Betrayal and Theft: Beerbohm, Parody, and Modernism

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No book of parodies in this century has been more celebrated than those contained in *A Christmas Garland*, and no parodist more celebrated than Max Beerbohm. Of the seventeen parodies contained in that book, the one of James, "The Mote in the Middle Distance," has been conceded to be, I think, "virtually definitive" (along with his later James parody, "The Guerdon"). Those of Kipling, Shaw, and perhaps Hardy and Bennett also have had some currency, as these writers themselves have maintained their reputations. For the rest, as such writers as A. C. Benson and Maurice Hewlett have been largely forgotten, so have their parodies. Others — Meredith, Chesterton, Wells — do not have a place in the modernist canon, and in this way they are rather like Beerbohm himself. He has had his acclaim, but the author of *A Christmas Garland* persists in the mind (as well as in his own caricatures of himself) as an irrepressible, elfin dandy, a product of the Nineties.

This is not the most acute view of Beerbohm. What I would like to do for the moment is carry the perspective of a nineties Beerbohm a bit further, then contrast Beerbohm with others of his contemporaries who wrote parody, and finally examine some of the motives which went into the writing of *A Christmas Garland*. It will be my argument that the peculiar kind of stylistic recreation perfected by Beerbohm more properly ought to be situated among still others of his contemporaries, such as Eliot, Pound, or Joyce. In fact the kind of writing which Beerbohm evolved, though it was given the formal designation of parody, is not so different from that written by Eliot, Pound, or Joyce. Beerbohm's writing did not come into existence because of these

writers, but he had to face, along with them, the common problem of inherited forms and "false orders." All of them had to shape fresh forms, new and vital strategies, of literary representation. Parody, for Beerbohm but also, I would argue, for the rest, was one of these strategies, one of the answers to the questions we have agreed to call "modern." It will not be to my purpose to present a detailed account of modernism. I will assume its questions to be those of origin and representation, rather than those attendant upon some crisis of belief or temporal and spatial reconfiguration of the external world. In what remains, I think, one of the most lucid discussions of modernism, Maurice Beebe distinguishes four characteristics: formalism, irony, the use of myth, and the preoccupation with aesthetic autonomy. Beebe dates this last characteristic from the Impressionists, who initiated the project by which "modern art turns back upon itself and is largely concerned with its own creation and composition."[1] My argument presumes that parody constituted one condition by which modern art made use of its own formal processes by, precisely, re-presenting them in order to explore its own origins.

Beerbohm's first published (anonymous) article was on Wilde, and a good part of his early career was spent hoaxing, parodying, and generally making fun of him. It was Shaw Beerbohm replaced as drama critic of *The Saturday Review*, Shaw who bestowed the epithet, "the Incomparable Max." Beerbohm chose to associate himself with writers such as these, and we so follow in turn. The fact that Beerbohm lived the latter part of his life in Rapallo, where a very different writer, Ezra Pound, also took up residence, is no more than a coincidence, we presume. The kind of writing Pound was engaged in by then was not the sort of writing Beerbohm's reputation had already been determined by. The dubious laurels accorded by Beerbohm in *A Christmas Garland* were woven, and remained, in another era.

This is a legitimate estimate up to a point. Though the integrity of the Victorian reading public was gone by 1912, and with it its exalted regard for poetry and the poet, Beerbohm could still count on a lingering sense of the spiritual authority of the literary enterprise. He could gain a purchase on its prestige, at the very least its topicality: his readers could well imagine Chesterton and

Belloc actually writing essays at and on Christmas. Furthermore, Beerbohm is engaged in his parodies in the same sort of activity that the Victorian parodists were engaged in — reading through a style to a man; most of the subjects in *A Christmas Garland* overcame their yuletide themes with vigorous and aggressive displays of personality, or else use the occasion to decorate it with their own intellectual and temperamental tinsel. Beerbohm is still very much after the man in the manner, and this is one reason it is possible to read his G. S. Street with a great deal of amusement.

