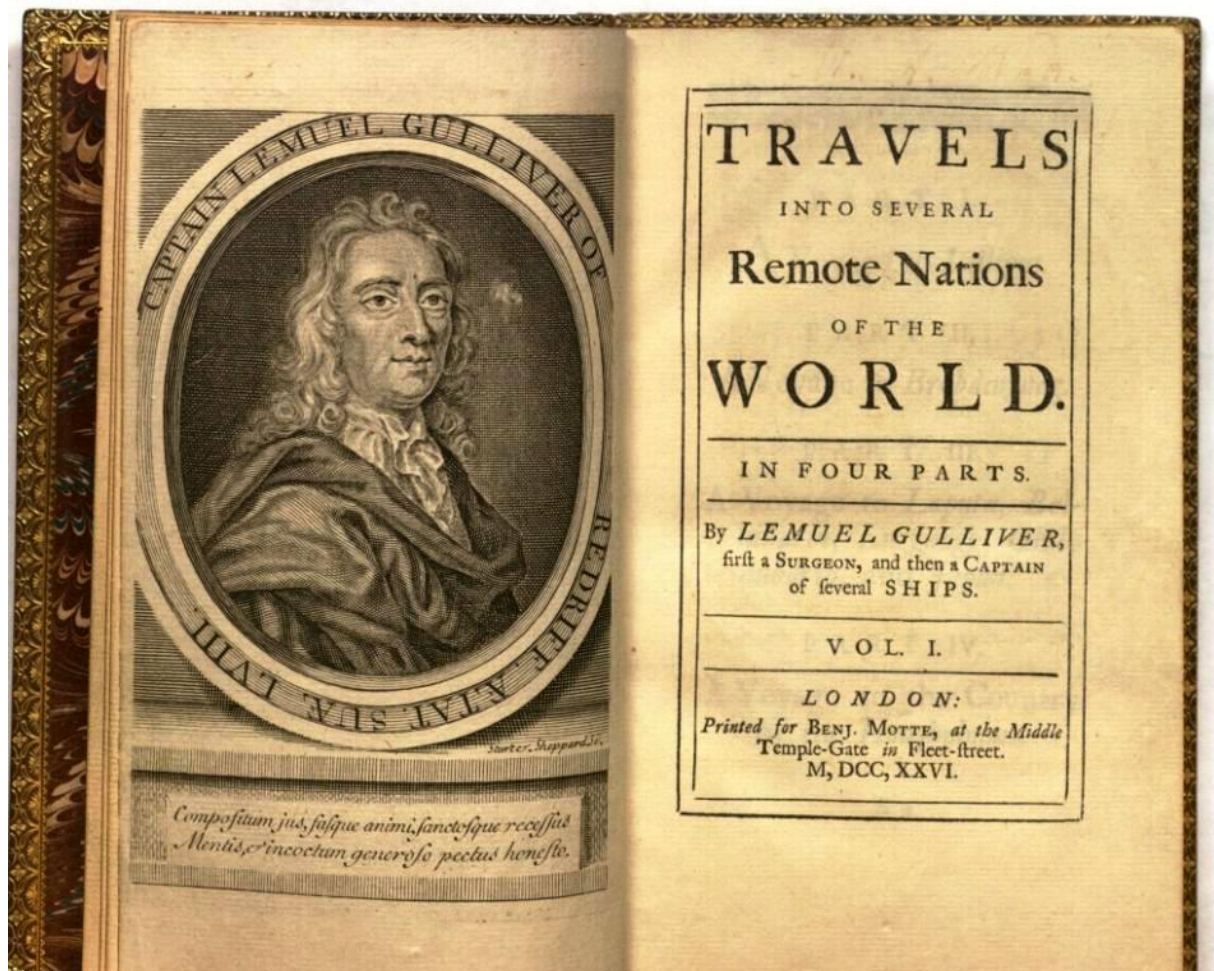


# GULLIVER'S TRAVELS



*Difference in opinions hath cost many millions of lives ...*

Gulliver's Travels – Part IV – Chapter 5

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## The rise of the English novel

Taken from: George Volceanov, A Survey of English Literature

Fiction represents things that did not occur. Literature deals with human experience as a possibility. According to a 20th century definition, fiction is “*a work of the imagination often associated with prose narrative*” (Rathbun, Cotrău).

Fiction is non-real, non-objective, and still we read a book for its truth, thus establishing a relation between life and fiction. A book is meaningful if it proposes a riddle to the reader. The truth of literature is a kind of potentiality. As readers, we fight our disbelief, we suspend our disbelief but not our critical judgement.

A book is meaningful if it provides, as in a laboratory, a sequence of reality. Fiction derives from life; fiction and life are in a mutual relation, being permanently linked and blended. Reality is infinite. Art is finite. Art means communication with the use of a specific code, be it either the language of colours or the language of shapes, of music, etc.

The novel stands closest to life, to reality, because it diverges least from the general code which is everyday speech. One should not expect solutions to his own life from a novel. It does not offer solutions, but it raises the question of empathy (identifying one's feelings or actions with those of a literary character).

Any work of art must be placed within the context which generated it in order to judge its effect. Writers attempt to translate ideas, symbols, images, memories into words. The material of fiction is speech. Fiction and life are brought together by means of language. Language places the novel in the realm of linguistics. The novel is a linguistic item. A character in a book is made of words on paper. This view is upheld by David Lodge in *The Language of Fiction*. But is the novel only linguistic? The novel deals with a certain level of human life, too. As a European phenomenon, it was born in the 18th century, dealing with the life of the city-dweller, the middle-class man, the bourgeois. It pictured life as lived by the individual in society.

The novel of urban experience in a modern, industrialized society deals with man in the industrial world, a man who is alienated from the product of his work, from men and from himself.

A novel deals with alienation and integration as opposed tendencies in human experience. The problem of the individual is to transcend alienation and to seek integration. Integration is achieved by obeying moral rules. By disobeying norms, you start a conflict and attempt to destroy order.

Hence, the novel is no longer merely linguistic; it also belongs to the sphere of ethics. The morals of an age become palpable, real in terms of manners, of behavioural rules. The morals and the manners make up the content and form of society, providing content and form to the novel. But the novel deals not only with human relations viewed institutionally; it also deals with the inner life of characters – hence, its psychological dimension.

Fiction and reality are to a certain extent interchangeable. Both in the 18th and the 19th century, most of the readers were women. Women were deprived of opportunities in actual life; slaves to a code of morality, they were considered just good for perpetuating the human species. Therefore, women found in fiction a surrogate of experience, they learned to live and experience indirectly what was denied to them. Thus, the novel had a therapeutic value, it was both a chief form of entertainment and a means of escaping into a denied reality. The 20th century “Sandra Brown” type of novels has obviously preserved this therapeutic value.

Umberto Eco, in chapter 6 of *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, warns us about the dangerous effects brought about by the inter-changeability of reality and fiction. (One of the disastrous consequences of reading fiction as historical truth was the Holocaust). The advantage of a novel over life is that in fiction you can know someone else's mind and feelings. A novel shortens the way to essence.

It may be defined as an experience of a possible life which lasts for a time, in which certain events and characters become detachable, to live with us.

Any truth possesses a meaning underlying it. Life is either meaningful (providing a coherent pattern for human understanding) or meaningless (appearing as chaos).

Truth and meaning are two distinct entities. Truth is more definite. Meaning is a segment of truth, a direction along which you might reach truth, a tool used in exploring truth.

In fiction, we can hope to reach truth for a moment. History is difficult to be lived and to be conceived as history at the same time. History is a matter of perspective, selection and interpretation. Thus, fiction is a reading of human experience, not human experience as such.

Fiction has a patterning of experience by selection, by leaving out. Truth becomes possible by reducing reality to a proposition. Truth is relative, it is a matter of opinion and debates among people. Truth is valid for a limited period, for a given historical moment; then it becomes a starting point for further development. Such is the case of the perpetual conflict between the older and the younger generations, whereby an old truth is denied, rejected, refuted, and a new one is established. From the early decades of the 18th century on, the novel is the literary form closest to life, acting as a moral guide for more than 150 years.

## The Rise of the Novel and its times

In Restoration England people reacted strongly to the past restrictions of the Commonwealth period. The court was frivolous, and the people followed its example. Betting, gambling and sports were regarded as essential pastimes, theatres played to packed houses and taverns and coffee-houses were full of gossip about the King's mistresses. In the new coffee-houses people could read the news, but papers were soon censored and the **Gazette** was the only permitted printed paper.

Industry expanded and in general people lived in much better conditions than before. Four-fifths of the population still relied on the land for their livelihood, and had to work hard. But the population growth had stopped and the balance between prices and wages was much better. Now it were the bigger farmers who had to pay more wages and taxes and had lower profits. The people working in the professions and the merchants were doing well, and became increasingly respectable. This led to a

change in the appreciation of status: the new group called themselves **squires**, and the term 'gentry' lost its significance.

Those merchants and others whose wealth and power grew beyond the influence of their landed estates went further into trade, banking and mining and became a cosmopolitan elite. They labelled themselves the **aristocracy**. On the Continent this title was restricted to privileged people who joined the group by birth, but in late 17th century England it was the term for a flexible and moneyed elite.

### Restoration England and the “Glorious Revolution”

The parliamentary gentry who had gone to war against Charles I in the 1640s eagerly restored his son Charles II to the throne in 1660. They had set out to rescue a Protestant nation from "popery and arbitrary power", but the Civil War had brought nothing but disasters for the governing elite.

The England of **Charles II**, who reigned from 1660 to 1685, and of his Roman Catholic brother **James II** until 1688 was characterised by two fears: that of popish absolutism from the top and of Protestant fundamentalism from the bottom. The period was one of attempts at absolutism, fears of renewed civil war and of political crisis. It was to end in the second English Revolution, traditionally known as the "**Glorious Revolution**", in which, for the last time in English history, a king was deposed. The Catholic James fled and was replaced by the Protestant Dutch Prince **William of Orange**.

The early Restoration period was marked by an anti-puritan backlash. The ruling classes felt that, after all, their safety and wealth depended on the power of the King in the state and of the bishops in the church. Pre-revolution England was restored wherever possible: the House of Lords, abolished by Cromwell in 1649, was re-instituted, the medieval and totally obsolete parliamentary election system was restored and left untouched until the long overdue reform bills of the 19th century.

The memory of the puritan upheaval made the gentry remarkably obsequious where the King's powers were concerned. The overwhelmingly royalist Parliament which met in 1661 (known as the Cavalier Parliament) handed back to the crown all the power that the Long Parliament of the 1640s had taken away. Charles was only too pleased and kept the Parliament in being for 18 years. When it became recalcitrant in 1681 he dissolved it right away and never recalled a Parliament for the rest of his life. His brother James II held one Parliament and dismissed it when it would not allow him to appoint Catholics to public office.

Financially the kings could afford to do without a Parliament: a healthy economy and reforms at the Treasury kept them in plenty of cash. In other ways too, the crown sought to bypass Parliament and to tame it. Sinecure jobs at court or elsewhere in the country were dangled before the MPs and as a result a large proportion of Parliament was agreeably pliable vis-à-vis the king.

All this meant that by the 1680s England was on a path towards absolutism. The Civil War had completely failed to restrain the King's prerogatives. The Cavalier gentry, in retreat from the Puritan catastrophe, were ready to help the King into the absolutist saddle. At no other time in English history did such a large proportion of the governing classes believe in the divine rights of kings and the inviolable duty of obedience. A whole cult developed around the martyr King Charles I, the symbol of patriarchal kingship and Anglican piety.

Underlying this passionate royalism was a crucial assumption: that the king would be wise enough to preserve the partnership with the natural upper-classes and with the Church of England. This went well under most of Charles II's reign and left the governing classes a free hand to seek revenge upon their puritan enemies. The church, borough corporations and universities were purged of religious dissenters. Almost anybody non-Anglican was barred from public office and university training. A famous writer like **Bunyan** (a Baptist) was jailed. **Alexander Pope** (Roman Catholic) was not allowed to go to university, etc. This mood of Anglican exclusiveness was the spirit called "Cavalier" at the time, but was soon known as "**Tory**", **the party of church, king and squire**.

The other main fear of the Restoration period was that of popish kingship. The reason was simple: it was public knowledge that the heir to the throne, James, Duke of York, had converted to Catholicism. This brought back memories of the reign of the previous Catholic monarch, Mary I (1553-58), when Protestants had been burned at the stake. The Protestants saw England as the flagship of "true religion" in a world of Catholic darkness. A Catholic King was totally incompatible with England and the Reformation. In 1678 a hoax plot was "discovered" to assassinate the King and bring England forcibly back to the bosom of the Roman Church. A frenzied pursuit of Catholics took place, the last severe prosecution of Catholicism that England was to see.

The Earl of Shaftesbury saw his chance and proposed in Parliament that James be excluded from the succession on the grounds that his religion was incompatible with the Protestant constitution. Those who feared popery more than puritan zealotry followed Shaftesbury and came to be known as **Whigs**. They felt that the powers of popishly inclined Stuarts should be curbed and believed in tolerance towards Protestant Nonconformists, in order to create a broad Protestant solidarity against the popish threat. Those, on the other hand, who feared puritan fundamentalism more than a Catholic King were called Tories. They thought that James should be allowed to succeed Charles. They knew that their old leader, Danby (who was more or less PM at the time), had taken the precaution of marrying the next heir but one, James' Protestant daughter **Mary**, to the impeccably Protestant Dutch Prince William of Orange.

The proposal to exclude James was brought before three successive Parliaments and achieved a majority in the Commons. Three times the King thwarted it, by



dissolving Parliament or by manipulating the House of Lords. The **Exclusion Crisis** gave rise to fears of a new civil war and at the same time gave birth to the English party political system. Its outcome was a complete success for King and Tories. Public opinion, reminded by the Whigs' constant cry of "No Popery" of the blackest days of the Cromwell era, shifted towards court and the Tories. During Charles' final years the Tories were free to persecute the Whigs to their hearts' delight. Shaftesbury fled to Holland for fear of being charged with treason.

A handful of desperate Whigs were driven to a coup, the Rye House Plot of 1683. It was uncovered and now the Tories had their proof that the Whigs were dangerous terrorists. Therefore, in spite of the great anti-popery tradition, James II came to the throne in 1685.

The partnership between James and the Tories seemed unstoppable. The Tories firmly believed that James would be wise enough to keep his Catholicism restricted to his private chapel. No such luck: James proved determined to transform the sad state of English Catholicism by promoting conversions and opening up public office for Catholics. The Tories and churchmen were stunned and refused to compromise. James decided to break the vital partnership and started to appoint Catholics all over the place. Realising that a purely Catholic regime would be too narrow a power base (only 1% of the population was Catholic) he tried to bring about a new alliance of Tory enemies. When he ran out of eligible Catholics, he appointed Nonconformists and Whigs.

