

Love's Labours Won

The Erotics of Contemporary Parody



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"Intertextuality" denotes not a state of affairs between texts, but the result of semiotic and deconstructive approaches to texts. It is, therefore, a historically founded literary phenomenon which—like all new approaches to texts—nevertheless contends, at least implicitly, that past perspectives on the interrelationship among texts are wrong. Such a contention is valid as long as the practitioner of intertextuality remains conscious of its epistemological limitations. One must keep an ironic distance from one's own fascination with intertextuality, always regarding it as a new method and not as a new "weltanschauung"—even if intertextuality calls the state of reality into question in the name of fiction. The very term *intertextuality* as such is in need of deconstruction insofar as it seems to presuppose the existence of discrete texts among which multiple influences can be noted. But actually the term is meant to convey the idea of overlapping textual systems which defy classification and allow for chains of signifiers to freely constitute themselves as so many fictional worlds. These fictional worlds seem to be all there is to those who agree with Raymond Federman that "there cannot be any truth nor any reality exterior to fiction" (12).

At first glance it seems as though the question of parody that is necessarily raised when one surveys contemporary American fiction cannot be approached intertextually. For parody presupposes first, that on the level of the text both the literary model and its parody should be discrete and that this particular quality should be marked as such; second, that on the authorial level the intention of the later author to parody the earlier text is a given and will become obvious to the reader; and, finally, that on the level of reception the reader will recognize citations from and allusions to the prior text in the later one. These parodic features require the author and the reader to be (to a greater or lesser extent) connoisseurs of a certain literary tradition; yet this tradition has to be regarded in strictly diachronic fashion and cannot be represented as a number of overlapping textual systems. Otherwise, the opportunity to establish hierarchies of texts would be lost, and without such hierar-

chies no evaluative attitude—for instance, the traditional mocking or denigrating attitude of the parodist—would be possible. Thus, the need for the author's parodic intention to become obvious in the text also seems to defy the concept of intertextuality, since the parodist appropriates the privileged position of historical heir, even when he considers himself aesthetically inferior to his model. And since intertextuality attempts to dissolve any distinct borderlines between texts, the claim for discreteness between at least two texts, which is necessary to define a parodic relationship, once more seems to indicate the necessity of a diachronic textual approach.

This essay nevertheless seeks to show that, as contemporary American literature has definitely absorbed intertextual tendencies and strategies to the point where they redefine the aesthetic value of texts as such, the traditional concept of parody has had to give way to a broader concept whose distinguishing feature can be seen as the attempt to recast, in seemingly synchronic fashion, the diachronic tradition of parody. Due to the particular history of the idea of parody in America, this process of recasting not only took place here (rather than in Europe, especially in France, where semiotic and deconstructive approaches to literature did, after all, come into being), but spread almost like wildfire, so that one may venture to say that—after the eighteenth century—a new parodic age is upon us. I would like to suggest that contemporary American parody should not be perceived as presenting a polemical approach to the literary model (or models) it is concerned with, but rather as entering into a seemingly erotic relationship with the prior text. The basic condition for the emergence of such an erotic relationship is a shift in the parodist's concern, from the style of a prior text (a literary concern that spawned much of Russian formalism) to the whole body of that text. The single features of the prior text become less important than the challenge to its existence as such. This recent change in the parodist's attitude coincides with the interest in margins demonstrated by those practitioners of intertextuality who locate significance, either more traditionally, in the interstices between distanced texts, or more radically, somewhere "outside" or "beneath" the tissue of literary interconnections altogether. This change may be the result of unconscious influence (the *zeitgeist*), or of the conscious struggle to meet the challenges implicit in a theory of intertextuality.

Two specific examples—a comparison of *Beowulf* (eighth century) and John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971), as well as a comparison of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915) and John Hawkes's *The*

