EXTRATEXTUALITY AND DISCOURSE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION. A CASE STUDY: JONATHAN SWIFT'S "A MODEST PROPOSAL"[1]

Abstract: *In our paper first we propose a* ***three-phase communicative looping model*** *of literary prose translation starting from the premise that the translator follows very closely the phases of the communication act (which is why we called our model a communication-oriented looping model), acting first and foremost as a decoder of the ST, then as an encoder of the ST into a SL 'open' or 'unknown-free' text, and, finally, as a re-encoder of the ST into the TL.*

Next, we make a discourse-centred approach to Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" *in terms of such extratextual factors as the author or sender of the text (who?), the sender's intention (what for?), the audience the text is directed at (to whom?), the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?), the place (where?) and time (when?) of text production and text reception, and the motive (why?) for communication.*

Keywords: *literary translation, communicative looping model, extratextuality, discourse.*

In our paper we propose ourselves to set forth a **communicative looping model** of prose translation which starts from the same premise as Nord's in the sense that we also see translation as a circular, recursive process consisting in an indefinite number of feedback loops on account of the fact that literary prose more than any other type of translation requires several 'decodings' on the part of the translator who decodes the SL text at a pragmatic level in view of understanding the intention of the author or the theme of the respective prose fiction, at the semantic level so that he/she may choose the proper denotative and connotative meanings to equal the denotative and connotative level of the ST, at the syntactical level in order to build equivalent syntactic patterns, and, finally, at the discourse level trying to integrate the results of the decoding at the former three levels into the entire discourse. Our contention is that for each of these decodings the literary prose translator should 'loop' to one or the other of the preliminary phases of translation consisting in the reading, the comprehension, or the analysis of the ST.

In as far as the phases of the translation process are concerned we reject the two-phase model since we consider that it oversimplifies translation, and we plead for a three-phase model somewhat different from both the three-phase model proposed by Nida and the three-phase looping model proposed by Nord. Our disagreement with the already mentioned three-phase models resides in the fact that neither of them integrates reading and sometimes re-reading as preliminary stages to their first analysis-oriented phase of translation, considering them in a way the means by which the analysis phase is realized.

We propose therefore a **three-phase communicative looping model** of literary prose translation starting from the premise that the translator follows very closely the phases of the communication act (which is why we called our model a communication-oriented looping model), acting first and foremost as a decoder of the ST, then as an encoder of the ST into a SL 'open' or 'unknown-free' text, and, finally, as a re-encoder of the ST into the TL.

Besides our already stated conviction that the translator's main role is that of communicator, we plead for the reading-decoding phase as a separate phase within the translation process on methodological grounds since our teaching experience at university level of *Literary Translations* theoretical courses and seminars has revealed that, unless

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'forced' and given the necessary time, students tend to approach literary prose translation on a sentence-for-sentence or word-for-word basis, disregarding altogether the decoding-oriented reading of the ST. More than that, a critical analysis of the literary prose translations made by some contemporary Romanian translators also reveals that in their otherwise commendable effort of translating modern English or Romanian prose, they also treat the SL prose text on a sentence-for-sentence or paragraph-for-paragraph decoding-encoding basis, disregarding altogether any research directed towards the intended meaning on the part of the author which might very well derive from a thorough reading and re-reading of the ST.

In light of the above, we consider that any act of literary prose translation should consist of the following phases:

1. **the reading-comprehension phase**
2. **the translation-oriented text analysis phase**
3. **the encoding-translation phase.**

Since without a proper performance of the reading-comprehension phase, the translator will be able to perform neither the text analysis of the source language text nor its encoding in the target language, we will focus our attention in this paper on the reading comprehension phase with special emphasis on the analysis of the extratextual factors which is necessary not only for the educated reader who wants to be in the know as to the text's literariness, or for the literary critic who wants 'to fill in the gaps' and read between the lines so as to come to the writer's intention, but it is also useful to the translator-reader providing him/her background information on the author (sender), his/her intention (sender's intention) and the production and reception of the respective text.

