# THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

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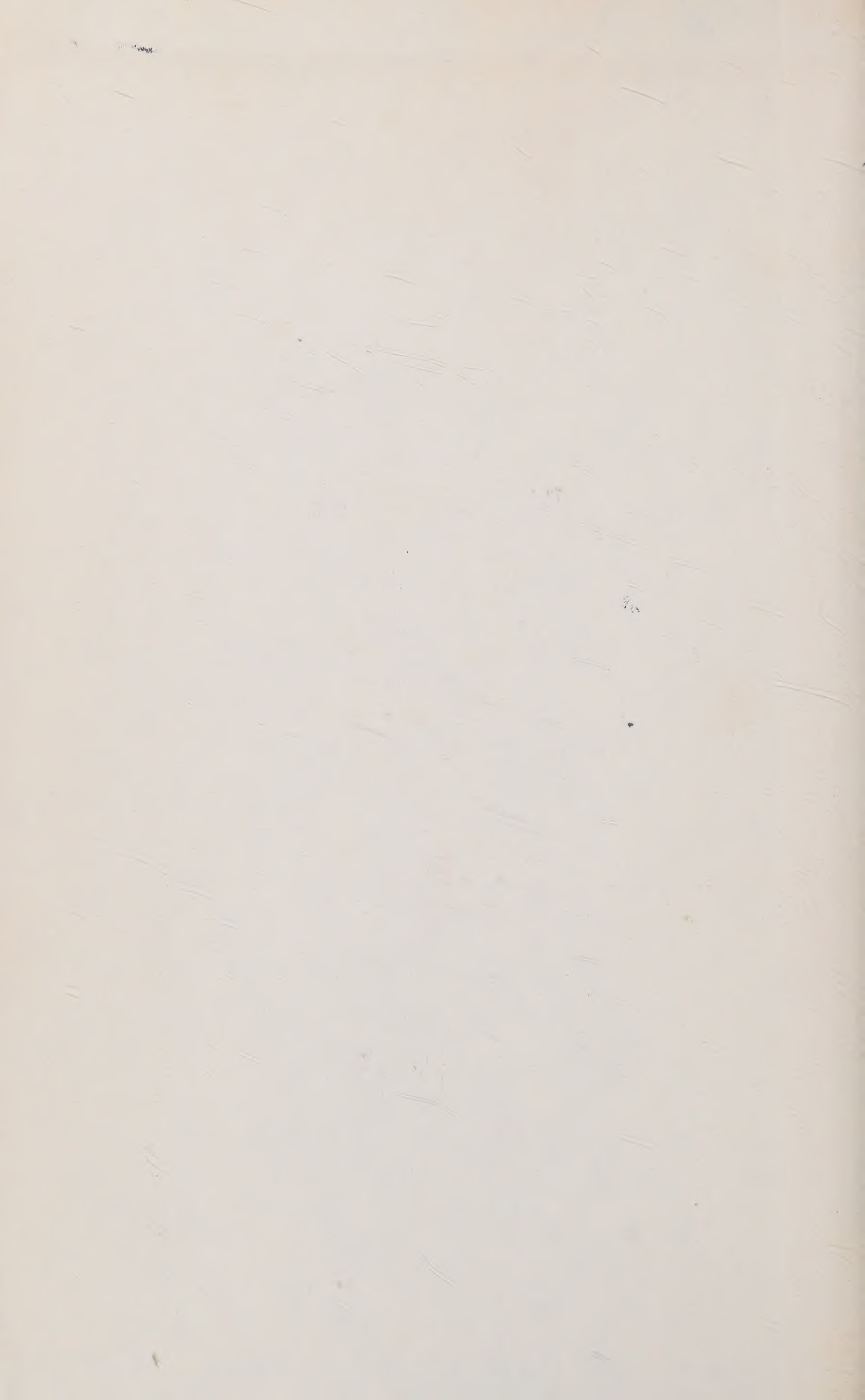

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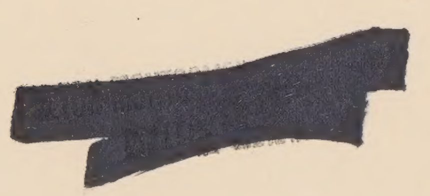

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# THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

By C. H. FIRTH

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

*Read* December 10, 1919

A critic who seeks to explain the political significance of *Gulliver's Travels* may be guilty of too much ingenuity, but he cannot fairly be charged with exaggerated curiosity. He is searching for a secret which Swift tells us is hidden there, and endeavouring to solve riddles which were intended to exercise his wits. Swift loved to mystify the public; he often preferred to speak in parables when there was no reason for doing so. In this case there was good reason for his preference. At that time, and for many years later, it was dangerous to write plainly about public affairs, or to criticize public men with any freedom.

When Swift wrote his *History of the Last Four Years of the Queen* he proposed to prefix to it characters of the party leaders of that period in order to make it more intelligible. In 1738 he contemplated the publication of this *History*. Though it was about five-and-twenty years after the events described, he was warned by his friend Erasmus Lewis, that if the characters he had drawn were published as they stood 'nothing could save the author's printer and publishers from some grievous punishment'.[1] Accordingly it was not published till 1758, thirteen years after Swift's death.

Authors who wrote about public affairs immediately after they had happened and about ministers of state while they were actually in office were obliged to use literary artifices of various kinds in order to express their opinions with impunity. But it was not without some compensating advantage, for to be allusive and indirect, while it protected the author, stimulated the curiosity of the reader.

In *Gulliver's Travels* many figures which seem to be imaginary are meant to depict real personages, or at all events are drawn from them. Swift says in one of his earlier writings: 'In describing the virtues and vices of mankind, it is convenient, upon every article, to have some eminent person in our eye, from whence we copy our

[1] *Correspondence*, edited by F. Elrington Ball, vi. 78.

description.' Again he says: 'I have thought of another expedient, frequently practised with great safety and success by satirical writers; which is that of looking into history for some character bearing a resemblance to the person we would describe; and with the absolute power of altering, adding, or suppressing what circumstances we please, I conceive we must have very bad luck or very little skill to fail.' He admitted that this method of writing had one serious drawback. 'Though the present age may understand well enough the little hints we give, the parallels we draw, and the characters we describe, yet this will all be lost to the next. However, if these papers should happen to live till our grandchildren are men, I hope they may have curiosity enough to consult annals and compare dates, in order to find out.' [1]

*Gulliver's Travels* was published on October 28, 1726, but some portions of the book were written much earlier. They were intended to be a contribution to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. 'It was from a part of these memoirs', Pope told Spence, 'that Dr. Swift took his first hints for *Gulliver*. There were pigmies in Schreibler's *Travels*; and the projects of Laputa.' [2]

As Pope's statement is confirmed by internal evidence, and is inherently probable, it may be accepted in an inquiry into the composition of the *Travels*, and parts of the First and Third Voyages may be assigned to the year 1714. At that date, as Swift's correspondence shows, Swift and a circle of his friends were engaged upon the *Memoirs*.[3] Swift's return to Ireland and the political revolution which followed Queen Anne's death (August 1, 1714) broke up the circle, and it was not till 1741 that the *Memoirs of Scriblerus* were printed. In the meantime Swift's intended contribution to the joint work had been transformed into the Travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver.