In this way James managed to achieve the seemingly impossible: he had now provoked both of the two main fears in the country and alienated large factions of both the Tories and the Whigs. Whig aristocrats engaged in secret negotiations with the Prince of Orange.

Things came to a decisive head when, unexpectedly, James' wife produced a male heir in 1688. Instead of his Protestant daughters, this Catholic son was to be his successor. William acted immediately, as he had counted on combining the resources of England and Holland against the Catholic expansionism of Louis XIV of France. He left Holland unprotected and sailed to Torbay (borne along by a "Protestant wind"). For the last time England was successfully invaded. But William did not need to fight very hard. The army officers, the ruling classes and the churchmen all deserted James, who had to run off to France with his new-born son. His Protestant daughter and son-in-law were raised to the throne as William III and Mary II. Since then the English monarchy has been Protestant by law. After 1688 people no longer died for their religion.

### **Empire, trade and shipping**

By the end of the 18th century Britain was undoubtedly the world's greatest sea power and probably the no. 1 economic power too. It was primarily the country's naval capacity which decided the Napoleonic wars in its favour.

**India:** In the 18th century the British Empire in India mainly consisted of trading posts and military and navy bases to protect them. The British did not want to possess territory, because that would require troops, administrators, etc.

The trade with India concerned spices, silks and other fine cloths, etc. It was mainly carried out by the **East India Company**.

The rival for the Indian trade was France. In the course of the battles that were fought with the French to get the exclusive trade rights for certain areas, the East India Company almost unwillingly saw itself forced to take over large parts of the country and govern them. British troops and clerks were stationed in them to keep order and protect the interests of the Company. In 1757 Robert Clive won control over the rich province of Bengal at the battle of Plassey. By 1763 the French had almost completely been driven out of the Indian subcontinent. Britain on the contrary continued to expand in the area, which gradually developed into the kind of colony the East India Company had never originally intended to establish.

**North America:** By 1763 Britain was also in control of Canada and the rest of North America. Trade was nowhere nearly as profitable as with India. In fact the trade volume became much greater after the American colonies had broken away from the mother nation in 1776. Still emotionally to most Britons they had been the Empire and their loss seemed a death blow to British hopes of building a vast empire overseas.

**Australia:** In the 1770s an English sailor called **James Cook** was exploring the South Pacific in search of new lands. On one voyage he mapped the whole coastline of New Zealand and the east coast of Australia. On board of the ship **Endeavour** was Joseph Banks, who had a passion for the study of plants. It was he who named one of the bays on the coast of Australia "**Botany Bay**". He was quite certain that this place was ideal for European settlement.

For years convicts had been shipped off to the American and West Indian plantations. After 1776 this was no longer so easy. Prisons in England were consequently getting overcrowded. In 1787 the government decided to experiment with transporting convicts to Botany Bay to see how they would fare. This experiment became a success and transportation to Australia for 7, 14 years or for life became a common punishment for criminals. In this way British settlement in Australia started. For the time being, however, an obscure convict outpost on the other side of the world obviously was no compensation for the loss of the 13 colonies that had stretched down the east coast of America.

**The West Indies:** Another great source of wealth was the sugar islands of the West Indies. These islands produced the greater part of Europe's sugar and played a part in the **triangular trade**, which made the fortunes of many of the richest families in England.



**Triangular Trade:** Britain produced and exported mainly manufactured goods: woollen and cotton cloth, guns, hardware, pottery, etc. Ships loaded with British-produced goods sailed to the west coast of Africa, where they exchanged their goods for slaves. The slaves were mostly bought from African dealers for money or for goods. They were transported to the West Indies and sold there. The ships were now loaded with sugar, molasses and rum. The ships then returned to Bristol or Liverpool, thereby completing the triangle.

This three-cornered trade in goods, slaves and sugar made the fortunes of many English traders. Money poured into the ports and the city of London in greater amounts than ever before. Banking, insurance, etc. experienced a period of unprecedented growth.

**Slave Trade:** There were people in England who had strong objections against the slave trade. So long as it was so profitable, the struggle against it proved useless. In 1776 Adam Smith published his **Wealth of Nations**. It had an enormous influence on the growth of English industry. Smith objected to the slave trade, not so much on moral grounds, but on economic ones as well: "the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves."

Slavery now came under a two-pronged attack: it was not just immoral but expensive too. A small group in Parliament, led by **William Wilberforce**, tried to get the government to pass a law abolishing the slave trade. They met with firm opposition from the West Indian interests; the trade was well represented in the House of Commons. In 1807, finally, a law was passed making slave-trading illegal for any British subject. The USA banned slave-trading in 1809, but slave-owning and domestic slave-trading remained legal in the southern states until 1865, the end of the American Civil War. In the West Indies -and in fact in all other parts of the British Empire - slavery as such continued to exist until 1833.

**Trade and Industry:** The great changes in agriculture and in the manufacturing industries we refer to as the Agricultural and the Industrial Revolutions took place in Britain before the rest of the world. This could never have happened without the vast sums of money resulting from the triangular trade. After all England was a small country, not particularly well supplied with raw materials. Why then was she such a mighty trading nation?

Like the Dutch naval empire, the British empire was founded on the skills of British sailors and shipbuilders. Together they produced a merchant fleet able to play a major role in getting to the Far East quickly and efficiently and supply Europe with all sorts of goods increasingly in demand there.

The British government (again like the Dutch) was far more sympathetic to trade and industry than was the case in many other European countries. It was the skill of the traders and the lack of restriction by the government which made countries like Britain and the Netherlands rich, not any rich resources within the countries

themselves. The goods sold by the British were not usually produced in England, they were brought in from outside Europe and then re-exported. Sometimes they had been processed in England, e.g. textiles, but in many cases they were just re-exported straight away.

When the 19th century, with its rapid developments in science and industry started, Britain found itself in a very advantageous position indeed.

### The attack on the old authorities

We have seen how in England, the struggle of Parliament led to a defeat of absolutism by the end of the seventeenth century. Although Holland and England as of yet stood alone with their relatively enlightened and liberal forms of government, all of Europe was changing during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The attack on the principles of the old authorities started in the seventeenth century, and was successful in the eighteenth.

The old authorities attacked were not so much the kings but the sources they derived a lot of their authority from: the Bible and the classical writers. These sources had fed the thinking of renaissance and reformation, and were firmly entrenched in most people's minds. We should remember this when we deal with those scientists and thinkers to whom we owe the foundations of modern science and philosophy.

We will trace the attack on the old 'authorities' in **politics, science and philosophy**, where it was fiercer than in architecture, music and literature.

### Politics

In the sixteenth and seventeenth religious passions had played a great role in politics. Their influence lessened in the eighteenth century, although it did not completely disappear. As Great Britain and the Dutch Republic were the most liberal countries in Europe in the seventeenth century, it is not surprising that philosophers from those countries paved the way for the enlightened policies of the next century.

From Holland we can mention **Hugo de Groot** or Grotius whose works: The freedom of the seas and The laws of war and peace were of great importance internationally, and **Rene Descartes**, a French philosopher who fled to Holland where he published his work Discourse de la methode in Leiden. Descartes wanted a new philosophy based on **reason** and **clarity**: he did not want to hold true anything he had not had clear insight into. This naturally made him suspect to those who took the Bible as a literal scientific guide, and those who believed the scientific laws of Greek philosophers like Aristotle. Although Descartes was a philosopher, not a politician, he started the swing away from dogma to research, and in that way started a process that would lead to greater political tolerance.

In England political thinking was influenced by **Thomas Hobbes**, a royalist who fled to France in 1640 and there studied the works of Galilei and Descartes. Hobbes concluded that man in his natural state is bad, a wolf to his fellow-men. Therefore,

there would always be wars. To keep peace, despotic authority is needed. His pessimism was not completely shared by **John Locke** who lived in Holland from 1682-1688 and returned in the train of William of Orange. Like Hobbes, Locke believed that man in his natural state would let violence prevail over justice, but that in order to protect his basic rights of liberty and possession he would form civil societies. In such societies governments would be granted certain rights but would not have absolute power. If a government has tyrannical traits, every individual has the right to stand up against it. Tyranny of Parliament and tyranny of kings were to be condemned equally. Locke defended the freedom of press and the freedom of speech. His ideas influenced the American **Founding Fathers** as well as the French enlightened philosophers **Voltaire, Montesquieu and Rousseau**.

### **The Royal Families of Stuart and Hanover**

Queen Elizabeth (Protestant) had no children. When she died in 1603, James I and VI (1603-1625), son of Mary Queen of Scots, became the first joint ruler of the kingdoms of both England and Scotland.

The Stuart claim to England's throne derived from Margaret Tudor, eldest daughter of Henry VII, who married James IV, King of Scots.

### **The Stuarts**

The Stuarts were the first kings of the United Kingdom. King James I of England who began the period was also King James VI of Scotland, thus combining the two thrones for the first time.

The Stuart dynasty reigned in England and Scotland from 1603 to 1714, a period which saw a flourishing Court culture but also much upheaval and instability, of plague, fire and war.

It was an age of intense religious debate and radical politics. Both contributed to a bloody civil war in the mid-seventeenth century between Crown and Parliament (the Cavaliers and the Roundheads), resulting in a parliamentary victory for Oliver Cromwell and the dramatic execution of King Charles I.

There was a short-lived republic, the first time that the country had experienced such an event.

The Restoration of the Crown was soon followed by another 'Glorious' Revolution. William and Mary of Orange ascended the throne as joint monarchs and defenders of Protestantism, followed by Queen Anne, the second of James II's daughters.

The end of the Stuart line with the death of Queen Anne led to the drawing up of the Act of Settlement in 1701, which provided that only Protestants could hold the throne.

The next in line according to the provisions of this act was George of Hanover, who was actually 52nd in line to the throne at that time, yet Stuart princes remained in the

wings. The Stuart legacy was to linger on in the form of claimants to the Crown for another century.

## **The Hanoverians**

The Hanoverians came to power in difficult circumstances that looked set to undermine the stability of British society.

The first of their Kings, George I, was only 52nd in line to the throne, but the nearest Protestant according to the Act of Settlement. Two descendants of James II, the deposed Stuart king, threatened to take the throne, and were supported by a number of 'Jacobites' throughout the realm.

For all that, the Hanoverian period was remarkably stable, not least because of the longevity of its kings. From 1714 through to 1837, there were only five monarchs, one of whom, George III, remains the longest reigning king in British History.

The period was also one of political stability, and the development of constitutional monarchy. For vast tracts of the eighteenth century, great Whig families dominated politics, while the early nineteenth century saw Tory domination.

Britain's first 'Prime' Minister, Robert Walpole, dates from this period, and income tax was introduced. Towards the end of the Hanoverian period, the Great Reform Act was passed, which amongst other things widened the electorate.

It was also in this period that Britain came to acquire much of her overseas empire, despite the loss of the American colonies, largely through foreign conquest in the various wars of the century. By the end of the Hanoverian period, the British Empire covered a third of the globe.

The theme of longevity was set to continue, as the longest reigning monarch in British history, Queen Victoria, prepared to take the throne.

## **Science**

One of the characteristics of our modern world is the obsession with science and the love of observation and experiment. It is hard to think of times in which people did not believe in these values at all, and were content to live with the authority of the church and the classical scientists like **Aristotle**. One example is that of the English doctor **William Harvey** (1578-1657) who, by observing animal hearts deduced the circulation of blood. This was not supported by the old theories and it took a long time before his opponents stopped ridiculing his theory.

Even more important for the foundation of modern science is the series of observations and innovations in calculating that leads from Copernicus via Kepler and Napier to Isaac Newton's theories.

**Copernicus** (1473-1543) stated the sun was the centre of the universe, not the earth, as the Church firmly upheld. Copernicus was a theoretician, not an observer.

Facts for his theories were supplied when **Kepler** started to do calculations on observed facts about the planets, and found they move in an elliptical trajectory around the sun. His calculations were made possible by another mathematician, **John Napier** (1550-1617) from Scotland, who invented logarithms and thus made mathematics and calculation a less time-consuming affair.

Kepler's calculations were supported by **Galilei** (1564-1642) who had improved the telescope and conducted experiments on the speed with which objects fall. Galilei was an example of what Descartes had called **reason**: one should observe, calculate and experiment. But he lived in Italy, where the catholic Church had a firm hold on everything, and, threatened by the Inquisition, he had to withdraw his theses. It was in England that the next step could be taken.

Partly this was due to the fact that the chancellor to James I, **Francis Bacon**, (1561-1626) rejected the old authorities too, and championed research. His position was strong enough to protect scientists from accusations of heresy, and England became a centre of research. Robert Boyle worked out theories on the compressibility of gases and supplied the theoretical foundation for the later invention of the steam engine.

A **Royal Society** was formed in which scientists discussed their work and which was helped by the patronage of the King. Its most eminent member was **Isaac Newton** (1642-1727).

Newton taught mathematics at Trinity College in Cambridge. He succeeded in combining reason and experiment, by using the findings of Kepler and Galileo to work out a whole new system of the universe, based on the single theory of **gravity**, which explained the workings of the solar system. He also developed a whole new set of mathematics, the differential calculus. Laws of nature proved to be true for the planets as well. His principles are an example of concise, exact and logical reasoning. Yet he was careful to include God in his system. This made it more acceptable for his contemporaries. Newton reasoned that human intellect knew the laws of nature, but also knew there was God. If the Universe was a system ruled by mathematical laws, that proved that there must be some intelligent, governing force in Creation. It was impossible that such diverse forms as the sun and the planets could have evolved from unstructured matter.

Swift was an upper-class conservative who undoubtedly looked down upon, and frequently derided, mechanists and scientists of the sort exemplified by the members of the Royal Society — disciples of Francis Bacon, who were even then threatening to remake the world in their own image. He lived in a time when a great deal of what passed for science was, at best, pseudo-science. He had little use for abstract science or technology — which he satirized unmercifully in the third book of *Gulliver's Travels*, the voyage to Laputa — but he was not opposed to science or to scientific experiment if it could be genuinely useful to mankind: he read and approved of Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*, for example. He was not, that is, anti-

intellectual, but he was passionately opposed to the useless follies of the charlatans, the quacks, the cheats, the speculators, and the virtuosi — to the "aerial studies" of the chymists, mathematicians, projectors, and the rest of that speculative tribe" — who lost themselves in useless abstractions, who wasted time and money (their own, and more importantly, that of gullibles) in vain or extravagant experimentation.

Most importantly, however, he perceived — long before others realized it — that science was ethically and morally neutral; that it could be put to evil uses as easily as to good. Swift insisted that human beings be reasonable, and that their efforts be both useful and moral, and he found too little practicality and too little morality in the science of his day. He was unwilling to sacrifice moral and ethical considerations to scientific abstractions: it seems unnecessary to remark that subsequent events seem to have proven many of his assumptions correct.

## Religion

Swift was a clergyman, a member of the Church of Ireland, the Irish branch of the Anglican Church; and as such he was a militant defender of his church (and his own career prospects) in the face of the threats to its continued existence posed by Roman Catholicism at home in Ireland (which was overwhelmingly Catholic) and in England, where Swift and his peers saw the Catholics (and, at the other religious and political extreme, the Dissenters) as threatening not only the Anglican Church but the English Constitution.

