

Hozier's "Eat Your Young" as a Modern-Day Response to Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal"

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Abstract: Almost three hundred years after the publication of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal", the song "Eat Your Young" by the Irish singer and songwriter Hozier reveals the attitudes of the wealthy ruling class analogous to those prevailing in the political climate of eighteenth century Ireland. Whereas Swift's essay has been subject to various literary and political criticisms throughout the years, the research on "Eat Your Young", and Hozier's discography as a whole, is miniscule in comparison. Although Hozier's song offers apt critique of the contemporary exploitation of people under the capitalist system, neither its satirical commentary nor its connection to Swift's essay has been explored academically. This paper analyses the song as a modern social critique inspired by Swift's essay. The song's profound criticism is understood in this paper as a reiteration, with a difference, of Swift's critique of the aftermath of the British colonial exploitation of Ireland. The song is here considered as a parodic satire alluding to "A Modest Proposal" in order to illustrate and amplify its message: its censure of the unceasing abuse faced by the most vulnerable members of society at the hands of the powerful and the wealthy. The ensuing discussion concerns the theme the essays and the song share – the motif of cannibalism used to represent a figurative "consumption" of people and their resources, rendered in both as the literal devouring of children– as well as the ideological similarities in the critiques delivered by the two texts, which are three hundred years apart, yet similar in their sensibilities.

Keywords: "Eat Your Young", "A Modest Proposal", irony, anticapitalism, anticolonialism, Hozier, Swift

The song "Eat Your Young" by Andrew Hozier-Byrnes, singer and songwriter who uses the stage name Hozier, was released on March 17, 2023, and is a part of his album *Unreal Unearth*. The core idea behind the song, as Hozier admits in

an interview for the editorial publisher Genius, was to criticise the people who care only about their own gains with no consideration for the future of others. For Hozier, that kind of oppression afflicts the eponymous “young” – the children who are going to inherit the world after the people in power have exploited it (Genius 2023). As such, the song is a critique of capitalism, a system Hozier describes as a fatal “race to [the] bottom” (Genius 2023). He recognises the current tendency to exploit the poorest places in the world – where the resources and manpower are the cheapest – and the people inhabiting those regions. Due to that abuse, those people are going to face numerous challenges for many years in the future, whereas the capitalistic system is only interested in the short-term gain that can be consumed today (Genius 2023).

A similar “race to the bottom” appalled, nearly three hundred years ago, an Anglican cleric Jonathan Swift. For Swift, the concern for the condition of Ireland at the time of writing “A Modest Proposal” was the inspiration and the direct cause for the creation of his shocking pamphlet. When he was writing it, the living conditions in Ireland deteriorated so badly that they “bordered on unsustainable” (Welch 2013, 473). In his economic works, he frequently distinguished four main categories of the causes responsible for the state of Ireland: “famine, trade restrictions, increases in land rents, and the movement of leased land from cropping to grazing” (Welch 2013, 473). Each of the four groups was either directly or indirectly related to the treatment the English imposed on Ireland.

The 1720s, in Ireland, brought several years of famine. Due to scarce harvests, the poor Irish were pushed to consume their potato stock sooner, which, in turn, led to food shortages in the later months (Welch 2013, 473). The trade restrictions imposed by England on Ireland were even more destructive (Welch 2013, 474). Irish trade was severely impacted by the restrictions on the export of livestock and the complete ban on the export of woollen goods (Welch 2013, 474). The money coming to Ireland from export was essential to the livelihoods of the Irish and, as it decreased, the population grew poorer (Welch 2013, 474). The imported goods, such as clothing, were pushing Irish-made goods out of the market, reducing the revenue of Irish craftsmen and vendors (Welch 2013, 475). The landlords played a consequential role in the deterioration of the Irish economy (Welch 2013, 475). Apart from moving the money from leases of Irish land to England, they converted the leased land from farmlands to grazing lands (Welch 2013, 475). Therefore, the land that could provide work and shelter for many farmers

and their families was converted into barren grazing grounds that only required one or two herdsmen to be maintained (Welch 2013, 475).

