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Chapter wise Summary and critical analysis of *Gulliver's Travels*

Book-III: Chapter 3

Summary

Gulliver's explains in detail how the Flying Island moves from one place to another for its magical capacity to move. The explanation is hard enough to understand only through mere reading. That is why the narrator gives a picture about the principles of the movement of the island. The movement principle is quite simple and is solely based upon magnetic forces in the Flying Island and in the country below (Balnibarbi). These magnetic forces help the island to make a free movement in any direction- up, down, forward, backward, and sideways by means of using the attracting and repelling principles of magnetism. Gulliver also explains how the King uses the Flying as an agent of punishment for those people of Balnibarbi who make any sign of protest against the king. He can easily deprive of sunshine and rain from any region beneath the Flying Island. Or, to curb the protest the king can make a rain of stones from his land. The narrator also tells us that if the people of the lower part of the Flying Island would be more violent in nature the king could theoretically lower the Floating Island directly upon the lower part and smash the land. Though practically it would never be possible for the king because of the formation of the lower part of Laputa. In that case the existence of Laputa would be in threat. Finally, Gulliver passes on through the story of the successful rebellion of the city of Lindalino.

Analysis

Gulliver's description of the movement of the island is a parody of papers often delivered to the Royal Society. Swift is mocking the Society's fondness for concrete, technical language, and their love of mathematical and pseudo-mathematical diagrams through the humourous description of the island. Gulliver's enthusiasm for the astronomical discoveries of the Laputans parodies the enthusiasm of the Royal Society for Halley's and other astronomers' observations of comets. It should be remarked, however, that Swift describes with great accuracy the two satellites of Mars. These satellites were not observed until 1877.

Swift fills his reader's mind full of reminiscences of scientific speculation with the description of the island. Then he proceeds to link these remembrances to political terrorism and tyranny. The King's attack on Balnibarbi, for example,



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and his policies toward Balnibarbi parallel the English crown's policies toward Ireland. Cutting off the rain and the sun refers to the royal policies that cut off Irish trade. The tall rocks in the towns of Balnibarbi seem to represent the Irish peers; the high spires represent Irish bishops, who protested Wood's scheme; and the pillars of stone probably characterize the Irish merchants.

Ireland was a rebel country and Lindalino, no doubt, represents Dublin. The towers Lindalino raised correspond to the grand jury that investigated Swift's *The Drapier's Letters*, the Irish privy council, and the two houses of the Irish parliament. The privy council and the parliament resisted Wood's scheme (that would debase Irish coinage), even at the cost of losing royal bribes. The lodestones installed to catch the island probably represent various quasi-legal organizations of merchants and citizens who opposed Wood's debased coinage. Swift's contemporaries seem to have recognized the many political references because the printers suppressed the Lindalino incident; it did not appear in the *Travels* until the nineteenth century.

Book-III: Chapter 4

Summary

Gulliver's discontent increases day by day due to the strange behaviour and the fashion of Laputa so he decides to come lower part of Laputa and arrives Balnibarbi where he visits Munodi, the erstwhile Governor of the city of Lagado. With the help of Munodi Gulliver becomes able to take a panoramic visit of the island — and a most unusual and grotesque island it proves to be. Except for Munodi's estate, which is flourishing and green, the land is completely eroded and barren. Munodi explains that everything changed after several people visited Laputa. These travellers came back dissatisfied with the way things were and established an "academy of PROJECTORS," the objective of the academy being to change the direction of all "arts, sciences, languages and mechanics" and "to contrive new rules and methods of agriculture and building." But none of their plans ever worked. Now the land is unproductive. Munodi's fields are bountiful because he follows the customs of his ancestors.

Analysis

In Balnibarbi, Swift discredits the kind of intelligence that is interested in the way things work without considering the ends to be attained. Here (and later) he stigmatizes the amoral engineer. All the projects that Gulliver describes are parodies of undertakings seriously advanced by English scientists. To illustrate the sterility of the engineering mentality, Swift has each experimenter reversing



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a natural process. Swift then illustrates the relationship between the engineering intellect (that reverses natural processes) and politics. Munodi, for instance, was a good civil servant who did his job well. He incurred national disgrace, however, when he failed to beat time well during a concert. His crime: He offended an abstraction — music.

Of all the Balnibarbians, Munodi alone is obedient to natural processes. In caring for his estate, he respects and follows the precepts of his ancestors; as a result, his estate flourishes. Those who listen to the "projectors" and the scientific experimentalists cause their land to become barren and desolate.

