

SWIFT'S *A MODEST PROPOSAL* IN THE PRAGMATICS OF IRONY: ECHOIC MENTION AND PRETENSE APPROACHES¹

Ruiz Moneva, M^a Angeles

Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Universidad de Zaragoza

C / Pedro Cerbuna, nº 12

50009 - Zaragoza

Telf: (+34) 976 76 10 00 (Ext: 1512)

Fax: (+34) 976 76 15 19

e-mail: mruiz@posta.unizar.es

(Recibido agosto 2004; aceptado septiembre 2004)

BIBLID [1133-682X (2004) 12; 123-146]

Resumen

Una de las principales controversias sobre el estudio de la ironía desde un punto de vista pragmático se centra en si su interpretación conlleva simulación o mención ecoica. La explicación de la ironía como simulación se remonta a las propuestas más tempranas (Aristóteles). Sin embargo, veremos que el término *simulación* y sus implicaciones para la interpretación de la ironía no siempre se han entendido de la misma manera. Como mencionamos más arriba, en fechas más recientes los teóricos de la "pretense theory" (Clark y Gerrig, 1984) y de la mención ecoica (Sperber y Wilson 1998, 1992 (1990), 1986/95, 1981, 1978; Sperber 1984; Jorgensen *et al.* 1984; Jorgensen 1996) han debatido sobre este tema desde un punto de vista pragmático. Es interesante que sus discusiones se han basado en un *corpus* muy concreto, "Una humilde propuesta", de Swift, y han continuado hasta fechas muy recientes (Kreuz, Roger 2000; Link 2000; Attardo 2001, 2000).

Este trabajo busca examinar las implicaciones que la consideración de este *corpus* puede tener para el debate en cuestión y evaluará las propuestas que ambos enfoques puedan aportar. También se abordará si las diferentes connotaciones que se pueden dar a los términos "mención ecoica" o "simulación" pueden influir sobre la interpretación de las diferentes traducciones españolas de la obra. Finalmente, el análisis considerará también las aplicaciones que la lingüística de corpus puede tener para el estudio pragmático de la ironía y la necesidad de combinar el corpus con el contexto en el que aparece.

Palabras Clave: análisis pragmáticos de la ironía, teoría de la mención ecoica, teoría de la simulación, Una humilde propuesta (Swift), lingüística de corpus.

Abstract

One of the basic controversies within pragmatic approaches to the study of irony dwells upon whether it entails either pretense or echoic mention. The approach to irony as pretense goes back to some of the very earliest proposals (Aristotle). However, we shall that the term *pretense* and its implications for the interpretation of irony have not always been understood in the same way. As noted above, in more recent times, pretense theorists (Clark and

¹ The research for the writing of the present paper is inscribed within the investigation project "J. Swift en España: la traducción y difusión de su obra a lo largo de dos siglos" (BFF 2002-00653), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology.

Gerrig 1984) and mention approaches (Sperber and Wilson 1998, 1992 (1990), 1986/95, 1981, 1978; Sperber 1984; Jorgensen et al. 1984; Jorgensen 1996) have attempted to explain irony from a pragmatic perspective. Interestingly enough, their debate has focused on a specific corpus, Swift's "A Modest Proposal", and has expanded until relatively recent (Kreuz, Roger 2000; Link, 2000; Attardo, 2001, 2000).

The present paper aims to examine the implications that the consideration of this corpus may have for this issue and will assess the contributions that may be offered by both approaches. The analysis will also consider the applications that corpus linguistics may have for the analysis of irony from a pragmatic standpoint and the necessity to combine both the survey of the instances considered with the context where they appear.

Key Words: pragmatic analyses of irony, mention theory, pretense theory, A Modest Proposal (Swift), corpus analysis.

Résumé²

L'une des principales controverses ouvertes dans l'étude de l'ironie, envisagée d'un point de vue pragmatique, réside dans le fait de savoir si cette dernière renferme une simulation ou une mention échoïque. L'explication de l'ironie comme une simulation remonte aux propositions les plus anciennes (Aristote). Nous verrons cependant que le terme *simulation* et ses implications, dans l'interprétation de l'ironie, n'ont pas toujours été compris de la même manière. Comme nous le mentionnons plus haut, plus récemment, les théoriciens de la "pretense theory" (Clark et Gerrig 1984) et ceux de la mention échoïque (Sperber et Wilson 1998, 1992 (1990), 1986/95, 1981, 1978; Sperber 1984; Jorgensen et al. 1984; Jorgensen 1996) ont débattu de ce sujet depuis un point de vue pragmatique. Il est intéressant que leurs discussions se soient basées sur un *corpus* très concret, "Une humble proposition", de Swift, et se soient poursuivies jusqu'à des dates très récentes (Kreuz, Roger 2000; Link 2000; Attardo 2001, 2000).

Ce travail cherche à examiner les implications que la considération de ce *corpus* peut avoir sur le débat en question et évaluer les propositions que ces deux points de vue peuvent lui apporter. On se demandera également si les différentes connotations que l'on peut donner aux termes "mention échoïque" ou "simulation" peuvent avoir une répercussion sur l'interprétation des différentes traductions espagnoles de l'œuvre. Finalement, l'analyse considèrera également les applications que la linguistique de corpus peut apporter à l'étude pragmatique de l'ironie, ainsi que le besoin d'adapter le corpus au contexte dans lequel il se présente.

Mot Clés : pragmatique étude de l'ironie, simulation (pretense theory), mention échoïque, linguistique de corpus.

Sumario

0. Introduction: Corpus linguistics and pragmatic analysis. 1. The use of *corpora* in pragmatic approaches to irony: *Swift's A Modest Proposal* and related works: *Swift's Irish Tracts*. 2. Searching for an answer to the pragmatic questions raised by *A Modest Proposal* on the basis of the corpus: the text and its Spanish translation. 3. Conclusions. 4. References. 5. Appendix.

0. Introduction: Corpus Linguistics and Pragmatic Analysis

Corpus linguistics is accounted for by Crystal and Davy as the science that "deals with the principles and practice of using corpora in language study" (1992: 85). A *corpus* is then defined by these authors in the following way:

Corpus, plural **corpora**: A collection of linguistic data, either compiled as written texts or as a transcription of recorded speech. The main purpose of a corpus is to verify a hypothesis about language –for example, to determine how the usage of a particular sound, word, or syntactic construction varies. (Crystal and Davy 1992: 85; bold types as in the original text).

² The author of the French translation of the abstract is Ms. Delphine Saint-Raymond.

