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## **Art as parodic practice**

### **What the difference?**

Already in *rehearsal* you can hear *repetition* and, in repetition, that insidious tilt towards *ironic italics*. As soon as another repeats your words there will be disjunction within the utterance. The slide from blank repetition to subversive mimicry, with or without intent, is, of course, a subtle one. As the French *répétition* recognises, repetition *is* rehearsal: what comes after produces precedence. Meaning is deferred through difference, as *différance*, Jacques Derrida argues of writing back in 1967 (Derrida 1967) – as Gilles Deleuze the following year is *differently* to elaborate of *repetition* (Deleuze 1968), whereby difference can be understood affirmatively, as differential. And so we turn, around the pivot of 1968, whose waves of student uprising and then mass protest will become, for detractors and supporters alike, a revolution that parodies revolution.

But *difference through repetition* marks the domain of our renewed questioning in this volume. Every utterance – be it diacritical mark, word, paint stroke or musical bar – every iteration of mode, or genre, means dialogue with previous iterations (Bakhtin 1986: 77). This runs the gamut of transformation from sampling, re-mash, pastiche, and travesty, through subversive laughter and extreme semiotic violence, right to revolutionary upheaval – stages through which parody spaces its becoming.

Where there are laws, injunctions, formal rules, there is also always, and implicit within the symbolic system, the ludic rehearsal of law breaking. Or is it so ludic? Proclaimed the Son of God in the Christian religion Jesus Christ is taken seriously *insofar* as he *suffers* parody. He is pronounced King of the Jews through a parody of Coronation: Christ is crowned by thorny derision. How far is that from Jean Genet, at once most religious and sacrilegious of writers, making of his Arab Nettle family in his *The Screens* (Genet 1967) his holy chosen ones, so chosen that in the end they are given *no end*; not even access to the Realm of the Dead? They will know no recuperation in representation. *Nowhere* is the sublime space in this parody of colonial violence-as-representation and the resistance it engenders. It is achieved through the tailwind of derision and nihilism that runs through its poetry – including the Legionnaires farting the Marseillaise – a riot triggering burst of iconoclasm that for a few days shuts down the play.

## Alongside the song

In the beginning was the word? Or was the word hosted by parody's sheer, insistent materiality, finding *substance* in its double: the pun? In conception every symbolic act always and already breeds possibilities of its subversion or, more exactly – its *alongside* version. There's logic in the spatial distinction: there has been no such subordination as implied in 'sub'. Parody is *alongside song*: a spatial relation, which the German *Beigesang* repeats: not *under* what is sung, not *sub*, but *alongside* the serious ode. *Parodia*. It is what is spoken alongside, and catches there the *other of the song*. Giorgio Agamben (2007) returns for a re-envisioning of parody theory to Renaissance rhetorician Guilio Cesare Scaligero and quotes:

Just as satire is derived from tragedy and mime from comedy so does Parody derive from Rhapsody. Indeed, when the rhapsodes interrupted their recitation, performers entered who, out of playfulness, and to spur the souls of the listeners, inverted and overturned everything that had come before...For that reason these songs were called *paroïdous*, because alongside and in addition to the serious argument, they inserted other, ridiculous things. Parody is therefore an inverted Rhapsody that transposes the sense into something ridiculous by changing the words. It is similar to Epirrhema and parabasis (28-9).

Here Agamben's analysis suggests the contemporaneity of the ancient Greek practice of *parabasis* in the satyr play, whereby, with the actors leaving the stage, the chorus leader steps forward to address the audience. Parabasis, accounting for the force of parodic interruption, opens a communicating vessel through which the spectators are addressed, and thus a human space, whereby briefly there is traffic between playwright and audience, *alongside* the space where the gods are invoked. And this seam – where parody is entailed alongside the divine – is, one might speculate, where humanity itself is always rehearsed and revised. In this spectator-address the chorus leader breaks the mimetic spell to make the contemporary moment speak *alongside*.

