UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

A pangalactic gargle blaster of Lilliputian proportions:

A comparative analysis of

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and

Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

by

Johanna Christina Lombard

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium

in the

Department of English

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: Prof. Molly Brown

April 2017

CONTENTS

List of figures

Acknowledgements

I express my thanks -

To my supervisor, Professor Molly Brown, for her patient and enthusiastic guidance during the course of my research.

To my husband, Mauritz, for his unfailing support and encouragement into many a night and over many a weekend. His belief in me aided in the completion of this dissertation.

To my parents, Victor and Loraine, for raising me with a love for literature and for taking pride in my achievements.

To my daughters, Amy, Natalie, and Judy, for having lived with a studying mother all their lives and for generously letting me know that this has inspired them.

To our dachshund, Shasha, for her attentive companionship on this journey.

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Declaration

Full name: **Johanna Christina Lombard**

Student number: 02542366

Degree/Qualification: **Magister Artium in the Department of English**

Title of thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation:

'A pangalactic gargle blaster of Lilliputian proportions': A comparative analysis of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard and its implications.

Jonny Lombard

SIGNATURE

1 APRIL 2017

DATE

Abstract

Douglas Adams and Jonathan Swift are satirists who lived and worked 250 years apart. Swift's eighteenth-century text, *Gulliver's Travels,* tells the story of an Englishman's adventures during numerous sea voyages that bring him into contact with fantastical peoples and places. Adams's twentieth-century text, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, relates a hapless Englishman's trials and tribulations during an intergalactic voyage which takes him and his companions to bizarre destinations. This study considers key similarities and differences between the texts. Resonances between Gulliver's celestial navigation in the eighteenth century and Arthur Dent's navigation among those very heavenly bodies in the twentieth century are explored.

The novels are examined for evidence of satire, the travel genre, proto science fiction and mock science fiction and for generic similarities between the works. Through a process of elimination, Gulliver's and Arthur Dent's respective journeys are abstracted, summarised and represented graphically. Communication theory and linguistic trends during the Enlightenment and the twentieth century, as well as the science and technology of each era are also briefly reviewed.

This study finds that, through the exploitation of the journey as literary device which allows Gulliver and Arthur Dent to view England and Earth from different places and from different times, both Swift and Adams are able to comment on and satirise humankind. The illustrations of the journeys highlight the differences between the two novels in terms of structure and adherence to markers of time and place. Lemuel Gulliver's journeys are shown to be radial voyages with England as the core location of departures and arrivals, whereas Arthur's appear to be random and follow neither the expected and known rules of travel, nor the laws of time and space. The study

furthermore considers the nature of the locations visited and finds resemblances and differences between the authors' and readers' known worlds, and the fictitious worlds described. This naturally leads to a consideration of the degree of alienation experienced by the protagonists and, indeed, humanity. Finally, the texts are examined for communication problems faced by the protagonists.

The conclusion of this study suggests that in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* both Adams and Swift show their awareness that language is not neutral, and that it possesses the power to entertain, inform, deceive and destroy. Both texts function metonymically to highlight the perilous complexity of the human condition and show that humanity's journey through space/time in the twentieth century remains as treacherous as one by sea during the Enlightenment.

Key terms

Gulliver's Travels
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
Jonathan Swift
Douglas Adams
narratological graphs
satire
mock science fiction
proto science fiction
travel literature
fictional travel literature
communication theory

A pangalactic gargle blaster of Lilliputian proportions: A comparative analysis of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

CHAPTER 1

AUTHORS AND GENRES

There are no foreign lands. It is the traveller only who is foreign.

— Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Douglas Adams and Jonathan Swift are satirists who lived and worked 250 years apart and whose work is similar in some respects, yet few comparative studies of the two writers have been done. *Gulliver's Travels* (2008 [1726]) tells the story of an Englishman's adventures during numerous sea voyages that bring him into contact with fantastical peoples and places, all of which are representative of either European society in particular, or humankind in general. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a four-part trilogy published between 1979 and 1984, is a comic science fiction series relating a hapless Englishman's trials and tribulations during an erratically circular intergalactic voyage which takes him and his companions to bizarre destinations, though it starts and ends on the Earth.

It is argued in this study that *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* both highlight the perilous complexity of the human condition and that Arthur Dent's navigation of the universe is a reflection of Gulliver's celestial navigation in the eighteenth century, as envisaged by Swift two hundred years earlier. The journey

undertaken by humankind in the twentieth century is as perilous as journeys by sea during the eighteenth century.

The aim of the study is to reflect on the novels as examples of satire, the travel genre, and various sub-genres of science fiction. It will explore the conventions of each genre, and consider generic similarities between the works. As *Gulliver's Travels* cannot be said to satirise science fiction (the genre did not exist in the eighteenth century), this study investigates the ways in which the novel uses satire and proto science fiction techniques to probe the genre of travel literature as well as the human condition more broadly. As a related line of enquiry, the chapter will investigate attributes of the sub-genre of mock science fiction that apply to *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* The study will consider various definitions of the science fiction genre, and look at representative themes, as they are discernible in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Thirdly, this study will provide definitions and consider representative themes of the travel genre, with particular reference to Whitfield's *Travel: A Literary History* (2011). A close reading of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will provide specific examples of the occurrence and parodying of all these motifs and conventions.

Issues that will be examined throughout the study include key similarities and differences between Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Can the two novels be considered fictional travel narratives and if so, how do they compare to actual travel literature? How do the social norms of the 1700s and 1900s satirised in these two novels differ and how are they similar? How do Swift and Adams present alienation issues that arise from altered states of belonging, or displacedness, caused by lengthy journeys? How do the novels represent, or satirise, the scientific and technological developments, in particular the

language and communication solutions, of their respective eras? These questions inform the structure of this dissertation: Chapter 2 focuses on the range of locations and relocation; Chapter 3 concentrates on the alienation of the protagonists and humankind alike; and Chapter 4 explores the resultant communication barriers, as well as the authors' views on communication in general.

1.2 AUTHORS

Historical-biographical criticism considers a work of literature mainly in terms of how it reflects the experiences of the author in his or her specific lifetime. When following this approach, the author's biography is analysed to highlight correspondences between the body of work and the lived life. This approach is to some extent echoed in the remark attributed by Spater and Parsons (1977: 83) to Virginia Woolf that "every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind, is written large in his works."

The limitations of this study will not permit a detailed biographical study of the selected authors, but a brief introduction to their lives and circumstances is necessary to provide a basis for understanding how the two primary texts represent the authors and the cultural and historical elements of their eras, and how the texts fit in with Swift's and Adams's respective bodies of work. One would not immediately expect to find much in common between the authors, given that one was an elderly clergyman in the 1700s, and the other an entertainment journalist in the late twentieth century, but similarities abound: both authors are held in high esteem for imaginative and creative texts; both have allowed their imaginations to surpass previous limits, thereby creating an enthralling reading experience; and both have had a profound influence on the reading public and on the genres in which they worked.

1.2.1 Douglas Adams

Like the protagonist of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the author Douglas Adams (1952–2001) spent much of his youth during the 1960s and 1970s as a penniless hitchhiker (his acclaimed novel was inspired by a copy of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Europe*, read while he was touring in Germany [Adams 2002: vii]). Such adventurous excursions were, however, mere diversions from his main interest, namely literature studies at Cambridge, where he was a member of the amateur Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club. After completing his studies he wrote a comedy radio serial for the BBC which piqued the interest of publishers, causing Adams to recast the series in book form. The first novel in his characteristic science fiction comedy series saw the light in 1978. More formats such as television, records and film were explored over time, which has resulted in the existence of numerous versions of the stories. The fact that the texts were apparently written as off-the-cuff episodes for weekly radio broadcast may also in part have caused the atypical structure of the works, as reflected in abrupt scene transitions between journeys, chapters and books.

Adams was possessed of exceptional energy and exceptional imagination, both characteristics that are clearly reflected in his works of fiction. He wrote sketches and scripts for festivals, radio and television, and the *Hitchhiker's* trilogy of four series consisting of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978)*; The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (1980)*; Life, the Universe and Everything* (1982)*;* and *So long, and Thanks for all the Fish* (1984). This quartet was grouped in an omnibus and described by Adams and his publisher, Picador, as "a trilogy of four" (Adams 2002: cover). A fifth book, *Mostly Harmless*, appeared in 1992, but due to the time lapse between its publication and that of the earlier set of four, is not included in this study.

The *Guide* is an account of Douglas Adams's interest in developments in pioneering cosmology and theoretical physics that were becoming stranger by the day (Hanlon 2005: 3). The era during which these novels were written (1978–1984) is characterised by technological advancement and the human reaction to, and disorientation caused by, these changes, as reflected in, among others, *Future Shock* (1970) by Alvin Toffler. Marcus (1996: 351) comments, however, that during the latter part of the 1970s and the first part of the 1980s the public's "pervasive acceptance of science as providing a beneficial worldview" began to wane. This defining spirit of the particular period of history during which the *Guide* was written is reflected in Adams's visions of the future, satirically riddled as they are with irreverent social observations, and in his creation of deliberate discomfort and unease by emphasising emptiness and remoteness in his galaxy.

1.2.2 Jonathan Swift

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) is considered to be a leading English prose satirist and produced many literary works, all of which sparked interest and controversy. As an author Swift was obsessively involved in making corrections and revisions of his books, including *Gulliver's Travels*, and his letters and comments about the book form part of the body of *Travels* literature.

Following Swift's deep involvement with various political factions in Britain, he was appointed as Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in 1713 at the age of 46. This effectively constituted a form of political exile in Ireland. His key political interests are reflected in all his books, but perhaps most notably in *Gulliver's Travels* in the allusions to Church-related proceedings against acquaintances, to clergy avarice, and to the conflict between the conservative and liberal political factions (the "Tories" and "Whigs") in the years leading up to the publication of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726. As explained in the

authoritative *Gulliver's Travels: Jonathan Swift*, edited by Robert A. Greenberg, Swift was initially a Whig, but he changed sides in 1710 to join the Tories (Greenberg 1970: 19). He was a genius at polemical and political satire, as is evident from ironic and satirical references to the court of King George I, and various courtly traditions, throughout his works. He represented contemporary events in a satirical guise, presenting England as Lilliput and France as Blefuscu, as commentary on their being opponents in the War of the Spanish Succession at the time (Greenberg 1970: 30).

Furthermore, Greenberg holds that Swift's works portray his concerned opinion that the new science stood in complete opposition to the methods and principles of classicism (Greenberg 1970: 303), as embodied in the work of, for example, the great philosopher Aristotle, and the famous Christian Father, St. Augustine (Welsh 2011: 58, 107). Greenberg argues that Swift saw in it the potential to "destroy the human orientation" (Greenberg 1970: 303):

> The unifying theme of all of Swift's criticism of the new science is not the external absurdity of its propositions, or its impious character, or its newness, but its partialness and abstraction from what is known about human things. Modern science represented a complete break with classical principles and methods, and Swift believed that there was a whole range of phenomena it could not grasp but which it would distort.

The themes in *Gulliver's Travels* represent Jonathan Swift's various interests in prevailing issues of the Enlightenment an era defined by Welsh (2011: 234) as follows:

> The Enlightenment, the philosophical, intellectual and cultural movement that transformed Western societies in the eighteenth century, was essentially the continuation of earlier revolutions. The search for evidence that had stimulated scientific enquiry began by questioning authority: what Aristotle or St Augustine had written was not acceptable as evidence, which must rather be sought by observation and the results freely published and discussed before conclusions could be reached.

These areas of interest included language and communication, as well as epistemological and psychological theories on sensation, whereby all knowledge is derived from the senses (Griffin 1993: 3). The Age of Enlightenment was therefore characterised by scientific rigour, and reason, and *Gulliver's Travels* is a reaction to this range of ideas, as will be illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4 of this study.

1.3 GENRES

As previously stated, key genres that both Jonathan Swift and Douglas Adams apparently experiment with, are travel literature, science fiction and the sub-genres proto science fiction and mock science fiction. This study will explore whether *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* can be considered to belong to any of these genres.

Genre may be defined as "a type or species of literature or, a 'literary form'" (Abrams 1988: 72). Classifications and criteria have varied over time. In the 1700s, for example, at the time of writing of *Gulliver's Travels,* new literary types such as the novel destabilised neoclassic confidence in the inalterability of genres. In the twentieth century the concept of genre played a more minor role in the evaluation and analysis of literary works (Abrams 1988: 73) and today is divided into poetry, novels and drama, with finer distinctions such as epic, tragedy, comedy and satire.

This procedure of grouping texts is, however, subjective and genres are not easily definable, as explained by Stephen Neale (1980, in Chandler 1997: 2):

> Particular features which are characteristic of a genre are not normally unique to it; it is their relative prominence, combination and functions which are distinctive.

1.3.1 Satire

As stated, one of the aims of this chapter is to consider how *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* reflect the themes, characteristics and conventions of satire. The chapter will show that both texts bear evidence of the generic elements of satire: topical issues such as poor government and the degeneration of human morals and values are held up to scorn with both gentle ridicule and caustic irony. The texts fulfil the functions of satire in that they mock power, highlight hypocrisy and the shortcomings of religious constructs, and switch points of view in order to unsettle their reader.

Despite the inherent challenges of definition, satire as literary genre will now be considered. Ogborn and Buckroyd (2001: 8) hold that satire is "a particular kind of writing which initially appears more dependent than most on the historical or social context in which it was produced". More detailed is the definition of satire found in Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1768), as "a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured … distinguished by the generality of the reflections from a lampoon, which is aimed against a particular person" (Johnson 1768: unnumbered page). Similarly, in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* Abrams defines it as "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation" (Abrams 1988: 166). In this chapter a determination of the degree to which the two primary texts meet the criteria for satire will be attempted.

Two main types of satire are conventionally distinguished and contrasted. Horatian satire displays a tolerant, witty and self-deprecating tone, and humanity's flaws and follies are held up to gentle ridicule (Abrams 1988: 167), as is evident in the greater part of *Gulliver's Travels*. Juvenalian satire, however, conveys a personal and caustic

voice; it is harsh, contemptuous and indignant with the speaker presented as a serious moralist (Abrams 1988: 167).

Satirists such as Aesop, Geoffrey Chaucer and Miguel de Cervantes from the medieval and early modern era, and Charles Dickens, George Orwell and Anthony Burgess more recently, have opinions on how humankind and the community should act as far as morals are concerned, and juxtapose this ideal standard with perceived contemporary foolish and immoral practices (Ogborn & Buckroyd 2001: 11). It is the aforementioned *opinions of how humankind and the community should act* that form the basis of satire: satire requires this norm or normal practice, this implicit standard in a given society or community.

A further attribute of satire is that it often contains digressions and extensions, and this characteristic is noticeable in the primary texts. For example, Swift elaborates on court protocol in a description of the procedure for advancing towards the throne of the king of Laputa (Swift 2008: 190), and comments on humankind and lying in the reported conversation between Gulliver and his Houyhnhnm master (Swift 2008: 223). Adams frequently interrupts his third-person narration to digress and to introduce apparently useless information. These sections of text, such as the adventures of Veet Voojagig and the planet full of biro life forms (Adams 2002: 129) however serve a purpose in that they underscore the overall theme of randomness and meaninglessness.

As is evident from the above, satire is aimed at ridiculing or criticising vices and follies, not merely in order to entertain the reader, but to improve or protect humanity and society. This overarching objective can be broken down into a number of functions.

First, satire mocks power to try to correct excesses of power, and in this process operates as a voice of moderation, questioning motivations and perceptions. The

object of attack is often in a figurative sense giant-sized and small-brained, for example, modern industry, or bureaucracy, or politics. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the Vogons are a satirical warning against excessive bureaucracy and the character Zaphod embodies society's worst expectation of politicians, in that he is shown to remain important in the galaxy, despite doing nothing. *Gulliver's Travels* targets politics in particular in "Part I, Lilliput", which is in essence a topical political satire.

A further function of satire is to highlight the disparity between the principles of conduct that popular society promulgates and the principles that the members of society really live by (Friedson 1967: 189). This function is exploited by Swift throughout the text, as in Gulliver's sarcastic dismantling of the façade of decency and virtuousness presented by eighteenth-century royalty (Swift 2008: 185):

> But as to counts, marquesses, dukes, earls, and the like, I was not so scrupulous. And I confess it was not without some pleasure that I found myself able to trace the particular features, by which certain families are distinguished up to their originals. I could plainly discover from whence one family derives a long chin; why a second hath abounded with knaves for two generations, and fools for two more; why a third happened to be crack-brained, and a fourth to be sharpers. … How cruelty, falsehood, and cowardice grew to be characteristics by which certain families are distinguished as much as by their Coat of Arms.

Satire may be used to highlight flaws in religious concepts. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Gulliver's Travels* both contain irreverent observations and critical or disparaging reference to religion; aspects that are explored in, among others, section 1.3.3 and 3.3.2 of this study. Lastly, satire typically sets out to question reasons and perceptions, and to shift perspectives on ordinary life, in order to offer insight and create discomfort and unease. *Gulliver's Travels* offers an ever-shifting perspective on

society and humankind, ingeniously through the use of telescopic distance (the Lilliputians) and microscopic closeness (the giant Brobdingnagians).

1.3.2 Proto science fiction, science fiction, and mock science fiction

In order to avoid the anachronistic application of the term science fiction and theories relating to science fiction to *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, it is important to clarify what proto science fiction and mock science fiction mean in this context, and to situate the two texts in the context of the fantastical or non-realistic works of their periods.

1.3.2.1 Proto science fiction

Proto science fiction is commonly held to describe literary works that prefigure science fiction. The authoritative academic, critic and author of *Science Fiction: Its Criticism and Teaching,* Patrick Parrinder, however argues that proto science fiction should not be judged by the degree to which it anticipates the particular themes of science fiction in the recent past and the present, but rather by the relationship of the text to the "cognitions", the collection of perceptions characteristic of its own time (Parrinder 1980: 22). In this context, "cognition" encapsulates the polarities of human knowledge. In other words, it is "at once logical and imaginative, rational and empirical, systematic and sceptical" (Parrinder 1980: 21). Themes that are characteristic of science fiction sub-genres, such as those dealing with utopias, alternate worlds, and alien cultures are discernible in certain early texts, thus enabling their classification as proto science fiction. Among the ancestors of science fiction is counted Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), of which the original Preface asserts that the text may lay claim to the status of science fiction, being "more than a mere tale of spectres or enchantment" (Shelley in Parrinder 1980: 6). Equally recognised as immediate predecessors of science fiction

are Edgar Allen Poe with the publication of, inter alia, *The Balloon Hoax* in 1844, and the scientific romance stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Fitz-James O'Brien (Parrinder 1980: 2, 4). Similarly, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (2007 [1886]) is viewed as a "fantasy drawing on scientific themes" (Parrinder 1980: 9).

It may be assumed that Jules Verne, 17th century originator of the Verneian "extraordinary voyage", would have relied for inspiration on natural laws and methods of propulsion in existence which would explain Parrinder's remark (1980: 11) that Verne's science fiction is "an anticipation of future possibilities, based on extrapolation from social and technological trends". By contrast, H.G. Wells, a determining author in the development of science fiction in the late 1800s, incorporated the use of impossible materials (Parrinder 1980: 10) and techniques and procedures, such as going to Mars in an airship, that defy natural laws.

Gulliver's Travels appears to meet these requirements for its classification as proto science fiction. The text is rich with utopias, alternate worlds, alien cultures, prophetic inventions and strange science. In addition, it fulfils Parrinder's condition for proto science fiction of the need for a clear relationship between a text and the collection of perceptions that are characteristic of its own time (Parrinder 1980: 22). Throughout this study the presence of such a relationship is illustrated, in particular in Swift's representation of institutions of power, religion, science and technology, and world views. The abandonment of traditional principles of transportation and laws of nature as noted above in the works of H.G. Wells is reflected in *Gulliver's Travels* in Swift's flying island and in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in Adams's flying building, as will be explored further in section 2.4.

1.3.2.2 Science fiction

The wide range of subject matter and the vast spectrum of stories and tales in the science fiction genre makes it difficult to define or delineate. Robert Heinlein says, for example, that "in the speculative science fiction story … accepted science and established facts are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action" (Heinlein in Parrinder 1980: 16). Faster-than-light travel, teleportation and the warping of space occur in science fiction texts with almost monotonous regularity. Douglas Adams draws on this feature of science fiction, taking it further and intensifying the absurdity already inherent in these speculative forms of movement and transportation (see Chapter 2, "Location, relocation and dislocation", section 2.4).

Along similar lines Parrinder defines science fiction texts as logical forecasts from present trends about human problems brought about by technological change (Parrinder 1979: 16). Chapter 3 of this study, "Alienation and estrangement", will closely investigate the scope and extent not only of human problems brought about by, but also human adaptation to, technological change as manifested in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This includes the human experience of alienation and estrangement which results from scientific and technological change. Darko Suvin (in Parrinder 1980: 21), one of the most influential critics of science fiction, advocates in this regard the replacement of the term "science" with the term "cognition", as he views science fiction as the "literature of cognitive estrangement", a phrase borrowed from Bertold Brecht's *Verfremdung*.

Science fiction as a genre is furthermore, according to eminent British literary critic and writer, Christine Brooke-Rose, not very different from realist fiction in terms of techniques employed, in that, like realist fiction, science fiction contains "world building, deployment of a reality effect, suppression of textual apparatus, presumption

to narrative transparency, and strong closure" (Brooke-Rose 1981, in Baker 2014: 14). Whereas in realist fiction the author will, for example, merely off-set the natural environment against the monotony of industrial cities, in the fictional worlds of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the authors go as far as having their characters actually build floating islands and planets. According to C.S. Lewis, these strange worlds that are created by science fiction authors need not be rooted in that which is probable in the realm of science (Parrinder 1980: 23). It is this artistic licence that enables science fiction authors to enthral and entertain.

According to science fiction theorist Gérard Klein (as quoted in Parrinder 1980: 33) science fiction as a genre reflects the expectations of society, with early twentieth-century science fiction mirroring a prevailing optimism, and late twentieth-century science fiction reflecting a general pessimism (Klein 1977, in Parrinder 1980: 34). However, science fiction after the 1960s "conveys the sheer excitement (and horror) of the vistas opened up by science and technology", including the unsettling phenomenon of global conglomerates where workers are miniscule parts of the greater whole, and human life is mechanised (Parrinder 1980: 35, 51). This is particularly noticeable in Douglas Adams's work, in the form of the Vogon interstellar corporation whose dissection and colonisation of the galaxy are largely dependent on the labour of Dentrassi workers (Adams 2002: 51).

Science fiction texts can inter alia be identified by the presence of certain representative themes. Such texts describe journeys to other worlds, or dystopias populated by other-worldly beings. They tell of threats to the Earth and fantastical future cities. Creatures undergo biological mutation, and characters in these texts typically experiment with alternative techniques of communication (Parrinder 1980: 10). Many of these themes are present in both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's*

Guide to the Galaxy in order to comment on the known society, to achieve humour, and so on.

The very titles of the two novels declare the journey theme which Swift and Adams apply by sending their protagonists on long journeys to multiple locations. Both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are detailed narratives of voyages to other worlds: the first involving travel over the oceans, moving between islands; the latter involving travel through outer space and time, moving between planets and galaxies. While Gulliver's travels are repeated radial voyages to and from a centre, Arthur Dent's journeys are apparently random, although ultimately circular, as he does return to Earth at the end of *So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish*.