The development was a slow process. After the revolution of 1714 Swift had no heart to continue his story. 'I must be a little easy in my mind before I think of Scriblerus', he wrote on June 28, 1715. 'You know how well I loved both Lord Oxford and Bolingbroke, and how dear the Duke of Ormond is to me. Do you imagine I can be easy while their enemies are trying to take off their heads? . . . Truly I must be a little easy in my mind before I can think of Scriblerus.' [4]

Five or six years later he had regained his ease of mind, and he began to write again. He took up his pen in defence of Ireland,

[1] *Works*, edited by Temple Scott, ix. 81, 101, 110; cf. also 271 and v. 297.

[2] Spence, *Conversations*, ed. Singer, 1820, p. 10.

[3] *Correspondence*, ii. 144, 155, 158, 162, 186, 288, 416. [4] Ibid. ii. 286, 288.

writing about May 1720 his *Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture.* He took out of his desk his half-finished contribution to the *Memoirs of Scriblerus,* and converted it into the *Voyages of Captain Gulliver.* In a letter written to Charles Ford and dated April 15, 1721, he says, 'I am now writing a History of my Travels, which will be a large volume, and gives account of countries hitherto unknown; but they go on slowly for want of health and humor.'[1] Three years later the *Travels* were nearly completed. 'I have left the Country of Horses,' he told Ford on January 19, 1724, 'and am in the Flying Island, where I shall not stay long, and my two last journeys will be soon over.' He was able to tell his friend on August 14, 1725: 'I have finished my *Travels,* and I am now transcribing them; they are admirable things, and will wonderfully mend the world.' On September 29 in the same year he told Pope: 'I have employed my time in finishing, correcting, amending, and transcribing my *Travels* in four parts complete, newly augmented, and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears.'[2] This reference to the printer's ears is an acknowledgement that the book contained political allusions which might bring the publisher to the pillory, and draw upon him the fate which befell Defoe.

Political allusions abound in the *Travels.* Some are to the events of the end of Queen Anne's reign, others to events in the reign of George I. Naturally those events which happened during the five years in which the *Travels* were completed left most traces on the work. In England at the beginning of the period there was the South Sea Bubble (1720), which was followed by the return of Walpole to office (1721) and by the return of Bolingbroke from exile (1723), by the ejection of Carteret from the English cabinet (1724), and by the supremacy of Walpole in it (1725). In Ireland during the same period the struggle over Wood's patent began and ended (1722–5).

These references to public events and public personages are most frequent in the First and Third Voyages. Each of these Voyages consists of a part which was written about 1714, as Pope's statement proves, and internal evidence confirms. Each of these Voyages also contains other parts written later, as Swift's letters indicate, and the contents of the additions show. Moreover, there are signs in the

[1] For these extracts from Swift's letters to Ford I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. D. Nichol Smith, who is now editing them for the Clarendon Press.

[2] *Correspondence,* iii. 276.

text itself, such as repetitions, explanations, and alterations, which show where the matter was added.

Let us begin by examining the Voyage to Lilliput. The first part of it, which contains the story of Gulliver's shipwreck, and of his early adventures among the pigmies, has no political significance. It is simply what Shakespeare terms 'very gracious fooling'. This no doubt represents the part written in 1714. On the other hand, the account of the laws and customs of Lilliput contained in Chapter VI was probably written later. It seems to be an afterthought, because in Chapter IV Gulliver had announced that he proposed to reserve 'for a greater work' the very subjects treated of in Chapter VI.[1] There is also a distinct change of tone; a serious didactic purpose becomes apparent. The institutions of Lilliput are described for the instruction of Swift's fellow countrymen, just as Sir Thomas More described the institutions of Utopia. 'There are some laws and customs in this empire very peculiar,' says Gulliver: 'and if they were not so directly contrary to those of my own dear country, I should be tempted to say a little in their justification.'[2] Thus he directs the attention of his readers to the impunity of certain crimes in England and the shortcomings of English education.

By a curious contradiction, as soon as Swift turns to describe the politics of Lilliput it ceases to be Utopia and becomes England itself, instead of being an example to England. 'We labour', says Gulliver's informant, 'under two mighty evils: a violent faction at home and the danger of an invasion by a most potent enemy from abroad.'[3]

In Lilliput there are two struggling parties called 'Tramecksan and Slamecksan, from the high and low heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves.'[3] These typify the High Church and Low Church parties, or the Tories and Whigs. The potent enemy abroad is the island of Blefuscu, which typifies France, engaged in an obstinate struggle with its neighbour for a whole generation. The conversion of Lilliput into England marks the change of plan made by Swift when he took up the half-finished story of the First Voyage again, about 1720, and turned his story into a political allegory. This change involved other changes. The majestic Emperor of Lilliput of the second chapter, with his 'Austrian lip and arched nose',[4] was a purely conventional monarch, not representing George I or any other real king. It was now necessary to convert this per-

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 48, 59. The edition referred to throughout this paper is that edited by Mr. G. R. Dennis in 1899, forming volume viii of the *Prose Works of Swift*, edited by Temple Scott.

[2] Ibid., p. 59.

[3] Ibid., p. 48.

[4] Ibid., p. 29.

change into George I, which was effected by making him a Whig 'determined to make use of only Low Heels in the administration of the government', and wearing himself heels lower than any of his court. The parallel was emphasized by making the heir to the throne show an inclination to the High Heels, as the Prince of Wales did to the Tories.[1] Finally Swift inserted an ironical passage on the lenity and mercy of the King, intended to call to the minds of his readers the executions which had taken place after the rebellion in 1715, and the encomiums on the King's mercy which the Government had published at the time.[2]

The King was not the only personage who underwent a sort of transformation when Swift took his half-told story in hand again. Gulliver is changed too. At first Gulliver to a certain extent represented Swift himself—that is, certain incidents in Gulliver's adventures were an allegorical representation of certain incidents in Swift's life. Editors of *Gulliver's Travels* rightly agree in their interpretation of the story of Gulliver's extinction of the fire in the palace at Lilliput, and of the resentment of the Empress in consequence. Sir Walter Scott says: 'It is perhaps a strained interpretation of this incident to suppose that our author recollected the prejudices of Queen Anne against the indecency and immorality of his own satirical vein, though it was so serviceable to the cause of her ministry.'[3] Mr. Dennis says: 'Queen Anne was so much disgusted with the *Tale of a Tub* that in spite of Swift's political services she could never be induced to give him preferment in the Church.'[4] J. F. Waller and W. C. Taylor, in their editions of *Gulliver*, interpret the incident in a similar fashion. It is not an unreasonable interpretation, for it is clear that Swift's satirical writings stood in the way of his promotion. He failed to obtain the Irish bishopric which he hoped to get in 1708,[5] and it was with great difficulty that he obtained a deanery in 1713.[6]

The tradition is that the first failure was due to the influence of Dr. Sharp, the Archbishop of York, who showed the Queen the *Tale of a Tub*.[7] The second, it is alleged, was due to the influence of the Duchess of Somerset, incensed by Swift's *Windsor Prophecy*, written in December 1711.[8] Swift believed that this was the case, and in

[1] Ibid., pp. 48–9. [2] Ibid., p. 74. [3] *Works*, ed. 1824, xi. 74.

