Critical Literary Studies

P-ISSN: 2676-699X E-ISSN: 2716-9928

Vol. VIII, No. 1, Series 15

Autumn and Winter 2025-2026

CLS ACADEMIC JOURNAL https://cls.uok.ac.ir

UNIVERSITY OF KURDISTAN https://uok.ac.ir

Article Type: Original Research

Page Numbers: 217-243

Article History:

Received: 27 April 2025

Accepted: 30 August 2025

Published: 11 October 2025

DOI:

https://doi.org/10.22034/cls.2025.64043

Author Details:

1. PhD Candidate in English Language and Literature, Faculty of Language and Literature, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran. (Corresponding Author)
ali.shenavi@uok.ac.ir

2. Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Language and Literature, Velayat University, Iranshahr, Iran.
i.bassir@velayat.ac.ir

The Construction of Subjectivity through Desire in *Gulliver's Travels*: A Deleuzian-Žižekian Perspective

Ali Shenavi[1*]; Seyed Iman Bassir[2]

Abstract: Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* has long been read as a satire targeting the 18th-century British politics, scientific rationalism, and imperial ambition. But beneath its satirical surface, the novel grapples with deeper philosophical questions—about how desire is shaped, how subjectivity is produced, and how individuals are caught within the systems that define them. Although scholars have extensively explored the text from political and ethical perspectives, its engagement with the dynamics of desire has not been examined through the theories of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Slavoj Žižek. This study brings those frameworks into conversation with Swift's narrative, drawing on the concepts of desiring-machines, social-machines, the Body without Organs, and the desire of the Other. Through a close reading of Gulliver's four voyages, the paper traces the dynamics of desire and Gulliver's gradual alienation from the social structures, culminating in an ontological rupture—a rejection of the codes that once shaped his identity. Rather than upholding Enlightenment ideals, Swift offers a portrait of a subject unravelling under their weight. In this light, *Gulliver's Travels* emerges not only as a political satire, but as a profound meditation on desire, control, and ontological rupture.

Keywords: Desiring-machines; Social-machines; Socius; The Body without Organs; The Other; Jonathan Swift.

Citation: Shenavi, A., and Bassir, S. I. "The Construction of Subjectivity through Desire in *Gulliver's Travels*: A Deleuzian-Žižekian Perspective," *Critical Literary Studies*, *8*, 1, 2025, 217-243. doi: 10.22034/cls.2025.64043

1. Introduction

Desire is often described in simple terms—as a wish, a want, or a need. It is socially recognized as a mental state, typically linked to common human urges: to eat, sleep, learn, or rest. Yet this apparent familiarity conceals its deeper complexity. When we ask why one person desires to study literature while another pursues wealth, we uncover a web of conflicting desires which defy simple explanation. A person born in Iraq might desire being rich more than being a poet. While those who are born in wealthy families in the centre of Edinburgh might desire a literary life more than being an engineer. Though these people almost share similar characteristics, their objects of desire are dissimilar. Even in desiring to drink or eat, they have already and unconsciously chosen what they desire to drink or eat. It would be more complicated when human thinking system is brought under the umbrella of the theory of desire. A person might be proud and say "cogito" and then affirm "je suis," unaware of the origins of their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours. In this sense, desire operates not only as a state of wanting something, but also as a dominant force underlying human social performances.

Desire compels individuals to think, feel, and act in particular ways. As Elizabeth Anscombe notes, the very tendency toward action presupposes some form of desire (p. 68). This makes desire not just a psychological impulse, but a site of intense cultural and ideological construction—a kind of playground, or battleground, where discourses and ideologies compete to shape what subjects desire. Discursive institutions and ideological apparatuses of society are the hallmark of such systems which determine what to desire, think, feel, and do. In this view, desire does not essentially originate from the subjects themselves. The desire of the subject and the very being of the subject are both historically constructed and regulated by external forces such as ideologies and discourses. According to Žižek, human beings have always been subjected to the influence of external objects (or Others); nevertheless, these forces are not purely positioned by external phenomena, because "it is at the same time the place where the fate of [their] internal, most 'sincere' and 'intimate' beliefs is in advance staged and decided," and their "belief is already materialized in the external ritual" (42). For instance, when somebody is under the influence of "the machine of a religious ritual," they "already believe without knowing it" (42). In other words, they "already believe unconsciously, because it is from this external character of the symbolic machine that [they] can explain the status of the unconscious as radically external" (42). This phenomenon has been for so long humans' archetypal frailty, questioning their freedom of will. This raises a fundamental question: Do humans desire autonomously, or are their

desires shaped by the desires of the Other? This question concerning the nature of desire has been significantly investigated since the discovery of the unconscious.

The question of desire—its origin, function, and object—has preoccupied many of the most influential thinkers in modern theory, from Freud and Lacan to Deleuze and Guattari. While Freud viewed desire as rooted in repression and the unconscious, and Lacan as a structure of lack mediated by language, later theorists such as Deleuze, Guattari, and Žižek radically redefined desire as a system shaped by external structures, not essentially internal essence. For these thinkers, desire is inseparable from the social and ideological fields which organize subjectivity. This theoretical shift—from understanding desire as private and psychological to seeing it as systemic and constructed—offers a powerful perspective for approaching literary texts concerned with identity and subjectivity. This paper mainly focuses on the concept of desire as developed in the theories of Deleuze, Guattari, and Žižek, investigating the ways through which desire may be interpreted in terms of social and power relations in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Deleuze and Guattari argue that desire does not presuppose any dominant force (such as libido), but emerges from the collision, relation, and connection between machines which operate dualistically (26). The moment these machines interact and form connections, they turn to the so-called desiring-machines. The desire of desiring-machines is not a self-contained entity and presupposes the existence of desiring-machines. Desiring machines should also coexist within the social-machines of the socius which governs and regulates the desires and productions of desiring-machines (5). *Gilliver's Travels* provides a narrative which can be interpreted based on these notions. In his novel, Swift presents several despotic societies which function as social-machines. These social-machines identify the desiring-machines—humans, animals, ideologies, etc.— in society and decode, recode, regulate, and direct their desires (294, 302, 340). However, the case of regulating desire in Žižek's theories is different.

