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Source: *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Spring, 1989), pp. 113-127

Published by: Duke University Press on behalf of the University of Oregon

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1770971>

Accessed: 16/10/2009 11:08

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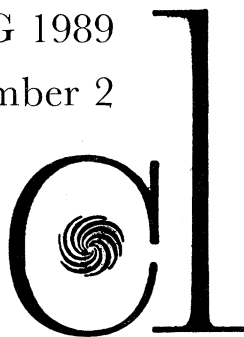
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MICHELE HANNOOSH



The Reflexive Function of Parody

A MAJOR ASPECT of parody to emerge from recent theoretical considerations of the genre is its essential reflexivity, its capacity to reflect critically back upon itself, not merely upon its target.¹ This derives from its metalinguistic character, first emphasized by the Russian Formalists: the commentary of one text on another, or on literature generally, within a single work, exposing the methods and processes of art while it makes use of them.² As parody deals specifically with works of art, its treatment of the parodied work may by analogy be generalized to include itself.³ Rose, for example, argues that parody possesses a self-reflexive aspect because of the dual function of the parodist as reader (of the parodied work) and author (of the parody)⁴: in presenting the parodist's critical interpretation of his reading, it gives us a model by which to interpret itself.

Two important consequences, thus far unexplored, follow from this aspect of the theory and deserve to be considered in more detail. First, reflexivity is inherent in the definition of parody as a comical retelling and transformation of another text, and is demanded by the form itself. In altering a work according to a different, usually contemporary and/or trivialized code, parody challenges the notion of fixed works altogether,

¹ E.g. M. Rose 97: "the problems of self-reference in metafiction . . . have shown metafictional parody to imply criticism of itself, and a form of 'self-parody' in parodying other fictions." See also R. Poirier 349: "[self-parody] . . . calls into question not any particular literary structure so much as the enterprise, the activity itself of creating any literary form." Cf. L. Hutcheon 67: "Overtly imitating art more than life, parody self-consciously and self-critically points us to its own nature." For works on reflexivity in general, see R. Alter, P. Waugh, and R. Siegle.

² See M. Bakhtin, *Problèmes de la poétique de Dostoïevski* 148ff. Cf. C. Abastado.

³ The parodied work may be a group of works, the manner associated with a school or movement, a genre, or any specialized language. For convenience, however, I shall refer to it here as a single work.

⁴ Cf. Rose 66 and 101.

and thus leaves itself open to the same playful or critical treatment. It provides a new version of an old story, but cannot legitimately propose itself as the definitive one, since by its own example it belies the concept of a definitive or authoritative work altogether. Moreover, a parody must even allow for a critique of itself such as it has performed on the original (or target, when these are different).⁵ This distinguishes parodic renewals from more generally intertextual ones, which are not obliged to make critical demands upon themselves in this way; the comic element present in parody, on the other hand, renders such self-criticism virtually compulsory:

Second, parodic reflexivity does not mean simply that the parody refers to itself as a text about texts, reflecting on itself by analogy, as it has been defined hitherto. It has more radical implications than mere self-reference: the parody actually rebounds upon itself, calling itself into question as it does the parodied work, and suggesting its own potential as a model or target, a work to be rewritten, transformed, even parodied in its turn. In particular, it frequently makes this possibility explicit in the text through a number of means, as we shall see shortly. Although reflexive devices and structures within individual parodies have been studied, the self-criticism which they imply has not figured in theories of the genre⁶; nor have the means by which it is realized been identified. Self-criticism should be acknowledged as a central feature, however, for it is crucial to a thorough understanding of the genre, both in itself and as an agent in the evolution of literary forms as described by the Formalists. Moreover, it redeems parody from some largely unjustified charges, such as its destructive effect upon literary traditions, its poverty as a creative form, and its lack of self-consciousness. Parody implicates itself in its treatment of the parodied work, and often realizes this overtly.

