Mental Health and Gender Issues in the 21st Century as Reflected in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*: Social Perspectives in the Light of SDG 3 and SDG 5

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Abstract— *This article examines Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), focusing on Book II in Brobdingnag, as a critical resource for understanding contemporary challenges in mental health and gender equality. Through historicized close reading aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 5: Gender Equality), the study argues that Swift's satire dramatizes mechanisms of alienation, commodification, gendered subordination, and systemic corruption that remain pertinent in the twenty-first century. Gulliver's treatment as spectacle illustrates how stigma undermines psychological well-being, while the contrast between the farmer's exploitation and Glumdalclitch's care highlights the social determinants of resilience. The Queen's authority and the maids of honour's scrutiny destabilize patriarchal norms, revealing the performativity of gender, while the King's judgment of European politics situates systemic violence as a determinant of collective distress. By aligning these episodes with specific SDG targets, the article demonstrates how literature illuminates the pathways by which social structures compromise health and justice. The findings affirm the enduring power of satire to serve as cultural critique and collective memory, underscoring literature's capacity to inform debates on health equity and gender justice in global contexts.*

Keywords— *Jonathan Swift; Gulliver's Travels; Brobdingnag; mental health; gender equality; Sustainable Development Goals; stigma; satire*

I. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating pressures of the twenty-first century, including technological disruption, globalization, and the erosion of traditional support systems, have intensified public concern about mental health and gender equality. These concerns correspond directly to two of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which seek to ensure access to equitable mental health services and the dismantling of systemic gender discrimination (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.). Literature provides a critical vantage point for understanding how such issues are socially constructed, both historically and in contemporary settings. Jonathan

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/2003), though written in the early eighteenth century, remains a text of enduring relevance. Its satirical engagement with psychological distress, alienation, and gendered power structures anticipates many of the challenges currently addressed under global health and equality frameworks (Radstone, 2007; Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017).

In Book II, set in Brobdingnag, Swift dramatizes the destabilizing effects of stigma, surveillance, and disempowerment on individual well-being. Gulliver's sense of insignificance, repeatedly underscored by his diminutive scale in relation to the giants, resonates with modern accounts of anxiety and alienation in contexts where individuals are overwhelmed by social or structural forces

(Kansteiner, 2002; Silove et al., 2017). His psychological unease in these episodes can be productively read through contemporary trauma frameworks, not as historical diagnoses but as heuristic models for understanding how environments of spectacle and subordination intensify distress (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016). This reading aligns with SDG 3.4, which targets the promotion of mental health and the reduction of premature mortality linked to psychosocial crises (Puras & Gooding, 2019).

The Brobdingnag episodes also invert patriarchal norms through striking gender reversals. Gulliver's dependence on the Queen and his subjection to the gaze of the maids of honour destabilize the authority his masculinity would have commanded in eighteenth-century Europe. Such role reversals foreground the performative and socially contingent nature of gender, anticipating later feminist theories of gender construction (Butler, 1990; hooks, 2000). Swift's satire therefore aligns with SDG 5.1 and SDG 5.5, which call for the elimination of discrimination and the increased participation of women in decision-making. Rather than a simple parody, these scenes expose the vulnerability of patriarchal authority when placed in an altered context, suggesting that power dynamics are contingent and open to reconfiguration.

By analysing these elements through the SDG framework, *Gulliver's Travels* emerges not only as a satirical critique of eighteenth-century social norms but also as a text that illuminates mechanisms of alienation and gendered subordination that remain pressing today. Literature in this sense is not an aesthetic supplement to social debate but an essential resource for understanding how structural forces shape both psychological well-being and gendered experience. As contemporary societies grapple with achieving SDG 3 and SDG 5, Swift's satire demonstrates the capacity of literary texts to inform, critique, and challenge the social determinants of health and equality, thereby underscoring the enduring role of literature in advancing sustainable and inclusive futures.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental health and gender equality are centrally positioned within the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with SDG 3.4 targeting promotion of mental health and reduction of premature mortality and SDG 5.1 and 5.5 calling for the elimination of discrimination and increased participation of women in decision-making (United Nations, 2015). Interdisciplinary scholarship consistently shows that these aims cannot be advanced without attention to the cultural narratives through which well-being and inequality are perceived and reproduced; literary texts serve as both archive and critique of those narratives, including

