Connotations
Vol. 23.1 (2013/2014)

Gulliver as a Novelistic, Quixotic Character? A Response to Aaron R. Hanlon*

DAVID FISHELOV

Hanlon's article on Gulliver as a quixotic character calls attention to several interesting aspects of *Gulliver's Travels* (hereafter *GT*) and succeeds in opening up Swift's work "to readings attentive to its quixotic elements" (Hanlon 285) which, as the author points out, have not received sufficient critical attention. Hanlon reminds us of Swift's complex, multi-faceted art and offers a counterbalance to the critical preoccupation with Swift's politics. While acknowledging their usefulness, in my view Hanlon's emphases need a few qualifications on four issues: (1) Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character; (2) Gulliver as a Quixote; (3) satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*; and (4) exceptionalism in *GT*.

(1) Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character

By calling attention to certain life-like qualities of Gulliver and a few background details that Swift offers us (e.g. about Gulliver's training as a doctor), Hanlon highlights the fact that Gulliver is not merely a two-dimensional, transparent vehicle for performing Swift's satirical goals. Still, there is a long way between acknowledging the existence of certain life-like qualities in a character and assigning to that character the status of a novelistic character, "indeed a complex character"

*Reference: Aaron Hanlon, "Re-reading Gulliver as Quixote: Towards a Theory of Quixotic Exceptionalism," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 278-303. For the original article as well as contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debhanlon02123.htm>.

(Hanlon 285). Character complexity does not automatically arise from possessing certain life-like qualities, and it is not even a function of the number of such life-like traits (i.e. the more the traits, the more a character achieves complexity). Rather, a character gains individuality and complexity if, first, during the process of getting to know that character we detect uncommon *relationships* (e.g. tension, incompatibility, contradiction) between his/her different traits; and if, second, we encounter a character who has a multi-layered psyche with thoughts, emotions, memories, and awareness. A villain who only performs evil deeds is not a complex character even when we are given many details about his/her physical looks, daily routines or educational background; whereas a villain who suddenly acts mercifully because of guilt or remorse gains complexity. A benevolent character who donates generously to charity is not complex, even when we know many details about his/her taste in clothing or family life; whereas a good-guy who commits a crime because he has been momentarily tempted by lust or greed gains in complexity. To avoid a type-cast and to confer individuality and complexity we need to establish an unusual relationship between the allotted traits and to construct a multi-layered, yet coherent psyche of the character.[1]

Gulliver may seem to qualify for the title of a complex character because in different situations he behaves differently, sometimes even expressing conflicting attitudes. At one point, for example, Gulliver defies the King of the Lilliputians' imperialist scheme to use Gulliver's overwhelming strength in order to subdue the kingdom of Blefuscu (I.v). In this situation Gulliver is presented as a magnanimous defender of freedom: "And I plainly protested, that I would never be an Instrument of bringing a free and brave People into Slavery" (35).[2] In Book II, however, when he is confronted with the harsh critique of the human race by the king of Brobdingnag (II.vii), Gulliver bursts out into a vehement speech in which he offers to teach the king the secret of gunpowder, being highly enthusiastic about the destruction that can be caused by this invention. The gentle, peace-loving giant has turned into a belligerent, malicious pigmy.

We can also detect certain inconsistencies in Gulliver's behavior within one book: in Lilliput, Gulliver is very embarrassed by his natural needs and crawls to the depths of his dwelling to relieve himself (I.ii)—a behavior consistent with cultural inhibitions regarding man's baser needs—but only a few chapters later (I.v) he will shamelessly use his organ as a fire hose to extinguish the fire in the queen's palace, adopting this time a purely functional attitude to these lower aspects, ignoring cultural inhibitions altogether.

I would like to argue, however, that despite such inconsistencies Gulliver is not a complex novelistic character, at least not in the sense that we attribute the term to characters like Elizabeth Bennett or Emma Bovary or Raskolnikov or Leopold Bloom. The reason is that, despite certain life-like qualities and despite certain inconsistencies in his behavior (i.e. necessary conditions for individuality and complexity), we do not detect in him a multi-layered yet coherent psyche that remembers, learns, evolves, and attempts to integrate such inconsistencies. In most cases Gulliver acts as a "sponge" that uncritically absorbs the point of view of his environment: when accused of having a secret liaison with the wife of the Lilliputian treasurer he will seriously defend himself against these accusations (I.vi), without even questioning the physical possibility of such an alleged act; and, by the same token, he will adopt *in toto* the Houynhmns' equation of the whole human race with the Yahoos. On the few occasions when he confronts the point of view of his surrounding society, it is mainly because his pride is hurt (e.g. his speech re the gunpowder). In both cases, when he acts like a chameleon and when his pride is hurt, there is no sense of psychological depth, and it is clear that Swift is simply using him to enhance his satirical goals in a manner appropriate to the situation at hand. There is no sign of soul-searching or even awareness of his shifting attitudes, characteristic of a truly complex character.