1. The reading-comprehension phase of translation consists in:

a. the **decoding-oriented reading** and then **re-reading of the ST** in view of making a 'surface' decoding of the intended meaning of the ST in point of its subject matter, followed by a **comprehension-oriented reading** during which the translator-reader, on the basis of his/her background knowledge concerning the author's other writings (without a text-oriented detailed research), will 'rewrite' the text either in their mind or in the form of notes in terms of type of text, characters and themes.

b. the **analysis of the extratextual factors** which may be a phase subsequent to (our point of view) or preliminary to (Nord's point of view) the reading-comprehension phase depending on whether the translator acts first as a simple reader (possibly getting in touch with the text for the first time and having no intention whatsoever of translating it) and then as a professional engaged in research on the author and the writing technique he/she will translate, or is under a professional obligation or contract from the very beginning and then he/she starts by doing some research on the author and the piece of work to be translated so as the reading-comprehension phase engender at least a partial understanding of the respective piece of prose within the framework of the respective author's specificity in point of style and writing technique.

a. The decoding-oriented (re)reading of the ST

A translator of fiction has to engage with the different rhythms, the images and symbols the author will use in the course of a few pages or hundreds of pages. Repeated reading and research will enable the translator to identify such patterns, and adopt what is called a reading position, that is "the position assumed by a reader from which the text seems to be coherent and intelligible." (Cranny-Francis, 1990: 25)

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Elena Croitoru (1996: 173) approaches the skill of reading from the perspective of translation theory and practice, distinguishing thus six scopes for the act of reading by a translator:

- reading for inferring the essence of the text;
- reading to extract specific information;
- reading for detailed understanding;
- reading to translate the main;
- reading for partial translation;
- reading for complete translation.

To put it differently, the translator-reader has to adopt a stance with regard to the values and procedures of the narrative, or to use Coleridge's formulation, the reader has to undergo a *suspension of disbelief,* leaving himself/herself under the spell of the text until it becomes 'familiar' and 'comprehensible' as opposed to 'new' and 'full of unknown.'

In order to attribute the translator-reader a certain reading position, we will first make a brief presentation of the different types of readers revealed by the reader-oriented theories and of the different degrees of 'openness' or 'closure' of a text in view of finally deciding on a particular type of reader suitable for the translator-reader when decoding both open and closed texts.

According to the American critic Stanley Fish, in a book published in 1980: "Twenty years ago one of the things that literary critics didn't do was talk about the reader, at least in a way that made his experience the focus of the critical act." (Fish, 1980: 344)

Since the time about which Fish was writing, however, more and more attention has been devoted to the identity, role and function of readers of literature, all of which resulted in a number of different critical theories and approaches which are often described as *reader-response criticism*. The term gathers together several attempts to theorize about readers and to study them and the reading process. However, not all criticism categorized as reader-response criticism is actually concerned with readers' response(s); much of it is concerned with other issues such as readers' competence, the reading process, the text's formation of the reader, and so on.

Reader-response criticism gave birth to various theories first on the different types of readers, and then on the different types of texts, with the observation that all these terms with the form 'the X reader', although singular, actually describe a group or category of readers.

Wayne Booth's book *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) popularized the notion of the *implied author (*the term being used to refer to that picture of a creating author behind a literary work that the reader builds up on the basis of elements in (or reading experiences of the work*)*, and by extension the term *implied reader* was coined to describe the reader which the text (or the author through the text) suggests that it expects.

Susana Onega and José Angel García Landa (1996: 9) comment and explain the appearance of two terms synonymous for implied author and implied reader, i.e. *textual author* and *textual reader* or *mock reader*: "The textual author is a virtual image of the author's attitudes, as presented by the text. The textual reader is a virtual receiver created by the author in full view of the actual audience he or she presumes for his or her work. The textual reader need not coincide with the author's conception of the audience: this reader-figure may be a rhetorical strategy, a role which the author wishes the audience to assume (or even to reject)."