Two critics have examined the matter of self-parody in particular. R. Poirier describes it as a distinctly modern form, which makes fun of itself by questioning the activity of literary creation in general, rather

⁵ The original may be the target of the parody's mockery, but need not be, and frequently is not. In such cases, the original is a vehicle for parodying or satirizing a different target, usually something contemporary. *Don Quixote*, for example, parodies the romances of chivalry (among other forms) in order to mock not the authentic ones like *Amadis of Gaul*, but the spate of popular ones that followed them; the mock-epic frequently does not mock the epic, but merely uses epic to make fun of something else, usually in the contemporary world. This idea has been expressed by a few critics, e.g. H. Markiewicz 1265 and Hutcheon 44. Their claim that such mockery is satirical, however, does not follow from the theory. It may be parodic, provided the conditions for this are met: the target must be a work or specialized language and must be the material of the parody. The original would thus be transformed according to the clichés of the target.

⁶ Bakhtin, however, considered self-criticism a feature of the novel, which at every stage in its history parodies the main type(s) and thus creates a new one. See *Esthétique et théorie du roman* 443f.

than a particular literary structure (349)⁷: the writer parodies the act of writing, as it were. He takes as examples Joyce, Nabokov, and especially Borges, all of whose parodies of the act of writing fiction are necessarily directed, by analogy, against their own enterprise as well. Poirier isolates modern parody on the basis of this feature, differentiating it from previous types by its attitude toward standards: the assumption in the “older kind” of parody that life, history, or reality has made certain literary styles outmoded, as against the refusal of such standards by the “newly-developed” kind of self-parody. However, if, as I argue, the structure of parody as a comical reworking of another text implies in itself the possibility of self-parody, then the distinction is no longer valid. In the face of examples from the history of this highly self-conscious genre, the claim that “up to now parody has been almost entirely other-directed—by one writer against another or at the literary modes of a particular period” does not hold.⁸ But Poirier remarks, rightly and with insight, that in self-parody the “inferred standards” behind the parody are not allowed to become authoritative, and that self-parody does not merely question the validity of a text, but proposes “the unimpeded opportunity for making new ones” (352f.).

In her study of parody as a metafictional form, M. Rose similarly argues for the self-critical implications of the genre but acknowledges their essential contradiction, the limits of self-reflexivity. A parody cannot take itself as its subject, cannot ultimately criticize itself fully: “the parodistic and modernist metafiction has also shown itself to be forever short of its mark of analysing the reality of its own fiction” (81). Following this argument, self-parody is theoretically impossible, for it is forever unfinished and cannot describe itself completely: “cases of self-parody must imply further parody of themselves” (82f.). Rose offers two solutions to this logical problem. First, self-parody is possible if it is defined as the parody of another of the parodist’s works, although this does not address the reflexivity of the parody upon itself. Second, parody exposes the process of literary production of which it is an example, and thus implicitly includes itself in its criticism: this is the same analogical argument described earlier, which provides the theoretical foundation for reflexivity in the first place. Neither of these satisfies the requirement implicit in the genre, i.e. that the parodic action turn upon itself. But like Poirier, Rose acknowledges the “open-ended” quality of parody and attributes to it an important function: “to show the process of

⁷ Cf. Hutcheon 10.

⁸ Poirier 349. Siegle makes this same objection concerning narrative reflexivity in general, e.g.: “I have little sympathy for discussions that seem to confine reflexivity to recent avant-garde works, as if the novel had evolved into metafictional cleverness sometime during the 1960s” (14, cf. 3).

literary creation to be unfinished and open for further development” (83; cf. 153). Its criticism of other works suggests that it may undergo a similar process in the future.

In fact, the openness noted by both of these critics ensures that parody fulfills the function attributed to it in Formalist theory, i.e. furthering the development of literary forms and guaranteeing the continuity of literary history. It destroys categorically the old charge levelled against parody, namely its destructive effect on both individual works and literature in general. In making the parodied work the basic material for itself, parody, in Formalist terms, actually regenerates a tradition whose procedures have become (or have the potential to become) mechanized, and thus contributes to the ongoing history of literature.⁹ As we shall see, however, parody accomplishes this not only by offering itself as the new product of the tradition that it revises, as is usually maintained, but also by actually suggesting other works within itself: providing for other versions of its own story or for future rewritings of itself. Parody mocks and transforms, undermines and renews (Rose 61), thus putting its critical function ultimately in the service of literary creation and continuity. In rebounding upon itself, leaving room for other versions or even suggesting the forms these might take, parody ensures that the tradition it revises will continue even beyond itself.

