

PARODIC FORMS AND THEIR USE IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

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Abstract. *The paper explores different theoretical views of parody as one of the key elements of postmodern literature and how it is employed in Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49. The paper tackles parody's structural and functional features, such as allusive structural inclusion of different texts into the text of the novel and the effect produced by means of that inclusion, the possible polemical intentions of parody and the manner in which the polemic is induced and executed. The paper shows how Pynchon's parodic practice in The Crying of Lot 49 uses past cultural and language forms in order to make an evaluating context for those forms in the present time, and how the novel's different parodies are peculiarly randomized in an effort to both obfuscate and shed light on, to state nothingness, as well as to inspire subversion.*

Palabras clave: *parody, Pynchon, humor, postmodernism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Parody, together with pastiche, is seen as one of the central elements of the postmodern cultural context. As such, parody has been interpreted from different theoretical standpoints that all testify to the fact that parody as a form sums up key postmodernist questions, such as those of intertextuality, the problem of uniqueness, and the re-institution of meaning to precursor texts through the act of repetition on one hand, but also the impossibility of social commentary on the other. The perceptions of parody in all these theoretical proposals sometimes stand in direct opposition, but also often overlap, and in this paper I examine different theoretical views of parody and how it is employed in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. More precisely, I tackle parody's structural and functional features, such as allusive structural inclusion of different texts into the text of the novel and the effect – whether it is comical, satirical, playful, or simply imitative – produced by means of that inclusion, the possible polemical intentions of parody and the manner in which the polemic is induced and executed, as well as how a parodic text works as a double-coded

analogy, in which the precursor text is parodied within a new, contemporary cultural and literary context, that helps create an authentic new discourse as an outcome of that polemics.

2. DEFINITIONS OF PARODY

Parody and pastiche have been seen and defined in various ways, and Margaret A. Rose mentions "several different understandings, and misunderstandings of (their) background, functions and structure" (Rose 1993: 1). Abrams, for instance, defines parody as one of the varieties of high burlesque, where "the form and style are high and dignified but the subject is low or trivial", and where the imitation can be either general or particular, as in all burlesque, depending on whether it is a parody of a literary style or genre, or a parody of a specific work or author (Abrams 1999: 26). However, in Abrams' definition, the relation established between the precursor text and the parodic imitation is exclusively the one between the "serious" and the "lowly and comically inappropriate" (Ibid). Rose points out that this vision of parody as a low form persisted for a very long period of time, and that even structuralists and post-structuralists, in those instances when they would not disregard it at all, referred to it negatively. Rose sees that as a result of their unawareness of intertextuality, or the act of mention, as one of the main components of every parodic language (Rose 1993: 1). As previously mentioned, apart from being considered low, parody was also seen as restrictively comic. Nevertheless, Dentith, when talking about the Greek word "parodia" which is in the root of the modern term "parody", points out that Greeks and Romans used the word "parodia" to refer to general quoting and alluding to precursor texts but without humor as a regular accompanying effect (Dentith 2000: 10).

The intertextual or allusive trait of parody has been agreed on by all the theorists and critics that dealt with it; it is through the act of mention that parody tackles the precursor text. However, the nature of that mention in relation to parody and pastiche has been subject of different standpoints and argumentations. For example, the questions that arise in relation to parody are whether it necessarily produces either a ludic, satirical or hostile critique of the contemporary condition, or whether it may just be allusiveness emptied of any kind of social, historical, cultural or political commentary. As for pastiche, we may wonder whether it is, as Fredric Jameson argues, "blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor" (Jameson 1998: 5) and, as such, has lost the parodic critical distance, or whether it has never had the ability of the critical distance, since it has never been more than a "more or less extended imitation of the style or manner of another writer or a literary period" (Dentith 2000: 194).