It is true that Gulliver's reactions in many situations do not violate basic psychological plausibility (e.g. his belligerent response to the King of the Brobdingnags is an understandable, desperate attempt to

save face), but there is no sense of accumulation, of learning, of growing up, of self-awareness. Gulliver is ready to respond to any situation in ways that may conform to the general, flexible category of "an Englishman" (or "a European"). Swift was using different, sometimes conflicting, traits associated with this umbrella-like category precisely because he was not interested in constructing a truly complex individual. Gulliver is a man for all seasons or a man without (true, unique) qualities, presenting different aspects of the diffuse category of "an Englishman" as required by the specific occasion. This chameleon-like figure can be best described as an *ad-hoc character*.

In arguing for Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character, Hanlon highlights the "important phase-changes" (289) that Gulliver goes through: from the first phase "marked by an aloof, anthropological approach," to a phase marked by "nationalist defense of England and wider Europe as particularly enlightened nations" in Book II (297), and then to the final phase of uncritically embracing the Utopian society of the Houynhmns. Granted that Gulliver expresses different attitudes towards England and European societies and ideals in different Books, there still remains the question of whether such changes take place within the psyche of a true novelistic character, i.e. a character that remembers, learns, is occupied in soul-searching, and evolves. Swift seems to be more interested in examining and exposing different aspects of life than in developing Gulliver as a true, complex, individual.

Thus, despite the fact that we can detect in Gulliver's behavior different attitudes towards English conduct and ideals and those of humankind—a fact that Hanlon nicely highlights in his discussion—it does not necessarily prove that he emerges as a complex, novelistic character. I conclude this section by quoting Rawson's objections to portraying Gulliver as a novelistic character, which I find quite convincing:

> It is wrong, I think, to take Gulliver as a novel-character who suffers a tragic alienation, and for whom therefore we feel pity or some kind of contempt, largely because we do not, as I suggested, think of him as a "Character" at

> all in more than a very attenuated sense: the emphasis is so preponderantly on what can be shown through him (including what he says and thinks) than on his person in its own right, that we are never allowed to accustom ourselves to him as a real personality despite all the rudimentary local color about his early career, family life and professional doings. An aspect of this are Swift's ironic exploitations of the Gulliver-figure, which to the very end flout our most elementary expectations of character consistency: the praise of English colonialism in the last chapter, which startlingly returns to Gulliver's earlier boneheaded manner, is an example. The treatment of Gulliver is essentially external, as, according to Wyndham Lewis, satire ought to be. (Rawson 79-80)[3]

(2) Gulliver as a Quixote

When Hanlon calls attention to several similarities between Cervantes's and Swift's characters, he enriches our understanding of Gulliver and also reminds us of the important role played by Cervantes's work in eighteenth century English literature in the form of English translations (Jarvis's in 1742 and Smollett's in 1755) and also as an inspiring literary model, most notably in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, "told in the manner of Cervantes, author of Don Quixote" (as stated in Fielding's title). The suggestion to see Gulliver as a Quixote, however, raises an interesting methodological, or terminological, or philosophical question: When is it useful to describe one character as a version of another? I would suggest that detecting a few characteristics shared by two characters is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for such a move. To describe character B as a version of A, we need to detect in B the conspicuous and central characteristics of character A. Only then is it justified or useful to describe B "as" A.