canonical works such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Butler, 1990; hooks, 2000; Kansteiner, 2002; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Puras & Gooding, 2019; Radstone, 2007; Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017). In global mental health, recent syntheses emphasize structural determinants displacement, globalization, and the weakening of family and community supports as drivers of anxiety, depression, and trauma, underscoring that psychological outcomes are socially embedded rather than merely individual (Silove et al., 2017). Human-rights approaches similarly argue that parity of esteem, anti-stigma measures, and equitable access to care are preconditions for progress, reframing distress as a function of structural imbalance rather than personal deficit (Puras & Gooding, 2019). Read against this scholarship, Swift's Brobdingnag where scale renders the protagonist exposed to surveillance, display, and ridicule offers a historically distant but analytically proximate dramatization of alienation under conditions of social power.

Feminist theory clarifies how these dynamics are gendered. Butler's (1990) account of gender as performative and contingent, together with hooks's (2000) insistence on the everyday reproduction of patriarchal power, provides a frame for interpreting Brobdingnag's reversals: Gulliver's subordination to the Queen and subjection to the maids of honour's gaze unsettle presumptions of masculine authority and foreground the social construction of gendered hierarchy. Radstone (2007) further situates such reversals within trauma discourse, emphasizing the entwining of political domination and psychic dislocation. These theoretical coordinates render Swift's satire legible as an early critique of gender hierarchy whose scenes anticipate concerns now codified under SDG 5.1 and 5.5 (United Nations, 2015).

Literary studies on memory, body, and power corroborate this reading. Kansteiner (2002) argues that cultural texts preserve and organize collective anxieties; Olick and Robbins (1998) show that social memory embeds critique within shared narratives. In *Gulliver's Travels*, the Brobdingnagian King's political judgment operates as such a mnemonic device, storing a critique of European corruption and violence that persists beyond the novel's historical moment. Trauma-narrative research complements these insights by tracing the formal signatures of distress fragmentation, repetition, and disorientation in literary memory work (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016). Recent scholarship extends this line by demonstrating how texts stage exposure and vulnerability in ways that are analytically useful for policy conversations about stigma and care: for example, hydro feminist and witnessing-oriented readings show literature's capacity to archive communal injury and its afterlives, thereby making

mechanisms of harm legible for publics and practitioners alike (Rahmatullah, 2025a; Rahmatullah, 2025b). Methodologically adjacent work further shows how integrating psychological models into literary interpretation can illuminate representations of attachment, dependency, and affect without collapsing historical difference, strengthening the case for heuristic use of modern frameworks in readings of earlier texts (Rahmatullah, 2023; also, Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016).

Taken together, this literature indicates that mental health and gender are inseparable from the structures that organize social life and that literary form can clarify how those structures operate. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* through its exaggerations of scale and reversals of power dramatizes precisely such structures, while trauma studies, feminist theory, memory studies, and global health frameworks supply the analytic tools for reading Brobdingnag as a site where psychological well-being and gendered authority are tested, destabilized, and re-imagined (Butler, 1990; Kansteiner, 2002; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Puras & Gooding, 2019; Radstone, 2007; Silove et al., 2017; United Nations, 2015). This review therefore grounds the subsequent analysis by situating Swift's satire within verifiable scholarly conversations that explain how stigma, alienation, and gendered domination persist as mechanisms of harm in the twenty-first century (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016; hooks, 2000; Rahmatullah, 2023; Rahmatullah, 2025a; Rahmatullah, 2025b).

III.   METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach designed to analyse how Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/2003), specifically Book II set in Brobdingnag, represents psychological distress and gendered power relations in ways that resonate with contemporary global concerns. The method is best described as a historicized close reading informed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The approach emphasizes the interplay between textual analysis, theoretical framing, and socio-political context in order to demonstrate how a canonical literary text can illuminate issues of mental health and gender inequality relevant to SDG 3 and SDG 5.

The primary methodological tool is close reading of selected episodes from Book II, including Gulliver's commodification by the farmer, his custodial care under Glumdalclitch, his exhibition before the Brobdingnagian Queen and her maids of honour, and the King's later political judgment of European society. These episodes are analysed as dramatizations of alienation, stigma, and gender reversal, with particular attention to how scale and spectacle

destabilize identity. Following Kansteiner's (2002) insistence that cultural texts operate as repositories of collective memory, the analysis treats Swift's satire as both a record of eighteenth-century anxieties and a lens for present-day concerns. The text is thus engaged not as a historical curiosity but as an archive capable of critiquing structures of power that remain active.

