post-anthropocentric move, the nonhuman animals have voice in the narrative. They speak their own language. The borders between the human and the nonhuman vanish with such a portrayal of roles. The notion of the rational human is deconstructed, and the cognitive and moral superiority of man above the nonhuman is scrutinized in the chapter.

When the analysis of two chapters is considered, overall, the novel goes beyond the perspective of the human, to that of the Other. The ontological intricacies and the inversion of the human/animal hierarchies problematize the human-animal distinction. Dominant position of the human is lost, and serious ontological questions arise. The ontological layers of Gulliver problematize the concept of the human and blurs the human/animal separation. Human dominance is ousted, and the human is decentered. It is the hybridity embodied by Gulliver that makes this possible. The hybrid Gulliver not only upsets the humanist concepts of stable, autonomous, and fixed notion of the human, but also disrupts the hierarchies between the human and the nonhuman. It is observed that the nonhuman is not hierarchically subordinate to the human. Gulliver's identification of himself with other creatures is accomplished via distortion of human agency. The fantastical journeys that he embarks on achieve to expose him to the humanist fallacies regarding other beings and the egotism of human life. Hence, through learning about what it means to be the Other, he is offered the opportunity to draw links between himself and other creatures.

CHAPTER ONE

BODILY DECONSTRUCTION IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

This chapter analyzes the concept of body in *Gulliver's Travels* from a critical posthumanist perspective. It is proposed that Gulliver's display of a radical anatomy of the human body demonstrates Swift's anxieties regarding the borders among the human, the animal, and the machine. Throughout his voyages, Gulliver's body is deconstructed in novel ways. We can see Swift's posthumanist imagination through Gulliver's fluid positions in the cultures he engages with, particularly through his representation of Gulliver's man-machine identity that indicates the blurred distinction between his technological and cultural deeds. Gulliver's voyages include radical corporeal differences. The shift in his relative size and the strong reversals of perspective are a continuous theme throughout the journeys. The narration is maintained through Gulliver's perspective and his embodiment, and corporeal experiences basically shape his voyages. In the first voyage, Gulliver is considered a "Man Mountain" (*GT* 61) and a war machine because of his size. In the second voyage, Gulliver's body is referred to as an animal. It is also viewed as an automaton slave that performs tricks for an audience in Brobdingnag. In the third voyage, he comes across Flappers, who are the prosthetic extensions of Laputian bodies. In his fourth voyage, he dismisses humanity and reflects to have affection for the Houyhnhnms, and he comes to despise his own body. Swift's representation of the numerous, disparate bodies reads satirical. Nevertheless, his depictions of the body expand the perceptions of the human and the nonhuman, and obscures the distinction between the two.

Gulliver's relative size on the different lands that he visits indicates his destabilized status as a human individual. His fractured body does not conform to the fixed nature of the human body. Swift's narrative that rearranges size allows Gulliver to shrink and grow, by way of which he finds the opportunity to explore the world from different perspectives. His inherent sense of ontology is shaken by this process, which leads him to redefine himself as a human subject. In Lilliput, Gulliver's huge size earns him power over the tiny Lilliputians. However, despite his physical superiority, he complies with the Lilliputian rule. This indicates that larger size does not necessarily mean greater power

since the Lilliputians exercise power over the huge mass of Gulliver. The animalization and objectification of Gulliver because of his enormous size distorts the stabilized human agency of Gulliver. He becomes an object to be controlled as he is assigned the status of the “Great Man Mountain” (*GT* 61). Through Gulliver, the narration displays the human subject regarded as the Other. Although there is a size reversal in his next voyage, to Brobdingnag, his status as the Other does not change. The tension concerning his human identity (and the concept of what a human is) that arises in his first travel is maintained in Brobdingnag, where he is reduced to the size of a small animal. Distortion of the idealized human form shows that the human is not a fixed notion that is stable and potent as proposed by humanism. The shift in perspective renders the concept of the human unstable. The narration reveals that the human can be seen as the Other by the nonhuman. Gulliver’s changing ontology and the status of the human as the Other in the eyes of the nonhuman helps us to understand the anthropocentric perspective of humanism by blurring the lines that separate the human from the nonhuman.

Gulliver’s body undergoes various material conditions. After it is adrift during the shipwreck, it is treated as a spectacle and then it is inventoried in Lilliput. Gulliver’s humanness is threatened when he is considered a machine and inventoried accordingly. He undergoes Lilliputian surveying and, thus, Lilliputians have some form of power over him. He is called ‘Man Mountain,’ which stresses his gargantuan mass and indicates that his bulky body violates the normalcy among the miniature Lilliputians. His physical immensity causes panic among the Lilliputians. His corporeality undergoes the meticulous inspection of Lilliputian officers when he is, upon the orders of the royal command, subjected to anatomical scrutiny and his body is symbolically anatomized into quantitative units. As Gulliver reports, “[t]hese Gentlemen, having Pen, Ink, and Paper about them, made an exact Inventory of every thing they saw, and when they had done, desired I would set them down, that they might deliver it to the Emperor. This Inventory I afterwards translated into *English* ... ” (*GT* 28; italics in the original). An exact inventory of what the inspectors find on Gulliver’s body is transcribed and signed by the Lilliputian officers to be read over to their emperor. Under their inspection of him, it is important to note that Gulliver spares some room for privacy on himself through having a secret pocket and hiding his fobs from the Lilliputians’ gaze: “There were two Pockets which we could not enter: These he called his Fobs; they were two large Slits cut into the

Top of his middle Cover, but squeezed close by the pressure of his Belly” (*GT* 30). On Gulliver’s attempt to hide his secret possessions, Şafak Horzum states that “the non-inventoried pockets tell a personal narrative of a posthuman subjectivity having emerged from the coalescence of the subject and the object” (85). Horzum also observes that “[t]he dissected Gulliver, from the Lilliputian vantage, is part clothe, part machine, part animal, and part human. As a whole, though, he or his body becomes a sum of all these matters” (87). Similarly, In Hye Ha, in her dissertation, poses the question of “whether an aggregate of particularized bits of property or prostheses can count as selfhood” (121). She suggests that Gulliver’s pockets function “as a mechanical and prosthetic extension of his self” (121). In this context, Gulliver’s body is perceived as an inanimate object to be mapped out through scrutiny. As Gulliver’s body is considered a war machine by the Lilliputians and is surveyed rigorously, what forms human subjectivity in the narrative remains to be a question.

Gulliver’s inspection by the Lilliputians deems him as quantitative data. His private possessions and excrement can be regarded as basic markers of his selfhood in Lilliput. As noted by Ha, a comprehensive scrutiny of this sort seems to be “an assumption that the assemblage of discrete body parts adds up to a whole, sensible organic entity. Gulliver’s denunciation of such an objectifying gaze through his attempt to maintain his private pockets can be interpreted as an effort to salvage his humanity” (123). His personal possessions constitute part of his identity, and it blurs the distinction between interiority and exteriority. As Nayar puts it, “the subjectivity of a human lies not within the interior but within the exchange and linkage the interior has with the exterior world. This exchange and linkage ensure the deterritorialization of human subjectivity because interiority is itself an open state: in constant communication with the exterior” (98). Accordingly, Gulliver’s pockets, in this sense, extend his interiority. The possessions that he keeps to himself on himself signify his effort to keep his humanity intact. The Lilliputian officers catalogue Gulliver’s possessions, but the activity turns into challenging physical and intellectual work for the Lilliputians due to Gulliver’s enormous size. That the list of his possessions consists of mechanical instruments, such as a clock, a pocket watch, and some gunpowder, indicates an intersection between the mechanical and the organic. As these mechanical devices constitute Gulliver’s identity in Lilliput, it can be interpreted that he borders on the human-machine divide. The Lilliputian

inspectors describe the examination of Gulliver's body and the metal objects that he has on him. Despite their tendency for scientific data, the officers describe Gulliver's machinery as objects that are beyond their understanding: "In the large Pocket on the right Side of his middle Cover, ... we saw a hollow Pillar of Iron, about the Length of a Man, ... , larger than the Pillar; and upon one side of the Pillar were huge Pieces of Iron sticking out, cut into strange Figures; which we know not what to make of" (*GT* 29). Guns, gunpowder, and pocket watches are the objects that catch their attention, which are representative of the improvement of the military technology made possible by engineering. It is interesting to notice that Gulliver's identity is attached to the mechanical possessions that he keeps in his pockets. Although he is called 'Man Mountain,' the way he is scrutinized indicates that he is rendered as a mechanical entity, and he is treated as one in his stay on the land.