From Žižek's perspective, the desire of the subject is never purely autonomous; rather, it is structured through the gaze and expectations of the Other (130–32). The "Other" in this context refers not merely to other individuals, but to the broader symbolic order: the norms, institutions, and discourses that govern social life. Desire, in Žižekian terms, is fundamentally intersubjective—it is always mediated by what we believe others expect of us or value in us. As Žižek explains, even our most intimate wishes are haunted by an external structure. We desire what the Other desires, or we desire to be desired by the Other (137). This insight becomes especially relevant when read through the figure of Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*, whose early voyages reveal a deep complicity with the

ideological norms of British society. In both Lilliput and Brobdingnag, Gulliver participates in rituals of power, honor, and hierarchy that reflect his internalization of imperial and Enlightenment values. His actions and self-conception are guided by a desire to be seen as rational, loyal, and useful—desires that mirror the expectations of the world he comes from. In this sense, Gulliver does not yet confront his own desire; he moves within the matrix of desires imposed by the symbolic Other. His subjectivity, far from being self-generated, is shaped by what his society has taught him to want, believe, and become. However, by the fourth voyage, he gradually moves away from the Others which determined his desires in the beginning of his voyages, a phenomenon which can also be explained through the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze and Guattari also introduce a specific concept called the 'Body without Organs (BwO).' It is the primordial chaos itself, the disorder upon which all order rests. It throws out the partial objects which form organized machines and ironically escapes those machines. It "reproduces itself, puts forth shoots, and branches out to the farthest corners of the universe," but "every coupling of machines, every production of a machine, every sound of a machine running, becomes unbearable" to it (9-10). It is produced by itself, floating, escaping, deterritorializing, and deconstructing endlessly. The BwO does not only escape structurality and organization, but also threatens whatever structure or organization it encounters. This paper thus employs the term BwO to refer to any entity which rejects the dominant matrixial structures within the socius, the realm of social-machines. Gulliver can be an epitome of such rejection of social orders. He gradually refrains from identifying with the social-machines of his society. As he moves away from human civilization and grows closer to the Houyhnhnms—creatures who represent wisdom, reason, and gentleness—Gulliver begins to deconstruct his socially constructed subjectivity. He becomes a symbol of desubjectification, challenging the codes of the social-machines and moving toward a life outside the regulatory structures of human society.

This paper therefore approaches *Gulliver's Travels* through the concepts of desiring-machines, social-machines, the BwO, and the desire of the Other. It explains the dynamics of desire and demonstrates how Gulliver's progressive alienation from British imperialism and Enlightenment ideology reflects a deeper philosophical rupture: not only political or moral, but ontological. His journey is a de-subjectifying process—a shedding of the ideological scaffolding which has structured his identity. By tracing this transformation, the paper argues that Swift's narrative offers more than satire; it performs a philosophical meditation on desire, control, and the conditions for becoming something other than what society allows.

2. Literature Review

This study, while grounded in both posthumanist and psychoanalytic traditions, departs from earlier readings of *Gulliver's Travels* by focusing on the intersection of desire, ideology, and subject formation. Although numerous studies have examined the novel's political, ethical, and cultural dimensions, few have engaged its philosophical treatment of desire through the theories and concepts of Deleuze, Guattari, and Žižek. The concerns raised in this paper often overlap with those of prior research—particularly in critiques of Enlightenment rationality and imperial ideology—but its theoretical orientation sets it apart. By bringing together Deleuze and Guattari's theories of desiring-machines, social-machines, and the BwO alongside Žižek's concept of the desire of the Other, this study develops a distinct interpretive framework for understanding Swift's text not only as satire, but as a meditation on the production and disruption of subjectivity through dynamics of desire.

Critics of *Gulliver's Travels* have often been divided into two broad groups, the "hard" and "soft" critics (Clifford, *The Fourth Voyage* 33). The former critics view Swift's last part of *Gulliver's Travels* as a total misanthropy, a severe attack on humankind. The latter critics, on the contrary, claim that Swift sought to represent the pure, rational, and transcendent side of humanity as well as the Yahoo side (Casement 531; Clifford, *The Eighteenth Century* 126-30). Much of the existing scholarship emphasizes the political aspects of the text (e.g. Downie, Fink, Harth, Hone, Roberston, and Wilding). The case studies also approached the work from a historical-biographical (see Fox), feminist (see Nussbaum), new-historicist (see Fabricant), deconstructionist (see Castle), reader-response (see Conlon), and psychoanalytic (see Barash) perspectives. However, none of these studies examine desire through the theoretical frameworks of Deleuze, Guattari, and Žižek. The selected works reviewed below, while valuable in their own right, underscore the absence of a reading which centers on the ideological and ontological dimensions of desire as structured by the Other and social-machines.

George Orwell, in his "Politics vs. Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*," explores Swift's deep ambivalence toward human nature and social institutions. Orwell traces Gulliver's psychological and ideological development across his voyages, emphasizing how each journey intensifies the protagonist's disillusionment with the dominant structures of his society—including imperialism, religion, politics, and culture. By the end of the novel, Gulliver prefers isolation and contemplation to participation in human society, aspiring to live like the Houyhnhnms, whom he associates with reason

and purity. Orwell interprets this transformation as a kind of moral or philosophical rejection of society's superstructures. This reading resonates closely with the argument developed in the present study, particularly in its alignment with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the BwO—a mode of being which resists structure, representation, and ideological coding.

Kathleen M. Williams, in her "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," explores the notions Swift uses in his fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, such as the concepts of human reason and pride. She interprets Gulliver's transformation—particularly in the final voyage—as signaling a collapse of Enlightenment humanism. In this view, traditional humanist values such as reason, dignity and the soul no longer provide a stable foundation for subjectivity. Gulliver's turn toward animality and his rejection of human society are, for Williams, not merely satirical devices but philosophical provocations which interrogate the very category of the human. The progress expected by the eighteenth-century people, becomes a nightmare in Swift. In this view, people are the prisoners of new ideas, advancements, and modes of living. *Gulliver's Travels* thus becomes the critique of the fallen Enlightenment man.

In his "Corruption and Degeneration in *Gulliver's Travels*," Douglas Canfield explores the notions of degeneration and corruption of human beings and Gulliver's opposition to these notions in *Gulliver's Travels*. He argues that the significant end of part three is neglected by scholars. The end of the third part presents a turning point in which Gulliver becomes aware of human degeneration and corruption and aims at perfecting humankind. The first three voyages, Canfield notes, manifest the corruption and degeneration of man; however, the end of the third voyage reveals a twist, the movement from degeneration to perfection. Gulliver confronts the fact that humans are degenerated and corrupted, living in the illusion that they are the centre of the universe, the most reasonable creatures of all, and the heirs to the throne of the kingdom of the earth. Nevertheless, Swift depicts a reality that has been repeated in mythology and religion for thousands of years, the fallen nature of man. This interpretation aligns closely with the current study's theoretical framework, which understands Gulliver's condition in the final book as a movement toward deterritorialization and desubjectification. Gulliver ceases to function as a rational, coherent Enlightenment subject; instead, he becomes what Deleuze and Guattari might describe as a BwO—a subject estranged from the codes and flows that once constituted his identity.

Michael Wilding explores the political aspects of *Gulliver's Travels* in his "The Politics of *Gulliver's Travels*" and provides an extensive analysis of the moral, ethical, and behavioral dimensions of the work. He investigates the political allusions in the narrative and compares them with the different political stages of England. He interprets ideology as a regulatory mechanism, echoing this paper's argument that ideology operates as a tool for shaping desire. Ideology is, in a sense, a controlling tool or medium used by the leaders (or despots) and through this medium a despot is enabled to direct and regulate people's desires. Many scholars, Wilding concludes, view Swift's political stance as deeply conservative. He saw political and social institutions as necessary due to the fallen nature of humanity—but also as inevitably flawed. Since humans are corrupt, their institutions can never be perfected. Swift's work suggests a cautious acceptance of existing structures, driven by the fear that attempts at improvement may lead to even worse outcomes.

