

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: JUDAEOPHOBIA IN SWIFT'S PORTRAYAL  
OF THE YAHOOOS IN *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

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For nearly three centuries, scholars have debated the sources for Swift's portrayal of the Yahooos in *Gulliver's Travels*. In this essay, I argue that Swift's representation of the Yahooos was informed by personal and cultural anxieties about Jews as a quasi-racial, ethnoreligious group. Further, I present evidence that Part Four of *Gulliver's Travels* is replete with anti-Semitic tropes. In creating the Yahooos as a symbol of the degenerate aspects of human nature, Swift deliberately or unconsciously relied on these age-old Judaeophobic projections. The attitudes towards Jews that permeated his milieu heavily informed his representation of these aspects – more heavily, in fact, than attitudes towards any of the other groups that have been put forth as sources for the Yahooos. I begin by reviewing existing theories about Swift's sources for the Yahooos. I then present extensive evidence to support my argument that Judaeophobia was at the heart of Swift's portrayal. Next, I explore the sociopolitical context for Swift's use of anti-Jewish canards. Finally, I briefly consider the factors that have led previous scholars to disregard the clear evidence for the presence, and, indeed, the ubiquity of such canards throughout Part Four of the *Travels*.

### **The Sasquatch**

Debbie Argue maintains that Swift based the “Yahoo” on a mythical creature known as the “sasquatch” that was part of North American indigenous folklore. She asserts that the physical characteristics, diet, and behavioural traits of the Yahoo are similar to those reported for the sasquatch: “Both have large lips ... and the backs of the hands of both entities are hairy.” Argue devotes particular attention to a month-long visit by four Native American chiefs to England in 1710: “The sachems [chiefs] were entertained at the highest levels of society”; she maintains that there was probably “social and

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conversational interaction between the sachems and Swift's friends," and that the chiefs' visit was reported in Dublin when Swift lived there. Argue considers it significant that the four chiefs arrived in London on 10 April and that Swift used this date for Gulliver's arrival in London after his Voyage to Laputa. She maintains that "at some time, detailed information about this creature came to the attention of Swift."<sup>2</sup> Though Argue's ideas are thought-provoking, she does not account for the fact that there are many Yahoo traits which have no parallel in legends about the sasquatch. Also, many accounts describe the sasquatch in terms that are at odds with Swift's portrayal of the Yahoo. For example, there is nothing in any of the accounts of the sasquatch to shed light on the hatred and abhorrence Gulliver feels for the Yahoo.

### People of African Descent

According to Michael Wilding, the Yahoos emblemize the long-term impact of mistreatment by slave masters, whom he likens to the British colonialists. From 1655 onwards, the British colonies included Jamaica, where by the close of the seventeenth century over 600,000 people of African descent were enslaved. Thus, Wilding is implicitly referring to black or biracial slaves.<sup>3</sup> Frantz, too, explored the idea that Swift's representation of the Yahoos was informed by descriptions of people of African descent. He points out that Swift enjoyed reading accounts of journeys to the African continent, such as Sir Thomas Herbert's 1638 travelogue of his voyage to Africa (and Asia), and that the descriptions of the indigenous population that Herbert's and similar accounts contained may have influenced Swift's depiction of the Yahoos. Frantz remarks on the "extreme loathing for the beastly Africans" characterizing seventeenth-century travel accounts: "[This was] a loathing which is equaled only by Gulliver's unspeakable abhorrence of the detestable Yahoos."<sup>4</sup> Laura Brown similarly discusses the influence of British colonialism and anti-black racism on Swift's depiction of the Yahoos.<sup>5</sup> Though these scholars offer many useful insights, they ignore the fact that the loathing and abhorrence which typified British and Irish attitudes towards

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<sup>2</sup> Debbie Argue, "Does the Yahoo in *Gulliver's Travels* Represent an Eighteenth-Century Description of the Sasquatch?" *The Relict Hominoid Inquiry*, 7 (2018), 97-106.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wilding, "The Politics of *Gulliver's Travels*," *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. R. F. Brissenden, II (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 303-22.

<sup>4</sup> R. W. Frantz, "Swift's Yahoos and the Voyagers," *Modern Philology*, 29 (1931-32), 49-57.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Brown, "Reading Race and Gender in *Gulliver's Travels*," in *Jonathan Swift, "Gulliver's Travels"*, ed. Albert J. Rivero (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2002), pp. 357-71 (363-70).

people of African descent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were also typical of anti-Jewish sentiments that were prevalent in England and Ireland and, indeed, throughout much of Europe during the same period.

According to Anthony Stewart, the Yahoos' physical appearance corresponds to Swift's concept of 'savagery.' In eighteenth-century England, a belief in Anglo-Saxon racial superiority functioned to "rationalize the slave trade since it convinced the English that they were enslaving not human beings but inferior creatures who were neither as capable of suffering nor as sensitive as people of Anglo-Saxon descent." Stewart presents evidence that there was a substantial presence of African slaves residing in England when Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels* and, indeed, from as far back as the late sixteenth century, numbering into the thousands or even the tens of thousands. He shows Swift's descriptions of the Yahoos' physical characteristics to have been associated with African slaves: "Their Heads and Breasts were covered with a thick Hair, some frizzled and others lank; they had ... a Long Ridge of Hair down their Backs, and the fore Parts of their Legs and Feet; but the rest of their Bodies were bare, so that I might see their Skins, which were of a brown Buff Colour" (*Prose Works*, XI, 223 [IV, i, 4]). He also notes, "the Face of it indeed was flat and broad, the Nose depressed, the Lips large, and the Mouth wide: But these Differences are common to all savage Nations" (*Prose Works*, XI, 230 [IV, ii, 4]). Stewart maintains that the Yahoos' hairiness and their claws are "mere exaggerations of human physical characteristics," but that the other physical characteristics mentioned by Swift "evoke typical eighteenth-century descriptions of the African." He argues against the view that the Yahoos have "an assemblage of non-European physical traits": "Swift models his savage after the people most often equated in eighteenth-century England with sub-human savagery," that is, people of African descent. According to Stewart, Swift viewed "the African's entire life as one of servitude" to the European. Stewart emphasizes that "the suppression of [an awareness of] the African in Book IV" serves to "direct attention away from the Yahoo's historical referent" because this referent is associated with the reality of England's involvement in the slave trade for more than two centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Yet if we are to accept the immediate and visible evidence of ethnic differentness for our understanding of Book Four, the differentness of the Jews – who had become more numerous and more present in public life by the early 1720s in both London and Dublin – was at least as readily detectable as that of Africans. Moreover, given that some of the purported facial and

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Stewart, "The Yahoo and the Discourse of Racialism in *Gulliver's Travels*," *Lumen*, 12 (1993), 35-43.

bodily markers of Jews (such as a 'swarthy' complexion as well as thick and curly hair) were associated, in popular consciousness, with people of African descent, Swift's depiction of the Yahoos could have been shaped not only by images of colonized and enslaved Africans but also (and perhaps even more so) by the then-common perceptions of Jews. Consistent with this idea, Nadler, in his analysis of Rembrandt's paintings, notes that "the ... dark skin, large open mouth, and thick, fleshy lips of Jews in paintings and graphic arts make them look more like cartoon characters than natural human beings."<sup>7</sup>

There are additional flaws in the argument that the Yahoos are intended to represent primarily people of African descent. Swift describes some Yahoos' hair as "lank" (that is, long, limp, and straight) and red. These hair characteristics are associated much more with Europeans than with Africans. In addition, Stewart does not account for Swift's depiction of the Yahoo as having extensive body hair and claws: his suggestion that these are exaggerated human characteristics is not convincing given that ordinarily human beings are not depicted as clawed or hirsute. Further, Swift describes the Yahoos as having a "buff" colour. "Buff" is a pale orange-brown colour, which differs substantially from the typical, darker complexions of West African slaves. Even if one grants that some of the physical characteristics of the Yahoo do suggest eighteenth-century stereotypes of Africans, many non-physical, behavioural characteristics of the Yahoos are not explained by then-prevailing assumptions about Africans. Gulliver also expresses the fear that the Yahoos will reproduce excessively and thereby become too populous for the Houyhnhnms, whereas slaveholders by contrast viewed reproduction as a desirable way to acquire more slaves. Also, the fact that the Yahoos are depicted as slaves of the Houyhnhnms does not necessarily mean that they are meant to be reflective of African descent. The biblical account of the enslavement of the Jews by the Egyptians, for example, would have been well known to Swift (Exodus 1:13-14). Likewise, Martin Luther had written, in an anti-Jewish treatise, "Let them be forced to work,"<sup>8</sup> an exhortation suggesting that Swift may have been influenced by anti-Semitism in addition to anti-black racism in his portrayal of the Yahoos' servitude.

### The Irish

In the years immediately preceding and following his completion of *Gulliver's Travels*, Brown argues, Swift set forth his "most energetic defense

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<sup>7</sup> Steven Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 62.

<sup>8</sup> "On the Jews and their Lies (1543)," trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther's Works*, 47, ed. Franklin Sherman (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1971), 121-306.

of Ireland against British colonialist policies.”<sup>9</sup> Sir Charles Firth was the first to maintain that Swift intended the Yahoos to “typify the wretched old Irish.”<sup>10</sup> In Rawson’s view, too, Swift’s descriptions of the Yahoo form “part of an old English discourse about Ireland, assimilating the Irish to the generalized savage who, from the sixteenth century onwards, went under the name of ‘Indian.’”<sup>11</sup> Sullivan, likewise, quotes from a 1726 letter Swift wrote to Sheridan in which the Dean claimed that his portrayal of the Yahoos was intended as an insult towards “that wretched, dirty Dog-hole and Prison,” Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Torchiana also discusses the parallels between the Yahoos and the Irish that were common at the time Swift wrote the *Travels*.<sup>13</sup> Ann Cline Kelly, finally, applies Swift’s term “slavery” to the Yahoos with the argument that there are “parallels between the Irish-English situation and the Yahoo-Houyhnhnm situation” which Swift raised because during the time he wrote *Gulliver’s Travels* he was advocating Irish economic independence from England. In non-fiction writings he completed at that time, Kelly continues, Swift engaged with the question of “whether the Irish [were] servile because of some defect within their character or whether their sordid condition [was] the result of a calculated policy from without to reduce them to brutishness.” According to Kelly, similar questions about the dynamics of master-slave relationships may be posed with regard to the Yahoos; thus, the Irish may be seen as a source for the Yahoos because both are subordinated:

The type of degeneracy that offends Gulliver and many readers when considering the Yahoos ... might be seen as the end product of years of oppression and deprivation by the Houyhnhnms, just as England’s economic enslavement of Ireland produced impoverishment and a spiritual malaise which promoted what many of that period perceived as a similar bestiality in the Irish ... The Yahoos, therefore, can be seen as an emblem of the fate awaiting the Irish if they continue to remain a captive colony to England.

Kelly identifies “the Houyhnhnm’s violent desire to consign the Yahoos to complete servitude” with “England’s blind urge to obliterate the Irish politically and economically.” She links Swift’s use of the adjective “grovelling” to describe the Yahoo, with then-common perceptions of the

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<sup>9</sup> Brown, “Reading Race and Gender in *Gulliver’s Travels*,” p. 358.

<sup>10</sup> Frantz, “Swift’s Yahoos and the Voyagers,” p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> E. E. Sullivan, “Houyhnhnms and Yahoos: From Technique to Meaning,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24 (1984), 497-511 (p. 509). See also *Correspondence*, ed. Woolley, II, 651-52.

<sup>13</sup> Donald T. Torchiana, “Jonathan Swift, the Irish, and the Yahoos: The Case Reconsidered,” *Philological Quarterly*, 54 (1975), 195-212.

Irish. The concept of "groveling," however, could be more readily associated with popular perceptions of diaspora Jews than with the Irish. Kelly's argument is also undermined by the fact that most of the physical characteristics attributed to the Yahoos are not characteristics associated with the Irish.<sup>14</sup>

### Women

In Brown's view, the influence of Swift's "explicit" misogyny is discernible throughout *Gulliver's Travels*. With regard to the Yahoos, she states, "their offensive smell, their naked corporeality, their connection with disease, and their uncontrolled sexuality are ... the essential attributes of the female figure. From this perspective, the whole context of Book IV takes on a new significance. The Yahoos are the prototypical women of Swift's works."<sup>15</sup> Though these ideas deserve consideration, many aspects of the Yahoos' physical and behavioural characteristics cannot be adequately accounted for by Swift's misogynous views about the female body.

### Generic Human Beings

Based on his observation that "the most vivid reaction Gulliver had to the Yahoos ... was his disgust with their stench," Webster suggests that Gulliver's attitude towards the Yahoos reflects Swift's overall disgust with Mankind, given Swift's "almost pathological hatred of human uncleanness." He concludes that "the Yahoos were never intended to represent any one specific type or kind of man or savage or beast" but rather that they referred to all of humanity.<sup>16</sup> Rawson likewise asserts that "the Yahoos ... have become a common name for the wilder, more uncivilized forms of humanity, and for savage and uncouth customs and behaviour. They are Swift's version of what we have sometimes chosen to call 'other', whom we distinguish from ourselves and whose all too probable kinship with ourselves has always disturbed our consciousness, as well as our conscience." Rawson argues, thus, that Swift's views of the Yahoos extend "to the whole human species, including not only the English but the reader and author themselves." Nevertheless, he also recognizes that there are contradictions between that

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<sup>14</sup> Ann Cline Kelly, "Swift's Explorations of Slavery in Houyhnhnmland and Ireland," *PMLA*, 91 (1976), 846-55 (pp. 849, 852).

<sup>15</sup> Brown, "Reading Race and Gender in *Gulliver's Travels*," pp. 360, 357.