My insistence on the specific nature of the analogy between Quixote and Gulliver may look like hair splitting or a scholastic exercise, but what I am interested in here is quite the opposite: namely, to draw attention to the broader picture wherein we apprehend and describe literary characters. I would like to argue that the analogy between Gulliver and Quixote is *not* based on the latter's conspicuous and central traits. Thus, to move from a useful articulation of a few Quixote-like aspects in Gulliver to portraying Gulliver "as" a Quixote

takes the argument one step too far. By the same token, Gulliver may share certain traits with Robinson Crusoe (e.g. the compulsion to set sail despite recurring catastrophes), but it would be a bit hasty to describe Gulliver as Swift's version of Crusoe. Gulliver may also share certain traits with Raphael Hythlodaeus in More's *Utopia* (e.g. a European who recounts his visit to a strange, allegedly utopian country), but it would be a stretch to describe him as Swift's version of Raphael. Gulliver also shares certain traits with Homer's Ulysses and with Lucian's voyageurs in *True Story*, but he is not simply Swift's version of any one of them. In composing *GT*, Swift used a diversity of motifs, narrative structures, literary models and characters, but this does not make *GT* or its main character a mere version of any one specific source. I advise terminological caution precisely because Swift has succeeded in shaping from many sources quite a unique blend, and to call Gulliver a Quixote (or a Raphael or a Crusoe), while highlighting a few relevant aspects of Gulliver, may also restrict our appreciation of Swift's achievement.

Hanlon uses the term "quixotic" more than sixty times in his article, but the profuse use of the term may have a boomerang effect or, to use another metaphor, it may make us lose sight of the wood for the trees. I will discover nothing new if I say that what makes the hidalgo "a Quixote" is the fact that he has read too many chivalric romances, has been too deeply impressed by them to the point of blurring the line between fiction and reality, and has decided to enact fictional tales in his life. This is what makes the character tick, and this is what makes the novel evolve. Thanks to these conspicuous traits it makes sense to talk about Emma Bovary, for example, as a Quixote, despite the fact that these two have very little in common (in terms of gender, social background, specific story, and even the kind of literature they read). To be an avid reader of fiction, to blur the lines between fiction and reality in an attempt to enact fiction in reality is what makes a post-Quixote literary character a member of the Quixote club. Gulliver, however, is nothing of the sort: he has read books for sure, but there is no indication that his journeys are intended to enact a specific, pre-

conceived fictional scenario or that his reading has made him blur the line between fiction and reality. Thus, when we think of the most conspicuous characteristic of Quixote (what I may even dare to call his essential characteristic), Gulliver does not seem as a good candidate to join the Quixote club.

Furthermore, in making the case for a quixotic Gulliver, we may lose sight of the significant differences between the two. Whereas Quixote leaves his home to fulfill a very peculiar, out of the ordinary, lunatic mission (i.e. his "chivalric calling"), there is nothing out of the ordinary in Gulliver's motivations for leaving home (e.g. love of travel, making money). Moreover, whereas Quixote embarks on his way well-equipped with fantastic scenarios, which will unavoidably be crushed by reality, dissolved into real, mundane places and people,[4] Gulliver's travels illustrate just the opposite: an encounter between a relatively ordinary Englishman, equipped with a set of common beliefs and expectations, and strange, fictional, bizarre places and creatures (which are still representative, in a satirical manner, of our world). We have a twisted, fantasy-driven mind that bumps into reality (Quixote), on the one hand, and a basically normative mind that encounters fantasy (Gulliver), on the other. Another important difference is that Quixote comes as "a package deal" together with Sancho Panza—the former represents elevated aspirations and ideals, the latter corporeal, down-to-earth interests—whereas Gulliver is a loner, traveling and experiencing the encounter with strange countries and creatures all by himself.

By highlighting the few traits shared by Quixote and Gulliver, we may be led into downplaying important differences between the two, while using formulations that need further clarification. At one point, for example, Hanlon defines the quixotic character in terms that he perceives as allegedly also applicable to Gulliver: "The quixote is at once a madman who does material wrong and a well-meaning, sympathetic character capable of drawing attention to the flaws of the people and societies around him" (Hanlon 288). Quixote may indeed be a madman (for sure according to the Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM]), but Gulliver is presented to us for the most part of *GT* (except at the ending) as basically a very normal person who finds himself in abnormal circumstances; and whereas Quixote is indeed a basically well-meaning, sympathetic character, this is not always true of Gulliver, at least not in those parts where Swift makes him the butt of the satire (e.g. the vehement speech to the Brobdingnag king mentioned earlier).[5] In another place Hanlon argues that "Gulliver's quixotism is best characterized by his wanderlust, which is not only a desire to travel for its own sake, but an understanding of travel as his pre-ordained means toward amassing personal fortune and worldly knowledge, and ultimately locating a foreign utopia" (294). It is true that Gulliver is characterized by his wanderlust (so too is Robinson Crusoe), and it is equally true that he seeks fortune and worldly knowledge (true of almost any traveler), albeit mostly the former: the recurring motive in Gulliver's explanations for setting sail is money (I.i; III.i; IV.i). Is he truly looking for Utopia, however? I believe it would be more accurate to say that he involuntarily bumps into one (or an alleged one). In fact, when Gulliver offers his common (quite superficial) explanations for setting sail again and again we get the impression that Swift is simply looking for an excuse to move Gulliver on to the next adventure so that he (i.e. Swift!) will be able to unfold another fantastic story, describe another bizarre place, and exercise his satirical temper.