The self-critical aspect of parody also proposes a response to one of the more damaging challenges made against the genre in modern criticism. Barthes classified parody as “l’ironie au travail” (52) and thus consigned it, along with irony, to the status of *écriture classique*, the antithesis of the multivalent *écriture moderne*: it proclaims itself a parody and thereby identifies its origins and paternity, the authority on which its utterances are based, the voice which gives it unity.¹⁰ It prematurely arrests the literary play of codes, and its metalanguage, which we might expect to enrich this, instead merely superimposes one code on another. It thus performs an act of linguistic imperialism, placing itself as an authority over the parodied work: “L’écriture classique . . . s’essouffle vite, se ferme et signe très tôt son dernier code (par exemple en affichant . . . son ironie)” (145). In his view, only an *uncertain* irony, such as he sees in Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, has the capacity to keep the play of codes going by not privileging any one in particular, and by thus inspiring in the reader a “malaise salutaire” of undecidability (145). But the self-reflexive aspect of parody that I am describing may instead be seen actually to fulfill the function of writing as Barthes

⁹ For the Formalist view of parody as a motor for the evolution of literary forms, see Bakhtin, *Esthétique* 130 and *Problèmes de la Poétique de Dostoïevski* 125ff., Tomachevski, and Tynjanov. For a more recent treatment of this view, see Rose 83n.

¹⁰ *S/Z*, ch. 21, 42, 59, and 87.

understands it: “annuler le pouvoir (l’intimidation) d’un langage sur un autre, dissoudre, à peine constitué, tout métalangage” (105). Parody may in fact be likened to the structure of his exemplary *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, “une circularité où personne (pas même l’auteur) n’a barre sur personne” (105), and may thus provide an answer to his rhetorical question: “comment épingler la bêtise sans se déclarer intelligent? Comment un code peut-il avoir barre sur un autre sans fermer abusivement le pluriel des codes?” (212). Parody does not, indeed cannot, have the last word: its metalanguage proposes necessarily the existence of at least another, equally valid one, and thus undermines its power and status vis-à-vis the parodied work.¹¹ The metalinguistic structure continues to exist, and is not “dissolved” as Barthes would wish, but its power is neutralized in the greater parodic scheme: the reader sees, with the extended vision offered by parody, that it is as vulnerable and tenuous as the parodied work itself.

The self-reflexivity of parody thus guarantees both a critical and a creative dimension to this form. The parody not only rewrites another work, but suggests yet another one within itself, reminding the reader of the relativism of any work of art, and also of the richness of creative possibilities in an allegedly limited single source. This position provokes two qualifying remarks. First, it does not imply a necessarily conscious effort on the part of the parodist. Self-reflexivity is included in the conception of parody as a comical rewriting, and the logic of the genre as such; it therefore takes its place as an essential feature of parody which may legitimately inform our reading. Second, although it is implied in all parody, it is not always actualized. This should in no way diminish its status, however, for a single generic feature need not occur in every example. This one is particularly radical, the critical implications of the form carried to their furthest extreme, questioning the value and validity even of what the parody seems to endorse.

As examples from various periods and literatures attest, parodic reflexivity commonly manifests itself in three principal forms: first, the text may propose itself as a potential parodied work; second, it may allude to other examples of its own story, thus signalling to the reader that it is merely one among many possible ones; third, it may even provide details of an alternative version, specific ways in which this might differ from the parody, itself already an alternative one.

The text offers itself most easily as a potential parodied work by allying itself directly with the work that it parodies. Ovid’s *Amores*

¹¹ With respect to reflexive narrative in general, Siegle suggests along similar lines that reflexivity refuses such a status: “Reflexivity is a permanently revolutionary dimension of literature that persists in resisting the yoke of any paradigm that attempts to obscure its own self-transforming qualities” (246f.).