<sup>16</sup> C. M. Webster, "Notes on the Yahoos," *Modern Language Notes*, 47 (1932), 451-54 (p. 454).

extension and the “inapplicability of highly specific physical details” about the Yahoo to all human beings.<sup>17</sup>

The “hard school” of literary criticism holds that “the Houyhnhnms are Swift’s ideal while the Yahoos are his satiric representation of actual mankind at its most despicable.”<sup>18</sup> Keeseey, for one, argues that “the Yahoos serve the purpose of showing mankind’s utter viciousness.”<sup>19</sup> Frantz, for another, suggests that “Swift’s Yahoo is ... man at his conceivable worst.”<sup>20</sup> Frye, Landa, and Tuveson likewise claim that the Yahoos represent all human beings.<sup>21</sup> According to Williams, the idea that the Yahoos represent humanity broadly conceived is supported by the fact that they are presented as being “descended from a pair of human beings, driven to the country by sea.”<sup>22</sup> Yet this precise description more aptly reflects the reality of the Jews who were ‘driven’ to England by sea because of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, as well as those Jews who came by sea to re-inhabit England when the Order of Expulsion was rescinded, than human beings more broadly.

### **“The Yahoos” as Code for “The Jews”**

Most of these ideas about Swift’s sources for the Yahoos at first seem to be mutually exclusive or incompatible with the argument that hostile perceptions of Jews were a major – perhaps even the primary – influence. Yet Swift probably drew upon extant biases against a variety of despised groups to undergird the satirical commentary on humanity that is the central project of *Gulliver’s Travels*. He invokes then-popular anti-Semitic tropes to make evident the worst possible bodily and behavioural traits. He then depicts all human beings, including himself, as possessing these traits.

### **What’s in a Name?**

The first and clearest indicator that Yahoos allude to Jews is in Swift’s choice of a name. “Yahoodi” or “Yahudi” (both spellings are used) means “Jew,” “Jewish,” or “Jews” in Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Turkish, and several other

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<sup>17</sup> Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Sullivan, “Houyhnhnms and Yahoos: From Technique to Meaning,” p. 497.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Keeseey, “The Distorted Image: Swift’s Yahoos and the Critics,” *Papers on Language and Literature*, 15 (1979), 320-32 (p. 326).

<sup>20</sup> Frantz, “Swift’s Yahoos and the Voyagers,” p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> All quoted in J. Sackett, “Gulliver Four: Here We Go Again,” *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, 27, no 4 (1973), 212-18.

<sup>22</sup> Kathleen M. Williams, “Gulliver’s Voyage to the Houyhnhnms,” *ELH*, 18 (1951), 275-86 (p. 275).

languages.<sup>23</sup> Variations of the word have been used in diverse contexts for centuries. For example, in Penang (Malaysia), Yahudi Road acquired its name from the age-old Jewish presence in the area. In Hebrew, the words for Jew, Jewish, and Jews, respectively, are generally spelled (in English transliteration) as Yehudi and Yehudim, but are pronounced in a manner similar to the Arabic pronunciation as “Yahoodi” and “Yahoodim.” These Hebrew pronunciations would have been familiar to Swift because he studied Hebrew (and the Hebrew Scriptures, which use these words several times) as part of his preparation for the priesthood.<sup>24</sup> The English term “Jew” originates in Biblical Hebrew (usually transliterated from Hebrew into English as “Yehudi,” and from Arabic into English as “Yahudi” or “Al-Yahud”); the word occurs 74 times in the Hebrew Bible and would certainly have been familiar to Swift.

Some scholars have argued that Swift's invention of words in *Gulliver's Travels* carries no particular significance. Such arguments are unconvincing. The word “Houyhnhnms” seems like a partial anagram for “Humyns,” that is, human beings. *Gulliver's Travels* has many examples of neologisms like this, and in many cases these can be deciphered, even if not all of the hypothesized decryptions are plausible. In a 1993 article, Richard Crider, for one, argues that the name “Yahu” is a variant of “Yahweh,” and is also a component of numerous names in the Hebrew Bible, including the Hebrew version of Swift's first name (Yehonatan, for Jonathan). He points out that the Hebrew name “Yehonatan” could be interpreted as meaning “the gift of Yahu” and that this might be the source for Swift's use of the name “Yahoo” in Book Four of *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>25</sup> It is astonishing that in an article in which the author specifically undertakes to explore the possible Hebrew origins of the

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that the association of “Yahoo” and “Jew” has persisted even into the twenty-first century. In January 2019, a Cleveland physician, Lara Kollab, whose native language is Arabic, was widely reported to have made virulent anti-Semitic remarks on social media in which she spelled the English transliteration of the word for Jew as “the yahood” (plural) and “a yahoodi” (singular). She also quotes Arabic writings about Jews using the term, in English letters, “el yahood.” See, for example, CBS News, 3 January 2019 <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lara-kollab-cleveland-clinic-doctor-fired-after-saying-she-would-give-jews-the-wrong-meds/>> for a summary; her actual “tweets” are available on <[https://canarymission.org/individual/Lara\\_Kollab](https://canarymission.org/individual/Lara_Kollab)>.

<sup>24</sup> “In 1682, Swift entered what was then Ireland's only university, Trinity College Dublin, continuing his studies in Latin and Greek, [and] Hebrew;” see Ian Campbell Ross, “Jonathan Swift,” retrieved from <<https://www.tcd.ie/trinitywriters>> on 31 March 2019. First published January 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Crider, “Yahoo (Yahu): Notes on the Name of Swift's Yahoos,” *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*, 41, no 2 (1993), 103-9.

word “Yahoo,” he does not examine the likelihood that “Yahoo” evokes the Hebrew word for “Jew.”

Equally unconvincing is Rothman’s argument that the word “Yahoo” represents the Hebrew for the holy four-letter Hebrew name of God, YHWH, combined with the backward spelling of “hnea,” which would be “aenh,” pronounced “ayn,” the Hebrew word for “not.” Rothman, thus, proposes that the “hnea Yahoo” is “the antithesis of the godhead,” that is, they are “not God.”<sup>26</sup> This argument is far less persuasive than the argument that the word Yahoo is associated with Yahoodi and Yahoodim (that is, Jews). The tetragrammaton, both in its letters and its typical pronunciation as Yahweh, is not nearly as close to Swift’s word “Yahoo” as is “Yahoodi” or “Yahoodim.” Moreover, if Swift had wanted to generate a backward spelling of the Hebrew word for “ayn,” he is likely to have done so in a simpler manner than “hnea.”

In fact, if we consider the word “Yahoo” as suggesting “Jews,” a more convincing argument would be that “hnea” should be read *forwards*, in which case it would be similar to the pronunciation of the Hebrew word “hinei” or “hineh” (both transliterations are commonly used), meaning “Behold.” Furthermore, when the actual Hebrew letters are used rather than the transliteration, the word “hineh” consists of the Hebrew letter for “h” with the Hebrew vowel for “e” underneath it (one dot below the letter “hay”), the Hebrew letter for “n” with the Hebrew vowel for “a” beneath it (two dots below the Hebrew letter “nun”), and the Hebrew letter for a silent “h” (“hay” with no vowel beneath it). Hence, Swift’s word “hnea” is much closer to the Hebrew word for “Behold” than to the backward spelling of “ayn.” Thus, it is more likely that “hnea Yahoo” signified “Behold the Jew” or “Behold the Jews” than “not God.”

### **The Yahoos’ Physical Characteristics**

Readers are introduced to the Yahoos in Part Four. For each of their physical characteristics that the narrator observes, I provide some references to the text. I then summarize the literature on Judaeophobia<sup>27</sup> as well as on Jewish history in England, Ireland, and on the Continent, to demonstrate that specific bodily characteristics that Swift emphasized with regard to the Yahoos were associated with prevalent stereotypical beliefs about Jews.

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<sup>26</sup> Irving N. Rothman, “The ‘Hnea Yahoo’ of *Gulliver’s Travels* and Jonathan Swift’s Hebrew Neologisms,” *Swift Studies*, 30 (2015), 160-75 (p. 170). Rothman’s essay offers a complete survey of all criticism dealing with the Hebrew origins of Swift’s names.

<sup>27</sup> Though *Gulliver’s Travels* was published in 1726, there are some instances in which information about the Jewish presence in England (and British and Irish attitudes towards Jews) in the *mid*-eighteenth century may nevertheless shed light on Swift’s mindset during the period in which he wrote *Gulliver’s Travels*.

*Yahoos are Bearded and Goatlike* (IV, i, 4)

'Beards' are strongly associated with Jews, and contribute to loathing as well as comic anti-Semitic representations. Stereotypical portrayals of 'the Jew' in art have persisted from medieval times onwards: "He ... is easily recognisable, displaying a ... stubbly or bearded chin."<sup>28</sup> Similarly, "the figure of a bearded Jew" is a classic visual trope: in medieval art, the "chin-beard" is a signifier of a Jew. As regards the purported resemblance of Yahoos to goats, the frequent derogatory use of goats to symbolize Jews during the Early Modern Period is well known: "The goat with its lascivious character and incessant sexual desire ... became almost as popular and widespread as the *Judensau* ... on various defamatory pamphlets."<sup>29</sup> One of the most notorious examples of Judaeophobia is John Chrysostom's (334-407 AD) sermons denouncing Jews and Jewish practices.<sup>30</sup> Drake discusses these sermons in detail. According to Chrysostom, the condition of the Jews is "no better than that of pigs or goats because of their licentious ways and excessive gluttony."<sup>31</sup> Here it is also worth noting that the phrase "goatlike beard" has been used specifically with reference to Jews.<sup>32</sup>

The fact that Swift portrays the Yahoos as bearded and also likens their beards to those of goats is sufficient evidence that the Yahoos do not primarily represent Africans or Native Americans, Irish, Sasquatch, or women. In marked contrast to Jews, none of these groups is stereotypically linked with beardedness or goats.

*Yahoos are Hairy* (IV, i, 4; ii, 4)

Hairiness is one of the older stereotypical portrayals of Jews.<sup>33</sup> A 2005 London exhibition on the history of anti-Semitic images and cartoons showed

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<sup>28</sup> Sara Lipton, "Creating the Stereotyped Root of Evil," *The Jewish Chronicle*, 11 December 2014, <<https://www.thejc.com/culture/books/creating-the-stereotyped-root-of-evil-1.63514>>, accessed 4 March 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Birgit Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: The *Judensau*. Anti-Jewish Propaganda and Humor from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period," *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 325-64 (325, 326, 353).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts* (Philadelphia: Drake University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 80-92, 93.

<sup>32</sup> Andrei Oisteanu, *Inventing the Jew: Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures*, trans. Mirela Adascalitei (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> Manfred Gerstenfeld, "Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism: Common Characteristics and Motifs," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 19, nos 1-2 (2007), 83-108 (p. 93).

that certain themes persist in anti-Semitic imagery and can be found from the Middle Ages onwards, particularly “images of Jews portrayed as hairy apes.”<sup>34</sup> In Judaeophobic representations, “Jews tend to be portrayed as swarthy and hairy.”<sup>35</sup> This Judaeophobic trope has been remarked by Nathan Abrams: “Anti-Semites have long associated Jews with body hair and savagery.” He further noted, “Jews and primates have long been associated in art, literature, Christian theology, and the anti-Semitic imagination.” He also mentions that “body hair was ... viewed as a sign of wildness and lack of civility, which were believed to be hallmarks of the Jews.”<sup>36</sup>

The fact that Swift portrays the Yahoos as hairy suggests that people of West African descent, such as slaves and their descendants in England and the British territories, were not his primary source for the Yahoos: people of West African descent are usually believed to have less body hair than many other ethnic groups. Though some of these views may reflect flawed assumptions, it is conceivable that “there are genetically influenced variations in people: Whites tend to be hairier than blacks, and among whites, Mediterranean and Semitic people tend to be hairier than Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons. The least hairy peoples are Asians and American Indians.”<sup>37</sup> We now turn our attention to a different aspect of hair, namely, its colour.

*Some Yahoos are Red-Haired* (IV, i, 4; viii, 3 and 7)

In European popular culture, non-Jews considered red hair a demonic marker of Jewishness.<sup>38</sup> According to Jacky Colliss Harvey, the fact that red hair is a recessive genetic trait increased its prominence in endogamous populations where marriage with outsiders was uncommon, as was true in Jewish communities across Europe.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, red hair was associated with

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<sup>34</sup> “London Exhibit to Feature anti-Semitic Cartoons,” ynetnews, 12 July 2005, <<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3180742,00.html>>, accessed 4 March 2020.

<sup>35</sup> <<https://www.antisem.eu/stereotypes-of-jews/>>, retrieved on 27 November 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Nathan Abrams, “Planet of the Apes: A Movie about Jews?” In *Haaretz*, 6 March 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Jane E. Brody, “Personal Health,” *The New York Times*, 18 April 1984, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/18/garden/personal-health-129975.html>>, accessed 4 March 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Jacky Colliss Harvey, *Red: A Natural History of the Redhead* (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal, 2015), pp. 61-66; Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 89-90.

<sup>39</sup> Jacky Colliss Harvey, *Red: A Natural History of the Redhead* (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal, 2015), p. 63.

depictions of Judas Iscariot.<sup>40</sup> During the Spanish Inquisition, anyone who had red hair was considered to be Jewish. In Medieval European lore, 'red Jews' were a semi-fictional group of red-haired Jews. In the earliest performances of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock, the Jew, was portrayed as a redhead.<sup>41</sup>

Ripley, too, devotes considerable attention to questions about hair colour in Sephardic ("Oriental") and Ashkenazi Jews: "Hair and eyes [are] generally dark, sometimes, however, tending to a reddish blond. This rufous tendency in the Oriental Jew is emphasized by many observers."<sup>42</sup> Several of Rembrandt's paintings depict Jews as having red hair. Levin remarks:

The association of Jews with red hair has a long history, dating back even to the Bible, in which rugged Esau and the harp-playing warrior king David were both believed to be redheads. Some more sinister Jews, too, were thought to be 'gingers': Judas and Shylock are often depicted with flaming locks. In fact, the link has become so widespread in popular culture that some believe there are more auburn-haired Jews than there are Irish, those most famous redheads.<sup>43</sup>

The long-standing association of Jews with red hair provides considerable support for the contention that Swift's depiction of the Yahoos contains allusions to Jews. Indeed, the fact that the Yahoos sometimes have red hair

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<sup>40</sup> Ruth Mellinkoff, "Judas's Red Hair and the Jews," *Journal of Jewish Art*, 9 (1982), 31-46.