To conclude: we should accept Hanlon's suggestion to bear Quixote in mind when discussing Gulliver. I would like to suggest, however, that we should also bear in mind Ulysses and Raphael and Crusoe (among others) and, while acknowledging the Quixotic motives in *GT*, not over-state them and read Gulliver as Swift's version of Quixote.

(3) Satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*

Hanlon's emphasis on the novelistic elements in *GT* goes hand in hand with his arguing against paying too much attention to its satiri-

cal dimension. Hanlon criticizes readings that ignore *GT*'s novelistic dimension, because such an approach: "not only classes *Gulliver's Travels* outside the realm of the quixotic narrative, but also threatens to reduce it to mere political allegory and to minimize its novelistic elements" (282). As part of his emphasis on the novelistic elements, Hanlon (282-84) criticizes Sheldon Sacks's argument that *GT* should be read as a satire—namely a work "organized so that it ridicules objects external to the fictional world created in it" (Sacks 26). Satire is opposed in Sacks's typology of fiction to "action" (or novel): "a work organized so that it introduces characters, about whose fates we are made to care, in unstable relationships which are then further complicated until the complication is finally resolved by the removal of the represented instability" (Sacks 26).[6] Hanlon is right in calling attention to several novelistic elements in *GT* and in criticizing Sacks's contention that *GT* should be read only as a satire.[7] Hanlon seems, however, to tacitly embrace Sacks's argument that satire and novel are mutually exclusive categories, or at least that to read a work as satire and to read it as novel are necessarily competing: the more one detects novelistic elements in *GT*, the less it becomes a satire (or satirical allegory) and the more one pays attention to Swift's contemporary, satirical references ("Swift's politics" in Hanlon's terms), the more one is likely to miss the work's novelistic dimension that Hanlon wishes to rescue.

This assumption should be re-examined. Even if we accept Sacks's definitions of satire and action (or novel), I would like to argue that the two do not necessarily pose to writers and readers an either/or-situation: an author can invest in building verisimilar fictional characters, in creating a plausible plot with complications that are finally resolved, and at the same time write a highly effective satire, ridiculing and criticizing certain real people, social institutions, and politics ("external to the fiction world" in Sacks's terms). We can find mixtures of novelistic and satirical elements in eighteenth-century literature, when the novel was taking its first steps on the literary scene, as well as in nineteenth-century literature and onward, when the novel had developed into a fully-fledged, respected literary genre. A reader

can be very much absorbed in the fate of Dickens's characters, for example, follow with great interest developments in the story-line, build expectations about possible resolutions to complications in plot, and at the same time be keenly aware of the satirical exposure of contemporary English society.

In a complementary manner, even when an author writes a thinly veiled satirical allegory for which the reader is expected to "translate" the fictional characters and developments into real people and historical events, there is still an important level of the reading in which we follow the fictional plot, develop expectations regarding the next move, built up sympathy towards some of the characters, and distance ourselves from others. Orwell's *Animal Farm*, for example, aims to satirize communist totalitarianism, but this does not mean that while reading the story we are indifferent to various aspects of the fictional world: we do develop emotional responses towards the fictional characters (e.g. rejecting Napoleon, feeling sorry for Boxer), carefully follow the story-line, and build up expectations about how certain instabilities might be developed in the fictional world and be finally resolved.

Needless to say, satire and the novel do not always co-exist. There are many novels devoid of satirical elements (or with negligible ones), and there are many satirical texts which have nothing to do with the novel. Swift himself wrote a few powerful satires that have no novelistic elements whatsoever (e.g. "A Modest Proposal"). The decision to adopt the form of a travel story and to develop certain life-like qualities in its main character, however, does not mean that the satirical dimension is necessarily watered down. Personally, I believe *GT* to be the greatest satire of all times, but regardless of personal taste, there is no question that *GT* is one of the most powerful, haunting satires ever written according to any standard understanding of the term "satire" (or Sacks's specific definition): a satire that succeeds in exposing both contemporary individuals, institutions, and norms as well as several perennial human traits.

