Aristotle writes in chapter 2 of his ‘Poetics’ that “Hegemon of Thasos was the first writer of parodies” (Aristotle 18). He was near contemporary of Aristophanes (c.450 BC–c 388 BC), and, according to Athenaeus’ *The Deipnosophists*, “Hegemon was the author of mock-epics such as the ‘Gigantomachina’ or ‘Battle of the Giants’ (Athenaeus 341).

One significant example of an epic parody of the type associated. Hegemon is the mock-epic known as the *Batrachomyomachia* or ‘Battle of the Frogs and the Mice,’ which was attributed by some to Homer and by others to a ‘Pigres.’ Gilbert Murray’s account of the ‘Batrachomyomachia’ in the section titled ‘Comic Poems’ in his ‘Ancient Greek Literature’ of 1897 describes it as ‘a rather good parody of fighting epic.’ Gilbert’s description of the *Batrachomyomachia* gives some idea of its contents:

“The battle began because a mouse named Psicharpax, flying from a weasel, came to a pond to quench his thirst. He was accosted by a frog of royal race, Physignathos, son of Peleus, who persuaded him to have a ride on his back and see his kingdom. Unhappily a ‘Hydros’—usually water–snake, here perhaps some otter–like animal—lifted its head above the water, and the frog instinctively dived. The mouse perished, but not unavenged. A kinsman saw him from the bank, and from the blood-feud arose a great war, in which the mice had the best of it. At last Athena besought Zeus to prevent the annihilation of the frogs. He tried first thunderbolts and then crabs, which latter were more than mice could stand; they turned and the
war ended” (Murray 51-2). The *Batrachomyomachia* remains the only complete example of an ancient parody of the epic.

According to the information, provided by Householder about the ancients’ use of parody words, one other writer described by Athenaeus as a writer of parodies was Sopater, who was further described as a *phlyakographer*, or “writer of comic dramatic sketches” (Rose15). Athenaeus had quoted from Polemo’s twelfth book of his *Address to Timaeus*, where Polemo had named the sixth–century BC ‘iambograph’ Hipponax of Ephesus and not the fifth–century BC Hegemon as the ‘inventor of parody.’

H. J. Rose writes with reference to his work in his ‘A Handbook of Greek Literature, from Homer to the Age of Lucian,’ after referring to Polemo’s description of Hipponax as the inventor of parody, that it is true that Hipponax’s fragments include the beginning of a poem in Homeric verse, making fun of Eurymedontiades, a glutton, who seems to have been led through a mock-Odyssey of grotesque adventures.

Other forms pertaining to the types of parody known to ancients were called as *cento* or *centones* (a string of quotations, also termed a ‘*quodlibet*’ after the Baroque), which may not be necessarily parodic or comic but which can be used in parody or parodic purposes and *silloi*. These *silloi* (or ‘squint–eyed pieces’ as they have been called in English), were epic poems in mock–Homeric hexameters used to attack philosophical
arguments. Examples have been attributed to both the sixth–century BC Xenophanes of Colophon and to the later Timon of Phlius (c.320 BC–230 BC). Dryden had also spoken of selloi in his ‘Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire’ of 1693 as ‘satyric poems’, full of parodies; that is verses patched up from great poets, and turned in to another sense than their author intended them.

The first usage of the word parody in English cited in the Oxford English Dictionary is in Ben Johnson, in Every Man in His Humour in 1598: “A parodie, a parodie! To make it absurder than it was” (Jonson). The next notable citation comes from John Dryden in 1693, who also appended an explanation, suggesting that the word was not in common use.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE POST-MODERN PERIOD

In 3rd century B. C., the Greek philosopher Menippus of Gadara wrote parodies that troubled the established upper class Greek society. There were two motives behind this writing- philosophical and artistic or literary. Plato established the dialogue form of communication for the spread of philosophy (as per his teacher Socrates’ guidelines), though this style contained very few real dialogues or mixture of many voices. As a teacher, it was Plato’s responsibility to lead his disciples to a pre-decided truth or role. Menippus did away with this type of dialogue and created a writing format containing a mixture of prose and poetry. This format he used to parody the thoughts, ideas and concepts in the established civilisation. Later
on, Menippus was translated by the Roman authors like Varo, Seneca, Lucius and the tradition of parody was established in Latin after Menippus. Mikhail Bakhtin studied Menippus’ tradition of parody in depth and identified some of its salient features in ‘Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics.’ The use of jokes, mockery and rumours instead of serious debate; searching for mental truth and personality through strange dreams, dementia, insanity instead of the state of awakening or consciousness; asking improper questions at improper places and at improper times; searching for truth by means of ordinary common people instead of guru and knowledgeable people and opening new vistas of knowledge through that effort; mixing parodically many genres of literature; mixing the ideal and the real. Just as the established philosophical positions instituted by Plato were parodied due to these writings, even the genres of epic and tragedy established in the Greek tradition were parodied. These two genres attempt to strongly establish the totality and unification of human existence. The parody instituted by Menippus destroys this type of totality and unification while indicating variety and unpredictability.

European culture of the Medieval Age was dominated by the Catholic mentality and feudalism. Therefore, even this established system was communication-less and full of suppression. The governmental hierarchy in feudalism suppressed the voices of the common man. These systems had their festivals, but the common people could participate in them on a
limited basis because they were totally restricted by the hierarchy. Further, these formal, hierarchy-dominated festivals had no place for humour and laughter. Therefore, carnivals or festive parody was the antidote that the mass culture devised on this situation. These carnivals saw common people getting together in any square or market place informally, keeping aside their routine chores for some time and enjoy themselves. In fact, they enjoyed uninhibited freedom of expression against the established systems of the Church and policy within some limitations through enjoyment, mockery, teasing, slang and swearing, eccentric conduct, jokes and parody. Even the restrictions on speech, behaviour, food and drinks, physical and carnal pleasures were much looser in these carnivals. Common man’s voice received expression because of some relaxation from religious and social hierarchy. Even the distinction between the presenters and audience was blurred to a great extent because the audience were allowed to participate in the presentations. These carnivals presented a chaotic, eccentric, parody-based understanding of the incidents in human life. Bakhtin’s analysis of this festive parody is very quintessential. He believes that a common man was almost reborn on a new human level when participating in these festive parodies. They could, on psychological level, experience this new human existence that cut across the hierarchy that relaxed the formal restrictions, that gave equal opportunity to all voices and that was dialogue-based. According to Bakhtin, this parodic expression of mass culture lingers on the
borderline of life and art. It is a part of life but has acquired a shape or dimension by way of sport or enjoyment.

Rabelais (1494-1553), the French writer exploited this festive tradition based on presentation to its fullest potential in his prose piece *Gargantua and Petagruel*, creating a superior, dialogue based, multi-voiced story, as per Bakhtin’s analysis in his book *Rabelais and His World*. *Gargantua and Petagruel* were the mythical demons in Medieval Europe. Rabelais converted them into a king and his son and wove stories around their life. Through hilarious and parodical stories relating to their ancestry, birth, attire, education and adventures, he exposes the emptiness and suppression in the medieval value system. This writing is dedicated to drunkards! Rabelais has compared himself to the great guru Socrates. This analogy indicates that this writing has a potential of bringing out such content that appears coarse but is meaningful within. Moreover, he uses the simile of an onion for his writing. This clearly means if you go on removing layers of skin, finally you are left with nothing! Rabelais had studied extensively the Greek, Roman and Medieval Christian literary and theatrical traditions. He was a supporter of the humanitarian, rational, scientific tradition generated out of the renaissance of knowledge. Rabelais’ stories undoubtedly contain the carnival-like parody of the Medieval destiny-centred and uni-voice system. It is also beyond doubt that we can hear Bakhtin’s echo in his book ‘Rabelais and His World.’ Bakhtin had
found a significant similarity between Medieval religious coercion and Stalin’s coercion in post communist revolution, but instead of writing a parodical story-like prose like Rabelais, Bakhtin, we can say, preferred to write a multi-voiced critical book about festive parody and its uses. Modern literary criticism and aesthetics cannot afford to turn their backs on the glorious traditions of humour and parody in the mass culture.

The Middle Ages is supposed to extend over a rather long period of time ranging from the ninth-century to the fifteen. In popular understanding, the period is often associated with “oppressive tyranny, conservative thought, or primitive material conditions” (Bolton 2) – legacy of Renaissance humanists and neoclassical scholars, who firmly believed that the civilisation of the Middle Ages was barren because it was devoid of classical taste and learning. Humour and parody are, for example, often regarded as very insignificant aspects of Medieval literature, since they cannot prosper within a world characterised by the highly authoritarian and oppressive influence of the Church. Scholarly research of the last few decades, however, appears to be bent more on challenging this idea through a closer study of humorous Medieval texts.

In his *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* of 1922, German scholar Paul Lehmann stated that “the Mediaeval parody could be comical without serious ridicule and that when the Mediaeval parodists did mock something it was something it was generally not the holy text but some misuser of it”
(Quoted in Rose 147). After defining his use of parody in this way, Lehmann gave an example of such Mediaeval parody the *Cena Cypriani* (or ‘Feast of Cyprian’), which he first describes as “an old Christian parody of large dimensions inherited and renewed in ninth century” (Ibid 25).

Bakhtin refers to *Cena Cypriani* in his essay ‘From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse’ in positive terms: “At the very dawning of the Middle Ages there appeared a whole stories of remarkable parodic works. Among them is the well–known *Cena Cypriani* or *Cyprian Feast*, a fascinating gothic symposium” (Bakhtin 70). Bakhtin goes on to describe its contents as carnivalistic as well as parodic: “The entire Bible, the entire Gospel was as it were cut up in to little scraps, and these scraps were arranged in such a way that a picture emerged of a grand feast at which all the personages of sacred history from Adam and Eve to Christ and his Apostles eat, drink and make merry.’ In this work a correspondence of all details to Sacred Writ is strictly and precisely observed, but at the same time, the entire Sacred Writ is transformed in to carnival, or more correctly in to Saturnalia. That is *Pileata Biblia*” (Ibid 70).

Bakhtin goes on to speak specifically of the parody found in the carnivals, and to give one of several extended descriptions of it and its carnivalistic nature: “Parody, as we have already noted, is an integral element in Menippean satire and in all carnivalised genres in general. To the pure genres (epic, tragedy) parody is originally alien; to the carnivalised
genres it is, on the contrary, originally inherent. In antiquity, parody was inseparably linked to a carnival sense of the world. Parodying is the creation of a *Decrowning double*; it is that same “world turned inside out” (Ibid 127).

In his essay of 1940, Bakhtin states that “in Rome, parody was an obligatory aspect of funeral as well as of triumphant laughter (both were of course rituals of the carnivalistic style)” (Ibid 128).

In carnival, parodying was employed widely, in diverse forms and degrees: various images (for example, carnival pairs of various sorts) parodied one another variously and from various points of view; it was like an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees. Bakhtin adds with special reference to Dostoyevsky: “parodying double has become a rather common phenomenon in carnivalised literature” (Ibid 128).

Bakhtin also comments on the importance of ‘carnival square’ in the same essay: “The main area for carnival acts was the square and the streets adjoining it. To be sure, carnival also invaded the home; in essence it was limited in time only and not in space; carnival knows neither stage nor footlights. But the central area could only be the square, for by its very idea carnival *belongs to the whole people*, it is *universal*, and *everyone* must participate in its familiar contact. The public square was the symbol of communal performance” (Ibid 159-60).
According to Bakhtin, parody is just one of the cultural forms that draw upon the popular energies of the carnival. “In late Medieval and Early Modern Europe especially”, he argues, “the popular institution of the carnival, with its feasting, its celebratory enactments of the overthrowing of authority, and its militantly anti-authoritarian debunking of sacred and official rituals and languages, provides the social ground for the grotesque realism, mimicries, multiple registers, and parodies to be found in Rabelais and his near-contemporaries Cervantes and Shakespeare” (Ibid 129). Following Bakhtin, parody indeed emerges from a particular set of social and historical circumstances; it is mobilised to debunk official seriousness, and to testify to the relativity of all languages, be they the dialects of authority or the jargons of guilds, castes or priesthood.

Bakhtin’s following comments on the carnival square and what he sees to have been its role in Mediaeval life also relate it to the way in which the carnival may be described as a parodying ‘double’ of normal life: “It could be said (with certain reservations, of course) that a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, two lives: one was the official life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was the life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of every sacred, full of debasing obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both these lives were
legitimate, but separated by strict temporal boundaries” (Ibid 129). Previously, Bakhtin had also said that: “in the Middle Ages, the vast comic and parodic literature in vernacular languages and in Latin was, one way or the another, connected with the ‘Festival of Fools” with free “paschal laughter” (Ibid 129).

Bakhtin depicts Mediaeval parody as not being specially negative but universal in its laughter, and, unlike those who have viewed the comic as something negative, separates mediaeval parody from a concern with only the negative side of things because its parody is supposed to have treated everything as comic: “Mediaeval parody, especially before the twentieth century, was not concerned with the negative, the imperfections of specific cults, ecclesiastic orders, or scholars which could be the object of derision and destruction. For the Mediaeval parodist, everything without exception was comic. Laughter was as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology. It was the world’s second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away. It was, as it were, the festive aspect of the whole world in all its elements, the second revelation of the world in play and laughter” (Ibid 84, 86).

Since parody is a late form in literature, it is strange that one of the best should be the work of “Father of English poetry.” The explanation, of course, is that Chaucer ended a period rather than began one; he was, like Dante, a late Medieval writer; hence the sophistication of Sir Thopas. Laura
H. Loomis writes in Bryan and Dempster’s *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*:

“Sir Thopas has no one source...... Irrepressibly comic and creative, it touches lightly as a *boterflye* on a variety of romances and other poems. Chaucer may have read fifteen to twenty of the 113 Middle English romances that are still extant.... They nearly all indulge in extreme exaggerations, especially of the hero’s prowess; they make excessive use of insignificant detail; they show the same bourgeois absurdities in setting forth knight-errantry. Above all, they use the same worn devices of minstrel style, the same stereotyped diction..... The manner even more than the matter.... was what aroused Chaucer’s derisive wit to parody” (Macdonald 3).

In the fourteenth century, Chaucer had himself contributed to the native English parodic tradition a work that many critics still recognise to be one of the most fundamental cornerstones of that tradition, in the form of his humorous imitation of many ‘romances of prys’, in his *Rime of Sir Thopas* (c.1387). One could also assert that Middle English works as rich and varied as *Sawles Warde* (c.1175), *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c.1225), *Dame Sirith* (c.1250), Middle English lyrics such as *Alysoun* and *Wynter wakeneth al my care* (c.1314-25), *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* (c.1475), and even the masterfully constructed and openly humorous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c.1375) stood in potentially and at times even explicitly parodic relationships *vis-a-vis* earlier literary
works. The First lengthy parody in post-Chaucerian literature was *The Rehearsal (1671)*, a mock-heroic play mostly by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham.

It seems that parody didn’t appeal to the ancient Hebrews or the early Christians; at least there is no evidence of it in either the Old or the New Testament. The Egyptians were also immune—*The Book of the Dead* was more their kind of thing. But the Greeks, an invincibly secular and rational people, were addicts. “The rhapsodists who strolled from town to town to chant the poems of Homer,” Isaac D’Israeli writes in *Curiosities Of Literature*, “were immediately followed by another set of strollers—buffoons who made the audiences merry by the burlesque turn which they gave to the solemn strains” (D’Israelis 11). The most famous of these Homeric burlesques was the *Batrachomyomachia*, or *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, which describes in elevated style the quaint arms and heroic exploits of the tiny warriors. But the literary form which gave us the word was the *parodia* of the Athenian drama, contained in the satyr play which followed the tragedies and was performed by the same actors wearing grotesque costumes. The only surviving examples are the *Cyclops* of Euripides and *The Searching Satyrs*, attributed to Sophocles, but the most celebrated was the *Gigantomachia*, which delighted the Athenians even though they had just received news of the catastrophic fate of the Syracusan expedition. It was Aristophanes, however, who first took the giant step
from burlesque to true parody, with his satirical imitations of Aeschylus, Euripides and Socrates in such comedies as *The Frogs*, *the Birds* and *the Acharnians*.