Blood Oranges (1971)—shall serve to demonstrate that a description of parody in erotic terms can supplant a diachronically based definition of the term with one of supposed synchrony, and that this supposed synchrony is indeed the artistic outcome of the historical interdependence between contemporary American writing and the conscious formation of intertextual strategies. However, the two comparisons will also point to a difference within this new conception of parody which may ultimately serve to illustrate both its dangers and its possibilities. Without attempting to evaluate the following two terms along traditional lines, I would like to call Gardner's form of parody *regressive*, and that of Hawkes *progressive*. The reason why an evaluation of these terms should be initially suspended must be seen precisely in the synchronic aspect provided by intertextuality to the parodies of these authors. The dissolution of parody's diachronic features forbids any immediate use of synonyms such as "anachronistic" or "epigonal" for regressive parody, and "utopian" or "innovative" for progressive parody. Instead, the outcome of the subsequent analysis deserves adumbration at this point. *Regressive* and *progressive* will reveal themselves as opposing, yet not complementary, terms. They function on different levels of awareness. Whereas the term *regressive* relates to the moral and, by extension, traditional aspects of a text, *progressive* texts strive to be independent as texts, treating the prior text as the unaccountable Other. They suggest an encounter on equal terms; they engage literary tradition in order to overcome its forbidding impact. The erotics of progressive parody signify the attempt to do away with the hierarchical, patriarchal aspects of texts; the erotics of regressive parody signify a succumbing to that hierarchy and paternalism. Therefore, regressive parody tends to turn to canonized texts (*Beowulf*), while progressive parody prefers more canonically problematic, "comparable" texts (*The Good Soldier*).

What is meant by "the erotics of parody" is an evaluating extension of, say, Linda Hutcheon's definition of modern parody. In *A Theory of Parody* she states that "unlike what is more traditionally regarded as parody, the modern form does not always permit one of the texts to fare any better or worse than the other. It is the fact that they *differ* that this parody emphasizes and, indeed, dramatizes" (31). I refer to this difference as erotic because it implies in the emotional stance of the later writer towards the earlier text (and its author) a mixture of devotion (or homage) and aggression (or mockery)—the emotional attitude bringing the earlier text up to date, as it were. However, this definition seems to be geographically, rather than historically, delimited: what Hutcheon calls

"modern parody" may indeed be a specifically American phenomenon—one, moreover, that has begun to influence recent European literature as well. The reasons for the development of this particular kind of contemporary parody lie in the American writer's attitude towards tradition as such, especially towards European tradition. Many contemporary American writers are steeped in European literary lore; in fact their knowledge very often is almost encyclopedic. However, they relate to the *whole* literary tradition, not, say, to Homer as opposed to Dante, or to Shakespeare as opposed to Milton. This attitude of general homage at the same time requires constant rebellion: it creates a love-hate relationship. Therefore, American writers have always more or less attempted to treat the parodied text as if it were another body, as if its author could be "met." American contemporary writers whose distinguishing feature is self-reflexivity have let this love-hate relationship determine the narrative structure of their texts, inscribing the parodied together with the parody into the text and thus redefining the genre of parody from an internal, yet generalizing, point of view.

In *Grendel*, John Gardner retells the Beowulf legend from the monster's point of view. This shift of perspective is made possible by the historical development of philosophy, psychology, and the natural sciences that has taken place in the eleven centuries that have elapsed between the composition of the Old English epic and the twentieth-century novel. In seemingly postmodernist fashion, Gardner transforms the effects of this historical development into the causes for the fictional development of his "medieval" novel. The monster Grendel can be regarded with sympathy—a result helped along by the first-person narrative point of view—because he has to cope with theories historically beyond the possible scope of his understanding. On the one hand, Gardner implicitly denounces the Middle Ages as "the dark ages," when people believed in monsters as representatives of the devil and endowed them with terrifying supernatural features, although in fact these features were nothing but the projections of their own fear of the future. On the other hand, the empathy established between the main character and the author constitutes an emotional basis from which Gardner then attempts to criticize present life and art. Gardner lets the cultural assets of his own age parody an earlier time as represented in an early text while hardly parodying that text *as* a text. He can then use *Beowulf* as the moral framework within which he implicitly criticizes present-day life as inhuman, unheroic, and ugly. In other words, he attempts to make the parody work both

ways. If, according to Gardner, the Scyldings of Heorot hall should not have boasted of their humanity as compared to the outcast spirit whom they themselves had alienated, then neither should the people of today pride themselves upon their advancements in the realm of human learning, which serve, at best, to illuminate their past mistakes. Gardner's double-edged parody contaminates past and present, fiction and reality, and, without superficially calling into question the discreteness of the two texts that have seemingly entered into a parodic relationship, actually creates an erotic fusion between them. "Eros," in this sense, suggests an undifferentiated intermingling rather than a mutual attraction of texts.