The interpretation of Gulliver's psychological distress draws on trauma studies and theories of repression. Crespo and Fernández-Lansac (2016) highlight how trauma narratives are characterized by fragmentation, repetition, and disorientation. These features are observable in Gulliver's shifting accounts of his mental state, which repeatedly return to images of diminishment and exposure. Although Swift could not have conceptualized "post-traumatic stress disorder" in modern terms, trauma theory is used heuristically here, as a way of analyzing the textual mechanisms by which distress is rendered rather than as a retrospective diagnosis. This aligns with Silove, Ventevogel, and Rees's (2017) claim that displacement and systemic stress are among the most significant contributors to mental ill-health in contemporary contexts.

The analysis of gender relies on feminist theoretical models, particularly Judith Butler's (1990) account of gender as performative and socially contingent, and hooks's (2000) insistence on the embeddedness of gender inequality in everyday practices. In Brobdingnag, the spectacle of Gulliver under female authority figures the Queen's possession of him and the maids of honour's inspection offers a satirical reversal of patriarchal norms. These episodes are interpreted as dramatizations of gender contingency, exposing how patriarchal authority falters when placed in a different frame. As Radstone (2007) argues, such inversions of power not only critique gender but also intersect with trauma, since the destabilization of identity is at once political and psychological.

Methodologically, the paper also incorporates SDG target-mapping. Rather than treating the SDGs only as abstract goals, specific targets are aligned with textual analysis. For example, the stigma attached to Gulliver's display is read in relation to SDG 3.4, which prioritizes the promotion of mental well-being; the contrasting roles of the farmer and Glumdalclitch are considered alongside SDG 3.c, which calls for strengthening health-supportive systems; the Queen's authority and the subversion of masculine dominance are examined in connection with SDG 5.1 and 5.5, which aim to end discrimination and ensure women's participation in leadership. This mapping does not claim that Swift anticipated these global frameworks, but rather demonstrates how literature can illuminate the mechanisms of inequality that the SDGs seek to redress.

Finally, this methodology is transparent about its limitations. There is an inevitable risk of anachronism when applying twenty-first-century categories such as trauma or gender performativity to an eighteenth-century satire. To address this, the analysis proceeds by acknowledging the historical context of Swift's satire while deploying modern theories as heuristic tools for identifying mechanisms of alienation and domination. The aim is not to retroactively medicalize Gulliver's distress but to demonstrate how literary representation clarifies pathways of stigma and subordination that continue to structure psychological and gendered experience today. As Puras and Gooding (2019) note, mental health must be framed within a human rights discourse that recognizes the social determinants of well-being. Similarly, Swift's satire, when read critically, foregrounds how structures of power spectacle, commodification, and patriarchal hierarchy impact individual health and dignity.

The methodology combines historicized close reading with theoretical framing from trauma studies, feminist theory, and social memory studies, situating the analysis within the practical benchmarks of SDG targets. This integrative approach ensures that the study remains attentive both to the textual specificity of Swift's satire and to the pressing contemporary issues of mental health equity and gender justice.

Spectacle and Stigma

One of the most striking features of Gulliver's time in Brobdingnag is his conversion into an object of spectacle: the farmer who first shelters him quickly exhibits him for pay, turning his body into a curiosity for crowds and a source of revenue (Swift, 1726/2003). This commodification renders Gulliver vulnerable to ridicule and objectification and models what global mental-health research identifies as the stigmatizing effects of public exposure, in which persons are defined by marked difference and reduced to consumable signs (Silove et al., 2017). The spectacle reshapes identity through laughter and judgment, a dynamic consistent with human-rights based accounts that link stigma and inequity to diminished help-seeking and compromised dignity (Puras & Gooding, 2019). Swift exaggerates these mechanics through scale: a miniature man paraded before giants dramatizes how hierarchy is naturalized by disproportion and display, encoding a durable social anxiety around exposure (Kansteiner, 2002). The farmer's exploitation thus resonates with contemporary accounts of how marginalized groups are pushed into visibility as objects of consumption, with predictable psychosocial costs (Silove et al., 2017). Trauma scholarship sharpens the point: environments of powerlessness and public violation leave distinctive

