

THE ROLE OF PARODY IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT The study of the role played in parody in modernist art, literature and theory made in Rose's Parody/meta-fiction (1979) is extended in this article to a study of the contrasting roles attributed to reflexive parody in post-modernism by Fredric Jameson (1984) and Charles Jencks (1986). Firstly Jameson's claim that modern reflexive parody has 'degenerated' into an unreflexively form of pastiche in post-modernism is criticized and contrasted with Jencks' criticisms of the characterization of post-modernist art as pastiche. Secondly, it is argued with Jencks that many post-modernist works contain a number of dual or multiple coding's, and it is suggested that these are also characteristic of a new development of the reflexive parody found in modernism. Finally it is argued that if modernist parody would be transcended in post-modernism as an outdated modernist form as Jameson suggests, then parody must also be as ripe for such a transcendence given that it too is as old as the modernist parody which Jameson sees it as replacing, but that the most likely scenario for the immediate future will be that both parody and pastiche will be given new functions by their post-modernist owners, and that these new functions will continue to co-exist with the older forms of parody still being used by modernist writers and artists.

Key words: parody, pastiche, the characterization of post-modernist art, new functions, transcendence, modernist writers and artist

INTRODUCTION Parody is an artistic mode that has been present in the arts for a long time. It has both been widely used by writers and thoroughly analyzed by critics. But although it is not a new phenomenon at all, it may deserve a closer look in order to reconsider both its nature and function as a return of parody has been identified by well-known critics such as Fredric Jameson, Linda Hutcheon, and Simon Dentith, who consider parody a trend in contemporary writing. This return of parody is not accidental for postmodernist literature relies heavily on parody and this claims for a return to parody itself. Parodies have often been seen as “potentially transgressive authorship”, but postmodernist manifestations such as rap music have brought discussions on the nature and limits of parody to the limelight as they rely on parodic principles and problematize traditional conceptions of authorship. For this reason, several critics have once more turned their eyes to parody. Linda Hutcheon is one of these contemporary critics and her main interest is the use of parody in contemporary literature. Hutcheon claims there have been changes in the nature and function of many of the parodies produced lately which justify a return to parody. In her studies, she proposes and develops the concept of postmodern parody, which is highlighted in this paper and compared with other views on parody. Many periods of time could be also considered “The age of Parody”.

LITERATURE AND REVIEW Late 19th and early 20th century playwrights whose work influenced the aesthetics of postmodernism include August Strindberg, Luigi Pirandello, and Bertolt Brecht. Another precursor to postmodernism was Dadaism, which challenged the authority of the artist and highlighted elements of chance, whim, parody, and irony. Tristan Tzara claimed in "How to Make a Dadaist Poem" that to create a Dadaist poem one had only to put random words in a hat and pull them out one by one. Another way Dadaism influenced postmodern literature was in the development of collage, specifically collages using elements from advertisement or illustrations from popular novels (the collages of Max Ernst, for example). Artists associated with Surrealism, which developed from Dadaism, continued experimentations with chance and parody while celebrating the flow of the subconscious mind. André Breton, the founder of Surrealism,

suggested that automatism and the description of dreams should play a greater role in the creation of literature. He used automatism to create his novel *Nadja* and used photographs to replace description as a parody of the overly-descriptive novelists he often criticized. Surrealist René Magritte's experiments with signification are used as examples by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Foucault also uses examples from Jorge Luis Borges, an important direct influence on many postmodernist fiction writers. He is occasionally listed as a postmodernist, although he started writing in the 1920s. The influence of his experiments with metafiction and magic realism was not fully realized in the Anglo-American world until the postmodern period. One of the primary functions of parody in postmodern literature is its deconstruction of traditional literary forms. Authors such as Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo use parody to subvert the conventions of genres such as detective fiction and science fiction, highlighting the artificiality and constructed nature of these narratives. By exaggerating and distorting familiar tropes and motifs, these authors expose the limitations and constraints of traditional storytelling techniques, inviting readers to question the validity of established literary norms.

Parody as Critique of Consumer Culture

Postmodern literature often employs parody as a tool for critiquing consumer culture and the commodification of everyday life. Writers like Kurt Vonnegut and David Foster Wallace use parody to satirize the excesses of capitalism and the relentless pursuit of material wealth. Through exaggerated and absurd scenarios, these authors highlight the absurdity and emptiness of consumerist values, challenging readers to reconsider their own relationship to consumer culture and the values it promotes.

Parody as Exploration of Identity and Reality

Parody in postmodern literature is also used to explore questions of identity and reality in a fragmented and uncertain world. Authors such as Italo Calvino and Jorge Luis Borges employ parody to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, creating metafictional narratives that challenge readers' perceptions of truth and authenticity. By playing with narrative conventions and literary devices, these authors invite readers to

question the nature of identity, memory, and perception, highlighting the fluid and malleable nature of reality in a postmodern context.

CONCLUSION Postmodern literature represents a break from the 19th century realism. In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the "stream of consciousness" styles of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, or explorative poems like *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. In addition, both modern and postmodern literature explore fragmentariness in narrative- and character-construction. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature [citation needed] The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature, but the speaker in *The Waste Land* says, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins". Modernist literature sees fragmentation and extreme subjectivity as an existential crisis, or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. Playfulness is present in many modernist works (Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or Woolf's *Orlando*, for example) and they may seem very similar to postmodern works, but with postmodernism playfulness becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely. Gertrude Stein's playful experiment with metafiction and genre in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) has been interpreted as postmodern. Parody plays a central role in postmodern literature, serving as a powerful tool for critiquing established literary forms, challenging consumer culture, and exploring questions of identity and reality. By subverting traditional storytelling techniques, parody allows authors to engage with the complexities of contemporary society in innovative and thought-provoking ways. As postmodern literature continues to evolve and adapt to the changing cultural landscape, the role of parody remains a vital and dynamic aspect of the genre, offering new insights and perspectives on the challenges and contradictions of the postmodern world.

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