JORNAL OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

Metafiction in John Barth Giles Goat-Boy

Lect. Dr. Ammar Hashim Saleh *
Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul
ammaralabasy@uomosul.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

The current study attempts to investigate the concept of metafiction in John Barth *Giles Goat-Boy*. It tries to explore how Barth's novel challenges traditional storytelling and promotes a more engaged and critical reading experience. The research employs parody as a form of intertextuality, in conjunction with unreliable narration, to critically examine Barth's blurring of the distinctions between fiction and reality, ultimately obscuring the borders between the two and encouraging readers to actively interact with the story as a deliberately produced, self-referential piece of art. Barth's deliberate blurring of the lines between fact and fiction pushes readers to critically examine the essence of storytelling while offering insights into present-day social and cultural matters. His integration of mythical themes and irony and his self-reflective commentary on the creative process are also studied as essential strategies.

Keywords: intertextuality, metafiction, parody, unreliable narration

* **Corresponding Author**: Dr. Ammar Hashim**, Email:** ammaralabasy@uomosul.edu.iq
Affiliation: Mosul University - Iraq

ما وراء القص في جون بارث جايلز غوت بوي

د.م. عمار هاشم صالح

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية، جامعة الموصل

الـمستخلـص

تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف مفهوم الميتاقصة في رواية جون بارث " جايلز فتى الماعز". تحاول الدراسة استكشاف كيف يتحدى الروائي بارث السرد التقليدي ويروج لتجربة قراءة أكثر تفاعلاً ونقداً. حيث يستخدم البحث المحاكاة الساخرة كشكل من أشكال التداخل النصي، بالتزامن مع السرد غير الموثوق، وذلك لفحص قدرة الكاتب على طمس الحدود بين الخيال والواقع، مما يؤدي في النهاية إلى إخفاء الفواصل بين الاثنين ويشجع القراء على التفاعل بشكل نشط مع القصة كقطعة فنية منتجة عمدًا بالاضافة لكونها ذاتية الإشارة. إن التعتيم المتعمد الذي يمارسه بارث على الحدود بين الحقيقة والخيال يدفع القراء إلى فحص جوهر السرد بشكل نقدي، بينما يقدم رؤى حول القضايا الاجتماعية والثقافية المعاصرة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، البحث يهدف الى دراسة دمج الكاتب للمواضيع الأسطورية والسخرية وتعليقه الذاتي التأملي على العملية الإبداعية في الرواية المذكورة سابقا باعتبارها استراتيجية أساسية لفهم رواية الكاتب.

الكلمات الدالة: الميتاقص، المحاكاة الساخرة، التداخل النصي، السرد غير الموثوق

1. INTRODUCTION TO METAFICTION

Metafiction is multifaceted and has various connotations, depending on perspective. In the narrowest sense, it refers to a literature of self-consciousness, drawing attention to its fictionality or the storytelling artefact. In an expanded sense, it includes a host of more inclusive subgenres describing the impact wrought by realist fiction: irony, parody, the revolt against mimesis, or the fiction of reality and the world outside time and history. Put, fiction is about fiction, a comment on the creation of fiction. However, the reader should not expect to find these commentaries by another, the author, in a form aside or in any other deviation from the conventional way of telling a story: indirection is the genre's essence – it suggests. Metafiction brings to light the inadequacy and inevitable ambiguity of language: the paradox of the duality of reality, of the existence of the self, of the inseparability of appearance from fact, and of the permanent modification of the original data through its state of being observed. (Tykhomyrova, 2018, pp. 364–365)

However, the term "metafiction" is credited to William Gass in his book *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970). According to him, metafiction is a kind of fiction primarily concerned with the process of its own making, where the focus is on highlighting the fictitious character of the narrative and the process of storytelling. (Gass, 1989, p. 25). By doing this, he aimed to synchronise advancements in his works with the introspective inclinations seen in other fields, such as philosophy. He expressed that "the novelist and the philosopher are companions in a common enterprise" (Gass, 1989, p. 5) both are "obsessed with language and make themselves up out of concepts" (Gass, 1989, p. 4). Metafiction "is one of the postmodernist stylistic techniques" (Rahman et al., 2020, p. 89). It is a self-reflexive technique, encouraging readers to question the boundaries between reality and illusion in literature. Metafiction prompts readers to question the nuanced layers of meaning and the author's deliberate choices in constructing the story by highlighting the fabricated elements within the narrative. Thus, metafiction elicits a stimulating encounter, encouraging readers to actively participate in the text and investigate the intricate relationship between fiction and reality. Gass argues that the "mature novel" is primarily concerned with philosophy. Instead of depicting reality it employs language to create new worlds based on current fictional forms. According to Gass, just like there are "meta theorems in mathematics and logic, ethics has its linguistic oversoul, everywhere lingos to converse about lingos are being contrived," the same applies to novels, comments Gass, "the case is no different in the novel," where "forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed" (Gass, 1989, pp. 24–25).

According to Patricia Waugh, the author of *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), the subject matter defined as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh, 2013, p. 2). Waugh subsequently asserts that this narrative characteristic is a direct result of the "singularly uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic" the modern age gave rise to postmodernism (Waugh, 2013, p. 6). She incorporates metafiction as an essential component of her conceptual framework, emphasising its role as a manifestation of postmodernism. Waugh's inclusion of it inside this broader cultural category corresponds with the bulk of analyses on the topic. Metafiction exemplifies the intrinsic capacity of all fiction to engage in self-reflective discourse and display technical artistry. As Waugh explains at the outset of her outstanding book:

> This form of fiction is worth studying not only because of its contemporary emergence but also because of the insights it offers into both the representational nature of all fiction and the literary history of the novel as genre. By studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity (Waugh, 2013, p. 5).

Currie defines Metafiction as "borderline discourse, as a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism and which takes that border as its subject" (Currie, 1995, p. 2).

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Therefore, metafiction is characterised by an inherent reflexivity that defines the line between the process of transmitting written text and the act of receiving it by the general public, similar to Waugh's description. Currie, however, continues to characterise postmodern fiction as possessing a "deep involvement with its own past, the constant dialogue with its own conventions, which projects any self-analysis backwards in time" (Currie, 1995, p. 1)

In this contemporary age of boundless narratives and ever-expanding literary experiments, metafiction plays a vital role in shaping how we perceive and interpret stories. Its impact reaches far beyond the confines of traditional storytelling, beckoning readers into a realm where imagination intertwines with perception. The power of metafiction lies in its ability to challenge preconceived notions and dismantle the notion of a single, objective reality. It dismantles the notion of a single, objective reality, inviting readers to embrace the idea that multiple interpretations and perspectives can coexist within a work of fiction. Just as the author manipulates the narrative to reveal its artificial construct, readers are encouraged to detach themselves from the constraints of traditional storytelling and delve into the boundless realm of imagination. As readers delve deeper into the intricate layers of metafiction, they begin to navigate the blurred lines between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, ultimately realising that the true essence of a story lies in its ability to transcend the boundaries of a single reality. Through its thought-provoking nature, metafiction invites us to embrace storytelling's complexity and explore the possibilities that arise when imagination merges with the written word.