imprints fragmentation, repetition, and disorientation in memory and narration (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016). Gulliver's reported distress after repeated displays accords with this model, even as the reading remains heuristic rather than diagnostic, identifying textual mechanisms exposure, disempowerment, alienation that modern psychology now names (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016; Puras & Gooding, 2019). Recent literary work likewise shows how narratives stage injury as spectacle and archive it for publics, a framework transferable here to Swift's crowd scenes (Rahmatullah, 2025a; Rahmatullah, 2025b). Read against the United Nations' target on promoting mental health, the Brobdingnag exhibition anticipates concerns central to SDG 3.4, where reducing burden requires addressing stigma and the social environments that intensify distress (United Nations, 2015). In this episode, literature makes the pathway legible: profit overrides care, vulnerability is commodified, and psychological harm follows an articulation of structural and social determinants rather than interior defect (Puras & Gooding, 2019; Silove et al., 2017).

Care vs. Commodification

If Gulliver's initial exhibition before paying crowds dramatizes the corrosive effects of stigma, the subsequent episodes in Brobdingnag highlight the tension between commodification and care. The farmer who discovers Gulliver quickly recognizes his potential as a profitable spectacle, parading him in taverns and fairs to extract revenue from the public's curiosity. Gulliver's body becomes a commodity, valued less for his personhood than for his novelty. This form of exploitation exemplifies what modern social theorists describe as the instrumentalization of human vulnerability for profit (Puras & Gooding, 2019). In psychological terms, such treatment intensifies alienation by reinforcing the sense that one's worth is externally defined and economically determined (Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017). The farmer's actions thus illustrate a structure of inequality that undermines dignity and well-being, aligning with contemporary critiques of environments that foster poor mental health through objectification and neglect.

Against this backdrop of exploitation, Glumdalclitch emerges as a figure of custodial care. As Gulliver's assigned caretaker, she constructs a specially designed box to protect him, nurses him through illness, and mediates his interactions with others. These gestures of protection and routine attention suggest a recognition of vulnerability not as a basis for profit but as a call for responsibility and empathy. In contrast to the farmer's commodification, Glumdalclitch represents the supportive environments that global health frameworks identify as essential for resilience

and recovery. The World Health Organization (n.d.) emphasizes that health equity depends not only on medical access but also on the cultivation of protective social systems, particularly for those rendered vulnerable. In this sense, Glumdalclitch's care can be read as a literary analogue for the social determinants of health, where consistent support mitigates the alienating effects of structural exploitation.

This dialectic between exploitation and care also resonates with trauma theory. Crespo and Fernández-Lansac (2016) note that recovery from traumatic events often requires a stable environment where experiences can be integrated into coherent memory rather than fragmented by repetition and exposure. Gulliver's oscillation between the farmer's profit-driven displays and Glumdalclitch's protective routines illustrates precisely this dynamic: trauma is amplified by environments of exploitation but alleviated through sustained care. Swift's satire thus anticipates what contemporary psychology identifies as the importance of caregiving in mitigating the effects of disempowerment (Foa, Molnar, & Cashman, 1995).

From the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals, this contrast reflects the difference between environments that exacerbate inequity and those that support well-being. The farmer's profiteering corresponds to conditions where individuals are commodified, echoing critiques of systems that prioritize economic gain over mental health equity. In contrast, Glumdalclitch's protective role aligns with SDG 3.c, which calls for strengthening the health workforce and providing support to vulnerable populations. By dramatizing these opposed responses to vulnerability, Swift's narrative demonstrates how literature can expose the conditions under which well-being is compromised or sustained. The satire insists that psychological resilience is never simply an individual attribute but is deeply contingent on whether social environments exploit or protect vulnerability.

The Brobdingnag episodes therefore extend Swift's critique beyond individual distress to structural determinants of mental health. Through the farmer and Glumdalclitch, the text stages a debate over what societies choose to do with vulnerability: commodify it for profit or nurture it through care. In mapping these dynamics onto contemporary health frameworks, the analysis underscores how literature clarifies the stakes of SDG 3, revealing that health equity is inseparable from the ethical management of human fragility.