Swift was ostensibly a conservative by nature: he instinctively sought stability in religion as in politics, but stability which insured personal freedoms. Indeed, so far as he was concerned, religion, morality, and politics were inseparable: he consistently attacked theological attempts (even within Anglicanism itself) to define and limit orthodoxy — attempts which, he felt, led ultimately to anarchic dissent. The divisive tendencies of Mankind had, he believed, over the centuries, promoted the general decay of Christianity itself, which had lost its original clarity, simplicity, and coherence. The Truth had been mishandled, corrupted, by men who had behaved like Yahoos. He adhered to the tenets of the Anglican Church because he had been brought up to respect them, because the Church of Ireland was the church of his social class, and because his own ambitions were involved in its success, but also because he saw the Church as a force for rationality and moderation; as occupying a perilous middle ground between the opposing adherents of Rome and Geneva.

Underlying all of Swift's religious concerns, underlying his apparent conservatism, which was really a form of radicalism, was his belief that in Man God had created an animal which was not inherently rational but only capable, on occasion, of behaving reasonably: only, as he put it, *rationis capax*. It is our tendency to disappoint, in this respect, that he rages against: his works embody his attempts to maintain order and reason in a world which tended toward chaos and disorder, and he concerned himself more with the concrete social, political, and moral aspects of human nature than with the abstractions of philosophy, theology, and metaphysics.



## Philosophy

Even so, Newton's findings, and the rules he formulated for good research rejected the idea of a God who interfered with life on earth, and suggested a God who had created a system of natural and general laws that was perfect and should be admired. Before Newton, Descartes had also stated that the 'methodic doubt' of things that fires research should not include religion. If science rejected certain biblical truths, like the creation of the world in six days, one might well ask what part of the Bible was true, if any.

The new critical attitude of truth and reason against ignorance was unstoppable, even if many in Catholic countries suffered the treatment of the Inquisition for heretics. Slowly the fall of the old authorities led to a new virtue, the virtue of tolerance. In the eighteenth century old rules banning certain groups of dissenters were repealed in European countries. The French writer **Voltaire** did much to promote this new tolerance, today we would call him a 'politically engaged' writer.

Others, like **Rousseau** and **Kant** could theorize about European leagues of nations, the abolishment of great armies, and the republic as an ideal form of government.

Rousseau went even further when he stated that man is by nature good, not evil. Primitive man, he said, lived happily and civilization has only created egoism and a system of repression. Rousseau's idea of a 'noble savage' became immensely popular and influenced the way Europeans saw the American Indian. In another work Rousseau condemned ownership of land and other great properties, and his attack on the existing state of affairs in France heralded a new period, a period of great **social** upheaval. Rousseau's social ideas were a bit much for his contemporaries, even in the Age of Enlightenment.

As new knowledge spread, reason was elevated at the cost of sentiment. Likewise, religion lost to tolerance. The proof that God existed was found in the harmony of the universe, compared to which human differences such as wars seemed microscopically small and unimportant.

The judgment of eighteenth-century thinkers on the previous century is perhaps best put by the writer **Pope**:

*For forms of government let fools contest;*

*Whate'er is best administered is best.*

*For modes of faith let zealots fight;*

*He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.*

## 18th century nationalism: Walpole and his enemies

In the 18th century people like Rousseau, William Penn and Immanuel Kant considered the possibilities of creating European peace through a kind of league of

nations. In this cosmopolitan thinking the domination of the French language, morals and fashion served, however, to bring about a strong reaction of nationalism. This nationalism had earlier roots, and the British were the first to reject things French as they were proud of their wealth, culture and system of government. The 18th century British had defeated the absolutist Louis XIV, they proved supreme in land warfare and on the seas. They had gained control over Gibraltar, Canada and some of the West Indian islands and even if they lost their American colonies, this was seen to be the triumph of the power of freedom created by typically British institutions and habits, like Parliament, freedom of speech, person and religious toleration.

This nationalism had two sides. On the one hand the English gentlemen of the 18th century made the **Grand Tour** of Europe, mostly France and Italy, and was received in the salons of the French and Italian aristocracy. They were, unlike modern tourists, not isolated in hotels, and came into touch with the peoples whose nations they visited. There was an unprecedented camaraderie between the upper classes of Europe.

On the other hand there were the working classes who never went abroad, who boasted they were free-born British and had no use for the frog-eating, priest-ridden French. They had no information about the French or Italians in the form of books or papers, let alone films or photographs. The common people were prejudiced towards any foreigner, and this all too often even extended to the Irish and the Scots.

It must be supposed that even the gentlemen who had been on the grand tour were cosmopolitan only to a degree. They had their portraits painted by English painters, had books by English writers in their libraries, their literary oracle was **Dr Johnson** who was English to the marrow. Their lives were different from those of the French and Italian nobles who spent most of their time at court. The English gentry came to town for Parliament first, Court was a dull place for them. Most of their time was spent in the country, among their neighbours of all classes, whom they led, entertained, bullied, and at election time courted and bribed. They hunted foxes, improved the land, and governed the countryside as Justices of the Peace.

Therefore, in 18th century England prior to the changes made by the industrial revolution, a national solidarity and unity of ideas that tied all classes together and separated them from foreigners. Power was concentrated in the hands of one class, the country gentry, but this was generally not seen as a problem as the national idea made everyone proud of being a free-born Englishman. Although the Walpole governments of the first half of the century were criticised, only a few people, like the novelist Fielding was critical of squirarchical power. Swift, as we have seen, was contemptuous of English society as a whole.

The newly founded newspapers like **The Tatler** and **The Spectator** gently satirised the typical country gentleman of the day. If writers were politically and socially conscious this sooner led to a critical reporting on the doings of Parliament and often scandalous attacks on the successive Georges, the new Hanoverian Kings.

When William of Orange died after being thrown from his horse, Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702 to 1714, succeeded him. During her reign Scotland was joined to England (1707) in a 'shotgun wedding'. The way in which the Union was forced and 'bought' by the English was the cause of a number of Scottish uprisings which all failed.

When Anne died, the so-called Elector of Hanover was invited to become King, although numerous descendants of the Stuarts stood closer to the throne. George I did not speak English and was more interested in Hanover than in Britain. He was therefore not really able to preside effectively over meetings of his ministers, and this gave the strongest of these ministers the opportunity to set the pace. **Sir Robert Walpole** was a country squire who believed firmly in prosperity and trade rather than in war. His Whig party had enthusiastically taken the role of 'hawks' in the French wars between 1689 and 1713. But these wars cost a lot of money and land was highly taxed. Apart from that a **national debt** had been created. Many people believed the nation's creditors profited from the wars and kept them going on purpose, while the landowners had to pay. The Tory party identified with these claims, and writers like Jonathan Swift sensed a conspiracy between Whigs, government and the new Bank of England. Walpole certainly juggled funds and did well because of it, but in his case the country benefited as well.

Walpole was aware of the tensions created by the cost of warfare and one of his aims was to keep the land tax well below the wartime level. This gave him the trust of the landed gentry, while the City creditors came to trust him because of his handling of the **South Sea Bubble** affair.

In 1710 the South Sea Company had been granted a trade monopoly in the Pacific and along the eastern coast of South America, largely concerned with the slave traffic. It prospered so well that in 1720 it offered to pay off the entire National debt if it meant that they could handle the resulting fund. The king's German mistresses and a few ministers received shares in the South Sea Company to persuade them to back this scheme. The Government announced its approval and the public rushed in to buy shares. Rival companies were put up, a few people got rich quickly and then the 'bubble' burst and the funds dropped. Most speculators were ruined. Walpole saw to it that most creditors got about a third of their money back, which was more than they could have hoped for. Leading politicians who had been involved thought it wise to retire, leaving the political field to Walpole. He was leader of the Whigs, first Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He proceeded to bribe his way to a stable power-basis. Few people could vote, and elections were expensive affairs. Bribery was not frowned upon as much as in our day. Freemen tended to vote as their landowner told them to, and a new Member of Parliament would soon find out that loyalty to Walpole was a way to advancement. The newspapers did not fail to point out that a remarkable number of Walpole's relatives held lucrative offices. His ministry was called '**the Robinocracy**'. Walpole

made Britain a single-party state for the duration of his rule. The King supported the Whigs because even though he had to work with Parliament he had more power than the later Stuarts who had tried to reign without it. In 1716 the Whigs passed an Act which extended the interval between elections from three to seven years. Between 1720 and 1742 Walpole had to survive only four general elections, as many as had occurred between 1701 and 1705 alone. The constituents of larger boroughs often voted for opposition candidates, but the Whigs managed to stay in power through the use of a large number of **rotten boroughs**, which were small constituencies in which the member could easily bribe or threaten the voters. There was protest against such practices, sometimes even riots, but there was no radical platform and the Walpole government passed a Riot Act to ensure political stability. In the end, it was the outbreak of war against Spain and later France, which forced Walpole to resign in 1742, rather than any concerted opposition in England itself. Many instances of satire in the writings of **Pope, Gay and Fielding** reflect the protest against Walpole's policies. But it cannot be denied he ruled over a stable and affluent Kingdom.

### Early industrialisation, canals and enclosures

The phenomenon called the Industrial Revolution is often associated with the early nineteenth century. In fact, the early development of industry began in the 1760s.

England had its traditional industries, such as cloth, iron and tin, as well as newer ones like tool making and pottery. A great deal of this industry was carried on in villages and small settlements. Farm workers and their families would do work at home, or in small workshops. Initially, these workers shunned the (few) large factories in which goods were made. In this so-called 'domestic system' a merchant, sometimes along with the tools to work it would supply the half-product, such as yarn. The finished product, such as cloth would be collected and paid for when new supplies were delivered. So even if he worked at home, the cottage labourer did not differ so much from the later factory worker.

The artisans who had been trained by a master of their trade played an important part. There was no such thing as a technical school; the skills were often passed on from father to son. Artisans were in demand, they were mobile, in search of work, and they were often literate and inventive. When, through their travelling, they came into contact with new ideas; they would experiment and pass on their findings.

The first technical inventions were applied to the traditional industries: cloth and iron. In 1733 John Kay invented a weaver's shuttle that could double the production of a weaver. In 1764 James Hargreaves invented a spinning machine (**Spinning Jenny**) which later was improved by Richard Arkwright and Samuel Crompton. The latter's **mule Jenny** took most of the handwork out of weaving, improved the quality of the cloth, and created a need for space and power to let the machines run. This stimulated the building of cotton mills near fast-running streams (hilly country!). The new method put the farmers' wives and children out of work at home, so they turned

to the new factories to look for jobs. One of the evils of these first factories was the use they made of child labour. Children of the very poor and orphans were shipped off to the north, where the new centres of industry were found. There, they often were made to work under terrible circumstances.

In the iron industry Great Britain took a lead in the second half of the eighteenth century. Before, iron had had to be imported, as the smelting process required far more charcoal than Britain's woods could supply. When an iron-master, Abraham Darby discovered that coal, in the form of cokes, could be used as well, he first kept this secret (Quaker pacifist leanings). Later, after 1753, the method was used elsewhere as well. The Darby family produced the first iron rails for use in mines (for horse- or child-drawn 'trains') and built the first cast-iron bridge across the Severn. Here we see how the process of invention and improvement in one area speeded up developments in other areas. The iron rails and bridges would facilitate transport which would in turn make new forms of industry possible.

Even more important in this respect was the use of steam power. Steam engines had been around for a while, and were used to pump water from mines. But the cylinders they used were made of wood and could not be made airtight. Things improved when **James Watt** invented a different type of steam engine. At the same time (1782) the improvements in the iron industry produced more accurate machines and tools so that the imperfections could be taken out. Watt's engines were produced and sold with the help of the industrialist **Boulton**, and so a new industry, that of heavy machinery, started. Around 1800 five hundred of Watt's engines powered cotton mills, giant hammers in the iron industry and other machines.

The advances in industry led to advances in trade (clothes, for instance, became cheaper, as did many other consumer goods) and this made it necessary to move goods and fuel around the country. The English roads of the mid-century were dreadful. Before the railroads arrived with the advent of the steam locomotive, two other solutions were found: the **Turnpike Roads** and the **canals**.

The Turnpike roads were roads built by a trust appointed by the government. This trust raised money locally, built a road, and got the money for road maintenance by building toll-gates at which everyone who used the road had to pay. The turnpike system improved the quality of Britain's roads enormously. Trading towns were connected and time spent on travelling was reduced. One of the famous road builders of the era was **J. Macadam**, who used small stones and splinters of rocks to create a relatively smooth surface in comparison to the old cobbled roads.

Still, the new roads did not solve the problem of transporting bulk, like coal. In the North, the quality of the new roads in for instance Lancashire was still bad. After an enterprising Duke had ordered a canal built between Worsley and Manchester, and later between Manchester and Liverpool, it appeared that the costs of transport could be halved. This started a 'canal-mania', between 1760 and 1790 England was covered with waterways. Digging canals was very expensive, not in the last place

because some builders, to avoid the use of locks, dug through hills or built aqueducts. But there was a lot of money to invest (e.g. money from the triangular trade) and the much-used canals were very profitable for their shareholders. Still, the era of the canal was short, because in the early 19th century the railways would take over.

The factories were taking over from the individual cottage industry, thereby taking all of manufacturing to a larger scale. In agriculture, something similar was happening. The English had held on to the old three-field system for a long time. In this system, there were generally three big fields to a village, some pasture, and commons, land not good enough to grow crops. Farmers had strips in the fields, on which crops would rotate. They could graze their animals on the commons and pastures. The village parson would have his tithe, that is one tenth of the produce. Finally, there were poor cottagers or squatters who built their houses on or near the common. They had some common rights and worked at harvest time, but they had no share in the open fields.

Before the 18th century some of the fields had been enclosed, but under pressure of the population increase between 1750 and 1850 (from 6 to 18 million people) people turned to enclosing the fields. This meant redistributing the land according to the percentage each farmer had, and then fencing in the new property. Farmers could now farm their lands as they pleased, which enabled them to plant new crops, like beets and turnips for fodder. **Lord Townshend and Jethro Tull** had pioneered new scientific methods of crop growing and breeding that could not be applied in the old strip-system. Enclosure meant the farmers could skip the fallow year, and it also reduced the number of paths to each strip of land so that a greater part of the fields could be cultivated. For the big farmers this was a chance to use the new methods and to grow more and better food. Country squires who held great tracts of land and enterprising farmers would start the process of enclosure by petitioning in their village and applying for enclosure in Parliament. For the small farmers and cottagers the expenses that came with enclosure (legal costs and costs of fencing in and drainage) often meant they had to sell their land as they had no ready cash. Many had no documents to prove property rights that had been taken for granted for centuries, and lost land in the reallocations. Many had to leave their village and they went to the already overcrowded towns. Parliament did not heed the protests of the smallholders and cottagers. They were landlords themselves. The break with the past was painful for many, as was the transition to industry. Still, these changes led to a new England, which could generally feed, house and clothe its population better than ever before.