<sup>41</sup> According to Stephen Greenblatt, the wigs used for actors playing Shylock were only changed from red to black with Charles Macklin's performance as Shylock in 1741 ("Shakespeare and Shylock," *The New York Review of Books*, 30 September 2010). In a response to a letter to the editors from James Shapiro, in which Shapiro disagreed with Greenblatt's view on this issue ("Letter to the Editors," *The New York Review of Books*, 14 October 2010), the latter noted that although Shakespeare's text does not mention red hair or, indeed, anything substantial that differentiates Shylock from Christians or even more general aspects of his physical appearance, there is well-documented evidence that a former actor named Thomas Jordan (c.1614-85) wrote song lyrics to paraphrase Shakespeare's plot, which include the phrase "his beard was red." Greenblatt further notes that when a well-known nineteenth-century actor performed the role of Shylock, audience members appeared surprised that he wore a black wig, and remarked on this ("Reply to James Shapiro's 'Letter to the Editors,'" *The New York Review of Books*, 14 October 2010). Shapiro, in his letter, does suggest that Barabas, in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, written in 1589 or 1590, was probably played with a red wig. Given Swift's educational background, intellectual voraciousness, and interest in reading, it seems likely that both of these plays were familiar to him.

<sup>42</sup> William Z. Ripley, "The Racial Geography of Europe: A Sociological Study, Supplement: The Jews XVII," *Popular Science Monthly*, 54 (1899), 338-51 (p. 338).

<sup>43</sup> Sara Levin, "The Biggest Jewish Genetic Myths of All Time," 28 July 2012, *Moment Magazine*, <<https://momentmag.com/the-biggest-jewish-genetic-myths-of-all-time/>>, accessed 27 November 2018.

calls into question all arguments that the Yahoos represent Native Americans, Sasquatch, or Africans, none of whom is associated with red hair. Red-headedness is only associated with the Irish and Jews.

*Yahoos Have Claws* (IV, i, 4; vii, 7)

Jews were commonly viewed as Satanic or as “children of the devil.”<sup>44</sup> Eighteenth-century images of the devil often depicted him as having claws. The notion of the “Jew claw,” that is, a Jewish person having a talon instead of a hand, is based on anti-Semitic stereotypes portraying Jews as less than human. For example, a pamphlet of 1571, entitled “On the Jews’ Respectability,” on the front cover displays a woodcut with three “grotesque, barely human-shaped figures,” two of whom featuring “devilish symbols like hooves and talons.”<sup>45</sup> Depictions of Jews in the nineteenth-century United States would often include “‘claws’ for hands [and] ‘talons’ for fingers.”<sup>46</sup> Although the nineteenth century might not seem relevant for any consideration of Swift’s sources, Nathan has rightly observed that “many of the negative views about Jews have remained essentially unchanged over the centuries and millennia.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, among the most persistent anti-Semitic images she describes are caricatures of Jews with “stereotypical hooked nose and claws.” Even now, anti-Semitic websites and YouTube videos promote the belief that Jews have claws.

*Yahoos Have Distorted and Odious Facial Features* (IV, ii, 4)

Exaggerated or distorted facial features are common in Judaeophobic caricatures. In his 2003 monograph about Rembrandt’s depictions of Jews, Steven Nadler remarks:

[In] Christian art, from the early Middle Ages to the late Renaissance ... the portrayals of Jews tend toward physical caricature, sometimes of a particularly nasty nature. The physiognomic exaggerations and deformities that generally characterize them in medieval and Renaissance art are all part of a worldview in which the Jew is not merely morally degenerate, but of a sinisterly different nature altogether ... The mocking, repulsive faces [of the Jews] around Jesus as he carries the cross in Hieronymus Bosch’s nightmarish rendering of the Passion are only some of the more extreme examples of what had become a standard artistic formula. This is more than

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<sup>44</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 352.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, “Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth-Century United States,” *American Jewish History*, 89 (2001), 355-81 (p. 377).

<sup>47</sup> Julie Nathan, “Dominant Themes in Contemporary Antisemitic Discourse,” *ABC*, 4 April 2017, <<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/dominant-themes-in-contemporary-antisemitic-discourse/10095908>>, accessed on 1 December 2018.

just ugly stereotyping. The Jew's physical grotesqueness is a sign that he is "not one of us."<sup>48</sup>

The Anglo-Welsh historian James Howell (c.1594-1660) illustrates this kind of anti-Semitic portrayal that was typical in sixteenth-century England: "'It seems there is a kind of curse also fallen upon their bodies; witness the uncouth looks and odd cast of eye.'"<sup>49</sup> During the eighteenth century, too, printed images and other visual propaganda depicted Jews as having repulsive facial features.<sup>50</sup>

*Yahoo Facial Features Associated with African Descent* (IV, ii, 4)

Among stereotypical, easily recognizable features of 'the Jew' in art, which have persisted from medieval times onwards through the centuries are "a hooked nose, full lips, heavy eyebrows, stubbly or bearded chin, and swarthy complexion."<sup>51</sup> Thus, although Stewart argues that the Yahoos' facial characteristics indicate that they represent Africans,<sup>52</sup> it is plausible that some of the Yahoo facial characteristics conceived by Swift were intended to symbolize Jews. In the years just before he wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, over 2,000 Jews were residing in London, comprising both Ashkenazim and Sephardim.<sup>53</sup> Jews in both communities were viewed as having common markers of "blackness," such as full lips and a particular shape of nose.<sup>54</sup> For example, in the eighteenth-century caricature "Jews praying in the Great Synagogue, London," titled "Devotion in Duke's Place, or Contractors Returning Thanks for a Loan," the central figure is a Jewish man with large protruding lips. A strong association between Jews and stereotypically 'African' features has also been suggested:

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<sup>48</sup> Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*, pp. 61-63.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted from James Shapiro, "How Were the Jews Regarded in 16th-Century England?" published on 15 March 2016, in the "Discovering Literature: Shakespeare and Renaissance" section of the website of the British Library. <<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/how-were-the-jews-regarded-in-16th-century-england>>, retrieved on 26 November 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Sara Lipton, "The Invention of the Jewish Nose," *The New York Review of Books*, 14 November 2014, <<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2014/11/14/invention-jewish-nose/>>, retrieved on 26 November 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Lipton, "Creating the Stereotyped Root of Evil."

<sup>52</sup> Stewart, "The Yahoo and the Discourses of Racism in *Gulliver's Travels*," p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002), p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 171-74.

The Sephardim ... are found primarily to-day in Africa ... A small colony [of Sephardim] in London and Amsterdam still holds itself aloof from [the Ashkenazi Jews] ... The Ashkenazi type ... is said to be characterized by heavier features ... The mouth [in the Ashkenazim], it is alleged, is more apt to be large, the nose thickish at the end ... The lips are full and sensual ... The complexion is swarthy oftentimes, the hair and eyes very constantly dark, without the rufous tendency which appears in the other [Sephardic] branch.<sup>55</sup>

Exploring the question of how Jews were regarded in sixteenth-century England, Shapiro remarks, "The blackness of the Jews ... caught the attention of a number of writers; when William Brereton jotted down his impressions of the Jews in the synagogue at Amsterdam in 1635, he noted that Jewish men were black."<sup>56</sup>

*Yahoo Complexion* (IV, i, 4)

For centuries, Jews were perceived to have a relatively dark complexion. In 1808, for example, James Cowles Pritchard commented that the Jews "have in general a shade of complexion somewhat darker than that of the English people."<sup>57</sup> Gilman mentions François-Maximilien Misson, who, in his *A New Voyage to Italy* of 1691, described the "Portuguese Jews" as "black," claiming that they "beget Children like themselves, and consequently the Swarthiness of their Complexion is entail'd upon their whole Race, even in the Northern Regions. But the Jews who are originally of Germany, those, for example, I have seen at Prague, are not blacker than the rest of their Countrymen."<sup>58</sup>

Though Stewart maintains that Swift intended the Yahoos to evoke the image of African slaves, the association between Jews and signifiers of 'Africanness' suggests that Stewart's assumptions may be flawed. Swift describes the complexion of the Yahoos as "a brown Buff Colour" (*Prose Works*, XI, 223 [IV, i, 4]). If he had intended to emphasize a connection with African slaves, Swift is more likely to have mentioned a dark-brown complexion rather than "brown Buff." Indeed, a "brown Buff" complexion seems more stereotypically characteristic of Jews (both Ashkenazi and Sephardic) than slaves of West African descent.

*Yahoos' Offensive Odour* (IV, ii, 5; vii, 18)

The representation of Jews as malodorous is a classic Judaeophobic trope, which manifests itself with particular perniciousness in the concept of the

<sup>55</sup> Ripley, "The Racial Geography of Europe," pp. 338-39.

<sup>56</sup> Shapiro, "How Were the Jews Regarded in 16th-Century England?"

<sup>57</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p. 173.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, pp. 171-72.

*foetor judaicus*, the “evil smell with which God is said to have afflicted the Jews” as a punishment for the killing of Christ. Thus, a pamphlet published in Germany in 1803, with the title “Against the Jews: A Warning to All Christian Fellow Citizens” claims that “God punished the Jews with a particularly bad smell.”<sup>59</sup> In sixteenth-century England, Jews were viewed in the same way: “The Jew’s body was a site of particular anxiety. English writers, including both Christopher Marlow and Thomas Dekker, make much of the *foetor judaicus*, the so-called Jewish stench.”<sup>60</sup>

While in eighteenth-century stereotypical perceptions Jews, Native Americans, and Africans were all malodorous, the belief about the “supposedly distinct smell of the Jews,” which Christians believed would allow them to distinguish Jews from non-Jews, was particularly deep-rooted: “Smell was used to indicate otherness or inferiority long before the eighteenth century ... By the early eighteenth century the perceived stink of the Jews ... had come to be seen as the product of hygiene and diet rather than a curse from God.”<sup>61</sup> In fact, “the [purported] ‘bad smell’ of the Jew is ... the first and most constant feature of anti-Judaism, and the most universal one as well.”<sup>62</sup>

When contending that the Yahoos were malodorous, Gulliver specifically refers to a weasel and a fox (*Prose Works*, XI, 265 [IV, viii, 2]). Both these animals had been used before in anti-Semitic texts. The following example, from medieval English and French bestiaries, shows that references to a weasel and a fox were coded communications about Jews:

As the bestiary hyena represents the Jews, the imagery involved in these descriptions portray Jews as predators who trick innocent and unsuspecting Christians by blending into the accepted Christian society through mimicry. So the bestiary hyena also alludes to the stereotype of Jews as masters of deception, an idea that becomes even clearer in other bestiary entries such as the fox and the weasel.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, pp. 101, 90.

<sup>60</sup> Shapiro, “How Were the Jews Regarded in 16th-Century England?”

<sup>61</sup> W. Tullett, “Grease and Sweat: Race and Smell in Eighteenth-Century English Culture,” *Cultural and Social History*, 13 (2016), 307-22 (pp. 308-9).

<sup>62</sup> Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 103. See also pp. 104-5.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Elizabeth Spencer, “The Regional Impact on Medieval Text and Image: Exploring Representations of Anti-Semitism in English and Northern French Medieval Bestiaries,” Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Project, 193 (May 2012), p. 35, <[https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone/193](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/193)>, accessed on 27 November 2018.

It is probable that Swift's references to these animals reinforced the Judaeophobic tropes he had already invoked in his references to the Yahoos' offensive smell.

*Yahoos are Diseased* (IV, vii, 12)

There is a frequent and long-standing association of Jews with disease in anti-Semitic discourse.<sup>64</sup> The Christian perception that Jews betrayed Christ contributed to a belief that Jews used Christian blood in religious rituals, caused the Black Death by poisoning wells throughout Europe, and transmitted diseases such as syphilis: "The Jew in European science and popular thought was closely related to the spread and incidence of syphilis." According to Gilman, "there had been a long tradition in Europe which held that the skin of the Jew is marked by a disease, the '*Judenkrätze*' or '*parech*,' as a sign of divine displeasure."<sup>65</sup> The Katz Ehrenthal Collection of Antisemitic Visual Materials, maintained by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, includes a handbill of a "royal edict forbidding Jews entry because they bring disease," dated 1720.<sup>66</sup> This was an "edict issued on order of George, King of Great Britain, France, Ireland, etc., Guardian of the Faith and Georg Ludwig, Prince of the Roman Empire, Braunschweig and Lüneburg, concerning an epidemic that might be spread by itinerant Jews, thereby forbidding entry in the lands under their sovereignty."

*Yahoos are Deformed* (IV, i, 4; viii, 13)

The belief that Jews are deformed is a very common stereotype. In Robert Burton's often reprinted *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the voice and physical appearance of the Jews are viewed as indicative of "their conditions and infirmities."<sup>67</sup> Johann Jakob Schudt, a seventeenth-century Orientalist, referred to "crooked feet" among the Jews as "a sign of their physical inferiority."<sup>68</sup> In his 2003 monograph about Rembrandt's depictions of Jews,

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<sup>64</sup> Kenneth Marcus, "Fact Sheet on the Elements of Anti-Semitic Discourse," Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights under Law, downloaded from <<https://brandeiscenter.com/fact-sheet-on-the-elements-of-anti-semitic-discourse/>> on 20 November 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, pp. 91, 96, 100. See also Bryan Cheyette, *Between "Race" and Culture: Representations of "the Jew" in English and American Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 27-43.

<sup>66</sup> Object Accession # 2016:184.547, <<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn544964>>, accessed on 27 November 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson, 3 vols (London: J. M. Dent, and New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961 [1621]), I, 211-12.

<sup>68</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p. 39.