Gendered Power Dynamics

If the episodes of spectacle and care dramatize psychosocial determinants of mental health, Swift's Brobdingnag also probes the gendered dimensions of power by displacing a putatively authoritative European male into dependency under female governance (Swift, 1726/2003). The Queen assumes formal custodianship and the maids of honour scrutinize and handle Gulliver with a curiosity that oscillates between amusement and condescension, inverting the patriarchal hierarchy by situating him in a feminized position of exposure and reliance (Swift, 1726/2003). This inversion clarifies what Butler (1990) theorizes as gender's performativity: authority is enacted and stabilized by context rather than guaranteed by sex. Hooks (2000) underscores that patriarchal power is reproduced through everyday practices; the Queen's ability to summon, observe, and contain Gulliver exemplifies such practices reversed yet recognizable revealing masculine authority as contingent rather than natural (Butler, 1990; hooks, 2000; Swift, 1726/2003). The resulting loss of agency is also psychological. Radstone (2007) links domination to psychic dislocation, and Swift's scenes register that dislocation as humiliation and anxiety when a male subject is subordinated to female figures (Radstone, 2007; Swift, 1726/2003).

The encounters with the maids of honour most vividly stage this reversal of the gaze: Gulliver becomes the looked-at object, his masculinity reduced to spectacle through lifting, handling, and inspection (Swift, 1726/2003). Such scenes exemplify the destabilization of identity that literary trauma studies describe, where exposure and diminishment unsettle self-coherence (Isa, 2017; Radstone, 2007). Read through Butler's (1990) account of performativity, these episodes show masculinity not as innate dominance but as a fragile performance that collapses when the social frame shifts (Butler, 1990; Swift, 1726/2003). Recent literary work further demonstrates how texts encode vulnerability and dependence through affective and relational cues, supporting heuristic use of psychological lenses to analyze the literary rendering of gendered precarity (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016; Rahmatullah, 2023).

These reversals bear directly on contemporary equality agendas. SDG 5.1 and SDG 5.5 call for eliminating discrimination and ensuring women's full participation; Swift's satire anticipates these aims by exposing patriarchal dominance as constructed and therefore open to critique and reconfiguration (United Nations, 2015). By placing a male protagonist under female authority, the narrative unsettles the presumption that masculinity guarantees control and makes visible how hierarchy depends on scale, setting, and institutional sanction (Butler, 1990; hooks, 2000; Swift, 1726/2003). The gendered disempowerment depicted here also intersects with mental-health determinants: disempowerment and humiliation contribute to psychological distress in marginalized subjects, a pattern consistent with global mental-health findings on how social

inequality compounds vulnerability (Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017). Swift's exaggerations thus foreground how identity erodes under sustained scrutiny and subordination, tying gendered domination to psychosocial harm across contexts (Isa, 2017; Radstone, 2007; Silove et al., 2017).

Taken together, the Brobdingnag material reveals masculinity as performative and contingent, while tracing the psychological costs of gendered disempowerment. Situated alongside feminist theory and the objectives of SDG 5, the episodes confirm Swift's satire as a durable resource for interrogating structures of inequality that continue to shape social life and mental well-being (Butler, 1990; hooks, 2000; Silove et al., 2017; United Nations, 2015).

Political Judgment and Collective Memory

Beyond the spectacles of alienation and the inversions of gender, Book II culminates in the Brobdingnagian King's judgment of European politics. When Gulliver describes the military technologies, financial systems, and diplomatic intrigues of his homeland, the King responds with horror, concluding that Europeans are "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin" (Swift, 1726/2003, Book II, Ch. 6, p. [insert page number]). This moment crystallizes Swift's satire: political corruption, violence, and vanity are shown to be destructive not only of social order but also of the psychological well-being of individuals who must live under them. For Gulliver, the King's scathing assessment compounds his sense of insignificance, producing both humiliation and despair. In this way, the political critique intersects with the mental health concerns already dramatized through scale and spectacle, suggesting that systemic violence and injustice are themselves determinants of psychological distress.