The term *career author* is used by the narratologist Seymour Chatman to denote: "the subset of features shared by all the implied authors (that is, all the individual intents) of the narrative texts bearing the name of the same author" (1990:88) or, in other words, that sense of a personality or human presence which readers construct from the historical author's (the author as 'real person') works. According to him, we would have a sense of a person and

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personality to which we could give the name 'Jane Austen' even if we had no information about this person beyond that provided by her works of fiction, and it is this 'sense of a person' that Chatman calls the career author.

Closely related to the implied reader is the *inscribed reader,* that is, the reader whose characteristics are actually there to be discovered in the text itself.

Umberto Eco has introduced the similar concept of the *model reader,* arguing that "[t]o make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them." (Eco, 1981: 7) Later in the same chapter, Eco makes it clear that for him the concept of model reader is more intratextual in nature, being inscribed in the text: "[T]he Model Reader is a textually established set of felicity conditions... to be met in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualized." (Eco, op. cit.: 11)

Two related but slightly different concepts are those of the *average* and the *optimal* or *ideal reader* (sometimes translated as *super-reader).* The terms 'super-reader' comes from Michael Riffaterre (being replaced later on with archi-lecteur or composite reader), and describes as much readings as readers, or to put it differently, the responses engendered in different readers by particular textual elements. (Riffaterre, 1978)

The *optimal/ideal reader* is a term used to refer to that collection of abilities, attitudes, experience, and knowledge which will allow a reader to extract the maximum value from the reading of a particular text.

Stanley Fish approaches somehow the translator's role of reader by introducing the term of the *informed reader*: "[t]he informed reader is someone who (1) is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up; (2) is in full possession of 'the semantic knowledge that a mature . . . listener brings to his task of comprehension,' including the knowledge (that is, the experience, both as a producer and comprehender) of lexical sets, collocation probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, and so on; and (3) has *literary* competence. That is, he is sufficiently experienced as a reader to have internalized the properties of local discourses, including everything from the most local of devices (figures of speech, and so on) to whole genres." (Fish, op.cit.: 48)

From the above reader-oriented theories it results that one literary work can generate a range of different reading experiences, over time, between cultures or groups (or within them), and even for the same individual, all of which leads to the question of whether it is a characteristic of major literature that it can generate a succession of new reading experiences as the individual reader or his or her culture changes.

Although the above reader-oriented or text-oriented theories bring useful contributions to the so-called reader-response criticism, it is to be noted also that to a certain extent they are purely theoretical since in practice the majority of texts attempt to constrain how the reader makes use of them, and all readings may choose to accept such constraints to a greater or a lesser extent.

The *translator-reader* may be considered in turn *a textual reader or mock reader* since he/she is a receiver representing the actual audience, *a model reader* able to deal with the various interpretations encoded in the text by the author, and, finally, *an optimal or ideal reader* capable of extracting the maximum from the lecturing of a text, with the observation that in all these stances the translator-reader is above all *an informed reader* since as a translator he/she is supposed to have all the three 'qualities' attributed to the ideal reader (i.e. competence in speaking the SL, 'mature' competence in comprehending, and 'literary' competence).

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Although in possession of these necessary reading-oriented 'competences,' first the translator performs what is called an 'ingenuous reading' which is an act of translation in itself in the sense that the translator-reader performs what Jakobson calls an intralingual translation consisting in an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language. To put it differently, when we read, we do not store the words we have read in our minds as happens with data entered by keyboard or scanner into a computer. After reading, we do not have the photographic or auditory recording in our minds of the text read, but we have a set of impressions instead. We remember a few words or sentences precisely, while all the remaining text is translated from the verbal language into a language belonging to another sign system, that is the mental language.

It is to be noted, however, that even the first reading of a text, or a reading by someone who does not have the same tools available to a critic, the already mentioned 'ingenuous reading', involves a critical act.