All of the heroes of the Beowulf legend appear in Gardner's novel as either brutal, unthinking men of action, like the legendary hero himself, or as thoughtful yet melancholy weaklings, like King Hrothgar. Interesting exceptions are the men of words, like the king's spokesman, Unferth, and the minstrel. Unferth, who in the legend "sits at the feet" of the king and combines the duties of entertainer, orator, satirist, and general counselor, might be called the representative historian, and the minstrel the exemplary artist. In Gardner's novel, Unferth, a privileged yet treacherous man and an unpunished fratricide to boot, becomes the image of self-reflexive modern man. He is the only one, before Beowulf, who dares to attack the monster, even searching him out in his subterranean cave. Grendel, however, despises Unferth for his ceaseless talking and, to the would-be hero's chagrin, spares him time and again. Grendel despises words, yet he falls prey to the minstrel's songs. For the minstrel's songs probe the possible, whereas Grendel, who knows that his whole existence depends on nothing so much as the author's words, has to accept the words he is given as an unshakable reality. By talking—orality at least having the advantage of appearing spontaneous as opposed to the written word—he continually attempts to create a distance between himself and the world: "Talking, talking. Spinning a web of words, pale walls of dreams, between myself and all I see" (4).

Since Gardner's present-day monster, unlike the medieval Grendel, can no longer be believed to exist, he must be constituted through the text. The first-person narrative thus gains an existential function: for Grendel, it is literally life-giving. So, in other ways, are the songs of the minstrel or Shaper, as he is called in Gardner's novel:

His fingers picked infallibly, as if moved by something beyond his power, and the words stitched together out of ancient songs, the

scenes interwoven out of dreary tales, made a vision without seams, an image of himself yet not-himself, beyond the need of any shaggy old gold-friend's pay: the projected possible. (42)

To create, through his fiction, an image of himself yet not-himself seems a fair paraphrase of Gardner's artistic credo. The "projected possible," having the potential of becoming real in *Grendel*, seems to make Gardner, like the Shaper, part of his own projected fictional world. Through parody, the author himself wants to partake of an intertextual realm. He not only wants the Old English epic and his own novel to become one; his vision, as the projector of the possible, is to create the text in his own image and, thus, to participate in its fate. When the Shaper in Gardner's novel quotes the first lines of *Beowulf*, moving Grendel to believe in his own future destruction as a possibility, he is identical with the later author who repeats that same song.

This encompassing use of parody poses two questions. First, even in the Old English epic, the deeds of Beowulf become part of the minstrel's song immediately after they are completed—that is, they are cited within the frame of the epic itself:

hwilum cyninges thegn,
 guma gilp-hlaeden, gidda gemyndig,
 se the eal-fela eald-gesegena
 worn gemunde, word other fand
 sothe gebunden. Secg eft ongan
 sith Beowulfes snyttrum styrian
 ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,
 wordum wrixlan. (11.867-74)¹

However, while the process of assimilating life into art in *Beowulf* appears on the surface to be similar to Gardner's procedure, the distinction between deed and word remains unquestionable: indeed, Beowulf could not listen to the song celebrating his heroic deeds were he fulfilling those deeds at the time. Therefore, he is not like Gardner's Grendel, who lives by and through his words because he cannot exist otherwise. Second, in the parodic recension of the ancestral text, the realm of the possible does not pertain to the past in the same way as it does to the present and the future, not even as far as fiction is concerned. For whereas other possible versions of the Beowulf legend could have come into existence at the time of its composition that would have contained a similar outlook on life and art, it is impossible to assume that such a version could still be written today. (This is the problem that Jorge Luis

Borges most conspicuously calls attention to in his story "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote.") Yet regressive parody, such as *Grendel*, always treats the earlier text as the unchangeable Other. It attempts to project itself into the time of the other text at the risk of losing its own identity and becoming totally dependent on the past text. The identity of a progressive parody, on the other hand, consists precisely in its insistence on the present point of view, while treating the past text as if it were contemporary. It is because of this at times painful insistence on its own identity that the progressive parody can point to future narrative possibilities.

When John Hawkes wrote his parody of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* over five decades after that novel appeared, he chose a quotation from the end of the 1915 novel as the motto for his own:

Is there then any terrestrial paradise where, amidst the whispering of the olive-leaves, people can be with whom they like and have what they like and take their ease in shadows and in coolness? (213)

Hawkes's novel attempts to answer this question by placing two couples with a certain resemblance to those portrayed by Ford into just such an environment. Hawkes's characters live in an imaginary southern land called Illyria, a country without seasons, where amidst whispering olive trees they can be with whom they like and have what they like, and take their ease in Dionysian fashion, having sex, drinking wine and playing the grape-tasting game in shadows and in coolness. The novel takes up Ford's longing for a terrestrial paradise, yet only in order to show how the apparently ideal, timeless landscape causes the moral deterioration of its inhabitants.

