



José Cândido de Oliveira Martins

Catholic University of Portugal, Braga
martins.candido@gmail.com

Marcin Kołakowski

University of Warsaw
m.kolakowski@uw.edu.pl

Parody, Irony and Satire: Literary Approaches to Rewriting and Subverting Reality

I

The present thematic section of *Acta Philologica* has brought together papers which focus on parody, irony and satire as means of rewriting and subverting different literary, cultural, social and political realities. It includes articles that focus on rewriting, subverting and transgressing these realities, and the artistic strategies and devices used for this purpose; as well as papers that debate the criterion of new canons derived from established literary and artistic traditions. In this sense, focusing on authors from various literatures, the articles included in this section demonstrate the vast potentialities of the discourse of parody, in the past and in the present, and operating in different literary epochs. This fecundity of parody is clearly visible both in the dynamics of literary evolution and in the productive relations with other literary genres and discourses (cf. Denith 32ff.). Upon compiling the papers for this special section, we also bore in mind the fact that the enormous field of action of parody extends beyond literary history to other artistic forms and genres (Hucheeon, *A Theory*).

Including the problematic definition of its nature and functionality, parody carries a long and multi-secular history that has evolved very significantly from classical antiquity to contemporary and postmodern forms, in which it reaches a culminating moment (Margaret Rose). The most decisive moments for the change in the understanding of the ambiguous and dynamic conception of parody came at the beginning of the 20th century with the contribution of some of the Russian formalists and the absolutely remarkable theorization of Mikhail Bakhtin, later taken up by structuralist and post-structuralist theorists.

Overcoming traditional conceptions, parody has been duly defined by Linda Hutcheon as repetition with critical difference that allows to ironically point out the difference

within similarity, operating as an ironic *transcontextualisation*. Thanks to the logic of parody that both incorporates and questions the evocation of former literary texts is not a superficial gesture or trivial kitsch (Hutcheon, *A poetics* 24). Hence, paradoxically, parody sanctions both change and cultural continuity. It can also be understood as a particular case of intertextuality, one that involves the existence of an authority which, by means of artistic devices and strategies, can be subverted or copied (Hutcheon, *A poetics* 26). Furthermore, parody is a kind of self-reflection and self-criticism as well, and it is a manner of thinking about genres critically (McHale 144).

One of the central aspects of the theorisation of parody concerns the distinction and relationship with other related genres and discursive forms – irony, satire, burlesque, pastiche, metafiction, etc.; as well as its intimate relationship with the mentioned theory of intertextuality (Sangsue 103). In a poetic update of parody, this paradoxical metagenre asserts itself by the considerable ambiguity of its *ethos*, but also by the challenges it poses to the literary competence of the reader. Definitely, for parody to function properly it is absolutely necessary that the reader is able to identify the parodied text or object (Martins). The recognition of the parodic relationship constitutes a constant challenge to the reader's hermeneutic competence (Hutcheon, *A Theory*).

Among the most common and operative relations that parody establishes, its close relationship with the genre of satire comes to the fore. It is well known that the boundaries between parody and satire are not particularly clear at times, since we can even speak of satirical parody or parodistic satire. Satire itself reverts to sarcasm and irony, which for Northrop Frye (1957) are militant means of ridiculing social extremities and abuses. It has two main means of modeling the represented world: the realistic technique of the concave mirror that enlarges or reduces the image of something by selectively fixing and “engraving” the criticized aspects of reality; and the technique of the grotesque (carnavalesque) that consists in taking to the extreme the deformation of the represented world, contrasting aesthetic qualities, introducing the sense of absurdity of life and ignoring positive worldviews.

The didactic servitudes of satire implied that it had become a minor and marginalized genre, as the grotesque and parody became independent and constituted their own aesthetic. Nonetheless, satire can be perceived as a form of the postmodern rhizome because of its ambiguity and the inability of literary theory to define its qualities, such as limitlessness, evanescence and otherness (Stępień 426-427). It is common knowledge that the genre of satire is animated by critical-moralizing objectives: as a critical, agonizing and even polemical discourse, with extra-textual targets. Unlike parody, resorting to caricature, grotesque, diatribe, invective or pamphlet language, the *ethos* of satire is openly critical, aggressive and corrosive.