Nasir Jamal Khattak's PhD dissertation, *Gulliver's Travels: A Journey through the Unconscious,* analyzes *Gulliver's Travels* through Jungian analytical psychology, interpreting Gulliver's voyages as a metaphorical exploration of the human unconscious. It posits that the four nations and their inhabitants symbolize archetypal qualities, representing facets of Gulliver's psyche that remain unacknowledged due to his lack of self-awareness. Using concepts such as the collective unconscious and archetypes, this research examines the psychological regression Gulliver undergoes, driven by his extraverted-sensation-type personality and excessive reliance on sense perception. Through close textual analysis, it identifies a recurring thematic thread linking each episode, illustrating how the protagonist's encounters progressively contribute to his alienation from himself and humanity. This transformation closely aligns with the notion of the body without organs which Gulliver turns to by the end of the fourth voyage.

V. Tumer's *Denunciation of Humanity: A Posthumanist Reading of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels* applies a posthumanist or anti-anthropocentric approach to Swift's satire, focusing on the defamiliarization and deconstruction of the human body and reason. Posthumanism stands against the idea that language and reason are human-specific since these capacities are used by humans to oppress and control whatever non-human. Tumer argues that Swift attempted to depict posthumanism through "deconstructing" and "defamiliarizing" both human bodies and reason (VI). Since his work also examines the rejection of language and reason as two human characteristics, it links itself to some of the discussions of the present research, including the denunciation of consciousness and subjectivity.

Safak Horzum's recently published paper, "Proto-posthumanist Subject for Swift: Gulliver as a Non/human Hybrid in Lilliput," contends that the realm of fantasy empowers nonhuman beings while rejecting human superiority, stripping them from their humane subjectivity. He continues to argue that a similar case occurs in posthumanist studies, in which human agency is renounced. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, anthropocentric movements were at their peak and the Enlightenment haled human (and human logic) as the centre of the universe. Horzum claims that Swift is rebelling against the very notion of anthropocentrism. Gulliver goes through a gradual transformation from an anthropocentric figure to a nonhuman one, leading to his inevitable transformation into a posthumanist subject. These are valuable contributions, emphasizing the transformation of Gulliver from an enlightenment human to a posthuman who shares many characteristics with the so-called body without organs.

This study seeks to address a gap in the literature by analyzing the concept of desire through a Deleuzian-Žižekian framework. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not simply expressed or represented—it operates within a machinic system which organizes and regulates its flows. Žižek, in contrast, argues that desire is never truly one's own; it is always mediated by the Other. In his view, a subject's desire is the desire of the Other—one desires what the Other desires or what one believes the Other desires. Despite the richness of *Gulliver's Travels* as a site for such theoretical inquiry, these frameworks have rarely been applied to the text. This study therefore explores how desire is constructed, regulated, and directed within Swift's narrative, focusing on the social and ideological mechanisms that shape the characters' motivations. In particular, it examines Gulliver's transformation into a BwO—a figure estranged from and disillusioned with the symbolic structures which once defined his identity.

3. Theoretical Framework: Desire in the Theories of Deleuze and Žižek

The theories applied in this study aim at explaining how the subject's desires are detected, decoded, recoded, regulated and directed toward what the *Thing* desires (The *Thing* in Freud is the *Other* in Lacan and Žižek). The present paper, of course, borrows the term *Thing* not in a Freudian sense; rather, this term is used to refer to the regulating and directing force or forces underlying the desire. In Freud's opinion, these forces are the psychic elements (such as the id and libido) that construct and direct the human desire. He notes that the ego is "a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego" (56). However, Deleuze and Guattari believe

that desire does not have a particular psychic fountain or source to originate from. They see the flowing of desire as a result of machines' interactions, interconnections as well as relations. This leads the machines to transform to a sort of desiring-machines which are productive. They argue that "desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object … desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it" (26). Nevertheless, these desiring-machines can only function within a system, the social system, to be precise. The social system, or socius, itself comprises several social-machines which detect, decode, recode, regulate, and direct the desires of desiring-machines. Deleuze and Guattari affirm that "the prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated" (33). Therefore, one's desires are not real, but they are the desires of the *Thing* (like the socius or the Other), any leading or directing force behind the subjects' desires.

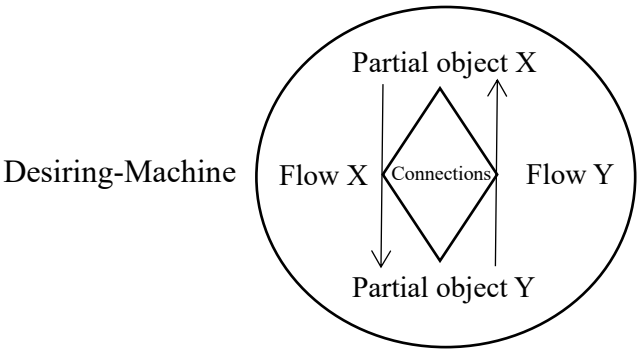
Žižek similarly explains how these desires are not one's own desires, but are a heap of fantasies, illusions, and forgeries. He maintains that the subjects' desire is not their own and it is the desire of the Other with which subjects infinitely attempt to identify. Subjects' desires do not originate from them but from the outside, *the Other, the Thing*. When somebody opens their eyes, they encounter many Others that shape them every day. For instance, TV shows, social media, and the news are some of the giants of these Others which subject human beings. They ironically name some [empty] signifiers (or *lacks*) for which human beings seek transcendental signifieds, especially out of the desire to know or the fear of the unknown (129-132). At the peak of human search for these transcendental signifieds, the Others, discourses, and ideologies fill humans' empty signifiers with their own signifieds. If somebody is desperately looking for the truth, a primordial empty signifier, it would be very easy to make them dance on the infinite chain of signifieds that never end and control them.