Swift weaves dystopia as theme into the narrative of *Gulliver's Travels* by including some of the classic elements of the utopian form, such as descriptions of marvellous journeys, strange new societies and newly observed peoples yet simultaneously attacking features common to the utopian theme.Consider, for example, Laputa's farming damage, disastrous architecture (Swift 2008: 150) and even the accidental impoverishment of the Laputans. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is an incessantly comic dystopia, opening with the complete destruction of the Earth, which is arguably the most extreme example of dystopia in the series.

While aliens are typically portrayed in science fiction as superior beings of enlightenment and intellect, a veritable master race (Parrinder 1980: 30), Adams's extra-terrestrials are flawed and display a preference for alcohol and sexual escapades. *Gulliver's Travels* too is populated with less than impressive alien beings: the diminutive Lilliputians, the giant Brobdingnags, the twisted and squint-eyed Laputans, and the monstrous Yahoos.

ore representative themes of science fiction, such as future cities, biological mutation and techniques of communication as a theme or tool in science fiction will be discussed in the course of the study.

1.3.2.3 Mock science fiction

The paucity of references to mock science fiction in works of literary criticism, glossaries and dictionaries makes it difficult to define the sub-genre. At best it is possible to extrapolate from common definitions of the mock epic to say that mock science fiction satirises or parodies stereotypes and paradigms. Kropf (1988: 61) explains that "mock science fiction stands to conventional science fiction in the same relation that the mock epic has to the epic" because mock science fiction reverses readers' paradigmatic expectations of the genre, thereby reversing its ideological function, all the while narrating events in a manner that represents atypical aimlessness and disorder. It is the collection of themes, elements and techniques present in science fiction that mock science fiction inverts and reverses. For example in science fiction, extra-terrestrials and alien beings conventionally pose a threat to Earth's independence or resources, a convention which is mocked in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in the pointless civil engineering requirement that the Earth make way for a planned bypass.

Throughout the course of the study, the above definitions and attributes of proto science fiction, science fiction and mock science fiction will be revisited and examples from *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will be cited to indicate the novels' adherence to such criteria.

1.3.3 The travel genre

Travel literature includes the writings of adventurers and ambassadors, merchants and missionaries, captives and castaways – and of writers who satirise this genre. According to Fredericks (1976: 50) *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are compelling examples of the mock travel book, a fictional travel sub-genre which first made its appearance in the second century BCE in *True History* by Lucian of Samosata (Fredericks 1976: 50), with descriptions of islands, travel between worlds, warfare, and aliens. Over the course of time, the travel genre was enriched with imaginary voyages that form the backdrop for fantasy narratives, tales of newly discovered places, seemingly ideal societies, fantastic journeys, and shipwrecks. In order to show how *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* contain knowing and humorous references to the genre, and discover whether the two novels do it in the same way, or differently, some recurring themes of travel literature will be examined below.

Travel texts such as the Exodus narrative and the Gilgamesh epic express as a leading paradigm of travel "the image of the journey as a process of transformation in which suffering is strongly implicated, in effect the death of the old life and the awakening of the new" (Whitfield 2011: 2). Travel as symbol of or metaphor for the shifting identity is prominent in the works of authors as diverse as Dante, Shakespeare and Conrad.

Is this theme of travel literature – the journey as a process of transformation – apparent in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*? It has frequently been debated whether Gulliver should be read as a well-rounded fictional character who is therefore able to transform. For example, leading eighteenth-century scholar Leo Damrosch points out that "Gulliver is sometimes shrewd but sometimes naïve, and … learns very little from his experiences until the end, when he learns too much"

(Damrosch 2013: 358). This researcher finds in a reading of the primary text that Gulliver originally displays no introspection or self-awareness, appearing to be devoid of emotions; there is no process of communication of his internal self to the reader. The journeys can, however, be likened to a process of transformation as Gulliver does towards the end of the narrative approach a type of distorted insight, alluded to by Damrosch in the above quotation. But Gulliver's convictions are irrational, and he comes to share the Houyhnhnms view of humanity which leaves him in a state of self-imposed exile from humankind (Swift 2008: 272–277):

> I here take a final leave of my courteous readers … to apply those excellent lessons of virtue which I learned among the Houyhnhnms; to instruct the Yahoos of my own family as far as I shall find them docible animals; to behold my figure often in a glass, and thus if possible habituate my self by time to tolerate the sight of a human creature.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, in contrast, exhibits a cast of mock science fictional antiheroes that are by implication unable to undergo transformation. Protagonist Arthur Dent's appearance may be that of a stereotypical romantic hero: "about thirty … tall, dark haired" (Adams 2002: 7), but descriptions of his character destroy that potential and detract from Arthur's status as protagonist: he is ill at ease in his own environment as well as in the science fictional environment. He is also described with reference to his evolutionary ancestors, or as if he were an object, in the same way that his house is described (Haslauer 2010: 53). Arthur Dent is rather "the perfect antihero of an anti-plot" by virtue of his status as an outsider and as an everyman-character (Haslauer 2010: 53). This limited characterisation by Adams helps to subvert the expectations readers have of the science fiction narrative and the traditional science fictional world view (Haslauer 2010: 56).

This theme of travel literature – the journey as a process of transformation – therefore seems to be present in *Gulliver's Travels* in that Gulliver undergoes a limited degree of transformation, but it is deliberately parodied and inverted in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Travel literature also includes factual reports that serve as practical guides from the earliest times, dating back as far as Pausanias's *Guide to Greece* (160–180 AD), considered the first ever real travel guide due to its detached tone and descriptions of religious and historical sites (Whitfield 2001: 12). Over time, Wey von Breydenbach, Petrarch, and others published similar works, offering practical advice and itineraries for prospective travellers (Whitfield 2001: 32–38). *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* satirise this tradition in different ways.

Both in form and style, *Gulliver's Travels* is made to resemble factual travel reports and ship logbooks of its era through the inclusion of charts and other seemingly useful graphics (Didicher 1997: 179), and eye-witness descriptions. These elements are, however, satirical: the maps appear to be reproductions of the earth and include details that readers could verify – actual shorelines that contemporary readers would be familiar with – as well as imaginary dystopias (Wagner in Didicher 1997: 180). Interestingly, those maps that are consistent with actual locations seem to have been traced from the emblematic 1719 world map by Herman Moll who, like Gulliver, was emphatic about his own modernness and exactness, whereby he arguably laid himself open to criticism and ridicule (Didicher 1997: 186).

Adams's knowing and humorous reference to the genre of the travel guide is most apparent in the inclusion of the electronic *Guide* which "tells you everything you need to know about anything" (Adams 2002: 49). It is furthermore useful to compare *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* to actual publications, such as *Hitch Hiker's Guide*

to Europe (1971), a guide for low-budget travellers and by Adams's own admission the guide that he had in mind when writing *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (2002: viii):

> As it is I went to lie in a field, along with my *Hitch Hiker's Guide to Europe*, and when the stars came out it occurred to me that if only someone would write a *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* as well, then I for one would be off like a shot.

A general reading of practical guides such as *Hitch Hiker's Guide to Europe* reveals that they are written by contract writers and contain useful and relevant information about places to visit, restaurant recommendations, maps, a glossary, facts and figures including distances, directions and driving times or sections describing exotic or strange food. They conform to a standard structure and layout and employ descriptive language. The electronic *Guide* invented by Adams displays some similarities to such travel guides, for example, it too is written by contract writers (such as Ford Prefect) and it recommends and describes the Restaurant at the End of the Universe. However, Adams's electronic Guide is filled with useless and irrelevant information (for example, it contains a very long explanation of a towel's uses, but a very short entry about the importance of planet Earth).

It can therefore be concluded that Jonathan Swift and Douglas Adams were indeed aware that travel texts may be factual reports and may serve as practical guides – and intentionally made humorous reference to these publications.

Additionally, travel literature includes narratives of pilgrimage and of miraculous adventure, for example, *The Voyage of St Brendan* (AD 900), presumably based on the voyages undertaken by early Christian missionaries (Whitfield 2001: 17). While *Gulliver's Travels* does not advance the miraculous in the strict sense, Gulliver does

encounter marvels and wonders, such as the Lilliputian belief in resurrection (Swift 2008: 51).

Religion as a theme is further explored in *Gulliver's Travels* in the irrationality of religious wars fought over shoe heels, and the correct way of breaking eggs (Swift 2008: 42, 43), referencing the conflict and slaughter in the religious wars of the 16th and 17th century in Britain.

In addition to the above implicit criticism of religion, specific aspects thereof are parodied in *Gulliver's Travels,* inter alia in the form of the Struldbrugs or Immortals who have eternal life (Swift 2008: 193), and in Gulliver's use of phraseology typical of the holy communion in his speech describing his return home (Swift 2008: 271):

> [T]he very smell of them was intolerable; much less could I suffer them to eat in the same room. To this hour they dare not presume to touch my bread, or drink out of the same cup; neither was I ever able to let one of them take me by the hand.

In contrast with the fervour, piety and passion of religious conviction that inspired missionary expeditions, pilgrimages and crusades as described in religious travel narratives, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* refers to religion in either a dismissive manner ("one man had been nailed to a tree", Adams 2002: 5), or offers satirical counter-propositions such as a planet factory, computational creationism in the form of the super computer Deep Thought, and a feeble-minded, ineffectual ruler of the Universe (Adams 2002: 140, 145, 351). Religion is therefore a major theme, albeit in satirised form, in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.*

Examples of religious parody, as well as the manner in which the authors destabilise this human attempt to give meaning to life, are explored in more depth in particular in Chapter 3, "Alienation and estrangement", section 3.3.2.

Furthermore, certain travel texts feature politics and conquests as theme in descriptions of the politics and "exotic courts, exotic courtesans and exotic cruelty" of "distant and formidable civilisations" (Whitfield 2011: 23, 93) by ambassadors and merchants, such as friar Willem of Rubruck's encounters with Genghis Khan (1200–1240), and Thomas Herbert's description of the Persian monarchy (1634), as noted by Whitfield (2011: 90).

Similarly, references to European governments in power at the time of writing of *Gulliver's Travels* feature throughout the text. Like early travel texts, *Gulliver's Travels* contains a multitude of references to exotic courts and politics at each of Gulliver's destinations, with the crucial difference that Swift criticises, for example, European conquests (Swift 2008: 275):

> [T]hey see an harmless people, are entertained with kindness, they give the country a new name, they take formal possession of it for the King, they set up a rotten plank or a stone for a memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the natives … .

Official institutions are ridiculed, for instance, the diminutive emperor of Lilliput is ironically described as "Delight and Terror of the Universe" (Swift 2008: 36); and Lilliputians earn prizes and are promoted to public office through the proverbial jumping through hoops, by displaying their dexterity as rope dancers and creeping under sticks (Swift 2008: 33, 34). In Brobdingnag, Gulliver's explanation of European affairs elicits ridicule and contempt from the king (Swift 2008: 96). The Houyhnhnm government is far from ideal, as it has no regard for Yahoo lives. Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master, for example, suggests the castration of the younger Yahoos, a practice "which, besides rendering them tractable and fitter for use, would in an age put an end to the whole species without destroying life" (Swift 2008: 255).

The rule of reason makes for an arguably inhuman rule, an aspect to which the Houyhnhnms are oblivious. Throughout the book, Swift makes his opposition to conquests clear through, inter alia, Gulliver's refusal to assist the emperor of Lilliput in his plan to conquer the Empire of Blefuscu in order to become sole Monarch of the world (Swift 2008: 47). At the end of the book, Gulliver scathingly denounces imperial conquest in his remark that "ships are sent with the first opportunity … the natives driven out or destroyed" (Swift 2008: 275).

Like *Gulliver's Travels,* and in sharp contrast to the reverence for foreign regimes displayed in early non-fiction travel texts, (eg Sir Thomas Roe's *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul,* 1615-1619, noted by Whitfield 2011: 108), *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* satirises the political dispensations that the protagonist encounters. The president of the Imperial Galactic Government Zaphod Beeblebrox, is described as follows (Adams 2002: 36):

> "adventurer, ex-hippy, good-timer, (crook? quite possibly), manic self-publicist … often thought to be completely out to lunch", clearly an unlikely candidate for office, "yet ideal presidency fodder".

Reflecting society's cynical view of politicians, Zaphod is shown to do nothing, but remains important. Adams satirises both conquest and bureaucracy through his portrayal of the Vogons, tellingly so in their notification of the "planning charts and demolition orders" for the destruction of Earth (Adams 2002: 33), which resonates with Gulliver's above-mentioned scathing denouncement of imperial conquest. Politics and bureaucracy are further satirised in the portrayal of those in charge of the planet Magrathea, in particular in their recorded message: "[We] regret … that the entire planet is temporarily closed for business. Thank you. If you would care to leave your

name and the address of a planet where you can be contacted, kindly speak when you hear the tone" (Adams 2002: 109).

It is not only society and local inhabitants that must be navigated and negotiated in this manner: in the Brendan narrative mentioned earlier (*The Voyage of St Brendan,* AD 900), as well as the *Saga of Eric the Red* (tenth century Norse literature), readers are introduced to the sea and the concept of the sea as the unknown, "out of which terror, wonder or discovery may emerge" (Whitfield 2011: 18, 19).

A History of Nautical Astronomy (Cotter 1968) reports that by the eighteenth century, when *Gulliver's Travels* was written the greatest challenge of seafarers such as Columbus, Da Gama and Magellan was finding longitude at sea. In this regard, "a knowledge of the phases of the moon … was of great importance, bright stars or star groups collectively formed a star-clock system." Star positions and lunar tables were published in almanacs for the seafarer to use "for finding position when out of sight of land" (Cotter 1968: 29, 35, 37).

Gulliver's Travels reflects these themes (the sea voyage and scientific methods of navigation). The book contains many mentions of these types of navigational computations and observations. For example, after encountering a violent storm on the way to the South Sea the seafarers determine their latitude "by an observation" (Swift 2008: 16). At the start of the second voyage past the Cape of Good Hope and in the navigation of the ship which rescues Gulliver from his floating box, similar techniques are used (Swift 2008: 70, 75, 76, 136), and at the outset of the voyage to Laputa latitude and longitude are described (Swift 2008: 143). The floating island is equipped with "sextants, quadrants, telescopes, astrolabes and other astronomical instruments", and is navigated by means of geometrical calculations (Swift 2008: 155), reflecting the dependence on astronomical navigation at the time of writing of *Gulliver's*

Travels. Interestingly, the Laputians live in dread of the celestial bodies and endow them with fearful characteristics (Swift 2008: 151). (This relationship between humans and science and technology is addressed in more detail in Chapter 3, “Alienation and estrangement”.)

Gulliver’s celestial navigation in the eighteenth century resonates with Arthur Dent’s navigation among those very heavenly bodies, as envisaged by Adams two hundred years later. Like the great travellers of the age of discovery, Arthur Dent finds his ocean (the universe) increasingly unpredictable and hostile; eventually he has experienced landslides and avalanches (Adams 2002: 515) and been “alternately blown up and insulted in more bizarre regions of the Galaxy than he had ever dreamt existed” (Adams 2002: 395). This uneasy journey through hyperspace is made more humorous through the use of understatement (“I’m a bit upset about that [the Earth’s destruction]”, 2002: 52) and overstatement (“When he came round … he was sobbing for his mother”, 2002: 57).

As with other travel elements in the narrative, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* also refers to navigation. The Improbability Drive, which is the propulsion device of the starship Heart of Gold, enables the ship to simply “pass through every point in the Universe” (Adams 2002: 84). The ship is navigated by means of improbability factors and nonsensical mathematical equations, such as “two-to-the-power-of-Infinity-minus-one to one against” (Adams 2002: 91). This humorous, pseudo-scientific phrasing represents a complete disregard of classic rules of navigation.

The journey theme in fictional travel literature and proto science fiction is frequently enriched with a supernatural element through the use of a particular plot device: magical elevation and transportation (Whitfield 2011: 123) which in *Gulliver’s Travels* finds expression in the flying island of Laputa (Swift 2008: 144). Swift presents the

island as if properly controlled in terms of movement and altitude by means of a magnetic load-stone and axle, and geometric calculations (Swift 2008: 155, 157), yet the inclusion in the narrative of the island, as well as the projects and experiments of the members of the Grand Academy of Lagado on the land mass below, is intended to show his sceptical attitude towards the elevation of the "new science" in England (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.3). *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* continues in this tradition with the inclusion of a series of "thoroughly ridiculous form[s] of transport" (Adams 2002: 40), such as Arthur Dent hitching rides with spaceships by means of "an electronic sub-etha signalling device" and "a matter transference beam" (Adams 2002: 46, 47), travelling in an aircar through a gateway into hyperspace and through steel tunnels (Adams 2002: 139, 181), time-travelling to prehistoric Earth (Adams 2002: 395), teleporting on a Chesterfield sofa (Adams 2002: 408) and flying on both the planet Magrathea and the Earth (Adams 2002: 152, 708).

A further prominent theme in travel literature is the phenomenon of travelling for reasons of curiosity; the eighteenth century saw "the first English sightseers, first gentleman travellers, first writers on travel for its own sake" (Whitfield 2011: 118). Closely related to this motivation is a desire for adventure, as reflected in William Dampier's detailed and lively maritime adventure narratives, such as *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697) noted by Whitfield (2011: 120), which may arguably have influenced Jonathan Swift. This desire to satisfy a sense of curiosity frequently results in suffering hostilities, described in the sub-genre of 'captivity texts' and 'pirate literature' (Whitfield 2011: 113).

The influence of such action-filled, tense narratives can clearly be seen in Part III of *Gulliver's Travels*. Curiosity and a sense of adventure seem to propel Gulliver from one escapade to another. Gulliver has "always believed it would be some time or other

[his] fortune to [travel]" and has prepared for his envisaged long voyages by studying navigation, mathematics, and medicine (Swift 2008: 15):

> I was bound apprentice to Mr James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London … and my father now and then sending me small sums of money, I laid them out in learning navigation, and other parts of the mathematicks, useful to those who intend to travel … .

His subsequent voyages are ostensibly triggered by the failure of his medical practice (Swift 2008: 16), but after his escape from Blefescu and with only two months at home, he confesses that he has succumbed to his "insatiable desire of seeing foreign countries … having been condemned by nature and fortune to an active and restless life" (Swift 2008: 71, 75). He furthermore explains that this thirst he has for seeing the world (Swift 2008: 141) is his "evil destiny" (Swift 2008: 137). His curiosity and sense of adventure are rewarded with suffering at the hands of foreign peoples, and it may be argued that the elements of the Damper texts mentioned above are satirised by Swift in Gulliver's numerous captures, experiences of bondage in chains and imprisonment in castles, rooms and boxes.

Unlike Gulliver, and unlike Ford Prefect who is a seasoned roving researcher who knows "how to flag flying saucers down and get a lift from them" (Adams 2002: 14), Arthur Dent is an accidental traveller, the anti-traveller, as it were, who from the start simply wants to go home (Adams 2002: 48) and wishes "there was something simple and recognisable he could grasp hold of" (Adams 2002: 52). (Arthur's motivation for travel, as well as the distinct triggers for each of his arrivals and departures, is explored in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.6.) He panics and hyperventilates when he realises that he is in outer space and continuously enquires about the availability of that symbol of home and England, a cup of tea (Adams 2002: 108, 197, 200). Time travel completely unravels him and he is clearly not cut out for that kind of life (Adams

2002: 268, 273). Admittedly, he does from time to time show an interest in the laws and forces at work in his ever-changing surroundings, but he displays a marked reluctance to change, which is proven to be well-founded when the horror of his travel experience is compounded by the extreme hostility of beings such as the Vogons.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Despite the chronological and biographical differences between the two authors, they have been shown to be similar in their creative impulse as embodied in their exciting, entertaining tales of adventure. Both Swift and Adams were exposed to social, political, theological and scientific issues of their day and would have drawn on these in their writing.

In this chapter it has been found that *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* reflect the themes, characteristics and conventions of satire. The generic elements of satire are evident in both texts: topical issues such as poor government and the degeneration of human morals and values are held up to scorn with both gentle ridicule and caustic irony. The texts fulfil the functions of satire in that they mock power, highlight hypocrisy, and shift perceptions in order to unsettle their reader. Simultaneously, due to the extent of its reflection of the prevailing world view and perception of reality, *Gulliver's Travels* can be said to form part of the body of proto science fiction. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in turn excels at ridiculing and parodying science fiction, thereby identifying itself as part of the sub-genre mock science fiction. Finally, the characteristic themes of travel literature have been shown to be present in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* Both novels present the journey as a process of transformation, for example, and contain elements of practical use to a prospective traveller. It has been shown that the texts reference and comment on religion, politics and conquests. Similarly, both authors

speak of unknown and uncharted terrain and describe how the protagonists discover new locations, at times suffering misfortune in the process. It is the presence of such themes that enable the classification of the two works as examples of the mock travel book.

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINES

In Chapter 2 the focus of the study shifts to the multiple locations visited in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and the prolonged travel which this involves for the protagonists. First each novel is compared to the travel texts of its era. For example, Swift framed Gulliver's journeys in the contemporary form of travel literature with a voyage by ship at either end (Donovan 1984: 18) and extended the imitation and satire of travel texts to illustrations and maps that contain verifiable facts such as genuine coastlines, as well as fictional dystopias (Didicher 1997: 179). Similarly, in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* descriptions of planet-building, topographical features and voyages of discovery such as Arthur's and Ford's raft-building and their scaling snow-covered mountains (Adams 2002: 359–366) resonate with twentieth-century mountaineering and seafaring literature (see section 2.5.1). Secondly the chapter will compare the two novels in their treatment of the motif of travel, including the way in which the episodic structure of each novel reflects the form and structure of Gulliver's radial voyages and Arthur Dent's random voyages. Finally, it will be suggested that the authors' motivation for choosing the journey as an authorial device is to facilitate a multitude of perspectives on humankind. The extent to which the protagonists are displaced, disadvantaged and challenged by their ever-shifting locations will be examined, leading naturally into the theme of alienation in Chapter 3.

Aldiss's statement (1974: 8) that science fiction is "a search for a definition of man and his *status* in the universe" leads to a consideration in Chapter 3 of how the authors alienate their protagonists by satirising and debunking anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism. Swift and Adams appear to do so by focusing on three issues. They address the individual's relative position in society, which in *Gulliver's Travels* is done through Gulliver's exclusion from various societies, to the point where at the end of his last journey he is fully alienated. Gulliver becomes estranged from humankind and from himself. Douglas Adams's traveller appears to be an eternal and universal alien from the moment of Earth's destruction onwards, an event which renders him displaced and without a core or a home base. Second, humankind's relative position among all creatures is examined in both novels. To understand how anthropocentrism is satirised in both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* through inversion of the hierarchy of living beings, the study will briefly describe Descartes's mechanistic view of animals; the great Chain of Being (Kelly 2007: 323) and Reimarus's system of a hierarchy of beings (Kuzniar 2003: 429) will be presented. Thirdly, both Swift and Adams address humanity's relationship with science and technology and show how humans use science, technology and inventions (from automation and clockwork in Gulliver's era, to twentieth-century artificial intelligence and transhumanism) to alienate humans, thereby progressively moving away from their own humanity. A final instance of humanity's relationship with science and technology that will be examined in both novels is the quest for immortality and the quest to create life (in the form of life-like automata in Gulliver's era, and robots in the twentieth century).