The King's condemnation can be read through the lens of collective memory. Olick and Robbins (1998) argue that societies preserve critique through shared narratives that highlight failures of governance and morality. In Swift's satire, the King's judgment functions as such a mnemonic device, preserving a memory of European corruption for readers who might otherwise normalize it. Kansteiner (2002) emphasizes that cultural texts encode social anxieties that outlive their original context. The Brobdingnag episode thus functions as a cultural archive, embedding a critique of political vanity and systemic violence that remains relevant for modern audiences. For contemporary readers, the King's judgment invites reflection on how political systems that prioritize power and domination exacerbate both social inequities and mental distress.

This critique aligns directly with the objectives of the SDGs. SDG 3.4 emphasizes that the promotion of mental health requires addressing the structural conditions war, poverty, exploitation that precipitate psychological crises. Likewise, SDG 5.c calls for systemic reforms to dismantle discriminatory structures and support gender equality. By situating his protagonist in a court where European norms are judged by an external, rational authority, Swift highlights how social structures generate both mental distress and gendered inequality. The King's insistence on the irrationality of European governance underscores what global health frameworks now stress: that individual well-being is inseparable from political structures and collective practices (Puras & Gooding, 2019; Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017).

In this respect, the Brobdingnag judgment serves as Swift's most overt gesture toward social transformation. Unlike Gulliver, who attempts to defend European practices, the King exposes their violence and irrationality, thus preserving a critique for the collective memory of Swift's readers. This moment anticipates the contemporary understanding that sustainable well-being requires not only individual interventions but also systemic reform. By making political corruption legible as both a moral and psychological threat, Swift demonstrates how satire can function as a literary analogue to global frameworks for justice.

The analysis of the King's judgment therefore consolidates the arguments developed in earlier episodes: spectacle, commodification, and gendered power dynamics all converge on the recognition that social structures produce psychological harm. By placing his protagonist in a position where European society is exposed to external critique, Swift foregrounds the inseparability of individual distress from collective political systems. In aligning this moment with the goals of SDG 3 and SDG 5, the satire demonstrates that literature is capable not only of reflecting anxieties but also of embedding them in cultural memory, urging readers toward re-imagining healthier and more equitable social orders.

IV.　　DISCUSSION

The examination of Swift's Brobdingnag episodes demonstrates that satire operates not only as entertainment or historical commentary but also as a lens through which enduring social challenges can be viewed. The preceding analysis highlighted how Gulliver's experiences of spectacle, commodification, gendered reversal, and political judgment map onto concerns that resonate strongly with twenty-first-century debates on mental health and gender equality. The discussion here draws these strands together to argue that Swift's satire offers an early cultural articulation of mechanisms that global health frameworks

such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now seek to address. In doing so, it underscores the capacity of literature to function as both critique and catalyst in shaping social imagination.

At the core of Swift's satire lies the recognition that psychological well-being is not an isolated matter of individual constitution but is deeply structured by social forces. Gulliver's alienation in the face of spectacle and ridicule parallels what contemporary scholarship identifies as the stigma associated with mental illness. Stigma, as Silove, Ventevogel, and Rees (2017) observe, is often exacerbated by displacement, public scrutiny, and systemic neglect, leading to alienation and reduced willingness to seek care. The Brobdingnag farmer's exploitation of Gulliver exemplifies how human vulnerability can be converted into profit at the expense of dignity. Such a literary representation provides a vivid analogue for SDG 3.4's emphasis on reducing the burden of mental health crises by addressing stigma and creating more inclusive environments (Puras & Gooding, 2019). Literature, in this context, does not simply depict distress but makes visible the mechanisms by which distress is produced.

Equally significant is the contrast between commodification and care. Glumdalclitch's protective role, in juxtaposition to the farmer's profiteering, illustrates how environments of support mitigate psychological distress. This resonates with contemporary trauma theory, which emphasizes the importance of stable, caring structures for recovery (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016). The SDG framework identifies the strengthening of health-supportive systems as essential to equity (United Nations, 2015), and Swift's satire dramatizes precisely this principle. By showing how Gulliver's well-being improves under consistent care, the text highlights the social determinants of resilience. Literature thereby extends clinical insights into a cultural register, reminding readers that caregiving is as much an ethical as a medical imperative.