From the perspective of prosthesis, it can be said that Gulliver's body augments itself through his possessions of weaponry with which he is embedded. This is in line with Nayar's argument that "[b]odies are bodies+machines where the body evolves in conjunction with assorted tools. All 'natural' and 'normal' bodies are always bodies+machines" (143). Gulliver, in this regard, is also a 'hybrid' and a 'congeries' as the posthumanist perspective does not accept that the body and the prosthesis are distinct entities. The very "subjectivity of the individual is constituted through and within the network, or the connection s/he has with machines and tools" (Nayar 144). The weaponry on him enables Gulliver to be a war machine in Lilliput against the army of Blefuscu. He is perceived to be a hybrid body that possesses military weaponry on him, and he is utilized as a war machine against Lilliput's archenemy, Blefuscu. Gulliver, too, depicts himself as a war machine that evokes terror: "... immediately all the Troops gave a Shout between Terror and Surprise; for the Sun shone clear, and the Reflexion dazzled their Eyes, as I waved the Scymiter to and fro in my Hand" (*GT* 31). In the context of his mechanical status in Lilliput, it is possible to associate his military feats to the operation of similar equipment of early modern engineering. The connotation of his body with an instrument of war highlights his mechanical and nonhuman status in Lilliput. He is operated as a Lilliputian weapon, intended to cause terror due to his huge bulk and power. He is taken advantage of as war equipment, and then is subject to disposition, as documented by Lilliput's verdict of his execution: "The Treasurer and Admiral insisted

that you should be put to the most painful and ignominious Death, by setting Fire on your House at Night; and the General was to attend with Twenty Thousand Men armed with poisoned Arrows, to shoot you on the Face and Hands” (*GT* 61). Although the use of Gulliver’s body against the Blefuscu may satirize British colonial coercion and expansion, Swift’s choice of discourses in the context of mechanical engineering imply that the everlasting separation of man and machine is not clear-cut, and, therefore, does not hold in the case of Gulliver as a war machine. This is reminding of Haraway’s conclusion that “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs” (*When Species Meet* 66). Building on the same premise, Nayar claims “all bodies, irrespective of abilities, are cyborged bodies because their abilities and subjectivities are the effect of a convergence and co-evolution with devices and institutionally facilitated networks: all bodies are hybrid” (147). He argues that “it is not a subject (human individual) + object (device) model that works any more ... : it shows how the very subjectivity of the subject is always already the effect of interactions with ‘objects’, and thus the organic/inorganic, human/non-human boundaries break down” (147). In this sense, from a critical posthumanist perspective, Gulliver as the embodiment of a war machine represents the break-down of these binaries.

On his second voyage, due to his tiny size, Gulliver is perceived by Brobdingnagians as an automaton: “The King ... conceived I might be a piece of Clock-work ... contrived by some ingenious Artist” (*GT* 93). Although his transition from a formidable war machine into a harmless doll is striking, Gulliver exhibits easygoing assimilation into the unfavorable conditions in Brobdingnag by acting out his assigned role as an automaton. His performance as a public spectacle underlines that he is on the animal side of the border between the human and the nonhuman⁷. Gulliver’s tiny body covered in smooth skin, as a little humanoid, is the automaton that fascinates and entertains the Brobdingnagian audiences. His unusual body here is considered deficient and abnormal, as well as impaired. As his small body of a peculiar shape is not considered as normal or natural, Brobdingnagians objectify it. Nayar points out that “[t]he disabled body was a freak body, and was put on show for people to come and marvel at” (143).

⁷ Public displays of anomalous bodies were not uncommon in the early eighteenth-century Britain. In her book *Spectacle of Deformity* (2010), Nadja Durbache states of the period that as a consequence of “the expansion of overseas travel, exploration, and colonization, exotic others began to be exhibited more frequently as living curiosities” (29).

The quote corresponds to what happens to Gulliver in Brobdingnag. As his body is deviant, he is put on display. In this context, unlike humanism, which favors ableism, critical posthumanism does not regard the impaired body as disabled. It is rather the environment that does not adapt to the needs of the so-called ‘disabled’ body. This reformulation of human/environment relation gives us a new perspective. It is the disabled system or environment which prevents the body to fulfil its needs, or function properly. As Harlan Hahn puts it, disability studies focus on “the mutual connectedness of body and environment” (60). As traditional humanism regards the human body as able, no attention has been given to alter the environment for the needs of the human beings that do not meet the humanist criteria to be accepted as fully human as they are not physically fit to conform to the norms of the societies that they live in. Concerning this issue, Hahn asserts that “modifying the environment” rather than the allegedly disabled body is the resort (61). The Brobdingnagians do not have the opportunity to locate Gulliver in his environment, which causes them to mark him as impaired for they cannot adapt their social environment to the specific needs of his physically divergent body. Hence, disability is a result of non-inclusive society/environment that does not accept all the human variations that exist. Brobdingnag is a “disabling” society, to use Hahn’s term (61), as they cannot adapt to Gulliver’s needs, whom they see as impaired and deficient. As Nayar sums it, “disability ... is not immanent in the impaired body but is the result of an interaction with an environment that prevents it [the body] from engaging in a full range of tasks and actions” (141). In this sense, disability is an ‘emergent’ condition as Barad would call it, an instance of intra-action between the impaired body and the disabling environment, rather than an inherent condition. Gulliver is not actually inherently inferior to the Brobdingnagians; however, as he is impaired and regarded as disabled, he is otherized and deemed to be nonhuman by Brobdingnagians.

Although Gulliver is similar to them in all regards except size, the Brobdingnagians, urged by their ethnocentricity, attempt to categorize Gulliver to separate him from their own kind. The King’s scientists assemble to establish what exactly Gulliver is as a species. At first, they think that he could be “a piece of Clock-work” (*GT* 93) mechanism—which could be a reference to Descartes, who believed that animals are machines that can imitate speech but are not mentally capable of producing thoughts or language (*Discourse* 32). They, then, think that he might be a predatory animal, an

embryo, or a dwarf. However, their observations of his physical characteristics cause them to reject that he is any of the things that they considered—as he has no teeth or claws to be a predator; he is too small to be a dwarf; and his limbs are well-developed to be an embryo. The scientists of Brobdingnag taxonomize Gulliver as “Relplum Scacath” in their language, which translates into Latin as “Lusu Naturae,” or in English “Freak of Nature,” which is, as Gulliver narrates, an instance of “a Determination exactly agreeable to the Modern Philosophy of *Europe*: whose Professors ... have invented this wonderful Solution of all Difficulties, to the unspeakable Advancement of human Knowledge” (94; italics in the original). This appears to be a reference, by Swift through Gulliver, to the humanist tendency to render as the Other what cannot be defined within the norms of their ideology. In the same anthropocentric context, it is also reminiscent of Franz Fanon’s suggestion that the African is a human regardless of its evaluation by the European perspective, and the human cannot be defined solely by its distinction from the European notion of the human (126). It indicates a failing aspect of humanism in that it does not have an inclusive notion of the human. As Foucault puts it, “humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics. Humanism serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is, after all, obliged to take recourse” (44). He makes the point that humanism is full of assumptions and prejudices in identifying what qualifies as man (44). Brobdingnagians’ failed attempt to locate Gulliver’s species identity is of a sort that reflects this understanding. Gulliver, in the eyes of the Brobdingnagians, is not human. He indeed does not fit into any of the species categories⁸. Therefore, he is dubbed as a freak of nature in their final analysis, which reflects an exclusive humanist practice on the part of the Brobdingnagians.

⁸ Ferrando asserts that the notion of species is a challenging issue (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 121). She refers to the terminology in biology, the “species problem” to underscore the difficulty. She claims that “species exist as long as none of their traits are essentialized. (...) Species, in other words, is an immanent concept. They are constantly changing and have no fixed boundaries” (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 121). The human is still evolving. While the “long-term dynamics of evolution take place over time periods which are inaccessible to human standards, the short-term changes can be detected, as in the case of the genetic mutation which has resulted in lactose persistence in some human populations” (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 121). Stating that the genetic mutation of lactose assimilation in humans is a consequence of consuming animal milk and dairy that came after the cultural practice of the domestication of animals, she reiterates that this is of special interest for posthumanism because it “emphasizes evolution as a naturalcultural process, through the continuity of biological adaptation and cultural practices” instead of holding onto “the Western dichotomy nature/culture” (*Philosophical Posthumanism* 121-122).

What Brobdingnagians fail to see in Gulliver can be expressed in reference to Nagel, who stated that “fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to be that organism, something it is like for the organism” (436). His argument focuses on the issue of self-consciousness. “No matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience at all means, basically, that there is something it is like to be that organism” (Nagel 436). Gulliver has a different form, and he has consciousness, as we know it from his narration that includes self-reflection. On one instance, for example, he reflects upon the Lilliputians’ verdict to extradite him: “This Preface made me so impatient, being conscious of my own Merits and Innocence, that I was going to interrupt; when he intreated me to be silent; and thus proceeded” (*GT* 61). Nagel proposes that our imagination is provided by our own experience, which limits our capacity to comprehend what it truly means to be that organism (439). This appears to be what Brobdingnagians experience in their encounter with Gulliver. According to Nagel, imagining to be able to fly around, catch insects, perceive the world by sound signals is not enough to understand what it means to be that animal, or to “spend the day hanging upside down by one’s feet in an attic” (439). There is a difference between feeling “what it would be like for me to behave as a bat” and “what it is like for a bat to be a bat” (439). The latter is the real question in his explanation. We are confined to the resources of our own minds. “I cannot perform it either by imagining additions to my present experience, or by imagining segments gradually subtracted from it, or by imagining some combination of additions, subtractions, and modifications” (439). In a similar vein, Beatrice Portelli states that “[t]he act of imposing humanist assumptions onto the mental lives of the Other is shown to be a violent act of hegemonization stemming from one’s own lack of knowledge about the Other” (19). This explains the Brobdingnagians’ failed attempt to understand what Gulliver is as they cannot think outside the limits of their anthropocentric approach. From a critical posthumanist perspective, then, this instance asserts the belief that nonhuman animals (Gulliver qualifies as one in Brobdingnagians’ regard) have cognitive faculties that go beyond the assumptions and prejudice of humanism.

