

Jonathan Swift

He was Irish, but he always considered himself an Englishman. He was born in Ireland in 1667, but he left his country because of the civil war broken out after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. When he moved to England, he became Sir William Temple's secretary. Sir Temple was a retired diplomat. Swift left him when he had a quarrel with him in 1694. He went back to Ireland and fell in love with a woman who refused him. So he decided not to be attached anymore to other women and children.

In this period he supported the Whig party. He went back to England and stayed with Sir William till his death. After that he stayed in Ireland, but he tried to get supporters to return to England. He visited many times London. In this period he had a phobic

relationship with Esther Johnson and another obscure relationship with Esther Vanhomrigh. Meanwhile he wrote a lot of works: in 1704 "A Tale of a Tub", a religious satire, in 1724 "The Drogheda Letters", in which he criticised the English misgovernment of Ireland, in 1726 "Gulliver's Travels" and in 1729 "A Modest Proposal", a satire about English behaviour towards Irish sufferings. Some of his works appeared anonymously (since they were bitter satires).

He went back to England in 1710, but in 1714 he took up the post of Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

Finally he died in 1745.

Swift can be seen as a pessimist because of the content of his satire, but his satire reflects the values of the age he lived in. Therefore his pessimism must be considered realism because perfectly represents the society of that period.

Gulliver's Travels

Even if it is an invented story in which improbable situations are represented, the minute realism, the realistic details of places and animals (or creatures) make Gulliver's adventures seem true. The story is divided into four voyages in which Gulliver meets different creatures which represent different human vices.

So the novel itself is a satire on human irrationality and wickedness and on the political situation in England.

The physical smallness of the Lilliputians (1st voyage) represents the moral smallness of humanity. The king of the Brobdingnag criticises Gulliver and English society (2nd voyage), while the huge size of these giants represents the unpleasant physical aspects of human body and the limitations they impose on spiritual values. The inhabitants of Laputa (3rd voyage), who have distorted

eyes, satirizes the emptiness of intellectual thinking when not related to reality. Finally the horrid human beings of the 4th voyage represent the complete degradation of men. Gulliver doesn't recognise the best creatures as humans because they are disgusting and governed by horses.