At all events, fifth–century Athens displayed an extraordinary tolerance and enjoyment of parody, which both seized upon the serious genres and permitted them to coexist. It is possible to trace the presence of parody in the writing of Plato, produced in fourth century. The potential for parody in the Socratic dialogue is apparent, since the form characteristically involves Socrates’ interlocutors setting out their case before it is shredded by their interrogator. Again we need to make the usual caveat: the exact nature of parody is often difficult to determine given that the texts of Socrates’ opponents have usually not survived. But it is useful to recognise that parody is a formal possibility in Plato’s writings, since its presence indicates the profoundly serio-comic aspect of his writing, which will serve as an important model for later writing, both Greek and Roman.

Plato is one possible ancestor for a tradition of serio-comic writing which is heavily dependent upon parody, and which continued through the Hellenistic and Roman worlds and into the Christian era. This tradition has come to be known as the ‘menippea’ or ‘menippean satire’, after the Greek writer Menippus, whose work was widely imitated but which only survives in fragments. The examples of the genre, apart from the lost works of Menippus and his Latin successor Varro, include Petronius’s *Satyricon* and
Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* (both first century AD), through to Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (sixth century).

In the cognate writings of the second-century AD Hellenistic writer Lucian, parody also plays a central role. However, the cultural situation of a Greek writer five hundred years after Aristophanes or Plato was very different from his Athenian forebears. Lucian was writing in a period known as the Second Sophistic, a period of conscious revival of Greek culture, where the practice of mimesis or imitation of great literary predecessors formed a staple of education. Parody here becomes almost a manner of learning; certainly this was a period which was very conscious of its belatedness in relation to a past golden age.

One of the works of the menippean tradition, Boethius ‘s *The Consolation of Philosophy*, was certainly widely known; it was translated into Anglo-Saxon, for example, by Alfred the Great, and into English by Chaucer. What perhaps seems most surprising about Medieval parodic forms is that they prominently deal with the most sacred texts of the culture, namely the Bible and the liturgy. A contemporary scholar of Medieval Latin parody, Martha Bayless, distinguishes four principal forms: allegorical parody, mock saints’ lives, liturgical parodies, and humorous centos. The principal text which can be considered as an allegorical parody is the *Cena Cypriani*, an early Medieval piece which was widely copied. A
second Medieval form is the mock saint’s life, often written about St Nemo (St Nobody) or by St Invicem (St One-another).

Numerous liturgical parodies are to be found in the Medieval period. These parodies typically take the form of Drinkers’ masses, in which the words of the liturgy are slightly changed to convert them into masses to the Cask, where Dolio (‘cask’), appears for Domino (‘Lord’), or where potemus (‘let us drink’) is substituted for oremus (‘let us pray’).

In recent years, scholars have begun to pay serious attention to humorous texts, and studies of such works as Medieval Latin satire, the Old French fabliaux, and the works of Boccaccio and Chaucer have evinced that Medieval humour need not be intellectually unsophisticated. In short, scholars have come to recognise that Medieval culture was neither as monolithically serious nor as unremittingly grim as it has often been portrayed. Recent research, then, has attributed a more essential role to humour in medieval literature. Parody has accordingly; received further consideration, and consequently, the Middle Ages have come to be regarded as richer and much more diverse and colourful in literary production.

It is not astonishing that Geoffrey Chaucer provides the early examples of parody in English vernacular literature. Most of his objects are the well-known and widely employed literary genres of the time. The
romance genre, for example, is targeted in “Sir Thopas”, the tale Chaucer himself tells as a pilgrim in ‘The Canterbury Tales.’

Sir Thopas

Listeth, lords, in good intent,
And I wol telle verrayment
O mirhte and of solas;
Al of a knight was fair and gent
In bataille and in tourneyment
His name was sir Thopas.

(Macdonald 4)

Asked by the Host of the Tabard Inn to tell “a tale of Myrthe” so that a cheerful atmosphere will replace the seriousness created by the preceding tale of the Prioess, Chaucer begins his story, which, he professes, is “a rym” he “learned longe agoon” (Chaucer 213). The tale begins very much like a conventional romance about the exploits of Sir Thopas, “a knight..... fair and gent” (Ibid 213). Parody, however, is quick to intrude. Sir Thopas has “lipples rede as rose” and “a semely nose” (Ibid 213)–a description “more suitable for a woman than a hero...” (Philips 174). Neither are his other characteristics those expected of a proper knight. “Thopas is fair and gentle on the battlefield, not exactly appropriated demeanour there, is born in the mercantile centre of Flanders, not a noble habitat, and partakes of the unknighthly sports of archery and wrestling” (Jost 233). Similarly, the adventures he engages in are far from being heroic, especially because they
are fraught with “humorous anti-climaxes” (Ibid 233). All this, coupled with Chaucer’s imitation of “the exaggerated metrics” of the romance genre turns this tale in to a powerful parody (Ibid 233).

Though less explicit, genre parody can also be observed in several other works of Chaucer. Mock-heroic scenes for instance, occasionally appear in The Nun’s Priest Tale, which is about Chauntecleer, the cockerel, and his wife, Pertelote, the hen. The story is written after the fashion of the beast fable, and naturally, most beast fables are parodic of “regular” narratives where human beings are the major characters. In The Nun’s Priest’s Tale, however, the parody is emphasised further through humorous stemming mainly from the chivalric style that sometimes characterises the description of this couple.

“Chantecleer’s vainglory is matched by an overblown style: his capture is presented with rhetorical devices like the apostrophe (address: ‘O Dystynee....’, ‘O woful hennes...’ repetition (‘Allas...’ Allas...’), and the rhetorical question (‘why woldestow suffre him on thy day to dye?’). Many parallels from the world’s great literature create further mock-heroic inflation: the fox is compared to Judas, Ganelon and Sinon (respectively, traitors from the Bible, the Old French epic Chanson de Roland, and the Aneid), the hens’ cackling (on the capture of Chantecleer) being compared to lamentations at the destruction of Troy, Carthage and Rome. The cock is presented like an epic hero through allusions to the Chanson de Roland...,
the Arthurian tradition..., and the *Aeneid...* His head and feet are visualised in chivalric terms... Cock and hen are also described in literary register of elegant romance: ‘Madame Pertelote’ is an elegant ‘damoysele’, described in country courtly French terms, ‘curteys,’ ‘discreet’, ‘debonaire’, ‘compaignable’...” (Phillips 188-189).

Mock-heroic scenes like this, of course, serve especially to parody the epic and the romance-genres that may both be considered central to the Middle Ages. The love vision is another literary form, central to the Middle Ages and this form, too, becomes an object of parody in Chaucer’s work. This time it is not *The Canterbury Tales* but *The House of Fame*–one of Chaucer’s lesser known narrative poems–that parodies the conventions of this popular Medieval form.

At first, Chaucer’s poem appears very much like a typical love vision: the narrator begins by explaining that on a December night he fell asleep and had a dream. The Temple of Venus is where he finds himself in his dream–yet another detail that leads the reader to assume that he is reading a conventional love vision, where the dream is of such a nature as to enable the narrator to make discovery about love. The narrator, however, does not stay very long in the Temple of Venus. On the wings of huge golden eagle he carried off to the House of Fame, and it is especially at this point that the poem starts to play “havoc with rules of the highly stereotyped and artificial literary form to which it pretends with great
earnestness to belong” (David 334). The House of Fame and The House of Rumour that narrator later visits are hardly places where one can receive revelations about love in general and courtly love in particular: “Fame, as Chaucer’s audience was well aware, is the deadly enemy of courtly love. The cardinal rule of the code of love is secrecy, and once the news of affair has become public property, love is no longer a divine mystery” (Ibid 336). It is through details like these as well as light-hearted tone that characterises the poem in general that House of Fame turns in to “a mock dream vision” (Ibid 339) and hence, in to parody of yet another popular medieval genre. It is, therefore, possible to argue that genre parody is the kind that best characterises the vernacular parodic literature of Medieval England. Genre parody can prosper in such a literary atmosphere. Parody works only if the reader is able to recognise the object of humorous imitation.

The use of genre parody in Medieval vernacular literature may also be accounted for through the need to expose and satirise “outworn but still powerful” traditions (Macdonald 563). Chaucer’s parody of the romance and love vision traditions in “Sir Thopas” and “The House of Fame” respectively may be said to serve such a purpose. Humorous imitation inevitably exposes the artificial conventions of these genres, drawing the reader’s attention at the same time to the exaggerated idealism that often accompanies them.
Parody in Medieval literature is not directed at genre only. The text parody is also employed fairly widely. Medieval text parody is usually directed at sacred religious texts, and this is quite understandable given the pervasive influence of religion throughout the period. Surprisingly, these parodies were mostly written by the clergy themselves. As Bayless explains, “Medieval Latin parody confounds the polarity between the official and unofficial cultures: these carnivalesque texts, many lampooning religious forms and ideas, were written by and for members of what has been considered the bastion of medieval seriousness, the Church” (Bayless 12).

Medieval parody, then, is surrounded by ambiguity, especially in relation to its intent. Was it aiming to challenge religious discourse in some way, or was it simply a form of harmless entertainment? Did it ever express approval or admiration for its object and thus serve the purpose of reinforcing the values represented by it? There are no clear and definite answers to these questions, and it seems that all may be answered in the affirmative as long as it is recognised that no single explanation can adequately resolve the ambiguity surrounding the intent of Medieval parodies directed at serious religious texts. Relief from authority must definitely be one function among the multiple and complex functions served by Medieval text parody. In his discussion of humour in the Middle Ages, Don Nilsen quotes from Louis Cazamian, relating the latter’s argument that “mirth was the outbreak of pent-up forces that allowed for natural man to come
forth. The various authorities of religion, chivalry, the feudal system, courtly love were rejected in a mood of rebellion "(Cazamian 27).

Mikhail M. Bakhin’s argument about parodic humour that is both “recognised” and “legalised” by Church also follows similar lines.

The Renaissance

In his study of humour in English Literature Don Nilsen quotes from Louis Cazamian, explaining that “During the English Renaissance, humour developed mainly along two lines” (Nilsen 38). The first of these—the humour of humanism—was produced and enjoyed more commonly by educated, courtly, and aristocratic circles, and it “was in close contact not only with the classics, but also with foreign literatures, especially those of Italy and France” (Ibid 38,39). The Second line, on the other hand, was popular humour, which was “much more widely diffused and which usually consisted of shrewdness, raciness, and a down-to-earth reaction to the life” (Ibid 39). Like Medieval humour, Renaissance, too, included parodies directed at text representative of the dominant discourse of religion politics, and the court. Unlike the Middle Ages, however, this kind of parody in the Renaissance was confined largely to the domain of popular culture, which was often sharply divided from the courtly and aristocratic culture of time. Authorities, in other words, were no longer agog to “legalise” this kind of laughter.
Between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Europe experienced a set of politico-cultural changes to aptly sum up in the phrase ‘a reform of popular culture.’ Many games, calendar rituals and other popular customs and beliefs were increasingly disowned by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities and measures taken to reform or suppress them. The same period witnessed a growing divergence between the culture of elite groups (noble, gentlemen, clergy, and some middle-class elements in town and country), and that of the mass of the people. Many elements of popular culture came to be regarded by members of the elites as merely the vulgar past times of the rude, unlettered masses. Popular humour survived, and so did parodies of texts representative of authoritarian discourses. Parodies of religious rituals, sermons, hymns, and anthems as well as mock proclamations and testaments were significant components of festivities.

The example provided by Adam Fox in his article on popular ridicule in Jacobean England gives a good idea as to how such parody usually worked. This parody of ‘Ten Commandments’, produced primarily to deride Andrew Abington—a landlord who fell in to a dispute with his tenants over enclosure of the commons—and fastened to church gate at Trent, Somerset in August 1616 so that it could be publicly seen:

Heere be Andrew Abington’s Commandments

Thou shalt do no right nor thou shalt take no wronge
Thou shalt catch what thou canst
Thou shalt paie no man
Thou shalt comitt adulterye
Thou shalt beare false witnes against thy neyghbor
Thou shalt covett thy neighbors wiefe
Thou shalt sell a hundred of sheepe to Henrye Hopkines after
Thou shalt drawe the best of them
Thou shalt sell thy oxen twice
Thou shalt denye thy owne hand

(Fox 74).

Popular humour of the renaissance widely employs parody directed at texts often representative of the dominant discourses of the time. In some respects, therefore, such parodies may also be regarded as discourse parodies aiming to challenge authority.

Classical mythology was similarly a very powerful resource for Renaissance writers. A literary/cultural atmosphere like this, of course, is highly conducive to the production of parodies directed at stories from mythology. These stories, which made up a significant part of the shared culture of Renaissance intellectuals, provided a good source of parody. A widely popular and hence widely parodied classical story during the Renaissance is *Hero and Leander*. Christopher Marlowe’s narrative poem, *Hero and Leander* (1598), for instance, may be regarded as a parodic work, where the narrator often assumes a rather detached and light-hearted
attitude towards his story—an attitude which sometimes amounts to mockery. James Smith’s mock-poem, *The Loves of Hero and Leander* (1651) is yet another parody of this popular story of the time, and it shows traces not only of Smith’s own creative fancy but also of the way Smith was inspired by prior parodies of the tale.

Dwight Macdonald opines that Shakespeare has parodied Christopher Marlowe in Hamlet, Act II, scene 2:

The rugged Pyrrahus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,

And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends!

(Macdonald 16, 17)

During the Renaissance, shared knowledge, of the classics also led writers to employ text parody for purposes of personal satire. It was not uncommon that works and styles of classical authors were parodied mainly to expose the literary inadequacies of contemporary writers. Ben Johnson’s *Poetaster* is good example in this respect. The work of Horace is yet another object of parody in *Poetaster*, and Johnson’s aim is again to attack his own contemporaries by setting a skilled writer like Horace against the poetasters he wishes to mock.
Parodying literary styles was a common activity among writers. Again some of these parodies were oriented more towards entertainment while others had more serious critical and/or satirical aims. In *Poetaster*, for example, Johnson occasionally parodies Marston’s style and vocabulary, and his aim is primarily to satirise Marston’s literary skills. Shakespeare parodies the general style of Nashe in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and in his poetry Sir John Suckling imitates and exaggerates the informal, colloquial qualities of John Donne:

O! for some honest lover’s ghost,
Some kind unbodied post
Sent from the shades below!
I strangely long to know,
Whether the nobler chaplets wear,
Those that their mistress’ scorn did bear,
Or those that were us’d kindly.

(Ibid 18)

The literature of the English Renaissance contains a variety of genre parodies ranging from those directed at chivalric romances—a legacy of medieval literature—to those directed at classical forms such as the epic and the pastoral. Parodies targeting Renaissance forms adopted mainly from Italy are also quite ubiquitous. All these genres were still widely employed and enjoyed at time, and satirising popular tastes and preferences was yet
another function of genre parody. The romance genre, for example, was common object of parody, owing not only to the need to expose the highly unrealistic conventions of the form but also to the influence of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), which is supposed to have left its mark on all subsequent Western literature. Perhaps the best known example of romance parody in English Renaissance literature is Fransis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607).

The Petrarchan sonnet and the love tradition represented by it were other targets of parody during the Renaissance. The most famous example, of course, is Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130 ‘My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun’, where the persona endows his beloved with all kinds of characteristics that go against Petrarchan conventions of beauty. Sir Philip Sidney also mocks and inverts “stock Petrarchan descriptions” in ‘Sonnet 54’ of his *Astrophil and Stella* (“Dumbe Swannes, not charting Pies, do Lovers prove”), and Shakespeare again parodies aspects of Petrarchism—the self-absorption of the lover and the catalogue of beloved’s beauties, or *blazon* —in such comedies as *Twelfth Night*.

Playful parodies like these entertain at the same time as they make a critical remark on popular taste by exposing the extremely idealistic nature of such a convention. The pastoral tradition is yet another target of parody during this period. The highly unrealistic representation of the idyllic life of shepherds and shepherdesses in these poems inevitably turned the genre in
to an object of humorous imitation. Perhaps the most well-known examples of the pastoral parody during the Renaissance are the numerous poems written in reply to Christopher Marlowe’s pastoral lyric, “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.” John Donne similarly parodies Marlowe’s poem in “The Bait.” Even Marlowe himself parodies his own poem in Act 4, Scene 2 of *The Jew of Malta* (1589). In all these examples, then, Marlowe’s poem serves as a typical representation of the pastoral mode, which is successfully exposed and parodied through the many humorous poems written in reply to it. Genre parody during the Renaissance entertained at the same time as it made critical remark on popular literary tastes and conventions. It would not be wrong to argue that many of the genres and modes that became objects of parody during the Renaissance were representatives of the values of the court. This is not very astonishing, given the fact that powerful patrons usually belonged to courtly circles. Lauro Martines’ discussion of the sonnet form is highly illuminating in this respect:

“The sonnet belongs to the world of the Court and to those who aspired to it. Meant to exhibit grace, dignity, restraint and good taste, it spun these qualities around the theme of love. And this theme sprang from the actual life of the Tudor Court, where leisure, music, games, and displaying one’s finery took up the days, and where love was turned in to a mode of play” (Martines 93).
Considered within this context, parodies of sonnet form may also be regarded as sharp satirical tools directed at courtly ways:

“Shakespeare, Donne, Davies, Drayton, and others all at some point twist or parody the Petrarchan conventions with the aim of puncturing the fashion…. Or deriding courtly pretence. Something about courtly ways is now boldly seen to be false; and poets use the devices of the genre itself to make social observations, to attack it, or to establish an anti-genre” (Ibid 94).

