

An Analysis of Satire as Social Critique in Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal

Wafiq Aziz Wardah¹, Otong Setiawan Djuharie²

^{1,2}English Literature Department, Faculty Adab and Humanities, State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author's Email: wafiqazizwardah@gmail.com, otongsetiawandjuharie@uinsgd.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of satire as a form of social critique in Jonathan Swift's A Modest Proposal (1729), a canonical satirical essay that responds to the severe poverty and political oppression in 18th-century Ireland. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative method with M.H. Abrams' theory of satire as the analytical framework, focusing on four key elements: parody, irony, allegory, and humor. Through close reading and contextual analysis, the study reveals how Swift weaponizes rhetorical strategies to expose the moral failures of British colonial rule, the economic exploitation of the Irish poor, and the inhumanity of utilitarian logic. Findings show that Swift employs layered irony and grotesque parody to mimic policy discourse, turning bureaucratic language into a tool of condemnation. Allegorical expressions and dark humor further intensify the satirical impact, forcing readers to confront the ethical absurdity of commodifying human lives. The study concludes that Swift's satire is not merely literary art, but a powerful moral act of resistance that remains relevant to contemporary critiques of injustice, inequality, and systemic indifference.

Keywords: satire, social critique, Jonathan Swift, A Modest Proposal, irony, parody, allegory, humor

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a medium of communication, but a complex system that enables individuals to express, persuade, critique, and entertain. According to T. Wiratino and R. Santosa (2014), language is a structured system that forms a larger unit through sound and written expression. Its function extends beyond direct interaction, encompassing creative expressions such as literature that is rich with diction, style, and meaning. Chaer (in Diah & Wulandari, 2015) outlines five principal functions of language, expression, information, exploration, persuasion, and entertainment, all of which converge in literary works. Among the many stylistic forms in literature, one of the most impactful and provocative is satire, a rhetorical strategy that weaponizes wit, irony, and ridicule to expose folly and criticize social structures. In literature, satire has served not only to amuse but to challenge, to denounce injustice and hypocrisy, and to catalyze introspection and change.

Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, published anonymously in 1729, stands as a towering example of this tradition. Through the guise of a rational economic pamphlet, Swift proposes that impoverished Irish families might ease their burdens by selling their children as food for the wealthy elite. The suggestion is horrifying, yet it is presented with such calm, logical precision that the reader is forced to confront the underlying absurdity and inhumanity of the systems being critiqued. This sustained irony, one of the essay's most powerful elements, builds from a dispassionate tone to an explosive satirical indictment. Swift's grotesque proposal is not to be taken at face value; rather, it is a carefully constructed mirror reflecting the cruelty of British colonial policy, the moral indifference of the ruling class, and the utilitarian calculus that reduces human life to economic statistics. It is, as Freud observed about humor, a release of psychic tension that reveals the aggression beneath civility: "By belittling and humbling our enemy, by scorning and ridiculing him, we indirectly obtain the pleasure of his defeat by the laughter of the third person, the inactive spectator."

Swift's satirical method relies on the fusion of rhetorical elegance and moral outrage. His use of cold economic data, references to fictional authorities like "a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London," and outlandish culinary suggestions "whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled" are all parodic imitations of the genre of political and economic pamphleteering that dominated 18th-century British discourse. The satire lies in the form as much as the content: Swift does not shout or rant, but adopts the voice of the very people he seeks to condemn, using their logic against them to devastating effect. As Declercq (2018) explains, satire is a genre that has historically shaped how literature is interpreted, as both critique and entertainment, capable of simultaneously amusing and unsettling its audience. Swift achieves this balance masterfully, delivering moral critique under the guise of bureaucratic absurdity.

The power of satire lies in its ability to cut through ideological façades by exposing contradictions and hypocrisies in language and policy. According to Keraf (2010), satire is "an expression intended to mock or reject something, often done through laughter." Ade Nurdin, Yani Maryani, and Mumu (2004) reinforce this by defining satire as a stylistic form used to criticize in hopes that the target of the criticism will improve or reform. Swift's essay is a classic example of what Holbert (2011) defines as Juvenalian satire, harsh, biting, and morally charged. Unlike the gentle ridicule of Horatian satire, Juvenalian satire seeks to provoke anger and deep ethical discomfort. It is direct, confrontational, and often violent in tone, not because it seeks harm, but because it seeks transformation.

