

Many of the critics who have critiqued Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* have used the word extraneous more than once. Swift was viewed as an insane person who was a failure in life. But this is far from the truth. Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, a book that has been assigned to students for years, and it is written from experience. Swift's experience with the Tories and their conflicts with the Whigs caused him to write books that mock religious beliefs, government, or people with views differing from his own. In one of these books, *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift criticizes the corruption of the English government, society, science, religion, and man in general.

In *Gulliver's* first travel, in which he visited Lilliput, Gulliver is faced with the minute people, called Lilliputians. Now while this is the premise for a fantasy story, Swift uses the events within to make severe criticisms of England between reigns of Queen Anne and George the first. The people of Lilliput are about six inches tall, and their size signifies that their motives, acts, and humanity are in the same, dwarfish (Long 276). In this section, the royal palace is accidentally set on fire, containing the empress inside. Instead of making his way across town, to the ocean, squashing the people of Lilliput as he goes, Gulliver makes use of his urine to save the palace. While this vulgar episode was a display of bravery, it infuriated the emperor, causing revenge to be vowed on Gulliver. Rather than be happy that both the emperor and the palace are not in ruin, the littleness of the government and the people in general is displayed in this act. Another display of this is the fact that Gulliver is used as the Emperor's absolute weapon, but the emperor only uses him to conquer his world of two islands. This makes the emperor's ambition seem extremely low (Bloom, *Interpretations* 84-5).

Swift also criticizes the religious beliefs of the Lilliputians and England in the first story. In Lilliput, Ministers were chosen strictly on agility, or their ability to walk a tightrope or stick jumping. They were able to maintain their rank of minister as long as they could keep these defeating these tasks (Swift, *Writings* 89).

The political parties of the English government are represented by the conservative High Heels who depict the Tories, and the progressive Low Heels, or Whigs. As per their names, the distinguishing mark of the parties is the height of their heels. Within these two parties, Swift criticizes the English political parties, and the Prince of Wales (Brady 21). Swift also mocks the religion war that was going on in England, through the use of the war between Lilliput, and its nearest neighbor, Blefuscu. Swift's use of the terms High Heels and Low Heels to compare the meaningless battles of the Whigs and Tories, such as the height of heels (Swift, *Writings* 81).

With *Gulliver's* next travel, we find him in Brobdingnag. His voyage shows us the filthy mental and physical characteristics of man. Here, Gulliver is confronted with an adult nurse. The nurse's repulsive action of revealing her breasts to Gulliver. This reminds him of how the Lilliputians found his skin full of crater like pores, and stumps of hair growing from them. The odor of the immense creatures is offending, and it caused Gulliver to recall the fact that the Lilliputians were also offended of his body odor (Bloom, *Interpretations* 27-8).

In Laputa, Gulliver is confronted with the old age Struldbugs, which look utterly hideous resulting from old age, and the deterioration of their bodies. The Yahoos from the land of Houyhnhnms are filthy, uncivilized creatures, who use their own dung as a weapon. In these descriptions, Swift criticizes both the moral and physical corruption of man (Bloom, *Critical Views* 87).

Gulliver's first owner in Brobdingnag represents the selfishness of man. Gulliver is constantly displayed in public, abused for the profit of the owner. When his owner finds out that Gulliver is weakening, he sells him immediately, at a high price in order to milk every last penny out of Gulliver.

Gulliver's third voyage, to the floating island of Laputa is one of the most

satirical of the whole book. In this voyage Swift criticizes the Royal Society of England, in which he says is composed of useless philosophers, inventors, and scientists. The floating island signifies that the inhabitants are composed of the same airy constitution as the environment (Long 276). Projects done by such people are summed up by "the Universal Artist," who directs his followers to turn useful things into the exact opposite, which results in useless achievements. Some of the experiments held were to create tangible air, wool-less sheep, and horses with stone hooves. The flying island itself expresses not only the desertion on the common earth of reality but their conversion of the universe to a mechanism and of living to a mechanical process (Bloom, Interpretations 53).

Finally, Gulliver travels to the land of the Houyhnhnms. After he reaches land, Gulliver comes across a pack of Yahoos and is instantly appalled by them. There he quotes, "Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable and animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so strong an antipathy" (Swift, Text 215). This statement is at best ironic, because Gulliver never saw the resemblances between the Yahoos, and himself. Afterwards, he encounters the rational Houyhnhnms and he immediately realizes the common characteristics he has in common with the Yahoos. He states, "my horror and astonishment are not to be described, when I observed, in this abdominal animal, a perfect human figure" (Swift, Text 220).

Gulliver is amazed to see rational figures acting in such brutal figures, but he later realizes that they regarded him as the brutal beast. The Houyhnhnms compare Gulliver and the Yahoos and find many similarities between the two. The only difference was that Gulliver, and mankind, had learned the benefits of clothing, and he, at times could be a rational creature.

Swift portrays the Yahoos as savage animals with human characteristics, which is the biggest mockery of mankind in the whole book. The Yahoos were so greedy, that they would fight over enough food to feed an entire army of fifty soldiers, just to keep it to themselves. They would poison their own bodies, by sucking a root, similar to alcohol, to reach a high. The female population of the Yahoos are also given characteristics of the ladies of the royal stature. Their gestures of hiding behind bushes and trees, looking at the passing by males, gives the impression of a woman hiding her face behind a fan, while looking flirtatiously over her shoulder. The smell associated with the female Yahoos, is similar to the perfume ladies wear to attract men (Brady 108). By the time Gulliver is returned to England, he becomes a complete antisocial, who is disgusted by the sight of his own wife and children. Gulliver's desire to become a Houyhnhnm gives the reader the impression that he is a pathetic man, who strives to become someone he can never be.

Through Gulliver, Jonathan Swift travels to four different foreign countries, each representing a corrupt part of England. Swift criticizes the corruption of these parts, and focuses on the government, society, science, religion, and man. Not only does Swift criticize the customs of each country, he mocks the naive man who has the inability to figure out the double meaning of things. Gulliver, being gullible himself, believes everything he is told, which symbolizes the irony of the English system.

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