In the light of those opposing viewpoints, in his overarching study of parody, Dentith covers all the main recent theories regarding parody and pastiche. Dentith himself defines parody as "the mark of a gameful but productive relationship with the past which nevertheless demonstrates the persistence of critical distance into the high art of the present" (Dentith 2000: 157), highlighting that "parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (Dentith 2000: 9). In his overview of different theories, Dentith starts with Genette and his view of the difference between parody and pastiche as the difference between transformation and imitation in the language. More precisely, parody acts as textual transformation of hypotext into hypertext in a manner that is more ludic or playful than it is satirical or verbally aggressive. The playfulness goes for pastiche as well, with

the difference that the creation of hypertext is sustained through imitation rather than actual transformation. Such view of parody – playful and void of critical edge – excludes the possibility of Dentith's "(relatively) polemical" characteristic of parody.

The view directly opposing to Genette's is the one that builds on the polemical and critical, more precisely on the language aggressiveness and critical edge of satire that "typically attacks the official word, mocks the pretensions of authoritative discourse, and undermines the seriousness with which subordinates should approach the justifications of their betters" (Dentith 2000: 20). Such language is directly subversive, "unsettling the certainties which sustain the social order, and placing all final truths under suspension" in its hostility to every aspect of political, social and cultural space that is deemed monolithic, hypocritical or retrograde (Ibid). Dentith identifies Bakhtin as one of the most prominent cultural theorists of the twentieth century who addresses parody as a subversive form that is "mobilized to debunk official seriousness, and to testify to the relativity of all languages, be they the dialects of authority or the jargons of guilds, castes or priesthoods" (Dentith 2000: 23). Fredric Jameson also perceives parody as the act of ridiculing the precursor texts, emphasizing especially the modernist texts that are characterized by particular, idiosyncratic styles of different authors, and underlining the special place that parody and pastiche have in the postmodern cultural and artistic context.

On the other hand, Rose sees parody and pastiche in a different light, as she perceives them as metafictional, i.e. fundamentally defined by the intertextual relation established between the precursor text and the parodic text, the latter being "at once a fiction and a fiction *about* fictions" (Dentith 2000: 14-15), an independent creative formation that at the same time alludes to the sources it emanates from. Such view takes into account the manner and extent to which the official discourse is contained and alluded to in parodic formulations, and how parodic representations manage to rise above such judgments in their ability to create an official discourse of their own – a discourse that serves "to continue the conversation of the world, though its particular contribution is to ensure that the conversation will be usually carried on noisily, indecorously and accompanied by laughter" (Dentith 2000: 189).

In his overview of different definitions of parody, Dentith presents Linda Hutcheon's outlook as the one closer to what is generally considered to be pastiche. Dentith says that, in terms of its use in providing critical commentary and its subversive function, Linda Hutcheon also sees postmodernist parody as an essentially intertextual form, but contends the polemical correlation between the precursor and the parodic text (Dentith 2000: 16-17), and that (similarly to Jameson) Hutcheon doubts the possibility of taking a critical stand in the postmodern art created in the consumer societies of multinational capitalism, since, in such a state of things, works of art have been subject to commodification as much as any other products, or, in John N. Duvall's words, from his essay "The power of history and the persistence of mystery":

[...] the amount of time between the emergence of a new aesthetic form (such as hip hop) and its appropriation by Madison Avenue to sell everything from fast food to running shoes has been so radically reduced that the ability of a new aesthetic form to establish a critical purchase on the social order has been thoroughly undercut (Duvall 2008: 2).

Duvall states that such circumstances of pervasive consumerism produce a climate in which the aesthetic production does not even get a chance to acquire a critical edge before its potential is merchandized and used up on the market. Postmodern commodification is

reinforced through endless mechanical reproduction, resulting in the production of a myriad of uniform products that are, in the process of their "appropriation" by the consumer society, emptied of artistic value and potential for critical distance. In such disintegration of the context that could have provided the satirical and the subversive, pastiche appears as the only possible mode of intertextualization. However, in her essay "The Politics of Parody", Hutcheon states just the opposite, that parody in the postmodern context is "a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations." (Hutcheon 2002: 90) In this essay, Hutcheon talks about the "parodic reprise of the past" that "is always critical", and the fact that a parodic critical commentary results from the juxtaposition of two representations, the present and the past one, as well as about the things that "ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference" (Hutcheon 2002: 89).

