

# JONATHAN SWIFT

## LIFE (1667 - 1745)

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin in 1667. He moved to England in 1689, when he became secretary to Sir William Temple. The Swift decided to take Holy Orders. He returned to Ireland as the chaplain of the Lord Justice of Ireland. In 1701 he published his first political tract and in 1704 his reputation was increased when he published two satires: *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of Books*. His most famous work, *Gulliver's Travels*, was an instant success. In the last sixteen years of his life, Swift became isolated and then he was declared insane. He died in 1745.

## ACHIEVEMENT

Swift literary production was prolific, and his most important works are:

- ***The Battle of Books***, on the controversy between modern and ancient writers;
- ***A Tale of a Tub***, a satire that describes the failing of the Protestant, Catholic and Presbyterian Churches, represented by Martin, Peter and Jack;
- ***Cadenus and Vanessa***, a poem on the love of Cadenus for Vanessa;
- ***The Lady's Dressing Room***;
- ***Journal to Stella***, a collection of letters;
- ***Gulliver's Travels***.

## GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

The very form of *Gulliver's Travels* is a parody of a sub literary genre: mariner's tales. Swift uses the description of the voyages of Lemuel Gulliver to criticize absurdities of life. Ever since Thomas More's *Utopia*, writers have understood that one of the most effective ways to criticize society is to describe a foreign world, where defects of the real world are exaggerated until they seem absurd. This is exactly what Swift does with *Gulliver's Travels*.

*Gulliver's Travels* is divided into **four parts**, each of which describes a different journey.

In part one we are introduced to **Lilliput**, a land peopled by minute beings who are at war with the neighboring state of Blefuscu.

In part two Gulliver describes the journey to **Brobdingnag**, the land of the giants. This time is Gulliver who emerges as an inferior being.

Part three concerns the flying island of **Laputa** and the desolate country of **Balnibarbi**.

In the fourth part Gulliver is abandoned on an unknown beach. Here he meets the Yahoos, men-like apes and the Houyhnhnms, intelligent horses. In this world the horses are rational creatures, while the men are trapped in unreasoning bestiality.