4.1 Machines

While previous theories concerning desire assume subjects or individuals as the originators of desire, Deleuze and Guattari devise a new concept, machines, which are everywhere. They declare that "everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections" (1). They define the concept of the machine as the foundational unit of desiring-production. A machine, in their terms, is not an isolated mechanical object but a relational and productive connection—a system of coupling which operates both within the unconscious and in social fields. They begin with a deceptively simple example: "The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the

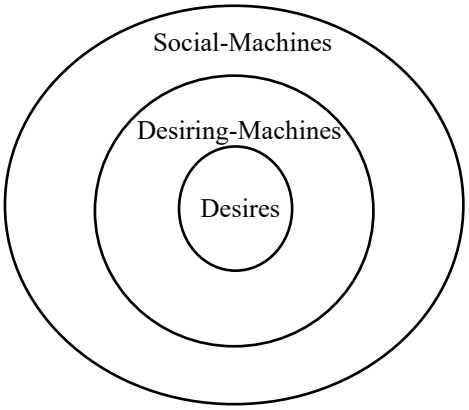
mouth a machine coupled to it" (1). This basic interaction exemplifies how desire functions through connections, where one element produces a flow and another interrupts or receives it. Every machine is always part of a broader network; "every machine is a machine of a machine" (1). In this schema, machines do not operate based on lack or symbolic meaning, but through productive synthesis, forming assemblages that are constantly connecting and disconnecting. The unconscious, for Deleuze and Guattari, is thus a factory, not a theatre—it is composed of machines which generate reality rather than represent it. These machines are the functional components of desire itself, which they describe as inherently machinic and immanent to material and social life.

Machines are made of "flows" and "partial objects" (Deleuze and Guattari 5-6). Partial objects—such as body parts, drives, or fragmented organs—are not remnants of a lost whole, but autonomous components which engage in production without reference to a totality; they are, as the authors describe, "dispersed working parts of a machine that is itself dispersed" (42). Each partial object emits a flow—a current of energy or desire—which is coupled with another partial object which interrupts or redirects it, forming what they call a binary machine (5). These flows are materially real rather than symbolic, and their interactions constitute what the authors call passive syntheses, through which "desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented" (6). In this framework, the unconscious is not structured like a language or driven by representational fantasies, but rather operates as a machinic assemblage. Desire, therefore, is not a longing for what is missing, but a process that actively produces psychic and social reality (26, 29). The flows are in constant collision to form a connection between various partial objects to form machines, a process called connective synthesis. Machines are not separate from one another but, to fulfil their function or confirm their existence, they are "always coupled with [one] another" (5). The continuous collision between the flows of these machines leads to desire and, simultaneously, this "desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects," forming the so-called desiring-machines (5).



4.2 Desiring-Machines

The flows which connect partial objects within desiring-machines are originally non-coded: they are spontaneous, undirected, and unregulated until captured by a machinic structure. Deleuze and Guattari describe these initial flows as operating "without any sort of mediation," where "everything is production: production of productions, of actions and of passions" (4). It is through the formation of desiring-machines that partial objects become productively organized, emitting and interrupting flows in a circuit of connective synthesis. Each connection generates a local code, not imposed from an external symbolic order, but emerging from within (5-6). This code does not originate from a transcendent Other; it arises from the immanent operations of the machines themselves. Desiring-machines are inherently productive rather than representational—they are not oriented toward a lack, but toward producing new assemblages, intensities, and objects (26). However, these machines do not exist in isolation. Deleuze and Guattari assert that "there are no desiring-machines that exist outside the social machines that they form on a large scale; and no social machines without the desiring-machines that inhabit them on a small scale" (p. 340). Social-machines, in turn, detect, decode, recode, and regulate these molecular productions, inscribing them within the broader systems of political economy and ideology. Thus, the relationship between unconscious desire and sociopolitical structure is continuous, not oppositional: desire is not external to society, but its motor force and its point of subversion.



4.3 Social-Machines and Socius

Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize social-machines as macro-level formations which organize, channel, and control the productive operations of desiring-machines. These are not merely metaphorical systems but actual machines that code "the flows of production, the flows of means of production, of producers and consumers" (142). The function of social-machines is to manage and inscribe the flows of desire onto the surface of a socius,

ensuring they are neither spontaneous nor unregulated (33). The authors identify three primary forms of social-machines: the territorial, despotic, and capitalist. The territorial machine operates through primitive codes that inscribe alliances and kinship structures onto the full body of the earth, forming what they call a "primitive territorial machine" (142). The despotic machine centralizes coding in the figure of the despot, who overcodes all flows by linking himself in direct filiation with the divine, replacing horizontal kinship with vertical sovereignty: "The despot is the paranoiac... the new alliance and direct filiation" (193). Finally, the capitalist machine is distinguished by its shift from coding to decoding, as it "has replaced the territorial codes and the despotic overcodings... with an axiomatic of decoded flows" (261). This modern machine no longer operates by inscription or repression but through abstraction, financialization, and axiomatic regulation. Social-machines, then, are not external to desire—they are the regimes through which desire is recorded, redirected, and made socially operative. These social-machines operate within a system called the socius.

The socius is the surface upon which all social-machines operate—the full body onto which desire, production, and relations are inscribed. Deleuze and Guattari define the socius as "the surface on which the whole process of production is inscribed, on which the forces and means of labor are recorded, and the agents and the products distributed" (141). In each historical formation, the socius takes a different form. In primitive societies, it is the earth; in imperial regimes, it becomes the body of the despot; and in capitalism, it is capital-money. Each form performs the same essential task: to code, inscribe, and regulate the flows of desire. "The prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not property dammed up, channeled, regulated" (33). The socius, therefore, is not a symbolic abstraction but a materialized field of power. In capitalism, this takes a particularly abstract form: the socius becomes deterritorialized and is structured by a pure axiomatic, whereby value is generated through flows of labor, finance, and information rather than through bodily or territorial inscriptions. It is "a field of immanence... determined by an axiomatic, in contrast to the territorial field determined by primitive codes" (250). The capitalist socius thus replaces codes with differential relations and substitutes belief and memory with operational control and circulation. It no longer needs to mark bodies—it marks quantities. Through this transformation, desire is not only decoded but reterritorialized as capital, embedding the unconscious within the logic of accumulation and control. This dominant field, and its inherent social-machines, nevertheless, is threatened by one entity, the BwO.

4.4 The Body without Organs

The BwO, introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, is one of their most powerful concepts which escapes the rigid structures imposed by social, psychological, and biological systems. Rather than being a literal body without physical organs, the BwO represents a conceptual space where desire can flow freely—outside of prearranged functions and hierarchies. It challenges the organization of life into defined roles and categories, whether that be man/woman, worker/consumer, or sane/insane. As they write, "it has nothing whatsoever to do with the body itself, or with an image of the body. It is the body without an image. This imageless, organless body, the nonproductive, exists right there where it is produced [by itself], in the third stage of the binary-linear series" (8). That is, it resists the way society tells us what each part of our body, identity, or mind should do. The BwO is a body in potential, a space of intensities where traditional structures break down—not into pure chaos, but into a different kind of immanent [disordered] order, one that is not imposed from above, but generated from within (154). This makes it both chaos and order-itself, because it disrupts the predictable and allows new forms to arise spontaneously. It is like jazz improvisation: while it may sound chaotic on the surface, it follows a unique internal rhythm created by the performers themselves. Or consider a child at play, making up their own universe of rules and roles—this is a BwO in action, as it detaches from the adult world's organization of meaning and function.