3. PARODY IN *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

Thomas Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49* has often been viewed in the context of comedy. Debra A. Castillo calls it "a desperate comedy of inaccessibility" (Castillo 1991: 22), while Robert D. Newman sees the novel's "bizarre comedy" as one of its chief components, which "complements the novel's tragic implications while simultaneously diverting attention from them" (Newman 1986: 68). Different literary devices contribute to the creation of comical effect, and parody, often with a satirical, ironic or sarcastic note, is one of the most prominent ones. The novel's long introductory sentence anticipates a dense narrative style, crammed with dispersed information that drags readers into a paradoxical situation: the more information they get, the less they are able to deduce. In a world so saturated with absurdities, created through interplays of various juxtapositions of the remnants of other worlds and other texts in the novel's contemporary context, illogical events succeed each other in feverish and often comical sequences. With the progress of the novel and its open ending, it becomes obvious that the information disseminated in and implied by the text is boundless, just like Pierce Inverarity's estate that Oedipa Maas, his ex-lover, is bound to execute.

Parodic workings in *The Crying of Lot 49* range from rather low, functioning as a trivializing and ridiculing agent in what appear to be serious or grave situations, to high structural parodies of literary genres, narrative techniques and the novel's often mocking self-reflexivity. Low parody, which treats a serious subject in a ridiculing manner, can be found in parts such as the one in which "Dean or perhaps Serge", young men almost interchangeable in their appearance and mindset, composites of fragmented TV, film and music experiences and devoid of individual subjectivity (and therefore easily mistakable), decide to steal a boat. Metzger, the lawyer, immediately closes his eyes and consequently trips over an anchor, calculating that, since they are committing a criminal act, he might have some business interest there, defending them in court if they ever get arrested. It can also be found at the end of the novel, when, with the suspense at its highest and the Trystero mystery about to become completely uncovered, Oedipa suddenly whispers to Cohen: "Your fly is open" (Pynchon 1996: 172).

On the other hand, the structural parody that the novel is based on is the one of the detective novel. Traditionally, the story in a detective novel safely leads its chief detective and the reader from one piece of evidence to another until the final resolution of the mystery in question; in that sense, the belief that the "who did it?" question will be

resolved in the end is never brought into question. However, in the case of *The Crying of Lot 49*, both the reader and Oedipa Maas, the "detective" of the novel, get increasingly confused as the plot thickens and the abundance of information diversifies. In that respect, the parody here lies in the impossibility to bring the story to its final resolution by piecing together the puzzle set before Oedipa. Ironically enough, Oedipa is not even sure if there is any puzzle; the existence of Trystero is never completely verified. Oedipa Maas, "a parodic everywoman of 1960s middle-class America" (Duyfhuizen 1991: 80), has two options before her, where one is a path of passive inaction, very similar to the behavior of her husband Mucho Maas, which would inevitably lead her to being swallowed and sedated by "the chaos of sameness" of the entropic aimlessness, and the other a path of uncontrolled reaction to such reality, withdrawal to her own world, madness, and paranoia. Oedipa refuses to be coerced, drugged or sedated, choosing the path of action and setting out on a quest for truth. However, in the reality she inhabits, the proliferation of information does not result in forming a pattern that would eventually produce a meaningful closure, but creates additional confusion. In other words, the pieces to the mysterious puzzle that are gathered along Oedipa's way do not indicate the final picture; quite on the contrary, the picture gets evermore blurry with the multiplication of information. As for the reader, their "attempts at sense-making are likewise confused"; however, in Newman's view, this is because "the narrative voice undermines any stability of tone with jokes and juvenile comedy" (Newman 1986: 78). Newman sees parodic humor in the novel as an obstacle to understanding the flow of information, and not as a potentially subversive element that calls into question the existing literary, social and cultural structures. The stability that Newman mentions is particularly undermined by the dense narrative style employed in the novel, an extremely congested sentence in which the potential for coherence gets lost in the overabundance of disconnected information. If different discourses are different possible ways of understanding the world, then the parodic text of *The Crying of Lot 49* provides an exemplary understanding of the reality in which any quest for meaning is considered futile and outdated. In the fictional world of the novel, Oedipa is the only one who retains her sanity and remains on her course, the only one lucid in the perturbing reality, and touching, even heroic, in her lonely and deserted condition. The comedy, seen by Newman as rather destabilizing in the process of sense-making, Oedipa's sarcastic remarks, deadpan deliveries, playfulness and firmness combined as reactions to various absurdities along the way, can be seen as a sort of a buffer zone between her sanity and the impact that the twisted characters and the entropic desolation experienced along the way might have on her. In that respect, the parodic humor is the alternative discourse of sanity knitted into Oedipa's uncertain reality.