Reading is characterized by a sudden and unaware effort to guess or sense, on the basis of all one has read, and in consideration of the portion of the text read, how the remainder could develop. In other words, the reader makes successive inferences on what will be written, and, step by step, arrives at a confirmation, a refutation, or a missing confirmation of his inferences, allowing him to make further different inferences.

This fact itself implies some problems for the translator-reader on account of the fact that, although a translator tries to read a text with the intent of embodying the point of view of the most generic reader, he/she, as a human being, has limitations and remains an individual, with individual tastes, likes and dislikes. More than that, the translator cannot deny his/her personality just because her reading is not only for personal interest but as a prelude to the use of the text by a wider group of readers. Thus, reading is the first of a series of processes that transform the TL text into a subjective, sometimes fallible interpretation of the SL text.

In light of the above mentioned reading-based observations, one could conclude that the translator is an anomalous reader because he/she is no longer able to read a potential SL text without thinking, more or less willingly, how he/she will be able to project that text onto the target culture and language, that is, without thinking about its potential TL texts. This way of reading represents in fact, maybe in the form of a re-reading, a stage subsequent to the 'ingenuous reading' and preliminary to the translation-oriented analysis, which is a very particular critical analysis to be performed in detail during the second phase of the translation process, that is the translation-oriented text analysis phase.

In order to avoid this overlap between the decoding-oriented (re)reading and the interpretation-oriented analysis we propose that the translator performs the analysis of the extratextual factors, which is not only meant to provide the translator-reader with information on the production and reception of the text, but also to confirm or contradict the experience-based expectations built during the (re)reading stage.[1]

b. The analysis of the extratextual factors

The analysis of the extratextual factors implies gathering of information on: *the author* or *sender of the text* (who?), *the sender's intention* (what for?), *the audience* the text is

[1] The analysis of the extratextual factors after the reading of the text stands in contradiction with Christiane Nord's opinion that they are to be analyzed before reading the text, simply by observing the situation in which the text is used. She explains her opinion as follows: "In this way, the receivers build up a certain expectation as to the intratextual characteristics of the text, but it is only when, through reading, they compare this expectation with the actual features of the text that they experience the particular effect the text has on them." (Nord, 2005: 42)

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directed at (to whom?), *the medium or channel* the text is communicated by (by which medium?), *the place* (where?) and *time* (when?) of text production and text reception, and *the motive* (why?) for communication.

To put it differently, this phase deals with the text from a communicative discourse-based point of view, in the sense that the narrative discourse presupposes the existence of an emitter/speaker who sends the message to a receiver/listener. The emitter is the narrator, which is not to be confounded with the author or the producer. Felix Martinez-Bonati (1981: 80-86) sustains the necessity to differentiate between the two elements of the narrative situation. Understanding the literary work as an imaginary discourse, he points to the existence of a distinct relationship between text and producer depending on whether a text is literary or not, in the sense that the non-literary discourse is directly revelatory of its producer while the fictional discourse represents its producer in the same way as any object represents its creator. The non-literary discourse pertains to a concrete situation while the fictional discourse represents its own communicative situation to which the author and the reader are but simple contemplators.

According to the theory of communication applied to narratology, any fictional work presupposes the presence of a narrator even when their presence is not marked in the surface structure by means of the personal pronoun "I" or other categories of elements.

The manifestation of the subject/producer in the utterance or of the narrator in the literary text is always in the form of the first person narrative, all of which leads to considering the classification of narrators on the basis of person as incorrect since a narrator who, from a grammatical and rhetoric point of view, narrates in the third person, stays in the first person as a subject/producer of the utterance.

