

10. Robinson and Gulliver

Daniel Defoe *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Robinson's family 36

Robinson introduces himself and his family, telling the readers various details about his origins and explaining what led him to travelling the seas, against his father's wishes.

- I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull: he got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at York, from whence¹ he had married my Mother, whose Relations were named Robinson, a very good Family at Country, and from
- 5 whom I was called Robinson Keutznaer; but by the usual Corruption of Words in England, we are now called, nay we call our Selves, and writer name Crusoe, and so my Companions always call'd me. [...] Being the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade², my Head began to be fill'd very early with rambling Thoughts: My Father, who was very ancient, had given me competent Share of Learning, as far as House-Education, and a Country
- 10 Free-School generally goes, and design'd for the Law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea, and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the Will, nay the Commands of my Father, and against all the Entreaties³ and Persuasion of my Mother and other Friends, that there seem'd to be something fatal in Propension of Nature tending directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me⁴.
- 15 My Father, a wise and grave Man, gave me serious excellent Counsel against what he foresaw was my Design. He call'd me one Morning into his Chamber, where he confined by the Gout⁵, and expostulated very warmly me upon this Subject: He ask'd me what Reasons more a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my Father House and my native Country, where I might be well introduced, and had a Prospect of raising my Fortunes by Application and
- 20 Industry, with a Life of Ease and Pleasure He told me [...] that mine was the middle State, or what might be called the upper Station of Low Life, which he had found by long Experience was the best State in the World, the most suited to human Happiness, not exposed to the Miseries and Hardships, the Labour and Sufferings of the mechanic Part of Mankind, and not embarass'd with the Pride, Luxury, Ambition and Envy of the upper Part of Mankind.

1. **whence:** where

2. **not bred to any Trade:** not channelled to a specific profession

3. **Entreaties:** it. *Lusinghe*

4. **befall me:** happen to me

5. **Gout:** it. *Gotta*

Jonathan Swift

Gulliver's Travels (1726)

War 37

A guest in Lilliput, Gulliver is told by Reldresal, the secretary of private affairs, about the present situation on the island, threatened by the conflict between the two main political parties and by the attacks of the Empire of Blefuscu. Reldresal explains the reasons for the long-lasting quarrel with Blefuscu.

It began upon the following occasion. It is allowed on all hands, that the primitive way of breaking eggs, before we eat them, was upon the larger end: but his present Majesty's grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his

5 fingers. Whereupon the Emperor his father published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law, that our histories tell us there have been six rebellions raised on that account¹; wherein one Emperor lost his life, and another his crown. These civil commotions² were constantly fomented by the

10 monarchs of Blefuscu; and when they were quelled³, the exiles always fled for refuge to that empire. It is computed, that eleven thousand persons have, at several times, suffered death, rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy: but the books of the Big-Endians have been long forbidden, and

15 the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments⁴. During the course of these troubles, the Emperors of Blefuscu did frequently expostulate⁵ by their ambassadors, accusing us of making a schism in religion, by offending against a fundamental doctrine of our great prophet Lustrog, in the fifty-fourth chapter of the Blundecral (which is their Alcoran). This, however, is thought to

20 be a mere strain upon the text; for the words are these: That all true believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end: and which is the convenient end, seems, in my humble opinion, to be left to every man's conscience, or at least in the power of the chief magistrate to determine. Now the Big-Endian exiles have found so much credit in the Emperor of Blefuscu's court, and so much private

25 assistance and encouragement from their party here at home, that a bloody war has been carried on between the two empires for six and thirty moons with various success; during which time we have lost forty capital ships, and a much greater number of smaller vessels, together with thirty thousand of our best

1. **raised on that account:** *it. scoppiate per quella ragione*

2. **commotions:** *it. sommosse*

3. **quelled:** *it. sedate*

4. **rendered ... employments:** *it. impossibilitata per legge ad avere un impiego*

5. **did ... expostulate:** *it. protestarono*

seamen and soldiers; and the damage received by the enemy is reckoned⁶ to be
30 somewhat greater than ours. However, they have now equipped a numerous
fleet, and are just preparing to make a descent upon us; and his Imperial Majesty,
placing great confidence in your valor and strength, has commanded me to lay
this account of his affairs⁷ before you. I desired the Secretary to present my
humble duty to the Emperor, and to let him know, that I thought it would not
35 become me, who was a foreigner, to interfere with parties; but I was ready, with
the hazard⁸ of my life, to defend his person and state against all invaders.

6. **is reckoned:** it. *è calcolato*

7. **lay this account of his affairs:** it. *porre questo resoconto della situazione*

8. **hazard:** it. *rischio*