Both in theory and in practice there is no contradiction between satirical and novelistic elements, and when they co-exist in a specific text (and they do not have to), this co-existence can take different shapes or proportions: sometimes the satirical elements are more dominant than the novelistic ones, sometimes it is the other way around; sometimes they work together, even reinforce one another, and sometimes they can compete for the reader's attention. Literary forms, modes and genres are flexible and dynamic, allowing for different ways of collaboration and even hybridization, rather than rigid, mutually exclusive pigeon-holes. Generic labels call attention to certain conspicuous characteristics (formal, structural, thematic) and evoke pertinent prototypical members of a generic tradition (e.g. "tragedy" evokes *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*; "comedy" evokes *Twelfth Night* and *L'Avare*[8]) and hence certain expectations, but they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive categories. Even when there is a conspicuous opposition between two generic traditions (e.g. tragedy and comedy), this does not mean that specific authors cannot mix them is certain ways (e.g. tragi-comedy).[9]

This brief diversion to genre theory is meant to remind us that we should not treat satire and the novel as generic frameworks inherently competing with one another, especially because they are both known for being quite flexible and open literary forms. Thus, when Hanlon rightly calls attention to certain novelistic elements in *GT*, there is no reason to link this argument to an attempt to weaken the text's satirical power or to downplay Swift's politics and topical allusions. If asked to describe the specific relationship between the satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*, I would suggest that the satirical ones are much more dominant than the novelistic ones. To play a second fiddle, however, does not mean that you are not heard or should not be heard. In literary texts a second fiddle does not even mean that you are totally subordinated to first violin (as Sacks argues): each textual dimension (satirical or novelistic) may keep its degree of autonomy and should not be viewed as necessarily competing (as Hanlon argues) or participating in a zero-sum game.

(4) Exceptionalism in *GT*

Hanlon's article develops two major arguments: first, it highlights Gulliver as a novelistic, quixotic character; and second, it calls attention to Gulliver's "exceptionalism," and on more than one occasion the author connects these two arguments. In the very first section of his article, for example, he states that "Gulliver's quixotism is marked not merely by immediate allusions to Cervantes or to *Don Quixote*, but by the use of exceptionalist arguments to justify fantastic ideological conclusions in the face of demonstrable counter-evidence" (279). I believe a few clarifications or qualifications would be useful for a better understanding of the relevancy of "exceptionalism" with regard to both Quixote and Gulliver.

Let us first be reminded of the meaning and use of the term. According to the *OED*, "exceptionalism" is a relative newcomer to English, first documented in 1928 as part of an economic and political argument contending that the USA has its own, exceptional economic laws. The term's ideological roots can be traced back to German Romanticism, with the idea that each nation (*Volk*) has an essential, unique character.[10] During the past few decades the term has also been used in a general sense not necessarily connected to economic issues: "The belief that something is exceptional in relation to others of the same kind; loosely, exceptional quality or character."

As for Quixote, one may wonder to what extent the term is applicable to the fantastic adventures of the hidalgo or in what sense Quixote should be regarded as representative of an exceptionalist way of thinking. There is no question that Cervantes's hero is Spanish to the bone: he was born and raised in Spain, and a great part of the chivalric literature on which his lively imagination was fed is Spanish.[11] Note, however, that Quixote is not a Spanish "exceptionalist," and the chivalric romances that he wants to act out are not necessarily or uniquely Spanish: the genre had many manifestations all over Europe and Cervantes explicitly alludes to a few famous non-Spanish works (e.g. *Orlando Furioso*). True, Quixote tries to use "arguments to justify fantastic ideological conclusions in the face of demonstrable counter-

evidence" (279)—as Hanlon aptly formulates the point—but it is not altogether clear in what sense Quixote's arguments might be described as exceptionalist. According to Quixote, all reality should conform to his beloved fictional stories, heroes, and codes. One may even be tempted to stretch the argument and claim that in one particular sense Quixote can be described as representing an *anti*-exceptionalist way of thinking: after all, according to him, everything should conform to chivalric rules, with no exception. Though one might argue that chivalric rules are very special, valid only in a specific time and place (e.g. medieval Europe) but not in other times and places (e.g. Quixote's time), neither Quixote nor Cervantes make such a claim. In fact, Cervantes satirizes in *Don Quixote* any realistic claims of chivalric romances and, of course, Quixote's uncritical acceptance of such claims. I shall shortly discuss how and to what extent exceptionalism is relevant to *GT*, but even if we conclude that it is highly relevant, it is still not altogether clear what Quixote's alleged "exceptionalism" contributes to our understanding of Gulliver's exceptionalism.