On his next voyage, to Laputa, Gulliver does not need to rearrange his sense of identity or size and gains the upper hand to be the observer of his surroundings. This is a position he could not have in his first two voyages as he was the object of observation

(both as a mechanical and an organic ‘unit’) due to his unusual size in comparison with the inhabitants. He observes in Laputa an embodiment of prosthetic extension. The Laputan masters employ *Flappers* that are used as servers. Gulliver narrates that Laputans are physically deformed in that “[t]heir Heads were all reclined either to the Right or the Left; one of their Eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the Zenith” (*GT* 146). The deformed body as an indication of a parallel malfunction of cognition is notable in that it represents embodied cognition⁹. These particular people need an extension in the form of another body to awaken and alarm them in case of danger. To this end, Laputans employ servers called ‘flappers’ that carry around ‘bladders’ to excite the attention of their preoccupied masters by hitting them on the mouth and ears. Considering the way the flappers are utilized, Ha suggests that they can be read as “human prostheses” (134). The excerpt below is how Gulliver accounts for the function of the flappers in Laputa:

I observed here and there many in the Habit of Servants, with a blown Bladder fastned like a Flail to the End of a short Stick, which they carried in their Hands. In each Bladder was a small Quantity of dried Pease, or little Pebbles (as I was afterwards informed). With these Bladders they now and then flapped the Mouths and Ears of those who stood near them, of which Practice I could not then conceive the Meaning. It seems, the Minds of these People are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the Discourses of others, without being roused by some external Taction upon the Organs of Speech and Hearing; for which Reason, those Persons who are able to afford it, always keep a *Flapper*, (the Original is *Climenole*) in their Family, as one of their Domesticks; nor ever walk abroad or make Visits without him. And the Business of this Officer is, when two or more Persons are in Company, gently to strike with his Bladder the Mouth of him who is to speak, and the Right Ear of him or them to whom the Speaker addresseth himself. This *Flapper* is likewise employed diligently to attend his Master in his Walks, and upon Occasion to give him a soft Flap on his Eyes; because he is always so wrapped up in Cogitation, that he is in manifest Danger of falling down every Precipice, and bouncing his Head against every Post; and in the Streets, of jostling others, or being jostled himself into the Kennel. (*GT* 146-147; italics in the original)

Although most prostheses function in the form of attachments or implants, flappers, unusually, exist outside of the body that they assist. It is noticeable that they are not authentic integral body parts; nevertheless, they enhance the cognitive functions of the body that they serve through hitting them for cognitive arousal. Gulliver reflects that the flappers are the class of servants and are employed to aid their masters when they are preoccupied with their thoughts. Next to being a satirical tool, the idea of flappers can be interpreted as Swift’s engagement with mechanical prosthetics. The neat separation between flappers and their masters indicates Cartesian dualism as one body is in charge

⁹ Embodied cognition is the theory that cognitive properties are formed by the attributes of an organism’s whole body rather than only by those of the brain.

of physical movement, while the other is responsible for cognitive function. Ha, in her dissertation, goes on to claim that a hierarchical formation of a “soul-over-body” can be read since the masters, who represent the mind, own the flappers, who represent the body (135). The fact that, in Laputa, the prosthesis is also a human body may indicate that bodies can also be prostheses. It reads as criticism against the view that prosthetics are seen as extensions because the dualism between the body and the extension (which is in fact another body in the case of flappers) sounds absurd. Therefore, this argument against dualism aligns with the posthumanist view of embodied cognition which states that cognition and the body are inseparable.

Dualism presents itself in a more complicated fashion in Gulliver’s last voyage, to the Houyhnhnmland, in the form of human/nonhuman. After a brief stay in his native country, Gulliver goes back to sailing as the captain of a merchant. His crew commits mutiny, and leave him on the first land that they sail by—the land of the Houyhnhnms. There are two species living on this land: Yahoos are the deformed savage creatures that look like humans and the Houyhnhnms are a species of talking horses. Houyhnhnms are the rulers of the land while Yahoos are the ruled class. Gulliver’s physical similarity to Yahoos is a source of ontological anxiety for him as he attempts to dissociate himself from the brute and irrational creatures:

One Day, my Master, having heard me mention the *Nobility* of my Country, was pleased to make me a Compliment which I could not pretend to deserve: That, he was sure, I must have been born of some Noble Family, because I far exceeded in Shape, Colour, and Cleanliness, all the *Yahoos* of his Nation, although I seemed to fail in Strength, and Agility, which must be imputed to my different Way of Living from those other Brutes; and besides, I was not only endowed with the Faculty of Speech, but likewise with some Rudiments of Reason, to a Degree, that with all his Acquaintance I passed for a Prodigy. (GT 238; italics in the original)

His body attracts attention when he wants to associate himself with the Houyhnhnms. He gets obsessed with how his skin is different to that of Yahoos. He is scared to be seen naked by the Houyhnhnms since his hairless skin resembles him to Yahoos, as opposed to Houyhnhnms. Gulliver’s white and smooth skin and his physiology are associated with the physical properties of Yahoos:

My Master observed the whole Performance with great Signs of Curiosity and Admiration. He took up all my Cloaths in his Pastern, one Piece after another, and examined them diligently; he then stroaked my Body very gently, and looked round me several Times; after which he said, it was plain I must be a perfect *Yahoo*; but that I differed very much from the rest of my Species, in the Whiteness, and Smoothness of my Skin, my want of Hair in several Parts of my Body, the Shape and Shortness of my Claws

behind and before, and my Affectation of walking continually on my two hinder Feet. He desired to see no more; and gave me leave to put on my Cloaths again, for I was shuddering with Cold. (*GT* 221; italics in the original)

As Gulliver tries to remain dressed, which is a symbol of his human civility, he gets exposed to curious intrusion. A female Yahoo's gazing at him and approaching towards him during his bath is full of indecent intentions. As he bathes in the river, Gulliver gives an account of the young female Yahoo's embracing him. Gulliver's master and other horses see the occasion as harmless, yet the incident suggests that the line between what Gulliver considers reason (humanness) and what the uncivilized female Yahoo represents (animality) is quick to disappear:

Being one Day abroad with my Protector the Sorrel Nag, and the Weather exceeding hot, I entreated him to let me bathe in a River that was near. He consented, and I immediately stripped myself stark naked, and went down softly into the Stream. It happened that a young Female *Yahoo* standing behind a Bank, saw the whole Proceeding; and inflamed by Desire, as the Nag and I conjectured, came running with all Speed, and leaped into the Water within five Yards of the Place where I bathed. I was never in my Life so terribly frightened; the Nag was grazing at some Distance, not suspecting any Harm: She embraced me after a most fulsome Manner. (*GT* 248-249; italics in the original)

Gulliver's vulnerable position in the Houyhnhnmland displays the fluidity and the flexibility of the divide between the rational and the irrational. Gulliver's account of his encounter with the female Yahoo is reminiscent of Herbrechter and Callus' report of a case of 'miscegenation' in the movie *Planet of the Apes* (1968), where the "[f]emale ape's sexual desire for the male human hero – is quickly discarded" (24). They state that "speciesism is not only intended but absolutely necessary to safeguard the humanist system of values" (24). Similarly, Gulliver's realization that he is in form a Yahoo with his physical characteristics underscores the thin line drawn between the human and the animal. However, he resents being seen as one of her own race by the stalking female Yahoo, and tries to draw a species boundary against the Yahoo: "I roared as loud as I could, and the Nag came galloping towards me, whereupon she quitted her Grasp, with the utmost Reluctancy, and leaped upon the opposite Bank, where she stood gazing and howling all the time I was putting on my Cloaths" (*GT* 248-249). Gulliver feels ashamed, and he wants to keep his garment, and along with it, his humanity. He appears to establish a species border between himself and the Yahoos. It is another instance in the narration wherein we witness his struggle to salvage his humanity.

Species boundaries, which mostly focuses on physical differences, play a factor in Gulliver's dismissal from Houyhnhnmland as well. The hybrid Gulliver is not tolerated

in their land as their views on species boundaries are offended by the Master Horse's implications of Gulliver's rationality. The horses seem to be concerned with a Chain-of-Being mentality. On one occasion, the Master Horse tries to reassure the assembly that "it was no Shame to learn Wisdom from Brutes" (*GT* 273). The Master Horse brags to the assembly in an impressed fashion about the fact that Gulliver speaks a different language and has learned that of theirs. He also announces that Gulliver has found a smart solution to the Yahoo issue that has bothered the Houyhnhnms for long. He speaks of Gulliver as "a certain wonderful *Yahoo*" (*GT* 254; italics in the original). Not persuaded, the General Assembly orders the Master Horse to return his pet Gulliver to its original place. For Houyhnhnms, although Gulliver is capable of reason, he does not have the physical form of their own race. That is the reason for his dismissal from their land. The instance reminds us of John Locke's argument that the human form is an inherent part of the notion of man, regardless of any other features the human being has (47). Although the Houyhnhnms agree that Gulliver is able to exercise reason, he is expelled from their land due to his human form. Through this practice, therefore, Gulliver discovers that having a human physique does not render a person superior to the animal. The Yahoos are more bestial compared to the animal Houyhnhnms. This opposes the European affirmation of the time that the human frame was by nature superior to that of the animal as the human form contained rational power. On the contrary, the Houyhnhnms possess a stronger sense of reason than the Yahoos, which symbolize humans. The novel, therefore, displays that true superiority originates from a rational mind that is harmonious with the body it inhabits. The notion of reason is dealt with in the next chapter to exhibit how Swift deconstructs the human from a cognitive angle.