The elements of satire, parody, irony, allegory, and humor, work in tandem to shape Swift's critique. M.H. Abrams, as cited in Octa (2015), identifies these elements as essential to understanding how satire operates. Parody functions by mimicking existing forms (in this case, political economic argumentation),

irony inverts expectations and meanings, allegory embeds symbolic moral lessons, and humor creates a space for reflection through discomfort and laughter. Swift utilizes each of these to confront a society that has lost its moral compass, a government that treats lives as disposable, and a public that tolerates suffering so long as it is justified by reason. In doing so, he transforms satire from mere literary technique into a formidable form of social critique.

The cultural and historical context of *A Modest Proposal*, colonial domination, famine, and systemic oppression, does not limit its relevance. Modern satirists like Trevor Noah, Samantha Bee, and others continue to use similar strategies to address contemporary issues ranging from political corruption to racial injustice. Satire remains a flexible and formidable tool for dissent. LeBoeuf (2007, as cited in Gift, 2019) states that satire “is always a criticism of some aspect of human nature, ugliness, or stupidity with the aim of making the audience view it with disrespect and, as a consequence, the potential to cause social change.” In this spirit, Swift’s essay continues to be cited, taught, and imitated as a model of how literature can challenge power and provoke reflection.

This research aims to explore how satire in *A Modest Proposal* functions as a mode of social critique, particularly through the lens of M.H. Abrams’ theoretical framework. By analyzing the interplay between form and meaning, between grotesque humor and ethical outrage, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which satire becomes a weapon of resistance. In doing so, it affirms Swift’s lasting contribution to literary tradition and the ongoing relevance of satire in confronting injustice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*

Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* (1729) is widely recognized as one of the most powerful examples of literary satire. Written in response to the economic hardship and political subjugation in 18th-century Ireland, the essay adopts a fictional persona who proposes the shocking idea of using poor children as a food source to relieve societal burdens. Through this grotesque yet logical proposal, Swift employs a calm and rational tone to critique the inhumane attitudes of British colonial powers and the moral decay of the wealthy elite. The essay exaggerates reason and economic calculation to the point of absurdity, highlighting the ethical void in political and social policies of the time. By using satire, Swift aims not only to ridicule but to provoke critical reflection on injustice, indifference, and human suffering.

Theories of Satire

Satire is a literary technique used to criticize human folly, vice, or social institutions, often through the use of humor, irony, and exaggeration. Gottlieb (2019) defines satire as the art of making people laugh at something to reveal its ridiculousness and provoke awareness or change. Raj Kishor Singh (2012) supports this view by asserting that satire highlights social flaws with the intent to inspire improvement. Keraf (2006) emphasizes that satire evokes laughter to indirectly criticize behavior or ideas without causing direct harm. High (1962) and Britannica also stress that satire goes beyond entertainment to reveal grotesque realities in society, prompting readers to confront moral and ethical concerns. Furthermore, scholars like Elliot (2022) and Murodova (2022) consider satire a powerful instrument of social commentary that combines critical thought and humor. Thus, satire is not merely a comic device but a meaningful tool for ethical engagement and critique.

Types of Satire

Satire can be categorized based on its tone and method of delivery. Holbert (2011) classifies Juvenalian satire as harsh and biting, characterized by moral outrage and intended to provoke discomfort rather than amusement. Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is a quintessential example of this type, as it shocks its readers through a disturbing and emotionally charged narrative. In contrast, Horatian satire is more gentle and humorous, typically aiming for tolerance rather than anger. Abrams and Harpham (2015) distinguish between formal or direct satire, where the satirist speaks directly to the audience through a persona, and indirect satire, where critique is embedded within narrative and character interactions. Menippean satire, as a form of indirect satire, targets ideologies and mental attitudes rather than specific individuals, making it well-suited for philosophical reflection.