Other authors, such as Mc.Arthur (1992), draw attention to the fact that corpora are regarded as such particularly if they are “complete and self-contained”, and the items that form a corpus are supposed to be “more or less representative of a language, and usually stored as an electronic database” (1992: 265-66). The use of *corpora*, however, cannot be said to be restricted to the scope of corpus linguistics. As Mc.Enery and Wilson (1996) illustrate profusely in their work, there are a handful of very different disciplines that may utilise *corpora* in their investigation. Among them, let us refer to the use of corpora in areas as different as speech research, lexical studies, grammar, semantics, sociolinguistics, language teaching, historical linguistics, dialectology, psycholinguistics, cultural studies, social psychology or stylistic and pragmatics. For the purposes of the present paper, we shall concentrate upon the two being referred to last, that is, stylistics and pragmatics. Indeed, for a start, we shall see that these two disciplines present peculiar features concerning corpora because of their own idiosyncrasy and field of study.

With regard to stylistics, Mc.Enery and Wilson claim that it may be said to confront corpus linguistics with a very specific challenge. Thus, these authors show that because of the fact that the focus of stylistics usually refers to the study of individual texts or authors, scholars working in this field cannot be said to use corpora in a systematic, methodological way intended to cover their investigation aims. However, in the case of this discipline, corpora are important in so far as they provide investigatorss with sound sources of data, which can be used as quantitative evidence that may substantiate the claims or hypotheses being analysed.

In this particular sense, the situation is very much similar in the case of the use of corpora in pragmatics and discourse analysis. According to Mc.Enery and Wilson (1996), the amount of corpus-based research in these fields has been relatively small so far. The main reason for this probably has to do with the fact that the research currently being done in these areas relies heavily upon *context*. In contrast, the relatively small samples of texts being generally used in corpora tend to be abstracted and somehow removed from their contexts of use. However, these authors also note that there are more recent *corpora* which, on account of their being based upon conversation, will tend to take context into account. This is the case of the London-Lund Corpus, or the British National Corpus, only to refer to certain remarkable instances. Likewise, they note that this area may possibly be further exploited in the near future.

In any case, these authors also make an important distinction that may be regarded as relevant for these two fields. It is argued that “the notion of a **corpus** as the basis for a form of empirical linguistics is different from the examination of single texts in several fundamental ways” (1996: Part Two, bold types as in the original). Indeed, it is often the case that research in pragmatics and discourse analysis concentrates upon particular texts that are being utilised as evidence or support for the claims being made. Moreover, particular *corpora* may show representative evidence of the specific point under analysis, as far as utterances are not isolated, but are on the contrary related to the context where they appear. Therefore, it could be argued that this use of *corpora* is characterised by two main features: its instrumentality and also its reliance upon context. In the present paper, a particular ins-

tance of the study of irony that has focused upon a particular work, namely, Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, will be dealt with, as an instance that fulfils the main points discussed above.

1. The use of *corpora* in pragmatic approaches to irony: Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and related works: *Swift's Irish Tracts*

Interestingly enough, most of the controversies raised between two different pragmatic approaches to irony, namely, the so-called mention and pretense theories, respectively, have tended to be centred upon Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. Let us briefly recall that this work deals with Swift's furious and desperate attack against the Irish for having done nothing to avoid the brutal oppression exerted by the British against them. In one of the best and most complex ironic and satiric treatises ever written, Swift recommends the Irish to eat up their own children, so that the latter will no more be a burden to the already heavily deteriorated economic situation.

It may be noted that this particular *corpus* fulfils the main features that, according to McEnery and Wilson (1996) characterise modern *corpora*, namely, its sampling and representativeness for the study of irony –as illustrated by the central position of this treatise within research in pragmatics–; second, its finite size; third, its being a standard reference –because of the fact that the same data is being used by each of these theoretical standpoints to substantiate their claims on irony–; finally, its being nowadays available in the Internet, existing, therefore, in a machine-readable form.

Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978) had proposed a wholly innovative approach to irony, which characterised it in terms of the speaker's attitude towards the proposition expressed, which was generally one of disagreement, disappointment, or more generally, distance. This was captured by means of the notions of *echo*, *use* and *mention*. For Sperber and Wilson, the essential point about ironic utterances is that they show “an attitude of the speaker to his utterance”, or “an attitude of the speaker to what his utterance is about” (1981: 303). This is further connected to the distinction which they establish between *use* and *mention*: “USE of an expression involves reference to what the expression refers to; MENTION involves reference to the expression itself” (1981: 303, capitals as in the original). The distinction between *use* and *mention* will be applied not only to *expressions*, but also to *propositions*:

(In) cases of irony (...) the speaker mentions a proposition in such a way as to make clear that he rejects it as ludicrously false, inappropriate, or irrelevant. For the hearer, understanding such an utterance involves both realizing that it is a case of mention rather than use, and also recognizing the speaker's attitude to the proposition mentioned. (1981: 308).

Swift's *A Modest Proposal* was first referred to by pretense theorists as an instance of a text in which, according to Clark and Gerrig (1984), there could not be said to exist any standpoint of echo, that is, there is nobody distancing herself from any opinions or state of affairs whatsoever. Thus, one of the most outstanding critical points made by Clark and Gerrig (1984) against Sperber and Wilson's earliest proposals on irony (Sperber and Wilson 1978, 1981; Sperber 1984) has to do with the fact that Swift's work could not possibly be

interpreted as *mention*. For these authors, then, the point of the entire essay could not possibly be an *echo* of "popular wisdom or received opinions" (Clark and Gerrig 1984: 123), but, rather, Swift would have adopted an attitude of pretense, which these authors account for as follows:

Treated as pretense, however, Swift's irony makes good sense. Swift was pretending to speak as a member of the English ruling class to an English audience. He expected his readers to recognize the pretense and to see how by affecting the pretense he was denouncing English attitudes towards the Irish. (Clark and Gerrig, 1984 : 123).

Pretense theory accounts for irony on the basis of both traditional accounts and also upon Grice's explanation of irony as pretense, and even Clark and Gerrig quote directly from Grice: "To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests), and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect" (1978: 125). It may be noted, however, that *pretense* has not always been understood in the same way within the rhetorical tradition: it was only from the work of Cicero or Quintilian that pretense became linked to deception. On the other hand, Plato had described irony as a debate between two characters, the *alazon*, and the *eirōn*, and it may be maintained that both of them pretended to be somebody or something other than they really were; thus, the *eirōn* pretended not to know, whereas he did know; on the contrary, the *alazon* knew much less than he claimed to. In his work *Ética a Nicómaco*, Aristotle had even explicitly associated the attitude of pretense to the *alazon*:

Así pues, con respecto a la verdad, llamaremos veraz al que posee el medio, y veracidad a la disposición intermedia; en cuanto a la *pretensión*, la exagerada, *fanfarronería*, y al que la tiene, fanfarrón [*alazon*]; la que se subestima, *disimulo*, y *disimulador* [*eirōn*], al que la tiene. (Book III, 18, 1419b, Greek terms italicised in the original; mine any other italics).