It is important to notice that there are two types of the marginalized in the novel. On one side, we have the "crazy or aberrant or marginal in some crucial way" (Johnston 1991: 71), such as Mike Fallopian, Stanly Koteks, John Nefastis etc., but on the other, we have Oedipa herself. As an everywoman of the 1960s who is at first a part of the pattern, she slowly removes herself from that context, and through her affiliation with them in her quest for meaning, she almost becomes indistinguishable from them. Parodically, they are the alleged bearers of the pieces of the truth that Oedipa is trying to collect, and in that respect Oedipa and they act as the sharers of the information that constitute a mutual cause, but still Oedipa is curiously removed from them. Her sometimes even unconscious discourse of ridiculizing parody seems to be a mechanism detaching and keeping her on the thin line, balancing between the two abysses, the one of stupefying mundanity and the

other of solipsistic aberrance. Still, she needs them, the "crazy or aberrant or marginal", because it is their lunatic shift in perspective that hides the truth obfuscated in the official discourse of the everyday.

In his introduction, Patrick O'Donnell cites Richard Poirier who says that Pynchon's work shows:

[...] a tenderness, largely missing from our literature since Dreiser, for the very physical waste of our yearnings, for the anonymous scrap heap of Things wherein our lives are finally joined. The Pynchon who can write with dashing metaphorical skill about the way humans have become things, can also reveal a beautiful and heartbreaking reverence for the human penetration of the Thingness of this country, the signatures we make on the grossest evidence of our existence (O'Donnell 1991: 7).

It is important to observe that the parts of the novel from which parody as a mocking device is almost completely removed are the moments of Oedipa's introspective ponderings on life and her position in the world. These segments acquire a special note of haunting lyrical poignancy, and mild self-mockery appears only when despair is on the verge of overpowering Oedipa. One of the crucial segments of the novel in which such transition can be found is Oedipa's encounter with Varo's "Bordando el Manto Terrestre":

In Mexico City they somehow wandered into an exhibition of paintings by the beautiful Spanish exile Remedios Varo: in the central painting of a triptych, titled "Bordando el Manto Terrestre", were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world. Oedipa, perverse, had stood in front of the painting and cried. [...] She could carry the sadness of the moment with her that way forever, see the world refracted through those tears, those specific tears, as if indices as yet unfound varied in important ways from cry to cry [...] there'd been no escape. What did she so desire escape from? Such a captive maiden, having plenty of time to think, soon realizes that her tower, its height and architecture, are like her ego only incidental: that what really keeps her where she is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all. Having no apparatus except gut fear and female cunning to examine this formless magic, to understand how it works, how to measure its field strength, count its lines of force, she may fall back on superstition, or take up a useful hobby like embroidery, or go mad, or marry a disk jockey. If the tower is everywhere and the knight of deliverance no proof against its magic, what else? (Pynchon 1996: 13)

The dialectic connection between "a beautiful and heartbreaking reverence" and Oedipa's irreverent humor is a connection between two poles that seemingly exclude each other, but their directly opposing stands somehow present them as mutually dependant: harsh circumstances produce harsh reactions in the form of aggressive humor, but the need for that kind of reaction rises from the utmost vulnerability and fundamental longing for uncorrupted circumstances.

