

Gulliver's Travels

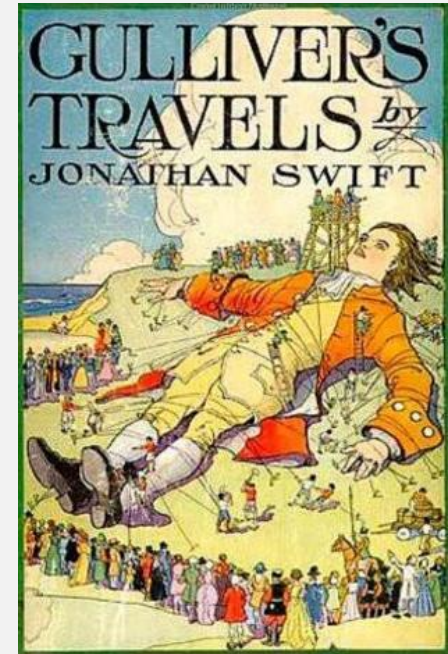


- Swift was born in Dublin in 1667
- Moved to England after the Glorious Revolution
- Worked as secretary to William Temple
- Became lover of Temple's daughter Ester, whom he called Stella
- Was ordained priest in the Anglican tradition.
- Anonymously released *A Tale of a Tub and The Battle of the Books* in 1704
- *Tub* was harshly disapproved by the Church of England
- Became editor of the *Examiner*, the Tories' official paper
- Took the post of dean at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin in 1713
- *Gulliver's Travels* is published in 1726
- Died and was laid to rest next to Esther Johnson inside St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1745



“Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World”, which then will be entitled.....

In 1726 my masperpiece was published anonymously



It is the greatest
allegory on
human nature
ever!!!

Who said
that?

If you believe that this
is a book for children
as it is peopled with
giants, dwarfs,
speaking animals.....,
well, you are in the
wrong!



Your teacher
believes so!



Gulliver's Travels



Part 1: A voyage to Lilliput



Part 2: A voyage to Brobdingnag



Part 3: A voyage to Laputa



Part 4: A voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms

Part 1: A voyage to Lilliput



- Lemuel Gulliver is a **surgeon** and **sea captain**
- In the first voyage, Gulliver is the only survivor of a shipwreck, and he swims to **Lilliput**
- He is tied up by people who are less than 6 inches (15 cm) tall
- He is then taken to the capital city and eventually released
- The Lilliputians' small size mirrors their **small-mindedness**



Are they just dwarfish strange creatures?

High Heels or Low Heels?

- Lilliputians indulge in ridiculous customs and petty debates (just like?.....)
- There is a curious bipartitism :

a) Those men who wear high-heeled shoes = Tories



b) Those who wear low heels = Whigs



Court positions are filled by those who are best at rope dancing

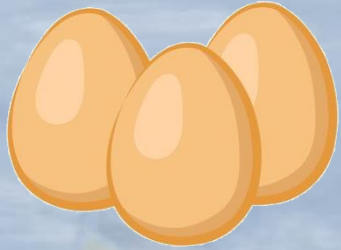
Hence, those who hold important offices are good at entertaining rather than having merits

Swift wants you to ponder whether we can respect someone we know being there because he is a good enteranimer (read: corrupted) or slave to the system



What country is he actually talking about:.....?





A Matter of Eggs

Gulliver is asked to help defend Lilliput against the empire of Blefuscu (France), with which Lilliput is at war

WHY?

They fight over which end of an egg should be broken, this being a matter of religious doctrine



HENCE

Wars are pointless and a useless waste of lives



- Gulliver captures Blefuscu's naval fleet
- He declines to assist the emperor of Lilliput in conquering Blefuscu
- Later Gulliver extinguishes a fire in the royal palace by urinating on it
- Eventually he falls out of favour and is sentenced to be blinded and starved
- He flees to Blefuscu, where he finds a normal-size boat and is thus able to return to England



But , the teeny-tiny Lilliputians are cruel. Their cruelty is directly proportional to their smallness

Swift means to mine our certainties, questioning our archetypes

We tend to associate smallness and cuteness to goodness



Part 2: A voyage to Brobdingnag



- Gulliver's second voyage takes him to Brobdingnag, inhabited by a race of giants
- A farm worker finds Gulliver and delivers him to the farm owner
- The farmer begins exhibiting Gulliver for money, and the farmer's young daughter, Glumdalclitch, takes care of him
- One day the queen orders the farmer to bring Gulliver to her, and she purchases Gulliver
- He becomes a favourite at court, though the king reacts with contempt when Gulliver recounts the splendid achievements of his own civilization



*“I cannot but conclude 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!!!!!!”*



- Gulliver offers to make gunpowder and cannon for the king
- The king is horrified by the thought of such weaponry
- Eventually Gulliver is picked up by an eagle and then rescued at sea by people of his own size.