The short memory of postmodernity has marked endless origins for the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, often mistranslated as 'alienation technique', but it's not hard to see its operations very much at work here in the spatial semiotics of the ancient theatre and to wonder whether it's not intrinsic to all art. *Alongside* the formalist foreclosure on context, it was Mikhail Bakhtin (1981[c.1940]; 1970), of course, who insisted on social context, with Parody as its grotesque guardian spirit, its gargoyle, if you like. With him, social context is alive, red, raw and laughing disturbingly.

Perhaps because of the pervasive sampling, remixing, rehashing and promiscuous citational blending in postmodernity, where quote marks dissolve, parody has come to be seen as a somewhat archaic concept, pertaining to cultures more stably codified and hierarchically ordered, rather than subject to the fluctuations of global markets and phantasmagoric projections affecting the flow of investment moneys. Given the anxiogenic nature of postmodernity under its various guises, willed as hypermodernity and metamodernity or supermodernity, the ideologeme 'parody' might be seen as nostalgic symptom in the wake of the 'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1984 [1979]) – a rehearsed post-apocalyptic nostalgia for a world of neo-feudalism and fiefdoms, where

the seasonal lifting of prohibition for carnival brought on the ‘allowed fool’ (Shakespeare 2006) for parody’s brief upending of the hierarchical order, when high became low, mouth met anus, and wise became mad, even within the Pater Noster of the Holy Mass. (Bakhtin 1980: 78). How the revisitation of parody might illuminate contemporary cultural politics is a driving question behind this collection, a question made more urgent by recent global developments of terror.

### **Provocation**

There was outrage and a sense of sickening déjà vu with the events of 7 February 2015 when cartoonists, editors, and friends of *Charlie Hebdo* were gunned down by ISIS-affiliated terrorists in Paris. The immediate aftermath was a massive global response in defence of the republican legacy of the French Revolution of 1789. Many defended Charlie Hebdo’s practice, including ‘obscene’ cartoons of Mahomet, in the name of free speech (Rouart 2015), in defence of parodic laughter, the right to lampoon pomposity, ideological certitude, and cultures of oppression, whether these be discursive, artistic or everyday practices sanctioned as custom. How might the parodic legacy of this trajectory – initiated in the French Revolution and transformed in the uprisings of May 1968 – be re-examined in the present climate of globalisation and terror?

Symbolically May 1968 takes us beyond the mere polemics and controversies it has spawned in historical, sociological, political, literary and artistic circles. Certainly these events gave rise to an efflorescence of innovative cultural theory and practice (Wark 2011; 2008; French 1995; Campbell 2014). In spite of the pervasive contemporary practices of culture-jamming, restaging, and adaptation that still resonate with these events, there has been little concerted work in recent years on the effective socio-political traction of contemporary modes of parodic repetition, whether these be deliberately provocative, playfully critical, or simply mimetic.

### **Background**

For Linda Hutcheon (2006), parody constitutes the most serious form of productive variation and intertextuality or inter-art play. However, this emphasis underestimates the persistence of more blatant modes of parodic ridicule exemplified by Charlie Hebdo’s ‘Voltaireian’ (Rouard 2015) lampooning of religious ideologies. It is with these contradictory propensities of parody in mind that this collection intends to explore the cultural legacy of May 1968 exemplified by contemporary parodic practices in the arts. Given that few accounts of contemporary parody have significantly challenged postmodern formulations, and with the reminder of 7 January 2015 that parodic iconoclasm can provoke murderous reactions, it is no longer possible to treat this simply as a theoretical question of parody as apolitical play.

The potential radical force of art as disruptive renovation was theorised for modernity by Viktor Shklovsky’s 1917 ‘Art as Device’ [Shklovsky 2006], on which we graft this collection’s title. And, as mentioned above, of inestimable influence, alongside the serious Russian Formalist enterprise, is Bakhtin’s nuanced theory of parody working

with power, just as it challenges it. Building on key concepts at work in early practices of parabasis and parody, the Russian Formalists foreground radical incongruity, 'laying bare the device' and 'de-familiarisation' (*ostranenie*) as catalysing the impact of art on habits of perception. Significant developments come, as already suggested, from Bertolt Brecht (1961), but also, importantly from the Australian Margaret A Rose (1979; 1993) and from Gérard Genette (1982; 1992), who quaintly recognises in an aside his debt to 'Mme Rose'. More than two decades have elapsed since the most influential postmodern theorists have tackled the question of parody, in what they variously saw as conservative (Barthes 1970), as its weakened and apolitical forms (Lyotard 1984; Jameson 1991; Eagleton 2003; 1993; 1990), or more positively, as subversive and even, in the tradition of Bakhtin, as empowering, double-voiced mimicry (Luce Irigaray 1974, Gilles Deleuze 2007, Judith Butler 1990; 1993 and Linda Hutcheon 2006).