Book III: Chapter 5

Summary

Gulliver visits the Grand Academy with the person appointed to him by Munodi to observe the multifaced experiments that are being tried out. The aim of these pilot projects is to improve some process, product, or human behaviour for the benevolence of humanity. Gulliver minutely studies several projects in progress — for example, trying to extract sunshine from cucumbers, trying to reduce human excrement to its original food, and making gunpowder from ice etc. In another room, there are language projects, one of which is an endeavour to abolish words altogether from day to day communication. Gulliver feels that none of the projects are yet perfect.

Analysis

In this chapter, Swift expresses a concern about the nature (and worth) of scientific study of undeserving/trifle things. Furthermore, each of the absurd projects that Gulliver reports in this chapter reverses a natural process. All the projects fail, and Swift exposes them as pointless and useless.

The Royal Society is also implicated by Gulliver's reference to the language project. The proposal to substitute objects for words is very much like an actual proposal made by Sprat, the historian of the Society. Sprat wanted the Society's reports to be written in a mathematically plain style — a style that would contain pictures of all the things mentioned; the style, therefore, would have almost as many pictures in it as words.

Book III: Chapter 6

Summary



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Gulliver tells us that the political scientists he visits are quite insane. They have proposed that administrators be chosen for their wisdom, talent, and skill; that ability and virtue be rewarded; and that ministers be chosen for their love of public good. One scientist proposes to improve state business by kicking and pinching ministers so as to make them less forgetful. Another says that he would expose treasonous plots by examining excrement because people are most thoughtful on the toilet. Two measures for raising taxes are also advanced. The first would let one's neighbours decide on one's vices and follies and then set a tax on each offense. The second measure would allow each man to decide how seductive, witty, and valiant he was; and, each woman would decide how beautiful and fashionable she was. Then a tax would be imposed on seductiveness, wit, valour, beauty, and fashion. It is obvious to the Balnibarbian that all the professors are as mad as March hares.

Analysis

Here Swift lets the Balnibarbian condemn certain of their own people. The "insane" political scientists actually outline some of the moral remedies that Swift would recommend. In particular, Swift censures human vanity and malice by means of the methods devised to assess taxes. Swift also relates Balnibarbian politics to English politics. The theory that treason can be discerned by reading signs in excrement finds its English parallel in the trial of Bishop Atterbury for treason. Some of the evidence introduced against the bishop was taken from papers discovered in his bathroom.

Book III: Chapter 7

Summary

Gulliver visits Glubbudrib, an island populated by sorcerers. The governor of the island, who can make people disappear or return from the dead, invites Gulliver to visit with several persons brought back from the dead. Thus Gulliver discovers that Alexander was not poisoned and that Hannibal did not use fire and vinegar to destroy an impassable boulder in the Alps. Caesar and Brutus are evoked, and Caesar confesses that all his glory doesn't equal the glory Brutus gained by murdering him. History, Gulliver considers, is not what it seems.

Analysis

Chapter 7 reads more like a collection of notes for a satire on the study of history than a carefully worked-out attack. While we do not know enough about the manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels* to say for sure, it does appear as though Swift had worked up notes for a satire on learning and history. Then, after



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having dropped the project, he seems to have picked it up again and inserted the notes into the *Travels*. We do know, for instance, that he wrote Book III last. Signs of this book's relatively hasty composition show up especially in his treatment of Gulliver. In this section, Gulliver is less complex than previously. He is not the gullible man who poses uncomfortable questions; rather, he seems to be just a visitor relating information about the curious customs of the natives.

Nevertheless, Book III is central to the *Travels*. In his satire on history and the historians, Swift refutes the claims made by historians and shows that politicians have degenerated, not progressed, when he compares the Roman senate and a modern parliament. Here, also, he demonstrates that reason is not trustworthy enough to supply a foundation for politics or morality. The way has been prepared for Book IV

Book III: Chapter 8

Summary

Gulliver, continuing his interaction with those brought back from the dead, visits with Homer, Aristotle, Descartes (a French philosopher and mathematician), and Gassendi, (a French philosopher and scientist). He also spends several days visiting with Roman emperors and with several rulers whom he terms as "modern dead." He then focuses on modern history and is disappointed to find that these rulers have not been as virtuous as people have been led to believe. Finally, Gulliver asks to visit with some English yeomen; he is astonished to see that they are so sturdy. The race, he fears, has degenerated because of a rich diet and syphilis, and the current generation is as corrupt and degenerate as if they were nobles.