Nadler quotes an early modern writer's remark that it is difficult to find a Jew "without a blemish or some repulsive feature." Jews, this writer continues, "are either pale ... or swarthy; they have in general pouting lips, protruding eyes ... and big shapeless warts, or are otherwise asymmetrical and malproportioned in their limbs."<sup>69</sup>

The outstanding physical characteristic that to a large extent distinguishes Jews in anti-Semitic stereotypes – at least the males among them – is circumcision: "The removal of the foreskin was a practice as repugnant to the ancient Romans as castration. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE) outlawed both, as they were seen as unnatural offenses against the Greek idea of the natural beauty of the human body."<sup>70</sup> Traditionally, Christians also denigrated circumcision. Over the centuries, many non-Jews viewed the practice with disapproval and even horror. The French engraver Bernard Picart (1673-1733) depicted the circumcision of a Sephardic male infant in a volume of 1722, entitled "Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the World." There was a British version of this volume.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, some Jewish men sought foreskin restoration as far back as the earliest years of the first millennium: "The circumcised penis was considered deformed and disfigured," a notion sitting "firmly in the Christian imagination as the sinister mark of Jewish difference."<sup>72</sup> Swift would have been cognizant of the Jewish practice of circumcision by April 1720 at the latest when his friend Pope published a farcical lampoon on one of his favourite enemies, the bookseller Edmund Curll, under the title "A Relation of Mr. Curll's Conversion to Judaism, and of his Circumcision," in which Pope exposed "the Ceremonial" of circumcision to merciless public ridicule.<sup>73</sup> Thus, it may not be amiss to surmise that Swift's depiction of the Yahoos as "deformed" was influenced by the dominant revulsion at male Jewish bodies.

### Yahoo Personality Traits

Having discussed the numerous ways in which Yahoo physical characteristics reflect Judaeophobic beliefs, I will now discuss Swift's depiction of Yahoo personality traits. For each Yahoo trait, I will provide references to the text,

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<sup>69</sup> Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>70</sup> Ophir Yarden, "Anti-Semitic Stereotypes of the Jewish Body," <<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/anti-semitic-stereotypes-of-the-jewish-body>>, accessed on 27 November 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, pp. 91-94.

<sup>72</sup> Leonard B. Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 102.

<sup>73</sup> *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, I: The Earlier Works, 1711-1720*, ed. Norman Ault (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936), pp. cvii-cix, 317-22.

which I will then link with the literature on Jewish history and anti-Semitism to demonstrate that the specific traits Swift invokes to portray the Yahoos were associated with then-prevalent stereotypes about Jews.

*Yahoos are Dirty* (IV, i, 4; iii, 3; vii, 16)

Numerous scholars have noted the “very mundane association of Jews with filth, stench, and uncleanness” pervasive in European countries for centuries. One of them elaborates: “In the early 17th century broadsheet *Der Juden Synagog* (The Jews’ Synagogue), the synagogue is a pigsty: pigs peep out of every possible window while Jews devote themselves to either criminal activities or studying their false and treacherous books” and “form the epitome of evil, filth, and perversion.”<sup>74</sup> Another historian emphasizes the deep-rooted stereotype of Jews as unhygienic, quoting a Bavarian author, Johann Pezzl, who summarized his impressions of a Jewish community he visited in Vienna in the 1780s. Though that is later than the period during which Swift wrote *Gulliver’s Travels*, it is reasonable to suppose that similar attitudes about Jews existed in the earlier part of the century:

There are about five hundred Jews in Vienna ... This is only the beggarly filth from Canaan which can only be exceeded in filth, uncleanness, stench, disgust, poverty, dishonesty, pushiness, and other things by the trash of the twelve tribes from Galicia ... There is no category of supposed human beings which comes closer to the Orang-Utan than does a Polish Jew ... Covered from foot to head in filth, dirt, and rags ... their necks exposed, the color of a Black, their faces covered up to the eyes with a beard ... the hair turned and knotted.<sup>75</sup>

This anti-Semitic linking of Jews with dirtiness is clearly discernible in Swift’s portrayal of Yahoo conduct.

*Yahoos Misuse and Ingest Excrement* (IV, i, 4; vii, 10; vii, 12, 13; viii, 2)

Swift represents Yahoo behaviour not only as deficient in cleanliness but also as characterized by frequent contact with excrement. Thus, the argument that Swift’s depiction of the Yahoos was influenced by Judaeophobic tropes is supported by the fact that references associating Jews with excrement were frequent in anti-Semitic discourse.

To understand popular stereotypes that linked Jews with excrement, it is important to establish some familiarity with the *Judensau*. A *Judensau*

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<sup>74</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” pp. 337, 345. See also the detailed analysis of the “dirty Jew” by Marcus, “Fact Sheet on the Elements of Anti-Semitic Discourse.”

<sup>75</sup> Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, pp. 172-73. See also Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast*, pp. 103-4.

[German for "Jews' sow"] is an artwork (stone carvings, woodcuts, prints, drawing, painting, or sculpture) depicting Jews in obscene contact with a large sow, often accompanied by anti-Semitic comments, "the Judensau [being] a standard feature of mediaeval churches, especially in Germany."<sup>76</sup> Judensäue first appeared during the thirteenth century, in Germany and several other European countries (including France and Switzerland, Sweden and Austria), and remained popular for over six centuries. They appeared mostly on the walls of churches and cathedrals, frequently facing outwards so that passers-by could see them. They also appeared in other locations, such as a bridge tower and a choir-stall seat. Intended as a way to mock Jews, they typically include images of Jews suckling (that is, drinking from the teats of) and having intercourse with the sow. One factor that contributed to these visual and verbal representations was that "pigs were linked with excrement."<sup>77</sup>

In many a *Judensau*, Jews were actually shown to be eating the sow's excrement. A woodcut from c.1470 shows Jews suckling from a pig and eating its excrement.<sup>78</sup> On another *Judensau* in Nuremberg, "a Jew is collecting a sow's excrement in a bowl." This coprophagic motif in representations of Jews had become very common by the sixteenth century. Woodcuts depicting such images were made into "leaflets and broadsheets that literally flooded the Holy Roman Empire in the Reformation period." For example, a *Judensau* in Frankfurt includes the image of a Jew "kneeling behind the sow, with the animal's excrement gushing into his eagerly opened mouth." A sixteenth-century altarpiece featured a chamber pot with a fake 'Hebrew' inscription, reinforcing the popular association between Jews and excrement. Various renditions of these *Judensäue* were widely distributed in Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries: "In the seventeenth-century engraving from Frankfurt ... a well-dressed, very contemporary-looking Jew has mounted the sow backward and holds up her tail, while a second Jew sucks at her milk and a third eats her feces."<sup>79</sup> This association was reinforced by the derisive phrases that accompanied the images: "You [Jews] guzzle down the milk [of the sow] and you devour the filth [of the sow's feces], this is after all your favorite dish," accompanied by the addendum: "Faeces were, by both scholarly and popular belief, the food of

<sup>76</sup> Concordatwatch.eu, <[http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org\\_id=858&kb\\_header\\_id=43191&order=kb\\_rank%20ASC&kb\\_id=36971](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org_id=858&kb_header_id=43191&order=kb_rank%20ASC&kb_id=36971)>, accessed on 27 November 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*," p. 337.

<sup>78</sup> Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*," pp. 350, 343-44.

<sup>79</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 208.

the devil, thus establishing, or rather cementing, the demonization of the Jews.”<sup>80</sup>

In his anti-Semitic invective *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* of 1543, some months after he had written *On the Jews and their Lies*, Martin Luther equated Jews with the Devil and portrayed them as vile and abject.<sup>81</sup> Luther described a *Judensau* at his church in Wittenberg which portrays Jews drinking from the teats of a sow, while a rabbi looks under the sow’s tail. In *Vom Schem Hamphoras*, Luther asserts that the Talmud is located in the sow’s bowels, and that this explains why the rabbi is looking under her tail.<sup>82</sup>

Beginning near the end of the thirteenth century, an “iconographic theme ... appeared in cornices in Germanic Europe ... in which Jews with big ears are being nursed by enormous sows ... Jews straddle the animal ... [and] collect its excrement.” A typical example shows a clichéd image of a Jewish man about to lick the sow’s anus, as if seeking to ingest the fecal matter. In Germany, between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these iconographic themes found expression in numerous engravings in which a Jewish man places his mouth, lips, or tongue at or near a sow’s anus, or visibly ingests its excrement, in some cases while a second Jewish man sucks at its teat.<sup>83</sup> Thus, at the time Swift wrote *Gulliver’s Travels*, Jews, in popular consciousness, were clearly associated with excrement. Although a number of other oppressed ethno-cultural groups (in particular, the Irish and people of African descent) were also viewed as having coprophagous propensities, only Jews were derided in prominent public displays.

#### *Yahoos Suck the Teats of Cows* (IV, ix, 2)

Given Swift’s penchant for punning and wordplay,<sup>84</sup> it is not far-fetched to suggest that his reference to the Yahoos suckling the teats of “cows” was a

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<sup>80</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” pp. 350, 344-45.

<sup>81</sup> The *Vom Schem Hamphoras* was translated by Gerard Falk into English in 1992 and published under the title *The Jew in Christian Theology: Martin Luther’s Anti-Jewish “Vom Schem Hamphoras,” Previously Unpublished in English, and Other Milestones in Church-Doctrine concerning Judaism* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland), pp. 166, 221.

<sup>82</sup> Wiedl comments: “[The rabbi’s] head is tilted to the side and there can be no mistaking as to where his gaze is directed: right at the sow’s anus” (“Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 340).

<sup>83</sup> Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, pp. 99, 135, and illustrations 10, 13, 14 (unpaginated).

<sup>84</sup> David Nokes, ““Hack at Tom Poley’s”: Swift’s Use of Puns,” *The Art of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Clive T. Probyn (London: Vision, 1978), pp. 43-56; Walter Redfern, *Puns*

punning allusion to Jews suckling the teats of 'sows.' As discussed earlier, the *Judensau*, which depicted a Jew sucking the teats of an animal, had been a common way of humiliating and degrading Jews for centuries; in fact, the *Judensau* was "the most successful anti-Jewish image in the German-speaking realm." *Judensäue* generally feature a combination of a Jewish man caressing the sow's anus and other Jews suckling the sow's teats. These two visual themes are "repeated in almost all renditions." A typical example is the *Judensau* found on the exterior of a cathedral in Regensburg (Ratisbon), which depicts Jews suckling a pig's teats. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was considerable expansion in the audience for and owners of *Judensäue*: "Individuals began to take hold of the possibility to acquire their own, personal *Judensau* ... Reliefs with sows suckling Jews appear on private houses ... The *Judensau* had now entirely moved from the ecclesiastical to the lay sphere."<sup>85</sup> Even if "cow" was not intended as a pun for 'sow,' the very fact that the Yahoos are reported to suck the teats of a creature that shares core features with swine (both are even-toed hoofed mammals) points to iconographic parallels between Swift's portrayal of the Yahoos and stereotypical depictions of Jews.

*Yahoo Noises* (IV, i, 4; ix, 2)

From the first centuries of the Christian era to the present, gentiles have perceived Jews as noxiously loud. In her "cultural history ... of 'the noisy Jews,' as they were 'heard' by non-Jews," Ruth HaCohen focuses on "the historical categorization of the Jew as a producer of noise in a Christian universe conceived of as dominated by harmonious sounds." She notes that "the accusation of the Jews as noisemakers originated in early Christianity, but it is apparently only in the second millennium, and mainly in western Europe, that it permeated cultural contexts that intensely engaged both accusers and accused."<sup>86</sup> According to Gilman, "the calumny that Jews are a noisy bunch and that Christians always sound like the music of the spheres is one well rooted in the dichotomy between *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga* in the early Church. It plays itself about after the Reformation in the stereotype of the *Judenschule*, a proverb even today for acoustical chaos in German."<sup>87</sup>

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(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986 [1984]), pp. 53-55 and *passim*; and Simon J. Alderson, "Swift and the Pun," *Swift Studies*, 11 (1996), 47-58.

<sup>85</sup> Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*," pp. 325-26, 342.

<sup>86</sup> Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. xii, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Sander Gilman, "Rev. Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)," *Min-ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online*, 12

*Judenschule* was “the usual German expression for ‘synagogue’ in medieval times ... The lack of decorum in the ancient synagogues imposed on the term ‘Judenschule’ the meaning of ‘a disorderly crowd.’”<sup>88</sup>

Much of Birgit Wiedl’s insights from her examination of nineteenth-century English caricatures of Jews is applicable to attitudes towards Jews in eighteenth-century England as well. In particular, she observed: “The Jews’ language was ridiculed; presented as some sort of gibberish no rational human would want to speak; at the same time, the ‘ominous’ quality of their language was pointed out, hinting at a clandestine and most likely hostile communication that was taking place between the Jews, both local and foreign.”<sup>89</sup> Another researcher uncovered an equally hostile “tradition of representing the ‘hidden’ language of the Jew as a signifier of specific difference ... A stereotype within the Christian world ... represents the Jew as possessing all languages or no language of his or her own; of having a hidden language which mirrors the perverse or peculiar nature of the Jew; of being unable to truly command the national language of the world in which he or she lives.” This stereotype may have arisen at least partly from discomfort with the fact that Christ’s words as spoken in The New Testament had to be translated into Greek, Latin, German, or English for Christian readers to understand them.<sup>90</sup>

Sephardic Jews spoke Ladino, a language based mainly on Old Spanish but with a Hebrew alphabet and with elements of Ottoman Turkish, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and the old Romance languages of the Iberian peninsula (Old Aragonese, Astur-Leonese, Old Catalan, Galician-Portuguese, Mozarabic). Ashkenazi Jews spoke Yiddish, a language that, while written with a version of the Hebrew alphabet, is based mainly on a German vernacular with elements from Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as with traces of Slavonic and Romance languages. It is quite possible that the unfamiliarity and perceived foreignness of Sephardic and Ashkenazi ways of speaking would have made Swift (and other gentiles) anxious if they heard members of either or both of these Jewish communities talk or pray. In Swift, the fact that the “Braying” of asses would be preferable to the “Howlings” of the Yahoos (*Prose Works*, XI, 272 [IV, ix, 2]) may reflect an unconscious (or, indeed, a deliberate) association between “braying” and “praying.” Compared to typical

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(2014), p. 1, <[www.biu.ac.il/~min-ad/Gilman-rev-HaCohen.pdf](http://www.biu.ac.il/~min-ad/Gilman-rev-HaCohen.pdf)>, accessed on 14 March 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Gottheil and Gotthard Deutsch, “Judenschule,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9048-judenschule-schola-judaeorum>>, accessed on 1 December 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 349.