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provide a typical example of this first self-critical technique by making a standard convention of the genre parodied—here, the poet’s wish for immortality through this poetry—into a vehicle of parodic reflexivity. This is the theme of *Amores* I.15:¹² “. . . mihi fama perennis/ quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar” (lines 7-8) (I seek everlasting fame, that I may be celebrated forever in all the world). The following twenty-two lines, well over half the poem, consist exclusively of examples of poets who indeed live on through their work, and thus are models for the poet of this one. Significantly, however, he includes not only Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, Virgil, and others, but also the love-elegists themselves, Tibullus and Gallus, objects of the *Amores*’s parody.

donec erunt ignes arcusque Cupidinis arma,	27
discentur numeri, culte Tibulle, tui;	
Gallus et Hesperiiis et Gallus notus Eois,	
et sua cum Gallo nota Lycoris erit.	30

(As long as the torch and bow are weapons of Cupid, your verse, elegant Tibullus, will be known; Gallus will be renowned in both the West and the East, and with Gallus his Lycoris.)

Proclaiming the immortality of Gallus, founder of the Roman love-elegy that Ovid parodies, is not only ironic; it also suggests that the manifestation of Gallus’s fame most ready to hand—the parody itself—may likewise be the means by which the poet’s wish for his own work will be fulfilled. His seemingly conventional desire for immortality through his poetry is colored by the nature of the example he hopes to follow: Gallus has achieved immortality by being parodied, and Ovid may do the same.

This is made even more explicit in the Tibullus example: not only is he, like Gallus, one of the poets parodied in the *Amores*, but also the specific allusion to the weapons of Cupid links him *directly* to the parodist. Ovid’s remark about the immortality of Tibullus’s work is easily transferred to his own, which, as the title makes clear, is likewise dependent, albeit parodically, on Cupid’s “torch and bow”; lines 37-38 remind us overtly that Ovid’s subject is love.¹³ But the parallel has a twist: Tibullus lives on in Ovid, the *Amores*, a parody, and these verses thus imply that Ovid may also. The conventional formula for partial immortality that closes the poem—the poet will die, but his work will survive—is again colored by his example, Tibullus’s immortality not only via his own

¹² For a commentary on Book I, see J. Barsby 159, who cites parallels for the immortality theme in Roman literature, notably Ennius, Virgil, Horace, and Propertius. Ovid himself used it often (Barsby 163). All translations, here and below, are my own.

¹³ “sustineamque coma mentuentem frigora myrtum / atque ita sollicito multus amante legar” (and may I sustain on my tresses the myrtle that fears the cold, and so be ever read by anxious lovers).

poems but also via the parody: “parsque mei multa superstes erit” (and a great part of me will survive) suggests fame not only through the *Amores* but, on the model of Tibullus, through the *Amores* as an object of parody.

The same reflexive technique, likening the parody to the parodied work, is used by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, again through a convention of the genre parodied: the famous defense of writing and reading novels that the author addresses to the reader in Chapter 5 actually offers her own novel as the subject of a later work. *Northanger Abbey* has long been seen to parody the gothic novel and to follow in some ways the pattern of *Don Quixote*: Catherine Morland is a mock-heroine who interprets her experience in terms of the sentimental novels that she so avidly devours, with their tales of mystery, horror, and the sinister adventures that befall a young innocent in a remote romantic setting, exemplified by the works of Mrs. Radcliffe and her “imitators.”¹⁴ Catherine’s “visions of romance” (201) bring her not only a comical disappointment of expectations, but, more seriously, the near-catastrophe of losing the good opinion of the young man with whom she has fallen in love, Henry Tilney. Her naïveté is not limited to taking her readings too seriously and behaving according to them; it prevents her even from appreciating Henry’s *parody* of them in Chapter 20, when he teases her with an exaggerated picture of life at Northanger, pieced together with the clichés of gothic fiction.¹⁵ Catherine fails to perceive the humor until Henry, unable to contain his laughter, leaves it to her to imagine the rest of the story, and thus brings her back to reality. Later, alone in her room at Northanger, she nevertheless applies his parody to her situation, in the episode of the ebony cabinet in Chapter 21; a roll of paper discovered in it turns out to be not a manuscript recounting secret terrors in the abbey, as she had imagined, but simply old laundry lists. Catherine ultimately learns her lesson, not only that the “visions of romance” are inappropriate to life, but also, through the pettiness and cruelty of Henry’s father, that life has dangers less obvious than those contained in such romances, but all the more sinister for that.