The Brobdingnagians though giant-like, are good-willed, virtuous and respectful towards Gulliver.

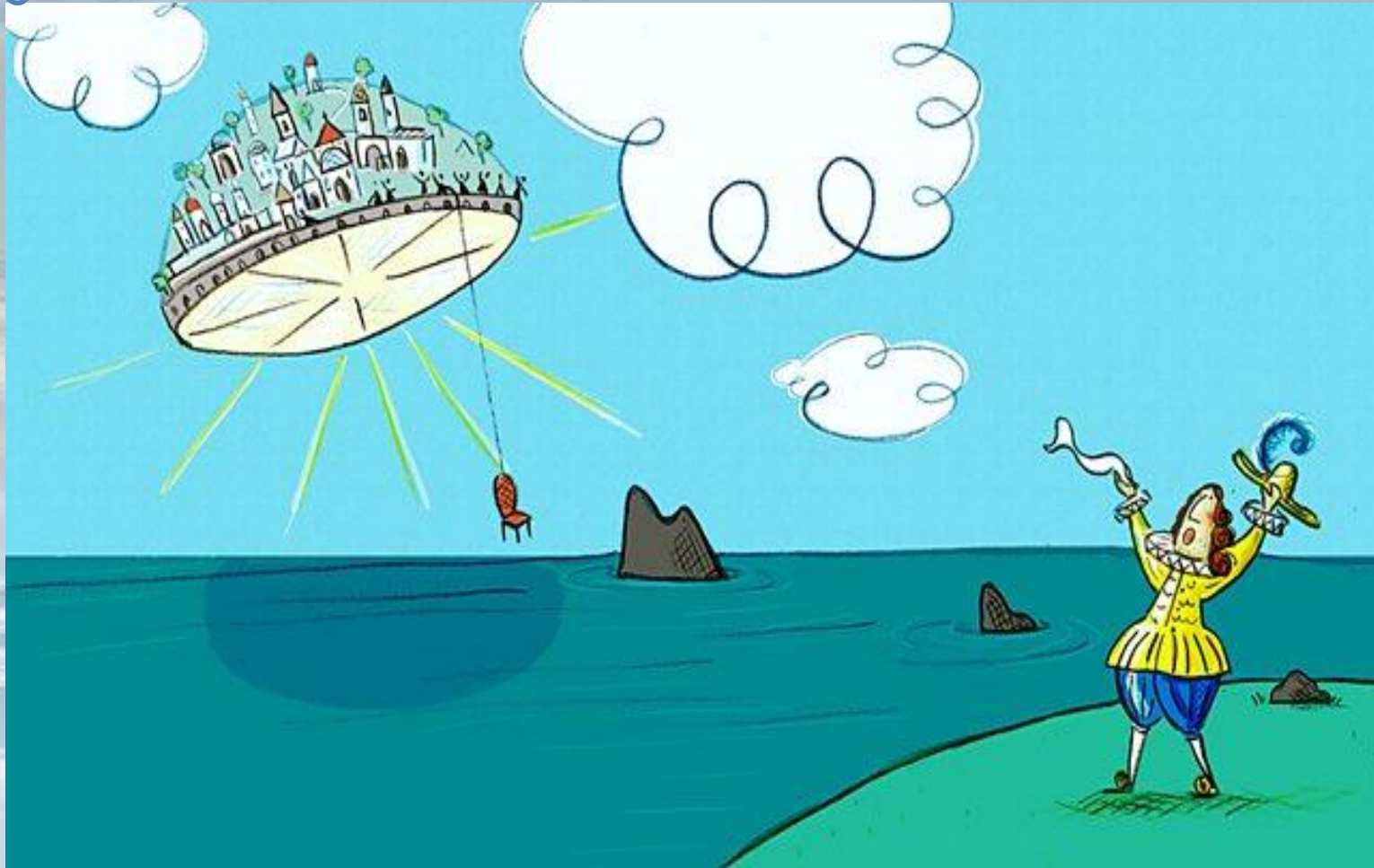
The Brobdingnagians represent relatively civil, rural, "small town" ethics

We tend to view as threatening and evil whatever is huge in size (monsters, dragons..)

