From Englishmen to all People around the World

*Gulliver’s Travels* is a satire written by an English novelist, Jonathan Swift, in 1726. ‘But, my good master Bates dying in two years after, and I having few friends, my business began to fail; for my conscience would not suffer me to imitate the bad practice of too many among my brethren.’¹ I would argue that Swift was not satisfied with the English society at that time, and did not want to do anything he dislike to violate his own consciousness. Thus, in *Gulliver’s Travels*, Swift criticizes not only Englishmen but also all human beings for humanity.

Many critics would argue that Lilliput is the metaphor of England, and Jonathan Swift ridicules England ironically from many perspectives. We can see it clearly from the first action of Lilliputians saw Gulliver, the contract made between Gulliver and Lilliput, a unique selection of officials, and the relations with their enemy, Blefuscu.

When dangers approach, Englishmen preempt their opponents before their enemies make attacks on them. There was a ship wreck and Gulliver was washed ashore to the country of Lilliput. When Gulliver fainted ashore, many Lilliputians immediately tied Gulliver tightly because they were afraid that Gulliver who was bigger than them might pose great threat to them. It implies that Englishmen do so to their enemies without any sympathy when aware of dangers, and all they bear in mind

is to assure their interests and safety no matter how strong or weak their enemies are.

A contract is a sign of democracy, but an ‘unreasonable’ contract breaks the principles extraordinarily. Gulliver made a contract with Lilliputians in order to get some freedom or liberty, but some pacts on the contract are ridiculous and extravagant. At that time, almost all countries around the world want to strengthen their power by occupying colonies, inclusive of England. When they won the war, they could have a good excuse to rule there and make an unreasonable contract to exploit that country. Step by step, the more powerful the ruling countries they were, the weaker colonies were. The most important principle, ‘democracy,’ disappears.

The corruption of Parliament shows that the country, England, becomes rotten little by little. In Lilliput, there is a special means to select officials. The one who jumps highest on the rope without falling down is the winner, and officials also need to show their ability. Indeed, Lilliputians were trained since their youth. That means of selecting officials seems very unbelievable to modern people, and it is the irony of those members of English Parliament then. Swift only represents us a picturesque image of England by a very ridiculous way.

No matter what the end that we break an egg, the way we can reach the final results is good. Due to persecution, Gulliver escaped to Lilliput’s enemy, Blefuscu. Lilliput has a long-running feud with Blefuscu; the circumstance is like England and
France are against each other since hundreds of years ago. Lilliput and Blefuscu are against each other only because an insignificant reason that Blefuscu broke the convention of breaking egg. Critics say, one end of an egg is England, Protestantism, and the other is France, Catholicism; and they have the same yoke which symbolizes the same God.

I would argue that Jonathan Swift wanted to give Englishmen a sharp warning. There was a storm and sailors on the ship *Adventure*, including Gulliver, were forced to find fresh water on an unknown island, Brobdingang. The habitants there are all much bigger than Gulliver; in comparison, Gulliver is like a Lilliputian now. Swift uses this kind of writing skill to make reader indirectly know that Gulliver is Lilliputian and implies England is thus Lilliput implicitly. Englishmen need to be humble and broaden their mind because there are definitely even more powerful countries than England on earth.

‘Horses are more rational than human beings.’ The dominant creature in unknown land is Houyhnhnms which are horses and govern this land. Gulliver gave an account of his country, England, in details, and all Houyhnhnms could not believe that there was a corrupt country and that people are greedy and selfish. The country that Houyhnhnms lives in was a peaceful country, like Utopia. ‘Upon the whole, the behavior of these animals was so orderly and rational, so acute and
judicious, ......”^2 By means of this kind writing skill, Swift shows us that it is ironical that human beings boast they are the best creature in the world. On the other hand, human beings are less reasonable compared to ‘Horses.’

Jonathan Swift implies that all our human beings are ‘Yahoos’ who are inferior to Houyhnhnms, horses. There was another creature is ‘Yahoos’ who were servants of Houyhnhnms and resembled primitives a lot. ‘The beast and I were brought close together; and our countenances diligently compared, both by master and servant, who thereupon repeated several times the word “Yahoo.”’^3 Gulliver was considered as a Yahoo, and also he was one of human beings. Thus, all human beings are ‘Yahoos.’

Jonathan Swift ridicules human beings obscurely. ‘My horror and astonishment are not to be described, when I observed, in this abominable animal, a perfect human figure......’^4 Gulliver considered ‘Yahoo’ as an disgusting creature; in doing so, he also implicitly said that human beings are ‘abominable.’

Later, the assembly of Houyhnhnms thought that Gulliver may pose a threat to their country, so he was asked to leave. From it, we can see that Houyhnhnms did not want to get along with Gulliver, being afraid that bad humanity may destroy their country.

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Horses which mankind looks down upon are described nobler than human beings in

*Gulliver’s Travels.*

Gulliver represents Jonathan Swift, and both of them finally can not accept

‘ugly’ humanity anymore. In the end of this novel, Gulliver was back to England, but he could not adapt to the society anymore. Also, he avoided seeing his wife and children, led a secluded life and everyday talked to horses. ‘At seventy-five, in 1742, Swift was declared insane.’

*If this is still satire, then Swift himself is among the victims, just as he uneasily avoids victimage by dissociating from Gulliver in Gulliver’s Travels.* Because both of them dislike the dark side of humanity of human beings, they isolate themselves into their own world.

From the following quotation, Jonathan Swift summarizes all dark traits of humanity. ‘He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century protesting it was only an heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishment, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, or ambition could produce.’ The world is full of bad humanity, and *Gulliver’s Travels* is a satire to ridicule it.

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Bibliography