Not coincidentally, parody scholars have repeatedly looked to reveal the intimate relations between parody and irony, in view of the ambiguity of ironic discourse (Hutcheon, *Parody*; Rose 87-90). Irony in literary works serves mainly comic purposes (satirical, parodic and sarcastic); but it also serves as also as a tool for creating a distance between the contradictions and conflicting opinions concerning culture and worldviews that should be unmasked and mastered thanks to the ironic artistic creation (Okopień-Sławińska 221-222). For several reasons, irony becomes indispensable for the functioning of parody,

and is even one of the most important rhetorical strategies of parodic discourse. However, while parody is an intertextual or inter-artistic metagenre, irony is of an intratextual nature (*dissimulatio*), as a trope or linguistic-semantic process. In this sense, parody is almost always an ironic language *par excellence*.

II

The present thematic section encompasses five articles discussing parody, satire and irony in literary works from three different literary and cultural traditions written in French, Portuguese and Spanish. Mónica Bueno's paper titled "Parodia y política en el *Fausto* de Estanislao del Campo" constitutes a comprehensive analysis of one of the most peculiar Argentinian literary texts of the 19th century: *Fausto, Impresiones del gaucha Anastasio el Pollo en la representación de la Ópera* (commonly known as *El Fausto*) by Estanislao del Campo. This "Creole" version of the legend of Faust is examined within a wide perspective of contemporary literary and cultural theories; and explores the ramifications of its satirical dimension for Argentina's literary tradition. The research encompasses a vast panorama of studies relating to the "gauchoesque" literature (*literatura gauchesca*), which deals with issues relating to the culture of *gauchos* (somewhat comparable with that of cowboys in the United States). This literary tradition (written by educated city dwellers, not *gauchos*) brings to the fore tensions inherent to Argentine culture: the perspective of the capital of Buenos Aires (immersed in and conscient of its European heritage) and the vernacular point of view, predominantly independent of the metropolis oriented cultural model.

Nevertheless, the main focus of the paper is the means by which *gaucha* characters parody the mechanisms of Gaucha literature and the subversion originating from the work's comicality. In this way, Bueno argues, it is not the *gauchos* themselves who are the object of the parody; it is the "Gucho code" (*código gauchesco*). Bueno also underlines the political aspects of Estanislao del Campo's *El Fausto*, since one of its main interests was to condemn the lack of institutional involvement in the socio-economic development of the rural areas, which is one of the issues most commonly raised in Argentinian literature over the course of the last two centuries.

In "Dictature à l'envers: le discours satirique dans *La revanche de Bozambo* de Bertène Juminer", Ewa Kalinowska examines a novel which seems not to have received enough critical and popular attention either at the time of its publication (1968) or later on. The article explores one of the principal techniques employed within the framework of parody and satire – the literary inversion – and demonstrates that the creation of a reversed word, where a fictional African state colonized Europe, shows great potential for social and political critique. It also discusses how the novel is built on the paradoxical idea of the internecine warfare between various actors of the public life, all of whom are black.

By contrasting the existing world structure with an imaginary one, Kalinowska proves that the true objective of the novel was not a comical one, but the denunciation of historical and contemporary economic, social and political phenomena such as slavery, colonization, imperialism, wars, genocide, and the extermination of certain populations for

the appropriation of their lands. The author stresses the universal scale of the text insofar as it also confronts issues that are socially valid in contemporary societies. She suggests that the discrimination of marginalized and excluded groups, similarly to those depicted in Juminer's novel, continue to proliferate. In this context she poses questions about the political meaning and objectives of the satirical techniques employed in Juminer's work and related to the dynamics between the majority and minorities: "Wouldn't it be a matter of provoking reflection and making people aware that the roles could be reversed in the future? That it might be useful to act with more discernment and justice?"

As Paulo Motta Oliveira demonstrates in his study titled "Camilo Castelo Branco: sátira, paródia e ceticismo", the extensive literary work of the popular 19th century Portuguese writer Camilo Castelo Branco (1825-1890) is hastily associated and even reduced to the stereotyped genre of the so-called "passionate novel" (*romance passionnal*). However, on a closer reading, his work is inseparable from satire, without which it would not be possible to fully understand his worldview. Camillian narrative cannot do without various comic processes and linguistic techniques, at the service of a critical, pessimistic and even disenchanted vision of 19th century Portugal.

