

Satire in Gulliver's Travels

Satire is a literary genre of Greek origin (satyr), in which human folly and vice are held up to scorn, derision, or ridicule. Although satire is usually meant to be funny, its purpose is often irony or sarcasm, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, religion, and communities themselves, into improvement. In Gulliver's Travels, satire is shown through narration, setting, character, and plot. Jonathan Swift uses utopia and dystopia as elements of setting, and he uses a flat character, miser and tyrant type of character, moral touchstone, and grotesque to illustrate the character element of his satirical novel.

Jonathan Swift has chosen a first-person narrator in his novel of Gulliver's Travels. The narrator is Gulliver who has been plunged into extraordinary and absurd circumstances during his four voyages to a multitude of strange lands around the globe. Although Gulliver's vivid and detailed style of narration makes it obvious that he is intelligent and well educated, his perceptions are naive and gullible. As an example, Gulliver is a naive consumer of the Lilliputians' grandiose imaginings, because he is cowed by their threats of punishment, and their formally worded condemnation of Gulliver on grounds of treason works quite effectively on the naive Gulliver, forgetting that they have no real physical power over him. Gulliver is a round character which is a kind of character who encounters conflict and is changed by it. He changes in relation to the places he visits and the events that befall him as he voyages. As an example, he is the giant in Lilliput and he is worried about trampling on the Lilliputians, while he is at risk of being trampled upon and he is treated as a doll in the land of Brobdingnag. In his last voyage, he develops such a love for the Houyhnhnms society that he no longer desires to return to humankind. And he becomes more and more narrow-minded as the story progresses. On the whole, Gulliver proves to be more resilient than the average man by managing to survive the disastrous shipwrecks and the foreign people.

The setting in Gulliver's Travels explores the idea of utopia and dystopia. Utopia is an imaginary model of the ideal community. The Houyhnhnms represent an ideal of rational existence because they are reasonable, rational characters, and they seem to embody the principle virtue of friendship and benevolence, and all the perfections that humans strive to achieve. Their language does not have negative words such as lie, deceit, war, and evil. Their society builds simple houses, and it has a sound knowledge of medical herbs and poetry. They breed cleanliness and civility in their young and exercise them for speed and strength, because they are concerned more with the community than their own personal advantages. The Houyhnhnms are used as objects of satire, particularly when the inconsistencies in their character and behaviour are reflective of paradoxes in human thoughts and faults. Utopia could turn into dystopia, for the reason that Houyhnhnms could not have a true sense of good if they do not know what the evil is, and their lives seem lacking vigour, challenge, and excitement. Therefore the Houyhnhnms' society is perfect for Houyhnhnms, but it is hopeless for humans.

On the other hand, dystopia is a creation of a nightmare world where the conditions and the quality of life are extremely bad. Dystopia is illustrated through the Yahoos. The Yahoos are more primitive than humans. Their behaviour reflects the decadent and irrational behaviour of the civilized humans. For example, Yahoos fight with other groups and each other without apparent reason. Also their avarice for certain shiny stones of no practical use can be paralleled to contemporary societies' possessions of material such as jewellery. Swift uses the Yahoos as an example of greed and selfishness of humans. The Yahoos are entirely bestial and Gulliver's first meeting with them greatly disgust him "Upon the whole, I never behold in all my travels so disagreeable an animal, nor one against which I naturally conceived so strong an antipathy"

The satirical element of character is illustrated through flat character, type of character, moral touchstone, and grotesque. A flat character is relatively uncomplicated and do not change throughout the course of a work. Swift uses the king of Lilliput as a flat character and he pictures the king as a powerful and greedy man who is very proud of himself. The king's government uses performance such as jumping high on a tight rope in order to obtain the vacant position in the government. This shows how the king's power eventually makes him care more about personal entertainment than the kingdom. In addition to that, the king's commands for Lilliputians to break their eggs on the small end first, illustrate the act of pride because the king wishes to make everyone subject to his will.

As well as using a flat character, the character element of the novel includes the greedy and the tyrant character type. For instance, the farmer of Brobdingnag plays the role of the greedy that puts Gulliver on display to profit from spectacular viewing of Gulliver performing tricks. Furthermore, the farmer starves Gulliver to death and resolves to make as much money as possible before Gulliver dies by selling him to the queen.

As an illustration of tyranny, Swift uses the king of Laputa. When the king wants to punish a particular region of the country, he can keep the floating island above it, depriving the lands below of the sun and rain. Similarly, the king is oblivious to the real concerns of the people below as he has never been below. Also, the character element of a satirical novel uses moral touchstone. The moral touchstone is an excellent quality or example that is used to test the excellence or genuineness of others. In this case, the two moral touchstones of the novel are Glumdalclitch and Don Pedro. Glumdalclitch takes care of Gulliver, and she becomes his friend and nursemaid. She makes Gulliver several sets of new clothes, she delightedly dresses him, she puts him in her closet at night to sleep, and she teaches him the Brobdingnagian language. Don Pedro treats Gulliver with great patience and hospitality, even tenderness, when he allows him to travel on his ship. He offers him food, drink, and clothes. He also gives Gulliver twenty pounds for his journey to England.

Together with flat, type, and moral touch stone. Grotesque is another element of the satirical character. Grotesque is strangely or fantastically distorted. It is embodied in the magnified world of Brobdingnag. In the magnified world of Brobdingnag, everything takes on new levels of complexity and imperfection, demonstrating that the truth about object is heavily influenced by the observer's perspective. For instance, the smoothest skin of the most appealing ladies has imperfections, and these imperfections are bound to be exposed under close scrutiny. Gulliver describes "Their Skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured when I saw them near" (108). In a sense, what looks perfect to us is not actually perfect; it is simply not imperfect enough for our limited senses of notice.

Furthermore, satire is shown through the plot of journey and return. The Lilliputians symbolize humankind's widely excessive pride in its own puny existence because, in spite of the small size of the Lilliputians, they do not consider the notion that Gulliver is enormous compared to them and could kill them with just a flick of his finger. Gulliver has learned that their society suffers from the same flaws inherent in the English society (rebellions over relatively minor issues), but their society is more utopian compared to the English society. On the contrary, the people of Brobdingnag are peaceful and fair, and not violent and cruel as the people of Europe have been. This is illustrated with the King of Brobdingnag's conclusion about European society, "I cannot but conclude hte Bulk of your Natives to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin" (121). In his fourth voyage, Gulliver has seen unusual societies. The Yahoos represent human follies, greed and selfishness, while the Houyhnhnms represent humanity free of strife and hardship. The Houyhnhnms seem like model citizens, and Gulliver's intense grief when

he is forced to leave them suggests that they have made an impact on him greater than that of any other society he has visited.

In conclusion, Gulliver's travels uses satire through narration, setting, character, and plot to illustrate the weaknesses of human, and suggest ways of improvement. In other words, the novel portrays the ideal (or not so ideal) society and how Swift views England. Each society has its own exaggerated feature. The Lilliputians presents the animalistic nature of humanity. Man's capability of reason is shown in the Brobdingnagians. The bestial characteristic is shown through the Yahoos. The highest ideal for man, however, is best represented by the Houyhnhnms. Therefore, the Houyhnhnms serve as an example of the ideal for man.

Gulliver changes his attitudes and his perceptions of people because of the different societies he encounters. At the beginning, he is a standard issue European adventurer; by the end, he has become a misanthrope who totally rejects human society.