The satirical function of parody targeting the pastoral mode becomes quite apparent. In addition to exposing courtly ways, such parody serves to criticise the hypocrisy that complacently unites rich and poor especially when real social conditions do not provide any justification for doing so.

Similar argument may be made for other genres that became objects of parody during the Renaissance. All this signifies, of course, that the literary aesthetic understanding of the time was not the only cause for the prevalence of genre parody. Discontent with courtly ways was also an essential factor instigating Renaissance writers to indulge in humorous and critical imitations of generic modes and conventions, which often represented, explicitly or implicitly, the values and lifestyle of the court.

**The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century**

Sudden proliferation of parodic activity in English in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was in many ways the outcome of
transformations that were, quite simply, rather more commercial and technological than profoundly cultural or ideological. The establishment of printing presses in England in the sixteenth century for the first time facilitated the rapid appropriation of the text, obviously sustained the means for manipulation of recently published material within the space of a few weeks—or even days—of its first appearance.

Earliest years of the seventeenth century witnessed a fundamental shift in established attitudes towards derivative imitation and text–specific parodic appropriation in English.

Parody, most noticeably, itself becomes an entrenched part of the new literary system. Not only does parody now serve as an offensive weapon against the language of political opponents and literary rivals; it emerges as a necessary defensive and creative tool in its own right—a prerequisite for any author looking to ‘protect his own’, as it were. The mid-seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of poets such as John Cleveland (standing in the line of satire as a direct descendant of John Skelton), who together seem systematically to take earlier poetic forms and styles to explicitly parodic length in their efforts to pre-empt any logical or common-sensical objections to their own religious or political positions (or, for that matter, to any criticisms of their own poetic styles.)

The cultural (and, indeed, social) chaos of a changing literary system produced a legion of writers from whom the new professionals–Dryden,
Pope, Fielding, and Johnson—constantly tried to separate themselves. These writers were early on characterised as intrusive insects and plague–carrying rodents. (‘paper-rats’ and ‘Book-scorpions’, according to Andrew Marvell.). They are later stigmatised as barbaric hoards, hacks, dunces, and inept pseudo-literary bullies. The primary charges against them, of course, remain accusations of plagiarism and parody.

The age of Pope and Dryden (1660-1750) is variously known as the Augustan Age, the classical age or the Pseudo-classical age or the age of Neo-classicism. It is called the Augustan age because the writers of the period supposed that their age was an age of brilliant writers like the age of King Augustus of ancient Rome.

The period is also recognised as the age of Restoration because of the restoration of Prince Charles to the throne of his father Charles II in 1660. The same period in English Literature that lasts from around 1660–the restoration of Charles II to the throne–to the closing decades of the eighteenth century is also known as the “neoclassical” or “Augustan” age. As these titles also denote, interest in the classics was a defining characteristic of this period too. Eighteenth century intellectuals greatly revered “the Classical authors, and especially the Romans, who, they believed, had established and perfected the principle literary genres for all time” (Cuddon 578). Writer was looked back to the grace and lucidity of classical writing, and tried to recover its virtues in their own work. Close
study of the Classical authors and careful imitation of their works, therefore, was a significant literary activity. Within such a literary atmosphere, parody directed at classical texts and writers—a widely produced kind during the Renaissance—became an even more popular form. In this influence of French literature also the parody played a significant role. In 1648 Paul Scarron published his *Virgile travesti*, a parody which retells the *Aeneid* in slang. The fashion set by his example was quick to spread in England.

This period witnessed the production of a significant number of parodies directed at individual authors and their styles. *Paradise Lost* and Miltonic blank verse, for example, are the targets of John Philips’ poem, “The Splendid Shilling”.

Happy the man, who void of cares and strife,
In silken, or in leathern purse retains
A splendid shilling: he nor hears with pain
New oysters cry’d, nor sighs for cheerful ale;
But with his friends, when nightly mists arise,
To Juniper’s-Magpy, or Town-Hall repares:

Wisheth her health, and joy, and equal love.

(Macdonald 29, 30)

The humour here resides mainly in the incongruity created by the way Phillips places Milton’s grand manner at the disposal of humble and
private concerns, which consist mainly in not having any “splendid shilling”. Jonathan Swift’s *A Meditation upon a Broom–stick* (1708) similarly parodies a personal style, this time of the physicist Robert Boyle. This work, too, is highly amusing and playful parody. Isaac Hawkins Browne’s *A Pipe of Tobacco* (1736) is yet another parodic work targeting individual literary styles. Unlike previous examples, this is a collection of parodies of various authors, all supposed to be writing on a single subject. The single subject is “a pipe of tobacco”, of course, and Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, James Thomson, and Edward Young are among the authors who are playfully parodied.

“Dryden institutes the practice of what might be called ‘homeopathic’ parody to keep his rivals and enemies at bay. His occasional verse, and particularly his political satires, consistently include elements of self-conscious parody and self-parody that work to ward off the threat of subsequent parodic exploitation of his own language. Dryden administers homeopathic doses of parody–movements of purposefully induced bathos or perhaps linguistic self-consciousness–that act as a preventive measure against subsequent exploitation” (Mack 128).

Dryden’s homeopathic parodic technique permits him to dislocate himself within his own text. He purposefully ‘plants’ a parody in his own work, so to speak, in the hopes of throwing his parodists and detractors off the trail.
In Dryden’s case the various contemporary parodies of *Absalom and Achitophel* fail, to a large degree, to excite the poet’s attention not because they lack the sufficient *animus*—the personal and political weaponry—of a negative parody attack but because they fail as *parodies* precisely where Dryden’s parodic–appropriative activity is most successful and most aware of the necessity of maintaining parodic distance. Dryden’s own homeopathic parody eventually traps his opponents in to flattening and weakening their own parodic attacks.

Dryden’s scornful dismissal of contemporary imitations and parodies (and his easy equation between plagiarism and lampoon parodies in the *Discourse on Satire*) are again complicated by the fact that Dryden himself was many times in his career accused of literary plagiarism. Thomas Shadwell’s *Medall of John Bayes* (1682) had charged of Dryden:

No piece did ever from thyself begin  
Thou can’st no web, from thine own bowels spin.  
Were from thy works cull’d out what thou’st purloin’d  
Even D–fey would excell what’s left behind  
Thou plundes’st all, t’advance thy mighty Name  
Look’st big and triumph’st with thy borrowed fame.  
But art (while smiling thus thou think’st th’art chief)  
A servile imitator and a thief.  

(Mack 142)
Later in his career, Dryden was similarly attacked by Gerard Langbaine, who criticised him for ‘taxing others with stealing characters from him, when he himself does the same, in almost all the plays he writes.’

Dryden’s poem is quite literally a complementary ‘beside-song.’ The Biblical typology of a poem such as *Absalom and Achitophel* depicts contemporary events as in some way ‘parodying’ the archetypal myths of the past.

Almost all of Dryden’s critics have recognised, on one level, the essentially parodic character of his work, employing a selection of literary-critical terminology ranging from ‘imitation’ and ‘allusion’ to ‘parody’ and ‘burlesque.’ Samuel Johnson commented on Dryden’s mimetic ‘habit of reflection,’ and noted that he was in certain ways if not always ‘a plagiary, at least an imitator.’ He noted too that Dryden was likely “to ease his pain by venting his malice in parody”, and just as likely “to descend into self-parody of which perhaps he was not conscious” (Jonson 256-7). T.S. Eliot, noting the parodies of Cowley in *Mac Flecknoe*, observed that Dryden’s poetic method was at times ‘something very near to parody,’ and suggested that one of Dryden’s conspicuous qualities as a poet was his ‘capacity for assimilation.’ According to Eliot, Dryden’s ‘assimilation’ seems to consist primarily in his ability to enhance his borrowed or derivative material—to create complementary beside songs, and to employ parodic techniques not
to belittle, but to ‘make his object great in a way contrary to expectations’ (Eliot 307). Ian Jack noted that the particular parodies of Cowley in *Mac Flecknoe* serve as analogical models for the “mock-heroic conception of the whole poem” (Jack 51). David Hopkions noted that Dryden was in his dramatic work always hovering “on the border of burlesque and self-parody” (Hopkins 42). Reuben Brower praised Dryden’s “allusive irony” and noted that Dryden’s parodic redactions of his classical originals can at times themselves be so “noble” as to be “hardly recognised as parody” (Brower 47).

Dryden’s political satire provoked a wide range of responses in verse and prose. At least eight of these responses are direct text-specific parodies reactions to Dryden’s poems. These include ‘Towser the Second, Bull-Dog’ (Dec. 1681), ‘Poetical Reflections,’ on a late poem entitled ‘*Absalom and Achitophel*’ (Dec. 1681), ‘A Panegyrick on the author of *Absalom and Achitophel*’ (Dec. 1681), ‘A Whip for the Fool’s Back’ (Dec. 1681), ‘A Key (with the Whip) to open the mastery and antiquity of the poem call’d *Absalom and Achitophel*’ (Jan. 1682), ‘Azariah and Hushai’ (Jan. 1682), ‘Absalom’s IX Worthies’ (March 1682), and *Absalom Senior* (April 1682).

Pordage’s ‘Azariah and Hushai’ is one of the most coherent attacks on Dryden, and far and away the best written parody of Dryden’s verse. While concluding the poem, Pordage parodies Dryden’s own lines in
Absalom and Achitophel that ‘Innovation is a dangerous thing / whether it comes from People or from King.’

Absolute and Abitofhell is a parody by Ronald Knot, based on Dryden’s ‘Absalom and Achitophel’. The same parody is a satirical response to Foundations, a collection of essays by leading members of the modernist wing of the Anglican Church which was published in 1912. The opening part of the poem searches what the author perceives as the dilution of religious faith among Anglicans over previous centuries:

In former times, when Israel’s ancient Creed
Took Root so widely that it ran to seed;
When Saints were more accounted of than Soap,
And men in happy blindness serv’d the Pope;
Uxorious Jeroboam, waxen bold,
-----------------------------------
And trembling Hands threw Jonah overboard…

(Gross 20)

The central concerns of Pordage’s parody in ‘Azariah and Hushai’ are obvious, and all these concerns work to correct the factual and sympathetic errors of Dryden’s original. The parodies and attacks on Absalom and Achitophel apparently failed to shake Dryden. Dryden makes a point of inviting his opponents to again use parody as a tool against him, pointedly suggesting that the parodies and imitations of Absalom and
Achitophel conspicuously failed to achieve their desired end. “If God has note bless’d you with the Talent for Rhyming’, he suggests, ‘make use of my poor Stock and welcome: let your Verses run upon my feet: and for the utmost refuge of notorious Blach-heads, reduc’d to the last extremity of sense, turn my own lines upon me, and in utter despair of your own Satyre, make me Satyrize myself” (Mack 157).

We can finally say that in case of John Dryden, the threat of parody is intimately related to the enhanced anxieties of plagiarism and imitation that had surfaced in the years following the Civil Wars, and the Restoration of Monarchy in 1960. Dryden himself develops a strategy of self-parody in the face of numerous parodic appropriations of his own texts.

It should be noted that until the advent of the analytic criticism of the late 1960s, little if serious attention had been paid to the status of parody as an identifiable mode or genre at work within the valued tradition of English literature. Little toleration was ever willingly extended to the transformative operations of parodic technique within the work of so-called ‘original’ or truly ‘creative’ authors. ‘Real’ authors got on with their business and wrote. Parodists, on the other hand, having perhaps first failed in their own attempts to dethrone the present idols of the literary marketplace, devoted their energies to belittling the culturally significant achievements of those geniuses, whose works they were assumed, more often than not, incapable of ever truly appreciating, much less emulating.
The role of parody in the work of English authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seems to have been particularly neglected. The editor of one of the most popular anthologies of English parody to remain in print throughout the later decades of the twentieth century, for example, included only a handful of eighteenth century parodies in an otherwise admirably representative volume, noting that although the era ‘should have been a great age of parody’, there was surprisingly little definite or identifiable parody in the world. The century seemed to have been self-confident to feel the need of the parody. The dismissive attitude towards parody as a literary mode more generally, of course, long remained unchallenged. Guides to literary terminology and self-designated handbooks to literature and poetics invariably ignored the actual range of parodic activity in English so as to focus their definitions exclusively on the perceived destructive capacity of the mode. According to one such representative definition, ‘parody, in verse as in prose, is a comic or satirical imitation of another piece of writing that exaggerates its style and subject matter in a sort of redictio ad absurdum, playing especially upon any weakness in structure or content of original.’

Usage of the word ‘parody’ in the eighteenth century would likewise seem to indicate the status of parody as a poetic activity that was more accurately to be categorised as complementary or supplementary rather than deprecatory. Alexander Pope several times refers unself-consciously to his
own imitations of Horace as ‘parodies’, and Bishop Warburton, writing in 1751, noted that those same Horatian imitations were the sort of parodies that reflected grace and splendour on original wit. Later in the century Thomas Warton would note in a similar fashion that Joseph Hall’s imitations of Juvenal and Persius were parodies of these poets.

Certain popular parodies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—the parodies by George Canning, George Ellis, and John Hookham Frere of Wordsworthian ethos at work in poems such as ‘Simon Lee; (1798) and ‘The Old Hunstman’ (1800) included in the pages of the _Anti–Jacobin Journal_ (1790-1810), for example, or Byron’s brilliant evisceration of Southey’s _A Vision of Judgement_ (1821) in his own ‘The Vision of Judgement’ (1822)—admittedly united the modes of parody and satire to splendidly destructive effect. Nevertheless, Samuel Johnson’s 1755 seminal definition of parody as ‘a kind of writing in which the words of an author are taken, and by a slight change adopted to some new purpose’, is implicitly treated by critics such as Rose and Hucheon, at least, as though it were completely anomalous to prevent parodic practice of Johnson’s day, and of the entire eighteenth century, more generally. The period’s valorising of wit and irony led to an almost paradigmatic mixing of parody and satire in the era—so much so that parody degenerated into the vehicle of malicious attacks on literary mannerism. The attitude towards the target text had to be derogatory, and parody was at worst the result of personal
animosity and spite. Parodies prior to the twentieth century were thus rejected or at least overlooked in favour of more recent examples, in which the positive ethos is seen to dominate. Another important early critic of the mode, Robert Burden, observed with a dismissive eye to ironic imitation prior to the twentieth century that ‘parody is a serious mode,’ unlike some types of playful imitation that are also identified in the same category.

Alexander Pope employed obvious techniques of parody and burlesque in almost all his poetry and translations. ‘The Rape of the Lock’ (1712;1714;1717) and the ‘Dunciad’ (1728, 1742,1743) are only the best known of his many works that reveal the vast referential potential of Pope’s parodic technique at work. ‘Imitation of Chaucer’ is one of a series of imitations of earlier English poets, written in Pope’s youth:

Women ben full of Ragerie,
Yet swinken not sans secresie
Thilke Moral shall ye understand,
From school-boy’s Tale of fayre Irelond:

‘Then trust on Mon, whose yerde can talke.’

(Gross 6)

Pope also parodied Chaucer in what were probably the last lines of verse he wrote. While lying on the sickbed, about a month before he died, he learned of the death of his pet dog Bounce, who had been entrusted to the care of his friend Lord Orrery. ‘I doubt not’, he wrote to Orrery, ‘how
much Bounce was lamented: They might say as the Athenians did to Arcite, in Chaucer [in The Knight’s Tale]’:

Ah arcite! Gentle Knight! Why would’st thou die
When thou had’st Gold enough, and Emilye!-
Ah Bounce! Ah gentle beast! Why would’st thou die?
When thou had had’st Meat enough, and Orrery?’