[4] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 57. [5] Craik, *Life of Swift*, 1882, pp. 145, 183.

[6] Craik, p. 259; *Correspondence*, ii. 22.

[7] Craik, p. 114; *Correspondence*, i. 73, 152, ii. 212; Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, ed. Hill, iii. 10, 68.

[8] *Poems*, ed. W. E. Browning, 1910, ii. 150; Orrery's *Remarks*, 48; *Correspondence*, ii. 212; *Works*, v. 463.

the lines entitled 'The Author on Himself', written in 1714, he mentioned both causes, and spoke of Queen Anne as 'a royal prude', whose opposition to his preferment was due to the efforts of his enemies. In that poem he names firstly the Duchess of Somerset and the Archbishop of York, and secondly the Earl of Nottingham and Robert Walpole as the enemies in question.

In *Gulliver's Travels* the captain's chief enemy is a certain lord named Bolgolam, who was pleased, says Gulliver, 'without provocation to be my mortal enemy. . . . That minister was Galbet, or Admiral of the Realm, very much in his master's confidence, and a person well versed in affairs, but of a morose and sour complexion.' He is referred to later as Gulliver's 'mortal enemy', and his 'malice' is mentioned and insisted upon.[1]

This person is clearly intended to represent the Earl of Nottingham. The 'morose and sour complexion' attributed to Bolgolam at once suggests the identification. In one of his pamphlets Swift says that Nottingham's 'adust complexion disposeth him to rigour and severity', and time after time he refers to him by his nickname of 'Dismal'. 'Dismal, so men call him from his looks', explains Swift to Stella.[2] The earl had long been Swift's personal enemy. In 1711, when Nottingham joined the Whigs in their attack on the foreign policy of the Government, Swift wrote two ballads against him, 'An Orator Dismal from Nottinghamshire' and 'Toland's Invitation to Dismal'.[3] Nottingham retaliated by using whatever private influence he possessed at court to stop Swift's preferment, and finally by an open and bitter attack upon him in Parliament. On June 1, 1714, when the Schism Act was debated in the House of Lords, Nottingham opposed the bill, saying that it was dangerous because it gave too much power to the bishops, 'though now they had the happiness of having so worthy bishops, yet it possibly might happen that a person who wrote lewdly, nay, even atheistically, might by having a false undeserved character given him be promoted to a bishopric by her Majesty.'[4] Another version makes Nottingham say: 'I own I tremble when I think that a certain divine who is hardly suspected of being a Christian, is in a fair way of being a Bishop.'[5] More than any other statesman of the period, he might be described with justice as Swift's 'mortal enemy'. On the other hand, it is more difficult to explain why Nottingham should be designated 'High Admiral'. There was no Lord High Admiral in England after 1709.

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 43, 69, 72, 73.
[2] *Works*, ii. 294; x. 29.
[3] *Poems*, ii. 148, 156.
[4] *Wentworth Papers*, p. 385.
[5] Mahon, *History of England*, i. 82.

and the different noblemen who held the post of First Lord of the Admiralty between 1709 and 1726 were none of them enemies of Swift. One reason for the designation can be suggested. Nottingham had been First Lord from February 1680 to May 1684, and ever afterwards 'piqued himself upon understanding sea affairs'. In William III's reign, when he was Secretary of State, he was continually interfering in the management of the fleet. 'All men', says Lord Dartmouth, 'that had been bred to that profession unanimously agreed that he was totally ignorant in their science, and were highly provoked when he pretended to contradict or give them directions.'[1] To term Nottingham 'High Admiral' may be an ironical reference to this notorious foible.

Nottingham was President of the Council in the first Ministry of George I, and held that post till February 29, 1716, when he was dismissed because he pressed for the pardon of the leaders of the late rebellion.[2] This attack upon him under the character of Bolgolam must have been written in the summer of 1714, when his offences against Swift were fresh and Swift's anger against him was hot. The prose character is the counterpart of the verses entitled 'The Author on Himself', which belong to the same summer. It is not likely that it was written after 1716, when Nottingham's clemency had led to his fall from office.

When Swift, in 1719 or 1720, took up his unfinished story again, and converted it into a political allegory, he changed his plan, developed, as we have seen, the character of the Emperor, and shadowed forth under the misfortunes of Gulliver the fate of Bolingbroke. That statesman must have been much in Swift's mind about that time. He had resumed his correspondence with his exiled friend in February 1719, at which time there was some prospect of Bolingbroke's pardon and his return to England, though the hope was not realized till 1723. During that period several long letters passed between them. It was towards the end of 1721 that Swift seems to have mentioned his *Travels* to Bolingbroke. 'I long to see your *Travels*', wrote the latter, answering on January 1, 1722, a letter from Swift dated September 29, 1721.[3]

The parallel between the fate of Bolingbroke and that of Gulliver was very close. Like Gulliver, Bolingbroke had brought a great war to an end and concluded a peace 'upon conditions very advantageous' to his country, but was denounced by his political opponents

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, ii. 95, ed. 1833.

[2] Torrens, *History of Cabinets*, 1894, i. 116–18; Tindal, iv. 487.

[3] *Correspondence*, iii. 24–32, 40, 88, 109, 170.

for not prosecuting the war to the complete subjugation of the enemy. He was accused of treasonable intercourse with the ambassadors of France, as Gulliver was with those of Blefuscu. Gulliver fled from Lilliput because he felt that he could not obtain a fair trial, 'having in my life', says he, 'perused many state trials, which I ever observed to terminate as the judges thought fit to direct,' and because he knew that powerful enemies sought his life. Bolingbroke declared that he fled from England because 'I had certain and repeated information from some who are in the secret of affairs, that a resolution was taken by those who have power to execute it to pursue me to the scaffold. My blood was to have been the cement of a new alliance; nor could my innocence be any security, after it had once been demanded from abroad, and resolved on at home, that it was necessary to cut me off.'[1]

Bolingbroke was pardoned in May 1723, and returned from exile in July 1723. In April 1725 he was restored to his ancestral estates, but remained excluded from the House of Lords because Walpole refused to agree to his complete restoration. The enmity between the two, which was concealed between 1723 and 1725, when Bolingbroke was hoping to obtain full restitution, and endeavouring to earn it by services to the Government, broke out once more about 1725, when he found his hopes were vain.[2]

One result of the transformation of Gulliver into Bolingbroke was the development of the character of Flimnap, who was obviously designed to represent Walpole, as all commentators agree. The Flimnap of the first version of the Voyage to Lilliput was a somewhat colourless character, secretly hostile to Gulliver because the prodigious appetite of the monster made him a burden to the treasury, but not his mortal enemy as Bolgolam was. At the end of Queen Anne's reign Walpole was not a personage of the first rank in English politics; in 1721 he became one of the most powerful members of the Government, and by 1726 he was practically Prime Minister. Hence three or four additional touches were added to give Flimnap additional importance, and to bring out the resemblance to Walpole.