In conclusion of the chapter, it is proposed that the bodily deconstruction of the human in the novel scrutinizes the borders among the human, the machine, the animal through Gulliver's radical anatomy. It is argued that Gulliver's changing identities as a machine and an animal blur the division between the nonhuman and the human. His shifting size against the inhabitants of the lands he visits destabilizes the nature of the human. His human subjectivity is threatened as he is treated as an animal and a machine. The humanist notion of the body is deconstructed as his body is viewed as disabled, deficient and abnormal. Gulliver finds the opportunity to adopt an anti-anthropocentric look on the human body as a result of his altering size. This different look decenters the

human physically. As the normative borders between the nonhuman and the human body disappear, the fluid nature of the human form is highlighted and the species boundaries regarding the body collapse. From a critical posthumanist perspective, the chapter argues that Gulliver's display of a radical anatomy of the human body and his corporeal differences indicate Swift's anxieties about the borders among the human, the animal, and the machine.

Next chapter deals with the humanist assumption that only man possesses reason and language. This prejudice has its roots in Descartes' suggestion that "animals are mindless, totally devoid of any conscious experience" (*Discourse* 36). Descartes advocated the separation of humans from animals grounded on the belief that language is a prerequisite for rationality. This humanist idea of human rationality was favored in the age of the Enlightenment. Derrida argues that the Enlightenment attempted to dismiss some prejudices and assumptions concerning human nature; however, it did not entirely succeed in breaking away from the idea that only man had the faculty of reason, and it disregarded the mental faculties of nonhuman animals. In this regard, the reflection of the rational Houyhnhnms disregards humanism and the Enlightenment by locating reason and language operating in the nonhuman animals. In this way, the humanist framework that positions the rational human over other beings (and generates hierarchies and binaries) is questioned in Houyhnhnmland. It is proposed in the next chapter that the rational Houyhnhnms are also a symbol of criticism against the human/animal divide that is assumed by humanism. This binary opposition is critiqued through Gulliver's adventures in Houyhnhnmland. As the novel presents rationality operating in animal form, it also undermines reason as a noble human characteristic. In this respect, the novel refuses the received norms and dogma of humanist conceptions. Descartes also argued that animals have no capacity to convey their feelings and therefore there is no evidence of animal consciousness. This conviction led him to argue that animals are machines that are devoid of mental awareness. Next chapter discusses that Houyhnhnms are a symbol that rejects this view.

CHAPTER TWO

COGNITIVE DECONSTRUCTION THROUGH HOUYHNNHMS IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

This chapter examines *Gulliver's Travels* from a critical posthumanist perspective that mainly deals with the notion of reason. The humanist view of reason is critiqued through Gulliver's experiences in Houyhnhnmland. Posthumanist arguments regarding human and animal reason are provided, and the humanist assumptions of rational superiority of the human over the nonhuman animals are put under scrutiny. It is proposed in the chapter that Swift accentuates the idea that reason and language are not human exclusive. It is argued that the anthropocentric view that humans are the exceptional holders of reason and language is rebutted in the narrative. By enabling language and reason to operate in animal terms, Swift exposes and reverses the assumed supremacy of the rational human over the irrational nonhuman. There is a subversion of anthropocentrism in the narrative in this sense. Humanist frame of thought is radically undercut by Swift as he displays that the attributes of reason and language are not exclusively human. He explodes the Cartesian idea that nonhuman animals do not have mental experiences of their own, by assigning them the so-called human traits of language and rationality. By way of this, the anthropocentric constructions of species boundaries are revisited. It is shown that the cognitive faculties of reason and language are not exclusive human attributes. In this context, critical posthumanism offers a novel way of reading *Gulliver's Travels* in a manner that undermines the hierarchies of being. It aptly tries to overcome the challenges of the humanist philosophies.

Gulliver's criticism of human superiority and rationality begins on his first voyage to Lilliput and gradually builds up to a more radical questioning of ontology in his final voyage to the Houyhnhnmland, where his perspective on the human and his view of the world change dramatically. Gulliver assumes dominance over the creatures he encounters until he comes across the Houyhnhnms. It is a turning point in the novel in terms of species dominance/supremacy. Gulliver's superiority to the creatures that he meets in Lilliput remains unquestioned mainly due to his physicality. He is human in shape, as are the Lilliputians. He has a status as a hybrid creature and accepts Lilliputian rule. He is

exhibited in public as a giant and called “*Quinbus Flestrin*,” or “*Man-Mountain*” (GT 29; italics in the original). He is objectified in this sense. He complies with his object status, yet he still maintains some control over his binders due to his huge mass. Throughout his travels, Gulliver tends to remind the audience of his potent supremacy repeatedly. With his giant form in Lilliput, he gives the impression that the size discrepancy between him and the little Lilliputians earns him the ultimate superiority over them, and that he is able to smash the little Lilliputians if he really wishes to: “I confess I was often tempted ... to seize Forty or Fifty of the first that came in my Reach, and dash them against the Ground” (GT 19). In Lilliput, Gulliver as a giant is not very different from him as a human. His superiority to the Lilliputians is in line with the eager assumptions of humanism as he “literally becomes great” (Jacques 32).

On his second voyage, however, his dominance is undermined by a size reversal, after which he becomes as small as a Lilliputian in size, in the land of Brobdingnag. After the perspective shift that he undergoes, Gulliver becomes a doll and a pet. There is a dehumanizing effect in Gulliver being a pet in Brobdingnag. The distortion of human agency can be observed when he becomes a pet. His voyage to Brobdingnag counters the dominance that he establishes through his size in Lilliput and makes Gulliver the object of such dominance, causing him to question his ontology. He assumes the status of a small animal in Brobdingnag and the physical supremacy that he had in Lilliput is radically undermined. As he is picked up by a farm worker, he reflects that “I apprehended every Moment that he would dash me against the Ground, as we usually do any little hateful Animal which we have a Mind to Destroy” (GT 79). Being the object of such dominance results in a dramatic attitude shift in Gulliver, which makes him reconsider his ontology with his disempowered self in front of the giant farmer. Being a vulnerable pet animal, exposed to human exploitation, contributes to this attitude shift in Gulliver. When he is given to the farmer’s daughter as a gift, she cares for him, yet her father decides to profit from him as a spectacle. Gulliver later learns from the girl that, the previous year, she was given a lamb by her parents as a present, which was later sold to a butcher “as soon as it got fat” (GT 87). In this instance, Gulliver takes a lesson in being an animal. His shifted role from a pet to a performing spectacle indicates that he might share the fate of the lamb, as animals are exploited by humans in many ways including as food. Gulliver undergoes modes of companionship to ownership, and then to “commodification for human

consumption” (Jacques 33), as animals do. Derrida argues that the practice of farming subjects and exposes animals to the “circle of death” by means of industrialization for the sake of human benefit (379). Gulliver’s transformation into a tiny animal in Brobdingnag allows us to think of the unimaginable extent of this exploitation.

Being a little animal in size changes Gulliver’s perspective on the world since he is exposed to various dangers and accidents because of his diminutive size. He also worries about the cruelty and ruthlessness of dominant beings that might desire to harm him. His worries mirror his own temptations of harming the little creatures in Lilliput, and they are indicative of a shift in attitude towards greater benevolence to little beings. However, Gulliver’s empathy with animals does not seem to take anything away from the supremacy of man; instead, it reflects his ability to act as a gentle helper to smaller, or weaker, creatures. Gulliver’s attitude at this point does not yet indicate a posthumanist thought as being kind to animals and being able to empathize with them do not conflict with the humanist idea of ontological superiority of humans over animals. Wolfe notes of benevolence as a condition of critical consciousness that “rise[s] above disciplinary and discursive finitude [and] actually closes off the human from the nonhuman and thus reinstates the human/animal divide in a far less visible but far more fundamental way” (*What Is Posthumanism* 118). Wolfe, here, argues that benevolence towards animals does not contradict the anthropocentrism that has been practiced in humanism. It is a practice that contains the animal as a distinct species to be cared for due to their lack of ability to care for themselves, as they are deemed to be weaker than the human. It does not emphasize the interdependence or shared vulnerability of humans with animals as promoted by critical posthumanism. Wolfe also notes of benevolence to the nonhuman as a gesture that flatters the human and helps to keep an “ontological distance” from the nonhuman by way of it (*What Is Posthumanism* 81). He calls this a typical characteristic of liberal humanism. It reinforces a Chain-of-Being morality that is essential to humanism. When analyzed separately, Gulliver’s shift in attitude in his adventures in Lilliput can be read within this kind of humanism as he is not significantly challenged regarding his species authority. He just grows considerate to those that are literally smaller than himself. Books One and Two of his travels, then, are a step in his recognition of the disconnect between human and animal; however, it does not yet invert the hierarchies that impose human supremacy. The stability of the human is not completely

denounced in Lilliput or Brobdingnag. Gulliver's ontology is challenged in a limited way in his first two voyages as most of the creatures he comes across in these lands are human in shape, whether being huge or tiny in size. The way Gulliver undergoes perspective shifts reflects the human from various angles and problematizes its ontology. The physical fluidity that he maintains also reflects the conceptual and ontological flexibility of what a human is. It reinstates that the human is not a fixed identity or notion. The fact that Gulliver is referred to as "human," "creature," and "animal" also contributes linguistically to this ontological hybridity and fluidity of the human. Gulliver's personal experiences in his travels confirm the observation of Lie and Wickson that "the self is not a fixed and separable unit but a fluid and dynamic entity that is undergoing constant change, redefining itself and continuously being shaped and reshaped by the biological and social forces that surround it and with which it interacts" (438). Within this context, Gulliver's voyages serve to the purpose of displaying the human, through Gulliver, as a fluid and unstable entity by altering his ontology as a result of his interactions with the variedly shaped inhabitants of the lands that he visits.

