

has many conversations with his equine master* who enlightens Gulliver on the way the Houyhnhnms run their country. In short, *Gulliver's Travels* contains a gripping narrative, and the credit for lending so much interest to the story goes to Gulliver.

Gulliver as a commentator and a moral judge. (Gulliver is also a commentator and a moral judge. He is not only a man of action but also one who is endowed with a capacity for thought and reflection.) He can ponder over what he sees and he can draw conclusions from his experiences. At one point in Part I, Gulliver reflects thus: "Of so little weight are the greatest services to princes when put into the balance with a refusal to gratify their passions".** In Part II, he thus meditates upon one of the situations: "This made me reflect how vain an attempt it is for a man to endeavour doing himself honour among those who are out of all degree of equality or comparison with him".*** After having witnessed the sad plight of the immortals, in Part III, Gulliver draws the following moral: "They were the most mortifying sight I ever beheld, and the women more horrible than the men. The reader will easily believe that my keen appetite for perpetuity of life was much abated."† In Part IV this is one of his conclusions about the Houyhnhnms and human beings: "But I must freely confess that the many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds, placed in opposite view to human corruptions, had so far opened mine eyes and enlarged my understanding that I began to view the actions and passions of man in a very different light."††

Gulliver, as the medium of satire. (Finally, Gulliver is the medium through whom Swift communicates his satirical points and purposes to us. When Gulliver dwells upon the conflict between the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians or between the High-Heels and the Low-Heels, we can see that Swift is giving us a satirical account of the conflicts between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, and of the party strife of his time. When Gulliver describes the rope-dancing and the creeping under a string, we know that Swift is here satirizing the sycophancy of the politicians in their efforts to win royal favour. The comments of the King of Brobdingnag upon the presumption of diminutive insects like Gulliver to mimick grandeur is also satirical in intention) as is the same King's description of the human race as "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth". In the account of the third voyage, we have a satire on people who remain engrossed in their meditations and cogitations to such an extent that they do not have the time even to make love

*equine master : master who is a horse.

**Page 89

†Page 259.

***Page 163

††Page 305

with a tumour in his neck, another with a pair of wooden legs, and so on. The people of Laputa are also described in detail: "Their heads were all reclined either to the right or the left; one of their eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the zenith". The minds of these people are so engaged in intense speculations that they can neither speak nor attend to the talk of others without being roused by some external stimulus. In short, Gulliver gives evidence of his enormous powers of observation throughout the book. Indeed, the book would not have been possible without this capacity for observation.

Gulliver's skill as a narrator. Gulliver also shows a good deal of skill as a narrator. This skill enables him to maintain our interest in the story throughout, and to whet our curiosity again and again. He sometimes arouses our interest by dramatic incidents and sometimes by humorous episodes. Indeed, the best parts of the book are very amusing and entertaining because of their comic quality. However, even in these three parts there are several dramatic and exciting moments. In Part I, Gulliver wakes up from his sound slumber to find himself in chains. Then there are dramatic and exciting incidents such as the threat of an invasion of Lilliput, Gulliver's seizing the bulk of the enemy fleet, Gulliver's extinguishing a fire in the palace by urinating on it (though this is more of an amusing incident than an exciting one), the threat of an impeachment against Gulliver, and the manner of Gulliver's departure from this country. Among the amusing incidents here are the rope-dancing and the creeping under a string, both of which, of course, have a satirical purpose behind them. In Part II we are greatly excited to learn of the giant size of the inhabitants. It is almost awful to read the account of how a huge woman suckles her child. Gulliver tells us that no object ever disgusted him so much as the sight of her monstrous breast: "It stood prominent six foot, and could not be less than sixteen in circumference. The nipple was about half the bigness of my head." The description of the hugeness of various animals such as cats, dogs, rats, flies, wasps, monkeys and such objects as apples and hailstones, and Gulliver's adventures among them, or with them, are both amusing and frightening. The manner in which Gulliver is tormented by the court dwarf (who is thirty feet high) is also one of the highlights of this part. The there are the maids of honour who play all kinds of games with Gulliver. The handsomest among these maids of honour sometimes plays Gulliver astride upon one of her nipples and plays many other tricks upon him. Part III is rather discursive and lacks the unity of action of the other parts of the book, but even here our interest is maintained. The flying island of Laputa is in itself a miracle. The experiments which are going on at the Academy of Projectors in Lagado are also very interesting. Part IV contains an exciting and intriguing account of strange creatures like the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. We now find ourselves in a country where the horses can talk and can teach their language to a human being. Gulliver

to their wives. There is also a satirical reference here to Wood's half-pence, the coin which was rejected by Ireland as a result of *Drapier's Letters* which were written by Swift. The account of the researches going on at the Academy of Projectors in Lagado is a satire on the kind of useless work which was being done by the Royal Society in those days. In addition to that, we have a satire on the human longing for immortality. In Part IV, the satire on mankind becomes very fierce and takes the form of what is known as "invective". We have here a denunciation of war and the destruction caused by the weapons of war; and a denunciation of lawyers, judges, doctors, and government ministers. The horses of the Houyhnhnms impress Gulliver so much that he becomes a great admirer of those beings and a hater of his own species. Thus, it is through Gulliver that Swift here conveys to us his misanthropic and cynical view of mankind, though Gulliver's final attitude of a complete abhorrence and detestation of the human race at the end of the book cannot be attributed to Swift himself.