The work of Canadian literary and cultural theorist (Hutcheon 2006 [1986]; 2006) has proven invaluable in refuelling debates on cultural politics under globalised capitalism. Hutcheon locates, as a common denominator across the artforms, a tension between the 'potentially conservative effect of repetition and the potentially revolutionary impact of difference' (Hutcheon 2000 xii). A potent catalyst for thinking the critical and subversive power of parody has been her concept of *ironic transcontextualisation* (Hutcheon 2000), whereby parody gains critical force when it activates the political context of the text parodied or the hypotext. Yet, beyond Hutcheon's revised and augmented edition of *Parody* (2006) there has been no sustained recent work tackling, *across the artforms*, the dynamics of production and reception of contemporary practices of parody. However, as essays in this collection testify, the work of such as Jan Verwoert (2007) and of performative theories developed from Deleuze (1968; 2004; 2007) through to Butler (1990; 1993) has been important in accounting for the politics of appropriation, including parody, in visual art and culture at large. Of vital importance to these questions of the relationship between parodic forms and cultural politics are the methods that do the work of reinventing and of reimagining the structures from within given codes. What is lacking in much cultural theory and critique of parody is a focus on its textual dynamics and formal mechanisms in the context of the everyday practices of contemporary life. This requires an investigation into the *mutual embedding* of the political, economic, and ideological within the semiotic, or meaning-making, relationships.

Parody, as defined by Hutcheon, is an important aspect of 'revolutionary projects', allowing for 'critical commentary' (Hutcheon 2006: 90) on the source text or the hypotext. Although the word parody generally implies a humorous denigration of an original text, Hutcheon defines it as 'a form of imitation ... characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text' (Hutcheon 1985: 6). It is the use of irony – that enables parodic re-writings to negotiate the implicit ideological positions of source texts or hypotexts.

Hutcheon states that 'part of the pleasure [of adaptation and parody] comes simply from the repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure and risk of experience and adaptation' (Hutcheon 2006: 4). Essential to this definition of

parody is the value accorded to the source text or hypotext. Far from dismissing the hypotext because of its problematic assumptions, a parody, as we understand it, recognises the authority of the original text and seeks to challenge or transmute that authority with a rewriting that reveals textual and contextual ‘issues’ – for lack of a better word. Parody does not simply offer a new narrative, but rather manipulates the old one in order to consider old subjects -- both understood as topics, or constructions of the self – and anxieties in new ways.

In fact, whether it takes the form of allusion, quotation, or downright appropriation, parody has its own very special parameters. As such, it looks backward and forward. In his book *Allusion to the poets* (2002), Christopher Ricks suggests that allusions are prone to self-enactment, to being ‘self-delightingly about allusion’, and that poets allude when they are thinking metaphorically about borrowing, theft, haunting, reminiscence (Ricks 2002: 9). Even Ezra Pound’s catch-cry ‘make it new’ was itself borrowed (See Pound 1970: 264-65). However, the full force of allusion, quotation and appropriation occurs outside the parameters of the text. Let’s take two extreme examples: James Joyce and Marguerite Duras. It is through their particular, even peculiar, uses of parody that both Joyce and Duras were pushing literature to its then limit; Joyce ruptured and transformed the history of the novel, and Duras invented a style that destabilises divisions between the autobiographical, the fictional and the poetic, offering an unprecedented performative and corporeal practice of writing. Moreover, through their artistry, both fostered social subversion: one via an excess that speaks of the sublime, the other via a minimalism that underscores the position of perdition.