While the desiring-machines compel their constituent partial objects to be organized and ordered, there is the BwO that escapes organization and structurality. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "the body without organs is a nonspecific and nonspecified support that marks the molecular limit of the molar aggregates, the chain no longer has any other function than that of deterritorializing the flows and causing them to pass through the signifying wall, thereby undoing the codes" (328). Desiring-machines are constantly trying to invade the BwO which threatens the structures with a deconstructionist nature. In other words, each connection between machines, every act of machinic production, and every operational resonance of a machine imposes an intolerable intensity upon the BwO, disrupting its surface with the force of desiring flows (9). Surprisingly, this BwO is filled with non-coded flows of desire and partial objects that are constantly in motion from one location to another. This body "reproduces itself, puts forth shoots, and branches out to the farthest corners of the universe" (10). It is the body without organized organs which is de-structuring, de-subjectifying, and de-organizing any structure while it is simultaneously chased by desiring-machines.

The BwO also appears vividly in art, spirituality, and even rebellion. A painter in a trance of creation, disconnected from ego and intention, becomes a BwO. So does someone in a deep meditative or psychedelic state, where self and world dissolve, and perception reorganizes itself from the inside, enter a condition which parallels what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the BwO—a plane of immanence where structured subjectivity gives way to pure affect, intensity, and machinic flow. In literature, characters like Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* or Faulkner's Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury* offer examples of minds resisting the organization imposed by linear time, rationality, or normal thought. Their perceptions are fragmented, but in that fragmentation, new logics arise. In a more political sense, the BwO can represent acts of resistance against capitalism's demand that bodies be productive, predictable machines. Deleuze and Guattari interestingly write,

> The body without organs is like the cosmic egg, the *giant molecule* swarming with worms, bacilli, Lilliputian figures, animalcules, and homunculi, with their organization and their machines, minute strings, ropes, teeth, fingernails, levers and pulleys, catapults: thus, in Schreber the millions of spermatazoids in the sunbeams, or the souls that lead a brief existence as little men on his body. (281)

It is not a final state to be achieved, but a continual process of becoming—of refusing to be fully defined. Gulliver similarly goes through several metamorphic stages — from a proud English subject to a de-subjectified and unstructured being. This makes the BwO a revolutionary concept: it allows oneself to imagine new ways of being, living, and desiring that are not governed by repression, normalization, or identity. In a world obsessed with control, identity politics, and productivity, the BwO calls for creative disorganization—a return to the raw intensities of life that are not yet shaped by external systems. It is not nihilism or disorder for its own sake, but the possibility of a different order—one that emerges from the body's own rhythms, flows, and multiplicities.

4.5 Žižek and the Fantasy of Desire

Fantasy is a key concept in Lacanian-Žižekian theories. Žižek asserts that fantasy is the force which confers a sense of coherence and stability upon what is perceived as reality (44). He argues that "'Reality' is a fantasy-construction which enables us to mask the Real of our desire!" (45). It is linguistically impossible to go beyond what language offers, namely symbols. The path that leads to reality is, in other words, an illusion and that is why subjects cling to fantasy. The void or lack is so frustrating that the subjects grow

restless. They feel the need to fill it. Gaps, or the unknowns, are the nightmare of subjects. This is why subjects are easier to be interpellated by ideologies, regulated by discourses, and subjectified by the Other. Žižek notes that,

> It is exactly the same with ideology. Ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel (conceptualized by Emesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as 'antagonism': a traumatic social division which cannot be symbolized). The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel. (45)

In his sixth chapter of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan uses the famous story of Zhuang Zi, who dreams of turning to a butterfly and when he wakes up, he wonders about the reality of himself: Am I a butterfly dreaming of being Zhuang Zi or am I Zhuang Zi who saw a vision of himself being a butterfly? This skeptical inquiry of Zhuang Zi illustrates his awareness of the illusory state of being (76-77). He who thinks Zhuang Zi is a fool, is somebody who takes “an immediate identity with [themselves],” believing in the totality of their being and identity (Žižek 46). In fact, these people are the actual fools, being unaware of the illusory state of their being and identity (46). The other side of Zhuang Zi’s condition is “offered by fantasy” (46). According to Žižek, when Zhuang Zi “was thinking that he was a butterfly dreaming of being Zhuang Zi, Zhuang Zi was in a way correct. The butterfly was the object which constituted the frame, the backbone, of his fantasy-identity” (46). “Being a butterfly,” in other words, was “the Real of his desire” outside of the symbolic order (46). To be like Zhuang Zi, one should be highly aware of the workings of their psyche as well as the socio-cultural dimensions round them, including the ideologies, discourses, and Others.

Žižek's concept of ideological fantasy posits the fact that Marx noted around two centuries ago, that people don't know what they are practicing or doing within society (27). He contends that "ideology consists in the very fact that the people do not know what they are really doing, that they have a false representation of the social reality to which they belong" (27). In other words, humans' concept of reality is an illusion, constructed by the very ideological apparatuses, discursive institutions, and the Other. Subjects are not overlooking reality, he asserts, but they are overlooking "the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity" (30). He also explores the

concept of fantasy with which the subjects identify in relation to their desires. He declares that fantasy functions as the structuring mechanism of desire, establishing the coordinates through which objects of desire become intelligible and attainable (132). The fantasy is a set of images in relation to a scenario or "an imagined scenario representing the realization of desire" (132). Fantasy which operates as a constructed, imaginary scenario that fills the void or lack inherent in subjectivity, thereby staging the scene through which the desire of the Other is articulated and made accessible, can be recognized as a linguistic phenomenon, like an empty signifier desiring to be filled as soon as possible by any probable signified (128). The Other interpellates the subjects, whispering in their unconscious ear that I embody the constitutive lack within you; through my devotion and self-sacrifice, I position myself as the means by which your incompleteness may be resolved, offering a sense of wholeness and fulfillment (130). This is how the Other — which constitutes all social and cultural domains, including traditions, ideologies, and discourses — takes over the subjects and controls them. In this sense, a subject does not have a unique desire of his own, but possesses a desire which is the desire of the Other's desire (Myers 98).

5. Gulliver's Entanglement within Social-Machines

Gulliver's gradual transformation throughout his voyages can be understood through Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the subject as a desiring-machine embedded within, yet ultimately struggling against, the rigid structures of the social-machine. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it" (26). Each voyage stages Gulliver as a desiring-machine whose desire is plugged into the symbolic and institutional codes of the societies he enters. These societies — Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and Houyhnhnmland — function as distinct social-machines, territorializing, recoding, and ultimately exhausting Gulliver's libidinal energies. Initially compliant and unconscious, Gulliver participates in these circuits of desire with docile enthusiasm, especially in Lilliput, where he is quickly interpellated by the imperialist logic of the Lilliputians' symbolic order or socius.

