

Background to Gulliver's Travels

Swift was dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin when his novel came out. Since in this book he wrote about prominent political figures, he published the book anonymously. While most readers were trying like mad to find out who the author was, Swift's close friends had great fun keeping the secret

London was buzzing with rumours about the author's identity, as well as those of some of his characters. In Part I, for example, the Lilliputian Emperor- tyrannical, cruel, corrupt, and obsessed with ceremony- though a timeless symbol of bad government, is also a biting satire of George I, King of England (from 1714 to 1727), during much of Swift's career. The Lilliputian Empress stands for Queen Anne, who blocked Swift's advancement in the Church of England, having taken offense at some of his earlier, signed satires. There are two political parties in Lilliput, the Low-Heels and the High-Heels. These correspond respectively to the Whigs and Tories, the two major British political parties.

It didn't take long for people to catch on to the fact that the author was writing about England by way of Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and the land of the Houyhnhnms. And it also didn't take long for the public to discover that the author was Jonathan Swift. Not only had he been involved in some of the most important and heated political events of the time, but he was also a well-known political journalist and satirist whose style was very distinctive.