In Chapter 5, the author nevertheless justifies the writing of novels and her heroine’s reading of them, thus linking her own work with those parodied in it. She argues that novelists should band together and support one other in order to protect themselves against the abuse and censure of their many critics:

¹⁴ *Northanger Abbey* 202. For discussions of the parodic and “quixotic” aspects of *Northanger Abbey*, see K. Moler, A. Litz, J. Brown, G. Levine, J. Wiesenfarth, and E. Kauvar.

¹⁵ Notably *The Mysteries of Udolpho* IV, 4. See *Northanger Abbey*, Introduction, 12f.

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[Catherine and Isabella] . . . shut themselves up, to read novels together. Yes, novels;—for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. (57f.)

In the guise of authorial self-defense, a common convention of narrative, Austen ironically identifies the critical purposes of her story, a work that parodies the kind of novels defended here and satirizes the effect of reading them uncritically, as Catherine does. The “censure” that she attributes to other writers, who refuse to allow novel-reading in their works, is actually best accomplished by her own method of including it, i.e. patronizing the heroines of other novels (the gothic romances) in her own. The most effective criticism of the gothic novel, in other words, consists not in ignoring it or hypocritically maligning or repudiating it, as do other novelists, but in parodying it, revising and reusing it comically in one’s own work, as Henry does in Chapter 20, and Austen does in *Northanger Abbey*. In the light of this, the passage is not wholly ironic: parody is indeed not as ungenerous and impolitic as the practice of novelists that the author reproaches. It criticizes, but does not have the hypocrisy of those who degrade “by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding.” Through its essential self-reflexivity, parody, rather, constantly demonstrates its awareness of contributing to the tradition that it mocks.

Austen illustrates this last point in particular by remarking that the heroine of one novel should be patronized by that of another. While appearing to justify Catherine’s reading and (ironically) the novel’s account of it, this comment actually refers to the heroine and the novel at hand. It suggests that Catherine’s story should be read by another, future heroine, as the gothic romances were by her, and given the same parodic treatment that her story—*Northanger Abbey* itself—gives to them. Austen authorizes others to use her novel as she does the gothic romances, i.e. parodically. The parody may be parodied in its turn.

Although she provides no example of such a future version, as do some parodists, Austen does imply in the final pages that the story told by the parody is not the whole one. *Northanger Abbey* here realizes the creative implications of the genre by opening a window onto another, related story of which it offers only a tantalizing glimpse. In closing, the parody actually creates another work, to be told at some other moment. To the reader’s surprise, Catherine’s friend Eleanor Tilney

marries a young man previously unmentioned and unsuspected, but not wholly unconnected to the present story:

Concerning the one in question therefore I have only to add—(aware that the rules of composition forbid the introduction of a character not connected with my fable)—that this was the very gentleman whose negligent servant left behind him that collection of washing-bills, resulting from a long visit at Northanger, by which my heroine was involved in one of her most alarming adventures. (247)

In yet another authorial address to the reader, Austen makes a comic detail of the parody—the washing lists that Catherine mistook for a mysterious manuscript in Chapter 21—generate a new story, Eleanor’s romance with her future husband. The parenthetical aside, justifying the introduction of the young man by his association with the ebony cabinet episode, insists on the connection between the two stories: the second narrative is born of the first, the parody, even though the events which it recounts may have happened earlier or simultaneously. As this is not the parody’s story told in a different way, it does not represent the direct self-criticism that I have been describing; however, it does illustrate the property of parody to provide from within itself the suggestion and even details of another work, here, as is typical of parody, by mocking a standard convention of narrative, to which it draws attention in the parenthetical aside to the reader.

A second self-reflexive technique consists in alluding to other, usually future versions of the same story told by the parody. Sheridan’s play, *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779), provides an example of this in a format particularly suited to reflexivity, the rehearsal play. It parodies the conventions of contemporary sentimental drama through the device of the theatrical rehearsal, in the manner of Buckingham’s earlier parody of heroic drama, *The Rehearsal* (1671). A rehearsal of the romantic tragedy, *The Spanish Armada*, by the critic-turned-author Puff constitutes Acts II and III, and provides the occasion for a simultaneous commentary on it, bringing out the stock features of contemporary theater that Sheridan mocks: extraneous elements to the plot, a subject drawn from history and enlivened by a love-conflict, a sub-plot having little connection with the main plot, a mad scene, a discovery scene, references to Shakespeare, and so on, many of which have already been ridiculed in Act I, with its satire on authors, critics, managers, and performers. The use of the rehearsal play as a means of mirroring, commenting on, and criticizing drama from within has been studied elsewhere,¹⁶ but not the relation of its self-reflexive devices to the parody. The idea of repetition with a difference, understood in parody, is present in that of