It was Cicero that had established a close link between irony and pretense. Thus, the attitude of pretense may reflect that the speaker claims to be somebody or something other than she actually is, or she may pretend not to cope with something which she indeed understands. Even so, Quintilian noted that irony is linked to pretense only if it is a figure, but not if it is a trope. The distinction between irony as being either a figure or a trope is made by Quintilian in the following terms: "... in the *trope* the conflict is purely verbal, while in the *figure* the meaning, and sometimes the whole aspect of our case, conflicts with the language and the tone of voice adopted" (Book IX, p. 401).

The debate between these two theoretical explanations of irony, mention and pretense theories, has reached very recent times. A brief review of the most important standpoints adopted, particularly in so far as they aim to account for Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, follows.

Joanna Williams (1984) claimed that both mention and pretense theories could be approached as being complementary rather than mutually exclusive, and noted that Clark and Gerrig lacked any substantial alternative approach to irony to that put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1981, 1978). Similarly, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) dwell upon Swift's *A Modest Proposal* as a paradigmatic instance of the account of irony in terms of the expression of a certain attitude. This makes us refer back to a point already noted by Sperber

and Wilson (1981, 1978), namely, the *source of echo*: thus, already at this moment, these authors claim that there may be very different kinds of echoes, or, as they put it, "there are echoic mentions of many different degrees and types" (1981: 309). Among some of them, they refer to the following: first, the echo of a preceding utterance; second, the echo of what the addressee takes it to be a particular pragmatic implication of the sentence uttered; third, those cases in which the echo refers not to an immediately preceding utterance, but to one that occurred some time before; fourth, instances where the source of echo is very distant indeed; or fifth, anticipatory echoes.

It may be argued that the value of any particular theory is closely related to its explanatory power. An interesting, comparative analysis of both mention and pretense theories of irony is conveyed by Mariscal Chicano (1994), in terms of their implications and the extent to which they fulfil their objectives. For this author, the main weaknesses that can be traced in Sperber and Wilson's mention theory of irony are the following: first, it lacks what we might call a psycholinguistic basis, which should make it possible to differentiate what may be interpreted as a possible echo and what may not; second, neither does it specify what role mutual knowledge plays, or what is it that has to be shared; third, it does not give an explanation of those instances in which the speaker is being ironic and yet means what she says; or fourth, what criterion can help the addressee, if any, to differentiate between those cases in which the speaker echoes not a certain state of affairs, but rather, an opinion entertained about it.

However, Clark and Gerrig's pretense theory of irony does not lack problems, either. What is more important, some of them show that it is unable to provide an answer to those –pretended or understood as such– weaknesses of the theory put forward by Sperber and Wilson: to begin with, it is false that the scope of pretense is wider than that of echo, or that pretense theory can account for certain instances assumed to have been left unexplained within relevance theory by Clark and Gerrig; then, no matter if Clark and Gerrig had set out to explain the kind of victims of an ironical utterance, there may be more different types, and these may not always appear.

The references to pragmatic approaches to Swift's *A Modest Proposal* have come down to the present. Pretense and echoic mention would be at work not only in irony, but would also be relevant for the analysis of related rhetorical forms such as satire. Thus, Link (2000) draws a very subtle, but interesting distinction regarding Swift's attitude in the treatise that may shed light upon its interpretation from a pragmatic standpoint. She notes that

...Swift pretends to be sincere in his proposal to feed Irish children to the British. However, he intends for readers to be aware of his pretense, and recognize that he is, in fact, mocking the social organization of the British society. In these ways, satire shares pretense, mutual recognition, and off-record purpose with ostensible speech acts. (2000: 25).

We may draw some conclusions from these points: namely, the close link between irony and satire, in particular, within this work. This means that in this treatise Swift both criticises the situation of the Irish, too passive under the British domination, and also distances himself from it, with a view of remaining apart, aloof. Crucially, we also see at play the com-

plex relationship between sincerity, on the one hand, and both pretense and echo, which may be said to entertain different levels of (meta) representation: thus, the author pretends to be sincere: by doing so, he distances himself in his words from his truly inner-felt attitude. In our view, this shows that pretense may be re-analysed within the relevance-theoretical framework as a form of *self-echo*. On top of that, the speaker has a truthful intention to criticise a certain state of affairs and he intends the readers to become aware of his echo from reality.

Very recently, Attardo (2001, 2000) has made very interesting claims on the pragmatic interpretation of this work. To begin with, he also contributes a theoretical account of irony, one of the main purposes of which is to reconcile the Gricean account of irony and the Cooperative Principle with other pragmatic approaches. According to him, in what he develops as the *Principle of Least Disruption*, what distinguishes irony from other possible violations or floutings of the Cooperative Principle is that, in Attardo's words, "Grice's CP (...) becomes fully operational again once the first step of rejecting the literal meaning has been taken" (2001: 112). According to Attardo, further research is required concerning the way this principle can be reconciled with entire texts, and it is here that Swift's *A Modest Proposal* is introduced in the following terms:

Once Swift has set up a world (...) in which eating children is acceptable, the issue of how to cook them is perfectly coherent. I refer to this phenomenon as "mode factivity", i.e., the fact that irony sets up a mental space (...) which the speaker and the hearer may choose to inhabit (temporarily). Thus, a long ironical text is a text that starts from an ironical premise. It is obvious that further work is needed here. (2001: 113, footnote n.9).

In synthesis, it can be seen that Swift's *A Modest Proposal* has been the scope of the discussion of very different pragmatic approaches to irony. It shows that a definite *corpus* may become the central core of pragmatic investigation, in so far as context is taken into consideration. Nevertheless, we shall see that context may make reference to other texts that a particular sample is related to, and it is here also that *corpus linguistics* may offer valuable tools of analysis.

2. Searching for an answer to the pragmatic questions raised by *A Modest Proposal* on the basis of the corpus: the text and its Spanish translation

It may be argued that pretense theory retakes Sperber and Wilson's account of irony to a certain extent, since they also approach irony in terms of a certain attitude (as Sperber and Wilson do, both before and after 1984: 1998, 1992/1989, 1986/95, 1981, 1978, as well as other authors within relevance theory: Blakemore 1992). What they differ is the consideration of what this attitude is about or entails. For the rest of the paper, we shall analyse those linguistic items that the author may have used to convey a certain attitude and the way they have been translated, so as to discover the possible ways in which these instances may show echo, pretense, or both. The main instances of irony that will be discussed have been included in the Appendix of the present paper. The most significant cases will be referred to and analysed below.

In what is one of the most valuable contributions and which stands for a significant widening of the study of irony within relevance theory, Yus (2000-01, 2000, 1997-98) proposes the existence of certain *contextual sources*, one or some of which and their possible incompatibilities the addressee may have activated to cope with irony. The *contextual sources* distinguished by this author are, namely, the following: encyclopaedic, factual information; a mutually manifest physical context or environment; the speaker's non-verbal behaviour; the addressee's background knowledge of the addresser's biographic data; mutual knowledge; previous utterances of the conversation; and linguistic clues.