It challenges the reader's understanding of reality by blurring the line between fiction and truth, often employing techniques such as self-referential narratives or breaking the fourth wall. These devices serve to entertain and provoke deeper reflection on the nature of the narrative itself. Metafiction intentionally highlights the artificial nature of the story and its structure, prompting a critical examination of the author's aims and the reader's involvement in understanding the text. In this way, it encourages a more active and engaged reading experience, where the reader actively engages in constructing meaning. Moreover, metafiction often exhibits intertextuality, referencing and incorporating other texts within its narrative. The interaction among various literary works enhances the plot by introducing intricate levels of complexity and depth. This enriches the reader's involvement and emphasises the interdependence of artistic expressions. By blurring the distinctions between reality and fiction, employing self-reflexive techniques, and incorporating intertextuality, Metafiction subverts conventional narrative structures and pushes readers to critically examine the fundamental aspects of literature and the process of meaning-making. It entertains and provokes intellectual stimulation and introspection, making it a fascinating and intellectually rewarding genre in contemporary literature. (Waham, 2023, pp. 178–188)

One of the innovators in the genre of metafictional novels is John Barth. His novel *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) explores the depths of metafiction. The novel is a widely respected and thought-provoking work of artistry. This literary masterpiece stimulates the intellect and bravely defies traditional narrative's established conventions and norms within its enthralling pages. It challenges the constraints of narrative form, inviting

adventurous readers into a realm of limitless and unexplored possibilities where the realm of metafiction reigns supreme. Within the complex layers of Barth's novel, the reader discovers a grand examination of the mysterious human mind, delving into uncharted realms of thinking and deep contemplation. This work fearlessly explores new and unexplored areas of metafiction, transforming the literary world and leaving a lasting impact on the history of literature. It will forever be recognised as a testament to the remarkable influence of written language. With each intricately designed and thoughtfully enlarged page, we are fully engrossed in a deep sensation of awe, intellectual engagement, and insatiable inquisitiveness.

Barth's exceptional ability to create stories demonstrates his unmatched intelligence and creativity, going beyond the limits of imagination and taking us to unimaginable worlds. This exceptional novel skilfully combines many storytelling styles, ingeniously blending them with several metafictional elements. The outcome is an exceptionally evocative and intellectually stimulating masterpiece that stands prominently as a lasting and inspiring symbol of literary excellence. In its mesmerising pages, we are provided with a riveting and transformational view into a realm where the limits of imagination disappear and invention is enthusiastically honoured. The story's protagonist is George Giles, a little boy who was brought up as a goat and eventually becomes the Grand Tutor (messiah or spiritual leader) of New Tammany College (the United States of America, the Earth, or the Universe). He tries to become a hero and ultimately succeeds in achieving it. There are numerous allegories in the book, including those that are Christian and mythological in nature, as well as references to the Cold War, academics from the 1960s, spirituality, and religion. In the end, George decides to act in this manner.

The novel is set in a fictional parallel universe where the entire planet is represented as a singular university. Instead of countries, there are colleges, and chancellors and deans replace the roles of presidents and kings. Religious leaders are substituted with "Grand Tutors". The western and eastern regions are called "West Campus" and "East Campus." Wars can be described as intense and violent conflicts. The institution has had two campus riots, known as Campus Riots I and II. Currently, the university is facing a different kind of conflict called the "Quiet Riot," which refers to the Cold War. God is commonly referred to as "the Founder," and redemption is often described as "Commencement" or "Graduation," both of which are supernatural concepts that are met with significant scepticism in modern educational institutions. However, another deity-like entity exists within the narrative: WESCAC, also known as the West Campus Automatic Computer, is an extremely intelligent supercomputer that exercises nearly complete control over the population of New Tammany College in the United States. It also commands a collection of nuclear weapons unique to this world, specifically an electromagnetic pulse known as the "EAT-wave." This pulse can drive large groups of people permanently insane in a controlled and targeted manner.

2. THE CONCEPT OF METAFICTION

Metafiction is a postmodern literary device through which the author deliberately highlights the artificial nature of the story. This could be in the form of fictional characters who comment on the act of writing and storytelling or through digressions in

the narrative that explore the mechanisms of literature itself. Similarly, metafictional works blur the boundaries between reality and fiction and cause readers to re-evaluate their expectations of fiction and the reading process. Barth, a pioneer in metafiction, explicitly explains his motivations for using fiction in a very self-conscious manner. It is a narrative that openly reveals its inherent artificiality, meaning it portrays how the story was created or how the characters are conscious of their existence as fictitious beings. Using certain stylistic qualities, a piece of metafiction consistently prompts the text to evoke the audience's awareness that they are engaging with a fictitious narrative and that the characters inside the story are conscious of their existence within a fictional realm. Metafiction relates to the point of view and narrative level from which the author approaches the events devised – from within or without. The traditional concepts of novel authorship (traditionally considered a structural and perhaps a political abstraction) present the protagonist as an object and the author as the one who enjoys power over this character. (Waham, 2023, p. 175)

In contrast, metafiction, or a narrative from without, emphasises the formal and technical aspects of the novel as well as the consciousness of constructing and representing. Regardless of how it is oriented, metafiction is a remarkable play on signifiers itself, the reality-confronts-unreality literature, and the combination is essentially a historiographic-metafictive blend. Its primary purpose seems to be a contentious relationship with the reader.

3. TECHNIQUE OF METAFICTION IN BARTH'S *GILS GOAT-BOY*

Metafiction typically plays with conventions of narrative construction – whether explicit or implicit – that a reader might have taken as given in the tradition. It risks nothing short of changing our notions of the function of narrative.(Sidiq & Abdullah, 2023, p. 125) This is easy to see in its immediate application: the conventions are usually taken for granted in constructing fictional worlds in novels. The least structurally provocative fictions in this respect are set in the world we recognise – the geography, culture, technology, and science are those we associate with a historical moment or with another set of fictional conventions, which has been thoroughly worked out and internalised by the reader.

However, metafiction employs various techniques to generate an unconventional reading experience, often obscuring the boundaries separating fiction and reality; it includes "the characteristics of paradox, self-reflexivity, open endedness, intertextuality, provisionality, subjectivity, discontinuity, indeterminacy, and Irony" (Rahman et al., 2020, p. 90). Due to space limitations, this study will discuss and analyse Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* by examining two important techniques: Parody as intertextuality and unreliable narration. Barth's novel prominently has significant instances of what is commonly referred to as metafiction in contemporary literary discourse. However, the story has a traditional plot and contains meaningful and realistic dialogue; a significant portion of the reader's guidance is presented through explicit explanations provided by the author. These explanations are often inserted abruptly into the narrative without consideration for the flow of the story. Additionally, the author occasionally offers external commentary as if engaging in a conversation with themselves, which holds greater importance. It was common at that time for the word metafiction not to be

published; therefore, authors had to create the phrase based on their knowledge and understanding.