One consequence of being in multiple locations, and of alienation, is the inability to communicate and the need to overcome communication barriers. In Chapter 4 both

novels will be examined for evidence of communication, translation and interpreting solutions. Occurrences and examples of solutions for language learning and techniques of communication in the two novels, such as memorisation, gesticulation, and interpretation by the 'flappers' in *Gulliver's Travels* and the Babel fish in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will be contextualised in relation to their respective eras with regard to theories and ideas about language during the Enlightenment and ideas about machine translation in the late twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2

LOCATION, RELOCATION AND DISLOCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 has laid a theoretical foundation by examining the genres of satire, science fiction, proto science fiction, mock science fiction and travel literature. It has been established that *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* respectively meet some of the criteria and reflect characteristics of these genres.

Arising from the above, Chapter 2 first considers how organised travel and transportation are presented in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This is followed by a summary of the fictional journeys, to compare the nature and shape of the journeys in the two primary texts, to discover possible relationships between each journey and the structure of the book in which it is described, and to gain an overview of the different locations, and how and why the protagonists arrive and depart from each. The approach followed in this and the following chapters is broadly New Historicist (Abrams 1999: 182–183):

> In place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects […] new historicists conceive of a literary text as 'situated' within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place… .

Themes and recurring narrative elements in the two primary texts are therefore considered against the backdrop of the forces of their time.

2.2 TRANSPORTATION AND BUREAUCRACY

Given Swift's and Adams's satirising of human society in travel narratives, travel and transport are naturally prominent themes in both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

It has been asserted in Chapter 1 that, in order to understand a satirical text, the reader must know the standards or practices that are being targeted, because something must first be shown to be normal in order for it to be satirised. With this in mind it is worth noting that in the Swiftian era of exploration, the British East India Company possessed powers akin to that of a government (Robins 2006: xi) to the extent that it is now viewed as one of the first multinational corporations in history. Aspects of transportation, such as propulsion, receiving, holding, storing, marketing and managing were organised and structured. This is the backdrop for Swift's descriptions of maritime activities in *Gulliver's Travels*, both in terms of the corporations that initiate and arrange the voyages, and the seamen that keep the vessels afloat. Yet there are no real instances of Swift satirising this aspect of transportation in *Gulliver's Travels* where his treatment of the organised aspect of seafaring can rather be viewed as a tribute to maritime culture.

Over time, transport became increasingly regulated until, in Adams's era, governmental decrees rigorously determined every aspect of transportation. In contrast to Swift, Adams satirises this transport bureaucracy in, for example, the demolition of Arthur's little house to make way for a bypass, and the destruction of the entire Earth to achieve faster galactical transportation. A particularly ironic twist is that the latter act of destruction is rendered unnecessary moments later by the revelation of the capabilities of the recently unveiled Improbability Drive, which will make all hyperspatial routes superfluous (Adams 2002: 48).

The absurd connection between Arthur's house being demolished and the whole planet being demolished is used to emphasise humankind's insignificance in the universe. The destruction of Arthur's house is collateral damage and so is the destruction of Earth. There is no malice behind the decision to bulldoze the house or the planet, just an unquestioned adherence to ideals of progress, regardless of cost.

When Arthur asks Mr Prosser why the bypass needs to be built, Mr Prosser is at first taken aback by the fact that the question is being asked at all, but then offers an inanely inadequate response: "It's a bypass. You've got to build bypasses" (Adams 2002: 10). Lengthy descriptions of the bureaucratic steps Arthur would have needed to follow in order to protest about the demolition of his house follow. Adams reinforces the theme of senseless procedural regulation of human life by having Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz repeat these bureaucratic procedures over the PA system just before the destruction of Earth (Adams 2002: 33):

> 'As you will no doubt be aware, the plans for development of the outlying regions of the Galaxy require the building of a hyperspatial express route through your star system, and regrettably your planet is one of those scheduled for demolition. […] There's no point in acting all surprised about it. All the planning charts and demolition orders have been on display in your local planning department in Alpha Centauri for fifty of your Earth years, so you've had plenty of time to lodge any formal complaint and it's far too late to start making a fuss about it now'.

Humanity may be viewed as behaving arrogantly and callously towards the planet and other species that inhabit it. Human beings require shelter and sustenance and of necessity alter the world to accommodate these needs. The course of rivers is altered, animals are corralled and cities and vast road networks are erected to serve humankind's needs. Through the description of the building of the bypass in Arthur's village (Adams 2008: 10), an event which is referenced later in the construction of a

hyperspatial express route through the Earth's star system (Adams 2008: 33), the narrator is communicating that humankind could be done away with and treated as callously and with as little consideration as humankind treats the world..

The bureaucratic communication style so characteristic of the Vogons is an extreme version of what is practised and held in high regard by many institutions across the world. For example by means of the narrator, Adams (2002: 50) says of the Vogons, "They wouldn't even lift a finger to save their own grandmothers from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal without orders signed in triplicate, sent in, sent back, queried, lost, found, subjected to public inquiry, lost again, and finally buried in soft peat and recycled as firelighters."

Many of Adams's readers would be able to relate to this sentiment. The steps within a bureaucratic process are ostensibly developed to smooth a complex process. However, Adams implies that these steps themselves, and particularly the style of communication used during the process, hinder it to the extent that they may cause the entire process to break down. Adams's portrayal of bureaucracy suggests that the process is designed specifically to fail, as is alluded to when the narrator mentions the recycling of the orders into firelighters (Adams 2008: 50). The entire scenario presents an absurd system which can only result in the loss of the Grandmother to the Ravenous Bugblatters of Traal.

Elevating the bureaucratic process and its accompanying paperwork to a level of greater importance than what it is trying to accomplish is a way to ensure failure, and Adams communicates this point by satirising both bureaucratic processes and bureaucratic language.

2.3 OVERVIEW AND SHAPE OF THE JOURNEYS

The journeys in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* provide ample material for comparison, which similarities and differences are more easily discernible when the journeys are summarised and represented graphically.

Gulliver's and Arthur Dent's respective journeys (their physical movement in space and time) have been abstracted from the surrounding text and summarised chronologically. This process of summarising and tracking the journeys has proved to be relatively simple in *Gulliver's Travels*, largely involving the noting of mentioned days, dates, weeks, months and years. Conversely, summarising and tracking the travel element in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* has proved to be as challenging as Arthur's perplexed efforts to discover the exact location of his cave on prehistoric Earth (Adams 2002: 676):

> In the end he worked out a method which would at least produce a result. He decided not to mind the fact that with the extraordinary jumble of rules of thumb, wild approximations and arcane guesswork he was using he would be lucky to hit the right galaxy, he just went ahead and got a result. He would call it the right result.

Inspired by Gallagher's reports (2000: 230) of Fredric Jameson's and Gerard Genette's "narratological graphs and charts that represent forms in the sense of structures that organise, arrange, or order the parts of a narrative" and "the classical activity of displaying the overall shape, indeed the symmetry or shapeliness of novels," each text summary has been converted to an infographic (see pp 39 and 44 of this dissertation), which is then reviewed to discover patterns and reflections thereof in the structure of the book. Given that this venture into pictorial semiotics may have distorted or too tightly condensed the narrative if pursued to its full

potential, the use of infographics has been limited to purposes of analysis and overview.

2.3.1 The journeys of Lemuel Gulliver

Lemuel Gulliver's journeys are radial voyages with England as the core location of departures and arrivals. Departures are planned long in advance, participants in each journey are identified and contracted beforehand, and dates and times are meticulously recorded, which has facilitated the following summary:

Part I

Before the onset of the events of this story, Gulliver spends close to ten years undertaking numerous voyages from his home in England to the Levant and the East and West Indies. For three years he works in England as a general surgeon, but on 4 May 1699 again departs by ship. On 5 November they are shipwrecked, he swims ashore in Lilliput, and escapes to Blefuscu by wading through the shallows. He leaves Blefuscu on 24 September 1701 in a makeshift sailboat, is rescued by an English ship between five and six in the evening on 26 September 1701, and finally arrives back in England on 13 April 1702.

Part II

Gulliver departs from England by ship on 20 June 1702, travels to and winters at the Cape of Good Hope, subsequently departs from the Cape and after a storm on 17 June 1703 goes ashore at Brobdingnag. An eagle carries him away from Brobdingnag in a box, which is later picked up from the ocean by a ship, which returns him to England on 3 June 1706.

Part III

Gulliver departs from England on 5 August 1706 by ship and arrives in Fort St George in the West Indies on 11 April 1707. He stays there for three weeks and departs but, following a storm, the ship is attacked by pirates. Gulliver is set adrift in a canoe with paddles and a sail, to arrive on the island of Balnibarbi on 1 May 1707. On the floating island called Laputa he travels to Lagado, the capital city of Balnibarbi. In an attempt to return to England, he travels overland by mule to Maldonada, from where he makes a circular sightseeing excursion to Glubbdubdrib, sails back to Maldonada, finally departs for Luggnagg and arrives there on 21 April 1708. He is detained but allowed to leave on 6 May 1709, to arrive back in England by ship on 10 April 1710.

Part IV

On 7 September 1710 he departs from England in a merchant ship en route to Barbados, past the Leeward Islands, where mutiny breaks out on board. On 9 May 1711 he is put into a long boat and set ashore on an unknown strand which proves to belong to the land of the Houyhnhnms. He is eventually expelled, builds a canoe and sets off, only to meet with enmity from the inhabitants of New Holland. He is taken on board a Portuguese ship, arrives in Lisbon on 5 November, departs from there on 24 November 1715, and arrives back in England on 5 December 1715. The summarised journeys are depicted in graphic format below.

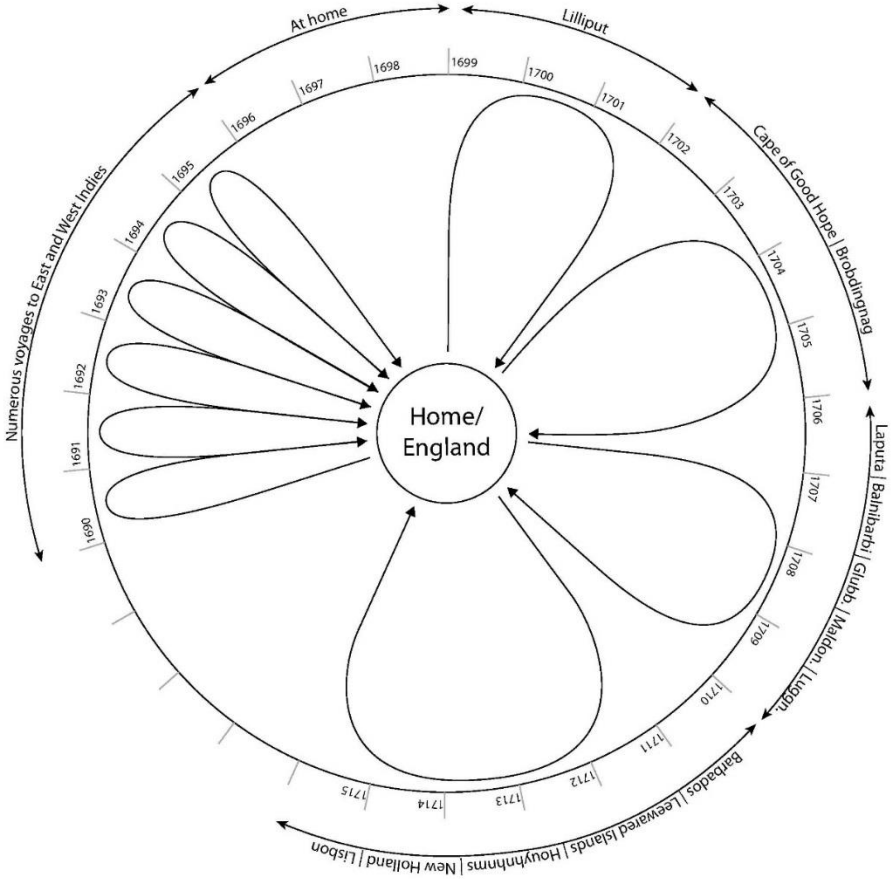

Figure 2.1: The journeys of Lemuel Gulliver

Figure 2.1 exposes a distinct pattern and suggests that the narrative is structured around the succession of places visited by Gulliver. In terms of elements that may determine a narrative structure, *Gulliver's Travels* as a whole may therefore be termed a milieu story, defined by American science fiction author and critic, Orson Scott Card (1988: 49) as a story with a clear beginning and a clear end; a story which is complete in itself, with a unifying theme and form. Measured against this definition it may be argued that each journey is a milieu story in its own right. Furthermore, each has Gulliver arriving at a foreign destination, observing and participating in fascinating events, being transformed by his experiences, and arguably returning as an altered man.

More examples of balance and repetition are noticeable throughout the novel. Chapters display a structural rhythm in that scene transitions are seamlessly inserted at the beginning of each chapter to skip a period of time, or to change to a new location in the narrative, glossing over events in the interim. Parts (or Books) reflect a similar order, with the onset of each journey introduced in the first chapter, to be swiftly followed by some calamitous event. The end of each adventure is marked by a cathartic section of text wherein Gulliver detachedly provides updated biographical information about himself and his family, so as to restore a sense of normality before the commencement of the next adventure. Each Part of *Gulliver's Travels* is thus drawn to a satisfactory close, which removes the need for a detailed transition before the next journey begins.

Given the care of Swift's composition, it is unlikely that there is not some compelling logic running through all four books to dictate their specific order. The order of Parts I to IV may indeed be read as episodic, as if Swift is intentionally building an argument about humankind's political endeavours. Swift scholars such as Allan Bloom, Bonamy Dobrée and R.S. Crane (in Greenberg 1970) argue that each book of the *Travels* has a different, but related argument on political practice and political behaviour. Claude Rawson in turn views it as a "progressive inculpation, from the ironic escalations of Books I and II to the absolute categorisation of human depravities in Book IV" (Rawson 2012: 12).

2.3.2 The journey of Arthur Dent

In contrast to Gulliver's journeys, Arthur's appear to be random and follow neither the expected and known rules of travel, nor the laws of time and space. Fellow travellers, modes of transportation, as well as destinations appear, are mysteriously altered and reappear at random, as is apparent in the following summary:

Book 1 - The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Three years before the events with which the novel opens, Arthur Dent leaves London and moves into his house. Following the destruction of the house along with the Earth, Arthur hitches a ride with the alien hitchhiker and roving reporter Ford Prefect on the Vogon Flag Ship, part of the Vogon construction fleet. They travel six light years through hyperspace to Barnard's Star, are thrown off the ship, fall through a hole and float in space, and are picked up in Sector ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha by the former Galactic President, Zaphod Beeblebrox and the girl from Earth, Trillian Astra, in the spaceship the Heart of Gold. The ship travels to the planet Magrathea with its twin suns in the Horsehead Nebula but suffers a missile attack, which causes them to enable the improbability drive and to land. Arthur meets the old man Slartibartfast and travels with him into hyperspace where planets are made, hears about the computer that was asked 7,5 million years before to answer The Question and meets the mice who want to harvest his brain. When a new set of attackers and police arrive, Arthur, Ford Prefect, Zaphod and Trillian escape.

Book 2 - The Restaurant at the End of the Universe

After a Vogon attack, Arthur, Ford Prefect, Zaphod and Trillian hold a séance and the ghost sends the Heart of Gold into time/space, from which it re-emerges on Frogstar World B. Along with Ford, Trillian and Zaphod, Arthur Dent time-travels (while staying in the same location) for five hundred and seventy-six thousand million years to Milliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe. Later, along with the others, he sneaks into a black ship and travels two million years back in time to orbit the planet Kakrafoon. Just before disaster strikes, Arthur teleports the group far away and he and Ford materialise in a vault in a spaceship, the "B Ark" carrying prospective colonisers from the planet Golgafrinchan. The teleportation splits the

group and only Arthur and Ford land on a planet which turns out to be the Earth two million years earlier. Arthur and Ford go their separate ways and while Ford goes to Africa, Arthur has a six month long adventure on mountains and glaciers and stays in a cave, whereafter he returns to the colonisers.

Book 3 - Life, the Universe and Everything

Arthur and Ford reunite and on a Chesterfield sofa travel through a space-time anomaly forward in time to a cricket match on Earth two days before the planet's demolition. Slartibartfast's spaceship lands on the cricket pitch, robots join in the fray and Arthur, Ford and Slartibartfast depart in the spaceship, only to be attacked by a star battleship. Nothingness erupts and the party of three find themselves inside illusions in a jumble of events until they arrive on the planet Krikkit. A spaceship crashes on Krikkit and Arthur, Ford and Slartibartfast take a short round trip in a spaceship, Krikkit One. After landing, they enter teleport cubicles and are temporarily separated in the teleportation process. Arthur arrives in a Cathedral of Hate and is reunited with Slartibartfast and Ford in the flying party building. They return to Slartibartfast's ship, are joined by Trillian, and land on an asteroid circling Krikkit from where they witness the Krikkit war and see a Krikkit warship open to let out Zaphod. Zaphod separates from the party and Arthur, Ford, Slartibartfast and Trillian go down to Krikkit. They are captured by Krikkiters and taken to a council chamber in the Robot War Zones, from where they depart in the Heart of Gold to the Dust Nothing. Zaphod, in the Heart of Gold, flies to the Robot War Zones above the surface of the planet Krikkit. An argument ensues between Slartibartfast and the other members of the group over the return of the Ashes to Lord's Cricket Ground and he departs in his own ship. Arthur, Ford and Trillian travel a couple of days back in time/space to Earth, the Heart of Gold is left in parking orbit around the planet and

Arthur and Ford go down to Earth. After an encounter with the robots they depart again in Heart of Gold. They are joined by Marvin the robot and, through a space warp, go to the Argabuthon Chamber of Law. From there, Arthur is dropped off on a now idyllic Krikkit and Ford, Trillian and Zaphod go elsewhere.

Book 4 - So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish

Arthur is on Earth, either six or seven months, or eight years after demolition Thursday. He travels over the surface of the planet by means of his recently discovered ability to fly, receives a fishbowl and meets up again with his soulmate Fenchurch, also known as Fenny. Arthur romances her and hears of the alleged hallucinations and the dolphins disappearing. He is handed back the copy of the Guide which he had dropped and discovers that Fenny can fly. They are joined by Ford in the flying saucer, and hitch a ride to outer space where Marvin meets up with them. Ford departs to an unknown destination and Arthur, Fenny and Marvin go to the planet Preliumtarn to read God's Final Message.

The following graphic summary is one possible depiction of this absurd journey, and enables discernment of the overall shape and form of the whole as well as its composite parts:

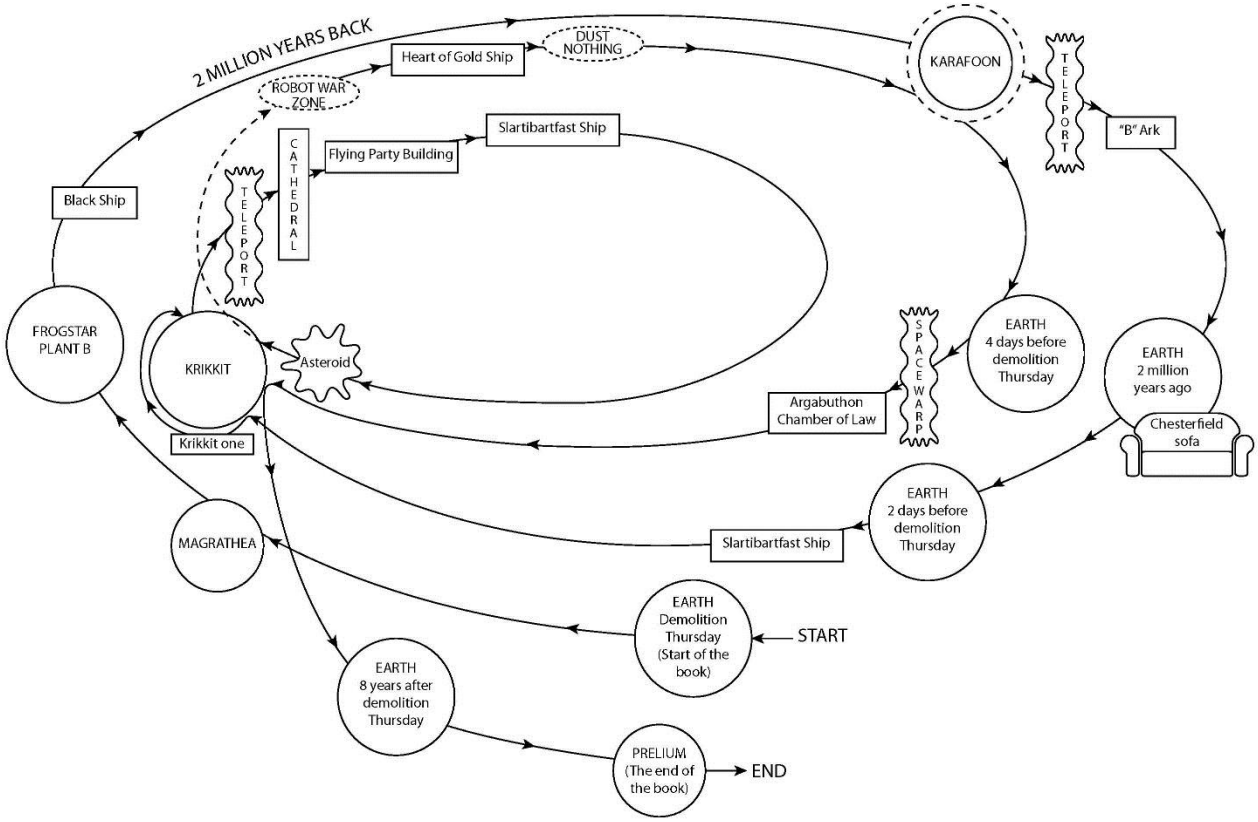

Figure 2.2: The journey of Arthur Dent

The narratological graph arranges the parts of Arthur Dent's journey in a spiral shape, reflecting the endlessly cyclical travels described in the narrative. This pattern differs markedly from the daisy-like pattern distilled from *Gulliver's Travels* (see figure 2.1), a distinction which confirms the difference between the two novels in terms of structure and adherence to markers of time and place.

As can be seen in figure 2.2, Arthur Dent (like Gulliver) repeatedly returns home, but in his case the Earth is never the same home previously departed from – each Earth to which he returns is situated in a different time. Given that the literary element 'setting' in a work of narrative includes both location and time, this imaginative

merging of place/time is an example of Douglas Adams's experimental narrative style. Time is inverted and distorted to the extent that Arthur Dent travels backwards and forwards in time. A traditional function of time in a narrative (as seen in *Gulliver's Travels*) is to help orientate the reader and provide a linear backdrop to the story. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, however, time is not pinned down to anchor developments for the reader, but it is rather unsettlingly disintegrated.

Unlike *Gulliver's Travels*, the scene transitions between different journeys (and between chapters and books) do not assist the reader, and take the form of abrupt conclusions and implausible, unsatisfactory introductions to the next unforeseen development. This may partly be explained by Adams having written the text as instalments for radio serialisation without a preconceived overall plot and plan at the outset, simply "making it up" as he went along. It would, however, be negligent to ascribe this structural element to only such a practical consideration, and to disregard Adams's continuous intention to catch the reader off guard, and to destabilise and to satirise reader expectations.

By referring to the summaries of the journeys, the next section considers the different modes of travel and vehicles employed, as well as different locations visited during the prolonged and multi-faceted journeys in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

2.4 MODES OF TRAVEL

Travel and transportation are typically divided into different modes depending on the surface or medium of travel, for example land or water, and in the twentieth century, air or space. Science writer Michael Hanlon (2005: 154) has remarked on the terminology that marks the transition between sea travel and space travel: "When the

existence of galaxies beyond our Milky Way was first shown in 1920, the old term ‘island universes’ was initially used to describe these smaller units”. This indicates that scientists and authors in the early 1900s related the mysteries of the universe to that which was known and familiar, perhaps in an attempt to make it understandable. This transition terminology resonates with the current reading of the two primary texts.