An important aspect, therefore, is the attitude shown by the speaker of the pamphlet. Indeed, in the case of the whole of Swift's works, critics have drawn attention to the different *personae* or masks that Swift makes use of, to adopt a certain perspective. In this case, this *persona* is a projector, a figure that is strongly criticised by Swift, not only in this work, but also, for instance, in the Third Book of *Gulliver's Travels*, "A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbudrib, Luggnagg and Japan".

That the work has become popular is illustrated by the number of translations that have come down to us. Those into Spanish that we have traced so far appear in the reference section. In what follows, I shall comment briefly upon the most significant traits that may be traced in the translation of ironical utterances, and how far the translation may be said to express pretense, echo, or both. Among the translations being referred to in the Appendix, Garate Ayastuy's version has been selected, as it is the most recent one so far.

With regard to the problems –and solutions– that the translation of such a heavily ironic and satiric masterpiece may give way to, I should first try to refer to a previous work where such problems had been traced, and certain solutions had been proposed under a two-fold cognitive and communicative perspective, that provided by relevance theory (Ruiz Moneva 2001). There, it was argued that these problems were the following: first, the possible translatability of irony; second, the relationship of irony with the context where it is produced, and the differences in context if approached as a cognitive entity between the source text and the target text audiences; third, and as a consequence of the former, the different, specific and linguistically and culturally based pragmatic connotations that may be expressed in both the source and the target languages to refer to what may be taken to be universal semiotic meanings; or fourth, the problems created by the different levels of explicitation to be generally found in the target text.

It was shown that, within the framework of relevance theory, the issue of the translation of irony had not been addressed so far. The following solutions were proposed: to begin with, it was argued that the communication of irony and its translation must tend to follow a balance between efforts and effects. Another consequence of translation being a communicative process is the active, cognitive role that context is likely to play. Similarly, if communication is assumed to be an ostensive-inferential process, this entails that the possible relationships between code and inference in the expression and translation of irony should

be explored. Then, if translation is approached as *interlingual interpretive use*, (Gutt 2000a, 1991), a certain guide to assess a translation will be constituted by the balance between explicatures and implicatures, between what is made explicit and what remains implicit in both the source and the target texts.

So as to accurately understand what the work is about, and cope with what goes on in the conveyance of its ironic meaning, it is important to approach the speaker of the text, namely, the narrator, and the attitude he displays throughout. Critics have stressed Swift's use of a *persona* or *mask*, by means of which "Swift pretended to be an exponent of the views he was attacking" (Speck 1969: 40). In our view, this is not incompatible with the relevance-theoretical account to irony: Swift must have been echoing his own views; the source of echo being, therefore, his own opinions as well as commonsensical assumptions, which are presented in a wholly subverted manner. This agrees with the most outstanding critical views on Swift's work. Thus, for Speck, *A Modest Proposal* "purported to be the work of an economic projector, and the awful impact of it depends to a considerable extent upon his skill in conveying the impression that the 'author' of the ghastly scheme is in deadly earnest" (1969: 40). As has been noted, this is a feature that recurs throughout Swift's works, and thus, Pilar Elena (1992), in reference to the *Travels*, but a feature that applies also here, notes that

Swift tiende trampas al lector y le traiciona de diversas maneras. Una de sus técnicas, [es] la de hacerle mirar al lugar equivocado y llevarle a aceptar proposiciones que son, en grados diversos, monstruosas, absurdas o falsas (...) (1992:141).

From a cultural point of view, it may be argued that the title of the pamphlet itself may be read in ironic and parodic terms. Thus, Kathleen Williams notes the particular way in which contemporary readers of Swift may have understood the title, in what becomes, therefore, the first source of echo, especially if we take into consideration that for Sperber and Wilson, ever since their first works on echoic irony (1981, 1978) parody shares with irony their being echoic:

In *A Modest Proposal* Swift parodies a particular kind of pamphlet, the straightforward argument for some particular economic policy. The words "A Modest Proposal" frequently, in the eighteenth century, formed part of the title of such pamphlets, and Swift uses it here to underline his meaning and purpose. His "Modest Proposal" is one to end all Modest Proposals; he uses parody of a form to press home the hopeless inadequacy of the usual economic theories in the face of the horrors of Ireland (Williams 1968: 51).

Therefore, from the very title, instances of echoic irony may be found, in this case, whose source may be traced to common or *shared knowledge* between the author and the potential audience of the work. Indeed, the narrator takes pains to adopt, and assume a sensible, commonsensical attitude, from which he distances himself and tries to offer the potential readership basic points to agree upon regarding a situation that seems at least to be credible, and even an equally reasonable solution.

Thus, (VID. Q.1) he refers descriptively³ to a state of affairs to a painful situation that may universally excite pity or compassion, seeking the readership's *captatio benevolentiae*. This initial part of the treatise creates the context that will enable the reader to trace the rest of the contents put forward in the treatise, and irony is restricted to the denouncement of the unfair situation that seems to lie at the root of the author's anger, which is accomplished in an indirect way, so as to obtain the audience's favour.

The translated version also shows the narrator's search for the audience's agreement, and therefore, the denounce of the situation is still rather indirect, even though the text is slightly more formal; thus, "honest livelihood" has become "probo sustento", which may require some additional effort on the part of the readership to reach the intended interpretation.

A similar tone can be traced in the narrator's echoically sincere, commonsensical attitude to find out a solution to the problem (VID. Q.2). In the course of the treatise, we shall see that the narrator will distance himself by this earnest attitude. Moreover, another aspect that the analysis will show in due course, when the narrator abandons the sensible part of his argumentation, is that some instances of what Clark and Gerrig would analyse as pretense may be accounted for as self-echoes: that is, the speaker distances himself from the views that he seems to uphold at a propositional level. This shows that one of the possible sources of echo may be the speaker's own assumptions, which indeed may be truly sustained—either in the present or else in the past— or also pretended. So far, in the work, the speaker still wants to share the floor with the audience and make them believe that his opinions are sound and his intentions earnest. It may be argued that, within the treatise, this stands for the *initial context* that is being made manifest and that will be contradicted later on.

With regard to the translation of this fragment, it is remarkable to see that the Spanish version incorporates a slightly stronger shade of the narrator's intention to take agreement on basic premises for granted, by means of the hypothetical future, linked to the statement of his own opinion: "Creo que todas las partes *estarán de acuerdo...*"

Another clue that is used by the narrator to claim and display an earnest attitude, only to later distance himself from it, has to do with the universal generalisation of his purposes, so far not revealed, in any case: in a further attempt to gain the audience's confidence, and depicting the context he will distance himself from later on, he makes manifest his intention

³ Within the relevance-theoretical framework, it is assumed that there are two basic ways utterances can be used as representations, namely, either *descriptively* or *interpretively* (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95: 224-ff.). Carston and Uchida (1998) define them as follows:

DESCRIPTIVELY USED REPRESENTATION: A representation (whether mental or public) which represents a state of affairs (that is, something non-representational). It is truth-based representation; that is, the representation describes a state of affairs that makes it true.

