

Reworkings in the textual history of *Gulliver's Travels*: a translational approach

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ABSTRACT

On 28 October 1726 *Gulliver's Travels* debuted on the literary scene as a political and philosophical satire meant to provoke and entertain an audience of relatively educated and wealthy British readers. Since then, Swift's work has gradually evolved, assuming multiple forms and meanings while becoming accessible and attractive to an increasingly broad readership in and outside Britain. My study emphasises that reworkings, including re-editions, translations, abridgments, adaptations and illustrations, have played a primary role in this process. Its principal aim is to investigate how reworkings contributed to the popularity of *Gulliver's Travels* by examining the dynamics and the stages through which they transformed its text and its original significance. Central to my research is the assumption that this transformation is largely the result of shifts of a translational nature and that, therefore, the analysis of reworkings and the understanding of their role can greatly benefit from the models of translation description devised in Descriptive Translation Studies. The reading of reworkings as entailing processes of translation shows how derivative creations operate collaboratively to ensure literary works' continuous visibility and actively shape the literary polysystem.

The study opens with an exploration of existing approaches to reworkings followed by an examination of the characteristics which exposed *Gulliver's Travels* to continuous rethinking and reworking. Emphasis is put on how the work's satirical significance gave rise to a complex early textual problem for which *Gulliver's Travels* can be said to have debuted on the literary scene as a derivative production in the first place. The largest part of the study is devoted to textual analysis. This is carried out in two stages. First I concentrate on reworkings of *Gulliver's Travels* published in eighteenth- and in nineteenth-century Italy. These illustrate how interlingual translation operated alongside criticism, abridgment, adaptation and pictorial representation to extend the accessibility of Swift's work and eventually turned it into a book palatable to a popular audience and to children. Then, I examine British reworkings and how the translational processes which they entail contributed to the popularity and the popularisation of *Gulliver's Travels* in eighteenth-century Britain.

KEYWORDS: *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift, popularisation, reworkings, translational phenomena

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