Taking into account the narrative attitude, Gérard Genette (1972: 252-253) distinguishes between two types of histories:

- a history with a narrator who does not participate in the history related – called the *heterodiegetic* narrator;
- a history with a narrator-character – called the *homodiegetic* narrator – which in its turn can be:
  - *a narrator-protagonist* (le narrateur héros – *Gil Blas*) or
  - a *narrator-witness/observer* (*Lockwood* - Wuthering Heights, *Nick Carraway* – The Great Gatsby)

Further on, from the point of view of narrative levels (the *extradiegetic* level – exterior to the events related, the *intradiegetic*/*diegetic* level – characterizing the events of the "primary narration" and the *metadiegetic* level – representing a narration-within-narration or a second degree narration), Genette also distinguishes between:

- *extradiegetic* narrators – the narrator himself, situated at the extradiegetic level;
- *intradiegetic* narrators – character-narrators who recount a story situated at another fictional level (intradiegetic).

In order to dissociate the communicative roles of the narrator from those of the character, Martinez-Bonati (1981: 39-42) proposes a model of stratification of the fictional discourse. Thus, he distinguishes three levels as follows:

- the mimetic level – which is the first level, that of the "world";
- the narrator's discourse – made up of its narrative acts which enclose the entire fictional work (the second level, that of the narrator-story teller);
- the characters' discourse – the third level, that of the dialogued or monologued verbal acts of the characters.

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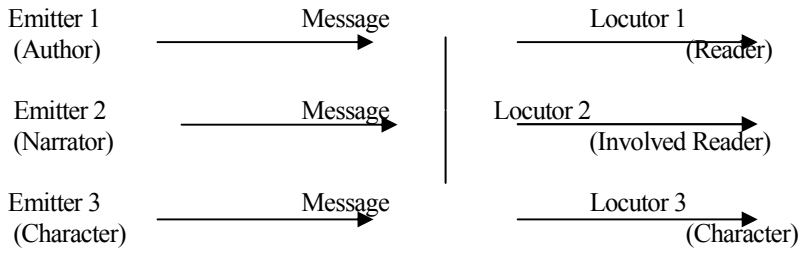
It is to be noticed that there is also another level which has the author and the real reader as protagonists with their own set of presuppositions from which result both the "general" categories of the communicative intention which prescribe the set of norms specific to the production, the reception and the interpretation of the texts, and the "characteristic" categories.

The above mentioned levels, corroborated with those of Genette's, would give rise to a level-based structure in which, according to Geoffrey Leech and Michael N. Short (1981: 269), the communicational model of the author includes that of the narrator which in its turn includes that of the characters.



The Communicational Structure of the Literary Narrative Text
(after Leech & Short quoted in Oltean, 1996: 15)

In order to exemplify the importance of extratextuality at and above the discourse level, we will make a discourse-centred interpretation of Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* based on Swift's bitingly ironic attempt to capture the attention of a widely-recognized indifferent audience by means of a series of morally untenable proposals, while sarcastically protesting against the utter inefficacy of the Irish political leadership and the reformers' orientation toward economic utilitarianism.

Starting from the title (*A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public*) to the very last sentence Swift's pamphlet is meant to express on the one hand his pity for the oppressed, ignorant and hungry Catholic peasants of Ireland, and on the other hand, his anger at the rapacious English absentee landlords, who were 'bleeding the country white' with the silent approbation of Parliament, ministers, and the Crown.

Since none of the above mentioned intentions is to be "read" overtly throughout the text, in the following we will point out Swift's special and various discursive strategies in view of drawing the reader's attention firstly on his own "double discourse" or anti-discourse, secondly on the literariness of the text resulted from the change of perspective, and thirdly on its modernism and actuality in point of themes and message.

In point of form the essay is an argumentative pamphlet-like type of text which expresses the author's and/or the narrator's adherence to a certain viewpoint or position (stated in the title: *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public*) and his intention to eliminate or reject others which are considered wrong or false (in our case the squalor state of the predominantly Catholic families who are too poor to keep their children fed and clothed).

The argumentative character of the text as opposed to a narrative or descriptive character in R. de Beaugrande & W Dressler's (1981) terminology is to be seen in the presence of some markers of cohesion and emphasis (such as repetition, parallelism and the paraphrase)

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as well as in the plan-like global pattern of the text in which the locutor expresses his intentions and tries to convince his audience as to their veracity.

