Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745)

\*\*\*England’s GREATEST SATIRIST (writer of satire;

satire = writing that ridicules in order to reform)

Anglo-Irish

Parents Eng, born in Ireland, Dad died, mother moved him to Eng, Nanny kidnapped him and brought him back to Ireland

Whole life, conflicted back and forth between England, Ireland. Never felt at home in either place.

Poor, uncle pd for his educ., Master’s Degree at Oxford, became a priest for the Church of Ireland (same as Church of England but in Ireland); later Dean at St. Patrick’s Cathedral

Wanted to be in ENGLAND, life kept sending him back to Ireland, finally accepted his fate, became a leading civil rights activist for the Irish.

Eng. treated Irish AWFUL (like how they treated the Am. colonies), not treating as citizens: taxing w/o representation or concern

govt policies HURT the poor, oppressed the Irish

Swift did not write for fame, pub. his work in anonymity (anonymously)

wrote to CHANGE BEHAVIOR, make p. better human beings.

Writing entertaining, funny, instructive, imaginative

Wrote pamphlets against Eng’s oppressive policies:

“A Modest Proposal”

Best known for *Gulliver’s Travels* = satirical novel

“A Modest Proposal”

audience = upper class, English govt

1,500,000 Irish people (500,000 poor)

200,000 capable of breeding

- 30,000 couples who can support ----------- family

170,000

- 50,000 miscarry or kids die

120,000

- 20,000 become breeders (1:4

male to females)

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100,000 sold as food

(delicacy)

says he’s learned about how to cook this flesh from a “knowing American, exposing the prejudice of English against Americans

purchasers will be rich English (landlords, for ex.) already devoured the parents, might as well eat their kids too

Catholic kids a 3:1 to non-Catholic; more babies born 9 months after Lent (they give up sex for Lent), market glutted (full); baby flesh available all year. 9 -12 months after Lent, all those babies sold (advantage = getting rid of Papists—derogatory word—Catholics) (SHOWS England’s prejudice against Catholics)

Cost of raising beggar child per year = 2 shillings

Selling cost at a year old = 10 shillings

NET PROFIT of 8 shillings

Landlords take better care of tenants if know they are gaining from it. If thrifty, have meat (4 meals) + skin for boots and gloves.

Someone offers a refinement to his plan (kill even older kids between 12 and 14 yrs, used in place of lowered deer population); Swift counters by saying meat is tough due to more exercise & tastes bad—due to hormones, females are soon breeders and can help starving society, and is cruel (older ones would anticipate what is coming and fear)

Some say problem not just beggars, but old and sick. Swift counters that issue will solve itself (they will die), so his focus poor kids.

ADVANTAGES of HIS PROPOSAL

1) Reduce # of Papists (Catholics)

2) Poor tenants will have a valuable product to sell, $$

3) Help Irish (NATIONAL) economy, because this product is theirs, England will not have to spend anything on Irish (independent)

4) Breeders won’t have the burden of raising children after a year old, but will have income.

5) New food source, new businesses and jobs (taverns, butchers, cooks) – good for LOCAL economy

6) Inducement (incentive) to marriage (afford to keep child if 2 people working); if poor, women would treat child better in womb and out (trying to get fat) and husbands treat wives better (like prized horse, etc); no kicking to miscarry (stop domestic violence)

7) New export (international trade) 🡪 food (baby bacon, baby jerky, pickled baby feet); hide products

8) New jobs, reduces unemployment (butchers, bakers, leather-workers, warehouses, slaughterhouses, gourmet chefs)

9) Poor population decreases.

NOT SATIRE, REALLY IS SERIOUS: bottom of p. 623, in italics; these are ALL things that Swift has already tried, or proposed, to help remedy the bad situation of Irish (taxing absentees, using only Irish made products, etc.)– ALL HAVE REJECTED BY ENGLISH; then says basically, “You got a better plan? Then let’s do it.” Not selfishly wanting own plan.\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*PURPOSE !!

Swift has no ulterior motive – will gain NOTHING by this proposal (wife too old to bear any more children, and his children are too old to be sold).