



Parody : The Art That Plays With Art

By Robert Chambers

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Parody: The Art That Plays with Art explodes the near-universal belief that parody is a copycat genre or that it consists of a collection of trivial and derivative forms. Parody is revealed as an uber-technique, a principal source of innovation and invention in the arts. The technique is defined in terms of three major variations that bang, bind, and blend artistic conventions into contrasting pairings, the results of which are upheavals of existing conventions and the formation of unexpected and sometimes startling and revolutionary new configurations. Parodic art fashions a galaxy of contrasts, and from these stem an illusionistic sense of multiplicity and an array of divergent meanings and interpretive paths. This book, an extreme departure from existing analyses of parody, is nonetheless highly accessible and will be of major interest not only to scholars but to general readers and to professional writers as well. *Parody: The Art That Plays with Art* is particularly suited for readers interested in modernism, postmodernism, meta-art, criticism, satire, and irony.

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Editorial Review

Review

Reviewed by Simon Dentith, University of Reading

Parody, Robert Chambers reminds us in this approachable, eccentric, self-deprecating, and mildly megalomaniac book, is one of the few literary terms that come down to us from ancient Greece, where it means something like “beside-or-against song.” Certainly Chambers has taken the license of its antiquity to extend the scope of parody way beyond what most people have taken it to mean up to this point. It is not to be confined to the minor and disreputable genre beloved of nineteenth-century *littérateurs* and the *New Statesman*/*New Yorker*. This is because it is not to be confined to a genre at all, since it is in fact a pervasive technique characteristic of all literary periods, possibly even of all language use, which works to combine or play off one convention or set of conventions against another. Its scope is therefore very wide indeed, encompassing children’s mimicry, all of the traditionally designated parodic genres (so: mock-epic, comic epic, burlesque, travesty, spoof, lampoon and hoax - though it’s not itself a genre), word-play and puns, much of the history of the novel, skaz, film adaptations, imitations, Dada, self-reflexive art, and what we know as modernism and postmodernism. Parody is characteristically multistable, that is, it permits or encourages several perspectives simultaneously, thus challenging the linearity of Western thought in favour of the Yin and Yang of Daoism; it is the principal means by which genres get exploded and new genres develop; and its pervasiveness has only been overlooked by criticism since the Romantics because of extraordinary critical myopia (not to say stupidity. Chambers undertakes to remedy this myopia, more perhaps in hope than expectation, and does so with wit, wild erudition, much repetition, and lots of diagrams.

About the Author

Robert Chambers is Adjunct Assistant Professor of English at Kennesaw State University. A graduate of Princeton University, he earned his masters and doctorate in modern British and American literature at Indiana University. He has been a correspondent for *The Economist* and a reporter for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, where he won a national fellowship competition.

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