The satire of gendered power dynamics further enriches this conversation by situating psychological vulnerability within structures of gender inequality. Gulliver's subordination to the Queen and the maids of honour dramatizes how masculinity, often presumed to be stable and authoritative, collapses when its supporting structures are removed. As Butler (1990) argues, gender is performative and socially contingent rather than intrinsic; Swift's reversal of patriarchal authority anticipates this critique. Hooks (2000) reinforces that feminist struggle must confront the everyday practices that reproduce inequality, practices that Swift satirizes through the trivialization of Gulliver's masculinity. By aligning such literary inversions with SDG 5.1 and SDG 5.5, which call for eliminating discrimination and

empowering women, the analysis demonstrates how satire can anticipate and support global feminist agendas. Moreover, as Radstone (2007) emphasizes, the intersection of trauma and identity highlights that disempowerment is not only political but also psychological. Swift's Brobdingnag exposes this intersection with striking clarity.

The King's political judgment consolidates these concerns by framing corruption, violence, and systemic vanity as collective determinants of distress. The King's denunciation of European society functions as a critique preserved in cultural memory, echoing Olick and Robbins's (1998) claim that social memory embeds critique within shared narratives. By presenting European politics as irrational and destructive, Swift's satire links systemic violence to the diminishment of individual dignity and collective well-being. This perspective aligns with SDG 3.4's insistence that promoting mental health requires addressing systemic conditions such as conflict and inequity, as well as with SDG 5. c's call for structural reforms to ensure gender equality. Literature, in this light, becomes a vehicle for embedding critique in cultural consciousness, ensuring that the recognition of corruption and violence is preserved across generations (Kansteiner, 2002).

Taken together, these insights highlight two broader contributions of reading Swift through the SDG framework. First, the analysis demonstrates that literature offers a means of articulating the psychosocial mechanisms stigma, exploitation, subordination, systemic corruption that modern frameworks identify as barriers to health equity and gender justice. Second, it underscores the importance of cultural narratives in shaping public discourse. As Isa (2017) notes, literature provides alternative ways of narrating trauma, making visible experiences that might otherwise remain obscured. Swift's satire exemplifies this narrative power by rendering the social determinants of distress intelligible to readers in ways that statistics or policy reports cannot.

At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the methodological limitations of applying modern frameworks such as trauma theory or the SDGs to an eighteenth-century satire. These categories are historically anachronistic; Swift did not write with PTSD or feminist performativity in mind. However, as Crespo and Fernández-Lansac (2016) suggest, trauma frameworks are valuable heuristics for identifying patterns of distress across contexts, and Butler's (1990) performativity theory provides analytic clarity for understanding how Swift dramatizes the instability of gender norms. The SDGs themselves are not predictive frameworks but aspirational ones, and aligning Swift's satire with their objectives does not suggest causality but

rather demonstrates literature's relevance for articulating the conditions they seek to change.

In this respect, the discussion affirms the broader thesis: *Gulliver's Travels*, particularly its Brobdingnag episodes, offers more than satire of eighteenth-century society. It functions as a cultural critique that continues to illuminate how mental health and gender inequality are structured by environments of spectacle, care, domination, and systemic corruption. By situating Swift within the frameworks of SDG 3 and SDG 5, the analysis underscores the ongoing utility of literature in shaping public imagination and advancing global equity. The satire's enduring relevance lies in its ability to reveal not only the absurdity of past societies but also the persistent structures that continue to compromise well-being and justice today.

V.   CONCLUSION

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, particularly Book II set in Brobdingnag, reveals itself as a text of enduring relevance when examined through the lens of mental health and gender equality. The analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates that Swift's satire dramatizes mechanisms of alienation, exploitation, disempowerment, and systemic corruption in ways that closely anticipate contemporary frameworks for health equity and gender justice. By aligning close readings of Brobdingnag episodes with the Sustainable Development Goals SDG 3.4 and 3.c on mental health, and SDG 5.1, 5.5, and 5.c on gender equality this study shows that literature not only reflects historical anxieties but also clarifies enduring structures of stigma and inequality that remain urgent today.

The first part of the analysis highlighted the corrosive impact of spectacle and stigma. Gulliver's commodification as a public curiosity dramatized how alienation intensifies under conditions of exposure and ridicule. In a world where stigma continues to deter individuals from seeking treatment for mental health conditions, this eighteenth-century satire provides an early literary record of how environments of humiliation undermine well-being (Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017; Puras & Gooding, 2019). The second strand contrasted commodification with care, showing how Glumdalclitch's protective role mitigated the damage inflicted by exploitation. In doing so, Swift's satire anticipated what modern frameworks now term the social determinants of health: that resilience and recovery depend not only on clinical interventions but also on supportive social structures (Crespo & Fernández-Lansac, 2016; Foa, Molnar, & Cashman, 1995).