INTERPRETIVELY USED REPRESENTATION: A representation (whether mental or public) which represents another representation (whether mental or public) and resembles it in content (logical, semantic, conceptual).

to care for every single child in the country, regardless of their socio-economic status (VID. Q.3).

Following Hatim (1997), other possible sources of echo may be said to have *intertextual connections* within Swift's work and may be best understood if both texts are compared. This is the case of the satiric attack against the so-called *projectors*, which recurs in Part III of *Gulliver's Travels* (VID. Q.4). In both works, Swift showed an intense disregard and distrust towards these characters, as a way to attack the state of science at his own time, the blind faith in an entity which too often showed an absolute carelessness about people's real problems. The sharp criticism against these characters is taken here to the extreme, since the narrator presents himself as one, whose project and *modest proposal* will turn out to be no other than the eating of children as a way to put an end to hunger and poverty.

It may be argued that irony, satire, and echo have here a twofold source: on the one hand, the narrator distances himself from the so-called "projectors", who are ridiculed; on the other hand, the scheme that he will put forward may be said to outreach widely any possible mindless absurdity that any projector might have dreamt of.

With regard to the Spanish translation, which is otherwise entirely sound, meaningful and coherent, this is perhaps the aspect that we find missing: in contrast to the explicit reference to the *projectors*, which, as we have just briefly seen, has very significant connotations within Swift's literary production, the Spanish version omits any reference to such characters, and is limited to referring to "otros". It might be argued that no matter if the general meaning of the passage is maintained, the reference to the *projectors* (which might have been translated as *projectistas* or the like) would have enabled readers to extract a much wider and richer meaning, which is in this way practically lost.

Still, the narrator goes on to develop certain assumed assets of his project, before he undertakes to flesh it out as such, with a view to attracting the readership's attention and interest about it (VID. Q.5 AND 6). In particular, Q.6 illustrates the failure of all other methods suggested, both those which could be considered "proper" or "honest", and otherwise, by means of which the narrator seeks to raise the readership's positive expectations about his own plan, which has not been outlined so far.

In these quotations, it may be seen that there is a tendency in the translator's output to alternate facts and opinions, or what we could say, following the relevance-theoretical proposals, *descriptive* and *interpretive uses* of utterances or propositions: thus, in Q.5, the Spanish speaker does not seem to be as ascertained about his own proposal, "pues evitaría", as the English narrator: will prevent". On the other hand, the Spanish speaker's assessment of the state of affairs being described, "se me antoja inviable", substitutes for a more descriptive tone of the English narrator: "is utterly impossible".

It is, indeed, after this considerably long process of *caputatio benevolentiae* that the narrator sets out to express his thoughts on what should be, according to what might have been expected, in a sort of *assumption confirmation* (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95), a sensible way to end up with the famine that affects the Irish: (VID. Q.7). This is particularly reflec-

ted in the use of *humbly* in utterances such as: "I shall now therefore *humbly* propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection", or "I do therefore *humbly* offer it to public consideration that (...), which may be regarded as either "ironic" or "literal", at least from the standpoint of the mention theory of irony. In a sense, this may be considered the climax of the essay, because, to begin with, this will give way to the narrator's exposition of his witless plan, which he insists on regarding as "modest". On the other hand, from the point of view of the definition itself of irony, and how far the so-called "literal meaning" or "propositional content" is preserved, these utterances in particular show that at least one possible interpretation is that part of it may have been retained in certain contexts. We say so because so far, the narrator may be said to have literally taken pains to display his otherwise pretended sensibility and common sense. However, we have seen that Swift had undertaken to parody the eighteenth century pamphlet that was known as "modest proposal". It may be argued that such a meaningful repetition may have been interpreted as *communicative clues*, which in the relevance-theoretical framework are understood as "properties built into the text to guide the audience to the intended interpretation" (Gutt, 2000b: 155). In this case, therefore, they may provide the readership with evidence, with a certain, relative degree of strength, of the narrator's communicative intention.

The translation of "humbly" into Spanish may be said to provide the reader with the same kind of *communicative clues* as in the original text, as the repetition has indeed proved to be significant. The shocking contrast between the pretending learned man and the non-sensical proposal that he puts forward is also maintained.

We should like to argue that in both cases this fragment may be equally and accurately interpreted from both perspectives, namely, mention and pretense theories, and that either theory tends to stress one particular aspect in point. Thus, it is clear that Swift's assertions encompass a certain pretense, and also, that such pretense may be understood as having common sense and universally accepted beliefs as the source of echo.

After this digression, the narrator provides the reader with what is anything but a modest, reasonable proposal: Irish children might as well be eaten up by the rest of the population, and in this way, some objectives will have been pursued, such as the decrease in the number of the hungry people. (VID. Q.8 AND 9). Therefore, what should have been a "modest proposal" is savagely reversed and turned down and the speaker explicitly distances himself from his own previous, *modest* arguments. In order to do so in a more effective way, the narrator bases his own proposal upon the authority of "a grave author, an eminent French physician", in a further subversive twist of what a *modest proposal* should have been. The already intrinsic criticism of the state of affairs is also reinforced by the addition of anticlerical attacks, and on the whole, projectors are once more implicitly but strongly criticised.

From the point of view of the translation, in Q.8 there are two aspects that deserve particular consideration: the first one has to do with the explicitation "mi propuesta", instead of the anaphoric pronoun being used in the original, "it", which makes it easier to follow the argument, as in this paragraph there has not even been any allusion to the proposal itself as such. The second concerns the translation of "collateral advantage" by "ventaja adicional":

it may be argued that, no matter if the Spanish translation is accurate enough, "collateral" is endowed with certain *encyclopaedic entries*⁴ that may be considered relevant in this particular context: in fact, according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* "collateral" contributes the meaning of being "connected but aside from main subject, course, etc.". It may be argued, then, that in the Spanish version certain *contextual effects* are lost, precisely because the original audience enjoys a somehow greater or more extended cognitive environment.

It is also the author's savage point to provide a way to do away with the poor and the weakest, in a further display of the plainest brutality, about which he declares to be absolutely mindless (VID. Q.10). The Spanish translation even makes it a bit stronger in its satirical illocutionary force, as the impersonal form "it is very well known" is replaced here by the use of an *inclusive we*, "bien sabemos todos".

One of the aspects of satire that is not entirely followed by Swift in this treatise is the abstraction from any space or time reference to a definite state of affairs which is then criticised. No matter if this has indeed been the case so far, at a certain point Swift makes a direct, explicit allusion to Ireland: "I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate 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". (VID. Q.11). This makes this piece of irony and satire direct and to have an inescapable, unequivocal target: Ireland and the Irish. In a sense, it can also be argued that at this point both irony and satire, no matter if they entail either pretense, or echoic distance, or both, are entirely cancelled. The reason has to be sought perhaps in the fact that they are but vehicles that the author or the narrator chooses at a certain point to make his message more effectively communicated; they are, then, but means to an end. It is, therefore, this same purpose of a sharp and savage attack against the Irish for their inaction that makes Swift adopt a clearly, direct reference to the propositional content that he seeks to communicate. At the same time, the reader may notice that it is after the previous desperate cry that Swift sets out to offer true solutions, no matter if he seems to reject them: "Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients", and puts forward an ultimate warning for his own nation: "... of being a little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing", perhaps because he has given up all hope in what may be called the "redemption" of the Irish.