Candidates for great employments in Lilliput competed for them by dancing on a rope for the entertainment of the Emperor. 'Flimnap, the Treasurer,' says Gulliver, 'is allowed to cut a caper on the straight rope at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole empire.' This symbolizes Walpole's dexterity in parliamentary tactics and

[1] Sichel, *Life of Bolingbroke*, 1901, i. 523.

[2] Ibid. ii. 110, 155, 173, 191, 208–10, 258; *D.N.B.* l. 138. Bolingbroke before exile, Torrens, i. 56, 62, 92, 97, 101, 141; return, 317, 326, 349.

political intrigues. 'The King's cushion', which broke Flimnap's fall when he leaped too high, and saved him from breaking his neck, is agreed to symbolize the Duchess of Kendal, one of the King's mistresses, by whose influence Walpole, after his fall from power in 1717, was again restored to favour.[1]

Another passage in the text must have been added just before the publication of the *Travels*. It is the account of the silken threads, green, red, and blue, given to the courtiers who showed most agility in leaping over or creeping under a stick.[2] The green thread typifies the order of the Thistle, revived by Queen Anne in 1703. The red typifies the order of the Bath, revived by George I in May 1725. Its revival, according to Horace Walpole, was due to Sir Robert 'and was an artful bank of thirty-six ribands to supply a fund of favours in lieu of places'. The blue thread typifies the order of the Garter, which was bestowed on Sir Robert himself in May 1726, after which he was known to satirists by the title of Sir Blue-String. Swift's verses on the revival of the order of the Bath explain the meaning of his prose.[3]

A third passage is more difficult to explain. It is the account of Flimnap's jealousy of his wife, who was reported to have conceived a violent affection for Gulliver, and the story is introduced to explain the Treasurer's enmity to Gulliver. This may be an ironical hit at Walpole, whose first wife, Catherine Shorter, was not above suspicion, while Walpole's indifference to her levities was notorious. Pope hints at it when he calls Walpole 'a tyrant to his wife'.[4]

Another explanation is that the episode is a reference to Bolingbroke's attempt to win the favour of the Duchess of Kendal, hitherto Walpole's firmest ally, in order to utilize her influence with George I to Walpole's detriment. Sir Robert, who was aware of the intrigue, 'bestowed some fitting language on her Grace, and said she would at any time have sold her influence with the King for a shilling advance to the best bidder.' Bolingbroke, according to Walpole, had paid her £11,000 for her support, and she was entirely in his interest.[5]

Besides Flimnap, another minister of the Lilliputian court is mentioned. Gulliver says: 'My friend Reldresal, Principal Secretary for Private Affairs, is in my opinion, if I am not partial, the second after the Treasurer.' Reldresal was the lord who explained to Gulliver the

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 39. [2] Ibid., p. 40.
[3] *Poems*, ii. 203; H. Walpole, *Letters*, ed. 1877, I. cxiv.
[4] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 66; Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, iii. 481.
[5] Torrens, i. 348, 358; Sichel, ii. 190, 208, 266.

intricacies of Lilliputian politics and proved himself throughout his true friend.[1] Commentators have not identified him, but it is clear that the person meant is Lord Carteret. He was Secretary of State from March 5, 1721, to April 14, 1724, and stood so high in the King's favour that he might fairly be described as the second man in the Government at that time. 'Principal Secretary of State' or one of our 'Principal Secretaries of State' was Carteret's official title. As the two Secretaries of State who then existed divided the conduct of foreign affairs between them, and the care of home affairs was the common function of both of them, there was strictly no 'Principal Secretary for Private Affairs' at the time. The choice lies between Carteret and his colleague Townshend; as Carteret was Swift's friend he must be the person meant. In April 1724 Walpole got rid of Carteret by making him Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In that capacity Carteret was obliged to issue a proclamation (October 27, 1724) offering a reward of £300 for the discovery of the author of the *Drapier's Letter to the People of Ireland*, just as Reldresal was obliged to suggest a method of punishing his friend Gulliver.[2]

The Second Voyage, the Voyage to Brobdingnag, requires less commentary. It was written at one time and is all of a piece. There are no references to persons which require explaining, and the allusions to contemporary politics are only general. Some of the institutions and customs of Brobdingnag are briefly described and praised; for instance, the brevity of the laws, the cultivation of useful knowledge rather than speculative philosophy or abstract sciences, and the simplicity of the literary style in fashion. The method adopted throughout is not to hold up ideal institutions for imitation as in the case of Lilliput, but to describe existing institutions so as to show their defects. In five interviews Gulliver explains to the King the constitution and government of England, and then the King, by astute 'doubts, queries, and objections', forces him to reveal the difference between the practice and the theory of the institutions described. Gulliver has to admit that the working of the parliamentary government is vitiated by the method of selecting peers, bishops, and members of the House of Commons, so that, as the King points out, the original idea of the institution is 'blurred and blotted by corruptions'.[3]

The comments of the King of Brobdingnag express on many questions the political views of Swift's party. He was amazed, says Gulliver, 'to hear me talk of a mercenary army in the midst of peace

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 39, 71.
[2] *Works*, vi. 109, 235.
[3] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 135–6.

and among a free people.' Every year, over the Mutiny Act or the Estimates, the House of Commons resounded with denunciations of standing armies, and Chesterfield recommended the question to his son as the best subject for a young member's maiden speech. In the same way the King of Brobdingnag echoed the criticisms of the Tories on the financial system, and their alarm at the existence of the National Debt.[1]

On most questions, however, the King is the mouthpiece of Swift, not merely that of the Tory party, and the opinions he expresses are those Swift had already set forth in his pamphlets. Swift's condemnation of gaming, Swift's complaint of the neglected education of the upper classes, Swift's theory of the best way of treating Dissenters and his rooted animosity to lawyers, lose nothing in vigour in issuing from the King's lips. 'I shall never forget', says Swift at the close of the *Drapier's Letters*, 'what I once ventured to say to a great man in England: "that few politicians, with all their schemes, are half so useful members of a commonwealth, as an honest farmer, who by skilful draining, fencing, manuring, and planting hath increased the intrinsic value of a piece of land, and thereby done a perpetual service to his country"; which it is a great controversy whether any of the former ever did, since the creation of the world.'[2] The King of Brobdingnag puts this in a more epigrammatic form. 'He gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.'[3]