The opening conversation of the washerwomen in the section ‘Anna Livia Plurabelle’ from *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce 1976 [1939]) takes on a hilarious turn due to Joyce’s multilingual excess:

Do you tell me that now? O do in throth. Orara por Orbe and poor Las Animas! Ussa, Ulla, we’re umbas all! Mezha, didn’t you hear it a deluge of times, ufer and ufer, respund to spond? You did, you deed! I need, I need! It’s that irrawaddyng I’ve stoke in my aars. It all but husheth the lithest sound. Oronoko (Joyce 1976 [1939]: 214).

Although the conversation begins in realistic fashion, it then parodically and blasphemously alludes to the Spanish prayer ‘*orar por Orbe y por Las Animas*’ / pray for the Earth and the Souls of the Dead, into which Joyce has managed to insert the names of three rivers, namely the Orb in France, the Orba in Italy and the Orara in New South Wales. The Spanish ‘*Por*’ / for becomes ‘poor’ so that, comically, the women seem to be talking about a friend or relative. In the next sentence, *Ussa* and *Ulla* are names of Russian rivers. Further, the portmanteau word *Umbas* fuses *umbra* / shade, or ghost and the African river *Umba*. Besides, ‘*Mezha*’ combines the Italian *mezza*, arguably for *mezza voce*, with the name of the Indian river Meza and the exclamation ‘ha!’ which leads to the women crying out in childish fashion ‘you deed, you deed! I need, I need!’ Equivocally, these repeated cries suggest that in the shadows or in the after-life (*umbra*), it has become harder and harder to understand one another. Thematically, ‘a deluge of times’ underlines the flood allusion, and the repetition of the German ‘*ufer*’ merges *Ufer* / river bank and Ufa, conjuring up the

notion of return (over and over again). The next portmanteau word, ‘irrawadding’ fuses the Irrawaddy river, wadding, ear and irrational whilst the final word refers to the Orinoko river that runs from Venezuela into iColombia, as well as to a slave in an Aphra Behn novel and a type of tobacco originating from Virginia. The parodic paradigm at work is clearly one of absorption of foreign words and morphemes into oral Anglo-Irish language, adding complexity and depth to its very fabric. The effect is of a dense tissue of inter-linguistic and intertextual references that undoes the taxonomies of the language itself. Jean-Michel Rabaté suggests that such process of linguistic denaturalisation was Joyce’s way of declaring war against English, ‘against a mother tongue used to the limit, mimed, mimicked, exploded, ruined’ (Rabaté 1991: 120-23). Not only has this practice revolutionised literature, it has also empowered minor literatures and, furthermore, the dispossessed in postcolonial societies. To mention but one Australian example, Ania Walwicz, whose work figures in the present collection, is a case in point.

To a certain extent, Marguerite Duras also declared war against language: rather than celebrating the trans-linguistic potential of language, her particular parodic mode denounces the impotence of language as communication. In this respect, her project is diametrically opposed to Joyce’s. Duras’ ambition was to subvert the ‘law of *genre*’ (Derrida 1980. Emphasis ours), which in French means both *genre* and *gender*. Revolution, writing as act, meant something quite different for Duras<sup>1</sup> than it did for Joyce thirty years earlier. Yet for each, it was oppression that necessitated the destruction of language and *genre* and the suggestion or, indeed, implementation of new forms.

Duras’ *Destroy, she said* (1969), written in the aftermath of the May 1968 events, enjoys a somewhat privileged position in French letters that may not be so obvious to the Anglophone reader. While overtly feminist politics do not play a prominent part in this text, as is the case for her entire oeuvre, a feminist *poetics* is at work here. This is especially evident in her denouncing of traditional novelistic genres – first voiced in a short essay called ‘Tordre le cou au social Balzacien’ (Duras 1966) – and her advocacy of a lawless *genre*, drawing attention to the imposture of language, especially as mode of communication and exchange between the sexes. In this text, Duras overtly opposes existing conventions and oppressions by state and social systems. Her art is here deliberately reductive and minimalist; she *unwrites* meaning and formulates the unsayable, if not the ineffable. And all the while, she circumvents conventional discourse by flaunting broken sentences and generating a broken book. If Joyce creates a new language, as does Wittig in a way that especially suits feminism, Duras, in reaching out for parody, writes from the position of perdition. Her search for the mythical and the universal, for origin, carries with it no vision or promise of a future. For her, writing serves to inscribe pain, and from this inscription grows her legacy. With the dissolution of genres, the labelling of texts has become impossible. We can no longer say: this is a novel, this is a play, this is a poem; and the term ‘transgression’ can no longer apply in the midst of a multiplicity of subversions that have now taken on a life of their own.