Ford's novel is set in America and Europe and is itself a parody of one of the main topics of the novels of Henry James, the so-called international theme. Ford's partial parody serves to offset Hawkes's more comprehensive endeavor. Ford's narrator and his wife are from Philadelphia and New England respectively. The other couple, called the Ashburnhams, own an estate in southern England, and the two couples meet in Nauheim, a German spa. Ford reverses the Jamesian pattern, in which American heroes tend to be ignorant of European culture but possessed of laudable moral convictions, while European heroes are sophisticated yet opportunistic. The American narrator of *The Good Soldier* is notoriously unreliable as a character. Florence, his wife, seems to have earned her telling name through her inclination to function as a

sort of walking Guide Bleu and Baedeker rolled into one. The Ashburnhams, on the other hand, lack not culture, but sophistication. In fact, on first meeting Edward Ashburnham, the narrator, in an outburst of jealousy, describes the latter's eyes as "perfectly honest, perfectly straightforward, perfectly, perfectly stupid" (33). While this parodic version of James's international theme reflects a kind of moral reversal, the international setting remains the same—complete with the presence of a third meeting place on the Continent as a stage for the dramatization of differences between England and America. The similar setting serves to bring out the reversal of the values that Ford attaches to Americans and Europeans, whereas in Hawkes's novel the translocation of the plot into an imaginary Illyria ultimately calls into question the attribution of values as such. The parodic series of locations from James through Ford to Hawkes, while it seems to form a progression from wilderness to civilization to terrestrial paradise—at least as far as the American characters are concerned—in fact ends by positing moral chaos as the condition of the new Eden. Hawkes implicitly voices the criticism that American literature still suffers from having replaced a European teleological concept of history with the myth of the virgin land, since for him the tension between the two concepts prevents the constitution of any unified set of values. At the same time, Hawkes's landscape of the imagination attempts to solve this American problem by treating it, ironically, as metaphor rather than "history."

In order to understand what this means, one should not see Ford's *The Good Soldier* simply as a link between James and Hawkes. The novel's unreliable narrator is not simply a continuation of a device developed by James, but also serves as a parody of that device, thus preparing the way for Hawkes's moral chaos to appear as a narrative problem. Ford dissolves the convention of the closed literary model as a necessary precondition for any parody by introducing the parody of a character as unreliable narrator. Normally parody can function only on the basis of two separate yet reliable narrative stances. However, Ford treats the international theme as if it were dependent on narrative instead of cultural values; that is, he opposes and questions two sets of values as if they were constituted through narrative representation. Thus Ford prepares for Hawkes's doubly unreliable narrator, whose unreliability can no longer be understood except when considered from the point of view of his ironic alter ego in the text itself. If Ford's narrator is unreliable because he cannot be trusted to exist exclusively as a "character" within his "tale of passion" (thus the subtitle of the

novel), Hawkes's narrator is doubly unreliable because he assumes the role of narrator and author of the imagined world of Illyria. He not only manipulates the other characters' lives, but also distorts whatever traditional narrative topics he employs to explain himself—whether it be the topic of the pastoral idyl or of the tragic hero or of the Christian saint.

Cyril, Hawkes's narrator, whose last name (like those of the other characters) is never given, attempts to create an erotic idyl by establishing a sexual bond between himself and his wife, Fiona, and the married couple, Hugh and Catherine. Cyril would like their sexual quartet to be timeless, containing cyclical patterns of repetition and change. The two men and the two women can take turns making love to one another while remaining true to each other. The crucial question for Cyril is not one of morality, but of how this quartet can be set up without any loose ends and, even more importantly, how it can be secured and defended against loss of continuity. However, Hugh resents Cyril's machinations; he clings to traditional morals and, in the end, commits more or less accidental suicide. Even after this cataclysm, Cyril is still not ready to give up his plan for perfection. By telling the story of how he attempted to create this timeless erotic idyl to Catherine, who after Hugh's death has had a nervous breakdown and (conveniently for the narrator) refuses to speak, Cyril replaces the experiential idyl with a narrative idyl that is supposed to have similar qualities. This attempt at recasting "life" into narrative must fail, because it is belated, because it is a parody of life; this is not easy for Cyril to understand, since the similar interdependence between repetition and change created in the process of reading or listening to a text does indeed seem to justify his renewed impulse to achieve timelessness.