The translation of this fragment shows an equally determined purpose on the part of the speaker to distance himself from common sense, and goes into deeper into the pretense of being offering a *modest proposal*. The ironic twist is also maintained: whereas he claims that "I can think of no one objection, that will be raised against this proposal", or, "Therefore, let no man talk to me of other expedients", it is precisely in the detailed reference to the so-pretended rejected remedies that the narrator offers indeed the sensible and "modest" ones:

⁴ *Encyclopaedic entries* are, according to Sperber and Wilson, together with *logical* and *lexical entries*, the three different components of a concept. Encyclopaedic entries are defined in terms of "set of assumptions" (Sperber and Wilson 1986/95: 92).

"No se me ocurre que pueda esgrimirse ninguna objeción contra mi propuesta", or "Por lo tanto, que ningún hombre me hable de otras posibilidades".

The final part of the essay (VID. Q.12) closes it by retaking that sharply ironic, even a bit sardonic tone. It is perhaps this point where the narrator abandons any pretense, unco-vers any mask, to distance himself from his own nation and showing a wholly contemptuous attitude towards them. In this part of the essay, then, pretense and echo are counter-balan-ced. Thus, he praises what is in fact an unsustainable proposal, and adopts what he has cri-ticised as the attitude of blind subjection to the British only to distance himself from his own nation: "... whereby we can incur no danger of disoblighing England", and even from his own proposal: "I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country (...) 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". At the same time, in a sort of hide-and-seek game, he also refers to England, this time without explicitly referring to it, as a means to retake the distance characteristic of the satiric attitude: "... although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it [salt]".

The translation of these utterances maintains this play of hide-and-seek dealing with the direct allusion to England mingled with its indirect reference: "con su puesta en práctica no corremos ningún riesgo de importunar a Inglaterra", contrasted with "aunque bien podría nombrar un país que estaría deseoso de comerse nuestra nación entera sin sal alguna".

Finally, it may be worth commenting that in this conclusion to his essay, the narrator gives up any possible pretense, and does so by distancing himself from the entire essay:

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion as to reject any offer propo-sed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. (...)

Después de todo, no hago una defensa tan obstinada de mi propuesta como para rechazar otras alternativas –igualmente inocuas, económicas, sencillas y efectivas– que ofrezcan hombres sensatos. (...)

3. Conclusions

In the present paper, the following claims have been sustained: first, there is a point in the use of *corpora* within pragmatic analysis in so far as context is taken into account; second, what is perhaps necessary is that the corpus chosen is representative enough of the phenomena to be studied. With regard to the particular text under study, namely, Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, and to the question at stake, whether the narrator's attitude is of pretense or of echoic mention, the analysis shows that they are not really contradictory, no matter if several points have to be made with regard to this: first, in so far as it is admitted that the source of echo may be broad, relevance theory provides a wholly suitable account of irony. Despite the comments made by Clark and Gerrig (1984) to the contrary, Swift's *A Modest Proposal* can be read as an instance of echoic mention of commonsensical assumptions, shared beliefs, which allow the speaker to distance himself from and criticise the situation of oppression lived by Swift's homeland at his own time.

Furthermore, we should also insist on the rather narrow and even inaccurate approach by Clark and Gerrig to the notion of *pretense* itself. As the historical review outlined in the paper has shown, *pretense* in connection with irony has not always been understood in the same way, and for authors such as Aristotle it was at the disposal of both the ironist and the mindless victim. This demonstrates that it cannot be considered a defining trait of the ironist's standpoint.

Irony is such a proteic resource that it may have either of this two means at its disposal, and even others; then, pretense and echo, in particular, self-echo, may intermingle with a view to enhancing the illocutionary force pursued by means of the use of irony; third, what these two views of irony show is the need to overcome the traditional dichotomy between saying and meaning, between literal and figurative meaning. On the contrary, focusing on irony in terms of *attitude* seems a more fruitful approach, which in this case also shows that the range of possible attitudinal meanings.

4. References

A) Spanish translations of Swift's *A Modest Proposal* consulted

- BOOTH, W. C. 1986 (1974), "Proposición modesta para conseguir que los niños de las familias pobres de Irlanda no sean una carga para sus padres o para el país; y para que puedan convertirse en un beneficio público", *Retórica de la ironía*, Madrid, Taurus, 150-164.
- ESCUADERO, J. F., "Una humilde propuesta para evitar que los hijos de los pobres sean una carga para sus padres o su país, y hacerlos provechosos para el pueblo".
<http://www.tiramillas.net/libros/swift/propu1.html>
- GALLO, E. (trad.) (19772), "Una modesta proposición para evitar que los hijos de los pobres de Irlanda (o de cualquier otro país) sean una carga para sus padres o su país y para hacerlos útiles al pueblo (dominador, claro está", *Una Modesta Proposición*, Madrid, Ediciones Felmar.
- GALLO, E. (trad.). (1977), "Una modesta proposición para evitar que los hijos de Irlanda sean una carga para sus padres o su país y para hacerlos útiles al pueblo", *Una Modesta Proposición*, Madrid, Ediciones Felmar, 9-27.
- GÁRATE AYASTUY, B. (trad.) (2002), "Una humilde propuesta que tiene por objeto evitar que los hijos de los pobres sean una carga para sus padres o para el país, y hacer que redunden en beneficio de la comunidad", *Una humilde propuesta ... y otros escritos*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 13-25.
- LORENZO, E. (trad.) (1999), "Humilde propuesta para evitar que los niños irlandeses de gente pobre sean una carga para sus padres o para la nación, y para que la sociedad se beneficie de ellos", Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 649-662.
- MORENO-RUIZ, J. L. (trad.) (1981), "Una Modesta Proposición para evitar que los hijos de los pobres en Irlanda, constituyan una carga para sus padres o para su país, y para

hacerlos útiles a la sociedad". *Meditaciones sobre el palo de una escoba. La cuestión irlandesa*, Madrid, Legasa, 105-116.

MUNIESA, B. (trad.) (1992), "Una modesta proposición para evitar que los hijos de los pobres de Irlanda sean una carga para sus padres o su país y para hacerlos útiles al público", *Jonathan Swift. Sátiras políticas*, Barcelona, Ed. Humanidades.

USANDIZAGA, A. (trad.) (1982), "Un modesto proyecto orientado a evitar que en Irlanda los hijos de los pobres sean una molestia para sus padres o para su país; y orientado a conseguir que se conviertan en un beneficio público", *Irish Tracts. La cuestión de Irlanda*, Barcelona, Erasmo-Bosch Textos Bilingües, 150-173.