In this way the specific reference to Ireland in the *Drapier's Letters* is made a general maxim in *Gulliver's Travels*, but at the back of Swift's mind there is always the thought of Ireland. In a letter written in 1732 he makes his meaning still clearer. 'There is not an acre of land in Ireland turned to half its advantage, yet it is better improved than the people; and all these evils are effects of English tyranny, so your sons and grandchildren will find it to their sorrow.'[4]

There is another passage in the Second Voyage suggested by Irish conditions, and that is an incident in Gulliver's visit to the capital of Brobdingnag. As the carriage in which he and his nurse were conveyed stopped at a shop 'the beggars watching their opportunity crowded to the sides of the coach and gave me the most horrible

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 134. The views expressed by the King refute Sir Walter Scott's opinion (*Swift*, xi. 8), that the monarch was perhaps drawn from William III.

[2] *Works*, vi. 202. [3] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 140. [4] *Correspondence*, iv. 312.

spectacle that ever an European eye beheld.'[1] He describes with horrid minuteness the exhibition of their sores, and there can be no doubt that the description was inspired by the beggars of Dublin, on whom he has much to say in his pamphlets and sermons.

These passages show that while Swift was entirely wrapt up in English politics when he wrote the First Voyage, Irish social conditions were beginning to occupy his thoughts when the Second was written.

The Fourth Voyage—the Voyage to the island of the horses—seems from Swift's letter of January 19, 1724, to have been written immediately after the second. In it Swift adopts once more the method employed in the Voyage to Brobdingnag.

The traveller describes the institutions and manners of his native country for the information of his temporary master, and his master judges them with all the freedom of a superior being. Once more Swift's views on the education of noblemen, and the education of women, and on the iniquities of lawyers, are restated. Once more militarism is denounced. A soldier is defined as 'a Yahoo hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species who have never offended him as possibly he can.'[2] But the attack on standing armies of the Second Voyage becomes now an attack on war in general, somewhat resembling a passage in the *Tale of a Tub*, written five-and-twenty years earlier. This tendency to generalize and to deal with abstract principles, rather than particular manifestations of them, is noticeable in the Fourth Voyage. In the Voyage to Lilliput, Swift had personally satirized Walpole as chief minister. In the Fourth Voyage he attacks the institution of a chief minister of state, describing not simply Walpole but a typical minister compounded out of many examples living and dead. Swift is no longer content with condemning the faults of English society: he assails the foundations of the social system, capital, trade, and private property, exalting the natural life at the expense of civilization, and horses at the expense of men.

Even the most devoted admirers of Swift are shocked. Scott calls the Fourth Voyage 'the basest and most unworthy part of the work.'[3] . . . 'The satire', declares Mr. Dennis, 'is here turned against human nature, and in his morbid effort to degrade man below the level of the brute, Swift has violated every law of probability and outraged every canon of propriety.'[4] 'It is painful and repulsive', complains Stephen. 'Swift tears aside the veil of decency to show the bestial element in human nature. . . . The Yahoo is the embodiment of the bestial

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 115.
[2] Ibid., p. 255.
[3] *Swift's Works*, ed. 1824, xi. 11.
[4] Preface to *Gulliver's Travels*, p. xxiv.

element in man, and Swift in his wrath takes the bestial for the predominating element.'[1]

But was it simply blind wrath against the human race which inspired Swift? Isolated expressions lend some colour to the theory. 'Expect no more from man than such an animal is capable of producing,' wrote Swift to Sheridan, 'and you will every day find my description of Yahoos more resembling';[2] and again: 'I hate and detest that animal called man, though I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth.'[3] 'I tell you after all that I do not hate mankind: it is you others who hate them because you would have them reasonable animals, and are angry for being disappointed. I have always rejected that definition, and made another of my own.' His definition of man was not *animal rationale* but *animal rationis capax*.[4]

Even among the Yahoos Gulliver distinguishes two kinds. There are Yahoos of his native land and the Yahoos indigenous to the island in which he finds himself. The English Yahoos, like himself, are a superior breed: it is admitted that they have appearances or glimmerings of reason; perhaps it is not real reason but only some quality like it; it may be they have some small pittance of reason. These are the conclusions of Gulliver's master.

On the other hand, the Yahoos indigenous to the island are a brutal and degenerate race. But they are, as Gulliver has to admit, of the same race as the English Yahoos. With horror and astonishment not to be described, he observed in this abominable animal a perfect human figure: 'the face of it indeed was flat and broad, the nose depressed, the lips large, and the mouth wide. But these differences are common to all savage nations.'[5] The 'degenerate and brutal nature' of the Yahoos was in part explained by their past history. Once they were free, but when they were free they were harmful, and infested the whole country. So after 'a general hunting' the old ones were destroyed, and the young ones 'brought to such a degree of tameness, as an animal so savage by nature can be capable of acquiring; using them for draught and carriage'. Nothing more could be done with them, because they were 'the most unteachable of all animals, their capacity never reaching higher than to draw or carry burdens'. Their untractableness came from perversity of nature. They were 'cunning, malicious, treacherous, and revengeful', mischievous and destructive to cattle and crops; ravenous and averse to

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Swift*, p. 181.
[2] *Correspondence*, iii. 267.
[3] Ibid. iii. 277.
[4] Ibid. iii. 277, 293.
[5] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 238.

labour, lived chiefly on roots, and had a 'strange disposition to nastiness and dirt'.

Gulliver's description of the Yahoos recalls the description given by Swift, in prose pamphlets written about the same time, of the people whom he terms 'the savage old Irish'.[1] By several conquests and long subjection, the old Irish had been reduced to be 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'.[2] They are 'poor wretches', says Swift, 'who think themselves blessed, if they can obtain a hut worse than the squire's dog-kennel, and an acre of ground for a potato plantation, on condition of being as very slaves as any in America'.[3] 'Wretches forced to pay for a filthy cabin and two ridges of potatoes treble the worth; brought up to steal or beg for want of work; to whom death would be the best thing to be wished for, both on account of themselves and the public.'[4] They were vicious as well as wretched. 'The poorer sort of our natives', says Swift, 'in all parts of this Kingdom where the Irish do abound, . . . live in the utmost ignorance, barbarity, and poverty, giving themselves wholly up to idleness, nastiness, and thievery.'[5] Can nothing be done, he asks, 'to reduce this uncultivated people from that idle, savage, beastly, thievish manner of life, in which they continue sunk to a degree, that it is almost impossible for a country gentleman to find a servant of human capacity, or the least tincture of natural honesty; or who does not live among his own tenants in perpetual fear of having his plantations destroyed, his cattle stolen, and his goods pilfered'.[6]

In short, the 'savage old Irish' who made up 'the poorer sort of our natives', were not only in a position similar to that of the Yahoos, but there was also a certain similarity in their natures. If nothing was done to stop the process of degeneration, they would become complete brutes, as the Yahoos were already. They were, so to speak, Yahoos in the making.

