

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

A dramatisation of Jonathan Swift's famous satire by Paddy Salmon

This extract is taken from the second part of the Travels, when Gulliver visits the land of giants at Brobdingnag (pp. 45-48). The King of Brobdingnag assumes Gulliver is an insect and cannot believe him to have any intelligence at all. Gulliver protests that he belongs to one of the most advanced countries in the world and tries hard to explain to the king and his scholars how marvellously advanced Europe and England are.

Cet extrait (dans mon texte du P 45-48) est tiré de la deuxième partie des Voyages, à Brobdingnag, où Gulliver visite le pays des géants. Le roi de Brobdingnag, traite Gulliver d'insecte et ne croit pas que celui-ci puisse avoir une quelconque intelligence. Gulliver proteste et explique qu'il appartient à un des pays les plus développés du monde, et, tout fier de sa patrie, il essaie de toutes ses forces de convaincre le roi et ses savants des avantages de l'Europe en général et l'Angleterre en particulier.

GULLIVER Your Majesty, I am a rational, intelligent human being like yourself.

KING **(Staring into his hand)** Rubbish! Rational, an insect like you? Ha! That will be the day. More like a conjuring trick concocted by these idle peasants.

GULLIVER Your Majesty, my accent may be peculiar to your ears as I come from Europe overseas, but I assure you I come from a highly civilised culture, in spite of the fact that my countrymen are much smaller than yours.

KING What nonsense! Call my scholars. They shall investigate your so-called intelligence.

SERVANT Call the King's scholars!

Enter three aged scholars with microscopes and magnifying glasses. They peer into the box.

SCHOLAR 1 Hmm! He cannot be natural. He is not equipped by nature with speed or size to avoid dangers.

SCHOLAR 2 Look at his teeth. He seems to be carnivorous, but he would have great difficulty pursuing mice. Perhaps he eats snails and insects.

SCHOLAR 3 I think your Majesty, that this is an aborted embryo.

SCHOLAR 1 Rubbish, man, look at his limbs, perfect. He even has a beard coming on. I think this is one of nature's monstrosities.

GULLIVER **(Heatedly)** Your Majesty, this is not fair. I am a member of a European country and Europe represents the highest pinnacle of progress to which man has aspired of.

All roar with laughter.

KING Oh, really? Tell us about your precious little kingdom, then. Your European kingdoms!

GULLIVER Your Majesty, you should not mock me. After all ants and bees have highly developed societies. Why should you find the idea so ridiculous in people of my size?

KING My dear little Grildrig, you are probably right. Come, tell us about your religion **(they all laugh)** and your politics **(they all laugh even louder)**.

GULLIVER Well, in Britain our dominions consist of two islands, along with colonies and plantations elsewhere. We have Houses of Parliament with a House of Lords and a House of Commons. The Lords are all people who have the noblest blood and who are highly educated, morally responsible and extremely well qualified to lead the country. **(Roars of laughter)** Our members of Parliament for the House of Commons are all democratically elected from amongst the most able and the wisest members of the community. **(More stifled laughter and shushing on stage. Gulliver reacts by becoming louder and rather indignant)** They are highly gifted people, who work hard to represent the interests of the people. Our government, under the monarch, makes good laws and looks after the kingdom in the interests of everybody **(Roars of laughter)**. Our courts of justice work with fairness and impartiality to bring justice to all. The British system of justice is second to none. **(Roars of laughter)**

KING **(Wiping eyes)** I see. May we ask a few simple questions? Have lords ever been chosen because money has been passed under the table, or because the monarch favours certain parties or individuals? **(Stifles a giggle)**

GULLIVER Er, yes. That does happen. Sometimes.

KING **(Again stifling giggles)** And are most of them immensely stupid, vicious and criminally selfish?

GULLIVER Er, perhaps that might be the case... of some.

SCHOLAR 1 And are members of Parliament often elected through bribing the voters?

GULLIVER Er,.. sometimes.

SCHOLAR 2 And if you are poor, you will get nowhere in a court of law?

GULLIVER Well, going to court is a very expensive business, it's true.

SCHOLAR 3 And if you are rich, you can get anything you want, power, more wealth, mistresses, without having to lift a finger?

GULLIVER That's unfair. Britain, like most European countries, is well governed and is a wonderful place to live. We have to pay taxes, it is true?

SCHOLAR 1 And where do those taxes go? In services for the people, I suppose. **(laughs)**

GULLIVER Well, rather a lot gets spent on wars.

SCHOLAR 2 WARS!?! Why?

GULLIVER We are often at war with our neighbours, Sir.

KING I thought you wanted us to believe that all your European countries were so wise, intelligent and well-governed. You must be a very quarrelsome people or have very bad neighbours.

