

CHANGELING

by

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One ungainly question in public forums is: what to do with 'it'. Burn it? Use it for research purposes? Science would not cavil over getting its hands on 'it' — some say it already has — and may one day likely afford the likelihood of getting 'it' live — vide the protracted career of abortionist Kermit Gosnel on trial for snipping the spines of many premature babies — such that a genetic pathologist might have a truly germane subject to work with, leaving some animal right's activists in peace: no more sickly rats, mice or baleful dogs. Recalling Jonathan Swift, a plumb unwanted foetus could also provide a nourishing few mouthfuls for the many children who go hungry.

If it is a disposable non-entity.

It is an unsung irony that women urge abortion-on-demand as a means of controlling their own bodies, when in point of fact what they expect is a highly trained specialist or potent drug to void unbidden conception. The demand is of course understandable, the anger behind it sometimes focused on the male immunity from the whole process, particularly the jaded male who not only shuns or snubs the end product but blithely touts the randy means needed to conceive it. Some men are undoubtedly happy with that arrangement, yet reducing the foetus to non-human status is as tacky for some people as making physical desire a discretely salutary player.

The fact that most pro-choice advocates do not condone killing a near half-year-old foetus leaves the unprepossessing choice in limbo: the arbitrariness of deciding when it becomes a human begs the question of it ever being an 'it' at all. For instance, research now suggests that a 16

week-old foetus can in fact ‘hear’ music, and may even be mouthing sounds itself, according to the *Institut Marques* in Barcelona.

Nonetheless: At approximately the twenty-fourth week — the stipulated gestation — now and evermore — a *changeling*. The fact that fetuses develop at slightly different rates makes the twenty-four week deadline even more arbitrary. Still, parts of fetuses will continue to be burnt in hospital incinerators, while parts of others, even in some cases nearly entire ‘others’ themselves, will be auctioned off, to facilitate new life-sparing and restorative interventions. The video Planned Parenthood belatedly banned showed brokers negotiating to buy body parts from ever more mature fetuses — the ones usually providing the most serviceable organs. Critics claim the film was badly edited, but the section where a PP broker is seen negotiating the cost of foetal tissue with a prospective purchaser has not, to my knowledge, been repudiated.

Let’s face it, Jonathan Swift may have a point. Think of the proliferating hungry mouths world wide that might be fed!