Despite the flexibility of the human ontology in the first two journeys, the two books of the travels hold reason firmly within the human body. This is exemplified in Brobdingnag when Gulliver is exposed to the pettings and mistreatments of a confused monkey that thinks Gulliver is "a young one of his own Species" (*GT* 111). As Gulliver struggles to leave, the monkey squeezes him so tightly that Gulliver has to submit as he thinks it is "more prudent to submit" (*GT* 111). Gulliver is animalized in the narrative through his subjugation to the monkey; however, at the same time, the monkey's mistaking Gulliver for a young of his own kind is also noteworthy. Gulliver reflects on how the monkey attempts to force-feed him and, "finding himself almost encompassed" (*GT* 111), escapes after dropping Gulliver. Through indicating the monkey's lack of reason, with its animalized and instinctual behavior, the narrative maintains a boundary between the rational and the irrational, that is the human and the animal. Although the first two books undermine the superiority of human reason, by critiquing little men who start a war over which end to cut one's eggs, they do not yet represent reason operating in animal form, or the human is not depicted as not having the faculty of reason. Gulliver is regarded as 'the other' in Lilliput and Brobdingnag; he embodies animality, and the humanity is satirized. The posthuman concerns seem to be limited to these aspects in the

first two books¹⁰. In the last voyage, however, the stability of the human collapses in a manner that predicts a posthumanist discourse that deals with human nature.

In Houyhnhnmland, Gulliver subverts the notion of Chain of Being through valorizing the civilization and culture of Houyhnhnms. In his visit to the land of these rational horses, the conventional human-animal hierarchy is reversed. The posthuman imagination in this voyage is related to the nonhuman in terms of anthropocentrism and species difference. His voyage to Houyhnhnmland also highlights the unfamiliarity of animal experience to the human. The breach of the human/animal boundaries is described by Gulliver through the mingling of footprints of animals and humans, “I fell into a beaten Road, where I saw many Tracks of human Feet, and some of Cows, but most of Horses” (*GT* 208-209). When Gulliver first encounters the Yahoos, it is initially confusing regarding whether he comes across humans or animals. He maintains an objective distance in his observations. And yet, his defamiliarized discourse associates Yahoos with animality and physical defect: “Their Shape was very singular, and deformed, which a little discomposed me, so that I lay down behind a Thicket to observe them better” (*GT* 209). Gulliver accounts that the body that he comes across is “covered with a thick Hair of various colors” (*GT* 209). That quality is associated with animality. He repeatedly expresses his disgust at the “disgraceful humans [Yahoos]” that look like horses throughout the voyage: “Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy” (*GT* 209).

Gulliver voluntarily submits himself to the order of Houyhnhnms, which can be interpreted as a denunciation of anthropocentrism on his part. Herbrechter and Callus give the example in the movie *Planet of the Apes* (1968) of how the segregation of the human from the animal other is reaffirmed in various situations when “humans first have to experience ‘animality’ – being treated like animals by a superior species – to be able to overcome their own animality and live in peace with and respect for animals” (24). This is what Gulliver undergoes in Brobdingnag before Houyhnhnmland. Gulliver experiences animality in Brobdingnag and is exposed to human ‘evil.’ His vulnerable position as an animal in the eyes of the local people of Brobdingnag helps him to break away from

¹⁰ The analysis of the third voyage offers an argument on the prosthetic extension of the human body within the framework of critical posthumanism, outside the context of animality.

anthropocentrism. In Houyhnhnmland, however, he sees the humility in the animals, and the hierarchy is reversed as the horses are more ‘human’ than the human. His subject position is self-admittedly inferior to the horses: “I had cured myself of some bad Habits and Dispositions, by endeavoring, as far as my inferior Nature was capable, to imitate the *Houyhnhnms*” (GT 261; italics in the original). By his assimilation to the culture of the horses, it can be inferred that he has ontological confusion in understanding the complex nature of animal psyche and life.

Gulliver’s voluntary assimilation to the Houyhnhnm life can also be read as criticism of the anthropocentric view that tends to reject that the nonhuman has experiences independent of the human. It can be argued that the horses represent the whole nonhuman life as nonhuman life is defined by lack of capacity for language and reason. As the human life is represented through language, it is not possible to understand the lives of other species which are assumed to have no language as we know it to express their experiences. This assumption is renounced in the narrative as the horses speak their own language and they are endowed with the faculty of reason. This also discards the alleged ontological uniqueness of the human as promoted by the humanist ideology. Gulliver exhibits humility as he makes an effort to assimilate into the culture of the rational horses. This appears to be a critique of anthropocentric values, especially in that the horses are portrayed to have ultimate reason: “The *Houyhnhnms* have no Letters, and consequently, their Knowledge is all traditional. But there happening few Events of any Moment among a People so well united, naturally disposed to every Virtue, wholly governed by Reason” (GT 255; italics in the original). On one instance, when Gulliver describes to the Master Houyhnhnm the unfavorable treatment and hard labor that the horses are subjected to by the British back in his home country. The human cruelty towards the horses stuns the Master Houyhnhnm. Under these conditions, where the nonhuman seems to have superiority over the human, human centrality and the categorical distinction between the animal and the human collapse altogether. On the matter, Donna Landry, in her work *Noble Brutes* (2009), states that “Swift appears to be participating in the comparison of imperial styles of rule that arose in discussions of horse-keeping in this period [early 18th century], and in which European brutality was contrasted with Ottoman leniency” (127). The cruel treatment of the horses at the hands of the human, as narrated by Gulliver, is a violation “of the natural order of things” (129) in the eyes of the

Houyhnhnms. As Landry puts it, “[i]n its brutality and unthinking use of living beings as mere instruments of human convenience, Swift renders early modern horse culture, like imperial mercantile culture more generally, repugnant” (129). From a critical posthumanist perspective, this revelation reverses the “human-equine power relations” (130).

The interpretation of Gulliver’s voyage to the Houyhnhnm-land has been a disputed matter for scholars. As William Casement points out, the debate has led to two main analyses (531). In the first analysis, the sheer rationality of the Houyhnhnm society can be seen as the embodiment of a quintessential form of existence that favors reason over passion. The second view, on the other hand, is that the Yahoos represent a well-rounded sort of existence as they combine passion with reason (531). In a philosophical approach to the distinctions between the two species, Otto Wedel argues that Swift attempts to contrast Thomas Hobbes with John Locke through Gulliver’s comparison of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. He explains that whereas Hobbes viewed humans at constant war with one another, Locke saw man as creatures gifted with the faculty of reasoning (443). In another reference, Ruth Fleischmann explains Gulliver’s final voyage from an evolutionary perspective, using “*equus sapiens*” to define Houyhnhnms, and “*homo Yahooensis*” to characterize the human beings with the capacity for reason, however lacking it (40). Kathleen M. Williams argues that Gulliver’s strong appreciation for the Houyhnhnm community signifies Swift’s antipathy to the notion of man as a self-sufficient agent (278). Gulliver appears to imply that the trait of being a rational animal *per se* does not define human beings in a sufficient manner. Being human requires more than the possession of reason. The difference is attributed to the necessity for the human “to be wholly governed by it [reason],” which is “the grand maxim” (GT 249) of the Houyhnhnms, who explicitly claim in the narrative through the Master Houyhnhnm that they are the superior race: “He [Master] observed in me [Gulliver] all the Qualities of a *Yahoo*, only a little more civilized by some Tincture of Reason; which however was in a Degree as far inferior to the *Houyhnhnm* Race, as the *Yahoos* of their Country were to me” (GT 254; italics in the original).

In his first encounter with the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver refers to the rational horses as animals and “brute beasts” (GT 272); however, this perspective changes when the Houyhnhnms speak of Gulliver as “a brute animal” and speculate on his ability to speak

as the “marks of a rational creature” (*GT* 280). Gulliver experiences humiliation as he discovers that there exist beings that are far more rational than he is, and that these beings consider him a Yahoo, the most hateful animal that they know to exist. This acknowledgement finally converts him to the Houyhnhnm belief of the world. Gulliver admits that initially “I did not feel that natural awe which the Yahoos and all other animals bear towards them,” although he gradually adopted the same attitude towards the rational horses (*GT* 326). As a result of his learning of the virtues from the rational creatures, “I began to view the actions and passions of man in a very different light” (*GT* 305). Gulliver, therefore, sees human beings for what they are in his opinion: “Yahoos in shape and disposition” (*GT* 327). This drastic change in Gulliver’s assessment of the human after he gets to know more of the Houyhnhnms has him see the human condition from a different standpoint.