### London in the 18th century

*'When a man is tired of London he is tired of life.'* Samuel Johnson 1777.

10 million people lived in Britain, one million in London. The streets were congested and the city was crowded. Paupers from the countryside and even abroad were drawn to the city, which led to slums and crime. The notorious slums could be found



near the docks and harbours, on the East Side of London. The palaces and the houses of the rich moved ever westward to escape the stench and filth of the eastern part of the city.

The poor in the harbour area could see merchantmen from all seas unload their riches, and therefore logically, crime was rife in this area, called the 'pool'. Other slums could be found on the edges of the city, for instance in Whitechapel. Among those groups who came to fill the slums two stand out: the Irish and the Jews from Central Europe.

From Ireland came peasants who had too little to live on and too much to die. In Ireland they had lived in small cottages, sharing their room with their animals. Used to hard work, they came to England to do seasonal work and eventually groups reached London. They could be found in the north, in St Giles' where they shared rooms with ten to twelve countrymen in dirty hovels without windows. They worked in the docks, in the brickworks and as porters. On Sundays they boozed and fought, with each other and with the English proletarians, who hated them.

The Jews from Central Europe were chased from Bohemia (1744) and Poland (1772). In 1734 there were approximately 6,000 Jews in all of England, around 1800 in London alone 20,000 Jews could be found. They were barred from London trades and had to make a living as scrap metal dealers and such. Many turned to crime and became pickpockets, fences or forgers. Later, some turned to professional boxing. The Jews produced a champion in Daniel Mendoza.

In the course of the 18th century roads were paved and street lighting was introduced. But at the time the Beggar's Opera was written we must picture a London that for the greater part was dirty, dark at night and unsafe. Part of the problem was that the burgeoning city had other priorities. The fight against fire and floods, keeping up the supply of food and drinking water, and, later on in the century, the forming of an effective police force came first. Around 1730 there was no police to speak of. One reason was, that the upper classes feared any armed force in society, they had not got rid of the standing army, they reasoned, to have it replaced by another force they did not control. The so-called 'Bow Street Runners' were the nucleus from which later the Metropolitan Police force grew. The authorities could only try to contain criminality by handing out heavy sentences for any crime. This did not deter criminals because for many it was simply a question of starving now or hanging later. Moreover, judges did not convict in any but the clearest cases. Rehabilitation was unheard-of and prisons were waiting- rooms till your sentence was cast. Punishment was flogging, the stocks, transportation or death. The system was corrupt, but not to a degree that rich people and noblemen stood above the law, as was the case in Europe in those times.

Burglary was not so common; it was easier to pick pockets, to pilfer goods from burning buildings or from the docks. The century saw the rise of the 'highwayman' who lurked on those roads into the city where the surroundings (heath or woods)

ensured a good chance of getting away. Being a highwayman was flashy and therefore these criminals were popular heroes, although there is little ground for their popularity apart from spite for the rich who got robbed. Highwaymen were no Robin Hoods; they did not share their spoils with the needy.

In London, the rich and poor were not entirely separated. The extravagant life-style of the rich could be witnessed by all. Meeting places of high-life and low-life were the markets, the coffeehouses (where people gambled) and the brothels. In one respect rich and poor alike gave Englishmen, and Londoners in particular, a bad reputation. In the early 17th century drinking spirits became popular. Alehouses advertised: 'Drunk for a penny, dead drunk for tuppence' and gin was consumed in vast quantities by all classes. The rich also drank port and sherry, the poor ale. Everybody drank, even children, and getting drunk in public was not stigmatised as it is nowadays. Hogarth has immortalised the drinking problem in his famous series of drawings of 'Gin Lane'. The problem was partly solved when tea became popular in the second half of the century.

### Scotland in the 18th century

In the 17th century the Stuart kings had ruled England, Wales and Scotland. But Scotland had retained its own religion (the 'Kirk', which was Presbyterian, an offshoot of Calvinist Protestantism, and Catholicism in the Highlands), law courts and education system (which was better than the English system).

After Britain's Glorious Revolution of 1688 the followers of the exiled Stuart king James II and his Roman Catholic descendants were known as Jacobites. The major support for their cause was in Scotland and Ireland, where the Jacobites continued to resist after the accession to the throne of William III and Mary II in 1689. William, however, defeated the Scottish Jacobites at Killiecrankie (1689) and the Irish Jacobites in the Battle of the Boyne (1690).

When James II died in 1701, his son, James Edward (known as the Old Pretender), was recognised as king of England and Scotland by Spain and France. The English mounted a political campaign and used bribery and feuds between clans to ensure a political union between England and Scotland. This was achieved in 1707, but many Scotsmen felt they had been forced into a 'shotgun wedding'. James Edward first attempted an invasion of Scotland in 1708, but it was a total fiasco. More serious was the Jacobite rising of 1715, which took place after the accession of the Hanoverian George I and had support in England as well as Scotland. Some people had seen Queen Anne as a kind of regent for the Stuart monarchy. All James Edward had to do, many felt, was abjure his Catholicism and he would be welcome to the throne. But James Edward refused to do so. Moreover, the Union of 1707 had been carefully constructed to leave the Scots a measure of freedom in their courts and religious affairs while at the same time giving them the economic advantages of being part of a 'booming' Britain. The Scottish Jacobites were defeated at Preston in Lancashire on

November 13, and by the time James Edward landed the cause was lost. He departed on February. 4, 1716.

In the following decades the Scottish middle classes tried to find a place in British society. The early industrial revolution influenced the Scottish lowlands and anti-English feelings festered in the Highlands, an area left behind in an era of rapid change.

In 1745 James Edward's son, Charles Edward (Bonnie Prince Charlie or the Young Pretender) sailed to Scotland and raised certain Highland clans. England was ill-prepared, after all, in the course of the 18th century it had fought its wars abroad and there had been no need to maintain a large standing army. Bonnie Prince Charlie managed to take his army deep into England. He defeated Sir John Cope at Prestonpans on September 21, 1745, but lack of support and supplies drove his army back. Many Highlanders were anxious to get their harvests in and did not feel like campaigning in England through the autumn and winter months. Finally, the Highlanders' army was routed at Culloden Moor on April. 16, 1746. It was a cruel battle and many survivors were sent as 'slaves' to America. The Prince fled from Scotland, and with him went the last of the Jacobite hopes.

## Notes on Gulliver's Travels

*Gulliver's Travels*, like *Robinson Crusoe* (which was published some six years earlier), has enjoyed fame as a children's book from the time it was first published till this very day. But unlike Defoe's book, which champions the God-fearing, ingenious, hard-working and thrifty Englishman, Swift's narrative was sharply criticised for being misanthropic, vulgar and the work of a deranged man. Both stories feature Englishmen cast on strange shores. But Robinson believes in the customs and institutions of his society, whereas Gulliver, at first unwittingly, but later quite purposefully, denounces those customs and institutions.

To understand *Gulliver's Travels* beyond the level of the 'little men and big men', the level of a fairytale, we must take a look at the writer and how he fit into the world around him.

Jonathan Swift was born in Ireland, but thought of himself as an Englishman. He grew up in an impoverished and fatherless family, but relatives enabled him to study. Later, he worked as a secretary for a retired statesman and in those years he read a lot. In those days, most people who studied seriously at University became priests, as the Universities were dominated by the Anglican Church. Swift eventually became Doctor of Divinity at Trinity College, Dublin. He disliked the so-called Dissenters, who did not believe in the cautious policies of the Anglican Church. In one of his satirical

works, *A Tale of a Tub*, he attacked both Dissenters and Catholics. In *Gulliver's Travels* he satirises religious strife by turning it into a dispute about which side of and egg one must break.

It was not uncommon for a writer to be interested in politics in those days. The fact that Swift was a man of the church did not matter. When the Church of Ireland Swift sent him on a mission to London quickly fell in with a group of writers and politicians. At first, he supported the Whig party, which was, as you know, the party of merchants, artisans, manufacturers and such. But it was also the party that sometimes courted Dissenters and even Catholics to gain support, as the Tory party was so strongly tied to the Anglican Church. At that time, England was involved in the Spanish War of Succession, a war that dragged on and cost a lot of money. Swift changed sides and started supporting the Tories, who wished the war to end and accused the army commander of enriching himself at the cost of the nation. Comments on the army commander (the Duke of Marlborough) and the castle that was built for him can be found in the second book of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Luck was not with Swift: for a few years he had influential friends, but when Queen Anne died in 1714 and the throne was offered to the Hanoverian elector George, the Whigs came to power and Swift had to return to Ireland. He always considered this an exile, even if, in a number of satirical works, he championed Irish causes and pointed out the miseries of the common people in Ireland in those days. In *A Modest Proposal* he had his narrator-letter-writer propose fattening Irish children so they could be sold as meat as the solution to civil unrest, poverty and famine in Ireland.

Swift was a very conscientious churchman and a very moral person. He discovered that, when he wished to defend a cause, it was more effective to satirise it by taking on the voice of a fictitious narrator than to write angry letters to the papers or such. Often, his narrators seemed to be 'innocents', people who stumble upon a situation without understanding what is going on, and, in their attempts to describe the situation, point out flaws, errors and corruption. Swift was not the only writer of his age to use satire. It was a time in which political influence could be bought and sold, the time in which Robert Walpole subtly took away power from the Crown and ruled Britain by using bribes, bending laws and practising nepotism. Direct attacks could be dangerous. Even indirect attacks were sometimes punished: Walpole eventually banned a number of satirical works from the theatre. Swift befriended Pope, who wrote satirical poems in which he lacerated the pompous attitudes of fellow-poets and politicians. With Pope and the playwright John Gay, Swift founded the Scriblerus Club, the purpose of which was to ridicule false learning.

Among the 'weapons' these satirists used were inversion in scale and size and burlesque. Inversion makes what is big or great, small, and what is small or common, big or great. Pope described a small incident in terms of a heroic battle in his poem *The Rape of the Lock* and Gay made thieves and beggars call themselves 'great men' in his *Beggar's Opera*.

Likewise, Swift used the smallness of the Lilliput people and the giant size of the Brobdingnagians in *Gulliver's Travels* to show how petty and stupid the attitudes of the English and French were. This fascination with size was partly due to studies people were making at the time using microscopes and telescopes, thereby discovering how relative things are when we only see them with the naked eye. This is shown in the Brobdingnag scenes in which Gulliver describes the skin of the giants as ugly, blotched and full of blemishes. By doing so, he satirises the concepts of beauty and elegance.

Many personal frustrations are incorporated in *Gulliver's Travels*. One of the most famous examples is the scene in which Gulliver puts out a fire in the Royal Palace of Lilliput by pissing on it. Of course, this is quite an inelegant way of solving the problem, but it did the job. (This scene is, of course left out or changed in the many versions of the tale thought fit for children). The Queen is quite angry, and an old law is quoted to accuse Gulliver and to justify the plans a government clique has for putting him to death. This scene reflects the attitude of Queen Anne. When she had read Swift's *Tale of a Tub* she was shocked, and refused to accept Swift sarcasm. It cost him the bishopric he wanted quite badly, and, to Swift, for all the wrong reasons. A more general political attack is made when Gulliver comments on the way ministers have to dance on a tightrope to get the Lilliput equivalent of a knighthood.

For a long time, Swift has been accused of being a misanthrope. It is certain that, to many people, he was an unpleasant voice telling truths better left alone. And in his final book of *Gulliver's Travels*, he seems to prefer horses to men. But Swift always maintained it was mankind he loathed, and individual men he could like. To some people he was a faithful friend. A critical reader has to admit that what Swift uncovers is human folly, and that he does not twist the truth to make all men look small and ridiculous. But in his age, the message that most rulers were corrupt, scheming megalomaniacs certainly caused more surprise and outrage than it does in our age, in which muckraking journalism uncovers one scandal after another.

### **The Author And His Times**

*Gulliver's Travels* was an overnight success, a runaway best seller. And why not? Not only did it smack of mystery and political, social, and sexual scandal, but also it's often hilarious, and just about always brilliant.

Swift was dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin when his novel came out. Since in this book he wrote about- and often harpooned- prominent political figures, he published the book anonymously. While most readers were trying like mad to find out who the author was, Swift's close friends had great fun keeping the secret. Days after the publication of the *Travels*, Alexander Pope, one of Swift's dearest friends and the author of such important works as "The Rape of the Lock" and "An Essay on Man," wrote him in an especially playful letter:

*“Motte [Swift’s publisher] receiv’d the copy (he tells me) he knew not from whence, nor from whom, dropp’d at his house in the dark, from a Hackneycoach: by computing the time, I found it was after you left England, so for my part, I suspend my judgment.”*

Pope, of course, knew perfectly well that Swift was the author of Gulliver’s Travels.

London fairly buzzed with speculations, suggestions, and countersuggestions regarding the author’s identity, as well as those of some of his characters. In Part I, for example, the Lilliputian Emperor- tyrannical, cruel, corrupt, and obsessed with ceremony- though a timeless symbol of bad government, is also a biting satire of George I, King of England (from 1714 to 1727), during much of Swift’s career. The Lilliputian Empress stands for Queen Anne, who blocked Swift’s advancement in the Church of England, having taken offence at some of his earlier, signed satires. There are two political parties in Lilliput, the Low-Heels and the High-Heels. These correspond respectively to the Whigs and Tories, the two major British political parties.

It didn’t take long for people to catch on to the fact that the author was writing about England by way of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and the land of the Houyhnhnms. And it also didn’t take long for the public to discover that the author was Jonathan Swift. Not only had he been involved in some of the most important and heated political events of the time, but he was also a well-known political journalist and satirist whose style was, to say the least, distinctive.

Swift got his political feet wet in the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), the object of which was to convince James II (king of England from 1685 to 1688) to abdicate the throne. James, a Roman Catholic, sought to increase the power of the Roman Church in England at the expense of the Anglican Church, long considered the country’s official church. James’ interests ran counter to those of the majority of his subjects, which was bad enough, but his methods- underhanded, blatantly discriminatory against Anglicans (also called Episcopalians), and cruel, made the situation impossible. James did flee England in December 11, 1688, when William of Orange, his son-in-law and a moderate Protestant, arrived with a small army to depose him. James lived the rest of his life in France under the protection of Louis XIV, but the English remained anxious that he or his son would again try to seize the throne.

At this point, Swift was secretary to Sir William Temple, a prominent Whig. Though Swift (an Anglican clergyman, remember) welcomed the Protestant William of Orange, he was uneasy that the monarch was so lenient toward Roman Catholics. Swift, for example, favoured the Test Act, which required all government officials to take the Sacraments according to the rites of the Anglican Church. This measure, of course, would exclude Catholics and other non-Anglicans from holding government posts. This put Swift at odds with the Whig party which, like the king, favoured the repeal of the Test Act. By 1710 it became clear that the Whig government would fall.