Elements of Satire (According to M.H. Abrams)

M.H. Abrams, as cited in Octa (2015), outlines four main elements of satire: parody, irony, allegory, and humor. Parody is the imitation of another work or discourse for ridicule, and in *A Modest Proposal*, Swift parodies rational economic discourse by mimicking the tone of political treatises while presenting a horrific solution. Irony is central to satire, where the intended meaning is opposite to the literal expression. Swift uses various forms of irony such as verbal irony, sarcasm, Socratic irony, dramatic irony, and cosmic irony to intensify his critique of both British rule and Irish passivity. Allegory is also present in the essay, where the shocking proposal becomes a symbolic representation of how society commodifies human life and overlooks suffering for profit. Finally, humor in Swift's work, though dark and unsettling, functions to destabilize the reader emotionally, encouraging reflection on the absurdity and cruelty within social structures.

Previous Studies on Satire and Swift

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the significance of Swift's use of satire as a literary and political tool. Scholars emphasize his effective employment of Juvenalian satire to expose the cruelty of British colonial policy and the apathy of the upper classes. Murodova (2022) and Gottlieb (2019) both highlight how Swift's calculated, logical tone enhances the shocking nature of the proposal, making his critique all the more powerful. Furthermore, Swift's satirical techniques, such as parody, irony, and allegory, have become foundational models for modern satirical discourse, as seen in contemporary media like *The Daily Show* with Trevor Noah. These parallels underscore the enduring relevance of *A Modest Proposal* as both a literary masterpiece and a model of satire as social critique.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the satirical elements found in *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift. The descriptive qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth interpretation of literary texts, focusing on the meanings behind language and rhetorical strategies. The analysis is based on the theory of satire by M.H. Abrams, as cited in Octa (2015), which classifies satire into four main forms: parody, irony (including verbal, dramatic, cosmic, sarcasm, and Socratic irony), allegory, and humor. These categories are used to identify how Swift criticizes the social, political, and economic conditions of 18th-century Ireland.

Data Source and Data Collection

The primary data in this study is the full text of *A Modest Proposal* (1729), which was carefully read and analyzed. The researcher used documentary techniques to collect data, focusing on specific passages that contain satirical language or tone. Each identified passage was examined to determine the type of satire used and its function in conveying social critique. Close reading was conducted repeatedly to ensure accuracy and to capture the nuances of Swift's language, especially in relation to irony and exaggeration.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using an interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of three steps: 1) Data reduction, selecting and coding textual excerpts that clearly show satire; 2) Data display, organizing the data into categories based on Abrams' satire types; 3) Conclusion drawing, how each type of satire functions to criticize colonial oppression, economic injustice, and moral failure in society. The researcher validated the data through triangulation of theory and peer feedback, ensuring the interpretations align with scholarly understanding of satire and literary criticism.

FINDING & DISCUSSION

Irony

In *A Modest Proposal*, irony emerges as the most dominant satirical device used by Swift to challenge moral indifference, economic utilitarianism, and colonial cruelty. The researcher finds that irony operates on multiple levels: verbal, situational, and cosmic, with a tendency toward sarcasm and rhetorical inversion. Swift often begins with seemingly logical or sympathetic remarks, only to subvert them with grotesque propositions that reveal the heartless logic of colonial rulers. By presenting horrific ideas in calm, reasonable language, Swift invites the reader into a trap of agreement before shattering expectations with horrifying conclusions. This strategic use of irony exposes the gap between surface civility and systemic brutality. The findings show that irony is used to disguise cruelty as logic, to reduce human tragedy to bureaucratic language, and to reflect the way oppressive policies are often justified under the pretense of rational governance.

Data 1:

"It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town... when they see the streets... crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags..." (p. 1)

In this opening sentence, Swift seems to start with a sympathetic tone towards the plight of the poor, especially the pathetic mothers and children. He refers to the scene as "a melancholy object". However, this phrase contains verbal irony, as it subtly distances the speaker from the object of suffering. The word "object" here suggests that human suffering is only seen as a visual phenomenon or a social problem, not as a human tragedy. Swift deliberately begins with false sympathy to ensnare the reader in a rhetorical trap. When the narrator then proposes the consumption of babies as a solution, the reader who previously felt in line with him becomes shocked and shaken. This is the initial use of irony as the foundation of the satirical strategy.