In Gulliver’s conversations with his master regarding society and politics of England, the reason of man is considered as a produce of malice and passion. It is shown to be applied by man as a means to serve their purposes as Gulliver reports to the Master Houyhnhnm:

Sometimes the Corruption of Ministers, who engage their Master in a War in order to stifle or divert the Clamour of the Subjects against their evil Administration. Difference in Opinions hath cost many Millions of Lives: For Instance, whether *Flesh* be *Bread*, or *Bread* be *Flesh*: Whether the Juice of a certain *Berry* be *Blood* or *Wine*: Whether *Whistling* be a Vice or a Virtue: Whether it be better to *kiss a Post*, or throw it into the Fire: What is the best colour for a *Coat*, whether *Black*, *White*, *Red*, or *Grey*; and whether it should be *long* or *short*, *narrow* or *wide*, *dirty* or *clean*; with many more. (*GT* 229)

It leads to the conviction that reason does not enable man to be superior to Yahoos. Instead, it makes them worse as it helps them to solely fulfil their desires and act out of malice. Reason possessed by man as such is not an improvement at all. The supporting argument for this postulation is that man wages “[w]ars so furious and bloody, or of so long Continuance, as those occasioned by Difference in Opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent” (*GT* 229), and uses his reason to make these wars more destructive. The other instances that support this opinion are the need for lawyers and judges that practice the constructed laws, the prevention of an equal distribution of goods due to an economy focused on money, the existence of doctors, and the behaviors of state ministers. The master horse thinks that a community of rational creatures does not need any of these so-called achievements. On the contrary, in the Houyhnhnm society, there are no wars,

judges, lawyers, or ministers since “[n]ature and Reason were sufficient Guides for a reasonable Animal, as we pretended to be, in shewing us what we ought to do, and what to avoid,” as the master horse claims (*GT* 231). Besides government and laws, it also applies to the context of medicine. The Houyhnhnm master has difficulty in conceiving “that Nature, who worketh all things to perfection, should suffer any pains to breed in our bodies” (*GT* 300). Houyhnhnms do not experience physical illnesses other than injuries, and they think the cause of man’s different experience of physical illnesses is his degenerated nature. Hence, there is no need for doctors, either, in the land of Houyhnhnms.

Gulliver’s description of human culture hardly offers a new argument against the Houyhnhnms’ perspective of his nature. It rather confirms their assessment of him as a Yahoo. Rather than differentiating him from Yahoos, they adopt Gulliver’s account as a base to justify the intricacies of Yahoo nature. Upon Gulliver’s account, the master horse has the conviction “that the dissensions of those brutes in his country were owing to the same cause with ours” (*GT* 307). Just as the people in Gulliver’s country, Yahoos are greedy, passionate about wars, desirous for all sorts of food in big quantities:

England (the dear Place of my Nativity) was computed to produce three Times the Quantity of Food, more than its Inhabitants are able to consume, as well as Liquors extracted from Grain, or pressed out of the Fruit of certain Trees, which made excellent Drink; and the same Proportion in every other Convenience of Life. But, in order to feed the Luxury and Intemperance of the Males, and the Vanity of the Females, we sent away the greatest Part of our necessary Things to other Countries, from whence in Return we brought the Materials of Diseases, Folly, and Vice, to spend among ourselves. Hence it follows of Necessity, that vast Numbers of our People are compelled to seek their Livelihood by Begging, Robbing, Stealing, Cheating, Pimping, Forswearing, Flattering, Suborning, Forging, Gaming, Lying, Fawning, Hectoring, Voting, Scribbling, Stargazing, Poisoning, Whoring, Canting, Libelling, Free-thinking, and the like Occupations: Every one of which Terms, I was at much Pains to make him understand. (*GT* 235; italics in the original)

Yahoos and man also possess strong sexual urges and desires. On the contrary, Houyhnhnms are different to Yahoos and man because they have no “Desire of Wealth, Power, and Titles” (*GT* 237). They also do not have personal attachment of any sorts to their fellow beings or any objects. Marriage in their society is also established upon rational motives. The act of sex is restricted only to breeding without lust, “[a]nd the married Pair pass their Lives with the same Friendship, and mutual Benevolence that they bear to all others of the same Species, who come in their Way; without Jealousy, Fondness, Quarrelling, or Discontent” (251). Possessions are shared and distributed in an

equal manner among the community. Since the Houyhnhnm populace is ruled by reason, they do not have any need for a regular government except for a “Representative Council of the whole Nation” which convenes every four years to apply reason to current affairs in the community (*GT* 251). Gulliver summarizes the Houyhnhnm society and nature as follows:

As these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues, and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is evil in a rational Creature, so their grand Maxim is, to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is Reason among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest. I remember it was with extreme Difficulty that I could bring my Master to understand the Meaning of the Word Opinion, or how a Point could be disputable; because Reason taught us to affirm or deny only where we are certain; and beyond our Knowledge we cannot do either. So that Controversies, Wranglings, Disputes, and Positiveness in false or dubious Propositions, are Evils unknown among the Houyhnhnms. (*GT* 249)

In this line of arguments, reason is viewed as an instrument that might make a better world if humans could follow it in its absolute form. The connection between Houyhnhnms’ rationality and their noble nature is underscored when the Master Houyhnhnm sees in man the “gross defects in Reason, and, by consequence, in *Virtue*” (*GT* 306; italics in the original). Man needs to give up his passions and attachments so as to stick to reason as the Houyhnhnms do. Then, they would achieve to have a better society. Considering this argument, it is not known whether Swift designed the rational equines as a model for man to imitate. It is not known, either, whether Houyhnhnms are genuinely the *animal rationale* and really adhere to their own natural laws. However, he humiliates humans by reversing the roles between the idea of the man as the rational being and the horse as the irrational one, as well as disturbing man by illustrating that he is an *animal rationis capax* at best, and there is no such notion as *animal rationale*. He exhibits a posthumanist attitude towards the hierarchical relation between the human and the nonhuman by picturing a scenario in which the human is inferior to the nonhuman. Human exceptionality and uniqueness are dismissed in this portrayal.

There is also another line of criticism that argues how Swift uses the Houyhnhnms to reveal that human beings are not rational. In this line of criticism, the rational horses are not indeed rational, and they have similar characteristics to humans. Sahra Wintle draws attention to an affinity between human beings and Houyhnhnms in this regard. She reports that in their first encounter with Gulliver, the Houyhnhnms’ behavior is reflective

“of a man inspecting a horse” (8). The horse slowly walks around Gulliver, examines his body thoroughly, and then leads him home, in a fashion similar to a man buying a horse:

The two Horses came up close to me, looking with great Earnestness upon my Face and Hands. The grey Steed rubbed my Hat all round with his Right Fore-hoof, and discomposed it so much, that I was forced to adjust it better, by taking it off, and settling it again; whereat both he and his Companion (who was a brown Bay) appeared to be much surprized; the latter felt the Lappet of my Coat, and finding it to hang loose about me, they both looked with new Signs of Wonder. He stroked my Right Hand, seeming to admire the Softness, and Colour; but he squeezed it so hard between his Hoof and his Pastern, that I was forced to roar; after which they both touched me with all possible Tenderness. (GT 211)

Clearly, this similarity can be attributed to the reversal of roles, where Gulliver is the irrational animal that is dealt with as such by the rational species of Houyhnhnms. However, it should be noted that in this above reading of the story, Houyhnhnms are connoted to be morally above humans, as opposed to similar to them. Frances Deutsch Louis argues that as well as acting like humans, Houyhnhnms think like them, too, when they “mistake seeing for knowing” (49). Gulliver sees a being in the physical form of a horse and conceives of it as an irrational animal. In a similar fashion, the Houyhnhnms see a creature that looks like a Yahoo and come to the identical conclusion. Subsequently, as Gulliver begins to admire Houyhnhnms, he associates the form of a horse with reason, and himself with Yahoo irrationality. Likewise, the Houyhnhnms call Gulliver a Yahoo due to his appearance although there is a crucial difference between them in that Gulliver is an animal with a capacity for reason unlike Yahoos. As Gulliver at first does not conceive that a being that resembles a horse can act with reason, Houyhnhnms, equally, do not comprehend that a creature with the looks of a Yahoo is not necessarily a Yahoo. Considering that the Houyhnhnms’ thinking operates in the same manner as humans, it would not be sensible to consider their reason as superior to that of man. They may have more virtues than humans, but the way they reason is not considerably different in nature than the creature that they look down upon and eventually expel from their land. Louis argues that they banish Gulliver not due to his irrationality, but on the grounds that he seems nothing like the only rational creature they know that is able to converse, i.e., a horse. They are troubled that he acts as an *animal rationale* although he does not look like one.