In Lilliput, Swift satirizes the mechanisms of ideological subjection in miniature. The Lilliputians' social organization exemplifies Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the despotic machine, where the socius as a surface of inscription imposes codes of loyalty, competition, and spectacle upon its desiring-machines. They explain that "the prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to

inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated (33). Gulliver recounts with apparent amusement the absurd political ritual of rope dancing. He notes that "when a great Office is vacant… five or six of those Candidates petition the Emperor to entertain his Majesty and the Court with a Dance on the Rope; and whoever jumps the highest without falling, succeeds in the Office" (Swift 33). This ritual is not merely absurd—it is the dramatization of desire's recoding: the emperor's will becomes the organizing logic that binds the subjects' bodies and ambitions to performative spectacles of loyalty. Even more telling is Gulliver's uncritical participation in these structures. He naively brags that "I had the Honour to be a Nardac," the highest position in the empire among other officials, "which the Treasurer himself is not" (47, 59). Here, Gulliver has already become part of the Lilliputian symbolic order or socius —his subjectivity recoded by the social-machine into an image of imperial legitimacy.

Gulliver's initial position in Lilliput can thus be understood through the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desiring-production, where the subject functions as a desiring-machine within larger social systems. Upon his arrival, Gulliver enters a political structure organized by the despotic machine—a regime in which power is centralized around the figure of the Emperor, who overcodes all flows of desire and production. As Deleuze and Guattari note, the despot is the point of departure for all the flows which he absorbs, or from which he extracts his surplus (194-5). In this system, Gulliver is literally bound, measured, and integrated into the Emperor's apparatus, producing utility and symbolic capital. His mechanical usefulness—his size, strength, and obedience—renders him a productive part of the Lilliputian state apparatus. However, this machinic integration is interrupted when the Emperor commands Gulliver to exploit his power further by destroying Blefuscu, a neighboring nation. He protests that he "would never be an Instrument of bringing a free and brave People into Slavery" (Swift 47). Gulliver's refusal marks a critical moment of deterritorialization—a rupture in the coding of his desire by the despotic system (Deleuze and Guattari 281). Instead of continuing to serve as a tool of imperial aggression, Gulliver disengages from the productive machine of war and conquest. This act resembles the movement toward a BwO—a state in which the subject withdraws from structured flows, symbolic overcoding, and prescribed functions (328). By rejecting the Emperor's demand, Gulliver ceases to act as a channel for the despot's will and desire and begins to undo the stratified roles imposed upon him. This temporary disconnection suggests a moment of resistance in which Gulliver approaches the BwO, suspending his function within the social machine and revealing the possibility

of an unstructured, unregulated mode of desire. While this transformation is not sustained, it represents an ontological hesitation within the system—an event that exposes the fragility of despotic overcoding. Gulliver begins each voyage a naïve subject; however, in each voyage, he experiences a moment of deterritorialization. The second voyage to Brobdingnag represents an intensified phase of deterritorialization, in which the boundaries of Gulliver's identity, subjectivity and his relation to social-machines become increasingly destabilized.

Brobdingnag continues this trajectory of disillusionment, presenting a reversal of perspective that challenges Gulliver's previously held fantasies. No longer towering above others, he is now minuscule, powerless, and often humiliated. The King of Brobdingnag, functioning as a more moral but still despotic machine, deconstructs Gulliver's pride in his native country's institutions. When Gulliver boasts of England's military strength and scientific sophistication, the king responds that he "cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth" (Swift 121). This blunt condemnation de-territorializes Gulliver's desire to be recognized as a bearer of civilizational superiority. Where once he imagined himself as an emissary of reason and empire, now he is positioned as vermin—a dehumanized fragment of a corrupt desiring-machine. The king's words function as an instance of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as deterritorialization, unsettling the symbolic codes that had previously stabilized Gulliver's sense of coherent subjectivity (281). Gulliver's own body, now rendered grotesque in scale and function, becomes a BwO—a being reduced to pure affect, visibility, and shame. He admits that he was kept in a box, carried like a monkey or little puppet for the diversion of ladies, treated as an object of curiosity, stripped of both dignity and function (Swift 88-89). His interiority is dissolved into spectacle, a passive surface for others' desires to be inscribed upon. Once more, Gulliver is disillusioned with his English subjectivity and takes a step away from the despotic social-machines which regulate the flows of his desire. In the third voyage, the process of deterritorialization intensifies further, pushing Gulliver further away from stable symbolic structures.

The third voyage, to Laputa and the Academy of Lagado, parodies the flows of scientific rationality and capitalist abstraction. The Laputians' pursuit of detached, abstract knowledge — such as extracting sunbeams from cucumbers — epitomizes a society where desire has been decoded but not recoded, producing madness and fragmentation. Gulliver reports that "the first Man I saw was of a meagre Aspect, with sooty Hands and Face… he had been eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sun-Beams

out of Cucumbers, which were to be put into Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers" (Swift 167). This grotesque detachment of desire from any productive social function mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's description of capitalism as a machine which emancipates the flows of desire only to trap them within the framework of money and exchange (372). The scientists, oblivious to their own absurdity, represent desiring-machines gone awry—obsessively producing disconnected objects within a system that has ceased to symbolize or signify. Gulliver's bemused horror at this spectacle intensifies his alienation, pushing him further toward a BwO: he can neither accept the codes nor derive meaning from their absence.

While the third voyage largely portrays a society trapped in absurd capitalist decoding and ideological mechanization, Swift also presents figures of resistance — fragmentary gestures toward the BwO. Among these is the figure of Lord Munodi, a nobleman in Balnibarbi who refuses to submit to the mad scientific projects emanating from Laputa. Gulliver notes with admiration that Lord Munodi manages his estate by the methods commonly used in other countries, achieving productivity and harmony through traditional means (Swift 163-164). Gulliver recounts that,

> he made me observe the several Methods used by Farmers in managing their Lands; which to me were wholly unaccountable: For except in some very few Places I could not discover one Ear of Corn, or Blade of Grass. But, in three Hours travelling, the Scene was wholly altered; we came into a most beautiful Country; Farmers Houses at small Distances, neatly built, the Fields enclosed, containing Vineyards, Corngrounds and Meadows. Neither do I remember to have seen a more delightful Prospect. His Excellency observed my Countenance to clear up; he told me with a Sigh, that there his Estate began, and would continue the same till we should come to his House. (163)

Lord Munodi's adherence to organic, practical flows of life starkly contrasts with the Laputian scientists' obsession with useless, deterritorialized experiments. However, from the perspectives of Deleuze and Guattari, Munodi's existence is precarious, because he resists the coding of the despotic machine dominating the country and its subjects. He is marginalized and regarded as a madman for this nonconformity with the socius. Gulliver notes that "his Countrymen ridiculed and despised him for managing his Affairs no better, and for setting so ill an Example to the Kingdom; which however was followed by very few, such as were old, and [willful], and weak like himself" (163-164). Munodi embodies a *BwO* that has refused to plug into the dominant machine — he preserves a self-sustaining mode of existence, refusing to be re-coded by the abstract flows of

capitalist science. Yet, like all BwOs, his existence is perilous: the desiring-machines around him conspire against his stability. His position mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's observation that "the desiring-machines attempt to break into the body without organs, and the body without organs repels them, since it experiences them as an over-all persecution apparatus … [because] every sound of a machine running becomes unbearable to the body without organs" (9). Lord Munodi stands not only as a figure of nostalgia for a lost organic order but as a living testament to the possibility of alternative, non-coded flows of desire — even as he is hunted and ridiculed by the dominant system. However, the case of Lord Munodi is not the only instance of resistance to dominant social-machines.