In "A Modest Proposal", Swift intends for his speaker to be a member of the higher class, apparently, a level-headed observer who takes pride in finally finding the solution to Ireland's problems. Swift's Proposer goes as far as to say that whoever can determine the resolution "would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2181). This self-praise of the speaker seems in disagreement with the proposal of the next paragraphs: the Proposer suggests that the children whose parents cannot provide for them and who are condemned to the fate of beggars can, after all, be "sound [and] useful members of the commonwealth" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2181). The gruesome "use" for those children is them being sold as food for the rich. Though being eaten here is a literal process, it is also an ironic mirror to the circumstances of the Irish, who have already been metaphorically "devoured" by the absentee landlords.

The Proposer's claim is based on two main elements of the essay: his estimates of the population of Ireland and a list of six benefits of the proposition (Welch 2013, 477). The calculations fortify the parodic aspect of the essay – similar figures are expected to be found in real political propositions. The impersonal character of the estimates is employed by Swift to underline the lack of actual consideration for the prosperity of the Irish people. The numbers are correct (Welch 2013, 477), but such calculations are devoid of the human factor. The Proposer uses the estimates to justify cannibalism. However, Swift also aims to criticise a broader notion of making political proposals that are only focused on the financial profit of the privileged.

Ironically, the potential monetary gain of the parents is immediately converted to the landlords' profit when the Proposer asserts that the arrangement will "help to pay their landlord's rent" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2185). Swift makes the claim that most laws are only enacted to serve the wealthy, and in the case of Ireland, the absentee English landlords. The landlords are, for the most part, the prime target of Swift's satire, with the Proposer repeatedly naming them the main benefactors of the proposition.

It should be noted that the societal and economic conditions in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland, indeed, prompted infanticide and child abandonment (Kelly 1992, 7). Most victims of infanticide were children of unmarried women, as female purity was one of the most prized virtues in the Catholic Ireland (Kelly 1992, 7). For those women, illegitimate children were tangible proof

of their transgression of proper sexual conduct, and thus “were afforded little sympathy” (Kelly 1992, 8). Economic pressures, along with social stigma, were also a deciding factor for many women (Kelly 1992, 9). For a young woman of lower status, marriage was the only way to gain financial security, and it would become near-impossible if she had had an extra-marital child; for a female servant, in turn, a dishonourable pregnancy warranted dismissal from work and the prospect of poverty (Kelly 1992, 9). Children were often abused and neglected by their parents and forced by them to beg in the streets or to work dangerous jobs (Kelly 1992, 26). Considering such standards, for the impoverished Irish of the eighteenth century, infanticide, Kelly observes, “excited no special revulsion” (1992, 26). Yet, even if in those circumstances the death and mistreatment of children would not have prompted that much outrage, Swift’s proposition includes the taboo element of cannibalism.

The uncompassionate and studious way Swift’s Proposer delivers the advantages only increases the satirical impact of the essay (Welch 2013, 480). The eponymous modesty, or rather the conflation of modesty and kindness, as recognised by Elizabeth Hedrick, is yet another target of Swift’s bitter criticism (2017, 857). Hedrick determines that Swift’s attack on modesty, understood as good manners, is a direct push against his political opponents (2017, 863). The contrast between the scandalous proposal and the mannerly and attentive tone taken by the Proposer accentuates Swift’s point that politeness, especially in the world of politics, is a concept separate from kindness.

Although the rhetoric of “A Modest Proposal” is tied to Ireland’s situation in the eighteenth century, its overarching message of criticism of the exploitation of the vulnerable can also be applied to our contemporary problems. The suffering of the poor and the underprivileged at the hands of the wealthy is still a pressing matter, even if this suffering takes different forms. A modern observer, much like Jonathan Swift in the eighteenth century, can recognise the problems and choose to comment on them in a satirical manner, emphasising the role of the elites in the perpetration of the harm.