It is apparent that Houyhnhnms can behave as irrationally as humans do since they claim that they are the ultimate rational beings that exist, as reported by Gulliver:

Neither is *Reason* among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest. I remember it was with extreme Difficulty that I could bring my Master to understand the Meaning of the Word *Opinion*, or how a Point could be disputable; because *Reason* taught us to affirm or deny only where we are certain; and beyond our Knowledge we cannot do either. So that Controversies, Wranglings, Disputes, and Positiveness in false or dubious Propositions, are Evils unknown among the *Houyhnhnms*. (GT 249; italics in the original)

Similar to humans, they are convinced that their way of thinking is the right version and, therefore, their reason is absolute. They claim that the plan to expel Gulliver from their land is fair, and “because no person can disobey Reason without giving up his claim to be a rational creature” (GT 328), anybody that disapproves of the plan is in fact disqualified to do so. An authoritarian thinking of this kind is familiar to humans. Another distinct familiarity is the Houyhnhnm form of vanity articulated in their belief that their perspective and views are flawless. Since Swift created Houyhnhnms as beings that are free of desire, passion and attachment in a way that their reason is not obscured with emotions, their defects help us to conclude that unbiased and objective reason does not exist. As we read Swift, the contradiction that we get is that although the virtue of Houyhnhnms is looked up to, there appears to be a warning as well not to imitate their pride and arrogance which lead Gulliver to his ultimate breakdown. He aspires to be an *animal rationale* at the expense of his family relations, his self-esteem and sanity, as is illustrated in the following paragraphs.

Gulliver’s voyage to the Houyhnhnm-land is remarkable as it brings him to a point at which he turns out to hate the human race and isolates himself ontologically from the whole race of humans. When he is in the Houyhnhnm community, he undergoes an interesting transformation as a result of which he is detached from his human identity and he refers to himself as a Yahoo: “I was a poor *Yahoo*, banished from the *Houyhnhnms*” (GT 267; italics in the original). Although his earlier voyages end with his joyous return to England and a motivation to set out on another one, he has the desire to continue his stay in the land of Houyhnhnms, and rules out the possibility of going back to his homeland, describing it as completely abominable: “So horrible was the Idea I conceived of returning to live in the Society and under the Government of *Yahoos*” (GT 265; italics in the original). He becomes someone else in an ontological sense as he identifies himself as a Yahoo that aspires to be a Houyhnhnm. Paradoxically, despite his intense dislike for the Yahoos, he cannot stop himself from feeling that he belongs to their race: “For now I

could no longer deny, that I was a real *Yahoo*, in every Limb and Feature ... ” (GT 249; italics in the original). Similarly, in spite of his belief that it is not possible, he cannot avoid desiring to be a Houyhnhnm: “By conversing with the *Houyhnhnms*, and looking upon them with Delight, I fell to imitate their Gait and Gesture, which is now grown into a Habit; and my Friends often tell me in a blunt Way, that *I trot like a Horse*; which, however, I take for a great Compliment” (GT 260; italics in the original). Although both the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos have the ability to reason, they are distinct in that the Houyhnhnms embody virtue, while the Yahoos represent vice. This fundamental difference justifies Gulliver’s growing misanthropic attitude towards the humankind. He has the aspiration to become a Houyhnhnm, and hates the idea of belonging to the race of the Yahoos. The reason for his attitude is that the Houyhnhnms represent reason for a virtuous existence, as opposed to the Yahoos, who exemplify the corrupt aspect of reason which causes them to be associated with vice. Gulliver’s attention to the use, and abuse, of reason can therefore be considered as Swift’s reaction to the approach in his time to the ennoblement of rationality as the primary characteristic of humankind.

Swift’s “priesthood in the Church of England” may support the view that the rational and moral Houyhnhnms represent the marriage of faith and reason, whereas the Yahoos embody coarse reason (Serdar 698). If we read the relationship between Houyhnhnms and Yahoos in the Christian terms as suggested by Roland M. Frye, Gulliver’s visit to the Houyhnhnm-land displays “a Christian dichotomy” between the spirit and the body, as represented by the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, respectively (205). However, it is worthy to note that Swift does not make a direct suggestion in the novel that it is their religious belief which positions the Houyhnhnm community over the Yahoos (Serdar 698). In Gulliver’s account of his visit, there is no reference to a religious faith that can be associated with the Houyhnhnms. In contrast, rather, Irvin Ehrenpreis argues that Swift inserted the Houyhnhnms in his narrative to symbolize “the adequacy of reason without Christianity” (898). The Houyhnhnms’ urge to reach a better state of existence, for Swift, rather involves “the time-approved wisdom of the race” (50). Swift, thus, considered the Houyhnhnms as superior to the Yahoos with regards to their capability to attain a superior form of existence through their adherence to reason rather than faith in a holy entity. In spite of these contradictory arguments, Swift’s emphasis on reason is apparently critical in the narrative.

Gulliver's account of his experience in the Houyhnhnmland identify the characteristics via which Gulliver distinguishes the Houyhnhnms from the Yahoos. He describes these qualities as a manifestation of his preference to view the land of the Houyhnhnms as somewhere he would feel safe as opposed to the country of the Yahoos. He expresses his gratification to be among the Houyhnhnms in this excerpt:

I enjoyed perfect Health of Body, and Tranquillity of Mind; I did not feel the Treachery or Inconstancy of a Friend, nor the Injuries of a secret or open Enemy. I had no Occasion of bribing, flattering or pimping, to procure the Favour of any great Man, or of his Minion. I wanted no Fence against Fraud or Oppression: Here was neither Physician to destroy my Body, nor Lawyer to ruin my Fortune: No Informer to watch my Words and Actions, or forge Accusations against me for Hire; Here were no Gibbers, Censurers, Backbiters, Pickpockets, Highwaymen, House-breakers, Attorneys, Bawds, Buffoons, Gamesters, Politicians, Wits, Spleneticks, tedious Talkers, Controvertists, Ravishers, Murderers, Robbers, Virtuoso's; no Leaders or Followers of Party and Faction; no Encouragers to Vice, by Seducement or Examples: No Dungeon, Axes, Gibbets, Whipping-posts, or Pillories; No cheating Shopkeepers or Mechanics: No Pride, Vanity or Affectation: No Fops, Bullies, Drunkards, strolling Whores, or Poxes: No ranting, lewd, expensive Wives: No stupid, proud Pedants: No importunate, over-bearing, quarrelsome, noisy, roaring, empty, conceited, swearing Companions: No Scoundrels, raised from the Dust upon the Merit of their Vices; or Nobility thrown into it on account of their Virtues: No Lords, Fiddlers, Judges or Dancing-masters. (*GT* 259)

The lengthy quotation displays clearly that Gulliver describes the land of Houyhnhnms as somewhere free of the absurdities of human beings, while he associates the Yahoos with the lowest mode of human existence. The Houyhnhnmland is depicted as one in which there is no place for any evil that a human being is able to do. Gulliver indicates that Houyhnhnms are endowed with superiority to the humankind in the social realm of life. Their reason combined with their morals places them over the humankind. This criticism is conveyed with an anti-anthropocentric approach that is only possible through Gulliver's first-hand experiences in Houyhnhnms' land among the rational horses. Therefore, it takes a journey into the life of the horses to learn about their ways of living, which necessitates a breakaway from anthropocentrism and speciesism as favored by the critical posthumanist thought. Gulliver finds himself in such a situation and revisits the notion of the human by this means. He, consequently, feels the urge to stay away from his own kind. His ontological distance from the humankind (and even the human language) exhibits itself in his first contact with humans after his dismissal from the Houyhnhnmland upon his arrival in New-Holland. While seeking a shelter, he comes across some natives, gets injured by an arrow and loses his hope of settling in that territory. He is later captured and carried by Portuguese mariners to their ship and

investigated as to why he is traveling. As he is interrogated, he is bewildered by the bizarreness of the sounds uttered by Portuguese seamen. He likens their speech to be “as monstrous as if a Dog or a Cow should speak in *England*, or a *Yahoo* in *Houyhnhnmland*” (GT 267; italics in the original).

Gulliver continues to use the word ‘Yahoo’ in referring to humans after he rejoins in the human community as well. After being taken to the captain Pedro de Mendez, they offer him victuals and assure him that he would receive an equal treatment aboard, like the captain of the ship. He tells his audience that he hates the Yahoos to such a great extent that he contemplates disconnecting from human beings forever by swimming for his life “rather than continue among *Yahoos*” (GT 268; italics in the original). Although the friendly captain assures Gulliver that he would not be held prisoner if he keeps his promise to not commit suicide, Gulliver responds to Mendez saying that he “would suffer the greatest hardships rather than return to live among *Yahoos*” (GT 269; italics in the original). In this context, Williams argues that despite Don Pedro’s advice for him to turn back to a life of humanity, to his family and people, Gulliver’s treatment of his family corresponds “to the point of madness” (283). Gulliver expresses that he cannot “tolerate the sight of Yahoos” (GT 271) and he resents having been married to a Yahoo. Additionally, he does not shy away from addressing his wife as an animal although he receives a warm welcome from her with hugs and kisses: “As soon as I entered the House, my Wife took me in her Arms, and kissed me; at which, having not been used to the Touch of that odious Animal for so many Years, I fell in a Swoon for almost an Hour” (GT 271). He does not feel the need to offer a reasonable justification to the reader for his rude conduct towards his family and does not show any signs of repentance for it. He is confident that although he is a Yahoo, he is better than the rest of the Yahoos solely because he was lucky to have learned from his master how to use reason to live a righteous life:

Do these miserable Animals presume to think that I am so far degenerated as to defend my Veracity; Yahoo as I am, it is well known through all Houyhnhnmland, that by the Instructions and Example of my illustrious Master, I was able in the Compass of two Years (although I confess with the utmost Difficulty) to remove that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the Europeans. (GT 10)

Gulliver notes that in the first several years following his return home, he would not permit his family to be in the same room with him. He instead speaks of his pleasure of

having two Stone-Horses, which “understand [him] tolerably well” and he “converse[s] with them at least four Hours every Day” (*GT* 271). He cannot reconcile himself with the sensations of the Yahoos’ sight and smell. His intolerance of the sight and smell of Yahoos, or human beings, does not diminish. He allows his wife to share his dinner time, after five years into his return, only if she eats at the other side of the table as “she emits the smell of a Yahoo” (*GT* 317).