And yet Beerbohm's parodies do seem very different from anything which had come before. Even the parodists who were Beerbohm's contemporaries miss the heightened stylistic communion that he is capable of. Owen Seaman, the best known of them, has a parody of James, for example, and his narrator in the parody has the "cornucopious predicament" of whether to accept a wedding invitation from a woman who is betrothed, he discovers, to a count with no legs. The "incalculable pain to my *amour propre*" that the narrator writhes under expresses much of the humour of the piece — too much, really, for despite the "faculties of deliberative volition" Seaman traces, he gains his effect "almost too crudely by playing off his overwrought deliberations against a banal, simple situation."[2]

J. S. Squire was another of Beerbohm's contemporaries and as good a parodist as the first decades of the twentieth century produced. It is especially instructive to compare him with Beerbohm. Squire's Chesterton deserves some extensive quotation:

> This profound and far-reaching truth has frequently struck me, and, as you doubtless know, I have frequently expressed it. Our ancestors (who were much less foolish than some of their descendents) never hit the nail on the head with more stupendous and earth-shaking force than when they laid it down as rigid and unquestionable axiom that the truth cannot be too often restated. It is that inexpungable fact that plunges our modern pessimists into the nethermost abysses of suicidal despair; it is that saline and saltating fact that raises in the breath of our optimists a fierce and holy joy. The essence of a great truth is that it is stale. Sometimes it is merely musty, sometimes it is almost terribly mouldy. But the mouldiness is not merely a sign

> of vitality — which is truncated immortality; it is the sole and single, the one and only sigh of vitality. Truth has gathered the wrinkles of age on her gown and the dust of ages on the skirts of her garment. A thing can no more be true and fresh than it can be new and mouldy. If a man told me he had discovered a new truth I should politely but firmly reprimand him precisely as I should a man who informed me, with however candid and engaging air, that he had just seen moss growing on the back of a newborn child.[3]

On the other hand, we have Beerbohm's Chesterton. He is arguing that that which is hated lives, while that which is understood dies, and he continues:

> Between the horns of this eternal dilemma shivers all the mystery of the jolly visible world, and of that still jollier world which is invisible. And it is because Mr. Shaw and the writers of his school cannot, with all their splendid sincerity and acumen, perceive that he and they and all of us are impaled on these horns as certainly as the sausages I ate for breakfast this morning had been impaled on the cook's toasting fork — it is for this reason, I say, that Mr. Shaw and his friends seem to me to miss the basic principle that lies at the root of all things human and divine. By the way, not all things that are human are divine. But to return to Christmas.[4]

What there is to choose between these two passages is not merely a matter of literary quality. Insofar as this is concerned, though both share a bellicose moralizing, jibe at the same opponents, and reach for a similar paradoxical inflation of statement, there is nothing as telling in Squire as regards the precise *kind* of religious sentiment in Chesterton as Beerbohm's one word, "jolly." Nor does Squire have anything quite as inspired as the homey and mock-casual sausage analogy — at once more humorous, I think, and more critical. And how to describe the way Beerbohm's Chesterton so jocularly *confides* his truths as simply being more faithful to the spirit of Chesterton himself? How not to marvel at Beerbohm's "by the way," which impales the moralist just as he turns into a dogmatist — or is it the stylist unable to resist yet another convolution into paradox, even at the risk of losing his subject altogether? It is hard to resist the temptation to conclude something like this: Squire is writing his parody with Chesterton's axioms, whereas Beerbohm seems to be writing his

from within them. So wholly does Beerbohm seem to have taken over the formal features of the mode of writing called "Chesterton" that it would be possible to read this passage from "Some Damnable Errors About Christmas" as actually having been written by Chesterton, did we not know it appears in a book written by Beerbohm. Knowing that, we have no choice but to read it as a parody and I would like to stress that John Felstiner writes in his excellent book on Beerbohm about the precise kind of parody Beerbohm produced: "Essentially, his parody was mimetic, not satiric, with the motive that literary representation itself has — to try out a form of expression."[5] This is the reason for the eerie disquiet certain of Beerbohm's subjects — Bennett, James, George Moore, Maurice Baring — felt at reading themselves, and it is a response one cannot imagine Jean Ingelow having after reading C. S. Calverley, the great Victorian parodist, on her. Felstiner goes on to speak of "the tendency of Beerbohm's parody to originate the very process of literary invention."[6] Beerbohm, in other words, inverts the most venerable relationship between a parody and its model — that of parasite to host; rather than content himself with less energetic, subordinate energies, Beerbohm in his practice demonstrates a logic whereby the model or host itself gets transformed into another model or another host, potentially equal if not effectively overmastering aesthetically. Such a logic is, for example, the same logic as that of Pound's translations.