As discussed earlier, each mode of travel is typically dependent on tailor-made infrastructure, operations and vehicles. But unlike the orderly, comfortable and safe system supposedly created and regulated by transportation authorities, the travellers in *Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* move with great discomfort and danger from one mode to another.

Gulliver primarily makes use of water transportation, travelling on water, complemented by land transport at his various destinations (to some degree his movement can therefore be termed intermodal). Arthur Dent primarily makes use of space transportation and moves in and through, inter alia, hyperspace and worm-holes.

The space in which Gulliver travels is hostile in the sense that the natural elements thwart his planned journeys: the wind drives the ships on the rocks, and he is continuously at the mercy of the waves and the tide (Swift 2008: 16, 141). This representation of the sea is in accord with the travel literature of Swift’s era as pointed out earlier, but overall the space in which Gulliver moves around is augmented by fictitious imaginative elements.

While Gulliver’s journeys in his blended world purport to be measureable by familiar indicators of time and distance, Arthur Dent’s travels are characterised by the

absurd. For example, after Ford and Arthur are thrown out of the Vogon ship they encounter an incongruous outer space tableau consisting of paper hats and party balloons, a team of analysts, and thousands of fried eggs, blithely explained by Adams (2002: 72) as being caused *by the absence of reason*. Given that reason is the power of the mind to think and understand, it is to be expected that the scene would be beyond understanding, random and bizarre.

Gulliver's Travels may be fabulous and fictitious in many respects, but the vehicles used by the protagonist are not and include common means of transport, such as sailing ships and canoes. Their design and operation are described in scientific detail, particularly in Gulliver's meticulous report of the crew's actions while attempting to ward off the storm at the beginning of Part II (Swift 2008: 75, 76, 154). Components such as "sprit sail", "fore sail", "helm", "wipstaff" and "lanniard" (Swift 2008: 76) were indeed present in sailing vessels of the time, as were the materials used by Gulliver to construct floating vessels at various times. Despite the generally fantastical nature of the vehicles in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, there are also intermittent references to elements of traditional ocean-faring vessels, such as "cargo holds", "sleeping quarters", "control bridge" and "galley cabins" (Adams 2002: 47, 650). Traditional navy and sailing ship jargon feature in the novel as is evident in the Vogon captain's remarks to crew and passengers that they will be "staying in dock" at Barnard's Star, and that "planet leave" is cancelled (Adams 2002: 54).

In contrast to *Gulliver's Travels*, the vehicles that feature in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are extraordinary and include a flying saucer, a pavement, and various spaceships, humorously described as "huge yellow somethings" (Adams 2002: 25) and "thoroughly ridiculous" (Adams 2002: 40), emitting "the music of a million hideous malfunctions" (Adams 2002: 751).

Early on in the novel, Adams has spaceships make a grand entrance into the narrative. With masterful employment of understatement, he takes the sting out of a serious statement by giving it a humorous twist: the sight of the immense Vogon ships arriving must have inspired a great deal of fear in those watching, yet the narrator chooses to say that “the ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don’t” (Adams 2002: 32). This statement allows the reader to imagine what shape the ships may have been, but also impresses upon the reader that the Vogons must be very technologically advanced if they are able to make huge structures hang in the air.

As is the case with Swift’s flying island and Adams’s flying building (see section 2.5), traditional principles of transportation and laws of nature are abandoned. Humour is achieved through the mad-cap juxtapositioning of theories and technologies that were cutting-edge at the time of writing, and science fiction and transport industry concepts. For example, propulsion is achieved in Zaphod Beeblebrox’s speedboat by means of a cushion of ionised atoms (Adams 2002: 38) and in The Heart of Gold, by an Infinite Improbability Drive (Adams 2002: 77, 78).

2.5 LOCATIONS

> The traveller juggles with familiar and unfamiliar environments, crossing over from the known to the unknown, the familiar to the bizarre, and probing the differences between them (Whitfield 2011: 119).

One function of the journey as authorial device is that different settings serve to evoke, as well as reflect, both the characters’ and reader’s emotions. The main function of the journey as literary device in the two primary texts is, however, that it enables both Swift and Adams to comment on and satirise humankind through Gulliver’s and Arthur Dent’s viewing England/Earth from different places and from

different times. Multiple locations prompt a constantly changing point of view, resulting in “a tale which looks at human life from a distanced and estranged point of view, one not available to realistic fiction” (Parrinder 1980: 6).

This process of altering perception begins early on in *Gulliver’s Tales*, and the reasons for this changed and disillusioned perception of European society will be examined in the next chapter. For example, after Gulliver’s exposure to the gigantic environment of Brobdingnag, he considers his home town as Lilliputian (Swift 2008: 137). His view of England and home on his final return is permanently altered, in that he is terribly aware of the shortcomings of European society and wishes that the “wise and virtuous” Houyhnhnms would come and civilize Europe (Swift 2008: 274, 276).

The graphic representations in figure 2.1 and 2.2 show that both Swift and Adams craftily use both moveable and immoveable sites such as flying islands and flying saucers, and different points in time such as classical times and prehistoric times, as narrative settings.

As asserted in Chapter 1, time travel is one of the characteristic themes of science fiction. Travelling to a different time, like travelling to a different location, provides a distancing effect and enables a view on a subject that may be critical, enlightening or insightful.

Douglas Adams’s text fully exploits the possibilities that time travel makes available to his protagonist, and Ford and Arthur are repeatedly transported by means of time travel (see summary in section 2.3.2), finding that “the nothingth of a second for which the hole existed reverberated backwards and forwards through time in a most improbable fashion” (Adams 2002: 72). Adams indirectly acknowledges the

paradoxes associated with time travel, but does not attempt to address these and moves Ford and Arthur into and out of trouble, thereby maintain the frenetic pace of the novel. But Adams also skilfully uses this device to offer fresh perspectives on humankind, most notably in Ford and Arthur's travel to prehistoric Earth (a topic explored more fully in the next chapter).

Similarly, it is asserted by Allan Bloom (Greenberg 1970: 303) that Gulliver's voyage to Brobdingnag (Part III) and to the Houyhnhnms (Part IV) may be viewed as travels back in time. "Brobdingnag is a sort of cross between Sparta and republican Rome," and the land of the Houyhnhnms is "a utopia based on Plato's republic" (Bloom in Greenberg 1970: 303, 308). By sending Gulliver back in time, Swift is able to critically contrast the Enlightenment with ancient utopian politics, using the utopian as "a standard to measure [English] inadequacies against", as suggested by Damrosch (2013: 373).

Boundaries between location and actor become blurred and sites such as Laputa, the Heart of Gold, Magrathea and Earth become characters in their own right, interacting with the protagonist to reinforce his state of dislocation and sense of unwelcomeness.

The locations visited by Arthur, in particular, reflect a variety of environments and landscapes so absurd that they even include "nothingness" (Adams 2002: 448–452). Most of the locations in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are described in unappealing and imprecise, vague terms. Ford Prefect's home planet is "a small planet somewhere in the vicinity of Betelgeuse"; Zaphod Beeblebrox's Damogran is hot, remote, topographically awkward and almost totally unheard of; and Earth is simply described in the Guide as "mostly harmless" (Adams 2002: 24, 34, 35, 58).

Magrathea is a typical science fiction landscape with an “icy wind” and “barren dust”, a “blighted land covered with a layer of dust” (Adams 2002: 121).

The locations in *Gulliver’s Travels* and *The Hitchhiker’s Guide* are explored further below, with consideration given to resemblances and differences between the authors’ and readers’ known worlds on the one hand, and the fictitious worlds on the other, and how the authors therefore comment on the known by invoking unknown times and places.

2.5.1 Resonances of each protagonist’s place of origin

Both novels contain descriptions of fictitious environments that bear some resemblance to the travellers’ known worlds. In *Gulliver’s Travels* the home environment that Gulliver leaves behind is an ordered world that contains institutions of learning and businesses and well-constructed dwellings, all familiar to the contemporary reader: “My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire … [H]e sent me to Emanuel-College in Cambridge …” (Swift 2008: 15). Following his studies, Gulliver “took part of a small house in the Old Jury … ” (Swift 2008: 15).

The different locations that Gulliver visits resemble (with some differences in scale) the landscapes and cityscapes of the reader’s familiar England. Lilliput and Brobdingnag boast orderly and developed towns and landscapes, with the difference being only Lilliput’s diminutive and Brobdingnag’s gigantic proportions. Balnibarbi is equally said to contain towns, villages and a metropolis, with rocky and desolate outskirts (Swift 2008: 143). Lagado’s homes seem similar to familiar architecture in England, albeit perceived as “ill built” by Gulliver (Swift 2008: 150). Even the island Laputa’s architecture resonates with the descriptions of English buildings, and, like Earth, Laputa is made up of layers of “several minerals in their usual order” with

familiar precipitation cycles (Swift 2008: 154). The land of the Houyhnhnms is equally familiar to the reader, and boasts lush vegetation, agricultural endeavours and housing structures.

The effect of this recurring similarity between the reader's known world and the fictional world is that trust and familiarity are established. This is in keeping with the stylistic norm of proto science fiction (of which *Gulliver's Travels* forms part) of "authentic, eye-witness description … to achieve authenticity" (Parrinder 1980: 107). This aspect of *Gulliver's Travels* is explored more fully in section 4.5 where the role of the narrator is considered.

Unlike Gulliver's England, the home environment that Arthur leaves behind in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* offers nothing to return to. The well-ordered society that Arthur loves, as well as his house, has been doomed to destruction. The chaos and randomness that surround the destruction of Arthur's home planet continue into his haphazard journey, but there are recurring references to the home environment.

One such example is prehistoric Earth, which is sketched in sharp contrast to the antecedent fantastical landscapes, both in terms of visual familiarity, and tone. Here, in the idyllic landscape and the florid manner of description, Adams references archetypal romantic nature narratives. Phrases such as "stars … dazzling in their brilliance and clarity", "the night was cool and balmy", "wonderful stillness", "magical calm" "soft fragrances", "quiet chatter", and a landscape redolent of the Garden of Eden all stand in stark contrast with the hostile pandemonium encountered by Arthur elsewhere in the Galaxy. Indeed, during Arthur and Ford's interaction with people on this prehistoric Earth there is direct reference to the Garden of Eden (Adams 2002: 362). (This encounter will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3, "Alienation and estrangement".) In a continuation of the clichéd writing which marks this section,

Arthur's and Ford's building of rafts, their travelling cross-country on foot, scaling snow-covered mountains, and scrambling over rocks and glaciers (Adams 2002: 359–366) are equally reminiscent of the atmospheric landscapes and mountain scenery of Gothic novelists, as well as the sub-genre known as mountaineering literature.

A second reference to Arthur's home environment is the extensive sub-plot about the planet-making factory on Margarethea where realistic facsimiles of his planet of origin are described in a skilful satirical allusion to the creation myth. This recurring element is explored in detail in Chapter 3 as part of a consideration of the author's satirical take on the meaninglessness of human existence.

2.5.2 Fantastic locations

While some locations bear resemblances to the protagonists' (and for that matter, the authors') home environments, most are subject to unique rules and physical laws that regulate the behaviour of objects, even that of land masses.

Tales of winged flight, flying chariots and aerial adventures are well documented in literature around the world, according to Cohen (1966: 95):

> [Humans] were drawn to the idea of conquest of the air, in a double sense, transcendentally and technically…long before [they] had mastered the science and technology of aeronautics.

This ties in with the observation made in Chapter 1 that travel literature and proto science fiction texts are traditionally enriched with a supernatural element through the inclusion of magical elevation and transportation (Whitfield 2011: 123). *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* continue in this tradition with the inclusion of flying as a narrative element.

In *Gulliver's Travels* Swift incorporates the concept of flying in descriptions of the floating island of Laputa, operated by astronomers and ruled by geometric calculations (Swift 2008: 155). As with all other elements in the landscapes where Gulliver travels, this marvellous object serves more than one function in the narrative.

The most obvious function of the flying island in the narrative is to entertain and to astonish – it is a spectacular, awe-inspiring notion. For all its deeper nuances, *Gulliver's Travels* strives firstly to amaze and entertain. But nothing in *Gulliver's Travels* is to be taken at face value and Lagado, too, serves a satirical function. The inclusion of the floating island in the narrative is inter alia intended to show Swift's sceptical attitude towards the elevation of the "new science" in England. The fact that the island does fly, and that the technology works, may be seen as a grudging concession by the author to the relative merits of the "new science" (this argument is elaborated on in Chapter 3).

Swift, and indeed his readers, would also have been sensitised to the nature of celestial bodies as a consequence of inventions such as Galileo's telescope in the seventeenth century which according to Clarke (1993: xxxi) inspired works with space travel as theme, for example, Johannes Kepler's *Somnium (Dream)* in 1634 and Bishop Godwin's *Man in the Moone* in 1638. It may be assumed that Swift was familiar with such works, and it is this aspect of astronomy which he alludes to in the purported laws of operation of the island (Swift 2008: 157).

The discardment and nonsensification of natural laws are equally notable in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* The Heart of Gold is navigated by means of improbability factors and ridiculous pseudo-mathematical equations, such as "two-to-the-power-of-Infinity-minus-one to one against" that allow the spaceship to cut

across every imaginable point in every imaginable universe synchronously (Adams 2002: 84, 91).

The floating island of *Gulliver's Travels* may have served as inspiration for a similar setting in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. During the course of their adventures, Arthur, Ford and Slartibartfast arrive in an absurd manner in a lurching, swaying building, complete with foundations, that is "flying through the clouds" (Adams 2002: 524). Like the flying island in *Gulliver's Travels*, the extrinsic function of the building in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is to amuse and amaze. Adams does, however, ascribe a deeper meaning to this narrative element and, in the relaying of activities and conversations that take place within its walls, issues a scathing commentary on the human need to escape from the consequences of our own actions (Adams 2002: 532):

> People had been dropping in on the party now for some years, fashionable gatecrashers from other worlds, and for some time it had occurred to the partygoers as they had looked out at their own world beneath them, with its wrecked cities, its ravaged avocado farms and blighted vineyards, its vast tracts of new desert, its seas full of biscuit crumbs and worse, that their world was in some tiny and almost imperceptible ways not quite as much fun as it had been.

The danger and dislocation inherent in the above-mentioned different locations raises the question of why the protagonists would visit such places. It is argued that foreign places make individuals see the known with new eyes, and the next section therefore considers the characters' motivations for going to such places in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

2.6 RELOCATIONS: CHARACTERS' MOTIVATIONS FOR DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

If the locations or destinations are so alien and fraught with danger, it may justifiably be asked why the protagonists go there. Reflecting the spirit of the explorers and travellers of the Enlightenment, Gulliver's two main reasons for repeatedly leaving the familiar environment of England are money and adventure. Even though Gulliver is shipwrecked repeatedly, and thus does not *choose* to go to Lilliput, Laputa, and so on, he is apparently not sufficiently put off by the negative encounters to settle down and stay in England. Rather, he leaves England again and again, reportedly because he experiences financial pressures and receives advantageous offers (Swift 2008: 15, 16, 207), and furthermore explains that he has an insatiable desire to see exotic places, because he is "condemned by nature and fortune to an active and restless life", because of "folly and wilfulness", and because of a "thirst of seeing the world" (Swift 2008: 71, 75, 78, 141). Swift casts Gulliver in the role of a typical traveller of the era that readers could recognise and relate to, and simultaneously in that of a representative of humanity.

From as early as the first page of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* Arthur Dent, by contrast, comes across as a person who would have no inclination to travel. He has moved "out of London because it made him nervous and irritable" (Adams 2002: 7). He is unsure of himself, worried-looking and holds a nondescript job in local radio until he leaves Earth entirely against his will. He is plucked from the doomed planet at the last instant into an unending series of intermodal, interstellar trips with hardly ever an envisaged destination, arriving in different times or different places only by accident. Douglas Adams portrays Arthur Dent as an anti-traveller, the archetypal accidental tourist, and thereby, too, a representative of humankind. Unlike Gulliver,

and in keeping with the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth century (as explored in more detail in Chapter 3), Adams has Arthur depart from home with no set destination. His departure is an involuntary escape from doom, a phenomenon which soon sets the pattern for the entire journey.

In what may be seen as illustrative of the fraught human journey through life, Gulliver never arrives at any of his planned, proposed destinations, and his arrivals at unforeseen exotic destinations are triggered by disastrous events. He arrives in Lilliput, Brobdingnag, and Balnibarbi, for example, due to storms at sea and drifting off course. In the case of his arrival at Balnibarbi and in the land of the Houyhnhnms, the terror of the hostile natural elements is compounded by human malice, as his ships are attacked by pirates or subjected to mutiny, in both cases leading to Gulliver being set adrift (Swift 2008: 143, 208).

Arthur's arrivals at and departures from Magrathea and Frogstar World B respectively are brought about by "some curious perversion of physics" in the Improbability Drive (Adams 2002: 98) and by the ghost of Zaphod's grandfather sending the Heart of Gold into time/space. Kakrafoon is visited next simply because Arthur, Ford, Trillian and Zaphod have to go wherever the stolen black spaceship is going (Adams 2002: 314). The arrival of Arthur and the rest of the party on the Earth of two million years ago is equally unintentional and the result of a series of unfortunate events (Adams 2002: 345).

As is the case with Gulliver's tumultuous arrivals at each happenstance destination, his departures from some of the islands are marked by upheaval: he departs from Lilliput and Blefescu after being identified as a traitor (Swift 2008: 68), leaves Brobdingnag in a wooden box dropped into the ocean by an eagle (Swift 2008: 129), and leaves the land of the Houyhnhnms because his relationship with his

Houyhnhnm master is deemed unacceptable by the community. As exceptions to the rule, his departures from Balnibarbi and Luggnagg are of his own volition due to his waning interest in local affairs and a sense of duty to his family in England (Swift 2008: 179).

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* it is noted, for example, that Arthur leaves prehistoric Earth accidentally – Ford Prefect harnesses a Chesterfield sofa, causing them to "emerge unexpectedly" back on Earth two days before Demolition Day. Krikkit, too, is visited randomly on Slartibartfart's ship, a journey which leaves Arthur astonished and bewildered (Adams 2002: 451).

A number of Arthur's journeys do, however, have an element of purposefulness (even though the purposes are absurd): his materialisation at Milliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe, is prompted by his feeling "a little peckish" (Adams 2002: 184); he arrives on Earth purposefully to return the Ashes to Lord's Cricket Ground (Adams 2002: 573, 575); and when he is later set down on the planet Krikkit it is at his request and in line with his plan to find somewhere to settle down (Adams 2002: 592). Interestingly, in the last few chapters of the final book, Arthur does become a slightly more deliberate Galactic hitchhiker and leaves Earth in a spaceship bound for Preliumtarn (Adams 2002: 740, 754) to find and read God's Final Message to His Creation. It may be argued that there is a degree of development of Arthur's character over the course of the series, from hapless, unwilling traveller to an adventurer who initiates space travel. This development in the protagonist's character towards the end of the last book is, however, too slight to alter the overarching impression that his departures and arrivals (like Gulliver's) are triggered by calamity. Swift and Adams equally succeed in depicting their

protagonists as vulnerable individuals at the mercy of forces beyond their control, thereby hinting at the unenviable fate of humankind as a whole.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter elements of the narratives that relate to the action of travelling in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* have been abstracted from the texts. Swift's text appears to include such references to add to the apparent plausibility of *Gulliver's Travels* as a genuine travel logbook, while in the case of the *Guide*, one of the reasons for their inclusion is to entertain and poke fun at the bureaucracy associated with industries regulated by humankind, such as the development of transport infrastructure.

A summary of each novel has facilitated an analysis of the narrative structure as well as the graphic shape and form of the journeys. *Gulliver's Travels* has been found to be an apparently meticulous record of journeys that disintegrate due to calamitous external events. Arrivals as well as departures are found to have been marked by either a hostile environment or hostile creatures. The same phenomenon is noted in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, differing from *Gulliver's Travels* in terms of initial orderliness, but corresponding with Swift's text as far as disagreeable locations and menacing inhabitants are concerned.

Both protagonists are shown to be vulnerable travellers differing only in that Gulliver travels of his own volition and Arthur Dent completely against his will. Despite the difference between Gulliver's and Arthur Dent's motivations for traveling, however, in the hands of both Swift and Adams the protagonists fulfil the same role: each allows the author to comment on diverse aspects of human existence, such as foolhardiness, randomness and vulnerability.

Swift and Adams are found to reflect different degrees of adherence to actual prevailing science and technology in the modes of travel and vehicles placed at the disposal of the protagonists. Both authors exploit the sea travel and space travel themes respectively to their full potential, to highlight inherent discomforts and danger not only in the narrated travels, but also in the human journey through life to which it alludes. In descriptions of extraordinary modes of transport and vehicles the texts remain true to their professed objective to entertain and enthral, yet simultaneously challenge and comment on prevailing knowledge and scientific pursuits.

The authors masterfully exploit the journey theme to facilitate comment on the human journey through life. The extent to which the protagonists are displaced, disadvantaged and challenged by these ever-shifting locations is examined in Chapter 3, “Alienation and estrangement”.

CHAPTER 3

ALIENATION AND ESTRANGEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

During the course of their travels both Gulliver and Arthur Dent are depicted as foreign, as newcomers at their various points of arrival. In both appearance and mind-set they stand apart from the local inhabitants and are confronted by life forms and landscapes that are different from and hostile towards them.

Swift and Adams cast their travellers in this role to enable a depiction of the alienation of humankind, and to challenge the human sense of place and purpose. Both authors expand this notion in order to also challenge the human attempt at finding meaning in religious beliefs and practices. The texts further set out to satirise commonly held anthropocentric views with regard to speciation (i.e. the formation of new and distinct species as a result of being reproductively isolated), and natural hierarchy. The authors highlight humankind's peculiarities, as represented in the two protagonists' rituals and observances and, particularly, humankind's purported achievements in the sphere of science and technology.

The prevailing scientific climate has an unavoidable influence on the output of any author of speculative fiction. Contemporary science and technology may be woven through the narrative as a story element to make the fictional environment familiar to readers, or to act as a catalyst for characters' actions. Futuristic, fantastical and meticulously researched extrapolations from prevailing science and technology are typically presented by authors of proto science fiction and science fiction and these representations of science and technology understandably change over time, as observed by Hayes (1999: 392):

> Brass gears [in *Gulliver's Travels*] have given way to silicon chips [in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*]. And as the computer has conquered technology, it has also taken the place of clockwork in metaphor and myth.

A consideration of the worldviews and scientific climate of the respective eras of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will facilitate understanding of how humankind's relationship with science and technology is presented by Swift and Adams.

3.2 WORLD VIEW AND SCIENTIFIC CLIMATE

3.2.1 World view and scientific climate in Swift's era

As asserted in Chapter 1, the Age of Enlightenment was characterised by scientific vigour and reason. The sciences became observable and accessible to ordinary people through inter alia the publication and distribution of a profusion of manuals on physics and science (Wood 2002: 6). Authors challenged conventional views of creation and the interplay between reason and nature. New scientists wanted to replace the Renaissance humanists' probabilism with certainty in philosophy and science. The aspiration to certainty in philosophy and science included an emphasis on the human senses as applied in scientific method and an endeavour to move further than "the evidence of the senses" (Patey 1991: 816).