Like Joyce, Duras has had an impact on postcolonial literatures and societies (see Bradley Winston 2002). Postcolonial writings represent the effort of specific societies

to regain a sense of identity after the event of cultural occupation by a colonising force. Individual and cultural identities are under constant revision in postcolonial societies and the impulse to fashion a coherent narrative of self is often the project of postcolonial literatures. The complexity of this objective results from the difficulty of integrating two distinct versions of self into an identity that can be articulated. As Amanda Johnson suggests in the present collection, postcolonial literature often responds directly to colonial, and specifically canonical, texts in an attempt to refuse the presumptive othering that is generally an aspect of colonial texts. Writing back to such texts revises problematic characterisations and offers new perspectives on accepted dominant narratives. Such politically motivated works use the language of the coloniser to invert limiting stereotypes and represent the oppressed without othering them. They are *alongside songs* and even *counter songs*. For, as Hutcheon aptly remarks, ‘parody could be seen, then, as an *act* of emancipation: irony and parody can act to signal distance and control in the encoding act’ (Hutcheon 1985: 96. Our emphasis).

The last thing that needs to be considered is the way parody has changed. If we consider the proposition that May ’68 is a parody of revolution, then it is time to recognise that formalist approaches to parody, based on the compositional form of genre and convention are passé. It is difficult to return to what might be called a fundamentalist parodic stance. Equally, it might be hard to resist the habits of parody replete with the powers that come with righteousness and resistance, which parody and satire share with comedy as potential forms of social corrective. One speaks freely because one has the right to do so – as *Charlie Hebdo* holds to the habits of resistance when newer more molecular conditions have emerged. If what begins as tragedy comes back as farce and farce now prompts tragic consequences, then the next step in the turning and churning of parody is the revolutionary power found in the linking of self-organisation with collective individuation. This goes beyond the use of genres and formal expressions into the very mechanisms of meaning: co-selection and co-origination (emergence). The degradation of tragedy to farce can be re-written, as Jerry Fodor suggests, as: ‘In intellectual history, everything happens twice, first as philosophy and then as cognitive science’ (1981: 298).

To invert tragedy to farce we begin with ‘no surprise’, and the feeling that nothing more will happen: no original or emergent styles of living or modalities of care and aggression. If that is the case, then it becomes possible to re-enter the body whose capabilities we don’t yet know and to re-enter the environment, which co-selects, with other agents and actors, the shape of a shared event-space.

The nuance that makes all the difference might be the latest of the turnings, having built upon the momentum of the other. Linguistic, embodied, corporeal and speculative turnings turn again in a *cognitive* turn. Not the last turn, but a turn that subsumes our autonomy under the waves of inescapable events. There have been many signals that the cognitive turn would out ... and it too would become available to produce both conservative versions of the world by attempting to ‘naturalise’ phenomenology, as well as generative versions, in which spaces for self-affecting experimentation open and proliferate.

Numerous early-warning flares have been sent up in the last 50 years indicating a progression of parodies that give expression to the degrees of separation, which the demarcation of different domains for the organism, the person and the human-non-human collective, formalise. By linking the affective power of language, somatic markers and the inseparability of body-environment, new versions of turning ourselves inside-out through the latest contested cognitive turns become available.

In 1975, Lacan offered the 'sinthome' as a way of addressing how touching the real is what we avoid with every fibre of the symbolic and imaginary being. The avoidance signals a fear of the structure of our inherited subjectivity. The historical subject is the source of denial and self-deception that does not allow one to deal ethically and compassionately with oneself. The 'sinthome' short-circuits the repression of the symptom and the masking of emptiness and lack in the Other (Žižek 1994: 84). It thereby offers a practical and embodied recourse to taking pleasure in the symptom. Lacan puns on sinthome as *saint homme*, a title he reserves for anointing James Joyce a literary saint (Rabaté 2001: 160-61). Joyce ties the knot of the real, imaginary and symbolic with his sheer enjoyment through the operation of *suppléance*.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this brute affirmation is what is developed in contemporary parody, taking it all back up into the forms and processes of signification to include its own mechanisms, tempos of discourse and impossible bodies.