<sup>90</sup> Gilman, *The Jew’s Body*, pp. 12-13.

modes of Christian worship, the prayer practices among both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews would probably have been experienced by Swift and his gentile friends as acoustically aversive.

Jews pray communally only when there is a “minyan,” that is, a group of at least ten men, and most of their prayers are said aloud in Hebrew. To outsiders (in particular, Christians), this may be experienced as loud, mumbling, and chaotic. The claim that references to the Yahoos’ noisy “Braying” were a coded communication about the Jews’ “praying” is supported by recent observations on the perceptions of Jews in London during the latter half of the seventeenth century. In 1657, which was not long after Jews had officially been permitted to return to England, the first synagogue in London was established, in a large building, with a 21-year-lease, indicating that the increased presence of the Jews was more than fleeting. The building could hold over 100 people, and, as is traditional in synagogue practice, the Jews went to the synagogue twice a day, in the early morning and again in the afternoon:

Londoners gawked at the sight and often went and watched the ceremonies. At the time, Jewish services were conducted by the cantor, and were comprised almost entirely of singing in Hebrew. The Christian English enjoyed mocking the Jews’ songs. Violet [a Christian] did not see the humor in the situation, but instead was extremely irritated that people would attend this neighborhood synagogue twice a day and create a terrible racket.<sup>91</sup>

While other ethno-cultural groups, in popular consciousness, may also have been associated with pernicious noise, in the years leading up to Swift’s work on *Gulliver’s Travels*, there were specific historico-cultural factors that gave the accusation of unpleasant noisiness Judaeophobic resonances. Thus, Swift’s references to the Yahoos’ disagreeable sounds may well reflect British and Irish distaste for Jewish religious practices and modes of expression.

*Yahoos are Detestable, Odious, Abominable, and Evil* (IV, i, 4; ii, 3, 5; iii, 10; vii, 12; ix, 11)

Swift’s descriptions of the Yahoos are strikingly congruent with Judaeophobic attitudes common before and during the eighteenth century: “Until the eighteenth century, Jews had almost everywhere been despised outcasts.”<sup>92</sup> Another historian goes a step further: “Anti-Semitism’s core

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<sup>91</sup> Amos Tubb, *Thomas Violet, A Sly and Dangerous Fellow: Silver and Spying in Civil War London* (New York and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), p. 109.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 103.

theme is that Jews embody absolute evil.”<sup>93</sup> The term “ontological antisemitism” has been used to connote “hostility toward Jews that concentrates on their being rather than their religion or economic practices, or any one particular attribute.”<sup>94</sup> Though that term was not coined until the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of perceiving Jews as intrinsically and immutably evil existed in the eighteenth century as well.<sup>95</sup>

According to David Turner, “for two centuries following the ‘John’ gospel the Church Fathers relentlessly ... attacked ‘the Jews’ in a literature that became known as *Adversus Judaeos* [Against the Jews].” Among the polemicists were “some of the most famous early Christian theologians,” such as Saint Ambrose, who around 340 CE denounced “the Jews [as] the most worthless of all men”: “They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the Devil ... The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible ... The Jew must live in servitude forever ... It is essential that all Christians hate them.”<sup>96</sup> It is noteworthy that Saint Ambrose used the word “odious,” the very word with which Swift characterizes the Yahoos.

Similarly, the Emperor Constantine, in a letter after the First Council of Nicaea, stipulated, using the word “detestable” that Swift applies at least three times to the Yahoos: “Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.”<sup>97</sup> The word “evil,” with which Swift describes the Yahoos several times, was also frequently used in anti-Semitic discourse: “Jews are seen as the carriers of a uniquely transcendent evil. No other group of people on the planet is accused so much and of such fantastic wrongs.”<sup>98</sup> Likewise, Gregory of Nyssa, a major fourth-century bishop revered by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican Christians, remarked:

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<sup>93</sup> Gerstenfeld, “Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism: Common Characteristics and Motifs,” p. 84.

<sup>94</sup> Walter H. Sokel, “Dualistic Thinking and the Rise of Ontological Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Shofar*, 5, no 4 (1987), 22-32 (p. 22).

<sup>95</sup> See also David Norman Smith, “The Social Construction of Enemies: Jews and the Representation of Evil,” *Sociological Theory*, 14, no 3 (1996), 203-40.

<sup>96</sup> David Turner, “The Jewish Problem: From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism. *Adversus Judaeos* (Against the Jews),” in *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 September 2014, <<https://www.jpost.com/Blogs/The-Jewish-Problem---From-anti-Judaism-to-anti-Semitism/The-Jewish-Problem-Adversus-Judeaos-Against-the-Jews-376333>>, accessed on 20 November 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Harold Attridge and Gōhei Hata, *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 319.

<sup>98</sup> David Mikics, “Why literally everyone in the world hates the Jews, and what to do about it,” *Tablet Magazine*, 4 September 2013, <<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/143487/academic-anti-semitism>>, accessed on 20 November 2018.

"The Jews are a brood of vipers, haters of goodness."<sup>99</sup> In other words, it is noteworthy that the Yahoos' vileness is intrinsic and immutable: "His Honour, to my great Admiration, appeared to understand the Nature of *Yahoos* in all Countries" (*Prose Works*, XI, 278 [IV, x, 2]). In anti-Semitic discourse, "the nature of Jews" is a common phrase.

In fact, Gulliver's remarks that the epithet "Yahoo" is added to "anything that is evil" in Houyhnhnm language (*Prose Works*, XI, 296 [IX, xii, 12]) are strikingly congruent with ways the word "Jew" has been used for centuries. The prefix "Jew," hyphenated, is used in many insulting English compounds: Jew-nail, Jew-craft, Jew-cart, and so forth. To cut a long story of opprobrium short, "The noun 'Jew' has been a slur in English since the seventeenth century ... To the Jew-haters of the world, Jewness, with all the genetically heritable perfidy it entails, is an essential and ineradicable trait."<sup>100</sup> Significantly, this common use of the name as part of compound negatives does not occur with the other hypothetical sources for Swift's Yahoos.

*Yahoos are Troublesome, Unteachable, Untamable, Restive* (IV, iii, 4; viii, 3; ix, 2)

Numerous adjectives Swift uses to refer to the Yahoos are identical with, or similar to, words denouncing Jews for centuries. In late-eighteenth-century descriptions, Jews are deemed "unteachable,"<sup>101</sup> but they had already been vilified as "obstinate" and "unteachable" centuries earlier.<sup>102</sup> Many scholars have linked the concept of "stiff-necked" (used in the Bible to refer to Jews) with stubbornness, perhaps because they refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Similarly, Erasmus (1466-1536), the Dutch humanist who had originally trained as a Catholic priest, remarked, "I know that you can scarcely find an animal more untameable than a stubborn Jew."<sup>103</sup>

Stereotypes of Jews as untamable were rooted in the difficulties Christians encountered when attempting to convert them. In the mid-seventeenth century, for example, the English Puritans (who at the time were

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Turner, "The Jewish Problem: From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism. Adversus Judaeos (Against the Jews)."

<sup>100</sup> Mark Oppenheimer, "Reclaiming 'Jew,'" *The New York Times*, 22 April 2017, p. SR 11.

<sup>101</sup> David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 256.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Dennis D. Martin's *Fifteenth Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 60.

<sup>103</sup> Shimon Markish, *Erasmus and the Jews*, trans. Anthony Olcott (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 96.

a strong political group) were opposed to the toleration of Jews, doubting that they could successfully be converted to Christianity. These doubts were expressed in anti-Semitic pamphlets, such as those by William Prynne and “WH.”<sup>104</sup> A closely related idea is that Jews are proud. At the end of the *Travels*, Swift makes Gulliver refer to the “pride” of the Yahoos (*Prose Works*, XI, 296 [IX, xii, 12]). In an article for *The Examiner* in April 1711, Swift had already remarked that “the *Jews* are allow’d to be a *stiff-necked and rebellious people*.”<sup>105</sup> In Swift’s historico-cultural milieu, qualities such as stubbornness and pride were also attributed to other ethno-cultural groups, it is true, but even so his depiction of the Yahoos appears to have been heavily informed by the then-prevalent anti-Semitic tropes.

*Yahoo Cunning and Deception* (IX, iii, 4; v, 8; viii, 3)

By the nineteenth century, long-standing stereotypical associations of Jews with deceptiveness had almost certainly left a deep imprint on English and Irish attitudes towards Jews. In a study of the Jewish Naturalization Controversy of 1753, Singer remarks:

Ancient and medieval notions of Jewish heresy and treachery made it possible for the anti-Whig propagandists to cast the Jews up against modern notions of what it meant to be British. It was not merely for religious and political treason, however, that the Jews were cast as a people to fear. Older established suspicions of Jewish financial treachery, combined with eighteenth-century ideals of property, wealth, and power, solidified the anti-Jew Bill argument and perhaps gave it its sharpest teeth.<sup>106</sup>

In Christian theological tradition, Jews are often presented in connection with animals that were considered deceptive, such as hyenas. Scorpions, likewise, were used to symbolize Jewish deceitfulness: “They are peaceful in appearance, friendly on the surface, yet woe betide anyone who touches them, they will sting with their venomous barb which they had so treacherously kept hidden from view – like the Jews, who appear as if they meant no harm but seek to poison Christians with their false teachings.”<sup>107</sup> In Ireland, these

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<sup>104</sup> Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 17-53.

<sup>105</sup> *Swift vs Mainwaring: “The Examiner” and “The Medley,”* ed. Frank H. Ellis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 360-61.

<sup>106</sup> Alan H. Singer, “Great Britain or Judea Nova? National Identity, Property, and the Jewish Naturalization Controversy of 1753,” *British Romanticism and the Jews: History, Culture, Literature*, ed. Sheila A. Spector (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002), pp. 19-36 (28).

<sup>107</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 334.

ideas may be traced back to at least the first millennium: "They 'know' that Jews are not trustworthy, that Jews bearing gifts are not to be taken into one's care." There are "implicit assumptions here about Jewish perfidy and untrustworthiness."<sup>108</sup> Spencer, in her analysis of anti-Semitic canards in *The Aberdeen Bestiary*, argues that a "fox ... reflects the ... idea of Jews as using deception to lure unsuspecting Christians to their death. Because ... deception is a common anti-Semitic stereotype, the fox becomes a representation of medieval Jews." She elaborates:

The fox pretends to be 'dead,' effectively convincing other animals that he is incapable of harm and therefore not a threat. By building upon the idea that the Jew is a master of deception introduced by the bestiary's hyena, the fox's deception becomes an allegory for Jews in medieval society. As the fox cunningly cloaks his dangerous intentions from other animals, medieval Jews could be seen blending into society as a hidden menace. In fact, both the hyena and the fox portray the symbolized Jew as a masked danger, a lurking threat waiting to strike.<sup>109</sup>

Stereotypical descriptions of Jews as "cunning" are among the most persistent of all anti-Semitic tropes.<sup>110</sup> A particular form of deceptiveness with which Yahoos are associated is "Coining false Money" (*Prose Works*, XI, 244 [IV, iv, 6]). This was a common accusation levelled against Jews in England prior to and during the eighteenth century. Among the reasons given for their expulsion from England were "violations of the king's coinage," also described as "clipping and counterfeiting of coins." In fact, the term "Jewboy" referred to young Jewish boys who were accused of selling counterfeit coins in eighteenth-century London.<sup>111</sup> By contrast, cunning and counterfeiting of coins are not qualities typically associated with portrayals of the Irish, Sasquatch, "Hottentots," African slaves, or other groups proposed as sources for Swift's Yahoos.

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<sup>108</sup> Aidan Beatty and Dan O'Brien, "Ireland's Complex Jewish History: Influential Figures who were anti-Semites," 23 October 2018, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/ireland-s-complex-jewish-history-influential-figures-who-were-anti-semite-1.3671755>>, accessed 28 November 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Spencer, "The Regional Impact on Medieval Text and Image: Exploring Representations of Anti-Semitism in English and Northern French Medieval Bestiaries," pp. 35-36.

<sup>110</sup> Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 247.

<sup>111</sup> Tubb, *Thomas Violet, A Sly and Dangerous Fellow*, pp. 105-18.

*Yahoos are Gluttonous and Devouring* (IV, vii, 10; viii, 4)

In John Chrysostom's Antioch *Sermons against the Jews*, "accusations of excess in food and drink" and "Jewish proclivities for gluttony and lasciviousness" were key tropes: "John Chrysostom anxiously and assertively repeats stereotypes of Jews in his effort to construct Jewish and Christian identities as antithetical and mutually exclusive ... Chrysostom further embellishes his invective against Jews by accusing them of drunkenness and gluttony," continuing that Jews "live for their bellies" and that "their condition is no better than that of pigs or goats because of their licentious ways."<sup>112</sup> These invectives led to the stereotype of "the devouring Jew," a commonplace that persisted from the medieval period up to the mid-twentieth century and climaxed in the charge that Jews were capable of "horrible oral crimes, such as the ... devouring of children."<sup>113</sup> The persistence and ubiquity of this trope may be taken for granted. Swift was undoubtedly exposed to it, and this exposure probably shaped his portrayal of the gluttonous and devouring Yahoos.