These engineering efforts culminated in inventions such as the microscope and the telescope, all attempts to improve human senses (Girten 2013: 497). Related to the fascination with scale was the phenomenon of miniaturisation of familiar items. In eighteenth-century material culture, 'downsizing' was very popular and small versions of familiar items were produced by the thousands (Rabb 2013: 281).

In addition, the Enlightenment science and technology landscape included inventions indicating a fascination with humanness and mortality, extending even to anatomy as reflected in the fascinating category of automata (Cohen 1966: 50). Despite the new rational *zeitgeist*, people were still partial to magic tricks and considered automata not only as grand engineering triumphs, but as metaphysical toys. The phenomenon of automata, however, posed a philosophical dilemma, in that clockwork is inevitably the inverse of the human condition, which is subject to death. Many of the rational scientists who made these toys held aspirations that exceeded the bounds of reason and experimented with artificial limbs, skin, and blood flow, to imitate life and gesture towards immortality (Wood 2002: xvi, xvii, 6).

This interest in the tangible human form and anatomy included speciation (i.e. the formation of new species due to being reproductively isolated), of which Lamb remarks (2004: 32):

> It seemed to be a fundamental point of difference between the giants of the Enlightenment whether humans and the human character could be changed by circumstances of climate, geography, transplantation, or solitude, and whether speciation was a perpetual process or the basic outlines of humans and all other species were settled and immutable.

For the most part, the borderlines between humans and animals were precisely described and philosophers attempted to delineate the intrinsic nature of humankind. Thinkers of the Enlightenment clung unerringly to the clear-cut Cartesian division between animals and humans with Descartes holding the mechanistic view that animals are “natural automata” (Kuzniar 2003: 427), with no soul and no vulnerability to pain; unable to think, speak, understand or feel. This was despite arguments by Leibniz, Hume, Locke and others that animals do have the capacity for dedication, reason and experiencing joy, and that they have souls. It is argued by Kuzniar (2003:

427) that “human reason” was seen as the key difference between the species and one recurring phrase was that humans were *animal rationale* (Kuzniar 2003: 429):

> [M]ost writers, however diverse, still subscribed to the notion of the Great Chain of Being … [they] all believed in the law of continuity and order in the universe.

It is these eighteenth century notions and the accompanying anthropocentrism that Swift satirises and inverts in Part IV in particular, as will be discussed in section 3.3.1 below.

3.2.2 World view and scientific climate in Adams’s era

The twentieth century, on the other hand was characterised by alarmingly rapid changes in the social and technological spheres. These changes were naturally reflected in the science fiction of the era: it is a commonly held critical view that science fiction is an essential and unavoidable assertion of the prevailing human condition, with the purpose of assisting readers to adjust to so-called future shock, to changes in the social and technological environment (Toffler in Parrinder 1979: 31).

From the 1940s onwards, awareness of the size and antiquity of the universe increased. This led to a fascination with the possibility of intelligent extra-terrestrial life forms, eliciting the phenomenon of purported UFO sightings and landings, such as those in Roswell and Rendlesham in the 1970s (Hanlon 2005: 16). Prevalent, too, were alien abduction stories whereby alarming numbers of people claimed to have been taken to extra-terrestrial spacecraft and subjected to experiments (Hanlon 2005: 20). Space travel developed rapidly and unmanned space craft were soon followed by manned missions, culminating in the moon landings. However, in the 1970s early space probes disappointingly found Mars to be an apparently lifeless sphere (Hanlon 2005: 28), which led scientists to debunk the dream of extra-

terrestrial life forms. (It is worth noting, however, that while serious consideration of alien life was frowned upon, cosmologist Carl Sagan did at the time suggest that Jupiter might be home to massive carnivorous organisms [Hanlon 2005: 27].)

Cosmology and space travel as it had developed thus made the universe seem inexplicable, and more random, and added to the phenomenon of twentieth-century alienation. Indeed, physicist Steven Weinberg stated (in Parrinder 1979: 86), that "the more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless". This view resonates with one of the main tenets of the modern scientific world view, namely the insignificance of humans in the detached space-time universe of cosmology. Science fiction reflects this, and attempts to estrange the reader from his or her known world (albeit in most instances providing partial relief through techniques such as domestication whereby the strange, unknown universe is made to seem familiar [Parrinder 1979: 58, 81]).

Perhaps in an effort to counter this sense of a pointless, insignificant existence, the age-old question of the 'meaning of life' received renewed attention in the twentieth century. The phrase suggests human identity and human purpose, but is vulnerable to ridicule and satire: the use of the definite article '*the*', rather than the indefinite '*a*', denies possible multiplicity of meaning, and equally denies the randomness and chaotic nature of a universe of which previously accepted concepts such as space, time and nature are now viewed as anthropomorphic and subject to revision (Mousley 2009: 136; Parrinder 1979: 85).

In addition to human existence being viewed as essentially meaningless, humankind's relative position has also been questioned. Inverting the Enlightenment notion of a Great Chain of Being with humankind at the pinnacle, some twentieth-century futurological writings foresee humankind as heading for a future as an

intelligently managed species in a human zoo, as the subjects of behavioural research executed by other species: In *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, for instance, JD Bernal (in Parrinder 1979: 83) predicts a "dimorphism of humanity" where remaining humans on Earth "might end up as a human zoo … a zoo so intelligently managed that they are there merely for the purposes of observation and experiment". This motif in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is explored in section 3.3.2 below.

Building on the previously mentioned long history of automata and mechanical toys, scientific and technological developments of the twentieth century included the field of artificial intelligence (AI), where robots were produced with a form of intelligence, leaving emotions as the last frontier of humanity that needed to be mastered. In 2000, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology partially achieved this when engineers enabled a robot to verbalise and signal feelings, but still could not equip it with the ability to experience emotions (Wood 2002: xxii). Wood (2002: xvii) pointedly notes that, "rather than being copies of people, androids are more like *memento mori*, reminders that, unlike us, they are forever unliving, and yet never dead. They throw the human condition into horrible relief". It is this aspect of robots and androids that Adams draws on to highlight humanity's mortality and susceptibility to emotional fluctuations, markedly in the character of Marvin.

While the above-mentioned scientific climates of the Enlightenment and the twentieth century differ in terms of specifics, they show remarkable similarities in general: the invention of objects that would improve human interaction with the elements of time and space; a preoccupation with humanity's humanness and attempts to replicate and immortalise life; as well as endeavours to find order and meaning in human existence. This necessarily brief and simplistic background to *Gulliver's Travels* and

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy respectively is nevertheless enough to enable a consideration of how key aspects of science and technology are represented in the two novels.

3.3 SPECIATION AND HIERARCHY

The human fascination with speciation, and the notion of a Great Chain of Being (see section 3.2.1), in which humankind occupies a superior position, are satirised and inverted in both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Book IV, the roles of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms are employed to illustrate the moral shortcomings and bestial aspects of humankind, and to show Gulliver's alienation from his species. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Adams satirises both the hierarchy of living beings and the development of humans, in particular in Arthur's descent down the chain of evolution, when he is regressed in time to prehistoric Earth to live in a cave, wearing animal furs, eating fruit, berries and small animals and adorning his hair with the left-over bones (Adams 2002: 402).

3.3.1 Speciation and hierarchy in *Gulliver's Travels*

In *Gulliver's Travels*, one of the earliest indications of this theme is the exchange between Gulliver and illustrious spirits on the island of Glubbdubdrib (Swift 2008: 184–188). Here Gulliver ironically states his disinclination to expose the flaws in royal blood lines and mentions a "profound veneration which [he is] naturally apt to pay to persons of high rank" (Swift 2008: 187), yet sarcastically identifies the forebears of kings, counts and earls as knaves, fools and pick-pockets, thereby brutally satirising eighteenth-century pride in lineages (Swift 2008: 185). He melancholically observes "how much the race of human kind was degenerate among

us" (Swift 2008: 188), referring both to humankind's moral degeneration, and to the physical degeneration, which he observes regarding body size, muscle tone and complexion.

These observations are precursors to Gulliver's final bleak view of humanity as represented by the Yahoos. The contrast between the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms gives him insight into humankind's flaws, and alienates him from and makes him turn against his own kind. Indeed, as a satiric representation of debased humanity, the Yahoos are described as depraved, morally corrupt, and wicked, and a vile, revolting race. These descriptions of the Yahoos highlight Swift's perceived debasement of humankind. As stated by Michie (2006: 68):

> Gulliver and his fellow human readers see the Yahoos as reason debased, a step down from our current species. But the Houyhnhnms see Gulliver as barbarity tamed, a step up from a subservient species. From both the Yahoo and the Houyhnhnm perspectives, Gulliver is a hybrid, stuck between two different species representing two different physical and mental states. From our human perspective, Gulliver is not a hybrid at all, but a representative human being stranded in a land of grotesque and comic caricatures.

The Yahoos represent the physical baseness of humans and the depths of humanity's potential fall if the ideal state of the Houyhnhnms is not achieved, a notion explored more recently by H.G. Wells, in *The Time Machine*'s theme of the "degeneration of human civilisation as represented by the Eloi and the Morlocks" (Parrinder 1979: 94). This is also clearly seen in Gulliver's own observations of the Yahoos, which confirm those of his Houyhnhnm master: if they are thrown food, they will fight among themselves to get it all, they engage in fierce, bloody battles that turn into a veritable civil war, they become intoxicated and inebriated, they scratch and bite, smell bad (Swift 2008: 242–248), and are "unteachable … cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful" (Swift 2008: 248). These speculations and observations

suggest that the Yahoos are degraded versions of humans, and indeed “debase human understanding below the sagacity of a common hound” (Swift 2008: 244).

Gulliver becomes progressively alienated from humanity and is viewed as one that “could not be produced according to the regular laws of Nature” (Swift 2008: 93), implying that he is, from the Brobdingnag point of view, a monstrosity. Earlier in Brobdingnag, he has been viewed as an alien and indeed carried around to be shown off. This reference is a satirical allusion to the contemporary notion of “physico-theology” (Patey 1991: 827), a belief which suggests benevolent design in the physical appearance and functioning of humans. Alluding to humankind’s relative unimportance, both in terms of the hierarchy of living beings, and size, Swift describes Gulliver in Brobdingnag as akin to a diminutive insect (Swift 2008: 96).

Gulliver is therefore alienated from his race, and equally alienated from his country; he finally renounces his role as Englishman and human. In his eloquent anti-imperial speech near the end of the novel he commits the ultimate revolt in that he renounces his duties “as a subject of England” (Swift 2008: 274). Gulliver is so impressed by the Houyhnhnms that he makes “a firm resolution never to return to humankind” (Swift 2008: 240), rapidly judging his own kind and acting like a traitor to his own race. Gulliver refuses to acknowledge that he is a human being with feelings and mental faculties. He furthermore does not want to accept his status as fallen creature in a fallen world. Swift demonstrates that Gulliver is, as a consequence, led to ridiculous and immoral extremes, “driven to excesses of eccentric misanthropy” (Swift 2008: xxi), preferring to be in the stable where horses are instead of with his human family.

3.3.2 Speciation and hierarchy in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

As noted earlier in this study, Arthur Dent is an accidental tourist who leaves Earth against his will and arrives in different times or different places by absurd coincidences. Arthur is alienated from humanity in every sense: he is displaced, disadvantaged and challenged by his ever-shifting location. Douglas Adams's traveller appears to be an eternal and universal alien from the moment of Earth's destruction onwards. Adams continuously employs the perspective of other characters to show up the "alien" qualities of the human, Arthur Dent. For example, Trillian and Marvin expressly introduce him to Zaphod as an alien (Adams 2002: 94), and the author, through Ford Prefect, highlights and ridicules odd (read 'alien') human habits as embodied in Arthur, such as repeatedly stating the obvious, and revealing his ignorance (Adams 2002: 46):

> One of the things Ford Prefect had always found hardest to understand about humans was their habit of continually stating and repeating the very very obvious, as in *It's a nice day*, or *You're very tall*, or *Oh dear you seem to have fallen down a thirty-foot well, are you all right?* … [H]e always remained desperately worried about the terrible number of things they didn't know about.

Added to this is Arthur's attachment to the parochial earthly ritual of drinking tea, which he demonstrates, for example, during their approach to Magrathea (Adams 2002: 105):

> Arthur blinked at the screens and felt he was missing something important. Suddenly he realized what it was.
>
> 'Is there any tea on this spaceship?' he asked.

However, throughout the course of the book, Arthur Dent is shown to shake off many of these restraining "Earthling" peculiarities, and he finally demonstrates unusual qualities, such as the ability to levitate and fly (Adams 2002: 459, 716).

Travelling naturally brings about numerous encounters with different beings, or aliens, throughout the universe. This array of aliens draws the attention to speciation as a theme in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Parrinder (1979: 74) explains that "even a radical otherness can only be recognised as such by analogy with what is already known." While alien invasion is one of the representative themes of science fiction, as will be expanded on below (Parrinder 1979: 10), Adams's aliens do have some qualities that are familiar and known. They are not all villainous – there are also noble, helpful aliens, an indication of his humorous and mocking treatment of the science fiction genre. Ironically, Arthur is aided by an alien, Ford Prefect, who acts as an interface between humans and aliens. He primes and prepares Arthur for the Universe by offering Arthur alcohol and peanuts in preparation for the departure from Earth, and enquiring whether he has an all-essential towel (Adams 2002: 1-46).

Adams's other alien beings correspond in some respects with genuine concerns and presuppositions in the early twentieth century (and their subsequent embodiment in the science fiction literature of the era), for example, alien life forms characterised by biological mutation, high intelligence and menacing hostility.

Many of Adams's aliens display biological mutation (Parrinder 1979: 10). Zaphod Beeblebrox, President of the Galaxy, is a 200 year old, two-headed being with an extra robotic arm (Adams 2002: 37), "roughly humanoid in appearance except for the extra head and third arm" (Adams 2002: 39). The Vogons are stereotypically vile "bug-eyed monsters" (Adams 2002: 47) with highly-domed noses, small foreheads and dark-green rubbery skin, with the disposition of bureaucratic civil servants and civil constructors. Throughout the text, Adams satirises the popular twentieth-century perception of aliens, and the descriptions of aliens encountered in purported

sightings, as well as in science fiction, for example, Wowbagger, the alien that lands on prehistoric Earth to insult Arthur Dent sports stereotypical grey-green skin, a flattened head, and slitty little eyes.Adams's galaxy also hosts (on Magrathea) a race of philosophers, sages and luminaries, "hyper-intelligent pan-dimensional beings" (Adams 2002: 143, 153). With reference to the earlier mention of the ongoing twentieth-century debate about the existence of intelligent life forms in outer space, Adams wryly presents the reader with creatures that are not only intelligent, but of superior intellect to humans (Adams 2002: 143), an aspect of the text that will be expanded on in the section on hierarchy below.

True to the stereotypical science fiction theme of hostile attacks by aliens, while on the planet Magrathea, Arthur Dent and the rest of the party are subjected first to an attack by a computer in the form of automated missiles with nuclear warheads while they prepare to land (Adams 2002: 110), then by a group of "ugly men … the heavy mob of Magrathea", also described as thugs, assisting with the attempted removal of Arthur's brain (Adams 2002: 174), and the Blagulan Kappa cops, "a methane-breathing life form" in suits, who shoot at Arthur, Ford, Trillian and Zaphod with Kill-O-Zap guns (Adams 2002: 180). The author's language usage in these descriptions is worth noting: terms commonly used to describe actual human character types draw on 'the known', on what the reader would be familiar with, making his aliens comic reflections of known Earth types and thereby domesticating the 'aliens'. This serves to minimise the fear these bad characters may have instilled and rather makes their behaviour strongly reminiscent of human behaviour.

This derision and deflation of human identity and purpose by Adams reflects the world view of the twentieth century as discussed in section 3.2.2 above. The author is constantly comically belittling and satirising human life. In the universe where

Arthur Dent finds himself, for example, the relative hierarchical roles of animals and humans are reversed. Adams inverts the concept of the Great Chain of Being (as discussed in section 3.2.1) by arranging humans, dolphins and mice in a narratorial hierarchy, casting mice, traditionally the subjects of laboratory experiments, in the intellectually superior role and humans as subjects. It is ironically noted that, while the mice were ostensibly the subjects of behavioural research in laboratories, they were in fact busy "conducting frighteningly elegant and subtle experiments on man" (Adams 2002: 136-137) and that "human beings were only the third most intelligent life form present on the planet Earth" (Adams 2002: 119). This is the same treatment of the topic of hierarchical roles as is seen in *Gulliver's Travels*. In Swift's hands, the Yahoos are representative of the physical baseness of humans.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy sets out to challenge the hierarchy of living things, to satirise and destabilise the anthropocentric world view, thereby unsettling the reader in the guise of comic entertainment.

Adams furthermore deliberately creates discomfort and unease and instead of domesticating his landscapes, he emphasises emptiness and remoteness. The author reflects the world view discussed in section 3.2.2 above which relates to the vastness of the universe and the minuteness and relative insignificance of human existence (Errington 2011: 61). Humanity's insignificant position in the universe comes into stark focus immediately in the first few lines of the book as Adams, through the narrator, uses the preoccupation with class and status inherent in some groups of society to communicate on this in the humorous observation (Adams 2002: 5): "Far out in the unchartered backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun." If the Earth's region of the galaxy is unfashionable and unchartered, and the Earth's sun also thought very

little of, what does that say about the human species? Descriptive terms such as "unfashionable end" and "unregarded" are aptly chosen to challenge humanity's baseless sense of superiority.

Equally, the scene where Zaphod Beeblebrox enters the Total Perspective Vortex is designed to convey a sense of how soul-destroying it is when a human being realises his or her own insignificance (Adams 2002: 247):

> As he stood and gazed bleakly at it, a sudden inhuman wail of terror emanated from it as of a man having his soul burnt from his body…For when you are put into the Vortex you are given just one monetary glimpse of the entire unimaginable infinity of creation, and somewhere in it a tiny little marker, a microscopic dot on a microscopic dot, which says 'You are here'.

Throughout the text of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* there are references to the words "meaning" and "meaningless", for example, the equation of incomprehensibility and meaninglessness by Arthur during their travels in the interior of Magrathea (Adams 2002: 139):

> The car shot forward straight into the circle of light, and suddenly Arthur had a fairly clear idea of what infinity looked like. It wasn't infinity, in fact. Infinity itself looks flat and uninteresting. Looking up into the night sky is looking into infinity – distance is incomprehensible and therefore meaningless.

Added to this is the mention of a number of "meaningless coincidences", such as the names of the islands Easter Island and France (Adams 2002: 35):

> Zaphod Beeblebrox was on his way from the tiny spaceport on Easter Island (the name was an entirely meaningless coincidence – in Galacticspeke, *easter* means small flat and light brown) to the *Heart of Gold* island, which by another meaningless coincidence was called France.

A third example of reference to meaning is the "bickering about the meaning of life" (Adams 2002: 143) which leads to the original request to Deep Thought to provide an answer to "Life, the Universe and Everything" (Adams 2002: 147).

Adams confirms the elusiveness of the meaning of life in remarks relating to the regrettable demise of the Earth before a meaning for life could be discovered. This is because Frankie and Benji the mice have been conducting an experiment on Earth. Adams describes how the mice have been running Earth for the last ten million years in order to find the Ultimate Question. They already have the answer, forty two, but Frankie notes that they need the right question in order for that to work as the answer (Adams 2002: 170-171):

> 'We have, as you know, been more or less running your planet for the last ten million years in order to find this wretched thing called the Ultimate Question.' … 'I mean ideally we still need the Ultimate Question in some form or other.'

This theme has triggered a number of studies, such as research undertaken by Van der Colff (2007; 2010) that elucidates and explores the futility of existence and the compulsion to construct subjective meaning in relation to Adams's work. *The Hitchhiker* series is considered as containing "explicit and implicit references to Existentialist philosophy and the absurdity of the human condition" (Van der Colff 2010: 5). Indeed, the author likens the human condition in Existentialist terms to being "flung into the cauldron of Being-in-itself, among the trees and Chesterfield sofas and rubber ducks of the world, without having a choice in the matter" and states that everything is "beyond our power to control". Interestingly, however, Van der Colff (2010: 86) also suggests Adams's exploration of existential preoccupations in the twentieth century by means of themes such as the search for the Ultimate

Question, “actually encourages his readers to actuate their own meaning, however stupid or trivial”.

Adams undercuts the theme of futility by introducing elements of a quest theme, in Chapter 1 of the second book (Adams 2002: 192):

> [A]ll hope of discovering a meaning for life was lost for ever.
> Or so it would seem.
> Two survivors.
> They are all that remains of the greatest experiment ever conducted – to find the Ultimate Question and the Ultimate Answer of Life, the Universe, and Everything.

This hint of a quest theme is strengthened because, as in many quests, Arthur and Trillian’s undertaking will be arduous and the objective will never be reached, yet numerous valuable discoveries will be made by them in transit, and the entire universe and also the reader will gain from their apparently futile undertaking.

Ultimately though, whereas authentic science fiction “reports on mankind’s destiny, on the meaning of life in the cosmos, [bringing] forth a deluge of answers for the key questions of every reasoning being” (Kropf 1988: 67), *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* as mock science fiction denies closure and rather than confirm an implied meaning or purpose in the astounding universe, affirms its meaninglessness. Humankind is inconsequential, and Adams illustrates this in the scene of the whale falling through the sky. Even though it has only been in existence for a brief moment, it is conscious of itself and begins to question its place in the universe, and is then very quickly killed off when it hits the ground (Adams 2002: 117–118):

> Ah …! What’s happening? it thought.
> Er, excuse me, who am I?
> Hello?
> Why am I here? What’s my purpose in life?
> What do I mean by who am I?.

Hereby Adams is trying to say that, even though we are able to question our existence and seek meaning in life, we are inconsequential in the greater scheme of things and could be wiped from the face of the earth in the blink of an eye, taking with us any deeper insight we may have gained.

Adams further embeds the theme of meaninglessness in his work by incorporating the strange transmigrating soul, Agrajag, for whose numerous successive deaths Arthur Dent is responsible and who self-destructs while attempting to get revenge. Arthur Dent represents Agrajag's destiny from which he fails to escape in any and every place or moment. For Agrajag, the man Arthur Dent is therefore the meaning of life, the universe and everything (Kropf 1988: 67) and according to Kropf (1988: 68),

> Agrajag …stands in relation to Arthur as the reader does to Adams and as humanity does to the Creator of the Universe. Arthur, Adams, and God are the creators of the respective worlds which Agrajag, the reader, and all sentient beings are trying to understand… all Arthur can do, is apologise and disclaim responsibility; as the author of his reader's experience as a reader, all Adams can do is conclude his work by declaring that if it has a point, he has forgotten it; as the Creator of the universe, all God can do is apologise for the inconvenience.

Adams continues to destabilise the concepts whereby humans attempt to give meaning to life. For example, In the Prologue to *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* the narrator notes that most of the people living on the planet were unhappy and that "many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these were largely concerned with the movements of small green pieces of paper, which is odd because on the whole it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy" (Adams 2002: 5). The statement is humorous because it forces the reader to imagine that money might have feelings and emotions, and the narrator uses

humour to communicate Adams's ironic observation that humanity is overly concerned with money and personal wealth, futilely trying to find happiness in worldly gains.