Liotard's 'differend' makes it unavoidable to ignore the violence that one phrase regime commits on another, or the violence of one regime of thought to another. He notes '[T]he damages are not the wrong', and instead asks, 'what proof do we have that there is a principle of compensation between genres of discourses?' (Lyotard 1988: 30) Parody wreaks havoc on the mechanisms of damage, diffusing and undercutting the way the truth effects of violence might be understood. Paradoxically the affect of language as effect, object and environmental attunement must be acknowledged to diminish its power as inescapable truth. The violence of one regime towards another gives way to a notion of the sublime in which nothing more will happen (Lyotard, 1991: 84 & 107). Parody too can be co-opted. The dispersal of the feeling of the terrible in contemporary culture made possible by parody also begins to take on a miniaturised form as a consumable bite-sized sublime, readymade and ready at hand.

Lacan and Lyotard are operating at the extreme edge of language, if language were ever to be confined by anything that could maintain an edge. However, as the affects and effects of language cannot be limited to the extent that the body (organism-person) is no longer constrained to, or identified against, the environment. This opportunity to develop a practice of person, aligned here with a parodic impulse, would emphasise the sites and situations of embodied configuration as it specifies, indirectly and directly, the selection of types and rates of change. The micro-events that shift the boundaries of body-environment make it necessary to 'consider the extent to which persons are behavioral subsets of the organisms from which they emanate and out of which they compose themselves as agents of action' (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 2).

Antonio Damasio suggests that William James would be pleased that there are plausible, if not proven, hypotheses for the neural self (1996: 244). Damasio attributes to nature a solution whereby ‘representing the outside world in terms of the modification it causes on the body proper’ (1996: 230) ensures both survival and ‘memory of the possible future’ (1996: 239). Further, he posits that somatic markers, which are automated signals that protect against future losses and allow decision making from fewer alternatives, may operate covertly by utilising an ‘as if’ loop (1996: 173- 174).

The event-space of ‘as if’ allows for the intersection of linguistic, corporeal and cognitive turns to fold through each other. In *Fictive Certainties* (1985), poet Robert Duncan recalls hearing poetry before learning to read, sitting next to his mother and sister looking at a picture in a book of three men, one of them the poet Basho who appears to have just awoken:

It is not the poem that comes to mind even as I see the picture. For as I remember that moment then there is another scene superimposed, a double exposure in which the splash of a frog into an old pond appears *as if* from actual life itself, but this vivid impression belongs to one of the most famous of Japanese hokkus (1985: 10, emphasis added).

Thus fictive certainties announce themselves ‘as if from actual life’, which is to say that Duncan did not actually experience the event but he experienced its integration into his life (his actuality). Rather than a false memory, this may be understood as the way we make meaning. The logic of this affect is not contained within the description (as if from actual life) because the ‘as if’ implies that he knows it is not from actual life but that the scene of this knowing is from actual life. The announcement to ignore the fictive origin is what may be more pragmatically described as the acceptance of indirectness as the way to construct oneself as the observer (inside and outside the story of oneself as it is being written). Fictive certainties are no longer unconscious ‘received’ truths spoken by Language but can be reappropriated in self-reflexive actions that become a personal generative poetics, which relies upon a parody of self-versioning as a technique of actualisation. However,

However, ‘as if’ is often used in an unconscious way to obfuscate or cover over a gap that cannot be explained as a blind spot of ellipsis or an elision or evasion. In contrast to Duncan’s poetic reappropriation of the fictive foundation of truth, the evasive use of ‘as if’ is a rhetorical device. On the other hand, the generative power that parody exploits comes from the *announcement* of two things with equal force: the fictive source of certainty *and* the intention to ignore this fiction. In discourses where the ‘as if’ statement functions as an elision of meaning, the writers do not consider themselves to be operating in the realm of the fictive. Here are three passages on the threshold of parody but trying to operate within the bounds of reason. From Freud:

When a hypercathexis of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are actually perceived – *as if* they came from without – and are consequently held to be true (Freud 1923: 23 emphasis added).