*Yahoo Greed and Power-Hunger* (IV, iv, 6; vi, 1; vii, 7-9)

Gulliver's discussion of Yahoo avarice might seem broadly applicable to Europeans in general and to a variety of non-Jewish ethnic groups: "Swift is also specifically targeting fashionable Irish women who, by preferring expensive imports over native products, were ruining the country's economy," one critic has ruled.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, it is astonishing that Swift scholars have not recognized that the Dean's portrayal of this aspect of Yahoo behaviour particularly resonates with anti-Semitic tropes. In fact, by then, the stereotype of the greedy Jew had already had a long history, originating in the Middle Ages: "Jews were closely connected with the sins of greed and excessive luxury," one historian has noted, and several others have followed suit; here is one example among many: "Excluded from agriculture, commerce, and handicrafts, the Jews were driven to the practice of usury, and a new stereotype was formed, of the Jew as the greedy, bloodsucking moneylender;" while another states, "the English typically had a very

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<sup>112</sup> Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, pp. 82-83; see also Wiedl, who notes that depictions of Jews with pigs in medieval *Judensäue* represented gluttony ("Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*," p. 329); and T. S. Kord, *Lovable Crooks and Loathsome Jews: Antisemitism in German and Austrian Crime Writing before the World Wars* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2018), p. 228.

<sup>113</sup> Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art*, p. 247.

<sup>114</sup> Jonathan Swift, "Gulliver's Travels", ed. Rivero, p. 213n7.

negative view of Jews as greedy, dishonest moneylenders who probably wanted to kill Christians.”<sup>115</sup>

Swift would presumably have been familiar with Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock as an avaricious, greedy, and usurious Jew in *The Merchant of Venice*. By the seventeenth century, Jews were strongly associated with usury in the popular imagination: “A money pouch that is dangling off the belt of the Jew kneeling behind the sow was added to some of the [*Judensau*] renditions, making sure that no one missed the connection.”<sup>116</sup> The satirical prayer that concludes Pope's “Relation of Mr. Curll's Conversion to Judaism” echoes the widely held cliché that Jews were avaricious: “*May all good and well-disposed Christians be warn'd by this unhappy Wretch's woful Example to abominate the heinous Sin of Avarice.*”<sup>117</sup>

#### *Yahoos' Obsession with Gemstones* (IV, vii, 7-9)

Swift's readers usually take the Yahoos' love for “*shining Stones*” to refer to gemstones, more specifically, to diamonds. In eighteenth-century England, Jews were clearly associated with trade in diamonds and other gems: “In the trade in uncut diamonds from India to England ... Jewish involvement was substantial and often predominant,” as the business records of the East India Company demonstrate, for example. This business was extensive: “Official imports into England – excluding the smuggling trade – varied much, but at their best in the years 1724-1730 averaged nearly £100,000 per annum.”<sup>118</sup> In 1749, a well-known diamond trader, Francis Salvador, was “commissioned to deliver three million ounces of silver to the East India Company, to be used in the purchase of Indian diamonds,” in a partnership with Samson Gideon, “a wealthy Jewish-turned-Christian financier.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 330; Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 102; and Tubb, *Thomas Violet, A Sly and Dangerous Fellow*, p. 106. See also M[y] J[ewish] L[earning], “Anti-Semitism 101: What You Need to Know about the World's Oldest Hatred,” <<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/anti-semitism-101/>>, accessed 27 November 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Wiedl, “Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*,” p. 350.

<sup>117</sup> *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, I: The Earlier Works, 1711-1720*, ed. Ault, p. 322.

<sup>118</sup> Gedalia Yogeve, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), pp. 81-93.

<sup>119</sup> Tijl Vanneste, “Money Borrowing, Gold Smuggling, and Diamond Mining: An Englishman in Pombaline Circles,” *The e-Journal of Portuguese History*, 13, no 2 (2015), 80-94 (p. 83), <[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Portuguese\\_Brazilian\\_Studies/ejph/html/issue26/pdf/v13n2a05.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Portuguese_Brazilian_Studies/ejph/html/issue26/pdf/v13n2a05.pdf)>, accessed on 1 December 2018.

By 1700, the Anglo-Jewish community was well established in London: “The fifty years since [the] readmission [of the Jews] had seen the movement of much of the commerce of Portugal into the hands of English merchants.” As a result, “the Jews had helped to gain for England an ultimate primacy in world commerce ... By 1700 The Jewish community consisted mainly of merchants but also included ... dealers in bullion and diamonds.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, in eighteenth-century England, the fact that many Jews “were dealers in precious stones,” was taken for granted.<sup>121</sup> It seems clear that Swift’s disapproving portrayal of Yahoo obsession with gemstones alluded to Jews.

*Female Yahoo Lustfulness* (IV, viii, 6)

The portrayal of Jewish women as sexually “insatiable” is a common element of anti-Semitic discourse, and the stereotype of the lustful ‘Jewess’ a well-known trope. According to Brownmiller’s landmark book, “the reputation for unbridled sensuality has followed Jewish women throughout history ... and has its origins in the Jewish woman’s experience of forcible rape.”<sup>122</sup> Jewish women’s actual experiences of rape in the context of anti-Semitic violence has led gentile men to project onto Jewish women distorted views about their sensuousness and promiscuity. Farcical, hypersexualized representations of Jewish women (as well as men) were present in English literature from the Restoration period onward.<sup>123</sup> In general, it may be said that Christian representations of Jewish sexuality endorsed such accounts: “Church fathers used accusations of fleshliness, bestiality, and licentiousness as strategies to differentiate the ‘spiritual’ Christian from the ‘carnal’ Jew.”<sup>124</sup>

Here it is perhaps worth considering that Swift’s portrayal of the female Yahoo who assaults Gulliver when he disrobes to bathe in the stream may be a reversal of the Biblical story of Bathsheba, whom King David observed bathing and then lusted after (and presumably raped) (2 Samuel 11-12).

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<sup>120</sup> Laura Vaughan, “A Study of the Spatial Characteristics of the Jews in London 1695 and 1895,” Thesis for the Master of Science in Advanced Architectural Studies, The Bartlett Graduate School, University College London, September 1994, p. 12.

<sup>121</sup> Marcus Roberts, “The Story of England’s Jews: The First Thousand Years,” Oxford Heritage Projects (2007), pp. 2, 28. *The National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trail*, <[http://www.jtrails.org.uk/cms\\_file/?file\\_id=312](http://www.jtrails.org.uk/cms_file/?file_id=312)>, accessed 25 November 2018.

<sup>122</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1975), pp. 130-31.

<sup>123</sup> Aaron Kaiserman, *Evolutions of Jewish Character in British Fiction: Nor Yet Redeemed* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), p. 32.

<sup>124</sup> Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, pp. 3-5, 9-10, 13-15, 82-83, and *passim*. See also Jeremy Webster, “The ‘Lustful, Bugging Jew’: Anti-Semitism, Gender, and Sodomy in Restoration Political Satire,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 6, no 1 (2006), 106-24.

### Gulliver's Emotional Responses to the Yahoos

Thus far, I have considered marked congruities between Swift's representation of the Yahoos' bodily and behavioural attributes and Judaeophobic tropes. Further, I have argued that most of these attributes were not typical of other groups that have been put forward as Swift's sources for the Yahoos. In this section, I present evidence that Gulliver's affective responses to the Yahoos are suggestive of hostile emotions towards Jews that were present in popular consciousness as well as in numerous written works.

#### *Antipathy, Contempt, Aversion, Hatred, Abhorrence* (IV, i, 4; iv, 4)

Gulliver's sentiments as portrayed in his *Travels* are strikingly congruent with the evidence of Christian contempt for, and abhorrence of, Jews discernible in all sorts of literary, theological, and historical documents up to the early eighteenth century. As the French-Jewish historian Jules Isaac has shown, the teaching of contempt for Jews was a core component of Christian anti-Semitism.<sup>125</sup> The early Church Fathers, the medieval theologians, and the individuals who spearheaded the Protestant Reformation all taught contempt for Jews.<sup>126</sup> The Fathers of the Church went so far as to develop "a comprehensive interpretation of Jewish religion and history that in sum was a teaching of contempt ... [Jewish] degradation, expulsion, and even deadly violence ... seemed to be only appropriate. The result: abhorrence of Jews was injected deep into European culture."<sup>127</sup>

Many contemporary scholars have argued that "anti-Semitism" is a misnomer that fails to capture the perniciousness of Christian sentiments towards Jews, and that "Jew-hatred" would be a more accurate term.<sup>128</sup> Christian antipathy towards Jews throughout the centuries was manifested in

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<sup>125</sup> Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964). See also Bruce D. Thompson, *Echoes of Contempt: A History of Judeophobia and the Christian Church* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

<sup>126</sup> Gareth Lloyd Jones, "Teaching Contempt: The Jew through Christian Eyes," *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 20, no 1 (1999), 5-20.

<sup>127</sup> Gilbert S. Rosenthal, ed., *A Jubilee for All Time: The Copernican Revolution in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), p. 66.

<sup>128</sup> Thomas A. Idinopulos, *Betrayal of Spirit: Jew-hatred, the Holocaust, and Christianity* (Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, 2007), pp. 3-26; Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

a variety of theological anti-Jewish writings, leading to mass expulsions of Jews in the Middle Ages and not excepting expulsion from England.<sup>129</sup>

Gulliver's emotions towards the Yahoos had specific resonances with the Jew-hatred that permeated Swift's cultural milieu. Although racism and prejudice existed towards other ethnic groups (such as Africans and Irish), the intensity and rigidity of the narrator's loathing strongly suggest an allusion to Jews rather than to any other ethnic group.

### **Beliefs about the Yahoos**

In this section, I demonstrate that Gulliver's (and the Houyhnhnms') views about the Yahoos are imbued with anti-Semitic canards common in Swift's milieu.

*Yahoos are Cursed* (IV, i, 4; iii, 8, iii, 14)

The belief that Jews were "cursed" is a classic Judaeophobic trope. In the minds of many Christians, "Jews and all their descendants in perpetuity were sometimes perceived as subject to a divine curse from which only baptism could save them."<sup>130</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "it was ... common to ascribe the smell of the Jews to a curse from God that was inherited through several generations."<sup>131</sup> The view that Jews were "eternally damned" and deserved "divine wrath" was a consistent topos in Christian theology from its earliest beginnings: "The basic themes of the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition were set within the New Testament. The anti-Judaic writing of the church fathers consolidate, extend, and harden this tradition." Further, these ideas were "repeated over and over in every Christian sermon, biblical commentary, or theological treatise which touched on the Jews."<sup>132</sup> As a result, Swift would almost certainly have been familiar with this stance. Here it is important to note that none of the other groups that have been put forth as

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<sup>129</sup> Gerard S. Sloyan, "Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries," <<https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20070119-persecution.pdf>>, downloaded 1 December 2018. See also Revd John T. Pawlikowski, "Introduction to Gerald S. Sloyan's Article on Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries," <<https://www.ushmm.org/research/about-the-mandel-center/initiatives/ethics-religion-holocaust/articles-and-resources/christian-persecution-of-jews-over-the-centuries>>, accessed 1 December 2018.

<sup>130</sup> Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 101; see *A Jubilee for All Time*, ed. Rosenthal, p. 71.

<sup>131</sup> Tullett, "Grease and Sweat: Race and Smell in Eighteenth-Century English Culture," p. 309.

<sup>132</sup> Rosemary R. Ruether, "Anti-Semitism in Christian Theology," *Theology Today*, 30, no 4 (1974), 365-81 (pp. 376, 374, 377).

possible sources for the Yahoos are specifically associated with being "cursed."

*Yahoos as Subhuman Brutes* (IV, i, 4; iii, 8)

The characterization of Jews as non-human is also a standard anti-Semitic tactic.<sup>133</sup> Since ancient times, Jews have been compared in derogatory terms to barnyard and wild animals. In some influential ancient Christian texts, for example, Jews are compared to pigs, goats, and cows. Thus, Chrysostom's *Sermons against the Jews* contain many stereotypes of Jews, "including insidious images of Jewish men as [brute animals]." A Chrysostom scholar remarks: "With this image of Jewish dogs, Chrysostom introduces a theme that will interweave throughout the remainder of his sermons *Adversus Iudaeos*: the sustained caricature of Jews as animals ... known for licentious, promiscuous, and brute behavior: dog, heifer, hyena, and stallion."<sup>134</sup> The use of "beast-Jew hybrids" in medieval art both reflected and promoted [this] dehumanization of Jews." A *Judensau* at Eberswalde, for example, emphasizes "the Jews' beastly, non-human descent." In the early modern *Judensäue*, the Jews are marked as "a different, and lesser form of being, as offsprings of a beast;" in the words of the German surgeon and well-known anti-Semite Hans Folz (1435/40-1513), the Jews were the "step-children of she-monkeys, jennies, and pigs."<sup>135</sup>

At one point in the *Travels*, Gulliver remarks that the Yahoos would "imitate [his] Actions after the Manner of Monkeys" (IV, viii, 1). The association of Jews with monkeys is another example of an anti-Semitic canard. In the Katz Ehrenthal Collection of anti-Semitic artifacts and visual materials, there is a colour engraving, published and distributed in eighteenth-century Germany, of "a bearded saki monkey once called the Jew monkey."<sup>136</sup> The collection has several other examples that illustrate this

<sup>133</sup> Marcus, "Fact Sheet on the Elements of Anti-Semitic Discourse."

<sup>134</sup> Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, pp. 83-84. See also *A Jubilee for All Time*, ed. Rosenthal, p. 66, and Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination*, pp. 74-87, for a more detailed analysis of the literary use of animal metaphors to belittle Jews; as well as Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast*, pp. 98-99 and 103-4, for a discussion of popular beliefs and iconography portraying Jews as having porcine anatomical or behavioural traits.

<sup>135</sup> Wiedl, "Laughing at the Beast: *The Judensau*," pp. 328, 346. See also Moshe Lazar, "The Lamb and the Scapegoat: The Dehumanization of the Jews in Medieval Propaganda Imagery," in *Anti-semitism in Times of Crisis*, eds Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 38-80.