The author continues nudging the reader through skilful use of Horatian satire (typically used to highlight flaws in religious concepts) and irreverent references to Christianity, in topics such as the destruction of Earth (which shows a resemblance to the religious prophecy of Armageddon, according to which the world would come to an end), in references to the Christ figure and in Arthur and Trillian (as allegorical representations of the Biblical Adam and Eve, inter alia through casting them as the only surviving male and female on whom the future of the human race depends [Adams 2002: 192]).

Religious cosmology or beliefs around the creation and demise of the world are particularly reflected in the narrative developments on the planet Magrathea (as pointed out in Chapter 1). The old Magrathean planet designer, Slartibartfast, loosely takes on the part of God as creator, and comically refers to the creation and demise of Earth as nothing more than a great bureaucratic mishap (Adams 2002: 164):

> 'So there you have it,' said Slartibartfast… 'Deep Thought designed the Earth, we built it and you lived on it. 'And the Vogons came and destroyed it five minutes before the program was completed,' added Arthur.

In the above passage Adams challenges both creation myths and apocalyptic prophecies as they figure in major religions of the world. The manner in which Adams writes of the Vogon destruction of the Earth and all the life it contains, save Arthur and Trillian, is understated to achieve the impression that it was not a very taxing undertaking (Adams 2002: 34):

> There was a terrible ghastly silence. There was a terrible ghastly noise. There was a terrible ghastly silence. The Vogon Constructor fleet coasted away into the inky starry void.

This brief description of such a momentous and calamitous event makes it seem almost inconsequential. Adams is trying to communicate the message that humanity is deeply vulnerable and that human existence, whether seen from a religious or secular perspective, is dependent on forces beyond current human capabilities. Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz also poses an interesting question, if he is interpreted as being godlike in his power, when Adams (2002: 48) writes that "he always felt vaguely irritable after demolishing populated planets." The idea that God is all-powerful and can shape events, and that He has a path and destiny for each of His followers, is one of the main concepts behind the Christian faith. If He is all-powerful and can change things then we ask why He does not prevent catastrophes from happening. Why does He not spare the lives of children, why does He allow all these terrible events to happen? By suggesting Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz only feels vaguely irritable after destroying the Earth, Adams raises the question of whether awesome power requires a level of detachment and if so, whether God feels the same sense of detachment from His creation.

Adams furthermore shapes Arthur and Trillian into allegories of the Biblical Adam and Eve (Adams 2002: 192, as noted above). This device enables him to achieve his underlying objective of unsettling, satirising and ridiculing humanity's attempts at finding meaning in life, and also allows him to expand on his commentary on the Book of Genesis contained in the Christian Bible.[1] It is equally a mocking of the Adam and Eve theme typically found in science fiction.

[1] All Bible references are to the New King James Version, 1982, HarperCollins.

In the creation story, God first creates Adam and then after a time He decides that Adam needs a companion. When Adam is sleeping, He takes a rib from him and creates Eve, and so the human race is born. In Genesis 2:23 Adam says, “this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” when referring to Eve. They are united by the fact that they share the same origins, were formed from the same dust by God and were given the same life-giving breath by Him. It is worth noting that Adam was asleep when God took his rib. In much the same way that Adam was unable to agree to having his rib removed and having his companion created from it, Arthur has no choice but to accept Trillian as his mate/companion, brought about through no choice of his own, but by outside forces.

When we then consider Arthur and Trillian from a twentieth-century perspective where science and the revolutionary advances initiated by the discovery of DNA have given us a deeper understanding of how we are all genetically connected, another parallel is formed. Arthur and Trillian are now the only two human beings connected by their shared genetic material. Adams may hereby be communicating that Trillian and Arthur are going to facilitate a new beginning for the human race, free of the bureaucracy, apathy and arrogance that characterise the description of humanity in the first chapters of the book.

It is also worth noting that Adam and Eve did not choose each other. They did not have a pool of people to sift through to find their ideal mate. They were created and told to multiply. There was never an expectation of love or being in love. Arthur and Trillian are put in the same position. There is no one else of the same species to choose from, they have only each other. The first time they meet at the party on Earth Trillian dismisses Arthur as someone she is not interested in dating so the question of attraction and having a choice of partners is also answered. They have

no one else to choose from and even if they do not believe they can be attracted to one another or fall in love with each other, they have no other choice.

It appears that this is especially true when it comes to reproduction. In *Mostly Harmless*, Trillian admits that she and Zaphod never had any children together because their species were too different. It seems that she would have had children with him had it been possible. Thus her choice is again removed and the inescapability of her need for Arthur is highlighted again.

She goes on to say that she did have a child via artificial insemination whom she named Random. This alludes to the fact that she did not specify which donor she would prefer and that any human donor would be acceptable. As it turns out the only human sperm available came from Arthur. Again this highlights her lack of choice and that, even though she may not be in love with Arthur and that he might not be her first choice, she really does need him from a biological point of view.

Using allegory as a device to communicate messages from author to reader enables meaning to be ascribed to a work. Adams uses this to his advantage and, although this is a comic work, the allegory contained within it gives it a feeling of gravitas that would otherwise be missing.

In Arthur and Ford's foray on prehistoric Earth, too, Adams satirises common religious beliefs, in particular the Biblical Garden of Eden myth, ascribing mean, spiteful motives to what he irreverently calls "your God person" (Adams 2002: 363). Throughout the text, religious phraseology is mockingly distorted in order to unsettle the reader, for example, a recording on Slartibartfast's ship invites the group to bow their head "in payment" (Adams 2002: 451).

The conclusion may be drawn that Jonathan Swift essentially conveys criticism of humanity from an orthodox religious position, whence humanity is viewed as fallen, whereas Douglas Adams dismisses all such spiritual models as void of meaning.

3.4 INVENTIONS, AUTOMATA AND IMMORTALITY

Swift satirises the eighteenth-century fascination with human senses, in particular visual perception, as well as scale and dimensionality (see also Chapter 4, "Getting the message across: Communication"). The satire serves the further purposes of (i) challenging the perceived superior position of humans among other life forms; (ii) ridiculing the incongruity between humans' physical stature and their pretensions, and (iii) enquiring as to what there is in human beings to be proud of. Parts I and II of *Gulliver's Travels* contain many instances of a play on perspective, and Gulliver's experiences are constantly communicated as a ratio of that which is known to him, for example, the Lilliputians are twelve times smaller than humans, and wasps are as large as partridges (Holly 1979: 137). Scale figures in the fantastical locations visited by Gulliver too. According to Hart (1992: 27, 28) Swift makes use of the incidentals of a child's dream world – miniature soldiers, houses for man mountains, floating courts – to disguise his criticism of the age of Enlightenment.

To understand this tendency in Swift's thinking (which is also evident from Swift's writings outside *Gulliver's Travels*) some background is required. For example, in his commanding biography, *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World*, Leo Damrosch tells of Swift's mock epic, *The Battle of the Books* (written but not published in 1697), which has as theme a struggle between the Ancients and the Moderns: "To Swift, as to [Sir William] Temple, the classics were living voices … so in Swift's satire, the books in the King's Library divide into armies and join battle, with the ancients of course victorious" (Damrosch 2013: 88).

The device of architectural scale is used in the first two books as sardonic commentary on one of the Enlightenment's most celebrated architects, Sir John Vanbrugh and in particular Vanbrugh's 'Goose-pie' house located in Whitehall, a *folie de grandeur* thinly disguised as the little house of Gulliver in Book II (Hart 1992: 29).

Throughout Parts I and II, Swift describes Gulliver's encounters in a manner reminiscent of scientific experiments founded in a juxtapositioning of different dimensions. This technique often presents humans as ridiculous, causing the reader to compare the human physique with human pretensions (Patey 1991: 825). Sizes are constantly viewed in relation to other sizes and the reader is left to consider the implications thereof and face the inevitable question of what humankind has achieved that it can be proud of. For example, by presenting humans up close, as in Brobdingnag, Swift can exaggerate all human flaws, and thus allow Gulliver to show people as ugly, as well as dangerous (Swift 2008: 78):

> [W]hen one of the reapers approaching within ten yards of the ridge where I lay, made me apprehend that with the next step I should be squashed to death under his foot, or cut in two with his reaping hook.

This inversion of size further promotes the notion of humans as monsters, and Gulliver's detailed and disgusted description of the breast-feeding scene (Swift 2008: 82) is a precursor to his final view (at the end of the book) of humans as loud and smelly. Similarly, in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Adams plays with the concept of size and humankind's insignificance by means of devices such as the Total Vortex Chamber (as discussed in section 3.3.2).

3.4.1 General inventions and technology

Both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are showcases for the science and engineering abilities of their eras. Technological procedures and

objects are mentioned and described throughout both books to serve multiple purposes. For example, this technique makes the tale more plausible and life-like and establishes a point of reference for satire. It furthermore allows the author to ironically remark on humankind's preoccupation with and dependence on instruments that enhance their senses, and their interaction with the elements of time and space. And in doing so, the author manipulates also the reader's expectations of these gadgets and accoutrements of a technologically sophisticated world.

The Lilliputians' description of the object which turns out to be Gulliver's pocket watch, for example, resembles that of a magical object in any tale of enchantment, or ancient riddle (Swift 2008: 30):

> Out of the right fob hung a great silver chain, with a wonderful kind of engine at the bottom. We directed him to draw out whatever was at the end of that chain; which appeared to be a globe, half silver, and half of some transparent metal…we saw certain strange figures circularly drawn…and we conjecture it is either some unknown animal, or the god that he worships…he called it his oracle, and said it pointed out the time for every action of his life".

Traugott (1984: 127) argues that "things such as a pocket watch are made strange so as to yield up their significances as cultural peculiarities". The pocket watch is presented as being perceived by a members of a culture foreign to it, so as to afford a fresh viewpoint on the object. By using the Lilliputians as the observers and describers, Swift makes it possible for the reader to see aspects of this everyday object that they would not have seen otherwise, and at the same time ironically remarks on the dependence of people on time pieces.

3.4.2 Humankind's dependence on science and technology

Humankind's dependence on science and technology is equally mocked in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Arthur Dent is filled with horror at being stranded

on prehistoric Earth where “there wasn’t a bus due for two million years” (Adams 2002: 395). Relevant in this regard too are the Golgafrinchans’s almost pathetic efforts on prehistoric Earth to recreate the creature comforts from their home planet, such as hot baths, soap, haircuts. The human attachment to technology is equally ridiculed by the presence of six (non-functioning) telephones, in the crisis brought about by attempts to master the basic human innovation of making fire without matches or lighters, and in the hairdresser’s conversion of the two fire sticks into curling tongs (Adams 2002: 369–372). The random meaninglessness of technology is indeed most apparent in the elevation of the most low-tech accessory, a bath towel, to the position of most useful object on an interstellar journey (Adams 2002: 26).

3.4.3 Mad scientists and queer preoccupations

Many of the lands visited by Gulliver are populated by creators and creations of scientific experiments. Biographer Damrosch mentioned above further alleges that “Swift was always sceptical of the claims of science, especially when it wastes its time on useless experimentation” (Damrosch 2013: 371).

In Part III, Swift demonstrates this scepticism towards the Age of Enlightenment. Elements such as the flying island of Laputa (Swift 2008: 144) and the meaningless inventions, projects and experiments of the members of the Grand Academy of Lagado on the land mass below, are included to show Swift’s doubtful attitude towards the elevation of the “new science” in England and to reference actual strange inventions of the Enlightenment. This use by Swift of the transactions of the Royal Society has been the subject of numerous studies, such as the *Annals of Science* article (1937: 299–334) entitled ‘The scientific background of Swift’s voyage to Laputa’ by Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler. The majority of the Laputan

experiments in Part III are shown to be distorted versions of real enquiries published in *The Philosophical Transactions*.

Just as Swift satirises and makes fun of the Laputan experimenters and inventors, in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Adams ridicules the engineers and researchers of the twentieth century by listing nonsensical professions, such as atomineers, maximegalaticians and physucturalists (Adams 2002: 38).

Adams equally withholds the reverence and respect that contemporary science and technology typically command. Throughout *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the author refers to scientific objects in either unscientific terms – "huge yellow somethings" (Adams 2002: 25) – or in pseudo-scientific, nonsensical language.

The imagery of sciences and scientists in *Gulliver's Travels* is extended to Gulliver himself. For example, Gulliver responds to the sight of lice on the clothes of the beggars in Brobdingnag's metropolis with the instinct of a scientist, pondering dissection (Swift 2008: 102); his memories of the Lilliputians' comments on his face seen up close (Swift 2008: 83) resemble the *Transactions*'s scientific descriptions of subjects viewed under a microscope. Throughout the text, Swift weaves in these references to prevailing scientific trends that would have been known to any well-read layman.

In particular, Swift references and satirises the automata and life-like metaphysical toys of the Enlightenment's experimental philosophy, as well as the concomitant quest to create and immortalise life. Consider, for example, the imagery of Gulliver as a doll and a clockwork-like toy, as pointed out by Traugott (1984: 128):

> He seems like a child playing with dolls and other reduced models, and the imagery of such play is pervasive …Swift…seems to have thought of big and little as fantasies of childhood play that live on in the adult. So pervasive is the imagery of doll play in the first two voyages that

> often Swift seems to be indulging himself gratuitously without anything in mind beyond thinking up comic routines to put Gulliver through.

This is first notable in Lilliput during Gulliver's first visit to the town where, "in short waistcoat for fear of damaging the roofs and eves of houses", he is able to cut down the tallest trees with his knife; and to step over buildings very conveniently (Swift 2008: 40–41). As remarked by Traugott (1984: 130), "it is the child's fantasy of dominion over the world, of absolute freedom to be a quick-change artist and perfect puppet master".

In Brobdingnag Gulliver is caught in the reverse image and Traugott (1984: 133) observes that "Gulliver… is now a doll, toyed with by various protectors, housed in a doll's house, dressed and undressed by a girl, and, worst of all, encouraged to perform like a clockwork toy … he does his cute routines of mimicry". In these scenes, Swift wryly draws on the humorous aspects of automatons, exploited too by Gulliver himself, who secures his safety by acting like a doll and imitating humans with his antics, thereby becoming a valuable asset that is displayed at fairs.

In these humorous references to the automatons of his era, and in scenes such as the charade of toy soldiers in mock skirmishes on Gulliver's handkerchief, Swift satirises not only the immoveable roles of political pawns and figureheads, but the pomp and prancing seen in real life (Traugott 1984: 128, 130, 135).

During the twentieth century robots and androids were developed in the technological sphere. In science fiction they were depicted as de-individualised, reflecting the twentieth-century sense of alienation (Parrinder 1979: 31). Adams incorporates numerous robots in his narrative, for example, an "immense silver robot, a hundred feet tall" that arrives in Knightsbridge and, in a satirical word play on

a hackneyed science fiction phrase, asks the bystanders: “take me to your Lizard” (Adams 2002: 746).

Adams not only populates the universe with different types of robots that meet the general expectations of robots, but in particular presents an individualised and humanised robot in Marvin, who is imbued with a range of emotions. Soon after meeting Marvin (Adams 2002: 892), the reader learns that he cannot commit suicide, which resonates with the remark of Wood (2002: xvii) that, “androids are more like *memento mori*, throwing the human condition into horrible relief”. Adams imbues Marvin with a range of emotions, and lets Marvin tell the reader “I think,” “I’m feeling,” Marvin is said to speak with a “low and hopeless” voice, he “convey[ed] his utter contempt and horror”, and declares about an activity that “I won’t enjoy it”. Marvin experiences a range of emotions, including boredom and depression and recognises emotions, such as hate (Adams 2002: 183). The Encyclopaedia Galactica entry about robots (Adams 2002: 83) and the marketing brochure (robots with Genuine People Personalities – in Marvin’s case, the depressed personality prototype) confirm that the barrier between humans and robots has been crossed and that individualised, humanised robots and androids abound in the Galaxy.

Adams also satirises humankind’s dependence on technology and comments on the servile aspect of robots. When Arthur and Fenchurch encounter Marvin on the Great Red Plain in the land of Sevorbeupstry, at the end of the book, his “dolorous cybernetic ravings” (Adams 2002: 761) include a sarcastic offer to perform any last services (the offer to open doors for them is particularly ironic, given the empty, undeveloped desert landscape).In *Gulliver’s Travels*, Swift reflects the contemporary fascination with vitality, with living, breathing creatures and how such life is achieved, as well as the remaining philosophical vestiges of the preceding darker era in

Gulliver's brief visit to the island of Glubbdubdrib (Part III), as described below. The very name of the island "signifies the Island of Sorcerers or magicians'" (Swift 2008: 180). We are told that the governor is skilled in necromancy, "hath power of calling whom he pleaseth from the dead" and has "dismissed all his attendants with a turn of his finger, at which … they vanished in an instant". Likewise, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* features communication with the spirits of the dead, when a séance is held for Zaphod to appeal to his deceased great-grandfather for help with their Vogon-related predicament, and for career advice in general (Adams 2002: 204–212). These references in both novels reflect, and satirise, humankind's dream of mastering life and death, even though one might also take the view that humankind's attempts to deny death are understandable and deserving of pity.

The dream of immortality is further referenced in *Gulliver's Travels* in the immortal Struldbrugs, whose lot is presented as far from ideal. In the kingdom of Luggnagg, and on meeting the immortal Struldbrugs, Gulliver reveals that he considers two of the main benefits of longevity and immortality to be an increase in wealth and an increase in wisdom. It may be argued that this view is probably held by many people of all eras, including readers in Swift's time, which presented Swift with the opportunity to satirise this dream of immortality, and the state of old age. Swift allows Gulliver to fantasize about the benefits of immortality at first, but then debunks the fantasy with harsher realities, such as that Struldbrugs age, even though they do not die, the compulsory dissolution of Struldbrug marriages, their being stripped of assets, and their loss of meaningful communication (Swift 2008: 193–200).

The notion of immortality is equally examined in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* Wowbagger, the immortal alien whose mission is to insult everyone in the Universe (Adams 2002: 398), achieves his immortality not through painstaking

human endeavours such as those of Enlightenment scientists, but in true Adams fashion by mere chance through an accident of physics. The disillusioned view of immortality intimated in *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift 2008: 195) is echoed in Wowbagger's bemoaning of the listlessness and eternity stretching unrelentingly ahead (Adams 2002: 398):

> In the end, it was the Sunday afternoons he couldn't cope with, and that terrible listlessness which starts to set in at about 2.55, when you know that you've had all the baths you can usefully have that day, that however hard you stare at any given paragraph in the papers you will never actually read it, or use the revolutionary new pruning technique it describes, and that as you stare at the clock the hands will move relentlessly on to four o'clock, and you will enter the long dark teatime of the soul.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Alienation and estrangement are depicted and achieved in fiction through various narrative techniques. In *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, this cause is furthered by an astute simultaneous genuine reflection, and inversion, of the prevailing science and technology. Contemporary science and technology may further be woven through the narrative as a story. The eighteenth-century fascination with human senses, scale, mortality, speciation, a natural hierarchy and order, and the accompanying anthropocentrism, as well as the age-old question about 'the meaning of life' are equally reflected in twentieth-century preoccupations such as artificial intelligence and, therefore, fiction. While the scientific climates of different eras may differ in terms of specifics, they show remarkable similarities in general: there are the inventions of objects that would improve human interaction with the elements of time and space, a preoccupation with humanity's humanness and attempts to replicate and immortalise life, and endeavours to find order and meaning in human existence. This would indicate that humanity still lives in the afterglow of

the Enlightenment, holding the firm belief that the answer lies in increased control and analysis, and in continuously promoting reason and science. In environments such as these, Swift and Adams display the mark of true satirists in that they need to constantly challenge and mock problematic assumptions.

CHAPTER 4

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS: COMMUNICATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the protagonists arrive in multiple locations, where both Gulliver and Arthur Dent experience a sense of alienation and foreignness, and face communication barriers. As established in earlier chapters, both Gulliver and Arthur represent humanity, each being a veritable Everyman. The chapter recognises that the authors employ language constructs – the very primary texts under consideration – to comment on language and communication. This allows one to study the vehicles for communication employed by the authors to not only bridge the communication gaps between their protagonists and whomever they meet (and by implication, between humans everywhere), but also between author and reader.

To contextualise the analysis, the chapter begins with a brief overview of current communication theory which informs the present reading, and an outline of the linguistic trends during the Enlightenment and the twentieth century, since these would have informed the understanding of the authors of the two primary texts (section 4.2). This is followed by a consideration in section 4.3 of the authors' solutions to the communication problems faced by their protagonists (and implicitly by humankind) and their ironic treatment of prevailing theories and notions on the subject, for example, the use of signs and gestures, as will be expanded on below. The communication and translation solutions proposed for and by Swift's and Adams's protagonists are categorised as nonverbal, intermediate, unintelligible verbal, intelligible verbal and mediated communication, illustrated with examples

from the texts and evaluated in section 4.4. Section 4.5 subsequently considers how the authors strengthen their own communication through the use of their narrators. Finally, in section 4.6 the chapter comments on Swift's and Adams's opinions on language as these can be deduced from the preceding information.

4.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Several modes are distinguished in communication theory, with the main mediums being the manual or nonverbal mode, the oral or verbal mode, the auditory mode and the written mode. The manual or nonverbal mode, for example, includes the use of signs and gestures, and is considered a crucial visual and kinetic aspect of communication that can compensate for the absence of spoken language or appropriate vocabulary (Salvato 2015: 12). The oral or verbal mode involves speech and the deliberate use of words to convey message and meaning; it stands in close relation to the auditory mode, and these modes are often used simultaneously. The written mode is the conveying of information through characters, symbols and inscriptions and is by nature planned and relatively delayed.

A multimodal style of communication or total communication is all-inclusive and combines various modes such as formal signs, natural gestures, speaking and listening and is often used in the education of hearing-impaired persons (Gibbs & Springer 1994: ii). Mediated communication refers to those interactions that are aided by mechanical or other intervention (Crowley & Mitchell 1994: 35), ranging from low technology to the most sophisticated electronic interfaces.

Supplementing the above distinctions between forms of communication, a plethora of models of communication have been advanced of which the scope of the current study does not permit a detailed exploration. A particularly noteworthy one of these

is the study by Albert Mehrabian (1971), which identifies verbal, vocal and visual interaction – words, tone and expression – as crucial aspects of communication (Mehrabian 1971: 42).

Additionally and with a particular bearing on *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Galaxy*, it is worth noting the observations on communication in the science fiction genre by eminent linguist JR Krueger in his article 'Language and techniques of communication as theme or tool in science fiction' (1968). Typically, science fiction authors address the communication challenge through aliens learning a human language or humans learning an alien language, aliens using a language which is the future descendant of a current major language or a language from past earth history, aliens and humans conversing in various *linguae francae*, artefacts from an earlier time that set off telepathic messages, non-speech forms of communication, and translation machines. The last of these is reflected in one of the most recognisable solutions to inter-species alien communication, namely the universal translator employed by the *Star Trek* television and film franchise, which operates by "scanning brain-wave frequencies and using the results to create a basis for translation" ("Universal translator," 2016). Authors and script writers continuously come up with solutions for travelling space heroes, as it is inevitable that they will come across a variety of alien species during the course of their journeys.

These aspects of communication theory serve as backdrop for the comparison of the two novels in terms of basic nonverbal communication, intermediate communication, unintelligible verbal communication, intelligible verbal communication and mediated communication.

As has been asserted in previous chapters, the prevailing world views, philosophies, science and technology influence the output of any author in any era. A full

appreciation of Jonathan Swift's and Douglas Adams's treatment of communication as theme thus calls for a brief consideration of attitudes to language and communication during their respective eras.