Data 2:

"A young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled..." (p. 2)

This sentence is one of the most brutal examples of irony in the text. Literally, this sentence sounds

like a fancy culinary recipe. However, the object is a human baby, which is described as animal meat in a restaurant. Swift uses formal language style, self-confidence, and culinary diction to cover up the cruelty of the idea, which makes this irony very effective. The irony here is not only in the content, but also in the contrast between the refined style of speech and the disgusting idea. Swift wants to show how cruel and absurd the British economic policy is, which is disguised in logic and statistics, but is basically inhumane.

Data 3:

“Infant’s flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March...” (p. 2)

This line is a striking example of cosmic irony, where Swift subverts the natural order and moral expectations of the universe. By suggesting that infant’s flesh will be in season, he equates human babies with seasonal agricultural produce, such as spring vegetables or livestock, reducing their value to availability and market timing. Swift adds grotesque specificity by identifying March as the peak month for harvest, drawing on a pseudo-scientific rationale involving fertility patterns after Lent. The irony lies in the calm, logical tone with which Swift presents this horrific idea. He employs culinary and agricultural diction “in season,” “plentiful” as if he were discussing seasonal menus in a gourmet restaurant, not human flesh. This unsettling juxtaposition of language and content exposes the monstrous absurdity of viewing humans as economic units.

Data 4:

“A boy or a girl before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity... they will not yield above three pounds... the charge of nutrients and rags having been at least four times that value.” (p. 2)

This passage exemplifies verbal irony at its sharpest. Swift’s narrator evaluates the financial return of raising a child as if discussing the cost-benefit analysis of livestock or produce. Children under twelve are deemed economically inefficient “no saleable commodity” because the cost of raising them outweighs their market value. The ironic horror is that he uses business terminology “yield,” “commodity,” “value” to describe living children, reinforcing how systems of power often see the poor not as human beings, but as financial liabilities. Through this irony, Swift dismantles the moral bankruptcy of Enlightenment rationalism when it’s applied without empathy. His satire critiques both the inhumanity of market logic and the policymakers who use such frameworks to justify social neglect. In Swift’s hands, irony becomes a scalpel that lays bare the grotesque truth beneath the polite language of bureaucracy.

Data 5:

“...landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.” (p. 3)

This sentence uses heavy sarcasm by comparing landlords to cannibals who have “devoured” poor Irish parents. Of course, they have not done so literally, Swift is mocking the exploitative landlord system that drained Irish peasants through high rents, forced evictions, and systemic poverty. The phrase “devoured most of the parents” sarcastically implies that since the landlords have already ruined the lives of the parents, they may as well take ownership of the children too. The phrase “the best title to the children” adds another layer of mockery. Swift sarcastically borrows legal language to criticize how British colonial law legitimized unjust power over the Irish poor. In doing so, he highlights how the system treats human beings as property, something to be owned, used, and consumed. The sarcasm is effective because it exposes the moral absurdity of legal and social systems that protect the powerful while dehumanizing the poor.

Data 6:

“The mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.” (p. 3)

This statement mocks how colonial and patriarchal systems view women as nothing more than reproductive machines. Swift sarcastically frames the mother's grief as economic gain, saying she will receive "eight shillings neat profit" from selling her baby, and that she will be "fit for work" afterward, as if she were a livestock animal ready for another cycle of production. The sarcasm lies in how Swift presents this horrific image with cold, matter-of-fact language. He mimics the tone of economic reasoning to highlight the dehumanization of both women and children. Rather than acknowledging a mother's emotional loss, the narrator focuses solely on her financial utility and physical readiness to continue producing. This satirical exaggeration forces the reader to confront the brutal logic of exploitation that hides behind rational economic discourse.

Data 7:

"...they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected." (p. 4)

This line is laced with cruel sarcasm, masked as bureaucratic observation. Swift lists the horrific conditions of the Irish poor, death by cold, hunger, dirt, and vermin, yet ends the sentence with the phrase "as fast as can be reasonably expected." This closing remark mimics the voice of a cold-hearted official who finds such suffering acceptable, or even efficient. The sarcasm here reveals the systemic indifference of those in power. Swift exposes the inhumanity of policymakers and elites who see mass death as manageable loss, rather than a moral crisis. The phrase ridicules the idea that such suffering is normal or tolerable, shining a light on how institutional cruelty is hidden beneath polite, rational language.