<sup>136</sup> Object accession # 2016.184.188, <<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn538306>>, accessed 1 December 2018.

association, among them, a caricature of a bearded Jewish male connected to the body of a fat monkey (object accession # 2016.184.325) published in France, and a 1900 caricature, also published in France, of a bejewelled Jewish woman “with sagging breasts and the body of a monkey” (object 2016.184.321). Similar themes likening Jews to monkeys and apes were common in diverse artistic and literary works across Europe. Examples include medieval manuscript illuminations, the 1732 engraving *A Harlot’s Progress* by the English artist William Hogarth, and Jessica’s mocking of Shylock’s marriage by exchanging her mother’s wedding ring for a monkey, in *The Merchant of Venice*.<sup>137</sup> While the deliberate linking of despised ethnic groups with subhuman or bestial characteristics is found in representations of a variety of such groups, these dehumanizing tendencies were particularly prominent when applied to Jews.

*Yahoos as Intruders or Foreigners or Interlopers* (IV, ix, 2)

The fear that Jews had become too numerous and might dominate or damage the non-Jewish population in the countries where they resided has existed for millennia, as is shown in the Biblical account of the Egyptian Pharaoh’s preoccupation with the increasing numbers of Israelites in his midst and his fear that they might give support to hostile invaders (Exodus 1:7-10). The perception of Yahoos as intruders, foreigners, or interlopers likewise suggests that Judaeophobic sentiments informed Swift’s portrayal of the Yahoos. The view of Jews as “interlopers” was prevalent in eighteenth-century Britain, and was promulgated in blatantly anti-Semitic prints and pamphlets as part of the campaign against permitting Jews to become naturalized citizens.<sup>138</sup> Nicholls explains:

Most of the leaders of thought in the new nations [Modernity] brought into being continued to regard the Jews as aliens and potential enemies, as a problem for which solutions would be sought. Not only did they continue to regard the Jews as an alien people, unassimilable while they remained a people, but they continued to attribute to them much the same characteristics as had medieval paranoia.

This critic further notes that prior to the Enlightenment “Jews had no legally recognized place in a Christian society, except as serfs or tolerated residents. They had lost their status as Roman citizens and no equivalent had been allotted them.”<sup>139</sup> Given that widespread verbal and visual propaganda in

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<sup>137</sup> Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination*, p. 76.

<sup>138</sup> Dana Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39, no 2 (2006), 157-71 (p. 158).

<sup>139</sup> William Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (Northvale, New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson, 1993), p. 278.

eighteenth-century England and Ireland portrayed Jews as an alien people, Swift's representation of the Yahoos as foreigners has Judaeophobic resonances. The Jew-hatred that was prevalent in England and Ireland was closely linked with xenophobia. Gulliver's Yahoo-hatred is similarly linked with the awareness that Yahoos are not native to the land in which they reside.

*Yahoos' Segregation from non-Yahoos (IV, x, 5)*

The kings and prelates of medieval Christendom were agreed on the separation of Jews and Christians:

The Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent in 1215, decreed that Jews must wear a specific badge or mark on their outer garments, to distinguish them from Christians ... The ghetto system began even earlier. Sporadic attempts were made by local authorities to segregate Jews in various places, and in 1179 the Third Lateran Council resolved that Christians 'who will presume to live with Jews be excommunicated.' With the growth of hostility, what began as Jewish neighborhoods became a form of enforced segregation. The word ghetto was first used in Venice, where in 1516 Jews were restricted to an area of the city called the Ghetto ... The practice and the name spread rapidly to other Italian cities and then to other parts of Europe, and came to denote the walled quarters, with barred gates, to which Jews were legally confined, and from which they were only allowed to emerge at limited times and by special permission.<sup>140</sup>

Hundreds of years earlier, Pope Sylvester I (314-335) had already interdicted any intercourse between the clergy and Jews: "No Priest shall ... be friendly or sociable with Jews, nor should anyone take food or drink with the Jews ... and the synod shall excommunicate anyone who does not comply with this order." In the view of the early Church Fathers, "Jews were so vile and their faith so benighted that they were to be isolated from others."<sup>141</sup> The fact that towards the end of the *Travels* the Houyhnhnm authorities, too, prohibit any close interaction between Houyhnhnms and Yahoos echoes these historical precedents.

*Yahoo Extermination (IX, ix, 2)*

Gulliver's report on the debate about Yahoo extermination at the Houyhnhnm General Assembly is eerily reminiscent of arguments that have been put forward to justify mass slaughter of Jews across the centuries. As an educated, well-read man, Swift would have been aware of this history. Attempts to annihilate the Jews are described as early as the Hebrew Scriptures (most notably, in Exodus 1:15-22 and the Book of Esther). Anti-

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<sup>140</sup> Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, p. 91.

<sup>141</sup> *A Jubilee for All Time*, ed. Rosenthal, p. 66.

Semitic violence during the Middle Ages has equally well been documented: “Antisemitic passions have run so deep that only the actual annihilation of the Jewish people could solve what came to be called ‘The Jewish Problem.’”<sup>142</sup> Since the Middle Ages, large-scale massacres of Jews occurred in many parts of Europe. During the Black Death, Jews were accused of having caused the plague by poisoning the wells; accusations which contributed to large-scale massacres of Jews in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Four decades later, in Spain, thousands of Jews were murdered in a wave of attacks now referred to as “the massacres of 1391.”<sup>143</sup> Large-scale massacres of Jews took place in 1190 in Norwich, Stamford, Bury-St Edmunds, Colchester, Thetford, and Lincoln, and anti-Semitic violence also triggered the mass suicide, inside Clifford Castle, of the entire Jewish community of York.<sup>144</sup> Though no one would accuse the Dean of ever physically targeting Jews in this manner, it is worth noting here that on at least one occasion before he wrote the *Travels*, Swift did express concern about the growth of the Jewish population in England: “What if the *Jews* should multiply, and become a formidable Party among us? Would the *Dissenters* join in Alliance with them likewise, because they agree already in some general Principles, and because the *Jews* are allow’d to be a *stiff-necked and rebellious People*?”<sup>145</sup>

As to Gulliver’s ideas about “enclosing” the Yahoos, there are clear parallels with the segregation and ghettoization of Jews. The word “ghetto” specifically referred to “enclosed areas where Jews were forced to live.”<sup>146</sup> In Venice, the authorities compelled the city’s Jews to live in a quarter established for them in 1516.<sup>147</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, officials ranging from local authorities to the Emperor ordered the creation of ghettos for Jews in Frankfurt, Rome, Prague, and other cities.<sup>148</sup>

These attitudes towards the Jews, which explode in outbreaks of murderous anti-Semitic violence over the centuries in multiple areas of

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<sup>142</sup> Prager and Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism*, p. 18.

<sup>143</sup> David Nirenberg, “Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” *Past & Present*, 174 (2002), 3-41 (p. 9).

<sup>144</sup> John D. Hosler, “Henry II, William of Newburgh, and the Development of English Anti-Judaism,” in *Christian Attitudes toward the Jews in the Middle Ages: A Casebook*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 167-82 (167).

<sup>145</sup> *Swift vs Mainwaring: “The Examiner” and “The Medley,”* ed. Ellis, pp. 360-61.

<sup>146</sup> Prager and Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism*, p. 199.

<sup>147</sup> Simon Worrall, “The Centuries-Old History of Venice’s Jewish Ghetto,” *Smithsonian Journeys Quarterly*, 6 November 2015, <<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/venice-ghetto-jews-italy-anniversary-shaul-bassi-180956867/>>, accessed 1 December 2018.

<sup>148</sup> “Origin of the Term ‘Ghetto’” <<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ghettos?series=19182>>, accessed 1 December 2018.

Europe and which parallel the attitudes described by the narrator of *Gulliver's Travels* towards the Yahoos, have no counterpart in the other ethnic groups that have been considered possible sources for Swift's Yahoos. It is clearly the Jews for whom Gulliver's remarks about exterminating and enclosing have the greatest relevance.

*Yahoo Expulsion* (IV, x, 5)

At this point, after the narrator has repeatedly expressed strong antipathy for the Yahoos, he increasingly describes himself as a Yahoo, and now implies that he is a target of Yahoo-hatred. Regardless of the challenges inherent in seeking to account for Gulliver's contradictory portrayals of the Yahoo as both different from, and similar to, him, the Houyhnhnm belief that the Yahoo should be forced to leave the country has uniquely anti-Jewish connotations, and it is considerably less germane to the other groups that have been put forward:

Jews have been expelled from nearly every country in which they have resided. England in 1290, France in 1306 and 1394, Hungary between 1349 and 1360, Austria in 1421, numerous localities in Germany between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Lithuania in 1445 and 1495, Spain in 1492, Portugal in 1497, Bohemia and Moravia in 1744-1745. Between the fifteenth century and 1772, Jews were not allowed into Russia, and when finally admitted, they were restricted to one area, the Pale of Settlement.<sup>149</sup>

For Ireland, first-millennium sources exist in which similar action is advocated: "Jews are not suitable for residence in Ireland – they should be expelled from the country."<sup>150</sup> In 1290, King Edward I issued the Edict of Expulsion, a royal decree expelling all Jews (an estimated 3,000 people) from the Kingdom of England.<sup>151</sup> One historian describes what the expulsion entailed for the deportees: "They were forced to walk to the south coast and cross by sea to northern Europe as refugees. Many died on the journey: in one case, a ship's captain left his Jewish passengers on a sandbank to drown when the tide rose."<sup>152</sup> Only in 1655 were Jews formally permitted to return to England, but their situation remained precarious: "A group of English

<sup>149</sup> Prager and Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism*, p. 17.

<sup>150</sup> Beatty and O'Brien, "Ireland's Complex Jewish History: Influential Figures who were anti-Semites."

<sup>151</sup> Richard Huscroft, *Expulsion: England's Jewish Solution* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2006), pp. 112-39.

<sup>152</sup> "Jewish Communities and their Expulsion from England in 1290," <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zpbs7hv/test>>, retrieved on 26 November 2018. See also Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 346.

merchants presented a petition to the king on November 30, 1660, demanding that the Jews be expelled [from England] ... [The petition] explained why the Jews were so dangerous to the English.”<sup>153</sup> In Germany, Luther, in his notorious tract *On the Jews and their Lies* of 1543, urged Protestants to expel the Jews from areas where Christians lived, declaring that they would be “compelled to expel [the Jews] like dogs in order not to expose [them]selves to incurring divine wrath and eternal damnation.”<sup>154</sup> Swift’s account of the expulsion of the Yahoos in Book Four is reminiscent of the repeated banishment of Jews from a large number of regions in which they had been residing. There are clear echoes of this historical experience of forced displacement in the anti-Yahoo attitudes represented in the *Travels*.

### **The Sociopolitical Context for Swift’s Judaeophobia**

Swift is believed to have finished *Gulliver’s Travels* in August 1725, after having embarked on the composition by 1720.<sup>155</sup> He was in Ireland for all of the time he worked on it. In March 1726, he travelled to London to have the manuscript published.<sup>156</sup> The first edition was released on 28 October of that year (TEERINK AND SCOUTEN, p. 192). In all likelihood, Swift would have absorbed implicit and explicit messages about Jews by the time he could read – that is, by approximately 1675/6.<sup>157</sup> Later, the young student would have been influenced by his studies for the ministry.<sup>158</sup> His references to Martin Luther in the religious allegory of the *Tale* make it clear that he was familiar with at least some of Luther’s ideas.<sup>159</sup> If the assumption is correct that

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<sup>153</sup> Tubb, *Thomas Violet, A Sly and Dangerous Fellow*, p. 114.

<sup>154</sup> Prager and Telushkin, *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism*, p. 107.

<sup>155</sup> Ehrenpreis, *Dean Swift*, pp. 442-45.

<sup>156</sup> David Woolley, “The Stemma of *Gulliver’s Travels*: A Second Note,” *Swift Studies*, 17 (2002), 75-87 (p. 77).

<sup>157</sup> Swift recalled entering Kilkenny College, which was considered the best school in Ireland, at the age of six (Ehrenpreis, *Mr Swift*, pp. 34-42). See also the autobiographical fragment “Family of Swift,” *Prose Works*, V, 187-95.

<sup>158</sup> See, in addition to Ehrenpreis, *Mr Swift*, pp. 55-77, 150-68, Phillip Harth, *Swift and Anglican Rationalism: The Religious Background of “A Tale of a Tub”* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969 [1961]), pp. 154-64, and, most recently, Dirk F. Passmann and Hermann J. Real, “Annotating J. S.: Swift’s Reading at Moor Park in 1697/8,” *Reading Swift: Papers from The Seventh Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, eds Janika Bischof, Kirsten Juhas, and Hermann J. Real (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2019), pp. 101-24.

<sup>159</sup> This familiarity did not have to be unmediated in order to have had an impact on Swift’s mindset. Admittedly, whatever knowledge Swift may have had of Luther and his views would have been indirect: there was no edition of any of Luther’s works in any language in Swift’s library. Instead, he is likely to have culled his knowledge about the Reformer from the various histories of the Reformation that either were sitting on his

Swift's depiction of the Yahoos was indeed influenced by Judaeophobic sentiments and attitudes, it is important to consider the zeitgeist that characterized the stance towards Jews in London and Ireland from the mid-seventeenth century until 1725, when Swift completed the manuscript.

Before the middle of the seventeenth century, people of Jewish descent living in England were primarily Marranos, who would not announce



themselves publicly as Jews. This changed, however, in the mid-1650s when "a variety of historical trends converged to force the Jews in London to publicly announce themselves." By September 1655, the readmission of Jews became the talk of the town after Cromwell allowed them to resettle in England, which meant that they were permitted to practice Judaism openly. This would almost certainly have stimulated greater anxiety about Jewish presence and differentness than had occurred when they were few in number and did not practice openly. In 1657, when Cromwell permitted the Jewish community

not only to have a 999-year lease on a burial ground at Mile End Road but also to establish a large synagogue, he is likely to have contributed to Christians' fears that Jews were becoming more fully ensconced in Britain.<sup>160</sup> There are reasons to believe that, in the years leading up to *Gulliver's Travels*, pre-existing Judaeophobic attitudes in England and Ireland intensified.