Regarding exceptionalism in *GT*, Hanlon persuasively points out that different characters in *GT* use a line of thinking that can be described as exceptionalist. We often encounter characters who think that their country, their society, their rules are very special (hence, exceptional) and also stand above those of everybody else. Let me quote one of the funniest examples of this line of thinking—the introduction to the "contract" between the Lilliputian king and Gulliver (I.iii):

> GOLBASTO MOMAREN EVLAME GURDILO SHEFIN MULLY ULLY GUE, most Mighty Emperor of *Lilliput*, Delight and Terror of the Universe, whose Dominions extend five Thousand Blustrugs, (about twelve Miles in Circumference) to the Extremities of the Globe: Monarch of all Monarchs: Taller than the Sons of Men; whose Feet press down to the Center, and whose Head strikes against the Sun: At whose Nod the Princes of the Earth shake their Knees; pleasant as the Spring, comfortable as the Summer, fruitful as Autumn, dreadful as Winter. His most sublime Majesty proposeth to the *Man-Mountain*, lately arrived at our Celestial Dominions, the following Articles, which by a solemn Oath he shall be obliged to perform. (25)

These pompous words, which seemingly place Lilliput and its king in a very special, unparalleled position, are ridiculous because the reader knows, among other things, that the king whose head "strikes against the Sun" is actually "not six Inches high" (5). As far as the king thinks of himself and of his kingdom as quite special, his words may be described as an exaggerated version of an "exceptionalist" way of thinking. Gulliver himself sometimes portrays England as a country that possesses certain special qualities, unlike the country where he is staying: e.g. when he describes England to the Brobdingnagian king (II.vi), and when he tries to explain the customs of his native land to his Houyhnhnm master, emphasizing the difficulties he has in explaining certain things: "I doubted much, whether it would be possible for me to explain my self on several Subjects whereof his Honor could have no Conception, because I saw nothing in his Country to which I could resemble them" (210). Thus, England is exceptional from the Houyhnhnms' point of view, as much as the Houyhnhnms are truly exceptional from the point of view of an Englishman.

We can even offer the generalization that, when a character in *GT* makes an "exceptionalist" claim (Gulliver himself or an inhabitant of a strange country he visits), the chances are that Swift will smile behind that character's back and hint to us that such a claim is groundless. The ridiculous rhetoric of the Lilliputian king about himself and his country's "unique" position on the globe is but an exaggerated version of the elevated, pompous phrases used by countless kings from the dawn of history. Lilliput is, after all, a thinly veiled satirical representation of England, and once we ignore the satirical distortions there is nothing truly special or unique about it. In a similar manner, when Gulliver claims that it is difficult for him to describe the customs of England to his Houyhnhnm Master "because I saw *nothing* in his Country to which I could resemble them" (210; my emphasis), we are fully aware that just a few lines earlier he had described how horses are treated in England in a similar way to the Houyhnhnms' treatment of the Yahoos (e.g. the sense of superiority of the ruling race towards the enslaved).

Granted that Swift critically exposes an "exceptionalist" way of thinking by calling attention to similarities between societies, no matter how different they may seem at first sight, I would still like to argue that it is not "exceptionalism" per se that mostly bothers him. In the words of the Lilliputian king, for example, we can discern two related but not identical aspects: first, he believes that he and his country are very special; and second, that he and his nation are on the top of the world—and it is the latter aspect that triggers Swift's satirical temper. In other words, Swift's harshest satire aims at exposing any self-aggrandizing tendency in his characters or, in more plain terms, he will critically expose anything that smells of human pride.[12] Swift's criticism of "exceptionalism" stems from what can be described as a Universalist position: mankind is basically the same everywhere and in all periods. Human beings not only think of themselves as special but also pride themselves on being the crown of creation, while they perform acts of stupidity and of vile cruelty that put them below the lowest of animals. To focus attention on Swift's critique of "exceptionalism" is not necessarily wrong, but it may unnecessarily diminish some of the most powerful, universal, and haunting aspects of Swift's satire.