Beerbohm can be regarded as the last phase or the finest flower of Victorian parody, then, but from the perspective of either his or our own time he was in fact unique. He seems to have suffered little of the tyranny of the authority of poetry, from which the Victorians sought to distance themselves or otherwise come to terms with through parody. Felstiner notes that "the purely parricidal impulse was spent for Beerbohm when Wilde died."[7] Though his roots are in aestheticism, where he developed, among other things, his keen and corrosive sense of prose sketches, *Words for Pictures*, which he wrote between 1898 and 1901, in which he contemplates Paterian and Wildean logic as a viewer of pictures by making his response part of what he sees and indeed co-equal with the creator of the painting himself.[8] As parodist,

Beerbohm presumed to be co-equal as well — a creator, whose creativity was expressed by recreating the words of others in himself.

But such a project is not without its own effaced tensions, and such presumption is established quite paradoxically. By definition, the motives that went into the writing of *A Christmas Garland* cannot speak openly of themselves in their own voice. The best place to examine the impulses which animated Beerbohm as a parodist is the group of essays he wrote between 1910 and 1920 and published in the collection *And Even Now*. One of them, "No. 2, The Pines," his account of his visit to the aged Swinburne, is perhaps his most famous essay and certainly one of his finest. It is a study in heroism, or rather a comedy of hero-worship: Swinburne for his poets, Beerbohm for Swinburne. The comedy turns, specifically, upon the question of language: Swinburne is effusive and magisterial over his precious volumes, while Beerbohm can only feel hopelessly ill-read and ignorant. He has nothing to say. At one point, Beerbohm refers to Swinburne's "genius for self-abasement" (p. 42), and we realize that what makes the essay so marvelous is Beerbohm's own considerable genius in presenting his own abasement during the course of the essay.

Then, perhaps, we realize that still another quiet paradox obtains: Beerbohm does have something to say — the very essay he himself has written. Indebted as he may be to his master, he has found words of his own: modest, circumspect, never contentious. They are not, certainly, the inflammatory words of Swinburne, whom he quotes at one point in the essay, concerning "the dotage of duncedom which cannot perceive, or the impudence of insignificance so presumptuous as to doubt, that the elements of life and literature are indivisibly mingled in one another, and that he to whom books are less real than life will assuredly find in men and women as little reality as in his accursed crassness he deserves to discover" (p. 52). These are not Beerbohm's words, even though the burden of the essay is to affirm them, and affirm Swinburne for saying them. Indeed, this statement is the theme not only of the essay, but of virtually all the essays in *And Even*

Now. Nothing is more characteristic of Beerbohm than the fact that he chooses to have another state it directly for him.

Life, the essays continually suggest, is one affair; literature (sometimes very broadly defined) is quite another. And yet there is a relationship, never fixed or static. One feels itself to be a version of the other. Beerbohm is content with the penetration, the indivisible mingling, and never anxious to inquire into the more mysterious matter of which sets the terms for the other. If there are rival claims to be mediated, Beerbohm disavows the role of mediator and retires from the conflict.

The peculiar way Beerbohm effaces the tension between literature and life can be traced in the short piece, "A Letter That Was Not Written." Beerbohm reads that Adam Street, Adelphi, is to be redone, and the Trivoli Music Hall abolished. Outraged, he sits down to write a letter to the *Times*. But the words do not come right. They lack restraint, and at last he resolves to revisit Adam Street for himself to freshen his inspiration. There he meets a friend and together they discover that they had never before realized the "hateful smugness of the frontage of the Trivoli." The proposed widening of the street will not be such a bad thing after all. The essay concludes: "For I had not, after all, to resume my letter to the *Times*" (p. 59).