In 1718, a group of Portuguese Jews purchased a piece of property in Dublin for use as a burial ground.<sup>161</sup> At that time, as well as in the following

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shelves, such as Peter Heylyn's *Aerius redivivus* (PASSMANN AND VIENKEN II, 852-54) or that he is known to have read at Moor Park in 1697/8, such as Gilbert Burnet's *History of the Reformation* (2 vols [London: by T. H. for Richard Chiswell, 1681]).

<sup>160</sup> Tubb, *Thomas Violet, A Sly and Dangerous Fellow*, pp. 107-9.

<sup>161</sup> For this, and some of the following, see Maurice A. Géracht, "Pedro de Mendez: Marrano Jew and Good Samaritan in Swift's *Voyages*," *Swift Studies*, 5 (1990), 39-52.

years, “Jewish emigration to London from Portugal and Spain suddenly increased because of an outburst of activity by the Inquisition, and the readiness of the Jewish community already [in London] to expend large sums of money to resettle new refugees.” By 1726, there were around 8,000 Jews in England, the majority poor peddlers,<sup>162</sup> increasing the likelihood that Swift and his contemporaries would have encountered Jews regularly in London and Dublin, and that their presence would have resuscitated the anti-Semitic feelings which had survived centuries of Jewish absence and which Swift would have shared with his contemporaries:

Continued religious intolerance, dislike for foreigners of any sort ... commercial jealousy, the general hostility to stockjobbers, financial scandals which involved several stockjobbers who were members of the Portuguese Jewish community, all conspired to excite old prejudices. Jews were in the community, but not yet of it. Given Swift’s political and social awareness of what was going on in London, as well as his family’s connection with Portuguese trade, it is likely that he was aware of that Jewish community, and of the habitual English response to it ... At the very least, his references to Jews in his poetry and prose are invariably part of a catalogue of anathemas, and usually yoked to “Heathen, Turk, and Mahometan,” or “Atheists, Infidels, and Hereticks.” This is true even of his final bequest, in which he excluded “*Jews, Atheists, and Infidels*.”<sup>163</sup>

The heated controversies surrounding the 1753 Jewish Naturalization Bill took place three decades after Swift completed *Gulliver’s Travels*, it is true, but anti-Jewish sentiments had deep roots in British consciousness and discourse. Indeed, “the initiative for the Jew Bill came amidst an ongoing discussion of the naturalization of foreigners that dated back to the seventeenth century,” and for those in favour, Jewish naturalization was seen as the “logical extension of the Toleration Act passed in 1689.”<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, those not in favour, the opponents of the bill, “deployed the worst defamations of Jews. The prints and pamphlets portrayed Jews as money grubbing, dishonest, cunning interlopers and played on stereotypes of Jews as blasphemous, clannish, ambitious, and traitorous.” Capping this all, “the propaganda images ... which were lurid and less ‘rational’ than the pamphlets, expressed fear that the naturalization of Jews would inaugurate a vast Jewish conspiracy to circumcise British men and to rob them of their masculinity and virility.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” p. 160.

<sup>163</sup> Gérard, “Pedro de Mendez: Marrano Jew and Good Samaritan in Swift’s *Voyages*,” pp. 43-44.

<sup>164</sup> Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” p. 159.

<sup>165</sup> Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” p. 160.

People of Sephardic (mostly Portuguese) Jewish descent, who had arrived in London in the early 1720s, included many conversos (Jews who had converted to Christianity) and Marranos (also known as crypto-Jews) (individuals who pretended to have converted but continued to practise Judaism in secret). There were also many who converted while still in Portugal but returned to practicing Judaism after they reached England.<sup>166</sup> These facts, combined with a popular fear that Jews would physically force Christians to undergo circumcision,<sup>167</sup> probably fuelled both conscious and unconscious preoccupations with the task of differentiating Christians from Jews.

Here it is important to note that Swift's representation of the Yahoos as indicative of personal and cultural anxieties about Jews is not incompatible with Laura Brown's argument that Swift's portrayal of the Yahoos reflects misogynous views about the female body. In fact, one of the most fundamental components of Judaeophobia is the dread of the (supposed) femininity of Jewish men. A common anti-Semitic belief, for example, was that Jewish men menstruated: "Jews, men as well as females, are punished *curso menstruuo sanguinis*, with a very frequent blood flux."<sup>168</sup> This peculiar belief probably reflected anxiety about circumcision (an image of men bleeding from the genital area). In the Christian imagination, "the act of circumcision sets the Jewish male apart (in that he is no longer fully a male)."<sup>169</sup> Thus, the widespread fear, among Christian men in eighteenth-century England and Ireland, of forced circumcision may have reflected the fear of losing a signifier of both Christian identity and male identity.

British anxieties about the presence of Jews in their midst were bound to have been exacerbated when the Sephardic community was augmented by the immigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Western Europe, beginning around 1670. The Sephardic Jews viewed these new arrivals as inferior, many of the Ashkenazi Jews being poor. Initially, the Ashkenazi Jews shared worship facilities with the Sephardim. However, as their numbers increased, they established their own congregations, the first of which in 1690. By 1696, the Ashkenazim had established their own burial ground, and in 1706, 1722, and

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<sup>166</sup> G racht, "Pedro de Mendez: Marrano Jew and Good Samaritan in Swift's *Voyages*," p. 41.

<sup>167</sup> Rabin, "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation," p. 160.

<sup>168</sup> Tullett, "Grease and Sweat: Race and Smell in Eighteenth-Century English Culture," p. 309.

<sup>169</sup> Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, p. 156.

1726, respectively, their own synagogues, among them, the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place in 1722.<sup>170</sup>

British fears about the greater visibility of Jews in the early eighteenth century were probably intensified by the Jewish city dwellers' growing tendency to move into locations that were considered more exclusive. For example, Jews began to move into Goodman's Fields beginning in 1720, and "a few took more prestigious townhouses in ... the West End":

Some of the upper class Sephardim and indeed Ashkenazim started taking summer residences in the countryside and villages adjacent to London, and the richest started acquiring minor country seats there as well. Richmond and its spa was particularly popular, as like most spas it was fashionable and the etiquette of social mixing was more relaxed – ideal for the socially ambitious. The first Jew in Richmond was Solomon Medina in 1697, and he got a knighthood by 1700. Other Jews in the area were to make aristocratic marriages or to convert out of Judaism altogether. This was the first Jewish move outside London. This move was due to social climbing and increasing assimilation – and the need to escape noxious conditions in the City. These Jews traveled to their country seats by boat, often by moonlight, and later by the turnpike ... This move outwards seems to have taken place after 1700.<sup>171</sup>

Many of the Judaeophobic attitudes that characterized this period were replaced by more liberal ones only as the nineteenth century approached.<sup>172</sup> All things considered, it is not unreasonable to suggest that in the years before the Dean wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, Judaeophobic sentiments had been stirred in him and in many of his contemporaries.

### Conclusions

Despite strong evidence that in his depictions of the Yahoos Swift was alluding substantially or even primarily to prejudicial images and clichéd commonplaces of Jews, no previous scholar has put forth this idea. It is striking that even in the few articles relying on knowledge of the Hebrew language to interpret specific words and phrases in *Gulliver's Travels*, the interpretations offered are red herrings that miss the key implications of the Hebrew etymologies. A similar failure to recognize the Judaeophobic tropes that inform Swift's portrait of the Yahoos is discernible in George Orwell's comparison, in 1946, of the Yahoos under the Houyhnhnms with the Jews in Nazi Germany, "both groups subject to a self-determined master-race's plan

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<sup>170</sup> Roberts, "The Story of England's Jews: The First Thousand Years," pp. 2-3.

<sup>171</sup> Roberts, "The Story of England's Jews: The First Thousand Years," p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

for their genocide or sterilization.”<sup>173</sup> Although Orwell implied that the Yahoos bore some similarities to the Jews, he referred only to their status as victims, not to any of the pernicious stereotypes about their physical and behavioural qualities. A similar omission is notable in Rawson's discussion of Ilse Koch, the wife of the Nazi commandant of the Buchenwald and Majdanek concentration camps. The post-war prosecution of Koch turned up evidence that she had ordered Jewish victims to be killed and skinned so that she could make souvenirs (such as handbags) from their skin,<sup>174</sup> just as Gulliver would utilize Yahoo skins to make shoes, sails, and canoes (*Prose Works*, XI, 283 [IV, x, 12]). Here, too, the common denominator between Jews and Yahoos consists in their shared experience as victims of atrocities, without recognizing the hostile parallels between the Yahoos and the Jews in the European imagination. Thus, Orwell and Rawson perceive in both Yahoos and Jews the experience of victimhood, but neither discerns the Judaeophobic attitudes in Swift's portrayal of the Yahoos.

Numerous Swift scholars have taken the view that the Yahoos “do not represent Swift's view of man, but rather of the bestial element in man – the unenlightened, unregenerate, irrational element in human nature.”<sup>175</sup> For centuries, up to and including the age of Swift, the “irrational” and “unregenerate” qualities that *all* people possess were often projected onto Jews. From this perspective, in creating the Yahoo as a symbol of the “bestial” side of human nature, Swift relied on these Judaeophobic projections. While the Yahoos are emblems of the more ‘primitive’ qualities in human beings generically, the prevalent perceptions of Jewish primitiveness undergirded Swift's representations.

Further support for this argument is lent by the interpretation of Don Pedro de Mendez, the Portuguese captain who rescues Gulliver at the end of Book Four, as a Sephardic Jew rather than as a Marrano.<sup>176</sup> While there can be no doubt that Don Pedro de Mendez “is identifiably a Jew,” and that in northern Europe and England, including London, not long after 1724 “Portuguese” and “Jew” became synonyms, it is less clear what functions are

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<sup>173</sup> Christine Gerrard, “Rev. Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001),” *The Review of English Studies*, 55 (2004), 278-79 (p. 278).

<sup>174</sup> Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide*, p. 279.

<sup>175</sup> Samuel Holt Monk, “The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver,” *Eighteenth-Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. James L. Clifford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 112-29 (126) (first printed in *Sewanee Review*, 63 [1955], 48-71).

<sup>176</sup> The reading first put forward by Géracht, “Pedro de Mendez: Marrano Jew and Good Samaritan in Swift's *Voyages*,” pp. 46, 41.

served by Swift's portrayal of Don Pedro; more particularly, whether the reading of Mendez as "a retelling of the parable of the Good Samaritan" is convincing.

Given that Swift is known to have shown ambivalence towards humanity and ethnic groups (such as the Irish) in general,<sup>177</sup> his portrayal of Don Pedro as an "honest," "kind," and "wise" Jew (*Prose Works*, XI, 286-89 [IV, xi, 8, 11, 16]) reflects an underlying ambivalence about Jews; more specifically, the desire to differentiate his feelings about Jews as a group from his feelings about specific, individual members of the group, so that after drawing on all the hostile and derogatory projections of Jews as a group for much of Part Four, Swift opted to present an *individual* Jew as a "very courteous and generous Person" (IV, xi, 9).

In this interpretation, Gulliver's experience with Don Pedro is strikingly reminiscent of an account published in the diary of the Elizabethan merchant John Sanderson (*fl.* c.1560-1627). Sanderson travelled to the Holy Land in 1601 in the company of a Jew by the name of Abraham Cohen, whom he described in some of the same words that Swift in 1726 made Gulliver use to describe his own Jewish travel companion:

My companion Jew ... was so respective, kind and courteous that never in any Christian company ... I ever did receive better content. For moral carriage towards all, understanding, and honesty, this Jew was without company ... A most devout, zealous, and soft-hearted man he was. I cannot speak too much good of him, in regard of his great humanity and extraordinary charity; his measure being more in those performances than is to be found in many of us Christians.<sup>178</sup>

Sanderson's account was published in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, the massive multivolume anthology of travel literature of 1625, which was in Swift's library and in which he had avidly read since his early days at Moor Park.<sup>179</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to assume he was familiar with Sanderson's account, and that he may have drawn upon the ideas expressed in it when conceiving of Don Pedro de Mendez and Gulliver's impressions of his character.

The upshot is that Book IV of the *Travels* hints at a tension between aversion and recognition; namely, an underlying ambivalence about whether to repudiate or identify with Jews. The substantial Judaeophobia prevalent in

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<sup>177</sup> See Swift's 29 September 1725 letter to Pope, in which he states that he "hates and detests that animal called man" but "hartily loves" particular human beings, and remarks "I have ever hated all Nations professions and Communityes and all my love is towards individualls" (*Correspondence*, ed. Woolley, II, 606-7).

<sup>178</sup> John Sanderson, *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602: With his Autobiography and Selections from His Correspondence*, ed. Sir William Foster (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931), pp. 124-25.

<sup>179</sup> PASSMANN AND VIENKEN III, 1641-42.

eighteenth-century England and Ireland coexisted with pockets of philo-Semitism: "Unprecedented familiarity with actual Jews by growing numbers of English merchants and travelers called into question some of the preconceptions that had long shaped English ideas about what Jews were like."<sup>180</sup> From this perspective, Don Pedro's kindness towards Gulliver, and Gulliver's eventual acceptance of his support, seems to represent a softening of the narrator's (and/or Swift's) earlier abhorrence and a willingness, however grudging, to perceive Jews as less repulsive and more human. If so, Swift's account of Gulliver's encounter with Don Pedro is reminiscent of Shakespeare's portrayal of a Jewish man more than a century earlier:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?<sup>181</sup>

In conclusion, it is important to bear in mind that critics bring to the debates in which they take part psychological defences, as well as culturally embedded assumptions, that constrain the range of interpretations brought forth, causing some to be foregrounded and others ignored. In this manner, psychological resistance to perceiving the perniciousness of Jew-hatred may have led scholars to disregard potentially important clues about Swift's sources for the Yahoos. The Judaeophobic canards in Part Four of *Gulliver's Travels* ought to have been self-evident to any educated reader. The fact that they were not suggests the presence of unconscious obstacles. It is the force of these obstacles, and not any dearth of textual evidence, which helps to explain the fact that for nearly three centuries scholars have failed to perceive a phenomenon that was hiding in plain sight.

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<sup>180</sup> James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016 [1996]), p. 33.

<sup>181</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1977 [1955]), p. 73 (III, i, ll. 52-58).