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## Jonathan Swift at Work

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# Jonathan Swift at Work

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*Bob De Smith*

Imagine the man  
Squinting along a table top,  
Arranging some young girl's toys,  
Or tin soldiers,  
Trying to get a perspective on things.

Or see him leaning back, back  
To take in a steeple  
Until his hat falls off

(Picking it up, he brushes  
Its felt rim with the gentlest touch of his fingertips,  
Getting the feel of it)

Or, dizzying, he actually falls backwards to the grass  
Like they do in the silent movies.

Is the ringing in his ears  
Menieres'  
Coming on—  
Madness feeling him out?

Did he wrap himself in thread,  
Prick himself with needles,  
Cover himself with sail cloth?

Imagine walking in on him:  
"Research," he intones.

How about dissecting lice,  
Lying in the stable under a horse?

Did he, pausing from his essay on the English language,  
Spout gibberish?

Did he linger in the jakes,  
Taking it all in?  
He must have looked through  
Both ends of his pocket perspective,  
Climbed stairs,  
Placed himself at odd angles,

Emptied his pockets,  
Sniffed young ladies and old women,  
Staring embarrassingly at their breasts.

Did he have a collection of peculiarities  
In a hidden drawer—  
Cuttings of hair  
Fingernails  
Bees knees  
Tokens  
Mouse pelts  
An extracted molar?

See him stomping about  
The green like a giant,  
Creeping along walls  
Lilliput-style,

Winnying back at the horse he was brushing  
Yelling from bridges and whispering into corners.

He's not Gulliver, we remember,  
But he made him,  
Imaging him into life.