After making sure that the Tories would favour his policies for a strong Church of England, Swift changed parties.

All of Part I of the Travels is an allegorical account of British politics during the turbulent early eighteenth century, when the main political parties, the Tories and the Whigs, competed with each other bitterly. England is a limited monarchy.

There is a king and/or queen, whose power is checked by Parliament, especially the House of Commons, which consists of representatives of the people. In Swift's time the Tories tended to be a more conservative party: they supported a strong monarchy and a strong Church of England; they were hostile to the new mercantile classes; their support came mostly from the landed gentry and clergy.

The Whigs, on the other hand, emphasized the parliamentary aspect of the government, supported the rise of the new middle class, and were more religiously tolerant than the Tories. The Whigs were a more varied group than the Tories, and drew support from the new middle class, sectors of the nobility who hadn't profited from James II's abdication, bankers and financiers, as well as Catholics and other non-Anglican members.

From 1710 to 1714 Swift, who was now a Tory, remember, was one of the most influential members of the English government. As editor of the Examiner, the Tory party organ, he was also one of the most famous political journalists of his day. He was very close to Oxford and Bolingbroke, heads of the Tories (they also appear, in various "disguises," in Part I). Swift wrote in support of the Peace of Utrecht (1713), which ended the War of the Spanish Succession with France and Spain. This war is recounted allegorically in Book I as the war between Lilliput (England) and Blefuscu (France).

While in London Swift worked passionately for his political ideals. He expected that in return for his efforts he'd be rewarded with a bishopric in England. That way he would remain close to London, the centre of activity. He was slighted, however, and given the deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin. This was a blow from which many say Swift never really recovered. He felt as though he'd been banished, unfairly, and in many ways he had been. Despite his disappointment Swift worked hard for his church in Ireland and for the cause of Irish freedom against the Whigs, many of whom considered Ireland more of a colony than a country. For most of the rest of his life, Swift was a clergyman/writer/activist. In 1729, when he was sixty-three, he wrote *A Modest Proposal*, considered by many to be the best satire ever written in English. In it Swift makes use of the persona of a respectable Whig businessman. His protagonist makes the suggestion that the Irish should fatten their children so that they could grace the tables- in the form of food- of the English. This would solve two problems, argued Swift's Whig. First, it would relieve Ireland's overpopulation problem. Second, English lords wouldn't have to import meat from so far away.

In *A Modest Proposal* Swift made his readers take notice of the dire situation in Ireland, and he pointed a finger at the English who he considered responsible for it and callous about it, to boot.

Swift's aims in the *Proposal* were humanitarian, yet his satire cut like a knife. This is in keeping with Swift's contradictory personality, which makes him one of the most puzzling figures in English literature. Acknowledged as a brilliant man of his age, he was a poor student. He entered the church reluctantly as a way of earning a living, yet he quickly became an ambitious and influential clergyman. His harsh satires caused many to call him a misanthrope, one who hates people. Yet he was a very outgoing man, a dazzler in the sparkling intellectual/literary/political/social constellation of John Dryden, Alexander Pope, John Gay, John Arbuthnot, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele. He wrote many letters, and with few exceptions, they are witty, charming, and lively.

Even Swift's biographers have had to live with the hard fact that the story of Swift's life is hidden behind the public events, the verifiable dates, and the published works. For all his activism and close relations with public figures, we know surprisingly little about the private Swift. No one even knows if Swift ever married. He had a years-long, passionate relationship with Esther Johnson and many have suspected that the two were secretly married. Though they saw each other every day, they didn't live together, and always visited in the company of a chaperone. Swift's famous *Journal to Stella*, in which he satirizes his own fame and writing (another contradiction- he worked hard to achieve recognition, and obviously wanted it badly), was written from 1710 to 1714 while he was in London with the Tories. Swift also had an involvement with a woman he called Vanessa (her real name was Hester Vanhomrigh), who left England to be with Swift in Ireland. They also didn't live together, though Vanessa was devoted to Swift for years. Because Swift died insane, some biographers have suggested that he never married because he'd contracted syphilis as a young man and feared passing it on. We'll never know.

We do know, however, that Swift was born in Dublin on November 30, 1667. Swift's father, an English lawyer, died while his wife was pregnant with Jonathan. Right after Jonathan was born his mother left him to be raised by her brother. Jonathan, never a good student, was graduated from Trinity College as a favor to his uncle. He worked halfheartedly on a masters degree, but left to join the Glorious Revolution. From then on we have a pretty full accounting of his public deeds, but the private man remains mysterious. Swift was simultaneously praised to the skies and criticized severely for *Gulliver's Travels*. His admirers called attention to the literary merits of the book and its ultimately humanitarian concerns; his critics said he hated mankind and cited his invention of the Yahoos as proof. It seems impossible to have a lukewarm opinion on Swift; the work is too strong and his personality, as his contemporaries tell it, seemed larger than life. As in the work there are few "mellow" passages, so Swift seemed to swing from one extreme mood to another.

Swift's last years were a torment. He suffered awful bouts of dizziness, nausea, deafness, and mental incapacity. In fact, Swift's harshest critics tried to discredit the Travels on the grounds that the author was mad when he wrote it. But he wasn't. The Travels were published in 1726- and Part IV, which raised the most controversy, was written before Part III- and Swift didn't enter a mental institution until 1742. He died in 1745.

Gulliver's Travels, which you're about to explore, may well be the world's most brilliant "homework assignment." Along with Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, and other literary lights, Swift was a member of The Martinus Scriblerus Club. The purpose of this club was to satirize the foolishness of modern man. Each member was given a topic; Swift's was to satirize the current "boom" in travel literature. The final result, ten years later, was Gulliver's Travels.

Jonathan Swift	Context
	1642-6: Civil War
	1660: Charles II takes the throne
1667: born	
1672-1682: school	
1682-9: Trinity College, Dublin	1685: Charles II dies, James II succeeds
1689-95: Secretary to Sir William Temple	1687: Newton publishes first book
	1689: William and Mary take the throne
1694: Ordained as priest in Ireland	
1696-9: Returns to work for Sir William Temple and meets Esther Johnson (Stella)	1699: <i>Gulliver's</i> first voyage
1704: Publishes <i>Tale of a Tub</i> and <i>Battle of the Books</i> anonymously	1701-13: War of the Spanish Succession 1702: Anne takes the throne 1707: Great Britain is created
1710: Goes to London, becomes politically active for the Tories	
1713: Becomes Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin	1714: George I succeeds Anne
	1715: <i>Gulliver's</i> final return home
1720: Begins writing <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	1721: <i>Walpole</i> becomes Prime Minister
1726: <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> is published	1727: George I dies, George II succeeds
1728: Esther Johnson (Stella) dies	
1729: <i>A Modest Proposal</i> is published	
1745: dies on 19 <sup>th</sup> October	

## The Plot

Gulliver's Travels is the tale of Lemuel Gulliver as he voyages to the strange lands of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, the kingdom of Laputa, and the land of the Houyhnhnms.

In Lilliput people are six inches high, and Gulliver, in comparison, is a giant, or a "Man-Mountain," as they call him. This section of the novel (Part I) is essentially an allegory of English politics in the early eighteenth century when the Whigs and Tories were fighting bitterly for control of the country. Correspondingly, Gulliver becomes involved with the domestic and international dealings of the Lilliputian government. Legislation is drafted and enacted to deal with Gulliver's physical presence and needs; an official document outlining the terms of his freedom is drawn up. One of these terms is that Gulliver must aid the Lilliputians in their war against Blefuscu (Lilliput represents England, Blefuscu, France). Gulliver literally seizes the enemy fleet and strides across the harbor with it back to Lilliput. For a short time he's a hero.

But Gulliver intervenes in the peace process, and wins a more advantageous treaty for the Blefuscuans than they would otherwise have had. After that it's downhill for Gulliver in Lilliput. When he urinates onto a fire raging in the palace and thereby saves the royal chambers, he is impeached for disobeying an ordinance prohibiting public urination. This and some other trumped-up charges against Gulliver result in a conviction of high treason, punishable by blinding.

Gulliver escapes to Blefuscu, then home to England.

Part II, which takes place in the land of Brobdingnag, continues the allegory on English politics. This time, however, it's Gulliver- every inch the Lilliputian among the giant Brobdingnagians- who represents English ways. After a short stint as a working freak, Gulliver is rescued by the king and queen and lives a life of considerable comfort at court. He spends much of his time learning the language and talking with the king about life in England. The king emerges as a fair, merciful ruler and a very sympathetic and humane man. Gulliver, in contrast, seems as petty, vindictive, and cruel as the Lilliputians.

One day while on an outing with the king and queen, Gulliver's "box" (his house) is kidnapped by a bird (with him inside), and dropped in the sea, and recovered by an English ship. Gulliver stays in England a while with his family then goes back to sea.

In Part III, where Gulliver goes to the flying island of Laputa and some of its colonies nearby, you get a sort of "allegorical whirlwind tour" of early eighteenth-century scientific activities and attitudes. His first stop is Laputa, where the inhabitants have one eye turned inward and one eye turned up to the sky- they're thinking always of their own speculations (inward) and of lofty issues in mathematics, astronomy and music (upward). They're so fixated they need "flappers" to box them on the ear to let them know someone is talking to them. The Laputans are so distracted from everyday life that they're barely conscious of their wives (who fornicate with their lovers right in front of them, knowing they'll never be noticed). Because the Laputans

are despotic rulers of their colonies, and because they pay precious little attention to Gulliver, he gets sick of them and goes on to the island of Balnibarbi.

There Gulliver becomes friendly with Count Munodi, who is the only one on the island who lives in a beautiful, well-built house and whose lands yield crops. The others- Projectors, most of them, engaged in “advanced” scientific research do everything according to the most “sophisticated” theories. Consequently their houses are in ruins and their lands lie fallow. Gulliver visits the Academy of the Projectors to learn more about them, and witnesses a series of perfectly useless, wasteful experiments.

In Glubbdubdrib Gulliver is able to call up historical figures from the past and converse with them. In Luggnagg Gulliver meets the Struldbrugs, a race of people who live forever. They do not have eternal youth, though; rather, they grow perpetually older, more feeble, miserable, and useless. Gulliver returns to England before again setting sail.

In Part IV Gulliver, after a mutiny, ends up in the land of the Houyhnhnms (pronounced WHIN-nims). The Houyhnhnms are horses governed totally by reason. They have created a society that is perfectly ordered, perfectly peaceful (except for the Yahoos), and exempt from the topsy-turviness of passion. The Yahoos are humans, but are so bestial that they are human only in outward appearance. The Yahoos are kept in a kennel, and are prohibited from having anything to do with the Houyhnhnms. The Yahoos arrived here by accident.

Gulliver tries his best to become a Houyhnhnm- he talks like them, walks like them, tries to think and act like them. He’s in the anxious position of being neither a Yahoo nor a Houyhnhnm; he fits nowhere, and because of this he must leave. Gulliver goes mad in Part IV, and can never reconcile himself to other people, whom he considers Yahoos. Neither can he come to terms with the Yahoo part of himself. Back in England, he buys horses and spends most of his time in the stable. He can barely tolerate the presence of his family, and has as little to do with them as possible. He says that his aim in writing Gulliver’s Travels is to correct the Yahoos. Having been exposed to the Houyhnhnms, he feels he is the man for the job.

## Characters

Swift’s characters aren’t the well-rounded, “flesh and blood” characters you usually find in a skillfully written novel. His characters are allegorical; that is, they stand for something- an idea, an attitude, a posture- or someone else. It’s never simple with Swift. Gulliver, for instance, represents different things at different points in the novel. In Part I Gulliver is solid, decent, and responsible. At times in Lilliput (during the inventory sequence in Chapter II for example), Gulliver stands for Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke. In Part II Gulliver represents a man who under repeated attacks on his ego and self-image succumbs to pettiness and vindictiveness characteristic of the Lilliputians.

Swift's allegories are never black and white. Even the Lilliputians have their good points- they are very clever. And the Houyhnhnms, who have created a perfectly orderly society in which there are not even words to describe anger, lying, and disagreement, let alone the more serious vices, have their drawbacks, subtle though they may be. A life without passion may always be calm, but is it life as humans know it, and could live it? Part III may be the exception, in that the Laputans and Projectors do tend to be black and white. Many critics feel that because of this, Swift's satire, from an artistic standpoint, is weaker here than in the other books. You will have to decide this for yourself.

Bear in mind that in *Gulliver's Travels* there's no character you can follow as you can a traditional omniscient narrator. Swift's satire is designed to keep you an independent reader, the characters are meant to stimulate you, not to lead you.

**LEMUEL GULLIVER.** Gulliver is the most important character in this novel. He's the "author" of the Travels, he's your tour guide. He's also one of the most vexing characters in English literature.

Gulliver's frustrating to deal with for a number of reasons.

1. He's not steady; he changes in relation to the places he visits and the events that befall him as he voyages.
2. He's often a victim of Swift's satire. This means that we have to be on our guard against what he says, and even though he's our guide, we can't follow him everywhere. If we do, he'll lead us into madness.
3. It's impossible to feel relaxed with Gulliver, as we can with a traditional omniscient narrator. Swift won't let us trust him enough for that.
4. Because Gulliver directs a lot of his hostility toward us - readers beyond reform - we in turn feel hostile toward him.
5. Looking at Gulliver is a lot like looking in a mirror. We are by turns fascinated, attracted, disgusted, and ashamed.

You first meet Gulliver at the "end" of his story, in a letter he's written to his publisher. By now Gulliver is out of his mind: he's raving, he's nasty, he lies, he's proud beyond the limits of pride. But he wasn't always.

He grew up in Nottinghamshire, the third of five sons in a respectable, middle-class family. While in school he held jobs: as an apprentice, he proved his competence; as a physician, he was able to get work on ships, which had been his lifelong dream. Before Gulliver leaves for Lilliput it can be said that he's reasonably intelligent, hard working, disciplined, alert, and curious. As a traveler in Lilliput he's careful in his observations, complete in his descriptions. Occupied as he is with the surface of things, he's a bit naive. Gulliver is a good, all-around type of guy.

But he gets knocked around while he's traveling, and this affects his character. In Lilliput he seems to be eminently fair-minded compared to the cunning, vindictive,



petty Lilliputians. Literally a giant in their land, Gulliver never takes unfair advantage of his size in his dealing with them. Though they're violent with him, he never retaliates in kind.

In Brobdingnag, land of the giants, Gulliver appears Lilliputian in more ways than one. But his size is a dire problem to him here. He is frequently injured, the king's dwarf takes out his frustrations on tiny Gulliver, but the latter is an improvement for Gulliver- before coming to court, his master hired him out as a freak at village fairs. Gulliver can't keep it together under the strain of repeated attacks on his ego, and in his dealings with the Brobdingnagian king, Gulliver appears as nasty and cruel as the Lilliputians themselves.