Analysis

Swift has attacked rationalistic and abstract thinking in Laputa and pragmatic and amoral scientific thinking in Balnibarbi. Now he lambastes the so-called humane studies of the Moderns, particularly the historians and philosophers. On the whole, Swift argues, poetry and ancient philosophy are more admirable than other ways of gaining knowledge because they teach morality and decency. Swift pits the ancient authors, like Homer and Aristotle, against their commentators. Most literary commentators and most historians, Swift asserts, distort those they write about. Swift points to Didymus and Eustanthius, ancient scholars who misread and misrepresented Homer. Then he singles out Scotus and Ramus, who, he says, misrepresented Aristotle. Such modern philosophers as Gassendi and Descartes were once popular; now they are unfashionable.



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Newton, Swift says, will also become unfashionable in his turn. His conclusion is that modern authors have no substance. He reduces them to matters of fashion, not truth.

After satirizing the humanities and philosophy, Swift turns to the historians. History, Swift infers, is the tool of politics; it is misread and miswritten for selfish reasons. In the service of politicians, history lies — about virtue, wisdom, and courage.

Book III: Chapter 9

Summary

Gulliver journeys to Luggnagg posing as a Dutchman, but he is discovered and imprisoned. The King sends for Gulliver, and we learn about the King's idiosyncrasies. He requires those who have an audience with him to advance on their hands and knees and lick the floor. When a courtier is out of favor, the King sprinkles poison on the floor. (Sometimes after this ritual, Gulliver notes, the pages forget or carelessly neglect to sweep the floor. Such carelessness is fatal.) Gulliver follows the custom and, as a result of his willingness to answer questions posed by the King, Gulliver is invited to stay three months as a guest.

Analysis

Swift takes another slash at the Dutch by having Gulliver imprisoned merely because the Luggnaggians think that he is Dutch. He then unmask the vanity of kings and the subservience of courtiers, using his usual technique of making abstractions concrete. He illustrates the subservience that the King demands and courtiers render by the ceremony of crawling and licking the floor. The moral — and physical — dangers of such subservience are shown by the poison on the floor. The King's mercy also falls under Swift's attack; the pages go "mercifully" unpunished for their occasional carelessness

Book III: Chapter 10

Summary

During his stay in Luggnagg, Gulliver hears about the *Struldbruggs*, people in Luggnagg society who are immortal. Gulliver's first reaction to hearing about the *Struldbruggs*' immortality is one of envy and enthusiasm because it would allow a person to gain immense wealth, wisdom, and the philosophical serenity. He fantasizes what he might do if he were one. However, when an interpreter explains the reality of life as a *Struldbrugg* — that is they grow old, feeble,



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decaying, and forgetful — Gulliver's enthusiasm for a life of immortality disappears as quickly as it began.

Analysis

In this chapter, Swift satirizes the theory that "experience is the best teacher." Already he has attacked all the other methods of gaining knowledge: Abstract reason was ridiculed in Laputa; pragmatic and scientific knowledge was his target in Balnibarbi; the humanities, and particularly history, suffered in Luggnagg. Now he discredits accumulated experience.

Like most people, Gulliver assumes that experience brings both wisdom and morality. He voices the human dream of immortality, sure that immortality will confer immense experience and, therefore, immense wisdom. Swift counters this naive dream of Gulliver's by presenting the Struldbruggs. It is true that they have immortality, but they do grow old. They wrinkle — and they degenerate; the physical is a symbol of the abstract once more. These creatures lack hope, kindness, generosity, affection, simplicity, honesty, and innocence.

When Swift's readers finish this chapter, they realize that Swift's theory is that reason is never to be exalted. People simply cannot depend on abstract, impersonal, inhuman reason. Nor can they depend on technological innovation, on history, or on the "modern" humane studies. The best guides are poetry and ancient philosophy.

Book: Chapter 11

Summary

At last Gulliver is able to find a boat bound for Japan. In Japan, though, he finds himself in trouble again. It is customary for Dutchmen in Japan to trample the crucifix, and none have ever protested doing so. However, the Japanese emperor excuses Gulliver from this ceremony. Later, a Dutchman again tries to have Gulliver forced to trample on the cross. Gulliver leaves Japan on the *Amboyna*, bound for Amsterdam, and there he boards a ship for England. Finally, he returns to his family in Redriff.

Analysis

The Dutch again come under attack in this chapter. They are meant to be a contrast to the charitable Portuguese captain who appears near the end of the *Travels*. Swift also compares the Dutch unfavourably to the Japanese, considered pagans in Swift's time. The Japanese have not nearly the malice of the commercial Dutch "Christians" and charitably allow Gulliver to escape this



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degrading ceremony by a subterfuge. They know he will be murdered by his Christian brethren if the truth is known.