However, in Barth's novel, the metafictional elements are particularly pronounced. The college campus serves as an allegorical representation of a community grappling with the creation of man and the role of governance in society. Through the quest of Giles Goat-Boy, readers are taken on a journey through the intricacies of power, desire, and the human condition. As Giles navigates the campus alongside his fellow students, their pursuit of the Wives of man, guided by the enigmatic Reverend Bishop Mephistopheles, brings to the forefront the complexities of social dynamics and the innate weaknesses of humanity. Throughout his quest, Giles encounters various obstacles, highlighting different aspects of the human experience. From immaturity and greed to lust and paranoia, these failings underscore the challenges individuals and societies face. Barth skilfully intertwines these themes with metafictional devices, blurring the line between reality and fiction and prompting readers to examine the narrative and its implications critically.

4.PARODY AS INTERTEXTUALLY

The term intertextuality was introduced in 1966 by the Bulgarian-French semiotician Julia Kristeva in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). Intertextuality is a literary theory that asserts that all works of writing are either derived from or affected by a prior work of literature. Intertextuality, as the term implies, contends that "texts of all kinds, from conversations to novels and films, borrow from one another, either consciously or unconsciously" (Berger, 2016, p. 120). Thus, either explicit intertextuality or self-analysis achieves the presence of textual awareness in metafictional novels. This may be achieved through deliberate writing techniques such as citation, allusion, calque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche, or parody. Additionally, it might arise from the text's reader seeing connections between comparable or related works by "using a certain text that accounts on the knowledge of some other texts is named as intertextuality".(Gadban & Ghanim, 2024, p. 275).

Deliberate intertextuality involves intentional borrowing from other texts, while implicit intertextuality refers to accidental allusions where the link or impact is not intentional. It is important to note that every written language inherently allows for intertextuality. Intertextual allusions might take the form of precise lines of conversation or action, or they can be more loosely alluded to. Any piece of literature contributing to producing a new text is regarded as intertextual. (Marta, 2019, pp. 364–365).

On the other hand, Neal R. Norrick defines intertextuality in "Intertextuality in Humour":

> Intertextuality occurs any time one text suggests or requires reference to some other identifiable text or stretch of discourse, spoken or written. Scholarly writing seems to make its intertextual references as accurate and conspicuous as possible through documentation, while everyday conversation borrows freely from sources often left

unnamed, and literature delights in disguise, obscure allusion, and parody (Norrick, 1989, pp. 117–118).

Jonathan Culler, in *The Pursuit of Signs*, describes intertextuality as a broader network that goes beyond the typical analysis of sources and influences as "not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived", but as a more extensive network that encompasses "anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts" (Culler, 2001, p. 114). This represents a clear departure from the conventional understanding of intertextual connections between a text and its source. In the traditional framework, we typically observe two types of intertextual relations: a positive one, where earlier literary texts mould an author, and a negative one, where an author draws inspiration from earlier literary texts but modifies them to meet their own requirements. In this sense, "positive" refers to the act of an author imitating or borrowing aspects from an earlier book, while "negative" refers to the sarcastic modification of the same qualities by a later author. Barth employs this kind of conventional intertextuality in *Giles Goat-Boy*. The contemporary use of intertextuality challenges the conventional concepts of inspiration and influence. Intertextuality is now a dynamic language system that operates as a creative process for generating meaning. Barth's self-conscious and self-referential language use requires this innovative approach to intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a frequently used method by authors of metafictional writings. It is also an essential notion in comprehending and valuing Barth's novel. However, for space limitations, the current paper defines intertextuality concisely and analyses Barth's novel by employing the concept of parody as it prevails Barth's novel.

Parody is a distinct kind of intertextuality when one piece of art mimics another to criticise or ridicule it. The parody's efficacy relies on the audience's preexisting knowledge of the original piece, which allows them to comprehend the nuances and criticisms being communicated. It is defined as:

> An example of explicit intertextuality. It is suggested that parody can involve ridiculing a style of authorship, a genre, or a specific text. In addition, other humorous techniques are often used in parodies. An exercise using parody is offered to readers (Berger, 2016, p. 119).

According to William Harmon in *A Handbook to Literature*, parody is: "A composition burlesquing or imitating another, usually serious, piece of work. It is designed to ridicule in nonsensical fashion, or to criticise by brilliant treatment, an original piece of work or its author" (Harmon, 2012, p. 319).

Parody is a form of mockery, often constructed in good humour, that imitates and exaggerates the manner and style of a work or author in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous. In essence, the parodist uses a work or style as a kind of target, representing all within it as a sort of game from afar, exaggerating it, and applying it so broadly that its flaws and humorous weaknesses appear more strongly in relief. Since such use has begun in literature, the intention of parody has often been less one of simple mockery or attack and far more that the writer has used it for the purpose of courtesy or

tribute, as occasionally a coloured pattern of the moment will make its greater debut as formalised copies of it are placed strategically, or as in the other literary targets of the same type allowed to cost people enjoyment. Among its most interesting potential uses is the effect production made possible, for through a carefully crafted but different use of form, the parodist can redirect or alter the message subtly as it has come to be received, the recipient having been conditioned to expect it to come in at a certain place and a certain reinforcement. As Linda Hutcheon, in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, illustrates:

> Parody is an exploration of difference and similarity; in metafiction it invites a more literary reading, a recognition of literary codes, but it is wrong to see the end of this process as mockery, ridicule, or mere destruction. Metafiction parodies and imitates as a way to a new form which is just as serious and valid, as a synthesis, as the form it dialectically attempts to surpass. It does not necessarily involve a movement away from mimesis, however, unless by that term is meant only a rigid object-imitation or behaviouristic-realistic motivation (Hutcheon, 1984, p. 25).

In its most subtle and covert forms, parody might be described as an extroverted criticism of the parodied original, showing, as well as the duller, more direct criticism can be, an ability to completely contain, explain, or destroy the bad work within itself. Acting within a piece of greater construction as a palm-extended satire, allowing the component portion of any work or author to be examined separately, and even the rough facet in a diamond to be placed within the setting of a vague intelligence provides that the angry reader is having the moral of a story preached to him at all. Such qualities are turned almost entirely to improving the work often so accurately parodied when reminiscent of Barth's *Giles Goat*-Boy.

Parody can be classified as a form of satire, and the major difference between parody and satire is "the aim…[as] Satire may thus employ literary parody as a device, but with no specifically literary aim whatsoever. Similarly, parody may choose to be satirical in intent;" (Hutcheon, 1978, p. 203). On the other hand, Douglas Robinson illustrates that "Satire is generally taken to mean a literary exaggeration of *life*, of the actions, words, and personalities of men and groups of men, while parody is used to refer to exaggerated comic imitations of literary or other artistic constructs [and thus] Satire, in other words, is comic realism; parody comic metafiction." (Robinson, 1980, p. 42). Therefore, satire often adopts a stance of superiority on the part of the satirist, or at the very least, a conviction that all individuals are inadequate to an ideal. Parody, however, does not need adherence to any moral ideal. Parody occasionally depends on an aesthetic criteria, mocking a piece of work for its artistic inferiority; however, this is not always true. Parody is occasionally used as a lighthearted way of showcasing a unique facet of someone's writing style, with no intention of denigrating the author.