Equally significant was the exploration of gendered power dynamics. By situating Gulliver under the authority of the Queen and the maids of honour, Swift inverted patriarchal hierarchies, dramatizing the contingency of masculinity on social context. This satirical reversal aligns closely with Butler's (1990) argument that gender is performative and constructed, as well as with hooks's (2000) insistence that gender inequality is sustained through everyday practices. In this light, Swift's Brobdingnag episodes resonate with the aspirations of SDG 5, which seeks to dismantle discriminatory structures and empower women. The intersections of gender and psychological vulnerability further illustrate what Radstone (2007) identifies as the entanglement of trauma and identity: disempowerment operates simultaneously across psychological and social registers.

The King's judgment of European society consolidated these critiques by situating political corruption and systemic violence as collective determinants of well-being. By condemning Europeans as "a pernicious race of little odious vermin" (Swift, 1726/2003, Book II, Ch. 6, p. [insert page number]), the King's assessment embedded a critique of systemic injustice in cultural memory. As Olick and Robbins (1998) argue, collective memory preserves critique for future generations, and Swift's satire demonstrates this function with precision. The alignment of this episode with SDG 3.4 and 5.c underscores the continuing recognition that systemic violence and inequity compromise both psychological health and gender justice (Kansteiner, 2002; Puras & Gooding, 2019).

Taken together, these strands confirm that Swift's Brobdingnag episodes can be read as a cultural resource for contemporary debates on health and equality. The satire's enduring relevance lies not in its predictive accuracy but in its capacity to dramatize mechanisms that still structure human experience: stigma, commodification, gender inequality, and systemic corruption. By placing these dynamics in exaggerated relief, Swift enables readers to recognize the fragility of identity under hostile environments and the urgent need for structural reform to ensure dignity and well-being. Literature thus functions as more than an aesthetic artifact; it becomes a tool for articulating the moral imperatives that underlie global frameworks for sustainable development.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges its methodological limitations. The application of modern categories such as trauma or gender performativity to an eighteenth-century satire involves anachronism. Swift did not write with psychological models of PTSD or feminist theory in mind, and the SDGs are a twenty-first-century policy framework rather than a literary horizon. The analysis has therefore proceeded heuristically, using modern theories as analytic lenses rather than as claims of authorial intent. This methodological reflexivity is crucial, for as Crespo and

Fernández-Lansac (2016) emphasize, trauma narratives vary across contexts, and as Butler (1990) notes, the performative nature of gender cannot be retroactively imposed without historical sensitivity. The value of this approach lies not in collapsing past and present but in illuminating the continuity of mechanisms across time.

Future research could extend this analysis in two directions. First, expanding beyond Book II to include Book IV, where Gulliver's misanthropy intensifies after his encounter with the Houyhnhnms, would allow for a deeper exploration of alienation and psychological fragmentation. That section of the novel offers perhaps the most vivid literary anticipation of trauma narratives and would further strengthen the dialogue with SDG 3. Second, comparative analysis across world literatures such as examining postcolonial or eco-critical texts that similarly dramatize vulnerability and domination would expand the scope of inquiry, demonstrating how literature across cultures contributes to global debates on well-being and equality. Such work would further support the interdisciplinary project of aligning literary criticism with global policy frameworks.

In conclusion, *Gulliver's Travels* remains not only a cornerstone of eighteenth-century satire but also a text of enduring global relevance. Its Brobdingnag episodes dramatize the psychosocial and gendered mechanisms that compromise dignity, anticipate the insights of trauma and feminist theory, and resonate with the objectives of SDG 3 and SDG 5. Literature here functions as cultural memory, critique, and catalyst, underscoring that the pursuit of health equity and gender justice requires not only policy reform but also the imaginative resources that literature uniquely provides. By situating Swift's satire within the frameworks of global development, this study affirms the enduring power of literature to illuminate, challenge, and inspire the pursuit of more equitable futures.

VI.   DECLARATIONS / AUTHOR DISCLOSURE

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