* * *

To conclude: Hanlon's article succeeds in raising several interesting issues related to Swift's art in *GT*. My modest proposal to qualify and clarify certain points in Hanlon's thoughtful article is intended to illustrate why Swift's work continues to generate different readings from readers and critics alike. There is no question to my mind that W. B. Yeats's words are as relevant today as when they were written eighty years ago: "Swift always haunts me; he is always just around the next corner" (Yeats 7).

The Hebrew University
Jerusalem

NOTES

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of my response for offering useful and knowledgeable comments.

[1]From a reader-oriented perspective, the unusual relationship between a character's traits can be described as surprising, unpredictable elements. For the role of the *relationship* between a character's traits in the emergence of individual, complex characters, see Fishelov, "Types of Characters, Characteristics of Types." The dual criterion offered here for constructing a complex character (unusual relationship between traits and assumed multi-layered yet coherent psyche) could also be applied to the way we construct and perceive complexity in the real-life people that we encounter; but this goes beyond the scope of the present discussion.

[2]All quotations from *GT* are taken from the edition by Greenberg and Piper; page numbers are given in parentheses after each quote.

[3]Whereas I do not necessarily concur with Rawson's belittling of Swift's criticism of the Houyhnhnms (Fishelov, *Dialogues with/and Great Books* 165-68), Rawson is undoubtedly the critic best attuned to the most haunting aspects of Swift's satirical temper.

[4]Even when we encounter strange, extravagant people (e.g. the Duke and Duchess in the Second Part), they are still part of this world.

[5]For an insightful analysis of some examples, including Swift's Gulliver, in which characters who voice satirical criticism are themselves satirized, see Elliott, *The Power of Satire* 130-222.

[6]In addition to "satire" and "action" (or novel) Sacks suggests a third category, "apologue," defined as "a work organized as a fictional example of the truth of a formulable statement or a series of such statements" (Sacks 26), a category Sacks illustrates with Johnson's *Rasselas*.

[7]Another issue is that of whether Sacks is to blame for a true logical fallacy, a *petitio*, as Hanlon claims (see 283): it would be more accurate to describe Sacks's argument as an hermeneutical, not a logical (or vicious) circularity: interpreting the whole based on the parts and these parts are in turn interpreted based on the whole. I am indebted to Menakhem Brinker for this distinction.

[8]For the place and role of prototypical members in generic categories, see Fishelov, "The Structure of Generic Categories."

[9]By pointing out the flexible and dynamic nature of literary categories I do not argue that they are totally diffusive. For a balanced view on this issue, see Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre*, especially 8-17, 55-68.

[10]"Exceptionalism is the perception that a country, society, institution, movement, or time period is "exceptional" (i.e. unusual or extraordinary) in some way and thus does not need to conform to normal rules or general principles. Used in this sense, the term reflects a belief formed by lived experience, ideology, percep-

tual frames, or perspectives influenced by knowledge of historical or comparative circumstances" (Wikipedia).

[11]See, for example, the list of books discovered in Quixote's library (*Don Quixote* I.vi).

[12]For a thorough discussion of Swift's critical exposure of human pride, including Gulliver's, see the classical essay by Monk, "The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver."

WORKS CITED

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *The Adventures of Don Quixote*. Trans. J. M. Cohen. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950.

Elliott, Robert C. *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960.

"Exceptionalism." 7 Oct. 2013. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 24 Oct. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exceptionalism>

Fishelov, David. "Types of Characters, Characteristics of Types." *Style* 24 (1990): 422-39.

——. *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theories*. University Park: Penn State UP, 1993.

——. "The Structure of Generic Categories: Some Cognitive Aspects." *Journal of Literary Semantics* 24.2 (1995): 117-26.

——. *Dialogues with/and Great Books: The Dynamics of Canon Formation*. Brighton: Sussex Academic P, 2010.

Monk, Samuel H. "The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver." *The Sewanee Review* 63 (1955): 48-71.

Rawson, C. J. "Gulliver and the Gentle Reader." *Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novels and Novelists in Honor of John Butt*. Ed. M. Mack and I. Gregor. London: Methuen, 1968. 51-90.

Sacks, Sheldon. *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1964.

Swift, Jonathan. *The Writings of Jonathan Swift*. Ed. Robert A. Greenberg and William Bowman Piper. New York: Norton, 1973.

Yeats, W. B. *Wheels and Butterflies*. London: Macmillan, 1934.