(Ibid 6)

The Eloisa of Pope’s poem is herself a parodist, and the individual whose language she chooses to parody is no one other than her own correspondent and former lover, Abelard.

The studies of the eighteenth century clearly indicate that Alexander Pope was the first great poet of the era. The last decade or so of the twentieth century proved to have been something of a golden age of Pope Criticism.

The Pope was himself a poet who–consciously emulating the achievements of the past and strategically placing him with reference to those achievements–effectively began his career as a parodist and imitator. His earliest verses were imitations of poets such as Waller and Cowley; he likewise set out on his path as a poet with paraphrases, imitations, and translations of Homer, Boethius, Chaucer, and even the Psalms. One of his earliest pieces of parody entitled simply ‘Spenser: The Alley’, a Swiftian description of London’s straggling Thames suburbs that sees the final,
potentially forceful Alexandrine of Spenserian stanza used, rather, to superb bathetic effect. In the same Pope depicts the street scenes in Deptford or Wapping:

The snappish Cur (the Pasengers annoy)
Close to my Heel with yelping Treble flies
The whimpling Girl, the hoarser–screaming Boy,
Join to the yelping Treble shrilling Cries.

(Mack 165)

It is Pope’s particular gift as a parodist truly to comprehend his originals; he possesses the intuitive, sympathetic identification of great translator and the great imitator, and uses both his ear of verse and his larger understanding of a poet’s meaning (here, for example, Spenser’s own love of surface play and narrative proliferation) effectively to parody his target texts.

Critics have long recognised Alexander Pope’s use of text-specific parodic techniques to enhance the force of his satire in many of his mature poems including both The Rape of the Lock, and The Dunciad. In The Rape of the Lock, Pope not only included many explicit echoes of his classical models, but gained the added dimension of self-parody by effectively referring his English readers to the language of his own 1715-20 Iliad translation for his Homeric models. Clarrissa’s famous speech at V.9-34—which, as Pope himself specifically noted, is ‘a parody of the speech of
Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer’ (Ibid 166) - perhaps best exemplifies the kind of depth Pope could gain from such a doubly parodic/self-parodic technique. Of all Pope’s major works, the verse epistle of *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) is a poem that Samuel Johnson once dubbed ‘one of the happiest productions of human wit.’

Ambrose Philips (1675 – 1749) is remembered for his noteworthy parodies. He wrote a great deal of pretentious verse and drama – Pope called him in *Dunciad* a Pindaric writer in red stockings–but what made him perhaps the most parodied English writer before Wordsworth was particularly fatuous style of mock-simple poetry he invented and which he used mostly in odes to noble nymphets.

The lethal parody of Philips was not by Pope or Gay but by a writer of musical farces named Henry Carey, who also wrote *Sally in Our Alley* and may have written *God save the king*. Very little is known about him, despite his popularity; he may have been the bastard of George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, and he may have committed suicide; a contemporary account states:

“He led a life free from reproach and hanged himself on October 4, 1743” (Macdonal 25). But even the date is uncertain. He did write a burlesque romantic drama, *Chrononhotonthologos*, which is still amusing despite the title and the sub-title: “the most tragical tragedy that ever was tragedised by any company of tragedians” (Ibid 25). But his *chef d’oeuvre*
was his parody of Ambrose Philips, entitled *Namby-Pamby* (which he has given the slang term.):

_Namby–Pamby_

Naughty–Paughty Jack-a-Dandy,
Stole a Piece of Sugar Candy
From the Grocer’s Shoppy-Shop,
And away with hoppy-hop.

(Gross 22)

John Philips (1676-1709) is remembered only for his Miltonic parody, *The Splendid Shilling*. After his burial, His epitaph optimistically called him “a second Milton’, but he is at least the only parodist to have made the poet’s corner. John had had the originality to reverse the approach of Scarron and Cotton, whose travesties of Virgil had been popular in the preceding century: they had treated high matters in a low style; he treated low matters in a high style. The mock epic became common in the eighteenth century–Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* and Swift’s *Battle of the Books*, for instance–but Philips was a pioneer. Addison called *The Splendid Shilling* “the finest burlesque piece in English language” (Macdonal 29)

The first English writer, whom everyone could describe as primarily a parodist, was Isaac Hawkins Browne (1705-1760). *A Pipe of Tobacco* (1736), by Isaac Hawkins Browne, is a slim volume of parodies of six poets. These poets were Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Colley Cibber,
James Thomson, Edward Young and the inevitable Ambrose Philips.

Following is the parody on Alexander Pope:

Blest Leaf! Whose aromatic gales dispense
To Templars modesty, to parson’s sense:
So raptur’d priests, at fam’d Dodona’s shrine
Drank inspiration from the steam divine.

And let me taste thee unexcis’d by kings.

(Macdonald 34,35).

The parody on Jonathan Swift is also significant:

Boy! Bring an ounce of Freeman’s best,
And bid the vicar be my guest:

Britons, if undone, can go,
Where tobacco loves to grow.

(Ibid 35).

“A Pipe of Tobacco was the initial attempt to present the style of several authors on a common subject of no elevation” (Macdonald 34). Or perhaps because Mr. Browne was highly thought of in his day. Dr. Johnson pronounced him “one of the finest wits of this country” (Ibid 34), and Pope, touchy though he was, spoke highly of the parody of his own verse which follows: “Browne is an excellent copyist, and those who take it ill of him are very much in the wrong” (Ibid 34). Browne was wealthy, worldly, an
MP (who never made speech), and contended man and—perhaps therefore—wrote very little. His *magnum opus* (unfinished) was a Latin poem, *De Animi Immortalitate*, of which more energetic versifiers made several English translations.

At the end of the eighteenth-century, when British intellectuals were taking stands on the French Revolution, three friends put out a magazine of political satire, *The Anti-Jacobin*. They were: George Canning, later to become a famous Tory statesman; John Hookham Frere, whose *Battle of the Monks and Giants* had introduced the Italian burlesque style into English poetry; and George Ellis, whose verse satire, *The Rolliad*, fifteen years earlier, had been on the other side, attacking George III and the Court party. *The Anti-Jacobin* printed some very good parody. Still readable are *The Loves of the Trangles*, a lengthy take-off of Erasmus Darwin’s curious poem, *The Loves of the Plants*, and the well-anthologised *Rogero’s Song* from *The Rovers*, a burlesque of German romantic drama by Canning and Ellis that was performed at the Haymarket Theatre in 1811.

The four parodies of Robert Southey represent below *Anti-Jacobin* at its most political and effective. The first is a parody of Southey’s *Inscription for the Apartment in Chepstow Castle Where Henry marten, the Regicide, Was Imprisoned Thirty Years*; Mr. Brownrigg was a Murderess notorious at a time. The fourth parodies Southey’s *The Window*; the “friend of humanity” was Mr. Tierney, M.P. for Southwark and “an assiduous member of the society of Friends of the People” (Ibid 37).
I

Inscription
For one long term, or e´er her trial came,
Here Brownrigg linger´d. Often have these cells
Echoed her blasphemies, as with shrill voice
She scream´d for fresh Geneva.

When France shall reign, and laws be all repealed!

II

The Soldier’s Friend
Come little Drummer Boy, lay down your knapsack here:
I am the soldier’s friend –here are some books for you

Higgledy piggledy, “fiddledum diddledum.”

III

The Soldier’s Wife
Wearsoime Snnetteer, feeble and querulous
Painfully dragging out thy demo-cratic lays-
Moon-stricken sonneteer, “ah! For thy heavy chance!”

IV

The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder
Needy Knife-grinder! Whither are you going?
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order-
Bleak blows the blast; your hat has got a hole in’t,
So have your breeches!

(Macdonald 36-40)
Richard Owen Cambridge (1717–1802), a poet, an essayist, a decorator, a historian, a naval engineer, a landscape artist, and a conversationalist was once dubbed by his Twickenham neighbour, Horace Walpole as ‘the everything.’

Cambridge’s admittedly eccentric parodies and deserving of closer critical attention, however, not only because they stand out among the more popular and intelligent of the many parodic responses to more widely available works such as Pope’s *Dunciad*, but also because they form part of the long line of later unexamined documents participating in the notoriously divisive controversy of the Ancients and the Moderns; in his Preface of the poem, Cambridge addresses the issue of parody in a strikingly straightforward manner, acknowledging his own debts to Cervantes, Bouïleau, and Samuel Garth.

Along with *The Scribleriad*, Cambridge’s *Elegy Written in any Empty Assembly Room* was easily one of his most popular productions. One of the few such parodies to be printed with his approval in his own lifetime, the work was to see itself through three editions in quick succession in the spring of 1756. The *Elegy* was likewise one of those poems written by Cambridge that was to be included in the 1758 edition of Dodsley’s Collection. Although the wide, occasional popularity of the piece was short–lived, the *Elegy* continued to be a generally well-known parody of Pope’s original 1717 *Eloisa to Abelard*. 
The subject of Cambridge’s assembly Room *Elegy* can be identified as the notoriously quarrelsome Viscountess Townshend, Harrison.

The recognisable epigraph to Cambridge’s *Elegy* is taken from Book IV of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (II. 466-7), and describes the condition of Dido (who significantly reappears at line 76 of Cambridge’s poem) following the departure of Aeneas.

**An Elegy Written in an Empty Assembly Room**

In scenes where HALLET’s Genius has combin’d
With BROMWICH to amuse and cheer the mind
Amid this pomp of Cost, this Pride of Art,
What mean these Sorrows in a Female Heart?

This Night the Happy and th’ Unhappy keep
Vigils alike, - N has murder’d sleep

An assembly room was a venue for public gatherings, that is, public assemblies, defined by Chambers 1751 *Cyclopaedia* as ‘a stated and general meeting of polite persons of both sexes, for the sake of conversation, gallantry, news, and play’ (Mack 127). The ‘assembly’ or ‘drums’ was an eighteenth century term for an evening assembly of fashionable people at a private home.

Although Cambridge’s *Elegy* was—simply by virtue of its title—long mistakenly identified in bibliographical studies as a parody of Thomas
Grey’s 1751 *Elegy written in the Country Church-Yard*, the poet quite clearly states that the piece is text-specific response to Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard*.

Beginning to flourish for the first time in English tradition in the earliest years of the seventeenth century—and developing in an era of unprecedented religious, political, and rhetorical crises—parody was at one and the same time emphatically both a personal and an inescapably public and political act. Poets such as John Dryden certainly seemed to demonstrate the consistent use of parody and of literary appropriation to attack the political opposition and, likewise, the consistent use of self-deprecating, self-parodic techniques to deflect subsequent parodies of one’s own poetry.

While the parodic activity of the early eighteenth century often attempted to preserve the goal of political action and efficacy that had characterised the inter-textual dialogues of the Restoration and the late seventeenth century, mid-century parodists frequently seemed to be less interested than their forerunners in engaging in any specially public or political debates. They seemed, in fact, to be moving inexorably and logically in the direction of their nineteenth century successors, who appeared in turn to be interested in the possibilities of parody almost exclusively as a means of mere stylistic critic. The progress of parody, in
other words, appeared precisely to be the progress of both public and personal depoliticisation.

The parodists of the late eighteenth century certainly would continue to encode their critiques of individuals and of entire political structures in a literary mode that had developed to accommodate a wide range of public action and that remained at all times conscious of its pedigree and heritage as a superbly effective weapon of public debate. The personal and the political do not disappear from parody; they simply become more deeply inscribed. Many parodists in the period of poets including Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Collins, and William Cowper continue to be informed by an often explicit ‘political agenda’ in the widest sense of that term.

Sometimes the work parodied is a laughable, pretentious one that begs deflating; but even more often it is very successful work that inspires parodies. Often the number of parodies attests to a pervasive influence. Fifteen different parodies of Zola’s *L’Assommoir* appeared on stage in the first eight months of 1879, including one by Zola himself. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, parodies of the most popular operas often appeared on stage contemporaneously with the original. Weber’s *Der Freischutz* (1821) was parodied in 1824 by *Samuel, Oder die Wunderpille*. This German parody was translated into Danish and Swedish – an obvious sign of its popularity. In the same year, an English parody was staged at
Edinburgh called “Der Freiscutz,” a new muse-sick-all and see-nick performance from the new German uproar. The popular operas of Wagner seemed especially prone to parody: *Tannhäuser* (1845) was taken on by the French in the not very subtly named *Ya-Mein-Herr, Cacophonie de l’Avenir, en 3 actes entr’acte melee de chants, de harpes et de chiens savants*. His *Tristan und Isolde* was parodied by *Tristanderl und Sussholde* before it was even staged.

The eighteenth century, so rich in satire and literary *jeux d’esprit* has been a great age of parody. Writers were by then, conscious of themselves and of their past; they were technically accomplished; and they were not creating a new literature. But somehow it wasn’t, perhaps because neither of the two conditions was present which stimulate parody: an outworn but still powerful tradition (*Sir Thopas*) or an avant-garde whose innovations are felt to be absurd (the many parodies, in the next century, of Wordsworth, Browning and Whitman).

The rules of decorum directed that a writer’s language, style, and subject-matter be fully appropriate to the genre he was employing. Genre divisions, therefore, were firmly set, and each genre was easily separated from the others through its defining characteristics *and* through the place it occupied in the hierarchical order. Writers often turned to genre parody within such a literary atmosphere. They could, after all, be certain that their parodies would work: readers would have no difficulty recognising genres,
especially classical ones, as objects of humorous imitation. Among these
genres pastoral was a form that eighteenth-century parodists were rather
keen on targeting. John Gay’s *The Shepherd’s Week* (1714) is a well-known
example in this respect. Gay places his shepherds and shepherdesses in a
humorously realistic context, giving them names and language reminiscent
not of the characters of an idealised idyllic haven but of contemporary
English country people.

Ben Johnson happens to be a poet and parodist who stood in a
particularly peculiar historical position, and one, whose own abilities
rendered him capable of recognising the significance of that position, and
attempting to effect or at least to emphasise its place and pivotal role in
literary and dramatic invention. His one of the noteworthy parodies is on
Whither Answer to Master Whither’s Song, “Shall I, Wasting in Despair?”

    Shall I mine affections slack,
    ‘Cause I see a woman’s black?
    Or myself, with care cast down,
    ‘Cause I see a woman brown?

The same age was, indeed, *the* age of the mock-heroic. As Ulrich
Broich puts it, “English neoclassicism sought the heroic epic, and found the
comic. The quest for the former ultimately entailed a quest for the latter,
and the result was the mock-heroic poem” (Broich 1990 6-7). The
prevalence of mock-heroic forms during the neoclassical period is also
significantly related to the rise of satire at the time. In the words David Noke: “the literature of the entire century from the Restoration of Charles II to the accession of George III is dominated by satire” (Nokes 1).

‘Scriblerian’ was the name for the group of writers gathered around Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift in the early eighteenth century, who shared a set of broadly conservative cultural and political attitudes.

In the seventeenth century, according to Noel Malcolm, ‘non-sense writing was thought of primarily in terms of a parodic stylistic exercise: to write nonsense was not to express the strangeness of unconscious thought but to engage in a highly self-conscious stylistic game’ (Dentith 97). The parody to which Malcolm refers here is the parody of fustian or bombast, both in prose and in the dramatic writing of, especially the playwright Christopher Marlowe (1564-93).

Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, John Arbuthnot (the Scriblerians), and their allies, used parody very centrally in their war on hacks and popular writers, whom they named Dunces and placed in Grub Street. In fact, parody was one of the central weapons that they deployed in the ferocious cultural battles that they fought against what they considered to be the debasement of literature and the betrayal of the whole scholarly–humanist tradition, which they were themselves embodying. Parody, paraphrase, burlesque, mock-encomia, tongue-in-cheek ‘answers’–these are the weapons of the Scriblerians.
In this account, parody is a weapon used in a particular cultural politics, designed to uphold the standards of writing produced by the ‘major writer.’ Swift’s *Tale of a Tub* (1704) or Pope’s *The Dunciad* (1728 and 1743) are canonical works for this argument, for they are thick with parodic allusions to the hack writers that they attack. Robert Phiddian gives an interesting comment: ‘The English Swift is more of a parodist, the Irish Swift more of a satirist’ (Phiddian 4). An immediately accessible example of this Scriblerian parody is provided by the assault on Ambrose Philips (1675-1749), whose pastoral poetry was mocked by Pope and Gay, and whose poetry dedicated to children earned him the nickname ‘Namby-Pamby’ Philips from the Scriblerian ally Henry Carey (1687 - 1743). First, Philips’s poem ‘To Miss Margaret Pulteney, daughter of Daniel Pulteney Esq; in the Nursery’ (1727):

Damply damsel, sweetly smiling,
All caressing, none beguiling,
Bud of beauty, fairly blowing,
Every charm to nature owing,
This end that new thing admiring,
Much of this and that enquiring,
Knowledge by degrees attaining,
Day by day some vertue gaining.