Gulliver’s estrangement from the humankind extends into the time of the publication of his book. A year after the publication of Gulliver’s book, his cousin and the first publisher, Richard Simpson, receives a letter from Gulliver in which Gulliver criticizes him for having made major changes to the novel without Gulliver’s approval, which causes Gulliver to seem as if he lied in various sections of the book:

I hope you will be ready to own publicly, whenever you shall be called to it, that by your great and frequent Urgency you prevailed on me to publish a very loose and uncorrect Account of my Travels; with Direction to hire some young Gentlemen of either University to put them in Order, and correct the Style, as my Cousin *Dampier** did by my Advice, in his Book called, *A Voyage round the World*. But I do not remember I gave you Power to consent, that any thing should be omitted, and much less that any thing should be inserted. (*GT* 7; italics in the original)

Gulliver does not use the word ‘lie’ in his criticism; he rather adopts the Houyhnhnm lexicon to refer to ‘lying’ as saying “the thing which was not” (*GT* 219) as he continues to pursue the Houyhnhnm model closely in every facet of his life¹¹. He admits himself to be a Yahoo; nevertheless, he feels grateful that the time he has spent in the land of Houyhnhnms has cured him of the “infernal habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species ... ” (*GT* 10). Gulliver’s craving to be received in Houyhnhnm-land, his denouncement of human rationality, and his disengagement from the humankind including his own family strongly display a posthuman inclination that decenters the notion of the human in a fashion that rejects the uniqueness and exceptionality of the human.

The discussions in this chapter, overall, exhibit how Swift critiques the humanist framework that proposes the idea that only man is endowed with rationality and language. The focus of the discussions involves the criticism against the humanist assumption that nonhuman animals lack the mental capabilities that human beings possess. It is put

¹¹ Hamdi Ali Serdar’s (2019) observation precedes mine.

forward in the chapter that Swift exposes these humanist fallacies through locating reason and language in the nonhuman animals. The humanist prejudice that the rational human has ontological superiority over the irrational nonhuman is rebutted in the narrative. The table of hierarchies is turned when the rational quadrupeds are shown to rule the brute race of Yahoos that represent the humankind. The novel displays a strong posthumanist vision by adopting an anti-speciesist and anti-anthropocentric narrative that abolishes the human/animal segregation that is promoted by the humanist thought. By pointing up the idea that reason and language are not exclusive to the human, Swift displays that the anthropocentric view of humans as the privileged holders of reason and language is a humanist fallacy. In the same vein, he revisits the anthropocentric constructions of species boundaries by literally changing the narrative regarding the human/nonhuman divide in his novel.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* within the critical posthumanist theory. It is proposed in the thesis that although the novel appears to satirize chiefly the British monarchy and imperialism of the eighteenth century, it also studies the human condition on a deeper level. The study of the human condition in the novel is ahead of its time in that it points to the arrival of the posthuman as the narrative critiques the liberal humanist notion of the human together with its (mal)practices. Through the adventures of Gulliver, the boundaries between the nonhuman and the human are challenged from a position that is similar to the critical posthumanist angle. The notion of the human being as a social construct is deconstructed from bodily and cognitive perspectives, by way of which the alleged exceptionality and the uniqueness of the human are challenged. Once the so-called human exceptionality is thwarted, the central position of the human in the universe as 'the measure of everything' is also cancelled out. This critique, observed as early as in the eighteenth century, corresponds to the central aim of the critical posthumanist theory. Therefore, it has been put forward in the thesis that through a bodily and cognitive deconstruction of the human, Swift exposes the falsity of the liberal humanist view of the exclusive human nature. By displaying the defects of the human nature and revealing that the human is not a superior rational being to other beings, Swift presages posthumanism.

Gulliver's differing ontologies in his voyages offer an anti-anthropocentric approach to understanding the nonhuman life. Being an animal, a machine, and a hybrid creature in his travels causes Gulliver to adopt different ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives in his attempt to make sense of the world around him. The thesis has argued that this attempt is, at its fundamental core, a critical posthumanist one, since the theory also attempts to get out of the human body and mind in an anti-anthropocentric sense to understand the universe. Denying the allegedly exclusive nature of the human is a major step to deconstruct the human in this sense. Gulliver and "the gentle reader" (*GT* 146) through his narration witness the collapse of the humanist notion of the human in this regard in his travels. The ontological, epistemological, and ethical distinction of the human is shown to be a social construct, and consequently the human individual is ousted from his privileged position in the universe. The human is decentered in the novel, which is in alignment with the fundamental aim of the critical posthumanist theory.

The decentering and deconstruction of the human have been done from two fundamental perspectives in the thesis: bodily and cognitive. In the bodily deconstruction, it has been argued that Gulliver's fluid bodily statuses display him as an animal and a machine, in the form of a nonhuman being. This representation of him leads to the blurring of the human/nonhuman divide as he is otherwise a normal human being. His disparate bodies, nonetheless, depict him as a nonhuman and it appears to expand the perceptions of the human and the nonhuman. It has been argued in the study that these representations of the human and the nonhuman in the novel are not for the sole purpose of satire. It is the presage of the critical posthumanist view of the human, which also rejects the fixed, stable, potent, and autonomous status of the human subject as has been proposed by the humanist thought. This view denounces the physical superiority of the human over the nonhuman beings. For Swift to deal with these notions of the human critically in his time is an indication of the emergence and the gradual arrival of the posthuman.

The cognitive deconstruction in the thesis has dealt with the notion of reason in humans and nonhuman animals through Gulliver's experiences on the land of the rational quadrupeds, Houyhnhnms. The depiction of the Houyhnhnms as rationally superior beings to human beings has denounced the exclusive humanist notion of man that has perfect reason. Having experienced to live among the rational nonhuman animals, Gulliver aspires to be one of them and tries to dissociate himself from the Yahoos, who represent the human race. The horses' capacity for reason and language abolishes the humanist assumption that these two mental faculties are uniquely human. From a cognitive perspective, Gulliver's desire to learn the Houyhnhnm language and to have pure reason is an indication of the denial of the superiority of the human against the nonhuman. It has been argued in the thesis that this is not an act of satire only. It is an anti-anthropocentric step to explore the nonhuman potential for cognition, which corresponds to the critical posthumanist discourse. Human uniqueness and exceptionality are once again dismissed as it is proposed that human beings may not necessarily be the only beings that are endowed with the mental capabilities of rationality and language. Humanist thought, which negligently suggests that nonhuman animals are devoid of reason and conscious experiences, is thwarted in this regard in the Book Four of the novel through Houyhnhnms. Conscious experience is displayed to be not exclusively human.

The humanist assumptions and prejudice against the nonhuman cognitive abilities are denounced in this respect. Based upon this analysis, the thesis has argued that Gulliver's desire to morph into a Houyhnhnm and have their reason and language is not a display of pure satire, but a denunciation of speciesism and anthropocentrism.

The thesis has aimed to display the inversion of the human and nonhuman traits with regards to reason and language as featured by Gulliver (the human) and the Houyhnhnms (the animals). The properties of rationality and language have been argued to be exclusively human in a Cartesian frame of reference as proposed by Descartes, who claimed that language was a prerequisite for reason (*Discourse* 82). However, this Cartesian belief does not hold in the land of the Houyhnhnms, wherein the limitations of this belief are exposed by the narrative. It has also been argued in the thesis that the Enlightenment's emphasis on human reason to arrive at truth is subverted in the narrative. Rationality embodied by the Houyhnhnms is against the humanist assumptions and prejudices of the Enlightenment as reason is exercised and voiced by the nonhuman animals in the narrative. Furthermore, Gulliver's affection for the rational horses' reason and his aspirations to live among and be one of them is an attempt to exhibit that animal rationality may in fact be superior to human rationality. This suggestion is a subversion of the anthropocentric logic of humanism. It has been explained in the study that this logic is favored by critical posthumanism as well. The fracture of the human stability by way of this subversion is a strong indication of posthumanist discourse.

Overall, the thesis has exhibited that the alleged bodily and cognitive supremacy of the human is critiqued emphatically in the novel. The physical and cognitive boundaries are distorted and reversed in the narration. In this sense, the thesis has proposed that *Gulliver's Travels* is a work that was created with a strong posthumanist imagination. Gulliver's experience of the status of the Other and the sense of animality in his travels present a post-anthropocentric perspective. His experiences of major change of attitude and ontology—and awakening from his anthropocentric self into a posthuman that is vexed by humanity's pretension to reason—have us question the traditional definition of the human. By way of making the human unstable and fluid, the novel distorts the humanist quality of the human as the measure of everything. In the final analysis, *Gulliver's Travels* poses robust ontological questions concerning human nature, and qualifies as a powerful posthumanist journey into the nonhuman.

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