While the Lilliputians represent the ethics of survival of the fittest



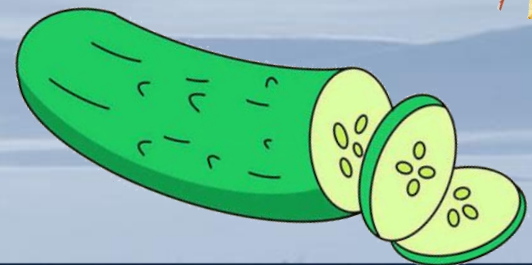
Part 3: A voyage to Laputa



- On Gulliver's third voyage he is set adrift by pirates and eventually ends up on the flying island of Laputa
- The people of Laputa all have one eye pointing inward and the other upward
- They are so lost in thought that they must be reminded to pay attention to the world around them.



- They are concerned with mathematics and with music, they have no practical applications for their learning.
- Laputa is the home of the king of Balnibarbri, the continent below it.
- Gulliver is permitted to leave the island and visit Lagado, the capital city of Balnibarbri.
- He finds the farm fields in ruin and the people living in apparent squalor.
- Gulliver's host explains that the inhabitants follow the prescriptions of a learned academy in the city, where the scientists undertake such wholly impractical projects as extracting sunbeams from cucumbers



- Later Gulliver visits Glubbdubdrib, the island of sorcerers
- He speaks with great men of the past and learns from them the lies of history
- In the kingdom of Luggnagg he meets the struldbrugs, who are immortal but age as though they were mortal and are thus miserable
- From Luggnagg he is able to sail to Japan and thence back to England





Swift was satirising the ubiquity of Newtonian philosophy in polite society of 1720s London

He believed the world of mathematical and philosophical endeavour does little or nothing to better people's lives



VOLUME 1: Man is **EVIL**

VOLUME 2: Men is **NOT SUPERIOR** to any other species

VOLUME 3: Man's **reason** is **USELESS**

Is this what
you meant Mr
Swift, am I
right?



Exactly
so!!



Part 4: A voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms



- Gulliver visits the land of the Houyhnhnms, a race of intelligent benevolent horses
- They **have no words for deception or evil**
- A brutish, filthy, greedy, and degenerate humanoid race called **Yahoos** lives there too.
- The Houyhnhnms are very curious about Gulliver, who seems to be **both a Yahoo and civilized.**

Interesting!



- Gulliver describes his country and its history to the master Houyhnhnm
- The Houyhnhnm concludes that **the people of England are NOT more reasonable than the Yahoos.** **MAN = ANIMAL**
- At last it is decided that Gulliver must leave the Houyhnhnms.
- Once in England, he is so disgusted with humanity that he avoids his family and buys horses and converses with them instead.





Meeting the Yahoos

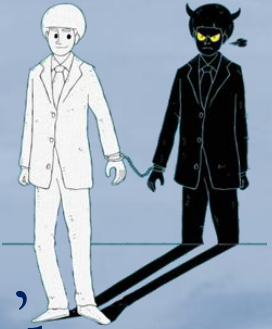
- When Gulliver meets the Yahoos, he doesn't recognize any human traits in them
- He shows his revulsion in any possible way

BUT

- The horses believe that even Gulliver is a Yahoo. The only difference? His strange clothes on.



Anticipating Freud



- The Yahoos represent the dark, primitive, beastly side of human nature, which Freud called the ID
- Gulliver (the EGO) is a Yahoo, who has yielded to social conventions (the SUPEREGO), symbolized by his clothes
- The wise horses are not deceived by Gulliver's clothes and manners and still regard his primitive side as prevailing

Conclusions

- Jonathan Swift didn't share the optimism of an age that believed that modern man could reform society using reason and advance knowledge through scientific method.
- Quite the contrary. To that “greatness” of the Enlightenment creed, he opposed his idea of the moral “smallness” of man.
- According to him, man was still an *animal* endowed with little reason which he couldn't even use properly.





The End