(Dentith 101)
This provoked Carey to one of the most famous poetic parodies called ‘Namby-Pamby, or a Panegyric on the New Versification’, which begins thus:

Naughty Paughty jack-a-Dandy
Stole a Piece of Sugar-Candy
From the Grocer’s Shoppy-shop,
And away did hoppy-hop.

And continues:

Now the venal poet sings
Baby Clouts, and Baby Things;
Baby Dolls, and Baby Houses,
Little Misses, Little Spouses;
Little Play-Things, little Toys,
Little Girls and little Boys.

(Ibid 102)

And The Rape of the Lock. One way of describing this cultural situation is to say that it was already ‘novelised’; that is, it was already in a situation in which the relativisation discourse had set in and the old hierarchies of genres, with epic and tragedy at the top, had begun to crumble. Parody, in this situation, is almost a condition of writing.

It may seem odd to use the term novelisation to describe the situation of poetic forms. Perhaps relativision would better describe the
way in which, from the 1660s onwards, a variety of imitative poetic forms came to be pervasive, so that characteristic productions of Restoration poets like Charles Cotton (1630-87), the Earl of Rochester (1648-80) and John Dryden (1631-1700), and their eighteenth century successors, included travesties, burlesques, imitations, translations, and mock-heroic poems of various kinds. In many cases, these poets took their lead from France, where the writers Paul Scarron and Nicolas Boileau had led the way in producing travesty and mock-heroic, though Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1663-78) provides an example of a comic–parodic form without parallel in Europe. A travesty, according to a now traditional distinction, is the opposite of a mock-heroic; in the former, ‘high’ matter is treated in a ‘low’ way, while in the latter, trivial matters are treated in a ‘high’ or dignified way.

Imitation, by contrast, might be thought to be the form which most evidently pays homage to those prestigious forms which it imitates.

Imitation is a form whose relationship to its models is sometimes ambivalent. The same can be said of mock-heroic, a form which is dense with allusions to high or classical verse, and in which possibility of parody cannot be excluded. Starting from Boileau’s *Le Lutrin* (1674) and Dryden’s *MacFleckno* (1682), mock-heroic came to be one of the characteristic forms of the period, including Sir Samuel Garth’s *The Dispensary* (1714) and, most famously, *The Rape of the Lock* (1714); more generally, it can be
perceived as a tone or generic possibility that is widely used in much of the poetry of the eighteenth century.

Parody plays a central role in poetry at a period of perceived cultural crisis, when the guardians of the humanist tradition of arts and learning consider it to be under the threat. Later in the eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson will occasionally resort to parody to see off threats to the appropriate dignity of poetry, as in his celebrated parody of the low diction of imitations of ballads, made popular by the publication of Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765):

I put my hat upon my head  
And walked into the Strand;  
And there I met another man,  
Whose hat was in his hand?  

(Ibid 109)

**The Nineteenth-Century**

It may be argued that the parodies by Austen are among the few notable examples of genre parody in the nineteenth century. The century, it seems, did not have much taste for this parodic kind. This may be accounted for mainly through the Romantic understanding of art and literature, which emerged as a reaction to neoclassicism in the second half of the eighteenth century. Romantic literary theory and practice no longer adhered to the neoclassical emphasis on generic divisions and hierarchies.
What was emphasised instead, was the individual poet with his individual style. The natural result, of course, was a considerable decrease in the production of genre parody paralleled by a proliferation of parodies directed at individual texts and styles: “The neoclassical view that the various *genres* or kinds of poetry are as distinct from one another as are the biological species, and that an appropriate set of rules can be framed for compositions in each. As long as the kinds were firmly established, mock-kinds could flourish. But the Romantics rejected the doctrine of kinds and the rules associated with it. They held that each true poem evolves, in accordance with organic laws, in to its own unique final form. Instead of poems that belong to kinds they created individual poems. As a result, text parody displaced the mock-poem (directed at a genre)” (Jump 50-51).

Such an atmosphere was also conducive to new experiments in literary style. In a sense, Romantic poetry may be said to have introduced “an avant-garde” whose innovations sometimes appeared rather disagreeable to more traditional minds (Macdonald 563). Here, then, is another reason for the prevalence of parodies directed at texts and personal styles. In this period, as in all periods, parody was occasionally employed as “retentive, conservative force used to ridicule and thus control innovation, perceived excess and aberration” (Hutcheon 7). Parodies of literary styles, however, were not produced by those writers who disapproved of Romantic trends only. Equally, common were instances where romantic poets parodied each other.
The Romantics were by no means a united group, and their reciprocal animosity at times was as intense as anything hurled at them by the conservative critics alarmed at their innovations. As a young man, Southey parodied Wordsworth, and (under pseudonym Abel Shufflebottom) he imitated that school of affective love poets known as the Della Cruscans. Coleridge, as Nehemiah Higginbottom (whose comical pseudonym Southey then imitated) parodied Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd. A generation later (in 1819), Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds, and Shelley all parodied Wordsworth; while a short time later Byron parodied Southey in *The Vision of Judgement*. John Keats wrote ‘On Oxford’ in 1817, and sent it to his friend with a note:

“Wordsworth sometimes, though in a fine way, gives us sentences in the style of school exercise. For instance:

‘The lake doth glitter,
Small birds twitter,’ (etc.)

Now I think this is an excellent manner of giving us a very clear description of an interesting place such as Oxford is.” (Macdonald 74)

**On Oxford**

The Gothic looks solemn,
The plain Doric column
Supports an old Bishop and Crosier;
The mouldering arch,
Shaded o’er by a larch
Stands next door to Wilson the Hosier.

---------------------------------------------

Then each on a leg or thigh fastens.

Here are some parodies on Wordsworth:

**A Sonnet**

Two voices are there: one is of the deep;
It learns the storm-cloud’s thunderous melody,
Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,
Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep:

---------------------------------------------

Quite unacquainted with the ABC
Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy worse.

(J. K. Stephen)

**The Baby’s Debut**

(Spoken in the character of Nancy Lake, a girl eight years of age)

My brother Jack was nine in May,
And I was eight on new year’s-day;
So in Kate Wilson’s shop
Papa (he is my papa and Jack’s)
Bought me, last week, a doll of wax,
And brother Jack a top.

(James Smith)
James Rigg
On Tuesday morn at half-past six o’ clock,
I rose and dressed myself, and having shut
The door of the bed room still and leisurely,
I walked downstairs.

-------------------------------------

From the wild common, melancholy crop.

The Flying Tailor
If ever chance or choice thy footsteps lead
In to that green and flowery burial-ground
That compasseth with sweet and mournful smiles

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On tears, and sighs, and groans, and brains, and blood.

(James Hogg)

Epilogue
There is something in a stupid ass:
And something in a heavy dunce;
But never since I went to school
I saw or heard so damned a fool
A William Wordsworth is for once.

(Lord Byron)

Malvolio
Thou hast been very tender to the Moon,
Malvolio! And on many a daffodil.
And many a daisy hast thou yearned until
The nether jaw quivered with thy good heart.

---------------------------------------------
Divorce between the nightingale and thee.

(Walter Landor)

He Lived amidst th’ Untrodden Ways
He lived amidst th’ untrodden ways,
To Rydal Lake that lead,
A bad whom there were none to praise,
And very few to read.

---------------------------------------------
The difference to him!

(Hertley Coleridge)

Jacob
He dwelt among “Apartment let”,
About five stories high;
A man I thought, that none would get,
And very few would try.

---------------------------------------------
The difference to me!  (Phaebe Cary)

Jane Smith
I journeyed on a winter’s day,
Across the lonely wold;
No bird did sing upon the spray,
And it was very cold.

---------------------------------------------
Will leave my spirits never!

(Rudyard Kipling)
Only Seven

(A pastoral story after Wordsworth)

I marvelled why a simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
Should utter groans so very wild,
And look as pale as Death.

----------------------------------

I ain’t had more nor seven!

Postscript

To borrow Wordsworth’s name was wrong,
Or slightly misapplied;
And so did I’d better call my song,
“Lines after Ache-Inside.”

(Henry Leigh)

Lucy Lake

Poor Lucy lake was overgrown,
But somewhat underbrained.
Ahe did not know enough, I own,
To go in when it rained.

(Mackintosh)

Miss Fanshawe (1765-1834) was a literary hostess and minor poet who lived in Berkerley Square and was admired by Sir Walter Scott. She was five years Wordsworth’s senior. She lived a quiet life but had a wide circle of literary friends, including Walter Scott and Mary Russell Mitford.
Her ‘Fragment In Imitation of Wordsworth’ is a parody on William Wordsworth:

There is a river clear and fair,

‘Tis neither broad nor narrow;

It winds a little here and there-

It winds about like any hare-

--------------------------------

And live three times as long.

(Macdonald 80)

*Peter Bell.* The parody is a literary curiosity because it was published before the original.

It is the thirsty-first of March,

A gusty evening–hal –past seven;

The moon is shining o’ver the larch,

A simple shape–a cock’d up arch,

Rising biggest than a star,

Though the stars are thick in Heaven

Reynolds had seen the manuscript and is said to have written off his parody in one day. He stated: “I do affirm I am the real Simon Pure,” and added a pure signed “W.W.” (Ibid 74).

“... Of *Peter Bell* I have only thus to say: It completes the simple system of natural narrative which I began as early as 1798. It is written in
that pure unlaboured style which can only be met with among labourers.....
In the course of the next few years I propose to write laborious lives of all
the old people who enjoy sinecures in the text or are pensioned off in the
notes of my poetry” (Ibid 74).

 Nobody liked Peter Bell. Keats and Leigh Hunt were critical. Shelley dashed off a parody which runs to 153 stanzas plus a prologue; it is lively but Shelley was not a parodist; some scholars think he didn’t even see the original but worked only from his friend Reynolds’ parody and from Hunt’s review. (“A critique on Wordsworth’s Peter Bell reached us at Leghorn,” Mrs. Shelley wrote, “which amused Shelley exceedingly and suggested the poem.”) (Ibid 75)

 “Much of Blake’s genius also expressed itself through parody, although he was not sufficiently well-known to be the actual object of parody until the middle of nineteenth century” (Kent and Ewen 13). This discussion makes the prevalence of text parody during the Romantic period rather apparent. It seems that—at one time or another—almost all Romantic poets tried their hands at parody. Dwight Macdonald’s ‘Anthology of Parodies from Chaucer to Beerbohm’ also attests to this. Nineteenth–century text parodies take up the largest space in his collection, William Wordsworth, being the most common target among the examples he provides. This is no coincidence. Wordsworth was indeed “the most frequently parodied serious poet in the nineteenth century” (Macdonald 73).
Wordsworth’s bold innovations in poetic theory and practice probably played a significant role in this. Especially, the more conspicuously eccentric qualities of his poetry became objects of parody.

“The many parodies of Wordsworth help us to appreciate which aspects of his poetic practice and ideology stood out as distinctive, challengingly different, or simply annoying to his contemporaries. Wordsworth’s particularities of description, for example, are turned by many of his parodists in to a scrupulous triviality about commonplace things, and his low–life characters and poems of encounter are sometimes flippantly mocked. Furthermore, his child-like expressions of faith become either vulgar childishness or immature silliness” (Kent and Ewen 17). It becomes vivid in the parody, ‘Fragment’:

There is a river clear and fair,
‘Tis neither broad nor narrow;
It winds a little here and there-
It winds about like any hare;

And live three times as long.

(Catherine Fanshawe)

Perhaps the best-known Wordsworth parody in the Romantic period is John Hamilton Reynolds’ Peter Bell (1819), which targets Wordsworth’s general style as well as his poem of the same name. What is striking about
Reynolds’ parody is that it was published before Wordsworth’s original *Peter Bell* came out.

“The Literary Gazette of 10 April 1819 had announced the imminent appearance of a new Wordsworth poem, *Peter Bell*, and Reynolds promptly seized the opportunity of composing his parody, some have said in five hours’ time, others say in the course of a day. Reynolds luckily borrowed the rhyme scheme from “The Idiot Boy” and (accidently hitting the rhyme scheme of Wordsworth’s poem) thereby manage to suggest even more forcefully the utter predictability of Wordsworth’s art” (Kent and Ewen 173).

**Peter Bell: A Lyrical Ballad**

It is the thirsty-first of March,
A gusty evening-half-past seven;
The moon is shining o’er the larch,
A simple shape-a cock’d-up arch,
Rising bigger than a star,
Though the stars are thick in heaven.

(Reynolds)

The 18th century stasis was broken up politically by the French Revolution and aesthetically by the rise of romanticism. In *The Anti-Jacobin*—a Little Magazine founded in 1797 by George Canning, later a Tory political leader, and two friends—and in the Smith bothers’ *Rejected Addresses* (1812), the first full-scale parodic offenses were mounted.
An example of parody comes from the practice of the *Anti–Jacobin*, a journal founded at the end of the eighteenth century to combat sympathy for the principles of the French Revolution. Its contributors, who included George Canning, William Gifford, and John Hookham Frere, relied heavily on parody to assault the new poetics of writers such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. In the 1790s, these writers were writing poetry of a kind construed by the Tories of *The Anti-Jacobin* as supporting those sympathies. Here, for example, is what Canning and Frere make of Southey in the 1790s, when he was still sympathetic to the Revolution and before his about-face and embrace of Toryism. The poem is called an ‘Inscription; for the Door of the Cell in Newgate where Mrs. Brownrigg, the ‘Prentice –cide, was confined previous to her Execution’:

    For one long term, or e’er her trial came,
    Here Brownrigg linger’d. Often have these cells
    Echoed her blasphemies, as with shrill voice
    She scream’d for fresh Geneva. Not to her
    Did the blithe fields of Tothill, or thy street,
    St. Giles, its fair varieties expand;
    Till at the last, in slow-drawn cart she went
    To execution. Dost thou ask her crime?
    SHE WHIPP’D TWO FEMALE PRENTICES TO DEATH,
    AND HID THEM IN THE COAL-HOLE. For her mind
Shap’d strictest plans of discipline, Sage schemes!
Such as Lycurgus taught, when at the shrine
Of the Orthyan Goddess he bade flog
The little Spartans; such as erst chastised
Our MILTON, when at college. For this act
Did BROWNING swing. Harsh laws! But time shall come
When France shall resign, and laws be all repealed!

(Jerrold and Leonard 93)

The Soldier’s Wife

(Southey and Coleridge)

Wearisome Sonnetteer, feeble and querulous,
Painfully dragging out thy demo-cratic lays-
Moon-stricken Sonnetteer, ‘ah! for thy heavy chance!’

(Ibid 94)

The practice of The Anti-Jacobin represents perhaps the most visible example in English literary history of the conservative function of parody.

In terms of its own cultural production, the nineteenth century saw striking and self-confident achievements in the novel and poetry, where, with some exceptions, parody is not central. Nevertheless, this is the period characterised by one anthologist and theorist of parody, Dwight Macdonald, as the ‘Golden Age’ of parody, which begins with The Anti-Jacobin and Rejected Addresses, and culminates in Beerbohm’s A Christmas Garland (1912).
Parody has been used extensively in establishing and defending canons of poetic decorum, above all when such canons have appeared to be under threat—at the beginning of the eighteenth century and again at the century’s end. The more writers mock the ‘bad’ poetry of others by means of parody, the more they contribute to the very proliferation of competing styles: just the situation that they seek to resist.

It is not until another period of perceived social, cultural and political crisis, at the end of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth century, that parody again begins to become an important feature in poetry. *The Anti-Jacobin* (1798) on one hand, and *Rejected Addresses* (1812) on the other, are crucial indications of the upheavals caused, in poetry, by the related eruptions of the French Revolution and that fundamental shift in sensibility known retrospectively as Romanticism.