Hozier’s song, written in 2013, engages with Swift’s essay published in 1729. And yet, the connection is seamless – it works through both authors’ concern with the exploitation of the dispossessed. “Eat Your Young”, similarly to “A Modest Proposal”, is a satirical piece where the speaker’s propositions are, on the surface, connected to devouring the most vulnerable members of the society, but, in reality, they are meant to draw attention to the issues introduced in the texts.

In an interview for Apple Music (2023), Hozier admits the importance of his Irish identity and of Irish art and literature in his music. When discussing "Eat Your Young" in the interview for Genius, he connects the song to Swift's "A Modest Proposal", recounting the Irish people's "suffering under the artificially created conditions of poverty" (2023, at 3:18–22). Later, he affirms that Swift's satirical essay allowed him to experiment with the themes present in both the essay and the song (Genius 2023).

The relationship between Hozier's "Eat Your Young" and Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is complex. Indeed, the reading of Hozier's song as a parody of Swift's essay can be based not only on thematic references to the hypotext, but also on the imitative nature of the song's structure. In "Eat Your Young", the target of the criticism is comparable with the target of Swift's essay, making the censorious aspect of the song essential to the parodic interpretation. Hozier uses the economic and political framework of "A Modest Proposal" to reimagine the pamphlet as transformed into a critique of the modern times. He extends the message of the essay; instead of commenting solely on the situation of one country in the face of exploitation, he encapsulates in his song a broad spectrum of modern-world issues faced by various underprivileged groups.

The unique way in which Swift utilises the motif of cannibalism to represent a figurative "consumption" of people and their resources – the literal devouring of children – is closely reiterated in Hozier's song. The theme of the cannibalisation of children has a long tradition in culture and art, including the myth of Kronos fearing that he might lose his power to his offspring, and the history of Ugolino torn between misery and hunger, forced to eat the dead bodies of his sons, the motif poignantly represented by Auguste Rodin's sculpture. Swift, however, uses the motif to represent cold and calculating greed. In his "Modest Proposal", it is applied to represent financial and political gain. Hozier, closely following Swift in that, extends the Swiftian message to carry out his criticism of the modern-day capitalism, colonial exploitation, and the arms industry. (It should be noted that, in the 1920s, in Brazil, the term's meaning was reversed by the Anthropophagy movement – it was used as a metaphor in urging the cultural appropriation of foreign influences in effort to create an originally Brazilian identity. This meaning, however, remains beyond the conceptual scope of the current essay).

"Eat Your Young" is composed of two stanzas – referred to as verses – two pre-choruses and a repeated chorus. While the chorus exposes the core satirical criticism of the song, the verses and pre-choruses help establish the song's lyrical

situation. Whereas Swift's proposal is delivered in the form of a mock-political pamphlet, in Hozier's song, the proposal is delivered through a conversation taking place at a lavish feast attended by the elites. This setting reinforces the song's cannibalistic theme, but it also adds a subtext of a power race. Multiple allusions to the image of "racing to the table" suggest it to be a highly desirable place. According to Cambridge Dictionary, a metaphorical "seat at the table" denotes "a situation in which someone is included in a discussion and can influence any decisions that are taken" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) The choice of such a celebration for the setting, then, not only aims to satirise the insatiable greed but also to parody the world of politics earlier satirised by Swift.

The title "Eat Your Young" can also be considered an allusion to Swift's work. Though the titles are not direct parallels – the title of Hozier's song openly states its proposition, while the title of Swift's essay conceals the cannibalistic character of the proposal – the use of the imperative verb "eat" implies making a request or a proposal of some kind. The ideas of Hozier's Proposer, similarly to Swift's, are satirical. The ironic inversion present in both texts forces the reader – or the listener – to evaluate their claims in search of the true meaning. Full comprehension of the song and the essay requires from the audience an ability to decode the irony of the proposals. Both Proposers contradict the authors' stances on societal issues and serve as a satirical tool for them to attack those they deem responsible for the detrimental circumstances they describe.