¹⁶ E.g. J. Loftis 107ff., D.F. Smith 115ff., V.C. Clinton-Baddeley 72ff, and S. Macey 35-45.

the rehearsal itself; Sheridan emphasizes this here by replaying many of the individual scenes within it a number of times. Moreover, the changes made to the play during the rehearsal by all present—actors, critics, and even Puff himself—imply that the parody too can be altered, improved, or redone; it thus provides for a reworking of itself. But Sheridan openly implicates his play as a whole by its final line, spoken by Puff at the end of the rehearsal: “Well, pretty well—but not quite perfect—so ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we’ll rehearse this piece again tomorrow” (385). The reflexive action of the parody upon itself is guaranteed by the obvious play on “piece”: not only Puff’s *The Spanish Armada*, but *The Critic* too. Like Puff’s play, Sheridan’s may be “rehearsed” again and changes made to it. As Buckingham’s parodic *Rehearsal* inspired *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed*, perhaps this parody also will give rise to another one, through another rehearsal, as suggested in the final line.

The reflexivity of *Don Quixote* has been studied in some detail, particularly with regard to the publication in Part II of a book recounting the knight’s previous exploits, or what one would have read as Part I.¹⁷ But Cervantes’s novel presents a special case of the self-reflexive and self-critical technique which I have been describing—calling its own version into question by suggesting the possibility of other ones—since another version of the story indeed already existed: the apocryphal *Don Quixote, Part II* by the pseudonymous Avellaneda from Tordesillas. At the end of Part I, Cervantes had left open the possibility of a sequel—a new sally of Don Quixote, allegedly to Saragossa—to be brought out by a scholar who had been given the manuscript to decipher: hence the quotation from *Orlando furioso* that closes the first volume, “forse altri canterà con miglior plectro” (perhaps another will sing with a better plectrum).¹⁸ Avellaneda had met this challenge with his own *Segunda Parte*, which appeared in 1614, before Cervantes’s own Part II had been published. Cervantes in turn brilliantly worked Avellaneda’s account into his own, and especially into his hero’s experience, in a number of episodes, casting doubt on its veracity, ridiculing it, and contrasting it with the “reality” told by the parody.¹⁹ But in the final chapter of Part II, Cervantes uses the satire against Avellaneda also to support a main point of his parody: the claims to absolute authority

¹⁷ This has been treated by numerous scholars, e.g. M. Gerhardt, Rose 63ff., M. Foucault 62f., J. L. Borges 99, and J. Ferreras 122f.

¹⁸ The first edition has: *Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectio*.

¹⁹ E.g. II, 59, where Don Quixote finds people at the inn reading the spurious account, and then decides to go to Barcelona rather than Saragossa, as he had intended, in order to disprove the apocryphal version (in which he indeed goes to Saragossa, as Cervantes had indicated at the end of Part I); or II, 72, where the hero meets one of Avellaneda’s characters, Don Alvaro Tarfe.

of the Arab Cide Hamete Benengeli, ostensible author of Don Quixote's history, are radically undercut and called into question. Cide Hamete might have learned the lesson of his hero and of parody itself, i.e. that stories, including histories like his own, are not life, nor truth, but interpretations that may be challenged or retold.

The parody's self-criticism is prepared by the final words of the hero himself, who, having returned to his village in defeat, publicly renounces on his deathbed his previous conduct, and the story it inspired, as utter foolishness:

Item, suplico a los dichos señores mis albaceas que si la buena suerte les trujere a conocer al autor que dicen que compuso una historia que anda por ahí con el título de *Segunda Parte de las hazañas de don Quijote de la Mancha*, de mi parte le pidan, cuan encarecidamente se pueda, perdone la ocasión que sin yo pensarlo le di de haber escrito tantos y tan grandes disparates como en ella escribe; porque parto desta vida con escrúpulo de haberle dado motivo para escribirlos. (1066)

(Item, I beseech the aforesaid gentlemen my executors, that if good fortune leads them to meet the author who is said to have composed a history going around under the title *The Second Part of the Exploits of don Quijote de la Mancha*, they shall beg him on my behalf, as earnestly as possible, to excuse the opportunity which I unintentionally gave him of writing so many and such great pieces of nonsense as are written in it.)