B) Reference works

ARISTOTLE 1931 (384-322 BC), "Ética a Nicómaco". *Obras Completas* Vol. VI, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, Nueva Biblioteca Filosófica.

ARISTOTLE 1971 (ca. 330 BC), "Poetics", in Hazard Adams (ed.), *Critical Theory Since Plato*, San Diego, Harcourt, 47-66.

ARISTOTLE. 1991 (384-322 BC), *The Art of Rhetoric*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

ATTARDO, S. (2000), "Irony as relevant inappropriateness", *Journal of Pragmatics* 32, 793-826.

ATTARDO, S. (2001), *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*, Berlin and New York, Mouton de Gruyter.

CARSTON, R. and S. UCHIDA (eds.) (1998), *Relevance Theory. Applications and Implications*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co.

CLARK, H. H. and R. J. GERRIG (1984), "On the Pretense Theory of Irony", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* Vol. 113, nº 1, 121-126.

CRYSTAL, D. and D. DAVY (1992), *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

ELENA, P. (ed.) (1992), *Jonathan Swift Los Viajes de Gulliver*, Madrid, Cátedra.

FILLMORE, C. J. (1992), "Corpus linguistics or Computer-aided armchair linguistics", in Jan Svartvik (ed.), *Directions in Corpus Linguistics*, Berlin and New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 36-60.

GUTT, E. A. 2000a (1991), *Translation and Relevance. Cognition and Context*, Manchester and Boston, St. Jerome Publishing.

GUTT, E. A. (2000b), "Textual Properties, Communicative Clues and the Translator", in M^a Pilar Navarro Errasti et al (eds.), *Transcultural Communication: Pragmalinguistic Aspects*, Zaragoza, Anubar, 151-60.

HIGHET, G. (1972), *The Anatomy of Satire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

JORGENSEN, J. (1996), "The functions of sarcastic irony in speech", *Journal of Pragmatics* 26, 613-634.

JORGENSEN, J., G. MILLER and D. SPERBER (1984), "Test of the mention theory of irony", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113: 1, 112-120.

- KREUZ, R. J. (2000), "The Production and Processing of Verbal Irony", *Metaphor and Symbol* 15, 99-107.
- LINK, K. E. (2000), *Pretense in Spoken and Written Language*, Unpublished PhD, The University of Memphis.
- MARISCAL CHICANO, J. M. (1994), "¿Quién finge la ironía pertinente?", *Pragmalingüística* 2, 319-356.
- MC. ARTHUR, T. (ed.) (1992), *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- MC. ENERY, T. and A. WILSON (1996), *Corpus linguistics*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. <http://ling.lancs.ac.uk/monkey/ihe/linguistics/contents.htm>
- RUIZ MONEVA, M^a A. (2001), "Searching for some relevance answers to the problems raised by the translation of irony", *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 14, 213-47, eds. José Mateo Martínez and Francisco Yus.
- SPECK, W. A. (1969), *Swift*, London, Evans Bros. Ltd.
- SPERBER, D. (1984), "Verbal Irony: Pretense or Echoic Mention?", *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113 n° 1, 130-136.
- SPERBER, D. and D. WILSON (1978), "Les ironies comme mentions", *Poétique* 36, 399-412.
- SPERBER, D. and D. WILSON (1981), "Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction", in Peter Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, New York, Academic Press, 295-318.
- SPERBER, D. and D. WILSON (1982), "Mutual Knowledge and Relevance in Theories of Comprehension", in N.V. Smith (eds.), *Mutual Knowledge*, London, Academic Press, 61-85.
- SPERBER, D. and D. WILSON (1986/95), *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, London, Blackwell. (2nd edition).
- SPERBER, D. and D. WILSON (1998), "Irony and relevance: A reply to Seto, Hamamoto and Yamanashi", in Robyn Carston and Seiji Uchida (eds.), *Relevance Theory. Applications and Implications*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co, 283-293.
- SWIFT, J. 1964 (1729), "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country and for making them beneficial to the Publick", in Herbert Davis (eds.), *Swift. Poetry and Prose*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 84-92.
- WILLIAMS, K. (1968), *Jonathan Swift. Profiles in Literature*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- WILSON, D. and D. SPERBER 1992 (1990), "On verbal irony", *Lingua* 87, 53-76.
- YUS RAMOS, F. (1997-98), "Irony: context accessibility and processing effort", *Pragmalingüística* 5-6, 391-410.
- YUS RAMOS, F. (2000), "On reaching the intended ironic interpretation", *International Journal of Communication* 10 (1-2), 27-78.

YUS RAMOS, F. (2000-01), "Literal/ non-literal and the processing of verbal irony",
Pragmalingüística 8-9, 349-74.

YUS RAMOS, F. (ed.) <http://www.ua.es/dfing/rt.htm>

YUS RAMOS, F. (ed.) <http://www.ua.es/dfing/rt2.htm>

APPENDIX

Corpus or selection of the main utterances analysed to trace the speaker's attitude.

(Q.1)

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors, crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, *instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants: (....)*

Resulta un penoso espectáculo para quienes recorren esta gran ciudad, o viajan por el país, ver las calles, los caminos y las chabolas abarrotados de mendigas que, seguidas de tres, cuatro, o seis hijos, todos desaharrapados, importunan a los viajeros pidiendo una limosna. Estas madres, en vez de poder trabajar para procurarles su probo sustento, se ven obligadas a deambular todo el día mendigando el alimento de sus desamparados hijos (...)

(Q.2)

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

Creo que todas las partes estarán de acuerdo en que con este ingente número de niños en brazos, a cuestras, o a los talones de sus madres, y con frecuencia también a los de sus padres se añade un muy serio perjuicio al ya deplorable estado en que vive el reino. Así pues, quienquiera que dé con una solución sencilla, económica y justa, que permita hacer de estos niños miembros saludables y de provecho para la comunidad, se hará acreedor de tamaño agradecimiento, que ésta habrá de erigirle una estatua como protector de la nación.

(Q.3)

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.

Pero nada más lejos de mi intención que buscar sólo una solución para los hijos de los mendigos declarados: mi propuesta es de más hondo calado y comprenderá el total de niños de cierta edad que hayan nacido de padres que a duras penas puedan mantenerlos, como sucede con los que nos piden limosna en las calles.

(Q.4)

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and *maturely weighed the several schemes of other projectors, I have always found*

them grossly mistaken in the computation. (...) and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner as instead of being a charge upon their parents or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall on the contrary contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing, of many thousands.

Por mi parte, he dedicado muchos años a reflexionar sobre este asunto y, tras estudiar al detalle las diversas iniciativas que otros han presentado, me atrevería a sostener que han incurrido en errores de cálculo garrafales. (...) Pues bien, es precisamente a la edad de un año cuando propongo disponer de ellos de manera que dejen de ser una carga para sus padres o para la parroquia, no necesiten comida ni ropa durante el resto de sus vidas y, muy al contrario, puedan contribuir a la alimentación y en parte a la vestimenta de muchos miles.