Therefore, parody can be satirical but primarily makes fun of the work it imitates. The primary function of parody is to entertain. It is as necessary to balance life as satire. Imitating a writer's style or his subject and ideas makes parody a literary game for the author who tries his skill. Singing unintentional words to a well-known tune is a popular

form of parody. For example, Barth's *Giles Goat Boy* has a diverse ensemble of characters resembling real-life figures such as John F. Kennedy, Eisenhower, Khrushchev, and the Beatniks. These individuals are portrayed fictiously, which may be seen as a clear instance of parody. Barth did not introduce them for satiric construction as they are devoid of the scorn and derision that characterise satire. Robinson further elucidates that "Barth is not concerned with contemporary socio-political life; as a writer of fiction, he has nothing to say about Kennedy as a President, or America's role in world politics. His interest lies in parodying the genre of the historical novel" (Robinson, 1980, p. 44).

Parody is often constructed in good humour that imitates and exaggerates the manner and style of a work or author in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous. In essence, the parodist uses a work or style as a kind of target, representing all within it as a sort of game from afar, exaggerating it, and applying it so broadly that its flaws and humorous weaknesses appear more strongly in relief. Since such use has begun in literature, the intention of parody has often been less one of simple mockery or attack and far more than the writer has used it for courtesy or tribute, as occasionally a coloured pattern of the moment will make its greater debut as formalised copies of it are placed strategically, or as in the other literary targets of the same ilk, allowed to cost people enjoyment.

Among its most interesting potential uses is the effect production made possible, for through a carefully crafted but different use of form, the parodist can redirect or alter the message subtly as it has come to be received, the recipient having been conditioned to expect it to come in at a certain place and a certain reinforcement. This fascinating mechanism enables a deeper appreciation of parody's nuances and intricacies, elevating it to an art form of its own. With its versatile nature, parody can penetrate various domains, not limited to literature but extending its reach to music, film, and even social and political commentary. Through witty and satirical devices, parodies serve as a cultural reflection, providing commentary and shedding light on prevailing societal trends and issues.

Furthermore, the inherent playfulness of parody has a unifying effect, creating a common ground for individuals to share in the amusement elicited by the comical imitation. It bridges gaps and fosters a sense of camaraderie as people join in laughter, recognising the familiarity of the parodied elements. In this way, parody catalyses social cohesion, using humour as a powerful unifier. By skilfully manipulating the expectations and norms set by the original works, parodists can subvert conventions and challenge established beliefs, sparking insightful discussions and encouraging critical thinking.

From the above definitions and statements, it should be noted that a parody is both an imitation of a pre-existing text or genre and another text in its own right. Of course, parodies vary greatly, and they do not fit squarely into one single category or in a uniform mould. They can serve many purposes, including expressing social concerns, critiquing literature, providing light entertainment, etc. One way of accessing *Giles Goat-Boy* is through its parody elements. This work is a parody on many levels, including the hero quest.

Before shifting the focus to analysing parody in Barth's novel, it is essential to address one further characteristic of parody: its connection to and dependence on irony. Parody and satire must both use irony to accomplish their goals effectively. Their aim is to produce a more absurd piece than the subject being imitated and that the audience recognises as a purposeful exaggeration. Parody would be seen only as a substandard imitation of the original if not accompanied by sarcasm. Parody, similar to irony, "postulates a double audience, one of which is 'in the know' and aware of the speaker's intention, whilst the other is naive enough to take the utterance at its face value" (Leech, 1973, p. 171).

The use of irony in parody is very suitable since metafiction, which can be utilised to parody literary styles and traditions, progresses from pleasurable experimentation with fictional forms to a discerning recognition of the logical invalidity inherent in such experimentation. Hayden White examines the characteristics of irony, which clearly imply the parodic and sarcastic metafictional themes found in Barth's works:

> Thus, Irony tends in the end to turn upon word-play, to become a language about language, so as to dissolve the bewitchment of consciousness caused by language itself. It is suspicious of all formulas, and it delights in exposing the paradoxes contained in every attempt to capture experience in language. It tends to dispose the fruits of consciousness in aphorisms, apothegms, gnomic utterances which turn back upon themselves and dissolve their own apparent truth and adequacy. In the end, it conceives the world as trapped within a prison made of language, the world as a "forest of symbols." It sees no way out of this forest, and so contents itself with the explosion of all formulas, all myths, in the interest of pure "contemplation" and resignation to the world of "things as they are" (White, 2019, p. 283).

Many parodic elements in *Giles Goat-Boy* are largely due to the nature of the story and the events that happen to the inhabitants of the university campus at West-Country State. The book is filled to the brim with mythic echoes, joyfully encompassing every conceivable production of humanity in the past two millennia, woven with an abundance of clever jabs and subtle allusions. The novel wears the mask of a parody, which stands proudly as an enticing reader with its clever and witty narrative style. At the same time, it may defy easy classification, this extraordinary literary work embarks on a transformative journey, akin to a pilgrim's tale, reminiscent of the esteemed classics such as Gulliver's Travels, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Remarkable Journey to the Land of Plenty. Imbued with a profound purpose, the novel courageously delves into the intricacies of defining and grappling with the elusive concept of quality within the hallowed walls of academia. Its thought-provoking narrative effortlessly weaves together the threads of human goodness and the sacred institutions that venerate and honour it. In doing so, it thrusts readers into a profound exploration of the very essence of humanity and the multifaceted nature of virtue itself. Within the rich tapestry of the novel, Barth artfully invites readers to traverse the corridors of intellectual curiosity, unravelling the complexities of the human condition while subtly and ingeniously subverting the conventions of traditional storytelling. In the pages of this remarkable novel, a mesmerising dance between reality

and fiction unfolds, propelling readers into a realm where their perceptions are challenged, cherished beliefs are shattered, and astute observations pierce the veil of convention.

Barth's ability to go beyond imitation and mockery is mostly due to his selection of the target of his parody. Although he often deviates from the main topic to criticise specific writers and works, his main focus in his parody is a comprehensive collection of human views. Barth's parodic strategy involves using the confusion between ends and means, which is evident at the university, to suggest a general play between the concepts of means and ends. The story works to parody the mythic underpinnings of the university in specific, secular terms, promoting a view of the historical necessity of human destiny. At the same time, historical necessity is placed in the service of this view.

Giles Goat-Boy is a parody piece of literature. Not only does this become evident in its interpretation of a society characterised by intricate contemporary technology and tensions of the Cold War, but also in the sardonic layers of its storytelling approach and its structure, which blends myth with historical events. Barth attempted to create a Messiah that might serve as the ideal American saviour: a combination of a machine and a goat. Conceived by a computer and born to a virgin who promptly leaves him in a library dumb-waiter, the Goat-Boy is crippled during his descent and is then reared as a goat by a scientist who has become disillusioned with humanity.