4.2.1 Language and communication during the Enlightenment (1650–1800)

During the late 1600s and early 1700s exploration and travel established links between peoples and nations (see Chapter 1). This contact was inevitably marked by communication difficulties and, partly as a result of this, the European interest in various aspects of language reached a historical high during that era. Prevailing points of interest that are pertinent to the current reading of *Gulliver's Travels* are ideas of an ideal universal language, attempts at mechanical translation, and the teaching of people with sensory impairments.

In the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–4), God punishes the people for attempting to reach him by making them unintelligible to each other and scattering them across the earth. Language had united the people that came together to build the tower, but God viewed this action as evidence of their being insolent and disobedient. The consequences of this biblical Babel received special attention in communication studies during the Enlightenment. Members of the Royal Society and many other British and French scholars pursued the notion of an ideal language, one that would approximate the original language of Eden, and would be instinctively and universally understood. Such a language would reflect an integration of object and word, as well as generic links between and hierarchies present in aspects of the natural world. Implicitly, the ideal Adamic language would reflect and resonate with the harmony of the society that used that language (Slaughter 1982: 32; Kelly 1978: 35, 38).As an alternative to recreating the Adamic language, it was hoped that it would in fact be discovered unscathed in some remote

corner of the world, a hope which fuelled an interest in obscure languages and consequently, in narratives of voyages (Kelly 1978: 38). These Enlightenment efforts to rediscover a universal language extended to the notion of translation in a mechanised manner by means of universal characters. Well-known proponents of such ideas were the German chemist Johann Joachim Becher (whose 1661 scheme was used 300 years later as the basis for machine translation software, as noted in Hutchins [1997: 5]) and John Wilkins who in 1668 created a scheme of universal characters to be used in a mechanical manner for the Royal Society of London (Hutchins 1997: 5).

The Enlightenment was furthermore characterised by an avid interest in epistemological and psychological theories of sensation. According to the sensationist doctrine of perception (notably promoted by Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac in the mid-1700s), every iota of knowledge is founded on sensory perception. There are therefore no innate ideas, and all knowledge is derived solely from the sense data of experience (Griffin 1993: 3).

Exploration of this premise naturally led to the question of how then to teach persons with limitations of the senses, such as a visual, or hearing impairment. During the Enlightenment, the teaching of people with such impairments was approached in markedly different ways in France and England.

Following a creative and speculative approach to communication, French scientists embraced what was considered to be hearing-impaired people's natural language, namely sign language. The French philosopher, Denis Diderot, elaborated on Condillac’s abovementioned sensationist theory by observing that there are signs for the eyes, namely letters, and signs for the ears, namely sounds, but that the sense of touch has no such signs. This notion found concrete application in the

development of a system of touch symbols and the tracing of symbols on the hands of persons born with a threefold visual, hearing and speech impairment. Condillac, indeed, had likened this state to a *tabulae rasae*, a “statue” of a human being, devoid of senses, and speculated how such a “statue” could be brought to life, be awoken and be exposed to knowledge through the conferral and stimulation of each of the senses in turn (Sicard in Seigel 1969: 113). The correlation between this theory and the Laputian flappers in *Gulliver's Travels* is explored in section 4.3.5 below.

Conversely, communication scientists in England displayed ignorance about the psychology of sensory impairments. For example, general teaching of hearing-impaired persons was undertaken by well-meaning evangelical reformers at charitable institutions. Their intentions were mainly to convey the Bible. Their methods consisted of promoting artificially acquired speech, and lip-reading, to help persons with impairments fit in with the greater group. These oralists deliberately ignored sign language, and rejected the notion that “signs could communicate ideas in the same manner as sounds” (Seigel 1969: 99). As indicated in section 4.3.2 below, Swift deliberately counters the English stance by portraying many successful exchanges where only this form of communication is utilised.

4.2.2 Language and communication in the twentieth century

By the twentieth century, exploration of the planet had effectively been concluded; the corners of the globe had essentially been charted. The shift to the exploration of outer space partly testifies to this: all earthly frontiers had been conquered. The subsequent climate of multiculturalism and international cooperation increased the need for improved communication. The Enlightenment dream of a universal language persisted and found embodiment in Esperanto, created in the 1800s and still seriously pursued into the twentieth century.

In this world where Douglas Adams worked, all endeavours to improve communication were mediated by technology in one way or another. This stands in contrast to the Enlightenment, when humankind's attempts to overcome communication barriers mainly involved bodily ingenuity, such as lip-reading or using signs and gestures. Bearing in mind that *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* as a series was written over a number of years (1979–1992), the author would not have been exposed to only one set of influences but to a continuously changing technological landscape. References to communication technology from the beginning of the first to the end of the last book differ. Adams would have been informed about and inspired and influenced by a succession of translation and communication discoveries and trends. Two such phenomena that are pertinent to the current reading of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are mechanical translation, and speech generation devices.

The early twentieth century saw a notable development in mechanical translation. Technology and science finally developed to a level where it was possible to produce instruments for mechanising translation, of which the first in 1933 combined paper tape, search mechanisms, keyboards, display functions, and glossaries (Hutchins 1997: 195–197). By mid-century, electronic computers had been developed, with one possible application being the translation of languages. Indeed, the world in which Adams began to write *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* boasted "the cumulation of centuries of search by scholars for 'a mechanical translator'" (said in 1954 about the IBM Corporation's translation system, quoted in Hutchins 1997: 231). In the 1970s a taxonomy was created to distinguish between machine-aided human translation, human-aided machine translation and autonomous machine translation (the quality of these translations was, however, poor). The influence of this

mechanical translation on Adams's ultimate translation solution is explored in the latter half of this chapter.

In addition to mechanical translation, cognisance of speech generation devices (SGDs) enhances understanding and appreciation of humorous and satirical elements in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* In the 1970s, technology was developed to enable both digitised and synthesized speech, initially to assist people with voice impairments. This robot or computer speech made its way into science fiction films and gadgets and devices such as talking alarm clocks. The late 1990s saw the development of dynamic screen speech-generating devices and speech synthesis equipment, such as the system adopted by Stephen Hawking. The application of this form of technology in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is considered in section 4.3.5.2.b below.

4.3 COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS* AND *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*

A close reading of *Gulliver's Travels* shows that Swift explores the full spectrum of communication, ranging from basic nonverbal utterances, to full-fledged mastery of the local language, to mechanical intervention. Indeed, Gulliver's communication journey lends itself to a reading of it as more than simply a linear progression, but rather as a progression in complexity from initial nonverbal attempts such as inarticulate sounds, body language, posture, and crying, to higher level signing and gesturing, escalating yet again to the use of languages, albeit not mutually understood, to finally learning the 'foreign' languages used in various lands.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy does not display such an ordered, scientific treatment of communication. While Swift arms his protagonist with everything from

grunts to the written alphabet, Adams's employment of nonverbal communication, and non-mediated verbal communication, is limited: most of the communication solutions in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* involve technological assistance. As will be shown in section 4.3.5 below, the protagonist, characters and objects alike are merged into an integrated landscape in which organic and electronic life forms are equalised partly because they are enabled by the author to interact and communicate. The texts are subsequently compared in terms of these modes of communication, with reference to the communication theory noted in section 4.2.

4.3.1 Basic nonverbal communication

Swift lays the foundation for Gulliver's interactions by means of numerous instances of basic nonverbal communication. The reader learns that Gulliver constantly attempts to communicate through incoherent noises and intonation: on arrival in Lilliput, Gulliver roars (Swift 2008: 17); when first picked up by the reaper on the farm in Brobdingnag, Gulliver groans to show his discomfort (Swift 2008: 79). He also instinctively resorts to communicating through body language, posture, and manner. For example, in Lilliput Gulliver makes a promise of honour by behaving submissively and answered questions "in the most submissive manner" (Swift 2008: 19, 20). Similarly, when first meeting the farmer in Brobdingnag, he falls on his knees, and lifts his hands and eyes (Swift 2008: 80). Later on, when appealing to the observers on the flying island, Gulliver places himself "into the most supplicating postures" (Swift 2008: 145). Communicating on the same basic level, when he is first picked up by the Brobdingnag farmer, Gulliver sheds tears to show that he is being held too tightly (Swift 2008: 79).

In comparison, descriptions of posture and body language in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* beg contextualisation within Adams's specific brand of physical

comedy. In the *Guide* things happen, fast and in amusing ways. The text is replete with action verbs that carry the action forward, and adverbs that intensify humour and absurdity. Adams's characters (in the broadest sense of the term, given that his characters include even doors and elevators) are all "large" – they fill their respective spaces fully, each making the most of a walk-on role, as it were. Rarely do characters linger for long or indulge in soulful soliloquies (with the obvious exception of the articulate Marvin). Significantly, even though his movements are relatively restricted, he is articulated enough to move and bend in an amusing manner, emphasising through posture and body language the tragicomic nature of his existence, as during his final epic trek through the Great Red Plain (Adams 2002: 759–760):

> Some way ahead of them an awkward low shape was heaving itself wretchedly along the ground, stumbling painfully slowly, half-limping, half-crawling… It groaned at them as they approached it, collapsing in the hot dry dust… He scraped a knee along pathetically in the dust, and then tried to twist himself up on to his misshapen elbows.

Complying with the overall frenzied pace of the book, the human(oid) characters' changes in posture and body language are marked by high energy levels, as is notable in Zaphod spinning around in astonishment (Adams 2002: 224), Trillian bursting in through doors (Adams 2002: 119) or Ford Prefect doing a "wild, frenetic … dance" (Adams 2002: 529).

Like Gulliver, Arthur is put through his paces, and the text contains instances of him communicating on a basic, nonverbal level through body language and posture. Noteworthy examples include an early incident on Earth when he "squelches" at an official (Adams 2002: 9) while indulging in an extreme form of body language by lying in the mud in front of the bulldozer, Arthur is absurdly and humorously signifying his

willingness to lay down his life for his home. Even his “helplessly tiny little dance” of frustration after being insulted by the alien Wowbagger (Adams 2002: 397) is expressive, and simultaneously maintains the energy level in the narrative.

4.3.2 Intermediate communication

Swift expands on the interactions by means of basic nonverbal communication, such as groaning and posturing, by elevating Gulliver’s communication to what may be termed an intermediate level, namely the use of signs and gestures. As described in section 4.2.1, the Enlightenment produced an interest in and expectation of the use of signs: artificial signs, natural signs and methodical signs (signs that are used to elucidate complicated concepts) (Seigel 1969: 112). Reflecting this prevailing concern of the time, Swift adds elements of nonverbal communication to every encounter, thereby beguiling his readers and drawing them into the web purporting to reflect the reality of Gulliver’s tale. For example, on arrival in Lilliput, Gulliver reportedly puts his finger in his mouth to signify that he wants food, and makes another sign that he wants drink (Swift 2008: 19). Gulliver’s self-reported attempts at communication after being stranded on the inhospitable land mass below the flying Laputa include waving his cap and his handkerchief (Swift 2008: 144).

In every instance the local inhabitants equally resort to signalling, for example, the Lilliputians reportedly made a sign that Gulliver should throw down the hogsheads, and the King made more signs to show that Gulliver would get food and drink (Swift 2008: 19, 20). In Brobdingnag, too, the farmer communicates with Gulliver by means of *signs* (Swift 2008: 80). In a similar manner, on meeting him, the Laputians point towards him and to each other, [making] signs for him to come down from the rock (Swift 2008: 145).

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* this intermediate level of communication – signs and gestures – is not practised for functional reasons as in *Gulliver's Travels*. Adams does not let his characters sign and gesture deliberately for practical purposes; it is not presented as an alternative to intelligible language interaction. Rather, this author's reason for their inclusion in the characters' repertoire is to strengthen the satirical and entertaining impact of the book. Gestures are physically expansive, as in Zaphod "ripping off" his sunglasses (Adams 2002: 228), and to heighten their effects Adams juxtaposes such physically expansive movements with reserved, conservative motions as can be seen at times in Marvin's behaviour (Adams 2002: 82, 85):

> [The robot] pulled itself up to its feet as if it was about five pounds heavier than it actually was, and made what an outside observer would have thought was a heroic effort to cross the room. … [Ford and Arthur] span around and saw an abject steel man standing hunched in the doorway.

4.3.3 Unintelligible verbal communication

Mirroring the actual frustration experienced by travellers and explorers of the Enlightenment (see Chapter 2, "Location, relocation and dislocation"), Swift's protagonist and the people he encounters also attempt to communicate using their own languages, and languages that they hope may be mutually intelligible, to no avail. On Gulliver's arrival in Lilliput, the Lilliputians and their king alike speak to Gulliver at length, and he responds in "as many languages as [he] had the least smattering of … but all to no purpose" (Swift 2008: 17–26). His Brobdingnag captor frequently speaks to him too (Swift 2008: 80). In a similar fashion, on first encountering Gulliver, the inhabitants of the flying island of Laputa attempt to communicate in a dialect resembling Italian, which prompts Gulliver to respond in the

Roman language (Swift 2008: 144, 145). Indeed, Gulliver replies in all the languages he knows, but with no success (Swift 2008: 147).

Mutual unintelligibility is not really a notable phenomenon in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, owing to the Babel fish. The greater part of the interaction and dialogue in this text rests on the implied galactical use of the Babel fish, a creature that feeds on brainwave energy and enables the host to understand every language it hears (Adams 2002: 55) which is discussed further in section 4.3.5 below.

4.3.4 Intelligible verbal communication

Inevitably, both protagonists must participate in intelligible verbal communication. The key to the language-based solutions drafted by Swift is Gulliver's native linguistic ability, as well as excellent memory. Gulliver is afforded a number of opportunities to explain and boast about his talent for learning languages, as when he claims, "in about three weeks I made a great progress in learning their language" and later "made a translation of the whole instrument, word for word" (Swift 2008: 28, 37). Throughout the novel, Swift provides a myriad details about Gulliver's language acquisition at each port, as well as focused descriptions and examples of the language in use at each destination (Kelly 1978: 33). Gulliver learns languages by a variety of methods such as repetition and explanation, tutoring and self-learning: Swift tells the reader that the Lilliputians later repeat and explain to Gulliver their formerly incomprehensible utterances (Swift 2008: 18) and ordered "that six scholars should be employed to instruct [him] in their language (Swift 2008: 28). In Brobdingnag the farmer's daughter is "likewise [his] school-mistress to teach [him] the language" and in Laputa, a tutor teaches Gulliver the language through alphabetical word lists, demonstrations of actions accompanied by written descriptions and labelled pictures in books (Swift 2008: 86, 148, 218). Notably, the

most comprehensive language learning occurs in the land of the Houyhnhnms, of which the significance is explored in more depth in section 4.6.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy pays little attention to language learning as a means of empowering the protagonist and other role players for their galactic adventures. From the start of the novel, there is no mention of the learning of languages. No explanation is offered of how Ford Prefect acquired the English language upon his arrival on Earth fifteen years earlier, and it is only later in the text (on being introduced to the Babel fish) that the reader finds a possible explanation for Ford's ability to communicate with Earthlings. (And as was the case with Gulliver, it would probably have taken Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent some time to learn any new language they encountered.)

4.3.5 Mediated communication – mechanical and technological intervention

Over and above the direct attribution of communication attempts to characters in *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift indirectly draws on notions and inventions that relate to mediated communication (see section 4.2) to satirise prevailing opinions about learning and language acquisition, some of which are discussed below.

For example, Swift references communication through the agency of objects. Satirising the Royal Society's endeavours to achieve an ideal language, Swift endows the Academy of Lagado's School of Languages with projects in which words and sentences are not only stripped down and condensed, but ultimately completely abolished, forcing people to communicate only by the show of objects carried around on the person, an invention "that would serve as an universal language to be understood in all civilised nations" (Swift 2008: 173).

Second, Swift's text contains oblique authorial references to communication through the agency of machines, such as the crude mechanical language machines (see section 4.2.1). A professor at the Academy of Lagado shows Gulliver an engine consisting of a large frame filled with connected blocks of wood, bearing "words of their language in their several moods, tenses and declensions" (Swift 2008: 171). Cranking a set of handles fortuitously produces parts of sentences that can be pieced together into a body of texts as a show of "great communicativeness" (Swift 2008: 172).

Lastly, in his portrayal of communication through the agency of assistants, Swift's text contains references to prevailing opinions about learning and language acquisition. An unusual communicational aid conjured up by Swift for one of the groups that Gulliver encounters in Laputa is the notion of 'flappers', servants who carry with them a bladder filled with pebbles which is used to touch the master's "organs of speech and hearing" to rouse them to communicate, and to rouse their memories. This method of flapping the organs of speech and hearing is a reference to Condillac's "statue" notion, whereby a human being, devoid of senses, would be brought to life through a system of touch symbols (see section 4.2.1.3). This equally resonates with Mark 7:35 where Christ opens the ears of the deaf man and loosens his tongue.

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* in the spirit of mock science fiction, Adams deviates from the twentieth-century science fiction formulae for intergalactic communication (see section 4.2) and offers a unique solution: organic utterances are made electronic, and lifeless objects are personified. In doing so, the author levels the communication field and puts creatures and objects on a par with each other. In this manner all participants in the communication process are equalised and the

communication gap between the protagonist and everyone and everything he encounters on his travels, is bridged. This is another example of Adams's technique of domestication, of making the unknown universe relatively accessible for his protagonists.

As discussed in section 4.2.1, Enlightenment philosophers and scientists strove for an Edenic form of communication which "would remove the Babel-induced barriers between man and man, and man and reality" (Kelly 1978: 38). This goal is in turn pursued by Douglas Adams, influenced by prevailing mechanical translation (MT) technology (see section 4.2.2), through the incorporation of two devices – both authorial and technological – one which he tellingly names the Babel fish, and the other eponymously The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

The Babel fish is described as a yellow leech-like creature that has the ability to feed on brainwave energy and excrete a telepathic matrix into the ear of its host, enabling the host to understand every language it hears. Adams pays due attention to descriptions of how the Babel fish came into existence: while the Babel fish is described as an organic, biological entity, the hand of God in its creation and divine intelligence are also considered. This forces the reader to think about whether or not such a creature could come into existence purely by natural processes or whether it must have been designed by some external force, which inevitably takes the argument back to technological advancement. Interestingly, the fish is organic rather than electronic, which elicits the question of whether Adams is suggesting that life is richer than technology.

As noted in section 4.2, science fiction authors have always been saddled with the problem of how to enable various alien species to communicate with one another. In some cases the author finds a technological or biological solution for the problem.

Others simply ignore the issue altogether, implicitly expecting the reader to assume that characters simply all speak the same language. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Adams places the reader in such a position: it can only be surmised that everyone in the Galaxy wears a Babel fish device, as Arthur would otherwise not be understood by anyone. The early exchange between Arthur and Ford about initiating communication with the Vogons ("But I can't speak Vogon!" "You don't need to. Just put this fish in your ear" [Adams 2002: 53]) implies that everything Arthur utters would, through the use of the device, then also be understandable to the hearer. Additionally, while Adams uses the convenience of the Babel fish for exchanges involving Arthur, other discourses take place between separate "alien" groups where the author does not explain how they understand each other. For example, in a parallel sub-plot involving two nations about to engage in an interstellar battle (Adams 2002: 166), the author refers to the Vl'hurg and G'Gugvuntt tongues, thereby adding to the reader's impression of a multilingual universe which requires an interface such as the Babel fish. Adams goes beyond Swift and suggests that superficial comprehensibility might cause more problems than it solves: "Meanwhile, the poor Babel fish, by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different races and cultures, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation" (Adams 2002: 56).

Adams furthermore equips his protagonist with another instant solution in the form of the eponymous Guide, the "electronic book [which] tells you everything you need to know about everything" (Adams 2002: 49). Without this device, Arthur would have been compelled to obtain information through interaction such as asking questions and engaging in dialogue. Like the Babel fish, it is a choice of convenience for the

author and, at the time of writing, an easy solution for the problems facing a traveller with a continuous need for information.

As was advanced at the beginning of this section, Adams levels the communication field by altering organic utterances to electronic sounds, with the aid of the translating Babel fish and the electronic book, and by personifying non-organic objects and lower life forms by endowing them with communicative abilities. The latter authorial conceit is clearly inspired by the prevailing speech generation devices (SGDs) of the late twentieth century as noted in section 4.2.2.

This personification of objects and elevation of the linguistic ability of lower life forms both abound in Adams's communication-rich galaxy: mice mutter, robots drone, books talk and computers chatter (Adams 2002: 50, 97, 174, 182). The Heart of Gold computer has a speech channel and voice circuits, with messages supplemented by ticker-tape print-outs (Adams 2002: 91–92), and even its tone is significant, being described as brash and later, cheery. Marvin the robot displays particularly advanced communication skills. Over and above his other human-like features, he is equipped with "a micromodulation of pitch and timbre" and higher order "irony circuits in his voice modulator" (Adams 2002: 82, 85). Even the doors in the spaceship communicate with feeling and are variously described as operating with "a satisfied hum", "a sigh-like quality" and "pleased little clicks and whirrs" (Adams 2002: 83–86). This attribution of human-like, nuanced communicative ability to objects reaches an unsettling high in the five-million-year-old taped announcement, greeting the travellers on Magrathea in a voice that is "courteous, almost charming, but underscored with quite unmistakeable menace", which soon becomes "distinctly cold" and is finally replaced by missiles (Adams 2002: 109–110).

4.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHARACTERS' COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS

Insofar as Gulliver's and Arthur's interaction with local inhabitants and other travellers is concerned, Gulliver's attempts at communication have mixed results. He is frustrated in many instances by unintelligibility, lack of comprehension, fear and even bodily injury due to communication barriers (Swift 2008: 17, 79, 80). Through a melange of modes and levels of interaction he does, however, communicate with varying degrees of success: in exchanges with the Hurgo, the Lilliputians and the Laputians he conveys and receives messages with some ease (Swift 2008: 19, 83). He thereby manages to gradually improve his living conditions. For instance, in Brobdingnag he begins to learn the farming family's language, and make his needs known (Swift 2008: 86). His communicative successes, however, remain qualified, as he continuously fails to negotiate his ultimate desire, namely his liberty. It is also clear that words fail when social concepts are missing, for instance, the Houyhnhnms have no word for or understanding of lies.

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Adams skilfully presents his communication solutions as having equally mixed results. While the Babel fish is presented as the ultimate communication device, the text freely admits to its having certain technological shortcomings, for example, it is unable to translate the prelanguage utterances of the human-like creatures on prehistoric Earth (Adams 2002: 361). And even when it does succeed technologically as an interface and establishes communication, it does not cure all ills: howling gargles are helpfully translated into regular English only to transpire to be hostile threats (Adams 2002: 53) and an intimate, disarming exchange with the Vogon guard nevertheless results in their being thrown into outer space (Adams 2002: 67). Equally, the speech generation technology drawn on by Adams for the benefit of numerous robots and objects,

disappoints: Marvin the robot uses his gift of speech only to complain of physical and psychological ailments (Adams 2002: 93); and so on. Given the satirical and irreverent nature of the novel, Adams sets out to parody humankind's mutual interaction and will therefore not portray a picture of perfect efficiency. His message is precisely that interaction and communication are flawed and imperfect, as will be expanded on in section 4.6. Arthur comes across as beleaguered and bewildered and despite the ultimate communication device at his disposal, he is a diffident, hesitant communicator. For example, only long after the departure of the insulting alien Wowbagger does he think "of things he could have said to the alien" (Adams 2002: 401).

Clearly, even when Gulliver and Arthur establish two-way communication, they fail to achieve the desired results, or to resolve the predicaments they find themselves in. The authors' motivation for casting the protagonists in this unenviable state relates to their opinion of language, which is explored in section 4.6 below.