The Yahoos, on the other hand, were not capable of any amelioration or improvement; they had sunk so far that they could not be raised again in the scale of being. To put an end to the whole species as humanely as possible, and to replace them as beasts of burden by asses, which were 'in all respects more valuable brutes' would be the wisest course.[7] This idea was no doubt suggested by the fact that the ass, recently introduced into Ireland, was beginning to become common in the country when Swift wrote.[8]

[1] *Correspondence*, v. 32.
[2] *Works*, iv. 17, 41.
[3] Ibid. vii. 164.
[4] Ibid. vii. 71; cf. vii. 212.
[5] Ibid. vi. 199.
[6] Ibid. vii. 133; cf. iv. 216.
[7] Ibid., pp. 283-4.
[8] See Dr. Mahaffy's paper, 'On the Introduction of the Ass as a Beast of

Swift's 'Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor People from being a burthen to their Parents or Country, and for making them beneficial to the Public', published in 1729, three years after *Gulliver's Travels*, is a parallel to the proposal for the painless extinction of the Yahoos. The wisest thing, he practically says, would be to treat the 'savage old Irish' and the 'natives of the poorer sort' like beasts, unless you are prepared to do something to relieve their misery and remove its causes. The difference between them and the Yahoos was that their lot could be ameliorated; however low they had sunk they could be raised in the scale. 'Those people may be brought to a less savage manner of life', says Swift; 'by proper measures it would be possible to civilize the most barbarous among them, reconcile them to our customs and manner of living, and reduce a great number to the national religion.'[1] Begin, he urged, by educating the young, and teaching them English: the Irish are not unteachable. 'Supposing the size of a native's understanding just equal to a dog or a horse, I have often seen those two animals to be civilized by rewards at least as much as by punishment.'[2] In a letter written some years later he declared that the English ought to be 'ashamed of the reproaches they cast on the ignorance, the dulness, and the want of courage, in the Irish natives; those defects, wherever they happen, arising only from the poverty and slavery they suffer from their inhuman neighbours, and the base corrupt spirits of too many of the chief gentry, &c. I do assert that from several experiments I have made in travelling over both Kingdoms, I have found the poor cottagers here, who could speak our language, to have a much better natural taste for good sense, humour, and raillery, than ever I observed among people of the like sort in England. But the millions of oppressions they lie under, the tyranny of their landlords, the ridiculous zeal of their priests, and the general misery of the whole nation, have been enough to damp the best spirits under the sun.'[3]

In this passage, Swift's pity for the old Irish seems to be developing into sympathy. But in reality he reserved his sympathy for the new Irish—that is, the English colony in Ireland. The inhabitants of that country were two distinct races, and he was anxious not for their union but for the maintenance of the distinction between them. 'Our neighbours', he complains in the *Drapier's Letters*, 'look upon

Burden into Ireland,' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, March 1917. Other evidence might be added.

[1] *Works*, vii. 133.
[2] Ibid. iv. 214; vi. 199; vii. 133.
[3] To Col. Wogan, Aug. 2, 1732. *Correspondence*, iv. 328.

us as a sort of a savage Irish, whom our ancestors conquered several hundred years ago.' [1] The first grievance of Ireland, he told Walpole, was 'that all persons born in Ireland are called and treated as Irishmen, though their fathers and grandfathers were born in England'. [2] He rebuked Pope as late as 1737 for making this mistake. 'Some of those who highly esteem you, and a few who know you personally, are grieved to find that you make no distinction between the English gentry of this kingdom, and the savage old Irish, who are only the vulgar, and some gentlemen who live in the Irish parts of the kingdom; but the English colonies, who are three parts in four, are much more civilized than many counties in England, and speak better English, and are much better bred.' [3] Swift confessed the place of his birth with regret. 'I happened indeed, by a perfect accident, to be born here . . . and thus I am a Teague, or an Irishman, or what people please.' But whatever other people said, he regarded himself as an English gentleman born in Ireland—the phrase by which he described Molyneux [4]—and wrote the *Drapier's Letters* in defence of the rights of those he called 'the true English people of Ireland'. [5] The Third Part of *Gulliver* is full of allusions to that famous controversy.

The Third Voyage is admittedly the part of *Gulliver's Travels* 'in which the world took the least pleasure'. Contemporary critics and later critics agreed in this verdict. 'Dr. Arbuthnot likes the projectors least, others you tell me the flying island', wrote Swift to Pope. Swift's friend Erasmus Lewis grumbled, and said he wanted a key to it. [6] One reason why the Third Voyage was less popular with readers was that it was more complicated and more difficult to understand than the rest. Its plot was less simple. It was not a voyage to a single island, but to a group of islands. Captain Gulliver sails from island to island as Lucian's heroes do in his *True History*, or as Pantagruel and his companions do in Rabelais. It consists of four different stories loosely held together by a framework of personal narrative. One part is the story of the Flying Island; another that of the Academy of Projectors, a satire against science and philosophy; a third part is a satire against literary critics and historians; a fourth a satire against too much love of living. These different sections were written at different times and patched together later. We know from Pope's statement to Spence, that the story of 'the projects of Laputa' was to be inserted in the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*, and must therefore have been written about 1714. Internal evidence confirms Pope's statement; for instance, there is

[1] *Works*, vi. 116. [2] *Correspondence*, vi. 309. [3] Ibid. vi. 32.
[4] *Works*, vi. 115. [5] Ibid. vi. 119. [6] *Correspondence*, iii. 357, 368.

a direct reference to a celebrated divorce case which occurred in 1713.[1]

We know that the story of the Flying Island was written later. 'I am in the Flying Island where I shall not stay long', wrote Swift to Ford in January 1724, but judging once more from the references to contemporary events which it contains, the final touches were not added till 1725. Swift's own words show that the Third Voyage possessed some political meaning, and that the world had not perceived it. In the lines on his own death, written in November 1731, he refers to himself as the author of

> Libels yet concealed from sight
> Against the court to show his spite;
> Perhaps his *Travels* part the third,
> A lie at every second word,
> Offensive to a loyal ear.[2]

The libel was an allegory about the relations between Ireland and England concealed in the story of the islands of Laputa and Balnibarbi. The Flying or Floating Island represented England. The application of that title to England was suggested by Sir William Temple. In his *Memoirs*, speaking of England's foreign policy during Charles II's reign, Temple says: 'Our counsels and conduct were like those of a floating island, driven one way or 'tother, according to the winds and tides.' Again, in one of his *Essays*, speaking of the fatal effects of faction, Temple terms England 'this floating island'.[3]