Gulliver recedes in Part III. Not much happens to him personally, for the most part he recounts what he observes in the way of scientific experiments.

Swift uses Gulliver to relate deadpan what he himself considers to be foolish attitudes and activities.

Gulliver goes mad in Part IV. Presented with the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, Gulliver tries desperately to become a Houyhnhnm, an animal governed entirely by reason. He cannot, of course. Gulliver isn't able to see the Yahoos as Swift intends them to be seen- as representing the worst traits in human nature, and the lowest level to which he might sink. Gulliver sees the Yahoos as mankind, period. Gulliver also misapprehends the Houyhnhnms. It is only to Gulliver- not to Swift- that these creatures represent a human ideal. Gulliver, neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm, can find no species to which he belongs, and so goes mad.

When the Travels first came out Swift was attacked for misanthropy, largely on the basis of Gulliver's hostility to humans in Part IV. Highly influential critics, such as William Thackeray (whose novels include *Vanity Fair* and *Henry Esmond*, Esq.) equated Gulliver with Swift. This is a misreading of the book, but the notion remains an important part of the early history of critical reaction to Gulliver's Travels. You must come to terms with Gulliver and with the uses Swift has for Gulliver. Be alert for the instances when Swift and Gulliver overlap, when Gulliver says something with which Swift agrees; for the instances when Swift lets us know that Gulliver's viewpoint is one among many; and for the instances when Swift holds Gulliver up for our criticism.

**THE LILLIPUTIAN EMPEROR.** On one level, the Lilliputian emperor represents George I of England. Swift had no admiration for this king, and uses Lilliputian court practices allegorically to criticize the English monarch. On another level the tiny emperor represents tyranny, cruelty, lust for power, and corruption. He is a timeless symbol of bad government.

**FLIMNAP** This is a Lilliputian government official who represents Robert Walpole, the Whig prime minister under George I. Walpole was Swift's enemy.

**THE LILLIPUTIAN EMPRESS** The empress represents Queen Anne, who blocked Swift's advancement in the Church of England because she was offended by his writings. The empress bears early responsibility for Gulliver's demise in Lilliput.

**THE LILLIPUTIANS IN GENERAL** The Lilliputians are tiny creatures, possessed of ingenuity, craft, and cunning. They have a love of flourish, pomp, ceremony, and bureaucracy. They appreciate military parades, theatrical oratory, and political maneuverings of any kind, including gossip. They are very refined in their manners, but this doesn't prevent them from being petty, vindictive, and vengeful.

**THE BROBDINGNAGIAN FARMER** He is a poor man who seizes on Gulliver as a way to earn money. Like many who have suffered and who suddenly see an end to their poverty, he's unable to care about the suffering he's imposing on Gulliver.

**THE BROBDINGNAGIAN KING** This man represents Swift's idea of a just, wise, and strong ruler. For him, force is a measure of absolute last resort, and the notion of gunpowder (of which he'd never heard until Gulliver described it to him) horrifies him. The king has other admirable traits- he's curious, eager to learn, not afraid of the unknown. He spends long hours with Gulliver asking him questions about English and European domestic and public ways, politics, religion, and history.

**GLUMDALCLITCH** Glumdalclitch is the daughter of the Brobdingnagian farmer. She is Gulliver's nursemaid and loves him and cares for him as her dearest doll.

**THE BROBDINGNAGIAN QUEEN** She, too, regards Gulliver as a pet. Yet it was she who rescued Gulliver from the farmer and convinced her husband that they adopt him. She is kind, though she sometimes embarrasses Gulliver by treating him like a baby, or a prized puppy.

**THE BROBDINGNAGIANS IN GENERAL** The Brobdingnagians in general are as ugly to Gulliver as the Lilliputians were physically attractive. Though their appetites appear bestially large to Gulliver, their features grotesque, and their skin revolting, the Brobdingnagian character is much more refined compared to the Lilliputian.

**THE LAPUTANS** These creatures have one eye turned inward and one turned up to the sky to indicate that they are so absorbed in their abstract speculations that they can't see what's going on around them. They represent science cut off from the demands of real life, and reason so abstract it is folly.

## Setting

Written in the form of a travel book, *Gulliver's Travels* has a variety of settings, each of which symbolizes one or more of Swift's themes. Gulliver stands out in relief against these settings; each brings out different parts of his personality. We get to know Gulliver, and Gulliver gets to know himself, through comparison and contrast to those around him. Because the settings change, and Gulliver finds himself in contrasting situations, Gulliver's viewpoints (as well as our own) are constantly shifting.

Part I takes place in Lilliput, where the inhabitants are six inches high, and Gulliver seems a giant. Swift makes his question literal: What is it to be small? What are the many forms of smallness? What is the value of doing things on a small scale? The hazards? Over the years many critics have suggested that in Part I Gulliver is looking down the Great Chain of Being at the Lilliputians who are petty, cruel, benighted. In comparison, Gulliver's (man's) place on the chain seems secure somewhere between animals and angels. Yet this is Swift, so things don't remain so simple. The Lilliputians have the refinement (to Gulliver), the physical attractiveness, and ingenuity we normally associate with human beings.

Gulliver's bulk renders him more animallike, in that he is a physical problem in Lilliput. Bestial as he seems at times, Gulliver is the humanitarian.

The Lilliputians represent the Whigs for whom Swift has so much contempt. Their political ways correspond to Whig machinations in English government in the early eighteenth century.

Part II takes place in Brobdingnag, the land of giants. What does it mean to be big? What are the forms of bigness? The values of it? The hazards in it? Here Gulliver has been said to be looking up the Great Chain of Being- he may seem physically very refined here, but he's no humanitarian. The Brobdingnagians represent what Swift considers good rulers and politicians.

Part III constitutes a "whirlwind tour" of Enlightenment intellectual and scientific attitudes and practices.

In Part IV, the world is stood on its head: animals rule and people are kept in cages.

## Style

Swift's style is composed chiefly of satire, allegory, and irony. Satire consists of a mocking attack against vices, stupidities, and follies, with an aim to educate, edify, improve. Allegory is one of Swift's most important satirical tools. Allegory is a device in which characters, situations, and places have a significance that goes beyond simply what they are in themselves. Allegory, like satire, is used to teach. The Lilliputians, for example, are allegorical Whigs. The Academy of Projectors is an allegory of the Royal Society. In order to make his devastating case against the Whigs, for example, Swift needs the disguise (the allegory) of the Lilliputians. He could never have actually named real names in his novel. The Yahoos are an allegory for a part of man's nature. Notice how important a part exaggeration plays in Swiftian allegory.

Irony is when the intended meaning of a statement or an action is opposite to that which is presented. A fine example of Swiftian irony is when Gulliver says he saw no mercy in the Lilliputian decision to blind him. Gulliver was actually looking for the mercy here, and, of course, there was none to be found. It is also ironic that the Brobdingnagians appear gross, but are filled with beauty.

Swiftian satire is a complicated affair. You've seen how even when he's using Gulliver to satirize the Lilliputians, for example, Swift is satirizing Gulliver. And then Swift satirizes the reader by creating a great tension between what is and what appears to be. He seems always to be prodding us, "What do you really think, beneath your nice appearance, polite ways, and evidence of intelligence?" It's hard not to fall into Swift's trap. The most obvious Swiftian trap, of course, is Gulliver himself, your tour guide- an affable, respectable, conscientious man. But if you follow him all the way, he'll lead you to madness.

Swift also satirizes himself through Gulliver. Gulliver ranting that mankind is beyond improvement is Swift flagellating himself for even trying. Yet, of course, there's tension here, too, for Swift has written the book. The tension within Swift is communicated directly to us, for if he fails as a satirist, it's because we've failed as human beings. But Swift satirizes because overridingly he cares, and thinks we, and his efforts, are worth it.

### Form

The novel is written in the form of a travel book. Swift chose this device because travel tends to change our perspective on the world around us. What may seem strange at the start of a trip may well seem ordinary by the end, or strange in other ways, for different reasons. As Gulliver voyages, and we voyage with him, his (and our) viewpoint changes according to the place(s) in which he finds himself and the things that happen to him there.

### Satirical Devices

Satire Defined: Sarcasm, irony or wit used to ridicule or mock - poke fun of something serious.

Satire Classified: *There are two types of satire: Horatian and Juvenalian*

- Horatian satire is: tolerant, witty, wise and self-effacing
- Juvenalian satire is: angry, caustic, resentful, personal

Satirical Devices:

1. Irony—the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning. It is lighter, less harsh in wording than sarcasm, though more cutting because of its indirectness. The ability to recognize irony is one of the surest tests of intelligence and sophistication. Irony speaks words of praise to imply blame and words of blame to imply praise. Writer is using a tongue-in-cheek style. Irony is achieved through such techniques as hyperbole and understatement.

- A. *Verbal Irony* - simply an inversion of meaning; saying the opposite of what is meant
- B. *Dramatic Irony*—when the words or acts of a character carry a meaning unperceived by himself but understood by the audience. The irony resides in

the contrast between the meaning intended by the speaker and the added significance seen by others.

- C. *Socratic Irony*—Socrates pretended ignorance of a subject in order to draw knowledge out of his students by a question and answer device. Socratic irony is feigning ignorance to achieve some advantage over an opponent.
- D. *Situational Irony*—Depends on a discrepancy between purpose and results. (The burning firehouse, the cardiologist who dies young from a heart attack, etc.)

2. *Travesty*: presents a serious (often religious) subject frivolously; it reduces everything to its lowest level. “Trans”=over, across “vestire”=to clothe or dress. Presenting a subject in a “dress” intended for another type of subject. Example: Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*.

3. *Burlesque*: ridiculous exaggeration achieved through a variety of ways. For example, the sublime may be absurd, honest emotions may be turned to sentimentality. *STYLE* is the essential quality in burlesque. A style ordinarily dignified may be used for nonsensical matters, etc. Modern burlesque incorporates strip tease but still holds the original concept.

4. *Parody*: a composition imitating or burlesquing another, usually serious, piece of work. Parody ridicules in nonsensical fashion an original piece of work. It imitates the techniques and/or style of some person, place, or thing in order to ridicule the original. For parody to be successful, the reader must know the original text that is being ridiculed. Parody is in literature what the caricature and cartoon are in art. Example: *Scary Movie* series. *NOTE—TRAVESTY, BURLESQUE & PARODY are similar, but travesty always makes a mockery of a serious subject, whereas burlesque and parody may do the reverse.*

5. *Farce/Hyperbole(exaggeration)/Inflation*: exciting laughter through exaggerated, improbable situations so that it becomes ridiculous and its faults can be seen. *Caricature* is the exaggeration of a physical feature or trait. Cartoons, especially political cartoons, provide extensive examples of caricature. *Burlesque* is the ridiculous exaggeration of language. For instance, when a character who should use formal, intelligent language speaks like a fool or a character who is portrayed as uneducated uses highly sophisticated, intelligent language. This usually contains low comedy: quarreling, fighting, course with, horseplay, noisy singing, boisterous conduct, trickery, clownishness, drunkenness, and slap-stick.

6. *Knives & Fools*: in comedy there are no villains and no innocent victims. Instead, there are rogues (knives) and suckers (fools). The knife exploits someone “asking for it”. When these two interact, comic satire results. When knives & fools meet, they expose each other.

7. *Malapropism*: a deliberate mispronunciation of a name or term with the intent of poking fun.

8. Anachronism: is placing an idea, invention, item or word in the wrong time period. This is not always used just for satire and may just be an unintentional error, but when used deliberately it adds to the humor of the story by highlighting contrasts between one era and another.
9. Comic Juxtaposition: linking together with no commentary items which normally do not go together; Pope's line in *Rape of the Lock*: "Puffs, patches, bibles, and billet-doux"
10. Mock Epic/Mock Heroic: Using elevated diction and devices from the epic or the heroic to deal with low or trivial subjects.
11. Understatement /Diminution: taking a real-life situation and reducing it to make it ridiculous and showcase its faults. Giving the nickname "tiny" to a 350 pound man, or describing him as "not the smallest guy in the room."
12. Deflation: the English professor mispronounces a word, the President slips and bangs his head leaving the helicopter, etc.
13. Grotesque: creating a tension between laughter and horror or revulsion; the essence of all "sick humor: or "dark humor." Example: many a *South Park* episode.
14. Invective: harsh, abusive language directed against a person or cause. Invective is a vehicle, a tool of anger. Invective is the bitterest of all satire.
15. Sarcasm: a sharply mocking or contemptuous remark. The term came from the Greek word "sarkazein" which means "to tear flesh."
16. Mock Encomium: praise which is only apparent and which suggests blame instead.
17. Incongruity: To present things that are out of place or are absurd in relation to its surroundings. Particular techniques include oxymoron, metaphor, and irony.

#### Satirical devices in the *Indian Passage* (Part 1, Chapter IV)

Text Reference	Historical Reference	Satirical Device
England and Little-Indians	England and the Protestant English	
Blefuscu and the Big-Indians	France and the French Catholics	
Emperor who publishes edict to break eggs on the small end	Henry VIII	
Emperor who loses life	Charles I	

Emperor who loses crown	James II	
Law forbidding Big-Endians from having jobs	The Test Act of 1673	

### Excerpt from *Twitterature* by Aciman & Rensin

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift

@LittleBigMan

- Though I have made a life as a surgeon, I do enjoy a good travel. In this day and age, 'tis not hard at all to acquire a ship and crew
- All goes well thus far upon the sea. My men are loyal, and I do believe I captain this vessel well. Oh shit! A ROCK!
- Awoke in an unfamiliar land. The boat and my crew are gone. Oh dear, the people here are very small. Oops. Sorry about that.
- I don't mean to boast: I'm not a terribly tall man. But these people of Lilliput are the size of child's Johnson. Still, they have captured me.
- I have become a great favourite of the Lilliputian court, whose antics are like and adorable tiny version of King George's, the blithering idiot.
- These tiny men are very serious, and engaged in a war with their neighbours. Plus they don't like me calling them "shorty" and "junior"
- Helped them by stealing the enemy fleet, as if playing like a boy in the bathtub. But they demand, "Blefusculian delendum est" and I say no.
- The Lilli-fckers have decided to blind me. Luckily I am twelve times their size and escape was not difficult. Back to England!
- I feel compelled to set out again. This time I shall have to improve my captaining.
- Again my crew has abandoned me. Oh dear! Woke up to see a gentleman over seventy feet tall. What a clever turn of events! Now I'M dick-sized.
- I have been turned into something of a travelling novelty. I even have a little house. All goes well. OH SHT, AN EAGLE!
- Home in England. Yet I am compelled to set out again. Wife seems skeptical; what does she know? Hope things go well this time.
- Attacked by pirates who left me marooned on an island. Starting to understand why I'm the captian of several ships. Don't tell my wife.
- Picked up by flying city. They've invented bombs and the computer. In the seventeenth century. Perhaps I'll see the foresight of this in 300 years.
- Back in England. Never travelling again. Ever. OK, maybe one more time. Just one more time.
- Marooned again. How many ships have I lost now? Oh well. There is an extremely ugly, stupid man here. He can't speak or reason, it seems.
- This island is run by horses. Beautiful, wonderful, brilliant horses. They are perfect beings. The man I saw earlier is their slave.
- Horses amused by my spark of intelligence. Yet, my ability to lie is a "threat" to their society and I must be expelled. Can't I stay, please?
- Back home. I cannot stand human society. I have taken to wearing horse sht about my neck as my wife's smell repulses me.