Meta-fictional features of the novel also constitute the already mentioned structural parody. *The Crying of Lot 49* stands for one of the most prominent works of postmodern fiction, and although Pynchon is a writer who exercises, in Poirier's words "a traditional practice of parody which retained some sense of the controlling force of 'life or history'" (Dentith 2000: 154), in the sense that *The Crying of Lot 49* never allows allusions to its

own fictiveness to overwhelm its metaphorical foundation, self-reflexivity is very present. *The Courier's Tragedy*, a parody of the Jacobean revenge play, together with the parodic detective novel within which it is set, forms a double structural parody, a parody within parody. The story of *The Courier's Tragedy* is brought to an almost absurd detail and, as a result, just like the entire novel, it loses itself in the myriad of information that rather blur than shed light on the story. Paradoxically, such bulks of information create curious gaps, and silences that go unseen while an effort is made to sort out the clues. Some parodically archaic language of *The Courier's Tragedy* – words like "ruefully" and "good" in the depiction of "the good Duke of adjoining Faggio" are juxtaposed to Niccolo's "hanging around the court of his father's murderer, Duke Angelo" or Angelo's "ass" handed over "with great reluctance". These examples show how two different discourses are joined together in a narrative thread to create, in Dentith's words, "competing (or complementary) discourses" (Dentith 2000: 166), where the cultural past is "used ... to unlock the complexities of the present moment" (Dentith 2000: 170). Any tragedy, even the Courier's, seems desperately out of place in Oedipa's contemporary context; derisively exaggerated and stretched with excessive information, it loses its tragic function, and diverts and confuses instead of provoking pity and fear. Ridicule is perhaps at its highest when, towards the end of *The Courier's Tragedy*, the narrative voice parodies the thickness of the plot of the play as well as the thickness of the language of the novel through the commentary of Ercole's murder as "a refreshingly simple mass stabbing" (Pynchon 1996: 49). Renaissance drama's common places regarding violent dramatic developments are also parodically exploited, with a commentary relating to the postmodern cartoon culture given in the end:

The fifth act, entirely an anticlimax, is taken up by the bloodbath Gennaro visits on the court of Squamuglia. Every mode of violent death available to Renaissance man, including a lye pit, land mines, a trained falcon with envenom'd talons, is employed. It plays, as Metzger remarked later, like a Road Runner cartoon in blank verse (Pynchon 1996: 51).

The use of an adjective "envenom'd" also indicates the imitation of the Renaissance drama style. Apart from this parodic imitation, the use of adjectives in *The Crying of Lot 49*, such as the one describing Oedipa as "perverse" standing in front of a picture and crying, or Mucho standing with his hands in his pockets and whistling while being described as simply "enigmatic" can also be perceived as parodic. These adjectives, the semantic function of which should help describe and bring the picture closer, do not clarify, but intrigue, and say nothing that could be fathomed without interpretation.

Furthermore, dark humor, which is considered to be one of the main constituents of the novel, gets emphasis in a self-referential manner, in the part of the plot dealing with revenge. In an extraordinary sequence of events, human bones serve as the source from which ink is produced and used in the writings suffused with black humor : "Later on, their bones were fished up again and made into charcoal, and the charcoal into ink, which Angelo, having a dark sense of humor, used in all his subsequent communications with Faggio, the present document included" (Pynchon 1996: 50). Metaphorically speaking, human condition in all its frailty poses here as the source the writer's ink is drawn from, but the human pain is still alleviated through dark parodic laughter.