This Floating or Flying Island hovers over the subject land or continent of Balnibarbi, and 'from the great advantage of such a superior situation' easily keeps it in a state of subjection. If any part of the subject land rebels, the King has two methods of reducing it to obedience. 'The first and mildest course is by keeping the island hovering over such a town, and the lands about it, whereby he can deprive them of the benefit of the sun and the rain, and consequently afflict the inhabitants with dearth and diseases.'[4]

This was the result produced by the laws in restraint of trade which England had enacted to keep Ireland in subjection. 'We are strangely limited', complains Swift in the *Drapier's Letters*, 'in every branch of trade that can be of advantage to us, and utterly deprived of those that are of the greatest importance. . . . For we are denied the benefits that God and nature intended to us; as manifestly appears by our happy situation for commerce, and the great number of our excellent ports.' In one of his pamphlets he contrasts the

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 171.
[2] *Poems*, ed. W. E. Browning, i. 262.
[3] Temple's *Works*, ed. 1754, i. 374; ii. 375.
[4] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 174.

unhappy lot of Ireland with that of England, 'which is left at liberty to enjoy the benefits of nature, and to make the best of those advantages which God hath given it in soil, climate, and situation.'[1] These 'benefits of nature' in general are typified by the 'benefit of the sun and rain' in the passage in the *Travels.*

Other pamphlets of Swift dwell on the decay of Dublin and the decadence of Irish agriculture. In that 'beggarly city', wrote Swift in 1724, fifteen hundred of the houses, being a seventh part of the whole city, were left uninhabited and falling to ruin. In Ireland at large land was going out of cultivation, owing to the transformation of tillage into pasture: landlords were prohibiting their tenants from ploughing, 'one effect of which is already seen in the prodigious dearness of corn, and the importation of it from London as the cheaper market.'[2] Both these features of the economic condition of the country are reproduced in Gulliver's account of the state of Balnibarbi and its capital Lagado. In Lagado most of the houses are out of repair and the people in the streets generally in rags. In the country outside it labourers were working on the ground, but there was no sign either of corn or grass, though the soil appeared to be excellent. 'I never knew', sums up Gulliver, 'a soil so unhappily cultivated, houses so ill contrived or so ruinous, or a people whose countenances and habit expressed so much misery and want.'[3]

All the economic evils of Ireland were increased by the fact that owing to absentee landlords, English placeholders, and the forced consumption of English manufactured goods, half the rents and profits of the whole kingdom were spent in England. Poor to begin with, Ireland was drained by England of what little wealth it possessed. It is for that reason that Swift baptized England by the significant name of Laputa. He solemnly describes the etymology and meaning of the word at the beginning of his account of the island, and offers a derivation which was no doubt intended to ridicule the philologists of the period.[4] But the name is simply two Spanish words meaning 'the harlot', a comparison suggested by Swift because, as a proverb in his Spanish Dictionary says, a lady of that kind 'leaves the purse empty'.[5] In one of his poems he calls England 'yon ravenous isle'.[6]

Some lighter touches he also added to suggest the identification of Laputa with England. One of the distinguishing characteristics of its people was the 'strong disposition' Gulliver observed in them

[1] *Works*, vi. 201; vii. 115. [2] Ibid. vii. 17, 69.
[3] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 182. [4] Ibid., p. 166.
[5] Captain John Stevens, *Spanish and English Dictionary*, 1706.
[6] *Verses on the sudden Drying up of St. Patrick's Well*, 1726.

'towards news and politics, perpetually enquiring into public affairs, giving their judgments in matters of state, and passionately disputing every inch of a party opinion.'[1] This was one of the characteristics Swift had remarked in the English. 'The rabble here', he wrote from London in 1710, 'are much more inquisitive in politics than in Ireland. . . . I never saw so great a ferment among all sorts of people.' In one of his essays he observes that there was in England 'a pragmatical disposition to politics in the very nature and genius of the people.'[2]

In Laputa Gulliver also observed a remarkable fondness for music. On the second morning after his arrival, about eleven o'clock, 'the King himself in person attended by his nobility, courtiers, and officers, having prepared all their musical instruments, played on them for three hours without intermission, so that I was quite stunned with the noise; neither could I possibly guess the meaning till my tutor informed me. He said that the people of their island had their ears adapted to hear the music of the spheres, which always played at certain periods, and the court was now prepared to bear their part in whatever instrument they most excelled.'[3] Now, at the moment when Swift was writing, operas were all the rage at the English court. The King had pensioned Handel, and a great scheme for producing operas, called the Royal Academy of Music, had been set on foot under his patronage. Rivalries between one singer and another, and disputes about the comparative merits of one composer and another, split society into contending factions. 'The reigning amusement of the town', wrote Gay to Swift on February 3, 1723, 'is entirely music. . . . Everybody is grown as great a judge of music, as they were in your time of poetry, and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another, now daily dispute about the different styles of Handel, Bononcini, and Attilio.'[4]

The Court of Laputa was too much taken up with its amusements to regard what passed below in Balnibarbi. One of the misfortunes from which that country suffered was the promotion of all kinds of schemes by an Academy of Projectors established in it. None of these projects were brought to perfection, and in the meantime the whole country lay miserably waste, the houses in ruins, and the people without food or clothes. Swift uses the words 'projects' and 'projectors' to cover speculative schemes of every kind, not merely mechanical inventions of a pseudo-scientific character. It includes political reforms such as the projected scheme of the Whigs for the

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 168.
[2] *Works*, ii. 8; xi. 180.
[3] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 167.
[4] *Correspondence*, iii. 154.

repeal of the Test Act in order to benefit the Nonconformists of Ulster. It covers the proposal for the establishment of a National Bank in Ireland, agitated in 1720–1. 'That destructive project', he calls it in the *Drapier's Letters*.[1] It also refers to financial jobs such as Wood's patent for providing Ireland with copper coinage. A 'wicked project', Swift calls it; 'an open attempt . . . to destroy all arts and sciences, all trades and manufactures, and the very tillage of the ground, only to enrich one obscure ill-designing projector and his followers.'[2]

The years during which Swift completed *Gulliver's Travels* coincided with the period when Wood's attempt was made and defeated. Wood's patent was sealed on July 12, 1722, and cancelled on August 25, 1725. The votes of the Irish Parliament against the patent were passed in September 1723, and the *Drapier's Letters* appeared in 1724, between April and December. A story in the Voyage to Laputa celebrates Wood's defeat. Chapter III begins with a scientific account of the nature of the flying island, how it was moved, and made to rise and fall, of the substance of which it was composed, and of the thick layer of adamant which formed the under-surface of the island. The last remedy of the King of Laputa against a rebellious district of the continent below, supposing the plan of depriving that district of the benefit of the sun and rain was not effective, was to crush the rebels 'by letting the island drop directly on their heads, which makes a universal destruction both of houses and men.' It was a dangerous remedy, because if the adamantine bottom were to crack or break the whole mass would fall to the ground. Just before Gulliver arrived in Balnibarbi there had been such a rebellion in one part of it, and the inhabitants, 'who had often complained of great oppressions', had 'provided a vast quantity of the most combustible fuel, hoping therewith to burst the adamantine bottom of the island,' if the attempt was made to crush them. In the face of this and other dangers the King of Laputa was obliged to give way, and yielded to the conditions demanded by the rebels.[3]

It appears to me that this story is an allegorical representation of the successful opposition of Ireland to Wood's halfpence.