GULLIVER WE aren't, it's the others who are. That's why we have to have a professional army and navy always at the ready. Look, let me give you a brief résumé of our history. **(Hands them papers they scrutinise closely)**

SCHOLAR 3 And you call this HISTORY???

GULLIVER This is the distinguished history of my nation.

KING Well, I call that a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice or ambition, could produce.

GULLIVER Your Majesty, you are talking about a cultivated, modern, civilised nation!

KING We have listened carefully to what you have to say about your beloved country, my little friend, Grildrig. But you have clearly shown that ignorance, idleness and vice are the proper qualifications for your legislators; that your laws are designed to hoodwink the people; that priests are not pious or learned, soldiers are not skilful or courageous, and judges have no wisdom or integrity. I CANNOT BUT CONCLUDE THE BULK OF YOUR NATIVES TO BE THE MOST PERNICIOUS RACE OF ODIOUS VERMIN THAT NATURE EVER SUFFERED TO CRAWL UPON THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH.

GULLIVER Your Majesty, please listen. **(almost in tears)** We have the most incredible technology. We have something called GUNPOWDER, something I can show you how to make. You can destroy whole cities. Ships can be sunk with cannons, castles can be demolished and hundreds, thousands of people can be easily killed with guns. With this invention, your Majesty, you COULD rule the universe, if you wanted.

KING GRILDRIG! How can an impotent, grovelling insect like you harbour such appallingly inhuman ideas? If I were you I would keep extremely quiet about your civilisation from now on.

GULLIVER Well that's thanks for you! Your Highness, you have no idea what you are refusing. This is modern progress.

KING On the contrary, I have a very good idea of what I am refusing. Governing for us is very simple, Grildrig. Here in Brobdingnag we stick to common sense and reason. Whoever can make two ears of corn or two blades of grass grow upon a spot where only one grew before will deserve better of mankind than the whole race of politicians put together.

Enter Queen

QUEEN Have you nearly finished with dear little Grildrig? The princesses and I so want to play with him a little. We've never had a little MAN to play with before!

KING MAN! Savage beast, more like! Glumdalclitch! **(She enters)** I think we have learnt as much as we want to from little Grildrig, here. Would you mind taking his box and carrying him back to the Queen to play with? **(Glumdalclitch does so.)**

GULLIVER Oh, no. I can't stand being played with. Glumdalclitch is very sweet to me, but she keeps on putting me down the front of her dress. It's DISGUSTING!!

BLACKOUT.

<p>La pièce a été écrite par Paddy Salmon, chef de département et professeur de littérature aux Sections Internationales de Sèvres et de Chaville. Pour obtenir le texte intégral, vous pouvez le contacter à l'adresse : <i>paddysalmon@club-internet.fr</i></p>

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

The Play 2008

From Brogue to Rap

What would a year at the SIS be without the annual Play? As incomplete as a Lord without his wig, as unsatisfying as a great meal without a vintage wine, as disappointing as a country's president without a hint of statesmanship. Luckily for the SIS community, Paddy Salmon and his team of co-directors worked their magic again this year and put together yet another memorable rendition of a classic piece of English-language literature.

This year, Jonathan Swift's famous allegory of British civilization in his day and time was chosen as the source of inspiration as well as the not entirely unwilling victim of the thespians' efforts. An excellent choice, of course, as it was so aptly reminiscent of the multi-cultural nature of the Sections Internationales and of the varied origins of their denizens: the witty caricatures allowed the talented young actors, accompanied by excellent music and lyrics, to run the gamut from Irish brogue and taste for brandy, to English complex of superiority and stiff upper lip, via American rap and slang, all to the delight of the audience. The moral of the story is rather obvious, but nonetheless worth pondering especially for our teenagers: you may be a giant in Lilliput, but never forget that the next morning you may be but a puny creature in Brobdingnag. Or, in other words, don't

be too proud of your mores and customs and too dismissive of others': be tolerant of your neighbours' quirks for there is no absolute truth in this world. Ain't that the truth?...

The text was so cleverly adapted that at times one did not know whether the well-delivered lines had been written by Paddy Swift or Jonathan Salmon (well, OK, the Clinton joke did give it away at one point!). The whole cast is to be complimented (with special distinctions for Gulliver and his wife, among many others, not forgetting the musicians and backstage crew). Particularly, and somewhat deviously, enjoyable were the astute ways in which actors improvised to cover a few blanks during the Wednesday show, a skill no longer necessary on Friday!

Proud parents greeted the performance with enthusiastic and well-deserved applause, unsure whether they were more impressed by the heretofore hidden (or, perhaps, misdirected?...) talent of their offspring or by the incredible knack of the directors for bringing such a motley crew to the same resounding success year after year!

Olivier Kaiser,
parent



*Ben Elie (Gulliver)
and Luna Cottis (Mrs. Gulliver)*



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