The author's and/or the narrator's 'discourse' is organized in four main sections, that is an introductory section in which he sets forth his intentions and his 'modest' proposal (*"It is a melancholy …the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value …"*), two other sections (section 2: "*… I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts … and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come…*"; section 3: *"… I have too long digressed … I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses, and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand…"*) which are meant as an argument for the proposed initial discursive intention, and a fourth section (*"…I can think of no one that will probably be raised against this proposal…I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing."*) which in the form of a non-discourse points on the one hand to the real purpose of Swift's (the narrator's) bitter satire, and on the other hand to the class of oppressors who have caused the writing of this essay.

Section I

Swift's opening paragraph offers a starkly realistic, although compassionate, portrait of families of beggars in Ireland. The first sentence gives a fairly straightforward and non-ironic impersonal-like description, but by the second sentence the author begins to offer first person-narrated judgments and explanations about some rampant beggary: the mothers are unable to work, and have been "forced" into their current poverty and disgrace. It is to be noted, however, that Swift's language here reverses the prevailing sentiment of his day, which held that if beggars were poor, it was their own fault.

The reader is unsure at this point whether to take Swift's professed compassion for the beggars as earnest or ironic. In this passage as well as throughout the whole essay, he is at pains to appear as not taking sides; his stance is one of general exasperation with all parties in a complex problem. Swift is 'generous' with his disdain, and his irony works both to censure the poor and to criticize the society that enables their poverty. The remark about Irish Catholics who go to Spain to fight for the Pretender offers a good example of the complexity of Swift's judgments: he is commenting on a woeful lack of national loyalty among the Irish, and at the same time criticizing a nation that drives its own citizens to mercenary activities. He makes a similar stab at national policies and priorities since the poor Irish children will not find employment, since "*we neither build Houses, ...nor cultivate Land.*"

After the first paragraph, the reader is inclined to identify themselves with the author-"proposer," in part because Swift has given no reason, at this point, not to. His compassion in the first paragraph, the matter-of-fact tone of the second, his seeming objectivity in weighing other proposals, and his moral outrage at the frequency of abortion and infanticide speak out in his favour as a potential reformer. Yet the depersonalizing vocabulary he employs in his elaborate computations is meant to give the reader some consideration: "*The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couples who are able to maintain their own children, although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom; but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remains one hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born: the question therefore is, how this number shall be reared and provided for, which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed.*"

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Further on, he describes a newborn child as "*just dropped from its Dam*" and identifies women as "Breeders." By comparison the word "souls" (which ought to make sense as a way of talking about hapless human beings) seems out of place when applied to Ireland's now strictly statistical population. This kind of language offers an early indication of the way the author's proposal reduces human beings alternately to statistical entities, to economic commodities, and to animals.

However, quickly enough it becomes clear that this will be an economic argument, although the proposal will have subtle moral, religious, political, and nationalistic implications. Despite his own moral indignation, when the author suggests that most abortions are occasioned by financial rather than moral considerations, he assumes that people's motivations are basically materialistic. This is not, of course, Swift's own assumption; he presents a shockingly extreme case of cold-blooded "rationality" in order to make his readers re-examine their own priorities. Swift parodies the style of the pseudo-scientific proposals for social engineering that were so popular in his day. His essay as a whole is partly an attack on the economic utilitarianism that marked so many of these proposals. Although himself an astute economist, here he draws attention to the incongruity between a ruthless (though impeccably systematic) logic and a complexly human social and political reality. Part of the effect will be to make the reader *feel* that the argument is bad, without knowing quite where to intervene as well as to oppose moral judgment to other, more rigidly logical kinds of argumentation.