In fact, these publications mark two distinct possibilities for poetic parody in the nineteenth century, and its flowering in the ensuing hundred years or so will be marked by these two broadly different kinds. On the one hand, the poetry of *The Anti-Jacobin* was fiercely partisan, attacking all those poetic (and dramatic) forms which were assumed to be in any way sympathetic to French revolutionary principles. Thus, the writers of the journal, George Canning (1770-1827), John Hookham Frere (1769-1846), and George Ellis (1753-1815) happily pilloried poets and writers of widely differing styles, who were at all associated with the revolutionary doctrines
of Jacobinism. On the other hand, Horace and James Smith, the authors of *Rejected Addresses* (1812), explicitly rejected any political hostilities in their celebrated collection of parodies, and proposed instead a solely humorous intention—though even here they note the readiness with which stylistic extremes lend themselves to parody, so that an implicit poetic norm is discernible in their writing. The multiple parodies that succeed these two models will fall between these two extremes, offering themselves now as purely ludic, now as corrective, either for stylistic or for ideological reasons.

Canning and Ellis also attacked the contemporary fashion for German tragedy, on the grounds that some of its writers also (Schiller and the young Goethe) were in league with the revolutionary devil, and encouraged immorality under the guise of philosophy. The following song comes from a full-length parody of a German tragedy:

```
Whene’er with haggard eyes I view
This dungeon that I’m rotting in,
I think of those companions true
Who studied with me at the U-
-niversity of Gottingen,
-niversity of Gottingen.
```

(Ibid 107)
The parodists are attacking German tragedy here for its sentimentalism; behind these various attacks lurks a defence of neo-classical standards in the manner of the Scriblerians. However, the targets of these parodic assaults were stylistically very disparate, and really only held together by their common, presumed, sympathy to revolutionary principles. The Anti-Jacobin writers were only consistent in attacking their targets with a wit and energy that, naturally, help to carry their assault home.

The best of the Victorian parodists—Calverley, Carroll, Hilton, Stephen, Traill—were bred on the classics and closely connected with Oxford or Cambridge. Calverley is more generally admired and his work is indeed formidable, but Stephen is found to be the more spontaneous and amusing.

Some of the following parodies of Calverley are really worth mentioning. “Striking” is a parody on Coleridge:

**Striking**

It was a railway passenger,
And he leapt out jauntile,
“Now up and bear, thou stout porter,
My two chattels to me.

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“For indeed—the clocks have struck.”

Thomas Moore has been parodied by Calverley in “Disaster”: 

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Disaster
T was ever thus from childhood’s hour!
My fondest hopes would not decay
Nor would I make myself a goose,
If some big dog should swallow Tiny.

Of Reading
Read not Milton, for he is dry; not Shakespeare,
For he wrote a common life;
Not Scott, for his romances, though fascinating, are yet intelligible.
And if thou canst not realize the Ideal, thou shalt
At least idealize the Real.

Calverley’s other significant parodies include: ‘Lovers and Reflection’; a parody on D.G.Rossetti, ‘Of Friendship’ on Tupper.

Carroll had also very remarkable parodies. His ‘The Voice of Lobster’ and ‘The Crocodile’ are the parodies on Dr. Watt. However, his “Father William”, which is a parody on Southey, is indeed memorable.

Father William
“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white,
And yet you incessantly stand on your head-
Do you think, at your age, it is right?

Be off, or I will kick you downstairs!
Carroll wrote a very short but amusing parody, on Jane Taylor:

**Bat**

Twinkle, twinkle little bat!

How I wonder what you're at!

Up above the world you fly,

Like a tea-tray in the sky.

It was not masters like Stephen and Calverley, however, that made the Victorian age unique, but the facts that parody and burlesque were so widespread. Never before or since has there been such a popular appetite for the genre. The 19th century marked the transition between the old elite culture and the new mass culture; on the one hand, the audience had enormously expanded with the increase in literacy; on the other, the newcomers were still close enough to the old culture to take it as natural part of life. The result was that a rank effervescence of burlesque in the popular media.

The Shakespearean travesties were for lowbrows. They were succeeded by the more sophisticated burlesques of Gilbert and Sullivan, which were for the middlebrows, as were the parodies endlessly printed in *Punch* and such magazines. Here are some examples of the parodies in *Punch*:
The Aesthete To The Rose

Go, flauting Rose!
Tell her that wastes her love on thee,
That she nought knows
Of the New Cult Intensity,
If sweet and fair to her you be.

The Birds and the Pheasant

I shot a partridge in the air,
It fell in turnips, “Don” knew where,
For just as it dropped, with my right
I stopped another in its flight.

I found again in the carte of a friend.

One gets a notion of their stupefying quantity from the six-volume collection that Walter Hamilton published between 1884 and 1889. Unreadable now, these tall, small-print, double-column volumes are interesting because that poetry was then common currency and not a peculiar diversion of the intelligentsia. Not very good poetry (though Volume V has 86 versions of Gray’s *Elegy*), some poems seem to have been written only to be burlesqued, as The Raven (60 versions), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *Horatius at the Bridge*. They have one thing in common: emphasis; both of rhythm and of emotion. These qualities are prominent in Ann Taylor’s *My Mother*, which begins:
Who fed me from her gentle breast?
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheeks sweet kisses prest?
My mother.

And so on for eleven stanzas. Miss Taylor published her poem in 1803 and at once the burlesques began; Hamilton prints over a hundred of them. The rhythm and the sentiment were irresistible, so much so indeed that Miss Taylor herself was imitating Cowper’s *To Mary*, doing a serious parody so to speak. Cowper was gloomier:

The twentieth year is well-nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be our last!
My Mary!

The English still has a living parodic tradition; one might call it an upper-class folk art. It expresses itself in competitions in *The New Statesman* and, until lately, *The Spectator*, in which readers undertake such tasks as composing a Miltonic sonnet on photography with special reference to Princess Margaret’s marriage, or a paragraph on Rock n Roll in the manner of (a) Dr. Johnson (b) Carlyle, (c) St. Paul, or (d) Gertrude Stein. The best parody of Eliot, Henry Reed’s *Chard Whitlow*, originated in a *New Statesman* competition; and Graham Greene is said to have won a prize (second) for his entry in one calling for parodies of Graham Greene.
(Mr Eliot’s Sunday Evening Postscript)

As we get older we do not get any younger.
Seasons return, and today I am fifty-five,
And this time last year I was fifty-four,
And this time next year I shall be sixty-two.

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And pray for Karma under the holy mountain.

Rejected Addresses

_The Rejected Addresses_ are generally taken to be among the best parodies ever written having practically marked the birth of modern parody and their authors.

The parody ‘The Theatre’, A Hampshire’ of Cobbett and Wordsworth’s ‘The Baby’s Debut,’ appeared in _Rejected Addresses_ by James and Horace Smith, which was first anonymously published in autumn of 1812 and went through many editions. The Smith brothers were amateurs –James was a lawyer, Horace a stockbroker–but they brought the art of parody, at long last, to maturity. Horace and Smith have been called the princes of the early parody.

The Theatre

Interior of a Theatre described-Pit gradually fills.-The Check-taker.–Pit full-The Orchestra tuned- One Fiddle rather dilatory-Is reproved.- and repents- Evolutions of a play-bill.- Its final Settlement on the Spikes.- The

‘Tis sweet to view, from half-past five to six,
Our long wax-candles, with short cotton wicks,
Touch’d by the lamplighter’s Promethean art,
Start in to light, and make the lighter start;

---------------------------------------------------
Made a low bow, and touch’d the ransom’d hat.

The occasion was the opening of the new Drury Lane Theatre, rebuilt after a fire by a committee headed by Samuel Whitbread, a public–spirited brewer whose ale is still a leading British brand. The committee offered a prize for the best Address to be spoken upon the opening night, and they received 112 entries, mostly in verse and some by well-known writers. (The Smiths claimed that 69 invoked the aid of that useful and much-abused bird, the Phoenix.) But the actual entries were quite overshadowed by the spurious ones concocted by the Smiths, which also included–besides the three here–parodies of Byron, Scott, Moore, Southey, Coleridge, and Dr. Johnson. The Smiths had the usual trouble of authors with an original idea who tries to get in to print; although they were willing to forego royalties, it looked for a time as if their Addresses would be doubly rejected. “These trifles are really not deficient in smartness,” one
experienced publisher condescended. “They are well, vastly well for beginners, but they will never do-never. They would not pay for advertisement, and without it I should not sell fifty copies” (Macdonald 55). However, they finally found a less experienced publisher, John Miller of Covent Garden, who not only put out their book but gave them half the profits. *Rejected Addresses* was an immediate success, both popular and *d’estime*. Lord Jeffrey took eighteen pages to praise it in *The Edinburgh Review*. One enterprising publisher tried to mount the bandwagon by asking the 111 unsuccessful competitors for their entries; he presented the manuscripts received in a volume entitled *Genuine Rejected Addresses*. It didn’t go very well. Even the authors parodied seem to have enjoyed the book.

A month after publication, Byron wrote to John Murray: “I think the *Rejected Addresses* by far the best thing of its kind since the *Rolliad* ..... Tell the author [the first edition was anonymous] ‘I forgive him were he twenty times our satirist,’ I think his imitations not at all inferior to the famous ones of Hawkins Browne.” (Ibid 56)

*The Anti-Jacobin* writers were only consistent in attacking their targets with a wit and energy that, naturally, help to carry their assault home. Horace and James Smith, by contrast with the fundamentally political agenda of Frere, Canning and Ellis, explicitly eschewed political motives in their celebrated volume *Rejected Addresses*, which provided an
alternative model for parody to that adopted by *The Anti–Jacobin*. This is how they described their aims in writing the series of parodies that make up the volume:

“Although aware that their names (those of Rogers and Campbell) would, in the theatrical phrase, have conferred great strength upon our bill, we were reluctantly compelled to forgo them, and to confine ourselves to writers whose style and habit of thought, being more marked and peculiar, was more capable of exaggeration and distortion. To avoid politics and personality, to imitate the turn of mind, as well as the phraseology of our originals, and, at all events, to raise a harmless laugh, were our main objects” (Jerrold and Leonard 396).

Two conclusions are worth drawing from this. First, there clearly is a notion of poetic decorum, embodied in the poetry of Rogers and Campbell, at work in the parodies, according to which only those poets who deviate in pronounced ways from this mean, can serve as fit subjects for parody. Second, the simply playful ambitions of the parodists are stressed; in this, they will form the model for countless poetic parodies in the nineteenth century, who, published in innumerable separate volumes, newspapers or magazines, will rely, like the Smith brothers, on a playful intimacy with the poetic canon that they imitate.

*Rejected Addresses* included parodies of a substantial list of early nineteenth-century writers, including Wordsworth, Byron, Southey,
Thomas Moore, Walter Scott, and Coleridge. Those of Byron and Coleridge are perhaps especially successful. All the poems are addresses written for the reopening of the Drury Lane Theatre, submitted to but rejected by the committee which held a competition to decide upon the opening address. Here are some of the parodies from *Rejected Addresses*:

(On Wordsworth)

**The Baby’s Debut**

My brother Jack was nine in May
And I was eight on New-year’s day,
So it Kate Wilson’s shop
Papa (he is my papa and Jack’s)
Bought me last week, a doll of wax,
And brother Jack a Top.

I will blow a kiss to you.

‘The Rebuilding’ is a parody on Southey:

**Rebuilding**

I am a blessed Glendoveer:
‘Tis mine to speak, and yours to hear.

‘No, thank you! One tumble’s enough!’
Coleridge was parodied in ‘Playhouse Musings.’

**Playhouse Musings**

My pensive public, wherefore look you sad?
I had a grandmother, she kept a donkey
To carry to the mart her crockery ware;
And when that donkey look’d me in the face,
His face was sad! And you are sad my Public.

--------------------------------------------

Indeed, indeed, I am very very sick!

‘A Pic-Nic Poet’; a parody: ‘Drury Lane Hustings’

Mr. Jack, your address, says the prompter to me,
So I gave him my card, - no that a’nt it, says he,
‘Tis your public address. Oh! Says I, never fear,
It address you are bother’d for, only look here.

--------------------------------------------

I more that the house be call’d Whitbread’s Entire.
Tol de rol & c.

Similarly Byron was parodied in the following parody:

**Cui Bono**

Sated with home, of wife, of children tired,
The restless soul is driven abroad to roam;
Sated abroad, all seen, yet nought admired,
The restless soul is driven to ramble home;
Sated with both, beneath new Drury’s dome
The fiend Ennui awhile consents topine.
The volume as a whole made the fortune of the Smith brothers, and was favourably received in the prestigious *Edinburgh Review*. This journal was, at the time of publication of *Rejected Addresses*, at the forefront of debates about the new poetics of the Romantic poets, famously beginning a review of Wordsworth with the line ‘This will never do’.

The publication of *Rejected Addresses* in 1812 sparked off a small publishing boom in volumes of parody, which included James Hogg’s *The Poetic Mirror, or the Living Bards of Great Britain* (1816), and Thomas Hood and J. H. Reynolds’s *Odes and Addresses to Great People* (1821). The former is of particular interest as indicating a claim to poetic competence on behalf of a plebeian outsider, the ‘Ettrick Shepherd’. But in fact, many of the practicing poets of the period published parodies, including Southey, Byron, and Shelley. Other parodists included Charles Lamb, and Thomas Peacock, who was the author of the comic symposia *Crotchet Castle* and *Headlong Hall*. Their various parodies were written with varying degrees of hostility, and with differing ideological agendas.

It is undoubtedly the case that parody could be used to mock stylistic excess, and thus to preserve a notion of decorum. Browning’s extravagances provided many opportunities here, as in the following famous assault called “The Cock and the Bull.”
The Cock and the Bull

“You are pebble-stone? It’s a thing I bought,
Of a bit of chit of boy i’ the mid o’ the day-
I like to dock the smaller parts–o’ speech,
As we curtail the already cur-tail’d cur
Did rather, i the Pre-Landscererian days.

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Extend from here to Mesopotamy.

(Calverley 219)

But equally, parody could be used to mock neoclassical diction itself, or for reasons of personal grudge-bearing, or to mock the pretensions of attempts at epic diction, or simply as a convenient comic handle on a contemporary topic. Parody appeared in the popular press and in the comic journals which competed with each other from the 1830s onwards—*Punch* in particular used parodies extensively.

The nineteenth century parodies were published in single-authored volumes, and then in anthologies. This nineteenth century tradition of parody still provides the staple of such late twentieth-century anthologies as the *Faber Book of Nonsense Verse* and *the Faber Book of Parodies*. It persists also in such forms as *New Statesman* competitions and in the work of, for example, the poet and parodist Wendy Cope, or such occasional publications as *Poems not on the Underground; A parody*, edited by ‘Straphanger’. However, it is clear that poetic parody has not been as extensive in the last hundred years as it was in the nineteenth century.
In 1817, a London publisher brought out *The Poetic Mirror*, which contained, or seemed to contain, the poems by Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Southey, and others, including one James Hogg. He was a Scotch peasant who had had only eight months of formal schooling and from the age of eight he had worked as a shepherd. Up to eighteen, the only verse he had seen was Psalms. He began to write, still in rustic isolation, at twenty-six. The next year he had a crucial experience: “The first time I heard of Robert Burns was in 1797, the year after he died,” when a half-mad tramp recited *Tam O’ Shanter* to him. “I wept and thought: what is to prevent me from succeeding Burns?” In fact, he did write some good lyrics, but his parodies what are most remembered; that he should have succeeded in this form, usually the province of more sophisticated writers suggests he had a great natural talent.

For obvious reasons, Wordsworth was the most frequently parodied serious poet in the nineteenth-century by his contemporaries and apparently the only one who never wrote parodies himself. In his preface to second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth alludes to parody as a ‘mode of false criticism.’ Browning was the second, for the same reasons; the score is nine to five in favour of—or rather against—Wordsworth. It was not only that each had eccentricities of style and thought that could easily be mocked; it was also that the combination of absurdity and elevation opened especially widen the gap which the parodist exploits. Had they been either
less elevated or more sensible, Wordsworth and Browning would have been spared much.

The parody of *A Grammarian’s Funeral* is *A Girtonian Funeral*. The same parody appeared in *The Journal of Education* of May 1, 1886, with a note: “The *Academy* reports that the students of Girton College have dissolved their Browning Society and have expanded its remaining funds, two shillings and six pence, upon chocolate creams.” (Girton was the first women’s college to be established at Cambridge). Among Browning parodies, this anonymous production is one of the wittiest and most restrained.

**A Girtonian Funeral**

Let us begin and portion out these sweets,

Sitting together.

Leave we our deep debates, our sage conceits, -

Wherefore? and whether?

Thus with a fine that fits the work begun

Our labours crowning,

For we, in sooth, our duty well have done

By Robert Browning.