The hero's disclaimer does not simply discredit Avellaneda's version, but also aims at the *ocasión* that he gave him of writing it, i.e. the exploits themselves. These, of course, have been recounted not only in Avellaneda's *Segunda Parte*, but in the story that we have just read as well. The spurious account here ironically mirrors Cide Hamete's "authentic" one: the parody calls all versions into question, including its own.

Although the hero thus renounces his story, Cide Hamete does not do the same. He is introduced in the final chapter precisely as the reason for which the death certificate was drawn up: so that no other author could revive the hero for more stories: ". . . y que el tal testimonio pedía para quitar la ocasión de algún otro autor que Cide Hamete Benengeli le resucitase falsamente, y hiciese inacabables historias de sus hazañas" (1067).

The idea of interminable stories and false revivals is firmly planted in the reader's mind through the precaution taken to avoid them. In his final address to his pen, and to the reader, the Arab historian does likewise, personally defending his version as the sole genuine one but therein referring to other versions, not only Avellaneda's but future ones as well. After warning other authors not to take his pen from the hook where he has hung it, Cide Hamete makes the pen itself suggest the possibility that someone may do so:

Para mí sola nació don Quijote, y yo para él; él supo obrar y yo escribir; solos los dos somos para en uno, a despecho y pesar del escritor fingido y tordessillesco que se atrevió,

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o se ha de atrever, a escribir con pluma de avestruz grosera y mal deliñada las hazañas de mi valeroso caballero . . . ; a quien advertirás, si acaso llegas a conocerle, que deje reposar en la sepultura los cansados y ya podridos huesos de don Quijote, y no le quiera llevar, contra todos los fueros de la muerte, a Castilla la Vieja; haciéndole salir de la fuesa donde real y verdaderamente yace tendido de largo a largo, imposibilitado de hacer tercera jornada y salida nueva; que para hacer burla de tantas como hicieron tantos andantes caballeros, bastan las dos que él hizo . . . (1068)

(For me alone was Don Quixote born, and I for him; he knew how to act, I to write; we two alone are one, despite that false Tordesillescan writer who has dared, and may dare again, to write with his coarse and badly trimmed ostrich quill of the exploits of my valorous knight . . . ; whom you will warn, should perchance you come to know him, that he should let the weary and already rotting bones of Don Quixote rest in the tomb, and not try to carry him, against all the canons of death, to Old Castile; making him leave the grave where he really and truly lies stretched out at full length, powerless to make a third journey and a new sally; that to make fun of those that so many knights errant made, the two that he made suffice . . .)

The stab at Avellaneda once again reflects back on the parody. Cide Hamete's effort to bury Don Quixote definitively alludes not only to an existing, false version ("se atrevió"), but also to a possible future one ("o se ha de atrever"), perhaps a third part with a Castilian scenario such as Avellaneda had foreseen at the end of his work.²⁰ What especially undermines Cide Hamete's claims, and his refusal of other versions and sequels, is that he is an Arab, and we have been warned repeatedly in the novel by the "editor"/narrator that Arabs are liars. We thus cannot have full confidence in his purported authority over Don Quixote's story. In this way, Cervantes subtly makes the satire serve the self-critical purposes of the parody. Through the notorious unreliability of the Arab historian, the "tercera jornada y salida nueva" remain definite possibilities, and even the alternative, apocryphal Part II may be as valid as his own. Cide Hamete's censure leaves open the story that it means to close forever. Moreover, the proof that his story did not remain as he intended it lies in the parody's famous displaced authorship, which we have ever before us: his account had to be translated by a Spanish-speaking Moor, and then "edited" by the narrator, in order to reach the state in which we, the readers, have it.