Section 2

The irony of Swift's second section is based on the assumption that his audience, regardless of their national or religious affiliations or their socio-economic status, will all agree to the fact that eating children is morally reprehensible: "*I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection. I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.*"

It is at this very moment that the attentive reader will be first shocked by the proposal and will recognize that a literal reading of Swift's pamphlet will not do. Swift is clearly not suggesting that the people of Ireland will actually eat their children, and so the task becomes one of identifying his actual argument. This involves separating the persona of the "*proposer*" from Swift himself. The former is clearly a caricature; his values are deplorable, but despite his cold rationality and his self-righteousness, he is not morally indifferent. However, he seems to have a single blind spot regarding the reprehensible act of eating children, but he is perfectly ready to make judgments about the incidental moral benefits and consequences of his proposal. The proposer himself is not the main target of Swift's angry satire, though he becomes the vehicle for some biting parodies on methods of social thought.

In terms of discursive roles it is to be noted that from this point on the emitter-author and the emitter-narrator are no longer one and the same person and the reader is supposed to follow the emitter-narrator's message so as to be able to decipher the emitter-author's intentions. The reader in his turn is no longer a simple reader following a plot, but an involved reader who will have to rely on his own experience so as to be able to decode the author's discourse out of the narrator's discourse and, finally, build up his own reading-resulted discourse as to the message of the text as a whole.

Thus, the proposal draws attention to the self-degradation of the nation as a whole by illustrating it in shockingly literal ways. The idea of fattening up a starving population in order to feed the rich casts a grim judgment on the nature of social relations in Ireland. The language that labels people as livestock becomes even more prevalent in this part of the proposal and it also serves to frame a critique of the domestic values in the Irish Catholic families, who regard

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marriage and family with so little sanctity that they effectively make breeding animals of themselves. Swift draws on the long-standing perception among the English and the Anglo-Irish ruling classes of the Irish as a barbaric people while neither confirming nor negating this assumption altogether. He indicts the Irish Catholics for the extent to which they dehumanize themselves through their baseness and lack of self-respect. He also, however, admonishes those who would accuse the poor for their inhumane lack of compassion. Finally, he also criticizes the barbarism of a mode of social thought that takes economic profitability as its only standard.

With the introduction of the idea of 'child-flesh eaters', a number of associated insinuations come into play. Swift makes an analogy between eating people and other ways in which people, or a nation, can be devoured. The British oppression amounts to a kind of voracious consumption of all that is Irish - humans devouring humans in a cannibalism of injustice and inhumanity. But Ireland's complicity in its own oppression translates the guilt of cannibalism to a narrower national scale; this is not only humans being cruel to other humans, but a nation consuming themselves and their own resources. Swift's contention that the wealthy Irish landlords had already "devoured" most of the poor parents voices a protest against their exploitation of the peasants. One of Swift's discursive techniques is to let abstract ideas resonate in multiple ways. The word "profit," for example, refers at various points to economics, morality, and personal indulgence. When Swift looks at who stands to profit from the sale of infant flesh, he includes not only the family that earns the eight shillings, but also the landowner who will earn a certain social status by serving such a delicacy, and the nation that will obtain relief from some of its most pressing problems. In this way, Swift keeps reminding his reader of the different value systems that bear on Ireland's social and political problems.

Section 3

Although the author identifies himself as a member of the Anglo-Irish ruling class, who were predominantly Anglican, his picture of the Anglicans forced to leave the country is an ironic one since Swift is denouncing the practice of absenteeism among Irish landlords, who often governed their estates from abroad, thus extracting all the fruits of Irish peasant labour out of the Irish economy and into the English coffers. The proposer's loyalty is to the interests of the wealthy, and it is at the upper classes that he aims his sharpest satire. Swift's contempt for the irresponsibility, greed, and moral indifference of the wealthy is matched only by his disgust at the utter failure of Ireland's political leaders. Swift begins moving away from the so-called economics of child-breeding in order to dwell on the realities of Ireland's economic crisis. Many of the arguments the proposer advances here have to do with the very real problem of building a viable Irish national economy. Swift reveals that his objection is not so much with the basic mercantilist idea that the people are the most valuable resources of a nation, but rather with Ireland's failure to value that resource in any meaningful and nationally constructive way.