(Macdonald 120)

In fact, parody in this period is “almost always aligned with satire” (Hutcheon 7). Most Romantic poets, after all, were highly passionate
supporters of their own political views—a phenomenon that was perhaps a consequence of the French Revolution as well as the social and political turmoil that surrounded it.

The political unease at home during the first decades of the nineteenth century was an equally significant factor in the pervasive use of satirical parody during this period.

Romantic parody reaches its height during the last part of the Regency. The year 1819 saw a proliferation of parodies. England was being governed by two parodies of kingship: George III—‘An old mad, blind, despised, and dying King’ (Shelley’s ‘England in 1819); and George IV to be—a man devoted to self-gratification who dabbled in numerous styles and modes. The Regency was an age of extremes and of transition in which ‘elegance and refinement’ existed beside ‘brutality and misery’, wealth beside poverty, licentiousness beside prudery. It had ‘no common belief, no accepted code, and no general standard of conformity’. Parody is an apt reflection of this age of role-playing and costume, of ostentatious dandies and vulgar improprieties, in some way the expression of political frustration.

“Parody conveniently combined many attractive elements for Regency writers, becoming a vehicle for cynical and contemptuous criticism of political, class, and artistic enemies” (Ken and Ewen 19).
Text parody during the Romantic period, then, was a “major literary weapon, writers used to engage in political satire by attacking others who represented either general political corruption or opposing political views” (Kent and Ewen 15). Even the Wordsworth parodies, which were usually motivated by the poet’s highly idiosyncratic style, were sometimes bent on making political commentary. The Peter Bell parody discussed above, for example, criticised Wordsworth’s “distastefully smug tone of moral superiority in both verse and prose” at the same time as it charged the poet “with having sold his loyalties to conservative political principles” (Ibid173).

Again written in 1819, another Peter Bell parody—Peter Bell the Third by Percy Bysshe Shelley—was bent even more on political satire. Shelley’s parodic poem aimed especially at condemning “Wordsworth’s Methodist view of humanity as hopelessly depraved and, above all, the social consequence of such a view, political passivity” (Ibid 213). ‘The Peter Bell The Third’ consists of seven parts, each part having a peculiar identity. These are: Part I: Death, Part II: The Devil, Part III: Hell, Part IV: Sin, Part V: Grace, Part VI: Damnation, and Part VII: Double Damnation.

**Peter Bell The third**

Prologue

Peter Bells, one, two and three

O’er the wide world wandering be.-

First, the antenatal Peter,

Wrapped in weeds of the same metre-

----------------------------------------

Surely he deserves it well!
The satirical vein is even more explicit in Romantic parodies directed at Robert Southey. Among the most well-known of such parodies are those written by George Canning and John Hookham Frere in *The Anti-Jacobin* (1797–1798), periodical founded by the two “to combat the subversive principles in philosophy and politics that were current at the time and that the French Revolutionaries had been putting in to effect” (Jump 19). Conservative MPs themselves, Canning and Frere used parody as a vehicle to attack not only Southey’s “republican sympathies in politics” but also his “experimental meters in poetry” (*Kent and Ewen*: 25).

Two decades later, Southey again became a major object of satire in Lord Byron’s parody, *The Vision of Judgement* (1822).

Byron’s parody was directed at Southey’s *A Vision of Judgement*, published a year earlier. By this time, Southey had relinquished his republican sympathies to become an equally ardent conservative in politics. This time, therefore, Byron’s satire attacked Southey’s “Toryism”, which became apparent especially in the way Southey’s poem celebrated “the reception of the [recently] decreased monarch [George III] in to celestial bliss” (Ibid 5). The period witnessed the production of many other Southey parodies. That he was both republican and conservative at different periods of his life also contributed to the proliferation of satirical parodies directed at him. As Kent and Ewen nicely explain, “in the example of Southey, we can see parody being used as an ideological weapon of considerable force
and influence, a mode lending itself to the service not just of conservatism and tradition but also to liberalism and reform” (Kent and Ewen 18).

“The Romantic vogue for parodying individual works and styles—of contemporary as well as earlier authors—continued in the Victorian period, too. Robert Browning, for example, was parodied almost as frequently as Wordsworth, and it was again his idiosyncratic and innovative style that easily lent itself to parody” (Macdonald 73-74).

Following are some noteworthy parodies on Browning.

**Angelo Orders His Dinner**

I, Angelo, obese, black-garmented,
Respectable, much in demand, well fed
With mine own larder’s dainties, - where indeed,
She cakes of myrrh or fine alyssum seed
-------------------------------------------------
Is bare: I, Angelo, will sit and eat.

(Taylor Bayard)

**Poets and Linnets**

Where’er there’s a thistle to feed a linnet
And linnets are plenty, thistles rife-
Or an acorn-cup to catch dew-drops in it
There’s ample promise of further life
Now, mark how we begin it.
------------------------------------
Well, there’s my musing ended.

(Hood Thomas- the Younger)
Sincere Flattery of R. B.

Birhtdays? Yes, in a general way;
For the most if not for the best of men:
You were born (I suppose) on a certain day:
So was I; or perhaps in the night: what then?

----------------------------------------------------

A bridge to stop asses at once for all.

(Stephen Kenneth)

The Pus and the Boots

Put case I circumvent and kill him: good.
Good riddance—wipes at least from book o’th’ world.
The ugly admiration—like—blot—
Gives honesty more elbow—room by just
The three dimensions of one wicked knaves.

(Traill Henry Duff)

Algernon Charles Swinburne was also fairly widely parodied—a phenomenon that may similarly be explained through “the hypnotic rhythm and mechanical alliteration characteristic of Swinburne’s writing” (Jump 23). Some of the parodies on Swinburne are short but amusing.

Jack and Jill

Their pail they must fill
In a crystalline springlet,
Brave Jack and fair Jill.

---------------------------

And poor Jack broke his forehead.
Poet As Sea

(Swinburne who let it get cold)
As the sin that was sweet in the shining
Is foul in the ending thereof,
As the heat of the summer’s beginning
Is past in the winter of love
O, purity, painful and pleading!
---------------------------
And take it away.

Villanelle

Dewy-eyed with shimmering hair,
Maiden and lamb were a sight to see,
for her pet was white as she was fair.
---------------------------
And a pet as white as its mistress was fair.

(A.C.Wilkie)

Lewis Carroll also needs to be mentioned in this respect. Most of the “nonsense poems” in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass (1872) “aren’t nonsense at all but burlesques of poems that were still current in the [nineteenth] century” (Macdonald 278). William Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott are among the authors parodied in the “nonsense poems”, but the Alice books most commonly targeted
those moralising poems that were once so profusely written for the edification of the young.

Parodies of Shakespeare, which were widely produced during the Romantic era, continued to be popular during the Victorian period, too. In fact, the nineteenth century as a whole saw a great many burlesques of Shakespeare’s plays, starting with John Poole’s *Hamlet Travestie* in 1810 and reaching a climax and an end, as Stanley Wells puts it with [W.S.] Gilbert’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (performed 1891). These parodies constituted a significant aspect of popular entertainment, and their prevalence may be accounted for not only through the general vogue for text parody in the nineteenth century but also through the fact that popular audiences at the time were still slightly familiar with Shakespeare’s major plays. Macdonald’s general discussion about the popular taste for parody in the nineteenth century throws further light on the prevalence of Shakespeare parodies at the time.

George Swimmers has a very interesting parody on Shakespeare. It pertains to his scholarly expression. According to John Aubrey, in Brief Lives, Shakespeare’s father was a butcher—“and I have been told therefore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy, he exercised his father’s trade, but when he killed a calf, he would do it in a high style, and make a speech” (Gross 9). The following is supposed to be the version of these early flights
In A High Style

Thou bleeding piece of meat, can it be meet
That thou shouldst die, to feed the appetite
Of some tun-bellied Stratford alderman?
Was it for this my sharp intrusive knife?
Did pierce thy throat and force thee to the change
From lusty bullock to unfeeling veal?

-------------------------------------------

Calves die, but I shall live, and live in fame.

It is interesting to note that Shakespeare’s well-known soliloquy “to be or not to be” has been extensively parodied on various subjects.

**Batchelor’s Soliloquy**

To wed or not to wed? that is the question
Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The pangs and arrows of outrageous love
Or to take arms against the powerful flame
And by oppressing quench it.

-------------------------------------------

And lose the name of Wedlock.

(Anonymous)

**Poker**

To draw, or not to draw, - that is the question:
Whether–’t is safer in the player to take
The awful risk of skinning for a straight,
Or, standing pat, to raise ’em all the limit

-------------------------------------------

And lose the right to open.

(Anonymous)
Toothache

To have it out or not. That is the question—
Whether it is better for the jaws to suffer
The pangs and torments of an aching tooth,
Or to take steel against a host of troubles,
And, by extracting them, end them? To pull—
To rug!—

---------------------------------------------

Scared at the name of dentist.

(Anonymous)

Parodies directed at Shakespeare’s plays, then, appealed to popular taste. Entertainment was the primary function of these parodic productions. These parodies, in other words, do not usually have the sharply satirical intent that usually characterises Romantic parodies directed at other authors. “Neither is Victorian text parody in general as severely political as its Romantic counterpart. It is often much more genial, and motivated largely by admiration rather than contempt for its object” (Kent and Ewen 20). This also seems to be apparent in the way Victorians have regarded parody “as relatively minor, harmless, and self-indulgent literary form, in rather the same way described by Isaac Disraeli in Curiosity of Literature: parody as not ‘necessarily a corrosive satire’, but as akin to ‘mimicry’, and as a kind of “agreeable maliciousness”’ (Ibid 20). This, of course, does not mean that serious satiric purposes do not ever exist in Victorian literature. Social satire, for instance, is often a significant component of the Victorian
novel, which may utilise a variety of devices to make its critical remarks. Parody is one such device, but this time it is discourse, not text, parody that serves this satiric purpose. This is understandable, given that discourse parody has the potential to ridicule and satirise the characteristic languages of those social groups which deserve satiric treatment.

Nineteenth-century British parody has been said to represent “the college man’s wittily expressed dislike of art that either in sentiment or technique departs too markedly from the cultured tradition of tribe” (Kitchin 298).

The reader of Wendy Cope’s parody of a Shakespeare’s famous sonnet 55 should be aware not only of contemporary English social institutions, but also of the literary fact that Shakespeare’s sonnets are themselves often parodic of the Petrarchan and classical traditions. Take, for example, Sonnet 55:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme
------------------ dwell in lovers’ eyes.

Cope’s parody is:

Not only marble, but the plastic toys
From cornflakes packets will outlive this rhyme:
I can’t immortalize you, love – our joys
Will lie unnoticed in the vault of time.
------------------ but my verse is rotten.

(Hutcheon 79, 80)
It is a very striking case in English society, between, roughly, the 1880s and the 1950s. This society was highly socially zoned, and its different groups lived in remarkable ignorance of each other. It was also highly unequal, and its different groups lived in remarkable ignorance of each other. It was also highly unequal, not only in material terms, but also in terms of access to cultural resources. Unsurprisingly, parody was pervasive, both formally and informally. Mutual mockery of habits of speech indicates one aspect of the pervasiveness of the mode at the informal level; more formally, the institutions of popular culture such as the Music Hall thrived on the parodic recycling of prestigious cultural material, while there was a specific genre of burlesque melodrama within the popular theatre. In an autobiographical account of life in a working-class of area at the beginning of the twentieth century, Robert Roberts described how new popular songs were quickly assimilated by the boys of his part of Salford, above all by parody; indeed, parody was one of the principal cultural forms used by working-class people, so much so that people would know the parodic version of sentimental songs or recitations, without knowing the originals. The tradition of work-class parody persisted in Second World War army songs, when ribald versions of classic songs such as ‘The Ash Grove’ and ‘The Minstrel Boy’ were widespread; popular entertainment carried forward this genre also, as in such radio, television shows as ITMA and the Goon Show. When Tommy Cooper or Morecambe and Wise
parodied Shakespeare in their acts they were the direct inheritors of this tradition.

We can, thus, say that there are social situations or historical moments when parody is likely to flourish, and to become the medium of important cultural statements. The particular forms that parody takes in such periods, however, remain to be specified, and in general terms we can conclude, unsurprisingly, that the predominant uses of parodic mode will vary according to the kind of social situation in which it is put to use.

English poetic history is certainly marked by skirmishes which lend support to both these ways of understanding the critical function of parody. The battles over style at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century produced, surprisingly, a wealth of parodies; Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey must be the most parodied poets in the English literary tradition. It has been observed that behind many of these parodies lurked secretly concealed political purposes. This is true of the second generation of Romantic poets also, though the politics were directed in the opposite direction. Percy Bysshe Shelley marked his distance from the older poet, Wordsworth, in the parody ‘Peter Bell the Third’, where the complaint is that Wordsworth has sold out to political reaction and lost sight of his originating poetic impulse:
Even the reviewers who were hired
To do the work of his reviewing,
With adamantine nerves, grew tired;
Gaping and torpid they retired,
To dream of what they should be doing.

----------------------------------------------

His servant-maids and dogs grew dull;
His kitten, late a sportive elf;
The woods and lakes so beautiful,
Of dim stupidity were full.
All grew as dull as Peter’s self.

(Jerrold and Leonard 206)

The polemical function of parody here is directed to a whole manner or style, that of the late Wordsworth, and looks back to an earlier, more authentic poetry, more genuinely permitting the evolution of a new manner. Parody, in these skirmishes in the culture wars of the beginning of the nineteenth century, is one of the weapons in struggle over the social and political direction of poetry. Parody can, indeed, become the vehicle for a critique of a whole aesthetic, and the substitution of another in its place, as in the following pair of poems. First W. B. Yeats’ famous poem from the 1890s, ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’:
I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee

While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart’s core.

Now compare the following poem by Ezra Pound, form 1917, called ‘The lake Isle’:

O God, O Venus, O Mercury, patron of thieves,
Give me in due time, I beseech you, a little tobacco-shop.
With the little bright boxes
Piled up nearly upon the shelves
And the loose fragrant Cavendish
And the shag,

O God, O Venus, O Mercury, patron of thieves,
Lend me a little tobacco-shop,
Or install me in any profession
Save this damn’d profession of writing
where one needs one’s brains all the time.

The immediate polemical target here is not really the idiosyncrasies of Yeast’ style; indeed, it is quite likely that no reader would be able to recognise this as a parody if it were not for the title. What Pound is attacking, by means of parody, is a whole aesthetic, a characteristic way of
writing and understanding art and its purposes. He attacks a particular vein of late nineteenth-century Romanticism, which combines lyric beauty, plangent melancholy, and fantasies about rural life. Pound’s parody gleefully asserts a quite different aesthetic, in which the rituals of urban life, sharply and brightly realised are offered instead, and where poetry would not come from the ‘deep heart’s core’, but be a product of the intelligence.

Pound’s parody, written at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a part of a battle over the direction that poetry should take; crudely, he is repudiating the generic inheritance of Romanticism in favour of the sharper and harder aesthetic we have come to know as Modernism. Where Gifford and Frere had attacked the early Romantics, and Shelley had attacked Wordsworth, so Pound was now taking on Yeats, in battles that all involved the critical reputation of a style, seen as symptomatic of wider aesthetic and cultural issues.

**The Twentieth-Century 1900 -1950**

Many eras have vied for the title of the “Age of Parody”. Certainly the nineteenth-century infatuation with specific and occasional parody of Romantic and late Romantic poems and novels provided a source of contemporary opinion on a major literary movement. The mixture of praise and blame makes such parody in to a critical act of reassessment and acclimatiation. Since this period had a literate, middle-class reading
public, parodists could venture beyond using canonic familiar texts (the Bible, the classics) to include the contemporary. But poetry in the twentieth-century has gone beyond this conservative function of keeping modishness in line. Unlike Dryden or even J. K. Stephen, T. S. Eliot seemed to feel that he might be able to trust in his readership’s knowledge—the knowledge necessary to understand his allusive or parodic poetry—but he would force his reader to work towards regaining the Western literary heritage (and some of the Eastern as well) while reading *The West Land*. In other words, parody in this century is one of the major modes of formal and thematic construction of texts. And, beyond even this, it has hermeneutic function with both cultural and even ideological implications.

“The Old Man’s Comforts” by Southey, with its moral to youth to live moderately, is parodied by Lewis Carroll’s “Father William” in such a way that there is both a satire of this specific moral, and a parody of process of moralising in poetry.