The similarities between the two works are not strictly confined to their satirical messages and the way in which they persuade, but they are also evident in the form of the narrators' moral and political standing. The song, in parallel to Swift's essay, is narrated by a figure that remains unaffected by the fatal politics he preaches. Like Swift's Proposer, the Hozier's Proposer is aware of the suffering caused by the wealthy, yet he detaches himself from the consequences of the elites' actions. Despite the severity of his proposals, the tone of the statements made by the narrator of the song remains fully unconcerned, even when urging the shocking solution.

Remarkably, the addressees of "Eat Your Young", closely resemble the audience of "A Modest Proposal": in both instances, those who are impacted by the decisions and propositions are removed from the debate. Swift's Proposer intends for his pamphlet to reach those with the influence to launch the plan; Hozier's Proposer, in turn, speaks directly to his lover, who joins him at the table, and to other attendees of the feast. The people whose lives are at the heart of the discussion are notably deprived of any say in what is being determined about their fate.

The opening lyrics of the first verse, "I'm starvin', darlin', let me put my lips to somethin', let me wrap my teeth around the world" (Hozier 2023, 0:21), are directed to the Proposer's lover. Isolated from the capitalistic context that becomes clear only later in the song, the introductory lines may create an incorrect impression that the song is about sexual lust, not about the lust for wealth and power. Indeed, as Hozier admits, the first lines of the song are meant to mislead the listener (Genius 2023). Coupled with the term of endearment - "honey" - the initial lines lull the listener into a false sense of familiarity. The grotesque juxtaposition of sexual and cannibalistic imagery enhances the shock evoked by the next parts of the song. The contrast between what is anticipated and what is delivered is also a parallel to what happens in Swift's "A Modest Proposal". The opening paragraphs of the essay, as well as the title, purposefully obscure the main postulate of the pamphlet. In fact, the first time Swift's Proposer reveals his plan outright happens as late as the ninth paragraph of the essay (Swift [1729] 1993, 2181-83). Hozier, mimicking the structure of postponement established by Swift, hides the destructive intent of his Proposer in the first verse.

In the context of the feast, the lyrics "I'm starvin'" (Hozier 2023, 0:21) are hyperbolic, but in a broader political sense they are meant to denote the insatiable greed of those in power. Hozier's Proposer does not only want to eat, but to "wrap [his] teeth around the world" (Hozier 2023, 0:27). He and, by extension, those of similar position cannot be satiated and always desire more than what they already have. The idea of consuming the "world" exemplifies the same attitude satirised by Swift in "A Modest Proposal" when he concludes that "landlords, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2183). In both instances, the wealthy are taking away from those who have too little to support themselves. In comparison with those truly affected by food scarcity, the word "starving" takes on an ironic overtone.

Lines three through six of "Eat Your Young" are intended to enhance the food symbolism. When Hozier's Proposer says, "Start carvin', darlin' / I wanna smell the dinner cookin' / I wanna feel the edges start to burn" (2023, 0:31-40), he urges his lover to help prepare the feast. Specifically, the lines refer to the cooking of meat. The directions are very clear, echoing the specificity with which Swift's Proposer lists the numerous ways to, shockingly, cook a child's meat (Swift [1729] 1993, 2182). These moments in "Eat Your Young" and "A Modest Proposal" constitute the first instances in which the audience may experience

discomfort. They disturb the previous assumptions about the texts: that Hozier's song is about sexual desire, and that Swift's essay is meant to provide a genuine solution to Ireland's problems.