An unfair criticism. (According to one critic,* Gulliver by his technique of narration does not create a sense of reality about himself. Gulliver is not a character in the sense in which Tom Jones, for example, is a character, says this critic.) Gulliver has the most minimal subjective life and the scantiness of his inner life cannot be doubted. (He is, in fact, an abstraction, manipulated in the service of satire. However, this is a view which we cannot accept. Gulliver strikes us as a real, living personality. His inner thoughts and feelings at different stages in the narration have adequately been revealed to us.) There was no need for Swift to subject Gulliver to any kind of psycho-analysis.

Q. 5. *Gulliver's Travels* is the...

Q. 4. Examine Swift's use of Lemuel Gulliver as a narrator and an observer.

Or

Explain the role of Lemuel Gulliver in Swift's book *Gulliver's Travels*.

Or

What is the function of Lemuel Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*?

1. **Ans. Gulliver, a detached and impartial character.** Lemuel Gulliver is a fictitious character invented by Swift to serve his satirical purposes in the book *Gulliver's Travels*. The book was not intended as a personal memoir* (Swift's object in writing it was to express his ideas about mankind in general and about England and English political and religious institutions of the time in particular). One method of doing so would have been to write the book in the first person pronoun using 'I'. But that method would have made the book look like an autobiography and we would have been inclined to question the validity of the story which is largely improbable and incredible. The account of the various voyages given by a fictitious character called Gulliver carries a certain plausibility because we feel inclined to look upon Gulliver as a detached and impartial person and we easily fall under his spell.

2. **Gulliver's four-fold role in the book.** Gulliver is primarily an observer and a narrator. He has extraordinary powers of observation, and he narrates all that he has observed and experienced in such a skilful manner as to hold our attention throughout. But, in addition to being an observer and a narrator, he is also a commentator and a medium through whom Swift conveys to us his criticism of mankind and his reactions to English institutions and English politicians of his own time. Thus Gulliver has a four-fold role or function in the book.

3. **Gulliver, Swift's mouthpiece, but not to be fully identified with Swift.** Nor can it be doubted that at most points in the course of the story Gulliver serves as a mouthpiece or spokesman of Swift. Of course, we are not to identify Gulliver completely with Swift; the two personalities are to be kept apart. But the fact remains that it is through Gulliver that Swift himself speaks and communicates his views to us. Wherever Gulliver draws any conclusions from his experiences, wherever he offers his comments on what he sees, wherever he moralizes, wherever he characterizes or condemns human beings directly or in a veiled manner, it is Swift himself who is speaking. If Swift had spoken directly to us in his

* memoir : autobiography.

own person, he might not have been able to carry conviction and we might have felt biased against him. At the same time, we should not identify Gulliver with Swift at all stages of the story. In the closing chapters of the book particularly, Gulliver is not Swift and Gulliver's misanthropy is not to be attributed to Swift. Gulliver may there be regarded as an objective, dramatic character, not to be identified with Swift just as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* is not to be identified with Shakespeare.

The general traits of Gulliver's character. (Gulliver is the narrator and the principal actor in the book. We look at things through his eyes; we feel his feelings; and we share his thoughts. We remain in his company from beginning till end. In the very beginning he gives us many insignificant biographical details in order to produce a realistic effect about his being an authentic person.) We find that in all respects he is an average good man. He has received some university education both at Cambridge and at Leyden where he studied medicine. He is a married man with children. He is keenly observant, reasonably intelligent, thoroughly capable in an emergency, brave, and hopeful. He is simple and direct in his narration. He retains his benevolence throughout the first three voyages, though towards the end of the fourth voyage he becomes morbid and almost crazy.

Gulliver as an observer in Lilliput. (Gulliver's powers of observation are made manifest to us in his accounts of all the four voyages.) For instance, when he finds himself in Lilliput, he observes that the people there are most excellent mathematicians and have arrived to a great perfection in mechanics. He then goes on to describe in detail the method by which he is transported to the metropolis. When he arrives at the royal palace, the Emperor surveys him with great admiration and orders his cooks and butlers to give him food and drink, while the Empress, attended by many ladies, sits at a distance in her chair to watch him. When he is released from his chains, Gulliver goes round the metropolis and gives us a detailed description of the city as well as the palace. He also devotes a whole chapter to a description of the style of living, the laws and customs, the habits and beliefs of the people of this country whom he has closely watched. As the height of the natives here is only six inches, so there is an exact proportion in all other animals as well as plants and trees, Gulliver informs us.

Gulliver as an observer in Brobdingnag and in Laputa. (In Brobdingnag Gulliver again observes everything with great care and minuteness. Here again he gives us a detailed description of the country and its metropolis) which is called Lorbrulgrud and which stands in almost equal parts on each side of the river that passes through it. The King's palace is no regular edifice, but a heap of buildings about seven miles round. In one striking passage Gulliver gives us his impressions of the beggars whom he sees outside a shop: a woman with a cancer in her breast, a man