**The Old Man’s Cold and How He Got It**

(By Northey-Southey-Eastey-Westey)

“You are cold, Father William,” the young man cried,
You shake and you shiver, I say;
You have a cold Father William, your nose it is red,
Now, tell me the reason, I pray.”

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At forty-eight shillings a ton!
**Father William**

“You are old, father William,” the young man said,

“And your hair has become very white,

And yet you incessantly stand on your head-

Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

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Be off, or I’ll kick you downstairs.

(Carroll)

The interaction of parody and satire in modern art is pervasive, despite the view of one commentator who has decided that satire is now a minor and outdated form. The increased cultural homogeneity in the ‘global village’ has increased the range of parodic forms available for use. In earlier centuries, the Bible and the classics were the major backgrounded texts for the educated class; popular songs provided the vehicles for others. While this is a general rule, there are, of course, always exceptions. Rochester ironically inverted parodies, thereby reversing the Lutheran practice of spiritualising the secular. Epic traditions, however, provided the ground for many parodies in the eighteenth century, parodies that are close to some kinds of modern satiric forms of parody. The mock epic did not mock the epic: it satirised the pretensions of the contemporary as set against the ideal norms implied by the parodied text or set of conventions. Its historic antecedent was probably the *silli* or the Homeric parodies, which satirised certain people or ways of life without in any way mocking
Homer’s work. There are still other, later examples of the same kind of the use of the parody and satire as we find in today’s art forms. For example, the predecessor of much recent feminist parodist satire is to be found in Jane Austen’s fiction. In *Love and Friendship*, Austen parodies popular romance fiction of her day and, through it, satirises the traditional view of women’s role as the lover of men.

For many, the 1960s marked a new golden age of satire, but it was a satire that relied very much on parody and therefore, shared its variable ethos. Musical satiric parody also has an honourable history. Mozart’s *A Musical Joke* parodies certain modish musical conventions (unnecessary repetition of banalities, incorrect modulation, disjointed melodic ideas) as a vehicle for the satire of inept amateur composing and performing—it is also known as the *Village Musician’s Sextet*.

The nineteenth century vogue for parodying texts and personal styles continued—though less intensely—in the initial decades of the twentieth century, too. Max Beerbohm was the best practitioner of the form. His *A Christmas Garland* (1912) may be considered similar to *A Pipe of Tobacco* (1736) and *Rejected Addresses* (1812) in that it, too, includes variations on a single theme. The theme this time is Christmas, and the work pretends to be a series of Christmas stories. Each story, however, is written in the style of a different author, and it is in this way that Beerbohm parodies eighteen
different authors, including Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, George Meredith, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, Joseph Conrad and Thomas Hardy.

In 1912 Heinemann published Max Beerbohm’s *A Christmas Garland*, the best single book of parodies. The chief drawback to it, as of 1960, was that about half the eighteen parodies were no longer of interest. Six of the *Garland’s* parodies—those on James, Kipling, Shaw, Hewlett, Chesterton, and Meredith—had already appeared in Christmas issue of The Saturday Review, whose dramatic critic was Beerbohm was from 1898 to 1910–his predecessor was Bernard Shaw.

In 1926 a little book entitled *Leaves from the Garland woven by Max Beerbohm* was published in New York. Privately printed in monotype in an edition of only 72 numbered copies and the type distributed was the impressive if ungrammatical inscription on the flyleaf. It contains six parodies—of Marie Corelli, Richard Le Gallienne, H. G. Wells, Ian Maclaren (Who is not remembered for his once-popular *Beside the Bonnie Brush*), Alice Meynell, and Max Beerbohm.

It must be added that *Leaves* is a pirated edition and that Beerbohm felt strongly about it. Mr. Harzoff of G. A. Baker & Co. made a practice of printing Beerbohm items and sending them out as Christmas gifts to his colleagues in the trade. Beerbohm devotes most of the Note prefacing *A Variety of Things* to denouncing him. *The Guerdon*, for instance, had its first authorised publication in that volume, but the enterprising Mr. Harzoff
had already printed it, from the manuscript Beerbohm had written ten years earlier and incautiously allowed to be circulated among his friends. The most famous parody on T.S. Eliot’s ‘Chard Whitlow’ by Henry Reed was originally in a New Statesman contest.

(Mr. Eliot’s Sunday Evening Postscript)

AS WE GET OLDER we do not get any younger.

Seasons return, and today I am fifty-five,
And this time last year I was fifty-four,
And this time next year I shall be sixty-two.

(Henry Reed)

Mr. Eliot writes: “Most parodies of one’s own work strike one as very poor. In fact, one is apt to think one could parody oneself much better. But there is one which deserves the success it has had, Henry Reed’s Chard Whitlow” (Macdonald 218). Except Reed, broadness is the sin of most Eliot parodies.

Both Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass are systematic parodies of the grown-up world from the viewpoint of a child, Alice being the norm and the grotesques she meets being exaggerations of adult behaviour. Most specifically, both books make fun of contemporary matters that are now forgotten. One need not know these references to enjoy Alice but it is interesting to read William Empson on the subject in English Pastoral Parody.
“Most of the ‘nonsense poems’ in the Alice books are not really nonsense at all but burlesques of poems that were still current in the last century. One is of Wordsworth—irresistible target! And one is of Scott, but most are of those moralising poems that were once so profusely written for the edification of the young” (Macdonald 278). Here are some of the parodies in Alice book:

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

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With gently smiling jaws!

(Carroll)

Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes;
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.

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The peppet when he pleases!

**Jane Taylor: The Star**

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world you fly,
Like a teatray in the sky.
T is the voice of the Lobster, I heard him declare,
“You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.”
As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his nose
Trims his belt and his buttons, and turns out his toes.

And concluded the banquet by-
Beautiful soup, so rich and green,
Waiting in a hot tureen!
Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful soup!
Soup of the evening, beautiful soup!
Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!
Soo-oop of the e-e-evening,
Beautiful, beautiful Soup!

Beautiful, beauty-FUL SOUP!

Beerbohm’s parodies are known primarily for their playful and entertaining qualities. Beerbohm does not seem to be motivated much, in other words, by more serious critical aims. Most of these authors were writing at the end of the Victorian age and their style and subject matter often represented a transition to modernism with all its emphasis on new literary forms and styles. No wonder, then, that such writers provided ample material for parodists like Beerbohm, and popularity directed at texts
and personal styles continued. Especially, “the stylistic extremes of Modernist poetry provoked a series of parodies, and T. S. Eliot became one persistent victim, given the ironic status of The Waste Land (1922) as the quintessential Modernist poem” (Dentith 118). Perhaps the most famous of such Eliot parodies is Henry Reed’s “Chard Whitlow (Mr. Eliot’s Sunday Evening Postscript)”, which reproduces both the literary mannerisms and the modes of thought and feeling characteristic of T. S. Eliot in “Four Quartets”. The Waste Land is parodied perhaps even more widely by authors like Roger Taghohm and Wendy Cope. Following is a highly humorous Waste Land parody from The Sweeniad by Myra Buttle:

**The Voice of Sweeney**

Sunday is the dullest day, treating  
Laughter as a profane sound, mixing  
Worship and despair, killing  
New thought with dead forms.  
Weekends give us hope, tempering  
Work with reviving play, promising  
A future life within this one.  
Thirst overtook us, conjured up by Budweiserbrau  
On a neon sign: we counted our dollar bills.  
Then out in to the night air, in to Maloney’s Bar,  
And drank whisky, and yearned by the hour.  
*Das Herz ist gestorben,* swell dame, echt Bronx.
And when we were out on bail, staying with the Dalai Lama,
My uncle, he gave me a ride on a yak,
And I was speechless. He said, Mamie,
Mamie, grasp your ears. And off we went
Beyond Yonkers, then I have a Vichy.

Modernist works like *The Waste Land* often represent a sense of belonging to a community and an age that is spent and debased.

Text and discourse parody dominated the first half of the twentieth century. Probably the modernist movement with all its emphasis on form, style, and technique was responsible for the prevalence of text parody, which often targeted the highly idiosyncratic styles of various modern authors. And it was probably the popularity of satire in this same period that made writers employ discourse parody pervasively. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the gradual advent of postmodernism, parody became a much more popular and prevalent form, enjoying at the same time a scholarly interest that had never before been so intense. Surely parody plays a highly significant role in postmodern literature.

Late twentieth–century methodologies tended to make gestures of inclusion regarding the pervasive and hitherto unacknowledged role played by parody in a wide variety of discourse. Pioneering feminist critics, such as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, examined the role of parody in the formation of female discourse in novel. Such critics indicated
that women writers–both individually and as a self-conscious group of authors ultimately working against the aesthetic assumptions of a dominant male culture–often moved through a phase or period of parody towards that dominant, male, aesthetic style. The palimpsestic nature of women’s literary endeavour–its continued attempts to rewrite a male culture–only naturally employed parody as one of the central tools in the redefinition of female writing.

The course of twentieth-century poetic history in English was marked by dissensions over ‘style’ as emphatic as those of preceding century. The battles over Modernism were in part fought out through parody, with Pound’s comic assault on ‘The lake Isle of Innisfree’ marking one ground-clearing exercise for the new aesthetic. Equally, the stylistic extremes of Modernist poetry provoked a series of parodies, executed with varying degrees of hostility. T. S. Eliot has been one persistent victim of such assaults, given the iconic status of The Waste land (1922) as the quintessential Modernist poem.

Bernard Sharratt’s parody seeks to inflect the poem in a more political direction; this is the beginning of a line-by-line rewriting of both ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘East Coker’:

The history that is past and the history that is present
Will together, we presume, determine the history to come
“Sharratt writes out of a sophisticated understanding of literary history, in which he recognises that our sense of the writing of the past is partly formed by the writing of the present. His parody of T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, then, is made as an intervention in contemporary debates about the political function of literature, in a way that seeks to undermine the depoliticised authority that the poems enjoy. It is certainly not comic, but it has a very specific polemical relationship to its hypotext, which makes it a clear, if untypical example of a parody” (Dentith 119-120).

Finally, there are two more traditional parodies from Roger Tagholm and English classics which demonstrate the assimilation of Eliot and his stylistic innovations into the poetic canon. First, a parody aimed at the style of the early T. S. Eliot; this is ‘A Nursery Rhyme’, as it might have been written by T. S. Eliot:

Because time will not run backwards
Because time
Because time will not run
Hickory dickory

This is a parody in playful mode, where the sense of mock-solemnity conveyed upon the nursery rhyme does little to disturb the genuine sense of urgency that can be found in, for example, ‘Gerontion’ or ‘Preludes’. Indeed, the parody here demonstrates the success of the idiom that Eliot fashioned for himself at the beginning of the twentieth century. By way of
contrast, here is a less accomplished piece of writing, but one which is centrally in the tradition of nineteenth-century literary parody—from *The Waste Land*, by Roger Tagholm:

April is the cruellest month, bringing
The tax man out of his dead office,
Ruining salaries and bonuses, drenching
Our balances with a rain of demands.
On Moorgate station
I can connect
Nothing with nothing
For that is all that is usually left.
I have measured out my life in tax
Returns:
This how the world ends
Not with a bang but an overdraft.

Here, the pleasure of the parody (such as it is) derives from the links that the poet can create between the world of the hypotext and contemporary London–indeed, the City itself. Thus, April becomes the cruellest month not because it ‘breeds lilacs out of the dead ground’, but because it is the beginning of the new tax year–and so on. In producing these comic connections, the parody is repeating the work done by *The Waste Land* in juxtaposing a prestigious poetic past with a degraded
contemporaneity. The original poem, already partly parodic in its relation to earlier poems, itself joins the chain of parodied utterances which it initiated.

Parody for the Scriblerians and the Anti-Jacobins was an important weapon in a sometimes ferocious cultural politics. The notion of parody handed down to the early twenty-first century, however, derives more from the playful parodies of *Rejected Addresses*; even this richly cacophonous tradition, however, has dwindled to little more than a parlour-game.


**Parody in the Post-Modern Period**

Postmodernism may be said to challenge the basic premises of liberal humanism which have so far shaped Western ways of perceiving the world. Previously unquestioned notions concerning language, meaning, reality, and the human subject all come under attack in post-modern thought. Postmodernism often goes about this difficult project through a paradoxical process of first accommodating and then undermining its target. This makes postmodernism – in the terms of Linda Hutcheon, “a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” (Hutcheon 3). It is no wonder, then, that parody, which employs a similar method of simultaneously incorporating and challenging its target, is a form closely allied with
postmodernism. Parody is also reconciled to postmodernism through its inherent intertextuality: the idea that every artistic production is a text whose traces can be found in other texts and the questioning of “origin and originality” that naturally follows is among the basic tenets of postmodern thought. Parody, then, may be regarded as a form which agrees favourably with postmodern concerns. It is these qualities of parody that make Hutcheon go even so far as to call it “a perfect postmodern form” (Hutcheon 11). It is, therefore, not surprising that postmodern literature abounds in parody. Such abundance may accommodate all kinds of parody ranging from parodies of individual styles and works to those of genre and discourse. Neither genre parody nor parodies of texts and personal styles make much sense within the context of postmodern thought. The discourse parody, then, is the one that best reflects postmodern concerns – hence its pervasive use in postmodern literature.

In his essay, Bradbury summarises his remarks on parody in a passage which also summarises the history of parody in recent times: “So it seems clear that in our century, parodic activity has vastly increased, moved, in art and literature, in practice and theory, from the margins to the centre, and become a primary level of textual or painterly representation. An essential part of our art is an art of mirrorings and quotations, inward self-reference and mock-mimesis, of figural violation and aesthetic self-presence, which has displaced and estranged the naive-mimetic prototypes
we associate with much nineteenth-century writing and challenged its habits of direct *vraisemblance*, orderly narrative, and dominant authorial control” (Bradbury 64). Like the sixteenth century, the postmodern period has witnessed a proliferation of parody as one of the modes of positive aesthetic self-reference as well as conservative mockery. Perhaps parody can flourish today because we live in a technological world in which culture has replaced nature as the subject of art. One of things that these two widely separated periods have in common, Linda suggests, is the sense of ideological instability, of challenging of norms. But parody today can be both progressive and regressive.

Bradbury finally affirms his other recent uses and descriptions of parody as both comic and complex when he concludes his essay with the statement that “parody is not simply a crisis of language, but a major form of creative play and artistic self-discovery which can give us a joyously experimental and comic art” (Ibid 64).

In broader sense of Greek *parodia*, parody can occur when whole elements of one work are lifted out of their context and reused, not necessarily to be ridiculed. Linda Hutcheon argues that this sense of parody has again become prevalent in the Twentieth Century, as artists have sought to connect with the past while registering differences brought by modernity. Major modernist examples of this recontextualising parody include James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which incorporates elements of Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ in
Twentieth Century Irish context, and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste land*, which incorporates and recontextualises elements of a vast range of prior texts.

In postmodern sensibility, blank parody, in which an artist takes the skeletal form of another art work and places it in a new context without ridiculing it, is common. Pastiche is a closely related genre, and parody can also occur when characters or settings belonging to one work are used in a humorous or ironic way in another, such as the transformation of minor characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from Shakespeare’s drama ‘Hamlet’ in to the principal characters in a comedic perspective on the same events in the play (and the film) ‘Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are dead.’

**Conclusion:**

There are some noteworthy collections of parody in English poetry. They are: ‘Anti-Jacobin’, ‘Rejected Addresses’, ‘A Pipe of Tobacco’, ‘A Christmas Garland’, and ‘Alice in Wonderland’, and ‘Through the Looking Glass.’ Wordsworth was the most frequent parodied poet. Catherine Fanshawe is found to be the only significant feminine parodist in English poetry. Beerbohm’s parodies are known primarily for their playful and entertaining qualities. Text and discourse parody dominated the first half of the twentieth-century due to the modernist movement. In the second half, with the advent of post-modernism, parody became more and more popular and prevalent form. Parody plays a very remarkable role in the Post-
Modern literature. The notion of parody, handed down to the early twenty-first century, is derived from the playful parodies of “Rejected Addresses”.


Post-Modern literature abounds in parody. Linda Hucheon calls it “a perfect Post-Modern form” (Hucheon 11). The discourse parody is pervasive in Post-Modern literature. Bradbury has also remarked in his essay about the increased activity of parody in art and literature, in practice and theory, from margin to centre. Post-Modern period has witnessed a proliferation of parody as one of the modes of positive aesthetic self-reference as well as conservative mockery. Parody, today can be both progressive and regressive. Parody, thus, is a major form of creative play and aesthetic self-discovery, which can give us joyously experimental and comic art.

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