Parody

The research finds that Swift masterfully uses parody to imitate and distort the formal styles of public policy discourse, scientific economic reports, and state-sponsored documents. In *A Modest Proposal*, parody is employed to expose the cold, detached logic often found in documents issued by politicians and economists of Swift's time. Swift mimics the structure, diction, and tone of policy proposals to present an outlandish suggestion—eating children—as though it were a viable economic reform. By doing so, he critiques how systems of power use technical jargon and "rational" language to obscure or justify violence and oppression. The findings suggest that parody becomes Swift's tool to mock both the intellectual class and the ruling elite who mask inhuman policies behind civilized prose.

Data 8

"I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection." (p. 2)

This sentence sounds like the opening of an academic proposal or a state policy speech. With diction such as "humbly propose" and "not be liable to the least objection", Swift imitates the formal and polite style of state documents. However, the parodic effect appears once the reader knows the contents of his proposal: namely that children from poor families be kept until they are one year old and then slaughtered and sold as food. The sharp contrast between the formal and polite narrative structure and the very barbaric idea creates a very strong satirical effect. Here Swift mocks the way policy experts hide cruel solutions behind neutral language and rational rhetoric.

Data 9

"The skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen." (p. 3)

In this sentence, Swift suggests that the skin of slaughtered babies can be used to make luxurious

gloves for ladies, and summer shoes for noble gentlemen. The parodic effect comes from imitating the style of fashion industry catalogs or luxury goods promotions. It seems to advertise luxury products with aesthetic benefits, even though the basic material is human baby skin, which is logically and morally unreasonable. This parody is aimed at the elite class who live in luxury on the suffering of the poor. Swift insinuates that they are not only metaphorically wearing the poor, but literally making their bodies part of the luxury.

Data 10

“Supposing that one thousand families in this city, would be constant customers for infants flesh, besides others who might have it at merry meetings, particularly weddings and christenings...” (p. 5)

This sentence is a parody of business planning and market analysis. Swift constructs a scenario as if human babies were marketable commodities that could be served at social events such as weddings or christenings. He uses the term “merry meetings” and estimates the number of regular customers with promotional logic. This parody satirizes how the free market system can rationalize cruelty if profit is considered more important than ethics. Swift imitates the style of a merchant's report, but the contents of his merchandise are human flesh, a cruel but brilliant depiction of the exploitation of the lower classes in a capitalist economic system.

Allegory

Allegory in *A Modest Proposal* functions as a deeper symbolic critique of the British colonial system and its dehumanization of the Irish poor. The findings reveal that Swift does not only describe suffering but turns the human body into a symbol of exploited labor, commodified life, and institutionalized oppression. The grotesque imagery of consuming children serves as a broader metaphor for how the Irish were already being “consumed” economically and socially. Swift turns children into allegorical figures that represent the loss of autonomy, dignity, and humanity under systemic injustice. The allegory reveals the dark truth of how colonial logic reduces people into units of profit, while masking exploitation behind rhetoric of progress and civilization.

Data 11

“...they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many.” (p. 1)

This line is loaded with allegorical significance. On the surface, it suggests that the bodies of impoverished children can be used for food and even clothing. Allegorically, however, this is a metaphor for the complete dehumanization and commodification of the Irish poor under English colonial rule. Swift frames the poor not as individuals with lives and agency, but as resources to be mined for the benefit of the wealthy. The use of the word “contribute” is particularly satirical, it suggests voluntary participation, when in reality, it is forced, exploitative, and fatal. This allegory paints a disturbing picture of how economic systems treat poverty not as a social failing but as an opportunity for exploitation. It critiques the industrial and colonial mindset that views human bodies as instruments for profit, even after death. The transformation of children into meat and leather for the privileged is an extreme metaphor for how colonial systems extract every ounce of value from subjugated populations.