The 'combustible fuel' represents the resolutions of the Irish Parliament, and Swift's incendiary pamphlets and ballads. In the *Drapier's Letters* he denied that Ireland was what was termed 'a depending kingdom' and told his countrymen that 'by the laws of God, of nature, of nations, and of your own country, you are and ought to be, as free a people as your brethren in England'.[4] The

[1] *Works*, vi. 145.
[2] Ibid. iv. 185, 189.
[3] Ibid., p. 177.
[4] Ibid. vi. 113, 115.

'adamantine bottom' typifies what was called 'the English interest in Ireland', that is, the colony of English descent who formed the foundation on which the rule of England there rested. The governing class in Ireland was divided: some officials and lawyers and bishops supported the English Ministry, but Privy Council and Parliament remonstrated against Wood's scheme, and the Chancellor and the Archbishop of Dublin opposed it. An irresistible attraction drew all sections of the English colony together in opposition to the Government. Archbishop Boulter, the Primate, told the Duke of Newcastle 'that the people of every religion, country, and party here are alike set against Wood's halfpence, and their agreement in this has had a most unhappy influence on the state of the nation, by bringing on intimacies between Papists and Jacobites and the Whigs who before had no correspondence with them'. He doubted whether Protestant justices of the peace would be strict in disarming Papists, and urged the English Government not to 'take any angry steps' against the offending Protestants, because 'no great damage can be done them without sensibly hurting England'.[1] In short, to borrow Swift's figurative phrase, 'the adamantine bottom' was cracked and in danger of falling off.[2]

Perhaps the most significant symptom of the crisis was the opposition of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland to Wood's patent. Alan Brodrick had been Lord Chancellor since 1714, and had been created first Baron and then Viscount Middleton. Three times in succession he had been one of the Lords Justices appointed to fill the place of the absent Viceroy (1717–19), and there was no stronger Whig in Ireland. However, he was honest, conscientious, and independent. Owing to his opposition in the English Parliament to the Peerage Bill he had been omitted from the list of the Lord Justices in 1722. Walpole believed he was the chief cause of the opposition to Wood's patent, and declared in October 1723 that the King was determined to remove him. Grafton, the Lord Lieutenant, denounced him and urged his removal.[3] On the other hand, Middleton strongly repudiated the doctrine of the independency of Ireland asserted in the fourth of the *Drapier's Letters*, and subsequently refused to allow the collected edition to be dedicated to him.[4] His opposition did not go beyond what was decent and legitimate. 'Whatever the event may be,' he wrote to his brother, 'I have the comfort to know that I fall a sacrifice to the opposition I gave to Wood's Halfpence, and I had rather fall for these with

[1] *Letters of Hugh Boulter*, 1770, pp. 7, 8.
[2] *Gulliver's Travels*, p. 177.
[3] Coxe, *Robert Walpole*, ii. 276, 281, 355, 363.
[4] Ibid. 395, 437.

my country.'[1] His brother told him that 'the honest part he had acted in reference to the patent was, he might be assured, a mortal sin, not to be forgiven.' Convinced by too many proofs that he would be removed, he preferred to tender his resignation.[2]

It is probable that the character of Munodi in the fourth chapter of the Voyage to Laputa is intended to suggest Middleton. 'This Lord Munodi', says Gulliver, 'was a person of the first rank, and had been for some years Governor of Lagado; but by a cabal of ministers was discharged for insufficiency.' He was too conservative, 'content to go on in the old forms', for which he was regarded as 'old, wilful, and weak', and unsuccessful projectors 'laid the blame entirely upon him'.[3]

The final touches to the account of Laputa in Chapters III and IV can only have been added when Wood's patent had been cancelled and the surrender of the Government announced (Sept. 1725). It was natural that Swift, while representing under the veil of allegory the story of the struggle, should allude also to the chief opponent of the patent amongst Irish statesmen. But it had to be done in a guarded way; so Swift added, altered, and suppressed a few circumstances in order that the resemblance between the real and the fictitious personage might be perceived, but the identity incapable of proof.

Seeking to explain the hints, parallels, and characters in *Gulliver's Travels*, I have followed Swift's own advice, 'to consult annals and compare dates'. The history of the years 1713–26 gives the events which might be reflected in Swift's romance. The other writings of Swift show which of those events interested him. If at a given time his pamphlets, his sermons, his verses, and his letters are all full of one idea it will not be absent from his mind when he depicts imaginary countries. *Gulliver's Travels* show plainly that when Swift began to write them England and English politics filled his mind, and that when he completed them Ireland and Irish affairs were his absorbing interest. As he passed from one subject to another his tone altered, his satire ceased to be playful and became serious and bitter.

Satire was not to him merely a literary exercise: it was an instrument with which he sought to effect a definite practical end. He had the restless temperament of the reformer. 'My notion is', he wrote, in 1714, 'that if a man cannot mend the public he should mend old shoes, if he can do no better.'[4] He described himself in the *Modest Proposal* as 'wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle,

[1] December 28, 1723.

[2] March 18, 1725, Coxe, ii. 417, 434; Torrens, i. 263, 334.

[3] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 182–4.

[4] *Correspondence*, ii. 265.

visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success'.[1] In *Gulliver's Travels* he denounced projectors, but confessed that he had been himself 'a sort of projector' in his younger days. It was folly, he said now, and of all projectors those were most irrational who proposed schemes for teaching ministers to consult the public good and princes to know their true interest.[2] In his later letters he spoke with some scorn of his own 'foolish zeal in endeavouring to save this wretched island',[3] and disclaimed any right to the title of patriot: 'What I do is owing to perfect rage and resentment, and the mortifying sight of slavery, folly, and baseness.'[4] And again: 'What I did for this country was from a perfect hatred at tyranny and oppression . . . . We are slaves and knaves and fools.'[5] Thus he raged on paper, but in reality he was a charitable and public-spirited misanthropist who, in spite of ingratitude and disappointment,

> Kept the tenor of his mind
> To merit well of human-kind.[6]

[1] *Works*, vii. 215.
[2] *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 185, 195.
[3] *Correspondence*, iv. 331.
[4] Ibid. iv. 34.
[5] Ibid. v. 64.
[6] *Poems*, i. 259.

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