Like "No. 2, The Pines," the essay's irony is fixed in terms of language. "Where before Beerbohm abided without any language of his own, here he *discovers* that he has none." The only truth the letter would have had would have been the truth of his own feelings, and even those he only thinks he knows, before they are rebuked by his own perception. The language he thought he had is exposed as fatuous — exposed, really, as literary; he thinks of Dr. Johnson, and transcribes a possible wording inscribed with heavyhanded, sonorous invocations of Empire. The fact that he suspects he is only being literary when he wants to be sincere is a prelude to the discovery he is wrong when he thought he was right.

So Beerbohm writes his essay instead of his letter. He recoups what he failed to do in what he succeeds in writing. It might even be possible to say what he failed to write amounted to a parody of what he did. Or should it be that what he did is a parody of

Toronto rappers Ringo Junior and Screecher Nice appear on "Rub a Dub Style"; black Nova-Scotian acappella gospel quartet "Four the Moment," along with Allen's daughter Anta, sing backup on "Sister Hold On"; and former members of The Parachute Club, Lorraine Segato and Billy Bryans, along with *Quebecoise* lesbian folk singer Lucie Blue Tremblay, provide backup vocals on "Dis Ya Mumma Earth." As Allen notes, "dub poetry is not just an art form. It is a declaration that the voice of a people, once unmuzzled, will not submit to censorship of form" ("De Dub" 15). As community-accountable art, these collaborative practices underscore that the voice of resistance is finally not a solo voice.

Allen also draws on the African-influenced communal form of call-and-response to structure many of her dub poems so that multiple voices frequently respond to her poetic injunctions in the tradition of black preaching oratory. "Dis Ya Mumma Earth" specifically recalls Bob Marley's nationalist liberation song to articulate an inclusive ecological politics through call-and-response:

> get up stand up
> shout en masse
> wail in the wilderness
> our will . . . will be
> peace . . . justice . . . equality
> join hands in liberation dance
> freedom chants (*Women* 96-97)

Davida Alperin advocates just such an interactive alliance politics in contrast to cultural pluralism or separatism. She sees coalition between groups with different experiences and standpoints as the only workable model for enriched understanding and transformation of complex social relations (30-31). As Philip notes, dub poetry's popular culture status with long roots in African oral practices invites its cross-over appeal ("Who's Listening" 40-41).

Linton Kwesi Johnson and others have expressed misgivings about the "sell-out" tendencies of cross-over forms like reggae in which the historical, material, and political contexts may be easily displaced by embodied pleasure (Hitchcock n.pag.). We

deep-rooted in the human breast the love of destruction, of mere destruction, is" (p. 129).

The theme of the essay is of course (again) destruction and creation, a relation which is actually an equivalence: to want to make is to want to unmake. What is interesting is not merely Beerbohm's sympathetic assent, but the way he hovers over the scene, expanding the budding creative drama with the gentlest irony. We have the feeling we are at, to use Felstiner's words, the very origin of the process of literary creation — which presumes the existence of something already creatable (if not created), as figured forth by the sand cottage. It is not Beerbohm's invention, but it is articulated, as it were, through him. He becomes a chorus, a kind of heightened conscience, for the created object: "The castle was shedding its sides, lapsing, dwindling, landslipping — gone. O Nineveh! And now another — O Memphis? Rome? — yielded to the cataclysm. I listened to the jubilant cries of the children. What rapture, what wantoning!" (p. 128).

Such a meditation may seem far too portentous for such a small occasion, but its irony (for it is impossible to imagine Beerbohm was not conscious of any) is really a function of the fact that Beerbohm is entirely outside the scene. On the face of it, there is nothing but the castle that the boy has built, and then lets wash away. What Beerbohm is actually doing is taking imaginative possession of the scene, and embellishing it as an artistic *exemplum*. Or rather not the scene, but the castle, the work of art, which Beerbohm, in his meditation, "creates" in the process of its destruction.