Data 12

“...a round million of creatures in humane figure throughout this kingdom...” (p. 6)

This sentence is one of Swift's most powerful allegorical condemnations. The narrator refers to the Irish poor not as people, but as “creatures in humane figure,” implying that they merely resemble humans but lack real human status. This linguistic dehumanization is not accidental. By calling them creatures,

Swift mirrors the language of colonial and racial hierarchies that were used to justify domination, slavery, and economic exploitation. It reflects a system in which poverty strips people of their humanity, a condition not just social but symbolic. Allegorically, Swift is saying that the British government and landlords view the Irish as less than human, not deserving of dignity, protection, or moral consideration. They are perceived as burdens, or at best, resources to be used. This line encapsulates the brutal reality of colonial hegemony, where systems of power deny the full humanity of the oppressed in order to rationalize their suffering.

Humor

Although Swift's essay is deeply unsettling, the researcher finds that *A Modest Proposal* makes strategic use of dark humor—a kind of humor born from absurdity, horror, and grotesque exaggeration. This humor does not aim to amuse in a conventional sense, but to force the reader into moral discomfort. By juxtaposing horrific content with polite, even elegant language, Swift generates a cognitive dissonance that leads the reader to question the ethical basis of what is being said. The findings highlight that humor, in Swift's hands, is not light-hearted but corrosive—it eats through the façade of civility and exposes moral bankruptcy. It is precisely this unsettling humor that makes the essay so powerful in its social critique.

Data 13

"A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish..." (p. 2)

This sentence imagines a human child as a family dinner menu, complete with "two dishes when entertaining friends" and "a quarter of the body for a private dinner." Humor arises from this absurd form, like a description of a recipe in a culinary magazine. However, this absurdity actually reveals how rotten society is that can imagine such a solution. Swift uses humor here to satirize the luxury of the upper class that is built on the suffering of the common people. The feast dish made from the body of a baby is a cruel metaphor for how the elite enjoy wealth from "eating" the lives of the lower class systematically.

Data 14

"...which of them could bring the fattest child to the market." (p. 4)

Swift imagines poor mothers competing to give birth to the fattest babies in order to get a high selling price. This sentence creates an absurd and tragicomic image. But the humor is a deep critique of extreme capitalism that judges human value from economic aspects alone, and patriarchy that views women only from their reproductive roles. Swift insinuates that in a rotten economic system, human birth and bodies are traded like livestock, and women are only valued for the production of children that can be sold.

CONCLUSION

Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* stands as a masterclass in the use of satire as a powerful instrument of social critique. Through a grotesquely logical proposal to sell and consume Irish infants as a solution to poverty, Swift exposes the moral collapse and systemic cruelty of British colonial governance and the economic ideology of utilitarianism. Employing a dispassionate tone and pseudo-scientific language, Swift masterfully constructs a fictional persona who mirrors the attitudes of the ruling elite, thereby intensifying the satirical effect. His essay forces readers to confront the horrifying implications of viewing human beings as mere commodities—an indictment that remains strikingly relevant in contemporary times.

The findings of this study, analyzed through M.H. Abrams' framework of satire—which includes

irony, parody, allegory, and humor—demonstrate how each element functions cohesively to deconstruct oppressive ideologies. Irony serves as the foundation of the essay, particularly through verbal and cosmic forms that invert moral expectations and highlight systemic absurdities. Parody mimics the style of political and economic discourse, exaggerating its logic to expose its inhumanity. Allegory is used to symbolically represent the dehumanization of the Irish poor, reducing them to resources for exploitation. Dark humor, finally, is not intended to amuse but to evoke discomfort, serving as a rhetorical weapon that destabilizes complacency and invites critical reflection.

Swift's satire ultimately transcends literary technique to become a moral and political statement. It critiques not only specific historical injustices—such as colonialism, economic exploitation, and class-based inequality—but also the broader human tendency to rationalize suffering under the guise of reason and policy. His work continues to resonate because it speaks to universal patterns of dehumanization and systemic neglect. By illuminating how bureaucratic language can be used to justify brutality, Swift compels his readers to reexamine the ethical responsibilities of society, governance, and discourse itself.

In conclusion, *A Modest Proposal* remains an enduring exemplar of how literature, through the vehicle of satire, can function as a form of resistance and awakening. This study affirms that Swift's essay is not merely a product of its time, but a timeless critique of power, privilege, and the dangerous detachment of reason from empathy. Through meticulous rhetorical construction and biting satire, Swift delivers not just a shocking proposal, but a lasting moral provocation.

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