- In the stable, brushing my horse. I should be here most of the day, and for the rest of my life.

## Essay: Swift's Moral Satire in *Gulliver's Travels*

"In its most serious function, satire is a mediator between two perceptions-the unillusioned perception of man as he actually is, and the ideal perception, or vision, of man as he ought to be," (Bullitt, 3). Likewise, "misanthropy" can be understood as being the product of one of two world views: 1) The Pure Cynic or Misanthropist has no faith in human nature and has given up on any notion of ideals. This type lies and manipulates as a matter of course and these are the types that tend to run the world. 2) The "Burned" or Disillusioned Idealist's misanthropy arises out of disappointment in humankind. In many ways, the second type exhibits more bile as he is constantly frustrated by what men do as opposed to what they ought to do. Jonathon Swift is the second type of misanthropist and *Gulliver's Travels* is arguably his greatest satiric attempt to "shame men out of their vices" (Ibid., 14) by constantly distinguishing between how man behaves and how he thinks about or justifies his behavior in a variety of situations. Pride, in particular, is what enables man to "deceive himself into the belief that he is rational and virtuous when, in reality, he has not developed his reason, and his virtue is merely appearance," (Ibid., 66). This satire works on so many levels that a paper such as this allows me to deal with only three elements, and in a necessarily superficial way: the ways in which the structure and choice of metaphor serve Swift's purpose, a discussion of some of his most salient attacks on politics, religion, and other elements of society, and his critique on the essence and flaws of human nature. Swift's purpose was to stir his readers to view themselves as he viewed humankind, as creatures who were not fulfilling their potential to be truly great but were simply flaunting the trappings of greatness. *Gulliver's Travels* succeeds in this goal brilliantly.

The form and structure of the whole work enhanced Swift's purpose, as did the specific metaphors in each of the four voyages. Firstly, Swift went to great pains to present *Gulliver's Travels* in the genuine, standard form of the popular travelogues of the time. Gulliver, the reader is told, was a seaman, first in the capacity of a ship's surgeon, then as the captain of several ships. Swift creates a realistic framework by incorporating nautical jargon, descriptive detail that is related in a "factual, ship's-log" style, and repeated claims by Gulliver, in his narrative, "to relate plain matter(s) of fact in the simplest manner and style." This framework provides a sense of realism and verisimilitude that contrasts sharply with the fantastic nature of the tales, and establishes the first ironic layer of *The Travels*. As Tuveson points out (58), "In *Gulliver's Travels* there is a constant shuttling back and forth between real and unreal, normal and absurd...until our standards of credulity are so relaxed that we are ready to buy a pig in a poke." The four books of the Travels are also presented in a parallel way so that voyages 1 and 2 focus on criticism of various aspects of English society at the time, and man within this society, while voyages 3 and 4 are more preoccupied with human nature itself, (Downie, 281). However, all of these elements overlap, and with each voyage, Gulliver, and thus the reader, is treated not only to differing but ever deepening views of human nature that climax in Gulliver's epiphany when he identifies himself with the detestable Yahoos. As such, the overall structure

also works like a spiral leading to a center of self-realization. Or, as Tuveson puts it, Swift's satire shifts from "foreign to domestic scenes, from institutions to individuals, from mankind to man, from others to ourselves," (62).

The choice of metaphor in each voyage serves more particularly the various points of Swift's satiric vision. "The effect of reducing the scale of life in Lilliput is to strip human affairs of their self-imposed grandeur. Rank, politics, international war, lose all of their significance. This particualr idea is continued in the second voyage, not in the picture of the Brobdingnagians, but in Gulliver himself, who is now a Lilliputian," (Eddy, 149). And where the Liiliputians highlight the pettiness of human pride and pretensions, the relative size of the Brobdingnagians, who do exemplify some positive qualities, also highlights the grossness of the human form and habits, thus satirizing pride in the human form and appearance. In the voyage to Laputa, the actual device of a floating island that drifts along above the rest of the world metaphorically represents Swift's point that an excess of speculative reasoning can also be negative by cutting one off from the practical realities of life which, in the end, doesn't serve learning or society (Downie, 282). And in the relation of the activities of the Grand Academy of Lagado, Swift satirizes the dangers and wastefulness of pride in human reason uninformed by common sense. The final choice of the Houyhnhnms as the representatives of perfect reason unimpeded by irrationality or excessive emotion serves a dual role for Swift's satire. The absurdity of a domestic animal exhibiting more "humanity" than humans throws light on the defects of human nature in the form of the Yahoo, who look and act like humans stripped of higher reason. Gulliver and the reader are forced to evaluate such behavior from a vantage point outside of man that makes it both shocking and revelatory, (Tuveson, 62). The pride in human nature as superior when compared to a "bestial" nature is satirized sharply. However, the Houyhnhnms are not an ideal of human nature either. Swift uses them to show how reason uninformed by love, compassion, and empathy is also an inadequate method to deal with the myriad aspects of the human situation.

Within this framework, very little of human social behavior, pretensions, or societal institutions escape the deflating punctures of Swift's arrows. Ewald states that, "As a satire, the main purpose of Gulliver's Travels is to show certain shortcomings in 18th century English society..." (151). Much of the first voyage lampoons court intrigue and the arbitrary fickleness of court favor, (Eddy, 110). The rank and favor of the Lilliputian ministers being dependent on how high they can jump over a rope literally illustrates this figurative point. Gulliver himself falls out of favor because he does not pander to the King's thirst for power. The two political parties being differentiated by the height of their heels points out how little substantive difference there was between Whig and Tory, (or today between Democrat and Republican), and similarly, the religious differences about whether the Host was flesh or symbol is reduced to the petty quarrel between the Big-Endians and the Small-Endians. Swift also highlights the pretensions of politics by informing the reader of some of the laudable and novel ideals and practices of Lilliputian society such as rewarding those who obey the law, holding a breach of trust as the highest offense, and punishing false accusers and ingratitude, but shows that, like humans, even the Lilliputians do not live up to their own standards when they exhibit ingratitude for Gulliver's help and accuse him of high treason, (Downie, 278).

Of course, the perspective shifts in the second voyage, where Gulliver finds himself in the same relation to the Brobdingnagians as the Lilliputians were to him, which not only leads to some different kinds of satiric insights, but many which are slightly darker in tone. Most of the social and political criticism occurs in Chapters six and seven. Gulliver describes European civilization to Brobdingnag's King, including England's political and legal institutions and how they work, as well as some of the personal habits of the ruling class. Yet, even though Gulliver subsequently confesses to the reader that he cast this information in the most favorable light, the King still deduces that every strata of society and political power is infested with rampant corruption and dismissively concludes "the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." This echoes a basic message of the first voyage but the attack here is more direct and corrosive. The relative size of the Brobdingnagians adds a physical dimension to the King's judgment and enhances its veracity. Also, "all the transactions of life, all passion, and all social amenities, which involve the body, lose their respectability in Brobdingnag," (Eddy, 150), from Gulliver's description of the odious breast to his viewing of a public execution. In contrast, Brobdingnagian society has many things to recommend it such as excellence "in morality, history, poetry, and mathematics," although Gulliver ironically laments that these are only applied to the practical aspects of life and not used for abstractions. However, much of Swift's political writings indicate that he, like the Brobdingnagians, favored a conception of government and society based on common-sense, (Lock, 132-134). The supreme moment of ironical criticism of European civilization occurs in Chapter seven when, after offering the secret of gun powder to the King and his subsequent horrified refusal, Gulliver declares the King to possess "narrow principles and short views!" Of course, mankind would never be so short-sighted as to turn away from learning a new method of injuring, torturing, or killing one's fellows! Aside from this sharp comment on human nature, Swift is also alluding to the eagerness with which European nations would leap at such an offer as an aid to waging war against their neighbors.

The main focus of social criticism in the voyage to Laputa is on intellectuals, such as scholars, philosophers, and scientists, who often get lost in theoretical abstractions and conceptions to the exclusion of the more pragmatic aspects of life, in direct contrast to the practical Brobdingnagians. Many critics feel Swift was satirizing "the strange experiments of the scientists of the Royal Society," but may also have been warning his readers against "the political projectors and speculators of the time," (Davis 149-150). The Laputians excel at theoretical mathematics, but they can't build houses where the walls are straight and the corners are square. Instead, they constantly worry about when the sun will burn out and whether a comet will collide with the earth. This misuse of reason is hilariously elaborated on in Chapters five and six, where the various experiments occurring at the Grand Academy of Lagado are described. Of course, the point is highlighted as Gulliver professes his sincere admiration for such projects as extracting sunbeams from cucumbers and building houses from the roof down. The satire in Voyage three attacks both the deficiency of common sense and the consequences of corrupt judgment (Quintana, 317).

Most of the criticism in the Voyage to the Houyhnhnms is directed at human nature itself, although the trend to more particular targets begun in the third voyage is continued with glancing, but increasingly direct blows to the subjects of war,

(destruction clothed in the pretext of valour and patriotism), lawyers, (social parasites who measure their worth by their excellence at deception and therefore, actually inhibit justice), and money, (the greed of a few is fed by the labor and poverty of the many, as well as the relative uselessness and corruption of these privileged few). In addition, Swift makes some very cogent observations on imperialism in the concluding chapter which point out the arrogance and self deception of European nations when they claim to civilize, through brutality and oppression, groups of indigenous people who were often mild and harmless. Of course, as Swift implies, the real goal of imperialism is greed. The most ironic point occurs when the author disclaims that this attack on imperialist countries does not include Britain, which history shows was equally as brutal as its European rivals and, in many cases, even more so, considering its Empire became at one time the largest of any European country. What I found most interesting was how many critics took this disclaimer seriously as an expression of the author's patriotism, (Ewald, 143-144, Bullitt, 64). It seems obvious that Swift is making the point that Gulliver's naive patriotism, the last remnant of identification he has with his own kind, is misplaced and it is Swift's final, palpable hit.

The main object of the satire in *Gulliver's Travels* is human nature itself, specifically Man's pride as it manifests in "pettiness, grossness, rational absurdity, and animality," (Tuveson, 57). Gulliver's character, as a satirical device, serves Swift's ends by being both a mouthpiece for some of Swift's ideals and criticisms and as an illustration of them (Ewald, 138-9); Thus, critiques on human nature are made through Gulliver's observations as well as through Gulliver's own transformation from a "naive individual...into a wise and skeptical misanthrope," (Ibid., 142).

Chapter seven of the first Voyage, where Gulliver is informed that he is about to be indicted for high treason by the Lilliputian Court, provides the most bitter satiric attack on hypocrisy, ingratitude, and cruelty (Tuveson, 75), yet Gulliver, and the reader, are able to distance themselves from these qualities by concluding that though these tiny creatures are aping human behavior, they are still not human. In the second voyage, both the human pride in physical appearance is attacked through Gulliver's perspective of the Brobdingnagians, and Gulliver's own pride in himself and his country is reduced to ridiculousness as Gulliver becomes the object of comic satire (Ibid., 76). Gulliver's offer of the secret of gunpowder only underscores that he is a typical member of his race. From Gulliver's theme of the excellence of mankind, begun in Chapter six, the episode concludes "with the shocking demonstration of what man's inhumanity is capable of" (Ibid., 78).

One of the most interesting comments on the human condition is the description of the immortal Struldbrugs in Voyage Three. Swift's treatment of the subject of immortality is characteristically practical and down to earth. What would it really be like to live in perpetuity? His answer: A living death. The main problem is that the human body ages and is not a fit vessel to house a perpetual consciousness. In relating this episode, Swift affirms with cutting precision that we have much in common with the rest of earth's creatures; any superior reason we may possess, and the pride we take in it, does not exempt us from the natural laws of physical death and regeneration. In Book Three, Swift not only shows the possible perversions of reason in the doings at the Academy of Lagado, but also shows its limitations in shielding us from the natural consequences of physical life. Here, he implies the

importance of a moral structure to human life; reason is not enough and immortality would only make things worse.

Yet on the surface, Book four seems to argue that reason is the one quality, when properly developed, that can elevate man to his ultimate potential. But ironically it is the horse-like Houyhnhnms that possess this perfect development of reason, whereas the Yahoos, whom Gulliver most resembles, are primitive and bestial. I agree with Ewald that Voyage four contains Swift's clearest attack on human pride (154). Indeed, the quality of reason only enables humans "to aggravate their natural corruptions and to acquire new ones which Nature had not intended." Even a dispassionate view of human history would find it difficult to dispute this conclusion. Whereas the attacks on human nature in the first three Voyages deal with actions that are symptomatic of man's nature-"the corrosive satire of the last voyage is concerned with the springs and causes of action" (Tuveson, 80), in other words, the essence of man. As such, the satire directed against the pretensions of court, political corruption, and the excesses of speculative reasoning may divert and disturb Gulliver, and the reader, but it is possible to distance oneself from the attacks. But the object of the satiric attack in the last voyage is man himself: it is Gulliver and the reader. Here, "Swift is attacking the Yahoo in each of us" (Ibid., 81).

Human nature is cut into two parts: The Houyhnhnms possess reason and benevolence, and selfish appetites and brutish awareness are left for the Yahoos. The microscopic analysis of the human form that took place in the second voyage is now used to analyze the defects of man's moral nature, and it is pride that prevents man from recognizing his flaws and dealing with them. When Gulliver experiences the shock of recognition that he, too, is a Yahoo, Gulliver passes from being a "perfect example a character acting in ignorance of his condition" to experiencing "a terrifying insight into evil (which) is accompanied by all the bitterness of a profound disillusionment" (Bullitt, 61, 65). Yet, I agree with many of the critics who say that though Gulliver makes the mistake of identifying himself completely with the Yahoos, Swift and the reader do not (Ibid., 65). "For the truth, as we are meant to realize, is that man is neither irrational physicality like the Yahoos nor passionless rationality like the Houyhnhnms" (Ibid.) but are something in between. We are meant to be repulsed by the chilling calmness with which the Houyhnhnms accept death as described in Chapter nine as much as we are by the selfishness of the Yahoos, and it is clear Swift does not present Gulliver's comic and absurd withdrawal from people as a viable solution. Instead, Swift wants us to be shocked out of the pride that allows us to deceive ourselves into thinking man is completely virtuous when he is not by experiencing, with Gulliver, our own limitations without making Gulliver's final mistake. The solution to the human dilemma is not so simple as Gulliver's rejection of humanity, and Swift's final success, in terms of stimulating response, is that, after masterfully dissecting and presenting the problem, he leaves the application of his lessons to "the judicious reader."