Indeed, before and after the emergence of the realist school, in addition to the discourse of irony, the fecundity and centrality of the satirical mode of this author calls on other complementary procedures such as parody of the renovating naturalist aesthetic of the 1870s. This is intensely visible in the publication of the novels *Eusebio Macário* and *A corja* and their assumed anti-naturalist parody. At the same time, it is possible to read these works as containing recurring characteristics, whereby the parody uncovers tendencies that run through the whole of the writer's work, such as the constant presence of the themes of sensual desire and the role of money, leading to a disillusioned vision of the world. On the whole, Motta Oliveira demonstrates that within the hermeneutics of Camillian writing, parody is not confined to a playful and satirical reaction to the realist or naturalist aesthetic.

The satirical mode also shapes the poetry of the popular Portuguese poet Guerra Junqueiro (1850-1923) as the article by Carlos Nogueira "«Ó cóleras sagradas!/: Dai-me versos febris, agudos como espadas»: a sátira na poesia de Guerra Junqueiro" proves. The critical study fully demonstrates that it is necessary to analyze not only the recognised emotiveness and the poetic-literary form of Junqueiro, but also the historical-cultural and literary contexts. Portuguese society during the transition from the late 19th to the 20th century experienced the agony of the monarchic system and cultural backwardness compared to other countries. By denouncing the moral degeneration of this society using poetics of great satirical intensity and somewhat scenic structure, the poet attained a mythical status.

In this sense, Junqueiro's socio-political satire was not only captivating and unique for its time, but it also created poetics focused on the recovery of the lost intensity of the nation. The presented analysis of this poetry runs in terms of its form and literary techniques. It reaches out to the micro-stylistics of the author's satirical verses, without losing sight of the interrelation with the generational and epochal context to which Guerra Junqueiro belonged; and of which he was a model interpreter. Thus, satire assumes in this poetry an ethical sense of commitment and responsibility, but also

a critical denunciation and a political and social vision of another country (demolition and reconstruction). With recurring themes related to burlesque, romantic pathos, epic vehemence, and theatricality, Junqueiro's satire has secured for itself a special place in the satirical tradition of Portuguese poetry.

In the essay "O herói romântico parodiado por Camilo Castelo Branco", Luciene Marie Pavanelo endeavours to deconstruct the image of Camilo Castelo Branco glued to sentimental idealism and the tragedy of impossible loves in a similar register to that of Paulo Motta Oliveira. This image is conveyed by a certain critical tradition and, at the same time, by the popular reception of the writer. The romantic movement, its aesthetics and psychology, and even the stereotyped image of Ultra-romanticism and its model of happiness, serve as the background of the investigation. Camilo's writing takes advantage of the potential of parody, aided by other forms, from irony and humor to satire and burlesque, in a continued parody of the romantic platitudes, often through a jocular language and a demolishing laughter, while still satirizing the scientific discourse of the time.

By analyzing the protagonist of *Coração, Cabeça e Estômago* (1862), one of Camilo's best known satirical novels, as well as three of the male characters in *Que Fazem Mulheres* (1858), the author of the study seeks to demonstrate how the Camillian conception of these protagonists resolutely departs from the image of the Byronic romantic hero. Quite the contrary, drawing from this elucidative literary corpus, the conception of these male protagonists is established not by resorting to a euphoric profile, but rather by way of Camilo's parodic and scathing writing, with its critical view of the loving and idealistic heritage of Romanticism. As the paper shows, on the whole, the writer uses various parodical techniques to mock the theme of passion in the Romantic era: by reverting to its idealized psychology (such as the figure of the "homme fatal") and to stereotypical language structures of this literary period.

It is clear that the section's scope embraces different literary periods and cultural and geographical contexts. Nevertheless, all the papers included deal with subversive strategies that, to a greater or lesser extent, deform the realistic means of representation with the objective of criticizing social, political and cultural patterns, not to mention the injustices and stereotypes encoded in culture and literature. We hope that this thematic section will prove a valuable reference point for researchers investigating parody, satire and irony in the field of humanities.

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