Providing details of an alternative version combines the reflexive and creative functions of parody, calling into question the authority of the parody's account by having it anticipate a different one. Laforgue's *Hamlet*, the first in his collection of prose tales, the *Moralités légendaires* (1887), which retell legendary stories according to 1880s Decadence,

²⁰ Avellaneda reports on the authority of hearsay that Don Quixote set out on a new journey to Old Castile and there underwent more adventures, to be recounted by a "mejor pluma" (229f.).

offers a clear example of this third reflexive technique: not only does it allude to other *Hamlets*, but it also suggests how his own, the parody, might have turned out differently. At the end of the story, the Decadent Hamlet has died at the hands of Laërtes, and everything has returned to normal in Elsinore. The final sentence remarks ironically: “Un Hamlet de moins; la race n'en est pas perdue, qu'on se le dise!” (47) (One Hamlet less; the race is not lost for it, of that you can be sure). “One Hamlet less” implies others in the line; and “race” refers not simply to the human race, but more precisely to the race of Hamlets. Laforgue's Hamlet may have died, but there are other ones to carry on the name. The parody acknowledges that its version is not the only one, or the definitive one, or even, ironically, an important one (“la race n'en est pas perdue”), but merely one among many, past, present, and future.

But Laforgue masterfully exploits the relativism implied in parody for creative ends also. He has in fact prepared the reader for this final line in the death scene earlier when, in a curious parenthetical aside inserted at the moment of the stabbing, the narrator realizes that Laërtes could have been the hero of the story:

A ce moment, on entend dans la nuit toute spectralement claire l'aboi si surhumainement seul d'un chien de ferme à la lune, que le coeur de cet excellent Laërtes (qui aurait plutôt mérité, j'y songe, hélas! trop tard, d'être le héros de cette narration) déborde, déborde de l'inexplicable anonymat de sa destinée de trente ans! C'en est trop! Et saisissant d'une main Hamlet à la gorge, de l'autre il lui plante au coeur un poignard vrai. (45)

At that moment, the barking of a farm dog at the moon sounds in the ghostly clear night, a barking so superhumanly lonely that the heart of this excellent Laërtes (who would instead have deserved, now I think of it, alas too late, to be the hero of this narrative) overflows, overflows with the inexplicable anonymity of his destiny of thirty years! It's too much! And seizing Hamlet by the throat with one hand, with the other he plants a real dagger into his heart.

Laforgue calls attention to the story's many possible alternatives by citing one, and also to the unpredictable element of chance that determines which version will find expression. The aside suggests that Laërtes might have dominated this *Hamlet* if the parodist had simply thought of the possibility earlier. It even gives the impression that he might have made a better, or at least more appropriate, hero (“excellent,” “mérité,” “hélas”) than the ludicrous Decadent Hamlet.

But if Laërtes was denied the hero's role in this tale, Laforgue gives him the *pis-aller* of possible future stardom. Indeed, Laërtes here begins to look suspiciously like Hamlet, and thus Laforgue hints that he may indeed take over his role: like Hamlet, he is a thirty-year-old potential hero spurred on by the thought of his anonymity, this being one of Hamlet's obsessions throughout the parody; the deed induces madness, one of Hamlet's chief characteristics; Laërtes goes off, possibly to be-

come a monk (“se faire moine, peut-être,” 46) again recalling Hamlet, who has earlier been described as looking like one.²¹ Laërtes took the revenge that Hamlet could not, and now may take over from Hamlet altogether, as the hero of a new story.

In thus proposing an alternative to his story from within, Laforgue uses the reflexive function of parody, which I have sought to illustrate, for creative ends: the parody leaves room for, and, as here, sometimes explicitly indicates another version of the story it tells. To borrow the words of Laforgue’s parody, this “one Hamlet less” actually adds one more to the corpus, and proposes yet another, still to be realized, with Laërtes as hero. Hamlet himself sets an example for the reader of parody when he scornfully rejects his play and its *moralité*: “He! . . . je me moque de cette représentation et de sa moralité” (I don’t care a bit about this performance and its moral) (40). Perhaps the larger *Moralité*, the parody itself, should ultimately be rejected too, revised and rewritten according to a different vision. In all parody, as in this one, the race will indeed not be lost, but rather continued and extended, for it.

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²¹ “Hamlet . . . ferait plutôt l’effet d’un camaldule que d’un prince héritier du Danemark” (23).

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