The sexual allusions in the line "let me put my lips to something" (Hozier 2023, 0:23) are reiterated in the second verse with the lines "Let me see the heat get to you / Let me watch the dressing start to peel" (Hozier 2023, 1:48–55). The supposed eroticism of these lines serves an additional purpose aside from working as a decoy and diverting our attention from the main theme. It represents the allure of the excessive and exploitative lifestyle of the wealthy, which is comparable with sexual temptation. Hozier's Proposer entices his lover to join the feast as if she were joining him in a sexual act. The seductiveness of the Proposer's words provides a justification for the act of consumption: the justification is in sheer desire. If the desire for power and money is analogous to sexual desire, then it must be just as natural.

The first line of the second verse, "You can't buy this fineness" (Hozier 2023, 1:46), seems to suggest a great level of exclusiveness to the event. Hozier's Proposer consolidates his high position by declaring it something impossible to reach. This overt belief in his own superiority distinguishes him from Swift's Proposer, who hides behind the titular modesty. Swift's Proposer is characterised by similar vanity, made evident when he says that for finding a solution to Ireland's problems, someone – meaning himself – would deserve the highest praise (Swift [1729] 1993, 2181). Unlike Hozier's Proposer, he later ostensibly tries to distance himself from any profit or recognition that his plan would yield (Swift [1729] 1993, 2187). They represent two different sides of political power, with one of them concealing his intention behind an illusion of care, and the other not bothering with the pretence of selflessness.

Although Hozier's Proposer does not feign selflessness, he maintains that the current system is supportive of everyone. He calls it "a kindness, highness" (Hozier 2023, 1:57), presenting the listener with a malformed depiction of empathy. This is a similar misunderstanding of kindness to that criticised by Swift in "A Modest Proposal". While the wealthy can enjoy luxuries, the line "Crumbs enough for everyone" (Hozier 2023, 2:00) serves as a twisted reassurance that, in the end, all people benefit from this structure of power. The line evokes a king throwing scraps from his table to his subjects, demonstrating his benevolence, but it might also represent Hozier's criticism of the "trickle-down economics" – a theory that "the accumulation of wealth by the rich is good for the poor since

some of the increased wealth ... trickles down to the poor" (Aghion and Bolton 1997, 151). Ironically, "everyone" does not really include everyone, but only the people who are deemed useful. Such an equation ignores all those whose lives are lost to sustain the status quo, those who are "eaten" by the system.

The last line of the second verse reveals another gruesome aspect of the song. Since "Old and young are welcome to the meal" (Hozier 2023, 2:03), the young people are no longer the only group bound to be sacrificed. This invitation to the feast directly contradicts the previous claim about the selectivity of the event. Hozier's Proposer makes an empty and deliberately misleading promise of wealth available for those who do not disobey the people in power. The discrepancy between the first and the last line of the verse stresses that such a level of prosperity is unobtainable for a regular person if they are trying to obtain it in a conscientious manner. The only way for somebody to join the people in power is by becoming complicit in the abuse. The inability of a regular person to make a change from within the capitalistic system is a grim reiteration of the fake incapability to mend the Irish economy that is satirised by Swift. In the essay, Swift breaks character to deliver his legitimate economic propositions ([1729] 1993, 2186). All of his solutions are then quickly rejected by his Proposer, who scornfully states that they should not be entertained, unless the people start to believe that "there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2186). "Eat Your Young" depicts an even bleaker reality: what binds people to their misfortune is not unwillingness for change, but powerlessness in the face of an oppressive system.

The first pre-chorus comes after the first verse. It begins with the line "Honey, I wanna race you to the table" (Hozier 2023, 0:42), which suggests some competitiveness between Hozier's Proposer and his lover. As explained by Hozier in the interview for *Genius*, this race between the rich is a competition in getting the most resources and manpower at the cheapest price (Genius 2023). Hozier's Proposer reveals the capitalistic tendency to exploit for profit the people and the land in the less developed places. This reliance of capitalist states on the resources of the poorest countries is described by Utsa Patnaik as a parasitic relationship (2012, 10). Hozier's criticism here is focused on the relocation of profit away from the exploited countries, which parallels Swift's criticism of the relocation of the rent money from Ireland to England.