The political landscape of *Giles Goat-Boy* is divided between two university campuses, East and West, where Student Unionists (Communists) and Informationalists (Capitalists) reside. During the Second Campus Riot, the two campuses engaged in a brutal conflict with Siegfrieder College (Germany), resulting in the deaths of several Moishians (Jews) at the hands of the Bonifascists (Nazis). The conflict concluded when someone at Few Tammany College (USA) activated a switch on WESCAC (West Campus Automatic Computer), resulting in a catastrophic event at Ameratsu College (Japan). Currently, East and West Campus are engaged in heightened tension similar to the Cold War, known as the Quiet Riot. This situation is constantly at risk of escalating into CR III if one of the colleges were to test their EAT (Electroencephalic Amplification and Transmission) project, which is comparable to an atom bomb, on the other campuses. The book is set at New Tammany College, where the governing authority is a Chancellor (President) and WESCAC, a highly advanced computer capable of autonomous self-programming. East Campus and West Campus may be likened to Russia and the United States. Siegfrieder College is located in Germany. The Bonifascists may be equated to the Nazis, while the Student-Unionists can be likened to the Communists. Campus Riots One and Two refer to the World Wars, while the computer WESCAC, equipped with its destructive EAT rays, symbolises the atomic bomb.

The book utilises contemporary computer-based tools and explores our cybernetic state and our continuous information processing that leads to entropy. Therefore, parody is in accordance with what Barth refers to as the Tragic View. Barth interpreted technology in his work Giles Goat-Boy as a myth representing the need for significance that is absent in history yet necessary for tragedy. He was trying to connect this narrative to the Ur-narrative, which he believed was represented in the destiny of the tragic hero. Parody is derived from modifying points of view, while myth is based on repeating

unchanging aspects. Barth resolves this problem by converting it into a narrative dilemma. At the beginning of the tale, the author, who is also a character in the book, follows the Tragic View and presents himself as an enthusiastic admirer of the hero. Over time, the literature gradually adopts a humorous tone and transforms into a parody of the Tragic View, contingent upon the historical consciousness of the contemporary reader.

However, the novel is influenced by several heroic stories, particularly the Oedipus story. Parodying myth involves creating a contradiction by demythologising genres and tales. In addition, Barth used several ancient deities who aligned with his vision of Giles' upbringing as a goat, including Zeus, Dionysus, and Pan. According to Robert Graves, Aegipan is traditionally linked to the zodiac Capricorn, which signifies that "Zeus was born at mid-winter when the sun entered the house of Capricorn" (Graves, 1948, p. 527). Giles' birthday coincides with the winter solstice on December 21. This day is particularly significant for the sun-gods Dionysus, Apollo, and Mithras. Dionysus is a suitable allusion since he was born of Zeus (WESCAC) and either Demeter or Persephone (Virginia). According to Apollodorus, he was depicted as a goat.

The most significant classical reference, however, is to Pan. Although Barth does not directly mention Pan in this text, there are references to him. Giles is likened to a satyr and "nymph and faun" (Barth, 1967, p. 163), and both Giles and his son Giles Stoker are connected to the Pan's "reed pipe" (Barth, 1967, p. 15). Pan had a dual nature, being both a deity and a creature with the physical characteristics of a goat. Cornutus believed that the bottom half of the creature represented the earth and bestiality, while the top half, consisting of human parts, symbolised heaven and logic (Graves, 1948, p. 352). While lacking any physical resemblance to a goat, Giles transitions from the overtly goat-like behaviour of his youth to the heightened reasoning of his adolescence, ultimately reaching a mature comprehension of his fundamental humanity, which encompasses both animalistic and divine aspects. The mentions of Pan throughout the book serve as additional iterations of the concepts of individual identity and the universe as well as the fusion of the divine and animalistic aspects inside human carnality.

The significance of Giles' early childhood as a goat lies in its relation to Christian theology, where sheep symbolise holiness and goats represent immortality. Matthew states that in the last moments of existence, the Son of Man:

> will separate men into two groups, as a shepherd separates the sheen from the goats, and he will -place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left hand. Then' the king will say to those on his right hand, "You have my Father's blessing; come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you . . Then he will say to those on his left hand, "The curse is upon you; go from my sight to the eternal fire that is ready for the devil and his angels (Ugowe, 2009, p. 60)[i]

From a Christian perspective, Giles is strongly associated with diabolism and sin. Max Spielman implicitly accepts this stigma since he equates goats with Judaism:

> The way the campus works, there's got to be goats for the sheep to drive out, *ja*? If they don't fail us they fail themselves, and then nobody

passes. Well I tell you, it's a hard and passed fate to be a goat. Enos Enoch, now, he didn't want them in his herd; he drove out the goats from the fold and set them on his left hand, so he could be a good shepherd to the sheep. Okay, Billy. But when the time came that the goyim drove me out I thought about this: Who's going to look after the goats? And I decided, 'Max Spielman is', (Barth, 1967, p. 41).

Max deliberately chooses to be sent to hell to rescue others and comfort himself, and he assumes the role of guardian over those who are condemned. Giles, on the other hand, completely rejects the Christian concept of dualism and confidently embraces his goat-like nature, presenting a new approach to navigating sexuality. Barth's portrayal of Giles being driven away from the herd while maintaining his goat-like behaviour and way of speaking implies that the combination of goat-like qualities with human logic is a significant aspect of human nature.

The narrative focuses on the maturation and evolution of Barth's central character, Billy Bockfuss, a goat-boy who ultimately transforms into George Giles; as Billy, he is a goat; as George, he is a man. Giles began his life as a boy who was brought up in the company of goats and identified himself as one of them. He directed his concerns towards tangible risks, but only after they were really there did he not experience any worry. He engaged in play when he had joy, exhibited kicking behaviour when he felt anger, and his moral education was based on straightforward practicality. He transforms from animal to human, eventually becoming a heroic character. He is a contemporary figure seen as a messianic figure, similar to Jesus Christ, and also has characteristics reminiscent of Oedipus. George Giles' father, WESCAC, the West Campus Automatic Computer, is comparable to the Christian God in terms of being indescribable in human words. Virginia Hector, the daughter of the president of the institution, came up with the brilliant idea that led to the establishment of WESCAC. The term "university" represents the whole of the "universe". John Barth was first given a written biography of George Giles by his son Stoker, titled *The Revised New Syllabus* (or New New Testament). Stoker Giles asserts that his father's life-story should be regarded as a holy scripture. Thus, it must be officially proclaimed as a set of beliefs, and Stoker Giles notifies the Author that he is now on his way to other educational institutions "There are other universities, you know" (Barth, 1967, p. 21).

The comparison made in the text between the universe and a university is not incorrect. Within a university environment, the understanding and concepts of the universe are converted into verbal articulations, while the firsthand encounters of existence are communicated through stories about life. Language serves as a medium through which the legendary wisdom of the great instructors of humanity is transformed into valuable teachings for future generations. Paradoxically, the language used in this context both conserves and undermines the original myth by subjecting it to the scrutiny of historical analysis. Thus, following the university's prescribed curriculum might be compared to a shift from naivety to knowledge rather than a process of personal development and advancement. Acquiring knowledge comes at a high cost since it is not easily obtained in its pure form. Language not only replaces the "real" item, but allegory also substitutes the "true" term. The Greek term *allegoria* originally referred to the act of

speaking indirectly, rather than addressing an immediate audience, in a non-public setting (Copeland & Struck, 2010, p. 4).