The workings of competing or complementary discourses can also be perceived in the novel's self-conscious parody of the detective genre. For example, we can take two short succeeding passages describing Oedipa's moment of self-interrogation, in which we witness a change of tone from a highly optimistic view of things as certain and decipherable, to a tone

of pessimistic defeat by entropic nothingness created through "malignant ... replication". This change is propped by a change of style and vocabulary; syntactically and semantically clear sentence in the first passage, with "bravely", "grit", "resourcefulness" as the core of its language, is succeeded by a passage in which the ability to convey clear meaning is gradually immobilized, just like Oedipa, by unconventional semantics and perturbed syntax:

She busrode and walked on into the lightening morning, giving herself up to a fatalism rare for her. Where was the Oedipa who'd driven so bravely up here from San Narciso? That optimistic baby had come on so like the private eye in any long-ago radio drama, believing all you needed was grit, resourcefulness, exemption from hidebound cops' rules, to solve any great mystery.

But the private eye sooner or later has to get beat up on. This night's profusion of post horns, this malignant, deliberate replication, was their way of beating up. They knew her pressure points, and the ganglia of her optimism, and one by one, pinch by precision pinch, they were immobilizing her (Pynchon 1996: 85).

Their juxtaposition provides a context for comparison of both different literary styles, one of a traditional narration and the other of a postmodern entropic schizo-text, as well as the divided self in the characterization of characters – Oedipa as a typical middle-class woman from the 1960s that slowly progressed towards a paranoid loneliness of the post-industrial America.

The novel introduces various other forms of parodic representation. For instance, Oedipa's encounters with different men, emptied of genuine sexual tension or potential for romantic involvement, provide a postmodern context for the parody of romance. A situation that could be seen as sexually charged and indicative of romantic development is brought to utter ridicule, especially through an additional banalization of, for example, a proposal of elopement that comes "when the coffee came":

They went to lunch. Roseman tried to play footsie with her under the table. She was wearing boots, and couldn't feel much of anything. So, insulated, she decided not to make any fuss.

"Run away with me," said Roseman when the coffee came.

"Where?" she asked. That shut him up. (Pynchon 1996: 12)

Similarly profane description is the one of Miles' romantic involvement with the girl who runs away with Metzger, after which he writes a poem referring to Metzger as "Humbert Humbert" and fantasizes about himself having an affair with an eight-year-old, and his advances to Oedipa, which both indicate the impossibility of experiencing sexuality outside the already existing patterns disseminated and adopted through literature, media, and popular culture in general:

Miles closed the door behind them and started in with the shifty eye. [...] "Do you want what I think you want? This is the Payola Kid here, you know." Oedipa picked up the nearest weapon, which happened to be the rabbit-ear antenna off the TV in the corner. "Oh," said Miles, stopping. "You hate me too." Eyes bright through his bangs.

"You are a paranoid," Oedipa said.

"I have a smooth young body," said Miles, "I thought you older chicks went for that." He left after shaking her down for four bits for carrying the bags. (Pynchon 1996: 17)

In order to be able to reach the alternative information carrier named Trystero, Oedipa descends into the "underground". Trystero can be interpreted as a vast allegory of attempts at communicating outside the imposed structures, but, as David Albahari says in his essay on Pynchon "every escape from the system of conspiracies is just an illusion, that opposed

