

My idea for this research project grew from a simple question: What was Jonathan Swift thinking? From the plethora of commentary written on the topic from the mid-1700s through to today, it was clear that I was joining a long line of researchers attempting to decipher *Gulliver's Travels*. The third part of the book, wherein Gulliver visits Laputa and Balnibarbi, prompted all sorts of questions: How did scientific advancements relate to authoritarianism? Was Swift just a proto-Luddite? Thus, I chose to write my Archival Research Methods class's research paper on my investigation of Swift's potential motivations. I soon discovered that the more I read, the more questions I had, leading me into unfamiliar databases and fields that forced me to develop my research methods accordingly.

To familiarize myself with the existing literature on this topic, I began by searching keywords such as "Swift," "Laputa," and so forth in the WorldCat database within UMD Libraries, but my research soon transported me into other databases. After reading different scholarly articles theorizing about Swift's intent, I found that scholars broadly fell into two camps: those who believed Swift sought to satirize the Royal Society and others who believed this focus had led many to neglect his warnings about absolute sovereignty. To evaluate each claim, I decided to enter Swift's world and explore archival material using the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) and the University of Maryland Special Collections and University Archives. I began by examining various editions of *Gulliver's Travels* published soon after its original publication in 1726. One 1765 edition replete with commentary by his biographer agreed that Swift was satirizing the scientists of the day. It was clear to me that I would need to examine Royal Society pamphlets and review their reception at the time to see why Swift attached an authoritarian component to the organization. Fortunately, the University of Maryland Special Collections possessed numerous such pamphlets and archivist Amber Kohl pulled many of them for me to search through. Considering the destruction in Balnibarbi was caused by attempted agricultural reforms, I narrowed down my requested items to those that focused on agriculture. In contrast to when digging through the UMD Library databases, I soon realized that my modern day search terms were excluding any results filed according to their eighteenth century classifications. My professor, Dr. Karen Nelson, aided me in revising my search terms to ensure I would not exclude such relevant material. Having never examined archival material in person, I was at a loss at first as to how I should go about evaluating the validity of these materials. My aim was to find a proposal that encouraged a major agricultural

reform, as seen with Laputa. I quickly found that what Dr. Nelson told me was true: in the archives, it's often what you find that you weren't looking for that ends up being exactly what you needed to find. Two inconspicuous books about beekeeping and plant anatomy that I had requested as an afterthought ended up being the most significant: they began to illuminate how the Royal Society supported the monarchy's absolute sovereignty. However, it was not until I searched through JSTOR, the MLA International Bibliography, and other databases for secondary sources on these works that I discovered an unexpected link between the two: corruption. What had been presented in those pamphlets as an exciting new invention oftentimes turned out to be a plagiarized idea that sought to suppress its revolutionary origins. This revelation led me to scrutinize these primary sources in a way that I had previously only been taught to do with secondary sources, and to evaluate their validity despite my lack of knowledge in these fields. Reaching across disciplines, I learned that some of the innovations could have had disastrous results if they had been put in practice.

As I continued delving into these fields and parts of history, Dr. Nelson's emphasis on publication history inspired me to return to the modern era and take my project in another direction. In class we had often discussed how modern editions of *Gulliver's Travels*, especially those aimed at children, removed the description of the foreign lands' politics or even the last three parts of the novel itself. Dr. Nelson encouraged us to look beyond books when evaluating adaptations, which led me to realize that Miyazaki's film *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* perfectly adapted Swift's criticisms for the modern day. This new direction led me to explore newspaper archives to find past interviews with Miyazaki where he expounded his motivations and inspirations in creating this film. Reading other analyses of his films in the MLA International Bibliography also aided me in finding translated portions of his interviews that were relevant to this film.

Through this research process, I discovered how crucial it is to make use of every database available when researching and to not let a narrow focus prevent you from exploring what may appear to simply be a tangent. Utilizing the archives emphasized both of these lessons to me, as I was obliged to modify my research habits and expectations to adapt to an unfamiliar collection. These lessons will help further my professional career, as I hope to pursue a specialization in Archives and Preservation within a Master's of Library and Information Science following graduation. My research experience also caused me to contemplate how the archives

could become more accessible as to encourage more students to utilize them. Without the aid of Dr. Nelson, I would not have realized that I needed to adapt my search terms to those used in past centuries nor to request a broad range of material. Thus, expanding the research guides to incorporate all works that could fall into a particular category, such as “science” as listed on the website, in addition to subcategories listing dates and genres, could help students acclimate to this unfamiliar territory. Furthermore, in improving the accessibility of the material, these research guides could encourage more students across a range of disciplines to explore the archives.