The authentic or sacred statements, which are no longer spoken but gathered in a written form, diminish in importance precisely due to this collection since their immediate impact seems to be continually suppressed. Giles' life is marred by the awareness of the process in which myth transforms into history. Among the sombre "Posttape," surreptitiously embedded among the recordings of The Revised New Syllabus by George Giles at a speed of "thirty-three and a third" (Barth, 1967, p. 565) revolutions per minute. At the time of the crucifixion, Christ, who was previously a highly respected teacher in Western civilisation, realises that he is no longer needed or relevant as a living being. Instead, "Gilesianism" has evolved into a recognised philosophy, with The Revised New Syllabus serving as its holy scripture (despite the inherent contradiction in calling it "new"). Additionally, enrolment in the "New Curriculum" is now mandatory for students on West Campus. Similar to Oedipus, George Giles has exceeded the limits in his quest for self-awareness, forsaking a legendary existence to take on a significant part in the course of events or, as shown in the book, abandoning a blissful infancy in the goat barn for the uncertain honour of embracing his humanity. Similar to Oedipus, George Giles will ultimately be compelled to leave the city and meet his demise on a desolate mountain known as "the highest rise of Founder's Hill" (Barth, 1967, p. 573).

Humanism has made the goat-boy's objective reliant on language. As a result, George Giles becomes a victim of people who possess the knowledge to manipulate language in order to serve their own agendas. They do this by transforming language into a means to convey supposed timeless truths, which they claim to be the authorities of. Once language is documented, it might attain the status of truth by being unalterable, while the person who originated this fact becomes an annoyance for educational institutions. The university assumes the responsibility of interpreting the cosmos.

Therefore, the notion of parody as a form of literature that may use irony to challenge the established term itself is crucial for comprehending Giles Goat-Boy. George Giles, the Grand Tutor, tragically pays with his life in order to finally develop ironic terms. He has always preferred being to teaching, particularly as a hero who favours acts over words. Great "Mathematical PsychoProtologist" Maximilian Spielman, served as minority leader of the College Senate until being ousted a year before retiring and taking on the role of Senior Goatherd on the New Tammany College Farms, raises George Giles, who emerges unhurt from WESCAC's "Belly," whereas all others are consumed and left psychologically incapacitated due to radiation exposure. Like Oedipus, George Giles is reared amid cattle, and his instructor, a modern-day Chiron to an ancient Achilles, tries to teach him Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "state of nature." Nevertheless, because of the novel's Christian and mythical parodies, it makes the hero's destiny seem inevitable, even though he is innocent and unaware of his fate. As with Ebenezer Cooke, he never learns the ways of the world and stays with the goats until he is fourteen. Giles, upon registering as a student and receiving his WESCAC assignments, eventually reaches Commencement Gate and ascends to the position of Grand Tutor. His lack of awareness regarding the impossibility of differentiating between his own free will and his predetermined destiny poses a thought-provoking challenge to others. As a result, they

either develop a strong affection or intense animosity towards him, transforming into fervent admirers or merciless persecutors.

George Giles' circular work card, given to him by WESCAC, has a unique phrase in each of its four quadrants on the front side: Everyone either passes or fails. Alternatively, this might be interpreted as "All Pass All Fail" (Barth, 1967, p. 574). George faces a double bind while trying to comply with this seemingly contradictory "command" (Barth, 1967, p. 574). He will pass everyone if he tries, and he will fail everyone if he doesn't. Everyone will pass or fail if he doesn't do either. According to WESCAC, it looks like that George's endeavours will eventually be pointless, regardless of what he decides to do, since the outcome for the pupils or mankind will remain unchanged: they will either succeed or fail or experience both or neither. Nevertheless, this understanding would prevent the possibility of heroism. As George Giles has embarked on a journey to become a hero, the main part of the narrative must focus on his efforts to discover the correct "Seek the Answers" (Barth, 1967, p. 574) to WESCAC's demands.

On a fundamental level, these "Answers" correspond to the concluding messages in the Old and New Testaments. During the first phase of his Grand Tutorship, George establishes a definitive differentiation between "Passage" and "Failure," symbolising deliverance and condemnation, as well as virtue and wickedness. Nonetheless, in the next stage, he maintains that "Passage" and "Failure" are fundamentally the same. Both approaches have political significance since West Campus and East Campus, embodied by WESCAC and EASCAC, respectively, stand in opposition to each other, symbolising the clash between capitalism and communism. Consequently, the delicate balance in intercollegiate relations between the two institutions, known as détente, is significantly disrupted. The Grand Tutor's impact on New Tammany's general methods in the West leads to two almost complete disasters. George Giles is forced to contemplate his assumptions for the first time. However, his deep thoughts and emotional pain, as he tries to reconcile the pursuit of knowledge with the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, only reveal to him the contradictory and apparently unsolvable character of his "Assignment":

> That circular device on my Assignment-sheet - beginning less, endless, infinite equivalence - constricted my reason like a torture-tool from the Age of Faith. Passage was Failure, and Failure Passage; yet Passage was Passage, Failure Failure! Equally true, none was the Answer; the two were not different, neither were they the same; and true and false, and same and different - unspeakable! Unnamable! Unimaginable! Surely my mind must crack! (Barth, 1967, pp. 532–533)

Due to his mission, Giles is no longer able to understand the last messages of the Old and New Testaments in chronological order, with one message replacing the other. Instead, they have evolved into rational options that require harmonisation. From Giles' perspective, which is either mythical or timeless, the opposing force has the ability to readily disrupt rational thinking. As Grand Tutor, George Giles not only fails to perform his duty, but he also represents the tragic reality that any fixed opinion stops people from

learning more about history and being creative. In an attempt to find a solution that avoids confronting this reality, George Giles must transform himself into a caricature of his own identity as the originator of a religious belief system.

However, the only viable option in the current pursuit of truth in the human imagination may be to use parody by being a parody. After causing two almost disastrous events for the Western world, George Giles decides to take the only available action: he abandons his idealistic beliefs and his desire for heroic success in favour of a relativistic stance. This decision, unfortunately, allows him to perform his task and follow the pattern of heroism. He once again traverses WESCAC's Belly, accompanied by Anastasia, the lady who both loves him and represents connection or relativism. During this journey, he impregnated her, resulting in the birth of their son, who would propagate Gilesianism across all universities. Therefore, a state of balance between contrasting elements is attained by relinquishing one's own desires and interests: "I the passer, she the passage, we passed together, and together cried, "Oh, wonderful!" Yes and No. In the darkness, blinding light! The end of the University! Commencement Day!" (Barth, 1967, p. 549).