Swift also presents the rebellion of the Lindalinians against Laputa as another flickering image of a collective BwO — like a social-machine attempting to resist its own territorial coding, turning to a BwO. Gulliver recounts that "it was eight Months before the King had perfect Notice that the Lindalinians were in Rebellion. He then commanded that the Island should be wafted over the City" (159). This island stands as the center of the socius itself, filled with social-machines and desiring-machines which aim at codifying, regulating, and controlling the Lindalinians who are a collective BwO. The island "hovered over them several Days to deprive them of the Sun and the Rain" (159). But the people of the city resisted and endured until the king ordered his subjects to "to cast great Stones from the lower Gallery into the Town" (160). They resisted and endured once again and the king commanded "that the Island should descend gently within fourty Yards of the Top of the Towers and Rock" (160). Now that the socius is getting closer to the BwO, it is a critical moment of collision. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "the body without organs is the limit of the socius, its tangent of deterritorialization, the ultimate residue of a deterritorialized socius" (281). It is exactly at this critical moment that the socius (the flying despotic island) is deterritorialized and falls down. The rebellion and resistance of the Lindalinians is an instance of the BwO which not only avoids conformity with the socius, but destroys it. Nevertheless, Gulliver's final voyage marks the most extreme point of deterritorialization.

The fourth voyage to Houyhnhnmland represents the apex of Gulliver's ontological transformation. The Houyhnhnms, horse-like beings who speak in calm, rational tones, are not governed by desiring-production at all. They seem to exist outside the symbolic order and the Other—unfamiliar with lying, war, or even government. Gulliver notes that they have no word for "lying," and that he could only explain it as "saying the thing which was not" (Swift 227). This is not simply a linguistic difference—it is metaphysical

rupture. In Lacanian terms, Gulliver confronts beings who dwell outside the so-called symbolic order; they are pure presence, unmarked by the traumatic void of the Real or the demands of the Other. As Gulliver states, "Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other Things had no Terms" in their language (227). Here, desire does not circulate through lack or ideological fantasy; it flows organically, unconstrained by social-machines.

Living among the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver undergoes the most radical form of deterritorialization. He detests his own species, identifying instead with the horses which resemble the BwO. Upon returning home, his symbolic coordinates collapse entirely. He writes that "My Wife and Family received me with great Surprize and Joy … but I must freely confess, the Sight of them filled me only with Hatred, Disgust, and Contempt; and the more, by reflecting on the near Alliance I had to them" (271). This nausea, triggered by proximity or closeness to coded human relations, signifies his total disintegration from the social-machines of his former life. He has become a BwO in a full Deleuzian-Guattarian sense—a being who has stripped itself of all functional signifiers, all imposed codes, and desires only to desire (309).

6. Fantasy, Desire, and the Collapse of Subjectivity in *Gulliver's Travels*

Žižek's theory of ideological fantasy offers a deeply illuminating way of understanding the arc of Gulliver's psychological fragmentation throughout *Gulliver's Travels*. According to him, fantasy is not merely a distortion of reality—it constitutes reality itself. "'Reality' is a fantasy-construction which enables us to mask the Real of our desire," he writes, emphasizing that what we call reality is already overdetermined by unconscious ideological structures (45). At the start of his travels, Gulliver embodies the Enlightenment subject, animated by fantasies of British moral superiority, rational governance, and imperial virtue. These beliefs are not ideological in appearance but in structure: they organize how Gulliver interprets the world, what he finds admirable, and what he dismisses as savage. Yet it is precisely this internal consistency—this fantasy of reason—which begins to disintegrate when Gulliver is confronted with alternative, and often humiliating, views of his civilization.

This unraveling is set into motion most forcefully in Brobdingnag. The King, whose "excellent Understanding" and "great Wisdom" contrast sharply with the self-aggrandizing rulers Gulliver esteems, listens to Gulliver's patriotic descriptions of British politics and warfare with growing horror (Swift 116, 127). When Gulliver proudly offers to share the secret of gunpowder—an emblem of European technological domination—

the King recoils, calling it the invention of some "evil Genius, Enemy to Mankind," and forbids him from ever mentioning it again (123). What for Gulliver was a gesture of loyalty becomes, under the King's moral gaze, a horrifying symptom of inhumanity. This moment is crucial: it is not merely that Gulliver's ideas are refuted, but that the fantasy structure itself—Britain as enlightened, rational, and just—begins to collapse. Žižek suggests that fantasy masks not the truth, but the Real—what cannot be symbolized within a given ideological framework (45). The King's reaction forces Gulliver to glimpse this Real, producing a crack in the fantasy which has organized his entire worldview.

As Gulliver continues his journey to Laputa and ultimately to the land of the Houyhnhnms, this ideological destabilization only intensifies. The Laputans, and especially the supposed experimentalists of Lagado, so absorbed in abstract thought that they require attendants to flap their mouths and ears just to pay attention, caricature the disembodied rationalism which once animated Gulliver's worldview (Swift 167-68). In Houyhnhnmland, he is confronted with a society where reason is stripped of contradiction and affect—a seemingly perfect order, yet one which renders human complexity pathological. Gulliver's dawning realization that he shares a biological kinship with the depraved Yahoos is not merely humiliating; it is ontologically devastating. He begins to see, as Žižek puts it, "the illusion which is structuring [his] reality" (30), and recognizes that "fantasy itself … provides the coordinates of our desire" (132). Gulliver's descent into self-hatred and disidentification with humanity thus reflects not political disillusionment, but a profound collapse of the symbolic order which once gave him meaning.