It is the same stance, and the same psychology, which produces parody. Seemingly outside the work, the original, and at one remove from it, Beerbohm is actually inside it, and one with it. Indeed, it is even possible to say he is more at one with it than the artist himself (just as here, where the boy is too young to understand his dissatisfaction). The artist thinks he has created something, whereas he has in fact destroyed the purity of his original conception. Beerbohm, in parodying, or destroying the work, is more truly recreating that conception.

Another essay, "The Crime," is a more personal, frank, and blunt account of destruction. It is another evocation of the para-

doxes implicit in the created work — the very paradoxes so much modern literature is founded on. Beerbohm finds himself alone in a remote cottage. He decides to dissipate his gloom by reading a book, and he chooses one by a woman author, whose work he knows to be distinguished for its vitality. He reads a bit, before the fireplace, but grudgingly, and all of a sudden finds that he has thrown the volume into the fire. He is shocked initially at his "crime" but soon pleased and he stokes the fire until the book is thoroughly burnt. He makes out the letters, "hing. Tolstoi was right," but it is too late to know what Tolstoi had been right about. Regretful, even guilty, Beerbohm is still resigned to his action.

Throughout the essay, he makes the identity between the book and its author so complete (even mentioning he has met her) that it is hard to feel the murder is only symbolic. Beerbohm's idea of literature is, as always, a deeply humanized one, and, as I have suggested, it is one of the reasons he could write parody recognizably in the Victorian tradition. It is also one of the reasons he can feel the thrill of transgression — "the way of transgressors is hard," he thinks, somewhat wryly, at the end (p. 141).[9] He might also have added, however, that the transgressor usually acts in the name of a still greater ideal, for in this essay there clearly is one and it is literature itself. Earlier after some ruminations on "the world's future," Beerbohm writes that he will concede a woman dabbling in the written word, "but that she should be an habitual, professional author, with a passion for her art . . . and a profound knowledge of human character, and an essentially sane outlook, is somehow incongruous with my notions — my mistaken notions, if you will — of what she ought to be " (p. 138). And so he destroys her, now utterly equivalent to her books, and thereby preserves the high calling to which she has presumed. It is not the calling as other modernist authors would have defined it — one cannot, say, readily imagine Yeats speaking of art's claim in terms of its sanity — but it is recognizably one with modernist claims that the artist provides a significant ordering of the world, and not the mere indulgence of individual sensibility.

With, perhaps, one fundamental difference: Beerbohm speaks in this essay of a literature which has not withdrawn from the human community and which therefore must hold itself accountable to it. His destruction is not without its irony. It is still a "crime," and his victim has still produced a book. The book is not reducible to its material form. It still has words, a plot, knowledge of a kind, and Beerbohm is left ignorant of exactly what kind — even as he felt he knew and so let the fire burn. In a way, Beerbohm, defender of literature, falls victim to the very perishability of the book he consigned to destruction. His was an extreme form of criticism, but actually futile. Insofar as he is merely a reader, he will never know what Tolstoi was right about, and it is ultimately as a simple reader that Beerbohm appears in the essay.

He is not, certainly, a parodist, but again I think the essay can be used as a gloss on the motives for Beerbohm's practice elsewhere. Here, he is frustrated, and frustrated because his "criticism" was not really literary at all. As the book burns, there is a compelling sentence: "I sub-divided it, spread it, redistributed it" (p. 140). This is precisely what Beerbohm does when he writes a parody (no less an act of criticism and equally redolent of transgression and even murder), with the difference that then the book does not burn. To parody it, Beerbohm stirs it about on a page of his own, subdividing and redistributing, both destroying and recreating.

I find it impossible not to read this essay especially as anything other than a representation (re-presentation) of the parodic process. Beerbohm's "crime" here is not merely the crime of criticism, but specifically of parodic criticism, albeit one which has failed, and so the critic is left with the thrill of transgression, but none of its exultance. *That* emotion, presumably, is the task — and the triumph — of parody. Parody, furthermore, not only upholds the literary ideal but actually redeems it by re-presenting another writer as but a tissue of mannerisms which the re-presentation that is the parody has seen through, by means of an "ideal" criterion that does not have to be made explicit in order to function. "The Crime" is flush with Beerbohm's sense of himself as an artist (here embarrassed as a mere reader), "the critic as

artist" as fully co-eval and co-equal as Wilde could have imagined. To play on the title, the hidden crime is that in this instance critic and artist are not co-extensive.