In the "Postscript to the Posttape", the author questions the legitimacy of the sombre "Posttape" by questioning its writer "suddenly shifts to what can most kindly be called a tragic view of His life and campus history" (Barth, 1967, p. 574). The Author, who claims to have become a dedicated follower of Gilesianism, is primarily concerned with the teachings rather than the personal qualities of George Giles. In this passage, Barth subtly mocks his role as the book's author, emphasising his prioritisation of the written word above the character he has brought to life via his writing. This parody is further emphasised by a concluding "Footnote to the Postscript to the Posttape," (Barth, 1967, p. 573), seemingly written by the editor-in-chief of the book. The editor-in-chief suggests that the nature of the book may be questionable by commenting on it: "the type of the typescript pages of the document entitled 'Postscript to the Posttape' is not the same as that of the 'Cover-Letter to the Editors and Publisher'" (Barth, 1967, p. 574). The only remaining document in the text is purportedly authored by the Author.

4. UNRELIEBLE NARRATION

Unreliable narration is a key to the overall interpretation of fiction writing. Narration operates as a contextual source according to which the reader forms some idea of how the narrative should be read or does not form any idea a. The reader begins exploring the text without any proof. Writers use several literary techniques to generate unexpected turns in the storyline and complex personalities. One instance of such a method is the "unreliable narrator". Although the phrase "unreliable narrator" was coined by literary critic Wayne C. Booth in his 1961 book The Rhetoric of Fiction (Booth, 1983, p. 158), such narrators have existed for centuries. Geoffrey Chaucer used a range of untrustworthy narrators in his work *The Canterbury Tales*, such as the "Wife of Bath", who boasts and exaggerates. An unreliable narrator often narrates the tale from a first-person perspective; however, there are noteworthy outliers like Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* (1939), which employs a restricted third-person point of view. The world's most popular mystery book employs an unidentified narrator who presents the reader with several perspectives of the possible murderers (and victims) confined on an island.

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In defining the term, Booth perceives unreliable narrators as those who express views and perspectives that are different from those of the implied author "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (that is, the standards that the author implicitly sets), unreliable when he does not" (Booth, 1983, pp. 158–159). However, the term refers to a character in a story who cannot be trusted to convey events or provide an objective perspective accurately. An unreliable narrator is a storyteller who intentionally or unintentionally confuses readers. Many individuals lack reliability due to various situations, inherent character defects, or psychological challenges. Occasionally, a narrator may conceal essential details from readers, or they could intentionally deceive or divert their attention.

Efforts have been undertaken to categorise unreliable narrators. In a 1981 research, William Riggan examined four distinct categories of unreliable narrators, emphasising the first-person narrator, the most prevalent kind of unreliable narration. Nevertheless, Riggan categorises unreliable narration into four distinct categories: "the picaro, the clown, the madman, and the naif" (Riggan, 1981, pp. 40-79-110–158). According to Riggan a naif narrator:

> Whose nature is revealed through their own narration and without their conscious awareness. The naïf narrator lacks the experience to deal in any far-reaching manner with the moral, ethical, emotional, and intellectual questions which arise from his first ventures into the world and from his account of those ventures (Riggan, 1981, p. 169).

This section examines the portrayal of this kind of unreliable narrator as it reflects the narrator's voice in the novel.

However, Booth asserts that the narrator's unreliability is a result of irony. Irony serves as the formal mechanism via which a sense of separation is established between the perspectives, behaviours, and voice of the untrustworthy narrator and those of the indicated author:

> All of the great uses of unreliable narration depend for their success on far more subtle effects than merely flattering the reader or making him work. Whenever an author conveys to his reader an unspoken point, he creates a sense of collusion against all those, whether in the story or out of it, who do not get that point. Irony is always thus in part a device for excluding as well as for including, and those who are included, those who happen to have the necessary information to grasp the irony, cannot but derive at least a part of their pleasure from a sense that others are excluded. In the irony with which we are concerned, the speaker is himself the butt of the ironic point. The author and reader are secretly in collusion, behind the speaker's back, agreeing upon the standard by which he is found wanting (Booth, 1983, p. 304)

A very clear irony can be perceived when George firmly believes that he holds the position of the Grand Tutor. Consequently, he thinks any instructions given by a Grand

Tutor should be accurate. As a result, he never considers the potential that his own perspective may be influenced by personal opinions and, therefore, prone to mistakes. However, due to the predetermined nature of his sad destiny, which is not foretold by a divine oracle but rather determined by his father - WESCAC, the novelist John Barth - he is unable to consider the idea of being incorrect. George Giles may be considered a parody of the tragic protagonist since he lacks the knowledge and ability to determine the correctness of his commands. The decisive irony lies in the question of whether they can be accurate, given that the protagonist lives in a moral reality that is not conducive to paradoxical but productive actions but rather in the abstract realm of a university.

Ironically, Giles embarks on his journey with a multitude of essentially naive beliefs:

> He seeks connection with the 'infrahuman' (hoping that his rather special qualifications as goat-boy will help) and poses various sorts of 'universal doctrine' in his confrontation with the all generating void. But what he discovers is a void which is not all-generating, but which is Ultimate Paradox. All hope for absolute meaning is shattered . . . Because the world is ultimately unfathomable, in the sense of its being made up of interfused polarities, interlocked paradoxes, what the hero has to offer is not a philosophical doctrine but certain aesthetic principles. Giles discovers that there are no answers, but also that this discovery can in itself be a partial answer by forming the subject matter of art (Thomas, 1973, p. 721).

An analysis of *Giles Goat-Boy* demonstrates that Barthian readers must deem the novel's narrator unreliable a priori. This conclusion is based on the fact that the novel and its narrator incite distrust. Unreliable narration in *Giles Goat-Boy* also arises from its narrator's naivety. Barth has "created a *naif* who is not so much naive as ignorant of human affairs, a boy raised as a goat far from the world of men" (Tilton, 1970, p. 93). This naïve individual aims to uncover the true meaning of being the son of man. Mistakenly believing that WESCAC is his father and that the present international tension between East and West is the issue he is meant to settle, Giles impulsively and recklessly jumps in and almost creates a catastrophe before realising his actual purpose. The naif goes through a maturity and self-awareness process that results in an understanding of the facts of life and a discovery that the real crisis is one of spirituality inherent in human nature.

On the other hand, the R.N.S. chronicles the exploits of Billy Bocksfuss as he embarks on his journey towards becoming a hero. Billy, who was raised by the humanitarian intellectual Max Spielman, goes through a self-aware phase of human adolescence. This is brought about by various emotional and imaginative experiences. These experiences include interactions with Lady Creamhair, who is revealed to be his mother, Virginia Hector. Billy also relates to both heroic and villainous characters from stories like "Brothers Gruff". He encounters George Herrold, the African American caretaker of the Campus Library, and participates in a condensed educational program led by Max, which leads to the development of consciousness of one's historical identity, including social, political, cultural, philosophical, and religious aspects "who you are,

nobody knows […] But what you are – that's what you got to hear now. It's the history you got to understand" (Barth 56). This process of self-realisation involves his symbolic marriage to Anastasia, who stands for the Earth Goddess, in union with which Giles experiences the creative force of human love, which brings him to full awareness of the nature of man, so overcoming Bray, who stands for the dragon requires keeping man back from full awareness of life and acceptance of human nature and man's fate.