By the time Gulliver returns home, his transformation is complete—but it ends not in resolution, but in radical estrangement. He can no longer bear human contact, refers to his family as members of the Yahoo kind, and claims to have spent hours conversing with his horses before enduring their company (Swift 271). His final plea—that no man tainted with the vice of pride dare appear before him—signals his absolute withdrawal from the human social field (277). This, for Žižek, is the terrifying consequence of confronting the Real beneath fantasy. Having seen through the ideological veil, Gulliver can no longer participate in a shared symbolic universe. His madness is not regression but resistance—a refusal to continue desiring what the Other demands. *Gulliver's Travels*, then, is not merely a satire of Enlightenment excess, but a philosophical allegory of desubjectification. It dramatizes the unsettling possibility that beneath the fantasy of reason lies not authenticity or clarity, but the void—the Real—that fantasy was always meant to conceal.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored *Gulliver's Travels* through a dual-theoretical perspectives, combining Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desiring-production with Žižek's concept of ideological fantasy. The aim of the paper was to recontextualize Swift's novel beyond its traditional reading as political satire, and instead interpret it as a philosophical exploration of desire regulation, subjectivity formation, ideological structuring, and ontological disintegration. The paper examined how Gulliver's narrative reflects the movement from identification with imperial and Enlightenment ideals toward a profound rupture from the symbolic systems which define desire, identity, and subjectivity. Using Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of desiring-machines, the BwO, and social-machines, alongside Žižek's insights into fantasy and the Other as a constitutive framework of reality, the study positioned Gulliver's transformation not as a moral lesson, but as an allegory of the subject's unravelling under ideological pressure. The scope of the analysis extended across all four voyages, treating each as a stage in the progressive disintegration of Gulliver's ideological and symbolic anchoring.

The findings of the paper demonstrate how Gulliver's experiences with each foreign society expose the illusions structuring his reality. In Lilliput, he operates as a desiring-machine embedded in the despotic social-machine of empire, but his refusal to annihilate Blefuscu marks an early moment of deterritorialization. In Brobdingnag, the king's rejection of British imperial logic deconstructs the ideological fantasy of Enlightenment virtue, producing the first serious rupture in Gulliver's sense of national and moral coherence. In Laputa, Gulliver confronts the absurdity of pure abstraction and the mechanical detachment of reason, which parodies the Enlightenment's disembodied rationality. Finally, in the land of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver is confronted with the Real: the impossibility of reconciling human desire with any coherent symbolic order. His identification with the Houyhnhnms and revulsion toward the Yahoos reveals a final collapse of subjectivity—he no longer desires through the Other but enters a condition approaching the BwO. Through these stages, Gulliver's gradual transformations reflect the transition from ideological submission to the breakdown of desiring structure, as theorized by Deleuze, Guattari, and Žižek.

The significance of these findings lies in the reinterpretation of *Gulliver's Travels* as a profoundly philosophical text which interrogates not just political, moral, and colonial perspectives, but the deeper mechanisms through which social-machines, ideologies, discourses, and the Others configure reality and construct the subject. Swift's novel anticipates key insights of poststructuralist theory, staging the progressive unmaking of a subject caught between fantasy and the Real, code and rupture, social-machine and deterritorialization. Rather than presenting a final moment of moral or rational clarity, the novel ends with an unresolved disidentification—a withdrawal from all symbolic and social coordinates, suggesting that resistance to ideological fantasy, the desire of the Other, and social-machines is both necessary and destabilizing. This reading contributes to literary theory by demonstrating how early modern satire can embody a prefiguration of contemporary philosophical thought, and to philosophical inquiry by illustrating how the processes of subject-formation through desire operate narratively and affectively within literary form.

Funding:
There is no funding support.

Authors' Contribution:
The authors have written the article in a complete collaboration.

Conflict of Interests:
This research does not conflict with personal and/or organizational interests.

References

Anscombe, Gertrude E. M. *Intention.* Harvard University Press, 2000.

Barash, Carole. “Violence and the Maternal: Swift, Psychoanalysis, and the 1720s.” Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism,* edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 442-464.

Canfield, John D. "Corruption and Degeneration in *Gulliver's Travels*." *Notre Dame English Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1973, pp. 15-22.

Casement, William. "Religion, Satire, and Gulliver's Fourth Voyage." *History of European Ideas,* Vo. 14, No. 4, 1992, pp. 531-544.

Castle, Terry. “Why the Houyhnhnms Don't Write: Swift, Satire, and the Fear of the Text.” Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism,* edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 379-395.

Clifford, James L. "The Eighteenth Century." *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1965, pp. 111-134.

Clifford, James L. “Gulliver’s Fourth Voyage: ‘Hard’ and ‘Soft’ Schools of Interpretation.” *Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Larry S. Champion, University of Georgia Press, 1974, pp. 33–49.

Conlon, Michael J. “*Performance* as Response in Swift's *Gulliver’s Travels*.” Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary* Criticism, edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 408-424.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Viking Press, 1977.

Downie, James A. "Political Characterization in *Gulliver's Travels*." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 7, 1977, pp. 108-120.

Fabricant, Carole. “History, Narrativity, and Swift's Project to ‘Mend the World’.” Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary* Criticism, edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 348-365.

Fink, Zera S. "Political Theory in *Gulliver's Travels*." *ELH*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1947, pp. 151-161.

Fox, Christopher. "A Critical History of *Gulliver's Travels*." Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 269-304.

Freud, Sigmund, et al. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud:* The Ego and the Id *and Other Works (1923-1925)*. Edited and translated by James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, Hogarth Press, 1961.

Harth, Phillip. "The Problem of Political Allegory in *Gulliver's Travels*." *Modern Philology*, Vol. 73, No. 4, 1976, pp. S40-S47.

Hernandez, Ramir M. *Disgusted with Modern History: Paratexts, Intertexts, and Ethics in the Transmission of* Gulliver's Travels. 2009. California State University, MA Thesis.

Hone, Joseph. "Politics." *The Cambridge Companion to* Gulliver's Travels, edited by Daniel Cook and Nicholas Seager, Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 11–22.

Horzum, Safak. "Proto-Posthumanist Subject for Swift: Gulliver as a Non/Human Hybrid in Lilliput." *Orbis Litterarum* (Online Version of Record before Inclusion in an Issue), 2025, pp. 1-15.

Khattak, Nasir Jamal. Gulliver's Travels*: A Journey through the Unconscious*. 2001. University of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD Dissertation.

Lacan, Jacques. *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, edited by Jacques A. Miller, WW Norton, 1998.

Myers, Tony. *Slavoj Žižek*. Routledge, 2003.

Nussbaum, Felicity A. "Gulliver's Malice: Gender and the Satiric Stance." Gulliver's Travels *by Jonathan Swift: A Case Study in Contemporary* Criticism, edited by Christopher Fox, Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 318-334.

Orwell, George. "Politics Vs. Literature: An Examination of *Gulliver's Travels*." *Fair Liberty Was All His Cry: A Tercentenary Tribute to Jonathan Swift 1667–1745*, edited by Alexander N. Jeffares, Springer, 1946, pp. 166-85.

Robertson, Lloyd W. *Political Philosophy in* Gulliver's Travels*: Shocked by the Just Society*. Springer, 2022.

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*, edited by Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Tumer, Volkan. *Denunciation of Humanity: A Posthumanist Reading of Jonathan Swift's* Gulliver's Travels. 2023. Cappadocia University, MA Thesis.

Wilding, Michael. "The Politics of *Gulliver's Travels*." *Sydney Studies in Society and Culture*, Vol. 8, 1993, pp. 3-28

Williams, Kathleen M. "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms." *ELH*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1951, pp. 275-86.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso, 2019.