

投稿類別：英文寫作

篇名：

The Use of Kidnapping as a Metaphor in *Gulliver's Travel* and *The Flower in the Mirror*

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I. Introduction

Gulliver's Travel (1726) and *The Flowers in The Mirror*¹ (1825) are two novels that are so similar that they have been compared for decades. These two novels not only were completed by 99 years, but also used the same approach of imagining a strange world in their literary works to criticize their societies. In addition to criticism, the authors also gave some advice to the governments at their times through their works.

Gulliver's Travel is Jonathan Swift's greatest satire. The general theme of *Gulliver's Travels* is to criticize the selfishness, ignorance, and depravity in humanity. Also criticizing the society, *The Flowers in The Mirror* is Li, Ruzhen's most important work, and also the only completed and well-known work. They are both political criticism novels that recommend changes and improvements to their societies.

Although these two novels seem very similar in several aspects, the messages that the authors wanted to deliver through their satiric fictions were in fact quite different. For example, both authors used the "kidnapping" plot to be an important metaphor in the story; however, the different "kidnapping" processes unveil the different attitudes of the characters.

The purpose of this study is to argue how the two main characters' attitudes differ from each other while facing similar problems in their lives. Besides, efforts were made to explain why the kidnappings happened in both stories, to compare and contrast the different background of the two authors, and then to analyze how the endings of the kidnapping stories reflect each author's political attitude and life perspectives. From these comparisons, we may find out the different philosophies of the two authors.

II. Thesis

A. Background of the Authors

1. Jonathan Swift

After he graduated from college, Swift later became the secretary to Sir William Temple without any difficulty. After working for the Church for many years, he finally got a lesser job as chaplain for a small congregation, and at the same time Swift dedicated himself to writing, he slowly gained a reputation in writing and Tories hired him as the chief editor. During these years Swift wrote many letters to the British Prime Minister and wrote to criticize the politics and the society. Unfortunately, few people paid much attention to him and even considered him crazy. He almost went to for his behavior. Gradually he got increasingly disappointed in the society and changed his attitude from fierce opposition to more passive resistance. After the year 1720, he began his work on *Gulliver's Travel*.

Jonathan Swift was born into a Protestant family with English parents in Dublin, Ireland.

¹ The Flowers in the Mirror in Chinese is Jing Hua Yuan, 鏡花緣.

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His ancestors had been royalists, and in all his life he would be a High-Churchman. However, his father died a few months before he was born. Soon after he was born, his mother, Abigail, left her son behind, in the care of relatives, and returned to England herself. At the age of six, Swift began his education at Kilkenny Grammar School, which was, at the time, the best in Ireland.

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Swift graduated from the Trinity College in 1689 and became the secretary to Sir William Temple. After working for the Church for many years, he finally got a lesser job as chaplain for a small congregation, and at the same time Swift dedicated himself to writing, he slowly gained a reputation in writing and Tories hired him as the chief editor.

Since he worked for the church for many years, he knew a lot of corruption in it and also wrote *A Tale of a Tub*, which attacked English churches. From 1701 to 1714, Swift kept writing letters to the British prime minister in hope of some changes and in the meanwhile working on his works to criticize about the politics and the society. Unfortunately, few people paid much attention to him and even considered him crazy. In 1714, he almost went to jail because of his behavior. After this, he became increasingly disappointed about the society and changed his attitude from fierce fighting to passive resistance. After the year 1720, he started to work on *Gulliver's Travel*. In his late years, Swift was diagnosed with nervous disorders.

2. Li, Ruzhen

Similar to Jonathan Swift, Li, Ruzhen also had much discontent about the society in his times. Li, Ruzhen was a famous novelist in the Qing Dynasty of China. His birth and death years are unknown. It is estimated that he lived about 60 years. Everyone expected him to do very well in his studies and get a good job in the future. However, Li, Ruzhen was different. He was averse to the traditional "Eight-legged Essay," a writing style that had to be mastered to pass the public service examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties. He also hated the culture of flattering authorities.

Thus, in Chinese society at the time, he could not score high in the national exam and could not get a good job as his parents expected him to get. His life of politics, thus, was not going at his will. The highest official position he had held was the deputy magistrate of Henan.

Li didn't seem to like or understand the job conditions of his time too well. He thought of himself as a genius and blamed that others were too blind to realize how talented he really was. He also felt frustrated and angry about his limited educational chances, instead of considering other possibilities. As he grew older, he began to realize it was too late to change the status quo of the society. He was caught in the framework of the traditional culture, and still nobody had discovered nor recognized his talent.

Later, he was reluctant of seeking official positions, so he concentrated on studies as a recluse. From 1795 to 1815, he spent twenty years writing *The Flowers in the*

The Use of Kidnapping as a Metaphor in Gulliver's Travel and the Flower in the Mirror *Mirror* to voice his discontent and frustration. He attempted to tell people how things could be done differently and to prove his talent by writing a great revolutionary novel.

B. The Kidnapping in the Novels

1. Kidnapping in Gulliver's Travel

Gulliver was seen as a "Man-Mountain" by the Lilliputians. With his towering height, he helped Lilliputians solve many problems such as fighting in a war, extinguishing a fire, rescuing people from the sea. Although he helped them a lot, Lilliputians hated Gulliver rather than thanked him for his help. Moreover, they even wanted to punish him. With one of the Lilliputians' help, Gulliver finally escaped Lilliput.

In contrast, later he found himself dwarfed by giant inhabitants who were sixty feet tall. In one of his journeys as a doctor on the ship, the ship lost its way after running into the monsoon. Gulliver was asked to find some water on an unknown island. Unfortunately, people on the ship forgot him and left him on the island.