Billy the child transforms into George the freshman, whose vibrant imagination gives rise to everlasting yearnings: "How can a person stand it, not to be. . . marvelous?" (Barth, 1967, p. 82). He decided to dedicate his life to becoming a hero "If a man knows he's a hero, can't he always find himself a dragon?" (Barth, 1967, p. 58). Giles engages in several disciplines such as physics, politics, economics, sex, psychology, philosophy, and American history via interactions with individuals like the Rexfords, the Hectors, Anastasia, Eierkopf, the Sears, Peter Greene, and Croaker, as he prepares for matriculation through the Trial by Turnstile and Scrapegoat Grate. The narrative then revolves around his endeavours to accomplish his valiant tasks (seven missions must be completed promptly), vanquish the dragon-like computer WESCAC, and unveil the significance of existence to his students.

However, Barth has questioned the customary practices of interpreting his story since the narrator starts and concludes unexpectedly. Barth delays the introduction of the narrative of George Giles for around twenty-three pages. Instead, he presents a review from the publisher about the various responses of his editors to the manuscript titled R.N.S "The Revised New Syllabus" which contains the story of George Giles. After the Publisher's Disclaimer, there is a foreword in the form of a cover letter written by J.B., the author, who denies any responsibility for the manuscript's authorship. However, he identifies himself as an editor of authentic recordings that were entrusted to him by Stoker Giles, the son of the Giles whose will the reader would need to face and react to in their own manner. Following the conclusion of the R.N.S., "A Posttape, a Postscript to the Posttape", and a Footnote to the Postscript accompany the story to the Posttape. These additional elements raise scepticism about the reliability of the inconclusive conclusions made in the R.N.S.

Nevertheless, when the reader questions the distinct identities of the publisher and John Barth, they also begin to wonder about the division between authorship and authenticity. Simply stated, while the reader may not doubt the authorship of the Author's "Cover-Letter," they should doubt its authenticity. Barth did not receive the text of The Revised New Syllabus, but instead authored it himself. Furthermore, he never considered relinquishing his position to assume the role of an apostle for Gilesianism, since he is the very founder of this belief system. Although readers may not dispute the veracity of the "Publisher's Disclaimer," they should query its own author.

Nonetheless, the confusion about the author's identity, or the renunciation of personal authority, is what really guarantees the book's apparent neutrality or authenticity. The readers must, therefore, repudiate it: not only John Barth but even Stoker Giles, the son of the Grand Tutor, who claims to have been the conscientious editor of the book while WESCACAC wrote the real content. WESCAC does, however, also deny being the author, which makes sense because The Revised New Syllabus is

written from the first-person narrative perspective—that of the Grand Tutor. Moreover, Giles Goat-Boy is arranged in "Reels," like a tape recorder, implying that it is not really a written work. At this point, the question of authorship finishes its whole cycle. The Grand Tutor asserts that he is the creator of the book only because he is the protagonist of its narrative. He was brought into existence by WESCAC, which in turn was created by the author. In their role as the Creator, the author maintains that they were transformed, or rather, reimagined by the Grand Tutor.

The R.N.S. is specifically intended to disrupt conventional reading patterns by instructing the reader on the ever-evolving criteria for literary structure. The linear progression established by the typical quest is disrupted by the existence of cycles, which compel both the reader and George to backtrack and revisit the same territory in a new manner. George is searching for "the path" to Commencement to preserve studentdom. Although he lacks certainty on the definition of Commencement, he tries to create an idealism that will enable him to succeed and instruct others on how to succeed. He struggles to amalgamate his experiences yet makes an effort to synthesise them. The first endeavour to enforce the specific structure he ultimately achieves onto others results in personal discontentment and societal chaos. Therefore, he makes another attempt with like outcomes. Following two unsuccessful and contrasting educational phases, his third attempt results in a unique synthesis. He suddenly understands during an epileptic fit in George's Gorge, and a profound realisation occurs in a spiritual encounter, happening instantaneously in an intricate argumentative embrace in WESCAC's Belly. George discovers no definitive "Answer" or "the way" but an unsustainable and uncommunicable path.

For a short while, the reader also experiences a synthesis, even a hero, as when George successfully wins Anastasia, eliminates his adversary Harold Bray, and is recognised as the Grand Tutor among his students, the presence of conflicting elements in the last frame fragments weakens the validity of such a judgement. The reader of *Giles Goat-Boy* must independently decipher the meaning. George is tasked with addressing the complex combination of conflicting voices and ideas that make up the universe of the R.N.S. The reader, in turn, is supposed to react not only to this complex combination but also to the one that defines the book as a whole. Giles' quest for the "Answer" that would save the student community produces knowledge, but he cannot articulate either his knowledge or the temporary understanding he gains about the enigma of life. The work does not provide a definitive answer that will shed light on the experience it presents. Due to the simplicity of some phrases, a reader may be ensnared in their pursuit of the "Key". In a word, it is the default of objectivity, the narrator's violation of the reader's expectation for adherence to norms of truth and reliability in reporting of events.

5. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of metafiction is to emphasise the contrast between the actual reality and the imaginary realm depicted in a literary work. Metafiction serves the purpose of satirising established literary genre norms, challenging audience assumptions, uncovering truths, or providing a perspective on the human experience. Thus, this paper's investigation of metafictional aspects, such as parody as intertextual and unreliable

narration, reveals Barth's original storytelling approach and encourages readers to question narrative bounds.

Barth exposes the reader to the intense interaction that arises from the characters' rhetorical statements and eliminates the reliable authorial voice, laying the responsibility of interpretation on the reader. The author puts the reader in a similar situation to the protagonist, George, where both are required to face form. One must attentively consider the conflicting arguments presented by different characters, analyse their components, evaluate each component in relation to the overall argument and light of personal experience, and strive to distinguish between what is legitimate and what is deceptive.Characters embody paradoxes, as well as the stances they assert and uphold throughout their internal and interpersonal debates.

Barth often creates parodies of mythology thinking by locating them in a framework of contemporary life, thus creating the illusion of reality. This interplay of reality and fiction is a major theme in *Giles Goat-Boy*. Parody, in fact, is one of the most consistent metafictional elements in the novel. It is clear that Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* uses several effective metafictional elements to create a work that discusses its literary heritage and contemporaries while also addressing its own production through the lens of a human story between its characters.

Overall, employing metafictional elements to analyse *Giles Goat-Boy* serves as a testament to how Barth challenges traditional storytelling conventions and encourages his readers to interact with the material more profoundly. By blurring the distinctions between the intersecting strata of fiction and reality, as well as the conventional narrative structures between the author, the character, and the reader, Barth's metafictional technique pushes readers to scrutinise the essence of the narrative.

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i Quoted in Ugowe's *The Teachings and Sayings of Jesus Christ.*