From Lacan:

The extraordinary compliance, which is the outward sign of this imaginary anatomy, is only shown within certain limits ... It all happens *as if* the body-image had an autonomous existence of its own, and by autonomous I mean here independent of objective structure (Lacan 1953: 13 emphasis added).

From Maturana:

there are organisms that include as a subset of their possible interactions, interactions with their own internal states (as states resulting from external and internal interactions) *as if* these were independent entities, generating the apparent paradox of including their cognitive domain within their cognitive domain. In us this paradox is resolved by what we call 'abstract thinking', another expansion of the cognitive domain (Maturana and Varela 1980: 13 emphasis added).

In each of these examples the use of 'as if' signals the existence of a mechanism that enables a closed system to move from autonomy to relationality or embeddedness. These passages unearth blind spots in the performative linking of regimes of thought and, each in its own way, supplies a measure of connective rope for use and generative misuse. No matter how rigorously a logic is deployed, we do not always recognise when  $A = A$  might become  $A = B$ . This 'sleight of tongue' covers a multitude of omissions or ellipses where a substitution passes for an explanation or analysis, which parody and an embodied understanding of the parodic impulse makes perceptibly *loud*. Parody announces that it's not sufficient to install the transformations promised by metaphoric language.

Parodic practice advocated in this volume is not concerned with the ultimate reality and origins of the world, but instead embraces the exadaptive, emergent, incommensurable, incoherent, indirect, concurrent specificities that contribute to the proliferation of possibility. Parody might be the best name for the parodies of escapes expressed so well by the ape in 'Report to an Academy':

It isn't a well formed vertical movement towards the sky in front of oneself, nor a question of breaking through the roof, but of intensely going head over heels and away no matter where even without moving. It is only a question of a line of escape (Kafka cited in Deleuze and Guattari: 1986: 6).

'Escape' in a minor literature aligns with the parodic impulse taking on an embodied practice of self-differentiating and moving between versions of oneself, folding inside-out, inversely expanding and indirectly affecting the field in which persistence and change, constraints and processes operate on the realisation of the living: Parody as Exit-genre.

The historical impact of scales of sensation cannot be underestimated. Poet and theorist Don Byrd has proposed that: 'If Marx once believed the philosophic task was not to interpret the world but to change it, the task now is not to replicate the world but to make it' (Byrd 1994: 23). From the logic of sense to the logic of sensation and back, parodies of meaningful consequences are performed every day in a flurry of soft revolutions. This change is only conceivable as a set of movements-within-movements across scales of inter-action.

Now available! New parodies emerge as the formal devices of meaning are laid bare, especially as the connective tissues are brought under the cognitive lens to identify graft and shonky suture. As we look to revisit and recast parody in contemporary cultural politics, we aim – by getting caught in the act of re-examination – to transform parody in the age of terror.

### **The running fuse**

This volume is predicated on the need and desire to go beyond the mere critical analysis of texts and cultural artefacts to examine the conditions whereby parody works in radically transformative, disruptive or provocative ways, disturbing the dominant paradigms of cultural production. Intrinsic to this is our recognition through art practice that parody is a process of production and reception, not something arrested in cultural artefacts. Collectively we see the contemporary moment as being in urgent need of an enquiry into parody's relation to the revolutionary impulse, and to examine the degree to which violence inhabits the heart of parodic practice itself. As such, dealing with 'the advent of appropriation, quotation, parody and the sampling of cultural codes in literature and the arts,' need not be 'concerned with performing the poetics of political correctness, pop cultural commentary and reading rubbish postmodern literature' (Tofts in this issue).

*Art as parodic practice* opens with Dominique Hecq's revisitation of May 68 and its deployment of parody as both invocation of authority and transgressive force. In particular, she sees parody bound up with a desire for the radicalisation of conceptions of difference. In both Duras and Lacan she finds a style that repudiates the idea of accepted, institutionalised, or canonised form. She reads their styles as the symbolic stripping of established socio-political structures that paradoxically unleashes more questions than those activated by the May 68 events.