Cyril's desire is the same as that of his author: he wants to create synchrony within the narrative order. His story seeks to recreate the earlier idyl and, at the same time, to improve it in order to prevent a second failure. Improvement in this case means that Cyril breaks up the chronological sequence of events into short narrative vignettes or chapters and reorders them according to his own principle of emotional coherence. To give an example: when the two couples hold hands, they can never form the circle Cyril craves because Hugh has only one arm. They can only form a line. Since Cyril's plan requires Fiona to be connected with Hugh, the foursome must always hold hands in the following order: Catherine, Cyril, Fiona, Hugh. Now, when Cyril retells the story, he describes a visit he and Fiona had made to an old village church before the reader ever laid eyes on Hugh, so to speak. During this

visit, Cyril at one point notices a life-sized wooden arm protruding over the edge of the pulpit. He points out to Fiona "the comic miracle of the arm in space, the wooden hand that no one would ever hold" (22). When Fiona fails to respond to this comic miracle, he argues to himself that the aesthetic pleasures of the wooden arm might be too subtle, even for the sensitive Fiona. If Fiona misses the comedy, the reader certainly should not, since the narrator implies that this is proof of an inability to perceive aesthetic pleasures. The reader at this point is also ignorant of the wooden arm's importance, and is only asked to note that it is, in some way, significant. Later, Hugh is presented to the reader as having the face of Saint Peter carved into the granite arch of the entrance to the church, and the reader can hardly help but conclude that Cyril is fitting the wooden arm, to which he had earlier drawn attention, into its proper place. By distorting the time sequence, the narrator creates the conditions necessary for the formation of a circle by four persons holding hands before the reader even knows that there is a need for such a circle. Thus Cyril constantly translates his cyclical time concept from life into story, relating it to the synchrony sought by the story's author.

The narrator in Ford's *The Good Soldier* is forced to distinguish between life and story (that is, he becomes a narrator in the first place) only because he never participates in the life story of the other characters. His very narrative presupposes his deficiency as a character. The life of Ford's narrator is completely eventless erotically: to all the women he meets, including his wife, he becomes, as he terms it, a male nurse. In contrast, the life of Edward Ashburnham, the narrator's antagonist and, as he would have it, alter ego, is punctuated by his various love affairs; their chronological sequence provides the only appearance of plot for the narrator's tale, which would otherwise seem to be completely confused. The story thus necessarily ends with Edward Ashburnham's final love, his all-consuming passion for his and his wife's ward, called "the girl." Remembering this episode, which ended with Edward's suicide and the girl's madness, the narrator ruminates about the nature of passion, asking himself why a man would fall in love with one woman after another, each time believing that this time he has found the one woman for him:

It is impossible to believe in the permanence of any early passion. As I see it, at least, with regard to man, a love affair, a love for any definite woman—is something in the nature of a widening of the experience. With each new woman that a man is attracted to there appears to come a broadening of the outlook, or, if you like, an

acquiring of new territory. A turn of the eyebrow, a tone of the voice, a queer characteristic gesture—all these things, and it is these things that cause to arise the passion of love—all these things are like so many objects on the horizon of the landscape that tempt a man to walk beyond the horizon, to explore . . . And yet I do believe that for every man there comes at last a woman—or no, that is the wrong way of formulating it. For every man there comes at last a time of life when the woman who then sets her seal upon his imagination has set her seal for good. He will travel over no more horizons; he will never again set the knapsack over his shoulders; he will retire from those scenes. (108–9)

Ford's novel is constructed in accordance with this argument, or if the listener/reader prefers, in accordance with this belief of the narrator. The novel explores, in widening circles and going back and forth in time, the new features added to Edward's realm of experience by each new passion. The novel thereby manages to do what time denies the narrator's alter ego: it changes the sequence of love affairs into a continuum, or, in other words, it paradoxically manages to make Edward remain faithful to each of his loves. Up to the end Ford's novel thematizes what Cyril, in *The Blood Oranges*, becoming his author's alter ego, seeks to make into the structural principle of "his" characters' lives: the timeless continuum of repetition and change. The final failure of Cyril's design is foreshadowed by the observation of Ford's narrator, borne out by the structure of *The Good Soldier*, that a man's imagination will eventually be sealed to further experience by one final passion; Edward's suicide and the girl's madness are, in a sense, as much a failure of the narrator's imagination to otherwise end his novel as they are an existential failure of the characters themselves.