Section 4

Finally, the author's account of his long and exhausting years of wrestling with Ireland's problems might be taken as Swift's own. His record of supposedly unrealistic alternative solutions marks a turning point in the pamphlet and a break in the satire while at the same time causing a final change of perspective from the narrator's account to the author's anti-discursive account. The ideas the proposer rejects represent measures that Swift himself had spent a great deal of energy advocating as follows: "*I can think of no one that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and it was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculated my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: Of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound: Of using neither clothes, nor household furniture, except what is our own growth and manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the materials*

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and instruments that promote foreign luxury: Of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women: Of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence, and temperance: Of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo: Of quitting our animosities and factions, nor act any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken: Of being a little cautious not to sell our country and conscience for nothing: Of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants. Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, into our shopkeepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure and goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it."

It is to be noted that all these 'unrealistic solutions' are a set of steps by which the Irish might hope to break out of their cycle of victimization without the need for England's cooperation. That is why Swift's own program for the future is a program of civic-minded, patriotic, and principled behaviour designed to cause change from the inside. The audience is confronted with the fact that there are real and practicable solutions to Ireland's national discomposure, of which they themselves, in their greed and self-indulgence, are to blame.

Further on, in emphasizing that this remedy is designed only for Ireland, Swift is calling attention to the extremity of his country's backwardness, as an index of how bad things were. The author's statement that much of the population would have been better off dead is exaggerated, perhaps, but not ironic; it is meant as testimony to the dire national consequences of such obvious civic neglect. Only in Ireland, he seems to say, could a policy of cannibalism possibly be considered a social improvement.

The closing statement offers a last scathing indictment of the twisted ethics of convenience and personal gain. We are urged to believe in his disinterestedness not because of his moral standards or his high-mindedness, but because he happens not to be susceptible to the particular fiscal temptation that might compromise his position. The manner of his assertion reminds us that the author's unquestioned assumption throughout the entire proposal is that anyone with children would in fact be perfectly willing to sell them. This declaration also undercuts, once again, the separation between the level-headed, wealthy, Protestant author and the Catholic masses and points to the fact that what unites the unruly and unscrupulous mob with the social planner is the fact that their priorities are basically economic.

To end with, we would like to make the following discourse-related conclusions on Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*:

- in point of form it is an argumentative type of pamphlet mostly realized by means of the so-called "black humour" satiric device;
- the first-person author-narrator manipulates the reader transposing him in the middle of a fantastic-like fictional country (the country of the 'child-flesh eaters') resembling from this point of view one of the 'countries' in *Gulliver's Travels*;
- the literariness of the pamphlet is realized by means of the change of perspective as follows: in section 1 - the author and the narrator seem to be one and the same person, in section 2 and section 3 - the author is to be differentiated from the narrator, and finally, in section 4 - the author takes the floor once again so as to send a clear-cut message as to the intentions of his pamphlet to the involved and at the same time cultivated reader to whom the narrator had addressed earlier, with the observation that each of the two locutors chooses the anti-discourse as their narrative technique.
- the matter-of-fact tone of the author/narrator as opposed to a pamphlet-like virulent tone is meant to baffle his reader by facing him with an apparently absurd reality in which what seems to be fiction (the idea of women-breeders, child-

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flesh eaters, people seen as livestock, etc.) stands in fact for the actual non-fictional reality (i.e. the incapacity of Ireland's politicians, the hypocrisy of the wealthy, the tyranny of the English, and the squalor and degradation in which most of the Irish people were living);

- in point of theme it is a social, political as well as a religious pamphlet which by its subject-matter anticipates George Orwell's *1984* with reproductory laboratories and women acting like some kind of breeding tubes, especially selected as early as their earliest age, or Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* country (Erewhon being an anagram for *nowhere*) in which children were to blame for allowing themselves to be born, illness was considered a crime, sick or sad people were thrown in jail since sickness and sadness were their own faults, while people who robbed or murdered, were treated kindly and taken to the hospital to recover.

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