Gulliver soon realized that he was on an island where giants several times taller than him lived. Gulliver was as tiny as a toy doll to the giant, and the birds there considered him an insect and desired to devour him. Gulliver was really scared of being eaten. Gulliver's comparatively tiny size then made him wholly dependent on the protection and solicitude of others, and he was imperiled by dangerous encounters with huge rats and a curious toddler. Fortunately, he met a farmer who brought him back home and protected him.

At first, Gulliver was satisfied with the life in the farmer's house, but the farmer was not a good man, as his motive for saving Gulliver soon became evident because he turned him into a sideshow in order to earn some extra money. He put Gulliver in a cage like an animal. Gulliver was like some exotic animal stuck in a little cage. He was taken everywhere, forced to put on performances. Of course, Gulliver didn't appreciate the job and sought opportunity to escape from his plight, and finally he did.

2. Kidnapping in The Flowers in The Mirror

Lin, Zhiyang was a merchant who traded overseas. When Lin, Zhiyang and his fellow travelers reached the island called the Country of Women, he got into trouble and needed someone to rescue him. It was a country where men were dressed as women and women as men, and where men had to obey the women. When Lin Zhiyang was selling goods in this country, his business was so successful that he was summoned by the "King," who in fact was a woman. This female king immediately fell in love with him. The "King" decided to make Lin the Royal Consort and brought him back to the palace.

However, Lin Zhiyang, sorely missed his wife and daughter, and he didn't have a good life in the palace. He wanted to escape from the place but didn't quite know how. The only thing he could do was to pray to his god, hoping that his friend Tang Ao, could quickly figure out where he was and find a way to come to his rescue.

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Fortunately, Tang Ao finally figured out that Lin Zhiyang was kidnapped to the palace. He jumped over the palace walls and came to Lin's rescue. On earlier occasions, Tang Ao had acquired supernatural skills to jump and fly with a man on his back. He successfully brought Lin away from the palace.

C. Analysis

There are several similarities between the two fictions and between the two kidnapping plots. First, the two main characters both set off for a journey abroad. Second, they both traveled to several imaginary worlds. Third, in one of the imaginary worlds, they were both kidnapped.

However, though the two main characters were both kidnapped in a strange world, their attitudes towards the kidnapping were different. Gulliver tried hard to change things in his life. While Lin, Zhiyang didn't try to deal with it himself. Instead, Lin Zhiyang waited for the situation to change or for others to come to his rescue. As a matter of fact, the main characters' attitudes were a reflection of the authors' attitudes towards the reality they faced.

Both Swift and Li felt trapped in the society they lived in. Both of them wrote a fiction that severely criticized the order of his day. Both authors seemed to use the kidnapping of their main character as a metaphor to express their dissatisfaction with the reality they were forced to face. However, Swift and Li held different attitudes towards their dissatisfaction.

Li felt frustrated with his political career because he disliked the Eight-legged Essay and the culture of flattering, but he was not reconciled with that. He considered himself idealistic and intelligent though nobody had the wisdom to know it. Therefore, he showed his scholarship performance deliberately through his writing to show his literary talent.

He used half of the journey in the "Tongue Kingdom" to show off his ability in phonology, and even used half of the whole story to describe the process of imperial examination to showed his writing ability. He never struggled to change but kept self-pitying. Li lived in a world created by books and knowledge, which was not the reality that common people can understand.

In contrast, Swift used half of his life trying to reform the society by continuously writing the letters to the prime minister then. He also wrote books with the motive of criticizing the society. He had made a lot of effort to change the current situation. He almost went to jail for doing so.

Since he had taken some actions, the world he created in his novel showed more link with the society than the world created by Li. **"He was primarily interested in the nature of the human condition, so he used his fantastical imaginings as a way of satirizing and revealing the underlying failings of humanity."** (Collins, 2010) While reading his works, we can pick up some ideas that are closely related to our lives and resonate with his words. For example, the *Houyhnhnms*, the island which the author

The Use of Kidnapping as a Metaphor in Gulliver's Travel and the Flower in the Mirror created to criticize human being's rudeness and ingenuousness. "... horses were representative of the more sophisticated qualities desirable in people. At that time, polite society viewed godliness as being as far away from the inner animal as possible. With concepts of evolution still a long way off and an acceptance of primal beginnings, people had the idea that ideal behavior should be very controlled, restricted and confined, as if the mind were ditched from the body... these vulgarities in other people and imagined that if the horses could talk, they would portray those characteristics that he viewed as more desirable. Horses were an integral and intimate part of everyday life at the time Swift was writing, although to a modern-day reader it seems a tad esoteric and eccentric to place horses on pedestal in such a way." (Collins, 2010)

Jonathan Swift was rather dedicated to '*action in direction*' in order to try to do something about his current situation and change it. On the other hand, it seemed that Li merely sat around waiting to die, complaining that the gods were unfair to him. He thought the world owed him because his talent was wasted and not recognized since he never got a good chance to change things for the better.

The ways that these two authors died were also a reflection of their life attitudes. Jonathan Swift died in a mental malaise of general hatred, distrust and contempt of the human species and human nature. He felt he could not communicate to others, whereas Li died from severe depression.

III. Conclusion

To sum up, Jonathan Swift tried hard to change his world, and so did his main character, Gulliver in his novel. They were both active in difficult situations and attempted to extract themselves from it. In contrast, Li did little but continued complaining and Lin, Zhiyang showed his reflection in his work. While facing a problem, they both wished others could help them.

The characters in the stories are based on the authors' attitude. As a saying goes, "Words are the author's inner reflection." We often camouflage ourselves as another person in order to meet the expectation or achieve our goals. However, the behaviors or works will unveil our real personalities.

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