Hawkes's novel takes up these two tragic events in parodic fashion—with Catherine's nervous breakdown, which is not quite madness, and Hugh's questionable suicide. Hawkes is fascinated by the existential impact of these events and, at the same time, repelled by the narrative treatment they receive. His own novel therefore gives an answer to Ford's in the form of an erotic challenge. He denies the closure that Ford was ultimately willing to accept in the idea of one final passion, and by retelling the whole story in a different fashion—just as his narrator Cyril retells *his* story in a different fashion—he broadens the premises of his pre-text. "A turn of the eyebrow, a tone of the voice, a queer characteristic gesture," the things that, according to Ford, arouse the passion of love, can also be seen as metaphors of authorial strategies. Hawkes the author responds to Ford as in an erotic relationship, bestowing on

that author's novel a fresh meaning by placing it within the enlarged context of Cyril's artistic reconstruction (subject to further interpretations/reconstructions) of his "life." At the same time, however, his own novel attempts to be like that last woman, setting its seal on Ford's novel for good. By having his own narrator revert to his past life story (a story like the one that the narrator of *The Good Soldier* tells, but in which he cannot participate), that is, by having him imitate yet transcend the role of Ford's narrator, Hawkes wants to preclude any further possible rewriting of Ford's novel.

The erotic relationship between texts, which I have portrayed as a love-hate relation, contains the respective authors' will to power as well as "mutual" respect. The will to power is exhibited when the later author makes use of his chronologically privileged position, which permits him to take up, transform, or even mock former literary themes or narrative strategies. However, just as for each individual woman within the string of Edward Ashburnham's mistresses, this privileged position is never secure: there may be yet another, more successful rewriting or parody of the same story, a rewriting that reduces its immediate predecessor's value. The evaluating process may also be reversed when the earlier text gains strength with each rewriting; this might be called an instance of the earlier author's will to power. It may instigate a later parody which is regressive in that its homage appears too complete, lacking the transforming power that would project it into the realm of future fiction. Progressive parody, on the other hand, in attempting to aggressively expand the premises of its pre-text, may not succeed in its project, and may thus lose even the generous reception which homage tends to inspire in the reader, who in any parody poses as the earlier author's alter ego.

An evaluation of regressive or progressive contemporary parody is difficult because it is uncertain whether the author gains or loses by his respective attitude. Yet, insofar as the parodying attitude has become part of the narrative structure of those texts, at least their historical place can be defined. Both regressive and progressive parody are responses provided by contemporary fiction to formation of an intertextual aesthetic. By inscribing his or her own parodic attitude into the text, the author substantiates the text: he or she can then treat the other text as a whole body that—just as a narcissistic mirror image—will reveal the identity of its challenger. Thus, the "death of the author" can be successfully circumvented if the contemporary author subscribes to parody.

On the literal level, contemporary erotic parody is ultimately

paradoxical. While converting parody's diachronic features into supposed synchrony by treating its model as a contemporary text, it nevertheless repeats the diachronic "mistake" (as seen from an intertextual point of view) on another level. In negating the historic distance of the parodied model, contemporary parody implicitly dates itself—coming up as either regressive or progressive, prone either to self-love or self-hatred. Regressive parody, in reverting towards the canonized text, seems to grant its author the joy of identification with his own text, whereas progressive parody subjects its author to the pain of jealousy towards further versions of the parodied text. However, to the extent that the erotic form of regressive identification fails to distinguish between life and art, it must instill morality into art. Although moral fiction is not to be condemned out of hand, it still precludes a truly independent authorial attitude, since moral values depend upon established conventions. Progressive parody, on the other hand, while not without a concern for moral values, must subvert those that exist in order to enhance, rather than diminish, the difference between past and present texts, thus establishing between them a tension which serves to substantiate their separate identities. Progressive parody thus tends to instigate new fictional forms which must either be short-lived or gradually lose their progressive quality, since this quality depends not on social conditions, but on the self-perceived personality of the author. Although our predilections may lie with progressive parody, both forms, by synchronizing a diachronically oriented genre, are responses to the formation of intertextuality in a paradoxical attempt to overcome intertextuality in the name of, and for the sake of, the author.

Note

1. "Then a king's retainer, / A man proved of old, evoker of stories, / Who held in his memory multitude on multitude / Of the sagas of the dead, found now a new song / In words well linked: the man began again / To weave in his subtlety the exploit of Beowulf, / To recite with art the finished story, / To deploy his vocabulary." See *Beowulf: A Verse Translation into Modern English*, trans. Edwin Morgan (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 24.

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