Continuing to address his lover, Hozier's Proposer says: "If you hesitate, the getting' is gone" (2023, 0:48). Even though he intends to instruct her on the

inside workings of the elites, he still treats her as an opponent. Hozier, through his Proposer, satirises the constant rivalry happening between the wealthy by showing it as contrasted with a romantic relationship. The Proposer is focused on profit to the degree that he views his lover as competition. If he wants to secure his place at the top, the structure of power leaves him no room for any real affection, including the connection with his lover.

The next two lines of the pre-chorus reveal the central message of the song. Aside from yet again emphasising corporate greed, the lines “I won’t lie if there’s somethin’ to be gained / There’s money to be made, whatever’s still to come” (Hozier 2023, 0:52–1:03) indicate a complete lack of consideration of the future. The same sentiment is later repeated in the second pre-chorus with the lyrics “I won’t lie if there’s somethin’ still to take / There is ground to break, whatever’s still to come” (Hozier 2023, 2:18–28). Hozier’s Proposer is not concerned with any consequences that his actions might have, as long as those actions are profitable. As admitted by Hozier, this is the main idea behind the entire piece (Genius 2023). He intends for his Proposer to be a “voice of power that shrugs off any responsibility to any sort of future” (Genius 2023, 0:38–44). The cultural, economic, and environmental repercussions are going to affect people for many years to come. The future generations, too, will be forced to live in a world left in a disarray as a result of today’s senseless pursuit of monetary gain.

By stating that he is “makin’ sure the table’s made” (Hozier 2023, 2:09) at the beginning of the second pre-chorus, Hozier’s Proposer assures his lover that he intends to maintain the current capitalistic system. In truth, he wants to be in control of the event. The need to always possess more than the others applies even to the relationships between the participants of the feast, rendering any collaboration impossible. This line recalls the competitiveness already established in the first pre-chorus. Such compliance with the oppressive system emulates the irony of the proposition suggested in “A Modest Proposal”. Despite the assertions of Swift’s Proposer that his plan will benefit the Irish, it is meant to reinforce the authority England holds over Ireland.

The bitter irony of the character of Hozier’s Proposer becomes more apparent in the second pre-chorus. Whereas in the first pre-chorus he has no inhibitions to depict himself as a person utterly uninterested in the wellbeing of anyone else, here he praises himself by saying “We can celebrate the good that we’ve done” (Hozier 2023, 2:13). Though none of his previous statements could be attributed to a “good” person, he congratulates himself and his lover on their kindness.

The inconsistency in his words matches the similarly conflicting logic of Swift's Proposer. The essay's macabre proposition to sell children for meat is portrayed as a kindness extended to the Irish nation, with Swift's Proposer going as far as to call a man who contributed his ideas to the plan "a very worthy person, a true lover of his country" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2183). Both Proposers see philanthropy in their actions; both authors satirise the performative and misconstrued kindness of people in power.

In the chorus, the Proposer begins to address the participants of the feast instead of his lover. By switching his attention to his associates, he can finally disclose his propositions. Although he views them as his rivals, they are complicit in the practices he is about to discuss. There is a distinguishable tonal difference between the seductive persuasions intended for his lover and his authoritative and demanding speech in the chorus.

He starts by urging the participants to "get some" (Hozier 2023, 1:04), recalling the sexual undertones present in the verses of the song. This time, the erotic allusion is not conveyed through figurative language, but rather a very direct order. Hozier's Proposer blends financial gain with sexual gratification to make it seem even more enticing. In the chorus, he operates on instructions, assuming leadership over the gathering. Swift's Proposer, on the other hand, is more reserved in announcing his authority. In the penultimate paragraph of the essay, he asserts that he is "not so violently bent upon [his] own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2186). He seems to accept the possibility of a better solution to Ireland's economic problems, but in the next sentences he, in fact, discredits any such future attempts. The narrator of "Eat Your Young" is thus a version of Swift's Proposer that has abandoned any pretence of modesty, just like he has abandoned the pretence of selflessness.