"Books Within Books," another of the titles in *And Even Now* runs — and Beerbohm imagines what it would be like to have been able to read them, when only their imaginary existence was mentioned in certain novels. That *other* book he habitually sees struggling to emerge from the one at hand — this is the book he does not see (or does not choose to see) in the wretched volume he consigns to the flames in "The Crime."

Owen Seaman once claimed the following rationale for parody: "In its highest form, parody is a department of pure literary criticism. It is often the way that humor has of paying homage to serious achievement; of conferring its recognition of something beyond its own range, which it can honour but cannot hope to emulate."[11] What is unique about Beerbohm's parody, and what I would claim enables it to participate in some of the central currents of modernist writing, is that it is not the product of any of the impulses Seaman asserts. It is not, or does not aim exclusively to be, humorous. It is not born out of a recognition that the original is aloof and inimitable.

It would be, I think, both foolish and fruitless to try to examine certain of Beerbohm's parodies and determine what personal emotions of his might be reflected there. (And what would be gained if it could be shown that his Belloc, say, was more deferential than his Kipling?) Nevertheless, it seems clear enough even without the psychology expressed in *And Even Now* that Beerbohm's parodies manifest a thoroughness and an aggressiveness quite different from the sort of respect Seaman is assuming. Such respect is the assumption of another, and previous, age.

Beerbohm's lovely little essay-fiction, "A Clergyman," collects itself around a moment when an insignificant clergyman, whom Boswell does not even bother to name, begs to differ with Dr. Johnson. He sits hushed before the Great Presence (as Beerbohm imagines Johnson) and, when he speaks, his words partake as much of the desire to blaspheme as to worship Johnson. So one must say of Beerbohm himself. He will have his own voice, and — if there was by 1912 any doubt — it will utter a sacralized lan-

guage no more. Moreover, it presumes not only to emulate, but actually to rewrite. It is a literary criticism that is anything but "pure." In "A Clergyman" Beerbohm, who admired Boswell's biography more than any other book, even sports with Johnson's style.

What is what we have agreed to call "modernism" but such sport, played with any number of precursors? We remember, for example, with respect to the great number of poets referred to in "The Waste Land," that that poem was greeted by some as a parody when it was first published. We now know from the manuscript of "The Waste Land" that Eliot once considered an epitaph from *Our Mutual Friend*, "He Do the Police in Different Voices" — a rather exact description of what Beerbohm had already done in *A Christmas Garland*. We know that Pound originally criticized the opening of "The Fire Sermon," based on "The Rape of the Lock," because "you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope — and you can't"[12] In effect, Pound was rebuking the undiluted parodistic energy expressed in Eliot's verse, and was urging him to be aware of it as such and to absolve himself of it. And indeed Pound is quite right: the parodist really does think he can write better than his original (though no parodist, certainly no Beerbohm, would like to admit it), whereas the poet ought to be content to think he can simply write, and not seek to address the power of his models in the direct and pre-emptive manner that only parody sanctions. The way of extinction was indeed better, which is to say more fruitful, "for it left the poet open to progress, more vulnerable to emotions which could endure as somehow original or otherwise fit for their own poetry."

Beerbohm's response to such a matter was not that of Eliot, or Pound, or Joyce. He was content to designate his writing as parody because he was comfortable within established conventions, impatient of such imponderables as history, and unconcerned about savage gods. Themes of self-consciousness and destruction are calmly, even blandly, impacted into his work. His was not a coercive temperament which has to edge out others from the imaginative space he must claim as his own. The subjective

dimension in his writing is imperturbable, and Beerbohm does not trouble the world because it is not an aesthetic phenomenon.