4.5 THE NARRATOR AS COMMUNICATION DEVICE IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS* AND *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*

Over and above verbal, nonverbal and mediated communication, an additional vehicle for communication namely the narrator is explored in this chapter. This section considers how the authors use the narrator to get their message across. In both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the authors communicate their story in such a way that they also comment on language and communication, as will be discussed below.

Gulliver's Travels bears a close resemblance to travel texts, sporting the specific structural device of the eyewitness or first-person narrator (Whitfield 2011: 13).

Generally, a listener or reader is inclined to believe and trust such first-hand accounts, and in the hands of a skilled author such as Swift this tendency is exploited to achieve his aim, which is to show how deceptive language is, and how gullible readers, can be. *Gulliver's Travels* is a work of fiction which is held up in every respect, including the frontispiece and the lifelike portrait, as a biographical report written by an actual traveller. This aspect of the novel corresponds to features of proto science fiction (a genre of which *Gulliver's Travels* forms part).

Gulliver as first-person narrator tries to establish trust and to come across as reliable through meticulously detailed descriptions. Ironically, he is unreliable and implausible. Note for example the unconvincing good cheer with which he reports his capture by the Lilliputians. His false modesty is apparent in his self-reported "gentleness and good behaviour" (Swift 2008: 33), which elicits suspicion in the reader. Gulliver alleges that he took the oath of agreement to his conditional release from captivity with "great chearfulness and content" (Swift 2008: 38) and alludes to compliments bestowed on him by the Emperor (Swift 2008: 39). At times, however, and when in extremes, Gulliver drops this façade of bonhomie and laments his "own folly and wilfulness" (Swift 2008: 78), thereby confirming the reader's growing mistrust of the general air of positivity that he tries to uphold. The narration by Gulliver, especially the meticulous attention to detail is an attempt by Gulliver to make it sound like a reliable report of events. This does not, however, mean that Gulliver appreciates what the potential consequences of his comments are – Gulliver is therefore also a naïve narrator.

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the narrator is a third-person omniscient narrator, a device which facilitates detailed reporting of multiple characters' actions and thoughts. But it is particularly in the text sections where Adams interrupts this

third-person narration to let the narrator address the reader directly (see, for example Adams 2002: 5, 129, 143), that the main themes, or recurring events, of the novel are introduced and summarised. In these digressions, frequently typographically distinguished in an italic font, the author allows the narrator to use satire, humour and absurdity to communicate Adams's opinion on politics, religion, the arrogance and apathy of twentieth-century humanity, the insignificance of human existence and the seemingly universal habit of prioritising things of lesser importance (Adams 2002: 143):

> There are of course many problems connected with life, of which the most popular are: Why are people born? Why do they die? Why do they spend so much of the intervening time wearing digital watches?

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift is a lurking presence behind Gulliver (Swift 2008: xii) and this casts Gulliver in the role of a spokesperson for the author's opinions. The eloquent narration of reasons for Gulliver's tranquillity of mind while living among the Houyhnhnms, for example, has a personal ring and represents Swift's own dislike of humanity's tendency to bribe, flatter, pimp, commit fraud, oppress, and cheat (Swift 2008: 258).

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, on the other hand, the narrator tells the reader about the absurd situation of Mr Prosser being convinced to take Arthur's place and lie down in front of his own bulldozer. This incident serves to highlight the human phenomenon of ignoring intuitive knowledge and common sense in the face of an irrational argument, as long as it is delivered by a convincing speaker. This absurd and humorous sequence is almost unbelievable, however, history has shown that people can become swept up in a cause even if they are not entirely comfortable with it, as long as someone is able to convince them of the virtues of the cause. One

could argue that not all perpetrators of crimes against humanity were born without feeling and empathy, some must have been persuaded by external forces that the proposed action was simply the right thing to do and that they would merely be doing their jobs. Again, it seems the narrator is asking the reader to question the world, the word and the gullibility of humankind.

The supreme example of gullibility is, of course, Gulliver himself. Gulliver simply accepts information presented to him without question and re-presents this without expressing doubt or suspicion. This is shown both by how he represents others in the tale and how he describes his own society. He lives easily with contradictions. In Lilliput he says he will not be party to bringing a free people into subjection (Swift 2008: 68) yet he eagerly offers to teach the king of Brobdingnag to make gunpowder (Swift 2008: 116).

In the same manner that Adams uses the digressions in the text where the narrator breaks through and directly addresses the reader to increase the impact of his message, Swift often has his narrator, Gulliver, echo and explicitly “tell” that which he, the author, throughout the novel chooses to “show”. Also, in a period of reflection after arrival on Brobdingnag, for instance, Gulliver observes that “nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison” (Swift 2008: 78). This insightful remark by the narrator explicitly foregrounds the author’s juxtapositioning of giants and tiny races, and of macro- and microscopic details throughout the novel.

4.6 OPINIONS THAT SWIFT AND ADAMS HOLD ABOUT LANGUAGE

Both Adams and Swift know that language is not neutral; neither author is naïve about the power of language, or of the opinion that communication is simply a means to convey the truth.

Swift juggles humanity's perpetual communication dilemma, as embodied in Gulliver and the Royal Society's scientific proposals to solve this problem. To tie in with the earlier mention of the Royal Society's interest in language, it must be noted that Swift himself took a keen interest in language and yearned for the improvement of the standard of English. Swift was a campaigner for language and communication, as is apparent from his exploration of the theme in various guises throughout the book. In *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Language* (1712) he had sketched his concerns over the state of English and suggested the forming of a public academy to regulate the language. As early in the novel as in Gulliver's letter to his cousin Sympson (Swift 2008: 9), Swift already hints at the role that language will prove to play in the narrative, when he has Gulliver comment on his own use of sea-language, and criticise the introduction of new jargon and neologisms into the language, to the extent that changing dialects cause mutual unintelligibility (see also section 4.3.3).

In another reference to language, Swift portrays in Part IV (the land of the Houyhnhnms) an ideal world, a state reflected in the language. The Houyhnhnms' multimodal style of communication is a blend of the distinct forms of communication attempted by Gulliver previously, incorporating touch, body language, gesture, sound and tone to convey message and meaning (Swift 2008: 210):

> We stood gazing at each other for some time … [b]ut, this animal seeming to receive my civilities with disdain, shook his head, and bent his brows, softly raising up his left fore-foot to remove my hand. …While he and I were thus employed, another horse came up; who applying himself to the first in a very formal manner, they gently struck each other's right hoof before, neighing several times by turns, and varying the sound, which seemed to be almost articulate. They went some paces off, as if it were to confer together, walking side by side, backward and forward, like persons deliberating upon some affair of weight; but often turning their eyes towards me … .

And in clear reference to the ideal Adamic language which is supposed to reflect the harmony of society (section 4.2.1), the Houyhnhnm language is said not to have terms for lying or falsehood (Swift 2008: 219, 277), reflecting the absolute rationality of their society. Swift thus sees an indissoluble relationship between a society and its language, and his description of the Houyhnhnms seems to reflect a yearning for improvement in English society.

Swift's body of works displays his fondness for hoaxing or gulling the reader and *Gulliver's Travels* is a prime example of how language may be used to persuade readers of the truthfulness of a work of fiction (Swift 2008: xiv). Ironically, this purported autobiographical text which is riddled with intimations of truthfulness, for instance "candidly" (Swift 2008: 240) and "to confess" (Swift 2008: 260), and which contains an expressed "detestation of all falsehood or disguise" (Swift 2008: 240), is a prime example of the ability of an author to use language to deceive. This was not unique to Swift, however, as Nicole Didicher has pointed out that "writers of (supposedly) genuine travel narratives in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries emphasised their own accuracy, but were usually considered notorious liars" (Didicher 1997: 184).

With reference to the overall chaotic (inter)action in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and the fact that Arthur remaining a diffident, poor communicator (see 4.6) despite the constant use of the Babel fish, it may further be argued that Adams does not see language as a problem, but rather the impetus within the communicator. The speaker's thoughts, motivation and decision as to what to express lie at the heart of these failures, not the conveying or translation of these. If observations and desires are inherently flawed, even the removal of language barriers will still leave imperfect

communication. Even a perfect communication device cannot cure an imperfect point of departure.

Adams therefore appears to be of the opinion that it is not necessarily a verbal communication problem that causes discord and conflict between people, but the fact that there will always be misunderstandings and conflict anyway. This repeated conflict scatters people to the wind to form groups of “us” and “them” and is an inescapable part of survival. The fact that his creature is called a Babel fish, yet facilitates understanding, seems perplexing in light of the biblical story (see section 4.2.1) until it is read in conjunction with the statement that the Babel fish has caused more and bloodier wars than anything in the history of creation (Adams 2002: 129).

This is completely at odds with the concept of an Adamic language reflecting and resonating with the harmony of the society that uses it, as in the land of the Houyhnhnms. This then becomes a conflict between God and nature, the Adamic language being that described by God. For centuries western society espoused the ideal of emulating God and Christ, as it was a way to draw a distinction between the elevated human species, and the beasts governed by nature (as discussed in Chapter 3: “Alienation and estrangement”). Adams is saying that, however humans may resist it, they can’t escape their nature, and that humans will do what they always do.

As an authorial device the Babel fish essentially removes the need for an Adamic language understood by all. In the twentieth century, technology advanced at a rapid pace and Adams would have been aware that at some point technology would solve the problem of universal communication. Specifically, the author would have been influenced and inspired by information about autonomous machine translation.

Note that the Babel fish works by excreting a telepathic matrix into the host's ear, and that it is this excrement which facilitates the understanding of all languages. Based on this description of the Babel fish's workings, it may furthermore be argued that, in line with his raucous satirical style, Adams holds the opinion that everybody talks rubbish, regardless of what language they're saying it in. But, while the late twentieth-century translation technology that Adams was exposed to delivered notoriously poor, garbled results, it cannot be assumed that Adams is parodying nascent artificial intelligence computer technology.

For example, that when Arthur is stranded on prehistoric Earth (Adams 2002: 401) he regresses and loses the ability to speak. Adams further capitalises on the prehistoric setting by having Arthur teach the cavemen to play Scrabble, further referencing the human development of language (Adams 2002: 380). This impression created by the use of the Babel fish and The Guide – that language acquisition is not important – stands in contrast to Swift's meticulous descriptions of Gulliver's language learning at each destination. (Of course, were Adams to have indulged Arthur in detailed language learning, it would have slowed down the progress of the frenetically paced story. Reading about Arthur taking language lessons would have been dull and out of kilter with Adams's general absurd and satirical touch in the book.)

As an aside, Adams makes humorous references to the publishing industry, particularly during the visit to the publishing offices of the electronic Guide and in mentioning, for example, the Guide's "compendious and *occasionally* accurate glossary" (Adams 2002: 307). Adams himself deliberately indulges in said [doubtful] publishing conventions through the random inclusion of footnotes that are at best humorous and at worst perplexing, for example (Adams 2002: 44):

> Ford Prefect's original name is only pronouncable in an obscure Betelgeuseian dialect, now virtually extinct since the Great Collapsing Hrung Disaster of Gal./Sid/./Year 03758 which wiped out all the old Praxibetel communities on Betelgeuse Seven.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the vehicles for communication used by the authors to bridge communication gaps between the protagonists and those they meet, as well as between author and reader. Jonathan Swift sends his protagonist as much on a linguistic journey as one in the physical realm and subjects Gulliver to situations where he has to use the full spectrum of communications options, including gesturing and sign language. Douglas Adams follows an approach of making organic utterances electronic, most prominently so in the device called the Babel fish. He complements this with the personification of objects and lower life forms, particularly by endowing these with the gift of speech. The narrator is equally employed to its full potential in both novels to strengthen the authors' communication with their readers.

Both Adams and Swift show in *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* their awareness that language is not neutral, but that it possesses the power to entertain, inform, deceive and destroy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The lives and works of Jonathan Swift and Douglas Adams may be separated by centuries, but this comparative study of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* has found the two primary texts to contain thought-provoking dissimilarities and, more prominently, intriguing resemblances. Much has been written independently on their most striking qualities, but few comparative studies have been undertaken of their similarity. An insightful blogger comments thus (Phasmatodea 2015):

> Hitchhiker's was never really about the science fiction. That was simply a backdrop and facilitator for Adams's wry observations on the absurdities of 'normal' life – in much the same way as Jonathan Swift satirised his own culture within an epic fantasy, following another hapless traveller through strange lands hundreds of years ago.

This study was triggered by obvious points of correspondence, such as the fact that both texts revolve around a man undertaking voyages that bring him into contact with fantastical peoples and places representative of humankind in general or European society in particular, and the highly imaginative and fantastical style of writing, skilfully underpinned by calculated subtexts.

While both novels display representative themes of the science fiction genre, such as journeys to other worlds and biological mutation, *Gulliver's Travels* is classifiable as proto science fiction due to themes such as utopia/dystopia, alternate worlds and alien cultures. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* on the other hand, mocks science fiction in its inversion and dismantling of the formulaic structures and narrative patterns of science fiction.

Both primary texts have furthermore been found to be exemplary specimens of satire and both *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* have withstood the test of time. In great part by virtue of their energetic pace and entertaining content, they have taken up their rightful place in the body of classic and contemporary satire. Power, institutions of power and bureaucracy are held up to scrutiny; flaws in religious concepts are highlighted; and altered perspectives on human life are presented.

The two novels have equally been found to display attributes of the fictional travel genre. As has been demonstrated, in *Gulliver's Travels* the journey is a process of transformation – towards the end of the narrative Gulliver achieves a change of view point and perception, and is rendered alienated and isolated. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Adams reflects a characteristic element of mock science fiction in his portrayal of Arthur Dent as an antihero with limited depth of character and little evidence of transformation. Further attributes and themes of travel narratives that are identifiable in both primary texts, are the text as a practical travel guide; religion, politics and conquests; and discovery adventure. Humanity's precarious existence and its relative insignificance – both actual and perceived – are shown up against the structural and philosophical backdrop of travel and its implied experiences of miscommunication, alienation and estrangement.

Jonathan Swift and Douglas Adams both worked during periods of heightened renewal and awakening in the human pursuit of knowledge that were marked by a steep rise in technological and scientific achievements (the Enlightenment and the mid-twentieth century). In both texts, science and technology are therefore major continuous themes. The unsettling perception of humanity noted above is strengthened through this incorporation of science and technology in both Gulliver's

and Arthur Dent's milieus and through allusions to humankind's interaction with research and innovation. Science and technology elements at times overlap with travel and transport activities in both texts, for example, in detailed descriptions of modes of travel, navigation and methods of propulsion. In other instances, science and technology references occur in relation to language and communication. Scientific notions and objects are presented by the authors as alienating humankind from a sense of place and sense of purpose. In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Adams explores this relationship between humanity and its sciences in an array of technological feats and defeats. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift at times actually incorporates and at other times hints at the underlying meaning of scientific instruments such as microscopes, telescopes and automata to achieve shifting perspectives and thereby altered views of humanity and society. The comparative smallness and vulnerability of humanity depicted in this manner are developed in both texts to include references to and inversions of the Chain of Being, and in Adams this extends to satirical criticism of religious concepts.

Despite the numerous similarities and points of correspondence between the two texts, key differences are noted in particular at the macro level. *Gulliver's Travels* boasts an orderly structure, with the elements of balance and repetition noticeable down to the level of discreet parts and chapters. Remarkable too are scene transitions that succinctly encapsulate each Part's preceding and anticipated action. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* in contrast presents a disordered structure: whereas in *Gulliver's Travels* the milieu as a narrative element is so central to the story that it qualifies the text as a milieu narrative, the *Guide* is rather an anti-milieu story marked by a haphazard structure. Adhering to the distinguishing features of mock science fiction, Adams deliberately thwarts reader expectations of the text and

employs even the narrative structure to drive home his message of chaos, randomness and absurdity.

The study undertaken in this dissertation has highlighted a number of topics that would benefit from future research. A topic deserving closer scrutiny would be a linguistic comparison of the ‘secret’ and ‘nonsense’ languages used at Gulliver’s various destinations, and the imaginative names of processes, characters and places in Adams’s galaxy.

Finally, Gulliver’s celestial navigation in the eighteenth century resonates with Arthur Dent’s navigation among those very heavenly bodies, as envisaged by Adams two hundred years later. Humanity’s journey through space-time in the twentieth century remains as treacherous as that by sea during the Enlightenment and this is hardly surprising given that both function metonymically to highlight the perilous complexity of the human condition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Adams, D. 2002. [1979] *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Trilogy of Four.* London: Picador.

Swift, J. 2008. [1726] *Gulliver's Travels.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abrams, M.H. 1988. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 5th edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Abrams, M.H. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* 7th edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Aldiss, B. 1974. *Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction.* New York: Schocken.

Baker, B. 2014. *Science Fiction: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism.* London: Macmillan Publishers.

Card, O.S. 1988. *Characters and Viewpoint.* Cincinnati: Writer's Digest.

Chandler, D. 1997. 'An Introduction to Genre Theory' http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/ Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf Accessed July 12, 2017.

Clarke, A.C. Introduction. *The First Men in the Moon.* By H.G. Wells. 1993. London: Everyman, xix–xxxiv.

Cohen, J. 1966. *Human Robots in Myth and Science.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Cotter, C.H. 1968. *A History of Nautical Astronomy.* London: Hollis & Carter.

Crowley, D. & Mitchell, D. 1994. *Communication Theory Today.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Damrosch, L. 2013. *Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World.* London: Yale University Press.

Didicher, N.E. 1997. Mapping the distorted worlds of *Gulliver's Travels*. *Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies 16*: 179–196.

Donovan, S.G. & Williams, G.W. 1984. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. *Explicator* 42(3): 18–20.

Errington, A.R. 2011. The comforting myth of the heroic unbeliever. *Quadrant*

55(10): 61–64.

Fredericks, S.C. 1976. Lucian's *True History* as SF. *Science Fiction Studies* 3(1): 49–60.

Friedson, A.M. 1967. Wycherley and Molière: Satirical point of view in *The Plain Dealer. Modern Philology* 64(3): 189–197.

Gallagher, C. 2000. Formalism and time. *Modern Language Quarterly* 61(1): 229–251.

Gibbs, E.D. & Springer, A. 1994. *Early Use of Total Communication: An Introductory Guide for Parents.* Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company.

Girten, K.M. 2013. Mingling with matter: tactile microscopy and the philosophic mind in Brobdingnag and beyond. *The Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* 54(4): 497–520.

Greenberg, R.A. 1970. "*Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift.* London: WW Norton & Company.

Griffin, D.R. 1993. Introduction: Constructive Postmodern Philosophy. In D.R. Griffin (ed.) *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy.* (pp 1-15). Albany: State University of New York.

Hanlon, M. 2005. *The Science of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* New York: Macmillan.

Hart, V. 1992. Vanbrugh's travels. *History Today* 42: 26–32.

Haslauer, E.M. 2010. Infinite improbabilities: mechanisms of parody in Douglas Adams's comic science fiction writing. Unpublished dissertation. University of Vienna.

Hayes, B. 1999. Computing science: computational creationism. *American Scientist* 87(5): 392–396.

Holly, G. 1979. Travel and translation: textuality in *Gulliver's Travels*. *Criticism* 21(2): 134–152.

Hutchins, J. 1997. From first conception to first demonstration: the nascent years of machine translation, 1947–1954. A chronology. *Machine Translation* 12(3): 195–252.

Johnson, S. 1768. *A Dictionary of the English Language.* 3rd edition. Digitised. Dublin: Thomas Ewing.

Kelly, A.C. 1978. After Eden: Gulliver's (linguistic) travels. *ELH* 45(1): 33–54.

Kelly, A.C. 2007. Gulliver as pet and pet-keeper: talking animals in Book 4. *ELH* 74(2): 323–349.

Kropf, C.R. 1988. Douglas Adams's "Hitchhiker" novels as mock Science Fiction. *Science Fiction Studies* 44(15, 1): 61–70.

Krueger, J.R. 1968. Language and techniques of communication as theme or tool in Science Fiction. *Linguistics* 6(39): 68–86.

Kuzniar, A. 2003. A higher language: Novalis on communion with animals. *The German Quarterly* 76(4): 426–442.

Lamb, J. 2004. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*. Berkeley: McMaster University.

Marcus, G.E. 1996. *Connected: Engagements with Media.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mehrabian, A. 1971. *Silent Messages.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Michie, A. 2006. 'Gulliver the Houyahoo: Swift, Locke and the ethics of excessive individualism.' In Frank Palmeri (ed.), *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate. pp 67–81.

Mousley, A. 2009. Shakespeare and the meaning of life. *Shakespeare* 5:2, June: 135–136.

Nicolson, M & Mohler, N.M. 1937. The scientific background of Swift's voyage to Laputa. *Annals of Science* 2(3): 299–334.

Ogborn, J & Buckroyd, P. 2001. *Satire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parrinder, P. 1979. The alien encounter. *Science Fiction Studies* 17(6)1: 46–58.

Parrinder, P. 1980. *Science Fiction, Its Criticism and Teaching.* London: Methuen.

Patey, D.L. 1991. Swift's satire on "science" and the structure of *Gulliver's Travels*. *ELH* 58(4): 809–839.

Phasmatodea. (n.d.) Rule of thumb Blogspot. http://fasmatodea.blogspot.co.za /2015/02/rule-of-thumb.html Accessed February 21, 2015.

Rabb, M.A. 2013. Johnson, Lilliput and eighteenth-century miniature. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46(2): 281–298.

Rawson, C. 2012. Gulliver, travel and empire. *Comparative Literature & Culture* 14(5): 1–10.

Robins, N. 2006. *The Corporation that Changed the World.* London: Pluto Press.

Salvato, G. 2015. *Gestures in the Pedagogy of Second Languages in Multilingual Canada.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Seigel, J.P. 1969. The Enlightenment and the evolution of a language of signs in France and England. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30(1): 96–115.

Slaughter, M.M. 1982. *Universal Languages and Scientific Taxonomy in the*

Seventeenth Century. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spater, G. & Parsons, I. 1977. *A Marriage of True Minds: An Intimate Portrait of Leonard and Virginia Woolf*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Stevenson, R.L. 1996. *The Silverado Squatters.* San Francisco: Mercury House.

Stevenson, R.L. 2007. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* Raleigh, NC: Hayes Barton Press.

Toffler, A. 1970. *Future Shock.* New York: Random House.

Traugott, J. 1984. The Yahoo in the doll's house: *Gulliver's Travels*. *The Yearbook of English Studies.* 14: 127–150.

Universal translator. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.startrek.com/ database_article/ universal-translator/. Accessed December 12, 2016.

Van der Colff, M.A. 2007. Douglas Adams: Analysing the Absurd. Unpublished dissertation. University of Pretoria.

Van der Colff, M.A. 2010. *One is Never Alone With a Rubber Duck: Douglas Adams's Absurd Fictional Universe.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Welsh. F. 2011. *The History of the World: From the Dawn of Humanity to the Modern Age.* London: Quercus.

Welsh, K. 1971. *Hitch Hiker's Guide to Europe*. London: Pan Books.

Whitfield, P. 2011. *Travel: A Literary History.* Oxford: Bodleian.

Wood, G. 2002. *Living Dolls: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life.* London: Faber & Faber.

Womersley, D. 2009. Dean Swift hears a sermon: Robert Howard's Ash Wednesday sermon of 1725 and *Gulliver's Travels*. *The Review of English Studies.* (60) 247.