When Hozier's Proposer delivers his first command to "pull up the ladder when the flood comes" (Hozier 2023, 1:06), he evokes the symbolism of the biblical flood. The flood represents a punishment for humanity's sins, yet his self-assuredness makes him believe he would be saved from the catastrophe. Even in the case of a disaster, he places himself above all others, escaping the dire consequences of his misdeeds. The flood could also be a metaphor for climate change. In this context, his indifference to the lot of the future generations is even more offensive. The Proposer can shelter himself from the destructive effects of the climate crisis and he admits that he could help those already experiencing them.

There is a ladder leading up to the safe ground, and the Proposer orders for it to be removed, dooming everyone below him. In relation to "A Modest Proposal", this ladder evokes the genuine propositions rejected by Swift's Proposer. Despite being aware of better solutions that would be beneficial for the Irish, he chooses to propose one that would lead to the death of thousands of Irish children. Sardonically extending the metaphor of the flood, Hozier's Proposer expands his order with the line "throw enough rope until the legs have swung" (Hozier 2023, 1:08). The rope is an illusion of help. Extended to the underprivileged, the line is not to save them but to lead them to their demise: it invokes a gruesome image of a person hanging from the gallows. This deceitful "kindness" offered to the struggling people mirrors the plan designed by Swift's Proposer – it is a kind of kindness premised on death.

Considering the song's connection to "A Modest Proposal", the line "seven new ways that you can eat your young" (Hozier 2023, 1:10) appears to be a natural continuation of the six ways to cook a child's meat listed by Swift's Proposer: "stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; ... in a fricassee or a ragout" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2182). Hozier's Proposer refers to the numerous ways the system "consumes" the vulnerable, including the exploitation of resources, economic struggle, and climate change. An additional method becomes apparent in the next part of the chorus, where Hozier's Proposer refers to war. "Skinnin' the children for a war drum" (Hozier 2023, 1:16) lends new meaning to the recommendation of Swift's Proposer to "flea the carcass" (Swift [1729] 1993, 2183) of a child to make gloves and boots out of the skin. In his song, Hozier reimagines the outrageous practice in order to criticise the arms industry. This highly profitable branch depends on war that devours the lives of those fighting it. The lyrics "puttin' food on the table, sellin' bombs and guns" (Hozier 2023, 1:19) affirm the anti-militaristic context of the chorus by showing that the arms industry is directly connected to the table where the feast is held.

Finally, Hozier's Proposer blatantly concludes that "it's quicker and easier to eat your young" (2023, 1:22). Whether he sees it as an act of mercy or convenience, his proposition to "eat the young" is parallel to that made by Swift's Proposer in so many ways. The lives and futures of children are sacrificed by the wealthy to uphold their political power and wealth. In the same manner as Swift, Hozier makes it apparent that this privileged existence is based on the exploitation not only of human beings but also of their available resources, rendered metaphorically as the consumption of people from whom they have been wrenched.

The two texts work as parallel critiques of the abusive systems of power, with Hozier's song drawing heavily on the symbolism and metaphors established by Swift almost three centuries before. Highly sarcastic, Hozier's song nods in Jonathan Swift's direction, proving the universality of Swift's appeal and of the power of his irony. Swift speaking through his Proposer is the eiron par excellence – and as the supreme ironist, he chooses a point of view dramatically different from his own beliefs, with his essay hinting subtly at an incompatibility of Swift's opinions with the views held by the Swiftian Proposer. Such is also Hozier's irony – the subtly revealed irony of the singer concerned with the unchanging flaw of the human heart, the insatiable greed whose severity can only be exposed as a crime against the most vulnerable.

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