Yet it is no mere accident of history that he retired to Rapallo just as Pound did. The conjunction is striking and suggests bolder affinities. We miss, I think, something of the evasions and distortions of the great modernist writers if we ignore the curious and fugitive life parody had for them. Parody was already present in the modernist enterprise. Beebe, for example, in an essay already quoted, cites *Pale Fire* at one point, and then states: "If a movement dies when it begins to parody itself, we can say that Nabokov's brilliant little combination of fiction, poetry, myth, and puzzle marks the beginning of the end of the Age of Modernism."[13] Instead, I think Nabokov's text merely illustrates another phase of this age. From our own vantage now we can see parody . . . as a discarded alternative, a path only minor writers and *belle lettirists* took, and Beerbohm but another instance, however exemplary, insofar as he took it himself. But parody was not a discarded alternative in the first decades of modernism, and, indeed, was one of the conditions for its emergence, . . . a way of blunting agonies (especially those of originality), sharpening irony, and perhaps even sustaining selfhood. Beerbohm's sense of himself was steady and unassuming, and therefore he was able to realize himself as a kind of absent presence in the parody of other writers. Eliot, Pound, and Joyce were each more exacerbated, more recondite and ambitious, and therefore too presumptive not to write parody without enlarging upon it to enhance their own originality; we might think of the Eliot, for example, who said that great poets steal while lesser talents merely betray an influence. Yet betrayal and theft are precisely what Beerbohm knew his own parody to be about, and the energies which lie so calmly submerged in *A Christmas Garland* competed with greater literature and were the same stuff out of which greater literature was made.

NOTES

[1] Maurice Beebe, "Introduction: What Modernism Was," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 3, No. 5 (July 1974), 1073.

[2] Owen Seaman, "The Sacred Found," *Apes and Parrots*, ed. J. C. Squire (London: Butler & Tanner, 1928), pp. 184-96.

[3] J. C. Squire, *Collected Parodies* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), p. 198.

[4] Max Beerbohm, *And Even Now* and *A Christmas Garland* (1920 and 1912; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), p. 206.

[5] John Felstiner, *The Lies of Art: Max Beerbohn's Parody and Caricature* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), p. 161.

[6] Felstiner, p. 162.

[7] Felstiner, p. 156.

[8] Some of them were reprinted in *Yet Again* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1909); see especially "Peter the Dominican."

[9] The fact that the way of transgression is hard is not to say that it is exactly "carnavalesque." I take this term from a recent essay by Allon White (who takes the term from Mikhail Bakhtin) in the Fall, 1982 issue of *Raritan*, "Pigs and Pierrots: The Politics of Transgression in Modern Fiction," pp. 51-70. "Carnavalesque" is the characterization White argues for an aggressively postmodernist transgression of alienated desire and libidinal paranoia. White's "postmodernism," however, is typical of attempts to see postmodernism so continuous with modernism that the wry thrill of a transgressive Beerbohm (ultimately no different, I would argue, than those to be found in Eliot, Joyce, or Pound) gets essentialized as indistinguishable from the raptures of another sort of canon that includes a host of writers from Sade and Nietzsche to Pynchon. One reason why Beerbohm writes that "the way of transgressors is hard" is because he is at least half in love with his limits, and so chooses parodic strategies in order to express his filiation with those limits even as he strives to extend or even transgress the same limits.

[10] Cf. Roman Jacobson's famous linguistic definition of the poetic function: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection in to the axis of combination"; quoted in Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 56.

[11] Owen Seaman, *A Selection* (London: Methuen, 1937), p. xx.

[12] Valerie Eliot, ed., *The Waste Land* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 127. Compare the amplitude and the incisiveness of Pound's conception of parody with F. R. Leavis, who wrote contemptuously of "the cult of parody" and consigned it to "that literary culture (a predominant one, to judge by our intellectual weeklies — it is a branch of 'social civilization') which, in its obtuse and smug complacency, is always the worst enemy of creative genius and vital originality. It goes with the absurd and significant cult of Max Beerbohm. . . . People who are really interested in creative originality regard the parodist's game with distaste and contempt"; quoted by Kingsley Amis, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Light Verse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. xv. There is much irony here. The literary culture against which Leavis is protesting was already breaking up, and the creative geniuses in whose name Leavis is protesting were already appropriating one of the constituent elements of that very culture: parody.

[13] Beebe, p. 1075.