Jondi Keane's essay examines several lineages of parodic work through the visual and spatial arts focusing on the tacit relation of ground, horizon and orientation. Keane proposes that the lived experience of space forms the basis of a critique of the ontological orientations that totalised images of space and operational systems of perspective produce as the very ground of meaning. The implication of this line of inquiry leads to the assertion that all descriptions of the world, universe and cosmos are parodies in search of an origin.

Darren Tofts steals John Howard's condemnatory tag of 'Rubbish Postmodern Literature' to dramatise the political tensions between different kinds of repetition from postmodern recycling of 'junk' to the re-enshrinement of the 'proper' canon. In demonstrating the ubiquitous presence of textual traces in culture he enacts a hauntological experiment: postmodernism, an ode.

Aritha Van Herk considers how hygiene and *nettoyage* need filth as parody needs authority. She argues that authorised transgression is intrinsic to the most quotidian practices and demonstrates the mutual imbrication of abjection and the proper in her examination of a range of postmodern literary, and filmic texts.

Antonia Pont opens the question of parodic humour as an example of philosophical intervention and seeks in Deleuze's account of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's work an elucidation of the relation between the perversions and the phenomena of humour more generally, especially humour's role in toppling the super-ego, and by extension other structures of authority and law.

Stephen Ablitt's metadiscursive analysis performs what Ulmer terms 'post-criticism', a strategy of textual demonstration and *détournement*, which he applies to modernist art and critical representations of it. He suggests that the law of genre (and by extension of gender) is anything but natural and requires a 'more oblique style'; that opens up an intersubjective space generative of new ways of being.

Barbara Bolt approaches the question of the ethics of appropriation and whether we can we draw on the spirit of the "original" work to make a (political) difference. She analyses the dynamics of appropriation in artworks from Manet to her own practice to demonstrate that the "effect" or "empathic suffering" that we may experience in viewing a work does not merely arise from representation alone, but more significantly emerges through forces and ghosts that lie beneath and structure representation.

Josephine Scicluna investigates sound art and music as sites for the mixed impulse of parody as repetition with difference and ironic trans-contextualisation. Her investigation of parody as counter-song takes an unexpected twist in finding within the parodic impulse spaces for intimacy and accord.

A Frances Johnson examines how Australian Indigenous writer Kim Scott recruits parody via historiographic metafiction in *Benang* and *That Deadman Dance* to generate new metaphors of colonial power relations within the novel as heteroglossic text.

Marion May Campbell's essay interrogates the parodic through the heteroglossic weave in the prose poem to see how it might entail a critique of capitalist consumption and of heteronormative relations.

Ania Walwicz's 'EAT' leads us into the heteroglossic spaces of writing where parody is active. Her psychodramatic script is both a theatre performance and a close reading of an autobiographical case history. She stages the interlocking of fiction, theory and parodic exaggeration, foregrounding the collusion and collision of the two areas of creative writing and theoretical awareness within the same field of verbal play.

Serially, and more or less seriously, the volume is intent on tracking the running fuse of parodic action as it affects bodies performative and textual, erupting in laughter, and provoking havoc, both destructive and transformative.

## Endnotes

1. Especially in *Destroy, she said* (Duras 1969), just as it did for Monique Wittig with her overtly belligerent *Les Guérillères* (Wittig 1969).
2. *Suppléance* is an operation whereby the pre-psychotic subject mimics neurosis by using creative resources to patch up a hole in the symbolic owing to the non-integration of the Name-of-the-Father. In light of its etymological roots in French, *suppléance* is a 'stand-in' which acts

as de facto, thus indicating that it refers to a dynamic process as well as the function that it fulfills. As such it is a symptom necessary to a person's functioning in that it ties the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. Suppléance can take the form of art-making, including writing, as was Lacan's thesis about Joyce in his twenty-third seminar (2005 [1975-76]). Recent research and clinical practice also suggests that in the 21st century addictions and may function as suppléance.

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