(Q.5)

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, (...)

Del mismo modo, mi propuesta encierra otra gran ventaja, pues evitaría los abortos voluntarios y esa horrible práctica -¡válgame Dios!, demasiado habitual ya entre nosotros- de que las mujeres asesinen a sus hijos bastardos.

(Q.6)

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. For we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; we neither build houses (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing, till they arrive at six years old, except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier, during which time, they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers, as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

Llegado a este punto, la cuestión es saber cómo se va a criar y mantener a todos estos niños que, como ya he dicho, en las actuales circunstancias se me antoja inviable, vistas las soluciones hasta ahora propuestas, pues ni podemos emplearlos en la manufactura ni en la agricultura. Tampoco se construyen casas (en este país, quiero decir) ni se cultiva la tierra. Rara vez alcanzan a ganarse el sustento mediante el hurto antes de los seis años, salvo que apunten maneras y talento, aunque confieso que aprenden los rudimentos mucho antes; así durante ese tiempo podrían ser considerados en verdad como aprendices, ya que, según me aseguró un distinguido caballero del condado de Cavan, él no tiene constancia de más de uno o dos casos por debajo de la edad de seis años, y eso que esta región del reino es muy afamada por la celeridad con que se adquiere gran pericia en este arte.

(Q.7)

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.

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that (...)

Así pues, paso a exponer mis humildes ideas, que espero no se hagan merecedoras de la menor objeción.

Un americano, conocido mío de Londres y hombre muy instruido, me ha asegurado que un niño sano y bien amamantado constituye, a la edad de un año, un manjar de lo más delicioso, nutritivo y saludable, tanto estofado o asado como cocido o hervido, y no albergo ninguna duda de que estaría igualmente bueno en una fricassé o un ragout.

De manera que someto humildemente a la consideración pública ...

(Q.8)

Infant's flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolific diet, there are more children born in Roman Catholic countries about nine months after Lent than at any other season; therefore, reckoning a year after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of popish infants is at least three to one in this kingdom: and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of papists among us.

La carne de niño será asequible todo el año, pero más abundante en marzo y también un poco antes y un poco después, y es que un importante autor y eminente médico francés nos dice que, como el pescado es un alimento de cualidades prolíficas, en los países católico-romanos nacen más niños transcurridos nueve meses después de la Cuaresma que en cualquier otra época. En consecuencia, cuando se cumpla un año a partir de Cuaresma, los mercados estarán más saturados que de costumbre, porque la proporción de niños papistas en este reino es al menos de tres a uno, y por tanto mi propuesta encierra otra ventaja adicional, pues hará disminuir el número de los mismos entre nosotros.

(Q.9)

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed, and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance.

Algunas personas de naturaleza pusilánime están muy preocupadas por el abultado número de gente pobre que es anciana, está enferma o lisiada, lo que ha avivado mi deseo de encontrar el camino a seguir para aliviar a la nación de una carga tan pesada.

(Q.10)

But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known that they are every day dying and rotting by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected.

Sin embargo, no sufro en modo alguno por este asunto, pues bien sabemos todos que a diario se mueren y se pudren a causa del frío, del hambre, de la porquería o de los bichos, y esto ocurre tan rápido como cabe razonablemente esperar.

(Q.11)

I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

(...)

I can think of no one objection, 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 calculate 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 cloaths, nor household furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the materials 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 acting 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 consciences for nothing: Of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants.

Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shop-keepers, 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 the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Esta digresión se ha prolongado demasiado; retomaré pues el asunto que nos ocupa. Creo que las ventajas de la propuesta que he hecho son evidentes, numerosas y de la mayor importancia.

(...)

No se me ocurre que pueda esgrimirse ninguna objeción contra mi propuesta, a menos que se aduzca que el número de habitantes del reino se verá muy reducido. Todo lo expuesto es obra mía sin reserva alguna y mi principal propósito es ofrecérselo al mundo. Espero que el lector se percate de que concibo este remedio únicamente para el reino de Irlanda, y no para ningún otro que haya sido, sea o vaya a ser instaurado sobre la tierra. Por lo tanto, que ningún hombre me hable de otras posibilidades: gravar a nuestros absentistas con cinco chelines por libra; no usar ni ropa ni inmobiliario excepto si es de

nuestra producción y manufactura; rechazar de plano los materiales o instrumentos que alimentan la riqueza extranjera; poner fin al derroche que hacen nuestras mujeres, movidas por el orgullo, la vanidad, la holgazanería y el juego; introducir una política de parsimonia, prudencia y templanza; aprender a amar a nuestro país, en lo que nos distinguimos incluso de los lapones y los habitantes de Topinamboo; dejar de lado enemistades y facciones, y no actuar más como los judíos, que se mataban unos a otros mientras su ciudad estaba siendo tomada; guardarse de no vender nuestro país y nuestras conciencias a ningún precio; enseñar a los señores a tener al menos cierto grado de misericordia para con sus arrendatarios. Finalmente, inculcar un espíritu de honradez, trabajo y eficacia entre nuestros tenderos, quienes, si se pudiera ahora mismo adoptar una resolución que ordenara comprar sólo productos autóctonos, se unirían a renglón seguido para engañarnos, imponiéndonos un determinado precio, medida y calidad, de los que ya nunca se podría siquiera esperar una oferta razonable y justa aunque con frecuencia y de buena fe se les haya invitado a ello.

(Q.12)

(...) I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expence and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, and flesh being of too tender a consistence, to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion as to reject any offer proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. (...)

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. 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.

(...) Vino la fortuna a premiarme con esta propuesta, que, dado que es totalmente original, además de convincente y factible, no comporta ningún gasto, acarrea pocos problemas, depende por completo de nosotros y con su puesta en práctica no corremos ningún riesgo de importunar a Inglaterra. Este tipo de mercancía no va dirigida a la exportación, al ser esta carne de textura en exceso tierna como para tolerar un largo tratamiento con sal, aunque bien podría nombrar un país que estaría deseoso de comerse nuestra nación entera sin sal alguna.

Después de todo, no hago una defensa tan obstinada de mi propuesta como para rechazar otras alternativas –igualmente inocuas, económicas, sencillas y efectivas– que ofrezcan hombres sensatos. (...)

Declaro, desde lo más sincero de mi corazón, que al promover esta necesaria tarea no persigo otro interés personal que no sea el del bien público de mi país, a través del desarro-

llo de nuestro comercio, la atención infantil, el alivio de los pobres y la satisfacción en cierta medida de los ricos. No tengo hijos por los que pueda aspirar a obtener un solo penique, pues el más pequeño tiene nueve años y a mi mujer ya se le pasó la edad de concebir.