to "I" and "We" there are always some others ... that are creating and conceiving a new system" (Albahari 1992: 173). In such a dialectic perception of opposing orders, it may be argued that the author of the novel parodies his own idea of creating a new system capable of defying the official and controlled system called Thurn and Taxis. The alternative system should wage "a campaign against entropic sameness, pitching the focus of its activities against attempts to regulate the act of communication" (Newman 1986: 80); nevertheless, its abbreviation is W.A.S.T.E. (We Await Silent Trystero's Empire), parodically suggesting that awaiting any empire is again being sucked into a controlling system that ultimately cannot be challenged. Therefore, the abbreviation W.A.S.T.E. is here used parodically as well – a system that should have a connotation of something new and revolutionary in the end is still just waste. Even their names, both the official information carrier, Thurn and Taxis, and the subversive one, Trystero, are phonetically rather similar. Although the parodic context of W.A.S.T.E. is not humorous in its nature, it is interesting to note that Trystero's main objective, which is, according to Newman, to "frustrate stultifying patterns and evince surprise" (Newman 1986: 80-81), can be seen as identical to the one of random, nonsensical and surreal humor. Both evidence "the extreme relativisation of all languages—the refusal to grant final authority to any one way of speaking over another— which is a characteristic of contemporary popular culture ... dissolving the fixed supports of linguistic and cultural authority" (Dentith 2000: 23-24).

4. CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether parody is used for conservative or subversive purposes, that is, whether it mocks new forms in order to reinforce the stability of the old ones, or whether it mocks the old ones in order to show their ironic misplacement in the contemporary era, it is generally concluded that parody and pastiche occupy one of the central positions in the postmodern cultural space. Framed in a particular discursive form, the precursor texts and the new text are juxtaposed in such a way that it enables a simultaneous insight into different periods and conventions, which brings them into a powerful confrontation resulting in an assessment and valuation. Pynchon's parodic practice in *The Crying of Lot 49* uses past cultural and language forms in order to make an evaluating context for them in the present time. Such textual anachronisms are in postmodernism seen as indispensable; just like Oedipa, who looks "around for words, feeling helpless" (Pynchon 1996: 52), postmodernism uses precursor texts to "make up for ... having lost the direct, epileptic Word, the cry that might abolish the night" (Pynchon 1996: 81). In the myriad of the novel's different parodies, they are peculiarly randomized in an effort to both obfuscate and shed light on, to state nothingness as well as to inspire subversion. Oedipa's quest, made ridiculous by characters she meets and believes that are the ones who carry the pieces of truth, provides a satirical parody of the society in which the marginalized, the sexually perverted, the suicidal, the aberrant are the ones who are equipped with the knowledge that should finally lead to a final resolution. In other words, the parody of her quest is in the implication that in the contemporary era answers appear to be possible – if at all – only through the discourse of the socially excluded. If postmodernist world is a collection of fragmented pieces in which there is still a memory of what has been lost, then postmodernism is also Oedipa's sadness in front of Varo's painting – sadness of the impossibility to fill the voids of the world with the tapestry that frail girls with heart-

shaped faces embroider. Any overly dramatic approach to the hollowness of the fragmented reality runs the risk of destroying the possibility of critical judgement and verges on the postmodern pathetic; therefore, forms such as parodic playfulness pose themselves as an effective instrument for providing a critical edge.

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PARODIJSKE FORME I NJIHOVA UPOTREBA U OBJAVI BROJA 49 TOMASA PINČONA

Rad se bavi različitim teoretskim viđenjima parodije kao jednim od ključnih elemenata postmoderne književnosti i načinima na koje je upotrebljena u Pinčonovom romanu Objava broja 49. Fokus rada je na strukturalnim i funkcionalnim svojstvima parodije, kao što su strukturalna obuhvaćenost različitih „prethodnih“ tekstova tekstem romana i efekat koji takva obuhvaćenost proizvodi, prostor za polemičnost koji parodične forme otvaraju i način na koji se polemika izaziva i sprovodi. Rad pokazuje na koji način parodija u Objavi broja 49 upotrebljava kulturološke i jezičke forme tradicija koje prethode postmodernizmu u cilju stvaranja konteksta u kojem dolazi do evaluacije tih formi u sadašnjem trenutku, i na koji način su različite parodije utkane u tekst romana tako da u isto vreme i navode na krivi put i rasvetljaju, i proglašavaju ništavilo ali i podstiču subverziju.

Ključne reči: *parodija, Pinčon, humor, postmodernizam*