For many critics, *Gulliver's Travels* "is in a sense, a tragic work...in that it is the picture of man's collapse before his corrupt nature, and of his defiance in face of the collapse" (Dobree, 447). Yet, obviously Swift felt that humbling human pride, enabling a more honest self-assessment, was absolutely vital to addressing the suffering and injustice so prevalent in human life. Contrary to many who label Swift a misanthropist, only a man who cared deeply about humanity could have produced a work like

*Gulliver's Travels*. Weilding the scalpel of satire, Swift cuts through our self-deception to our pride, the source of our moral denial and inertia. As we travel with Gulliver through the voyages, Swift brilliantly peels away our pretensions, layer by layer, until he shows us what we are and challenges us, intensely and urgently, to be better. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift continues to vex the world so that it might awaken to the fact that humankind needs saving, but it has to save itself.

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## Example Essay: Political Satire in Book 1 of *Gulliver's Travels*

As a child, I remember my mother reading *Gulliver's Travels* to me. It was a fun story, all about big and little people, and horses that could talk. A perfect bedtime story for little girls. Imagine my surprise, when, 25 years later, I saw the same book on the Fontys reading list. This immediately set my mind going: what's so special about this novel that warrants its study at Master level? During the lectures, the mystery was revealed: the book was not simply a fairy tale, but a satirical novel about life at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Why hadn't I twigged earlier? The simple fact is that the history of England in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries isn't taught as part of the British school curriculum. How could I, therefore, possibly understand the book fully without any background information? For the purposes of this essay, I have researched the political scene that would have influenced Swift, and I will demonstrate his use of political satire in Book 1 of *Gulliver's Travels*.

The first thing to note is the changing political landscape during Swift's life, as this plays a major role in analysing the satire of *Gulliver's Travels*. Up until writing *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift had lived through four different monarchies in England: Charles II, William III, Anne and George I. This in itself is fairly unusual, but what is more remarkable are the situations in which these rulers came to power. England's political landscape had seen some major changes, which I will try to condense into a proverbial nutshell. Charles II succeeded his father, who had been executed for high treason following the Civil War. The parliament, who wanted a constitutional monarchy, appointed Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector to govern England as a republic. When he died in 1658, public and political sentiment had changed and the monarchy was restored with the accession of Charles II in 1660. Charles II's reign was marked by a strict adherence to Anglicanism, the disastrous Great Fire of London, colonial expansion, and very importantly, a lack of male heir. Next in line to the throne was Charles's brother James, but the problem was that James was a Catholic. To solve this, Charles decreed that Mary – James's daughter – should marry William of Orange, who was both Protestant and Dutch (the latter being an advantage as England's relationship with the Netherlands wasn't exactly friendly at the time). During the reign of William and Mary, the political scene changed greatly with the passing of the Bill of Rights in 1689, which basically limited the powers of the monarchy and gave more power to Parliament, which is, as aforementioned, what the politicians wanted. The couple survived attempts by Catholics to restore James to the throne and peace was settled with France, who had been fighting several wars against its Protestant neighbours. Once again, Fecunditas hadn't been kind to the British royal family and there were no heirs to the throne. Next in line to the throne was Anne, Mary's sister. Queen Anne reigned from 1702 to 1714 and though her powers were limited due to the Bill of Rights, she was not afraid to show her support for the Tory party, who were in favour of the Anglican church. This backfired somewhat due to the rise in popularity of the Whig party during the War of Spanish

Succession, and in 1710 she had become so ill at ease with this fact that she had many of the senior Whig politicians removed from office. Shortly before her death, the Treaty of Utrecht were signed in 1713, which ended the War of Spanish Succession and also recognised the fact that the Hannovers of Germany were next in line to the British throne as Anne would die without heir. This recognition by – amongst others - Louis XIV of France, proved important as he knew this would prevent him from helping to restore Catholic James, or indeed any other Catholics, to the British throne. George I succeeded Anne in 1714, and his reign is arguably one of the most important in shaping Britain as we know it today. George I spoke no English and so left a lot of decision making to his advisors. Power increasingly shifted to parliament and a cabinet of ministers was formed. The leader of the cabinet was effectively the first British Prime Minister, Robert Walpole.

This lengthy introduction goes to show that Britain faced a great number of difficulties during Swift's life. Swift himself started out as a protestant priest and became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin in 1713. His political persuasions were Whig, who were categorically against having any Catholics in a position of power. However, despite this, he changed his political allegiance to Tory in 1710, when the ministry under Godolphin fell. Godolphin was a moderate Tory politician who, together with Lord Marlborough, closely advised Queen Anne. As the War of Spanish Succession grew unpopular, so did the Tories and eventually Marlborough and Godolphin led a ministry that was predominately composed of Whigs. As previously mentioned, Queen Anne wasn't all too pleased with this and dismissed Godolphin. As we know Swift was a gifted writer, and the pen is often mightier than the sword. He wrote several pamphlets against the Whigs and so grew within the ranks of the Tory party, where he worked closely with foreign minister Bolingbroke and Lord Treasurer Harley. It is important to mention these names as they form a central part of satire in Book 1 of *Gulliver's Travels*, which I will now move on to discuss.

The first example where the adult reader gets an inkling that Swift is poking fun of his contemporary society is in chapter one is where Gulliver meets the Emperor of Lilliput for the first time, and this person "made me a long speech, whereof I understood not one syllable"<sup>1</sup>. This is clearly a reference to king George I and to the fact that he could not speak any English. This is later repeated when Gulliver says "his Imperial Majesty spoke often to me, and I returned answers, but neither of us could understand a syllable"<sup>2</sup>. Staying with George I, in his description of the Emperor's physique in the second chapter of the first book, Gulliver describes the Emperor in a very positive light, as being tall, "strong and masculine, with an Austrian Lip and arched Nose, his complexion olive, his countenance erect, his body and limbs well proportioned, all his motions graceful and his deportment majestic"<sup>3</sup>. According to Joseph Black (2006), "the entire description of the Emperor may be a satiric

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<sup>1</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 25

<sup>2</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 32

<sup>3</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 31



representation of King George, who was stocky and ungainly”<sup>4</sup>. Within the first few pages, then, the satirical tone has been set and the contemporary reader will be aware of the satirical device that Swift is using.

The third chapter of the book provides us with a look into how Swift viewed the government. He describes how political candidates for ministerial positions within the court would have to dance on a rope in order to get the job. Alternatively, they may have to leap over a stick in order to gain the Emperor’s approval. This is something that would seem ridiculous to the reader, but that was Swift’s intention, as he felt the way in which ministers were (are?) appointed to ministerial positions depends more on how well you can impress the boss, rather than one’s actual skill in a particular field. Gulliver mentions how some of these acrobatic feats were not without danger, and mentions that Flimnap the Treasurer (insinuating Robert Walpole, who was First Lord of the Treasury) would surely have “broke[n] his neck, if one of the King’s cushions, that accidentally lay on the ground, had not weakened the force of his fall”<sup>5</sup>. Here, Swift refers to the Duchess of Kendal, who was one of George I’s wife’s chief maids, and with whom he had several illegitimate children. The Duchess was one of the few people able to influence George I and it was with her help that Walpole was able to re-enter into government in 1717 after the South Sea Bubble burst and caused a financial crisis for many (Gale Encyclopedia, 2011). Gulliver himself is able to win favour with the Emperor by creating his own trick: a platform on which the horses could parade. The Emperor was so impressed that he granted Gulliver more freedom. This is again Swift satirising the fact that giving the Emperor (King) what he wanted would give you immediate rewards, and that actions speak louder than words.

When the Emperor asked Gulliver to “stand like a colossus, with my legs as far asunder as I conveniently could”<sup>6</sup>, Gulliver complied but Swift adds a detail that was aimed at making fun of the prude society: Gulliver’s breeches were torn and the soldiers were able to look straight up as they passed under Gulliver’s legs. This is just one incident in which Swift makes fun of the all-fur-coat-and-no-knickers society of the time. There are several mentions of Gulliver having to relieve himself, and the incident in which Gulliver puts out the fire in the Empress’s palace will be discussed in more detail later. In any case, the Emperor decides to grant Gulliver even more freedom after his performance, but he wants to cover his back by first making Gulliver swear to eight articles and conditions. These articles and conditions are brought to Gulliver by Skyresh Bolgolam, who was his “mortal enemy”<sup>7</sup>. Skyresh has been linked to the Duke of Marlborough, who was Swift’s own political mortal enemy. Swift wrote numerous scathing attacks about Marlborough in his *Journal to Stella* (for example the fable of Midas). These articles and conditions are written in the tone of a contract, or a treaty, that were so frequently signed during the reign of George I. As

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<sup>4</sup> Black, Joseph. *The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. Pg 323

<sup>5</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver’s Travels*. pg 38

<sup>6</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver’s Travels*. pg 42

<sup>7</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver’s Travels*. pg 42

with these treaties, Swift creates articles that can easily be broken, should Gulliver decide to do so. What would realistically happen to Gulliver if he were to leave Lilliput without permission, or if he were to decide not to lift a heavy stone? These articles were deadly serious to the Emperor, but Gulliver could easily have neglected them if he had wanted to and there would have been nothing that the Emperor could have done.

It is interesting to read that the political situation in Lilliput is the same as in England, and is therefore another target for Swift's satire. Gulliver receives a visit from Reldresal, who tells him that "as flourishing a condition as we may appear to be in to foreigners, we labour under two mighty evils; a violent faction at home and the danger of a most potent enemy from abroad"<sup>8</sup>. The "violent faction" may be seen as the Junto Whigs, and the "potent enemy" may be interpreted as the French. Reldresal explains the two-party system of the Tamecksan and the Slameksan, named after the heels on their shoes. The high-heels represent the party of the High Church (Tories) and the low-heels represent the party of the Low Church (Whigs). As previously mentioned, Queen Anne favoured the Tories as they reflected her devout Anglican beliefs. We know that she removed the Whigs from government and Swift satirises this as "his majesty hath determined to make use of only low heels in the administration of the government"<sup>9</sup>. A similar policy was the case for the Prince of Wales, later to be George II, where Swift writes "we apprehend his Imperial Highness ... to have some tendency towards the high-heels; at least we can plainly discover one of his heels higher than the other, which gives him a hobble in his gait"<sup>10</sup>. This refers to the fact that the Prince of Wales favoured the Tories, but when he became king in 1727 (at the time *Gulliver's Travels* was published) he retained the Whig government. This is Swift's attack at George II sitting on the political fence and trying to balance both parties.

Swift satirises the continual conflicts with France as the wars between Lilliput and Blefuscu. From my research, the main conflicts between these countries in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were based on religion: the Protestant British versus the Catholic French. Swift chooses to replicate the inanity of these conflicts by writing of the Big-Endians and the Small-Endians, the names based on which way people eat their eggs. Swift chooses an absurdity to reflect the conflicts, as there is no right or wrong way to crack an egg, just as there is no right or wrong way to interpret the Bible. Swift writes that there "have been six Rebellions raised on that account; wherein one Emperor lost his life, and another his crown"<sup>11</sup>. Demaria (2003) interprets this comment as referring to the beheading of Charles I and the deposition of James II, who fled to France. Swift himself goes on to write – as Gulliver - of the madness of this difference in religion: "which is the convenient end [to crack the egg] seems, in

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<sup>8</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 47

<sup>9</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 47

<sup>10</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 47

<sup>11</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 48

my humble opinion, to be left to every man's conscience"<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, Swift goes on to comment – as Gulliver -on the ridiculousness of the bloody war (War of Spanish Succession) as being a waste to time, money and life. And this is where Gulliver says that is he “ready, with the hazard of my own life, to defend his [the Emperor's] person and state against all invaders”<sup>13</sup>. Gulliver waded across the channel between Lilliput and Blefuscu, ties up the enemy's fleet and drags them back to Lilliput. Gulliver is rewarded with a Dukedom but refuses to help any more. The Emperor cannot understand this and becomes irate. Gulliver's reason: “I would never be an instrument of bringing a free and brave people into slavery”<sup>14</sup>. This is a clear attack by Swift on the government of the time's colonial and slavery policy. Swift, despite his abhorration for mankind (which is the subject of a different essay), shows here that everyone should be treated equally and that all humans have some basic human rights.

The Emperor, however, could not understand tolerate Gulliver's refusal, and their relationship broke down. Once again, Swift demonstrates how fickle the king was: you are only in good favour with the King as long as it suits him. Go against him, and you're doomed. A peace treaty ensues with Blefuscu, a treaty which is similar to the previously mentioned Treaty of Utrecht (1713). Gulliver remained friendly to both Lilliput and Blefuscu, which irritated the Emperor even more. One evening, a fire broke out in the Empress's quarters at the Imperial Palace. The locals came rushing to get Gulliver's help and he reacted in the best way he could, being so far away from a water source: he urinated on the flames. This incident of the fire is seen by some to further represent the Treaty of Utrecht, which brought peace to the region after the war of Spanish Succession. The treaty was only ratified by the British parliament because Bolingbroke and Harley had encouraged Queen Anne to appoint twelve additional Tory peers to the House of Lords, which swung the vote in their favour. Swift probably chose to extinguish the fire on the Empress's – Queen Anne's – quarters because the Queen had refused to give Swift the title of bishop and instead sent him to be the Dean of Dublin Cathedral.

The final point I want to discuss in this essay is the fun that Swift has with the British legal system. Gulliver points out the differences between the Lilliputian and British legal systems. In fact, he almost describes the Lilliputian system as a kind of Utopia. False accusations are not tolerated, “fraud is a greater crime than theft”<sup>15</sup> (a reference to the shady payments Marlborough had received), those who stick to the letter of the law are rewarded, ungrateful people are punished by death. However, Gulliver is the victim of these laws when he tried for treason, following a plot against him by Bolgolam (Marlborough) and Flimnap (Walpole), the crimes being urinating on the Imperial Palace, refusing the Emperor's orders to annex Blefuscu, and basically fraternising with the enemy when he went to visit Blefuscu. Being tried for treason

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<sup>12</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 48

<sup>13</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 49

<sup>14</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 51

<sup>15</sup> Swift, Jonathan, and Robert DeMaria. *Gulliver's Travels*. pg 56

reflects how Harley and Bolingbroke were also tried for treason. Swift served with these politicians and felt their trial was unfair – although they went into exile and were pardoned later by George I.

In conducting research for this essay, I have learned a great deal about the political scene of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Swift was rather bitter about his personal treatment by Queen Anne, about the treatment of his political allies under both Queen Anne and George I, and his use of satire in *Gulliver's Travels* makes no effort at hiding this from his intended audience. He must himself have been apprehensive about publishing the story and the legal repercussions that could happen, which would explain why he published the story anonymously at first. Finally, despite having analysed the story on a deep level, I cannot help but cherish the memory of having the story read to me as a child. To me, this shows how very skilled Swift is to be able to write a novel on two different levels.

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