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# Introduction: Understanding Satire

*Ruben Quintero*

But still, despite our cleverness and love,  
Regardless of the past, regardless of  
The future on which all our hopes are pinned,  
We'll reap the whirlwind, who have sown the wind.  
(Timothy Steele, "April 27, 1937")

## The Satirist

If, at the end of Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), the "darkly meditative," aging, and "distrustful" protagonist, believing he once saw his Salem neighbors and newlywed wife ("Faith") cavorting in a witches' Sabbath one wild night in the forest, had chosen to take up the quill instead of bitterly retreating from life, he would have written satire. For satirists do not wither in despair but, on the contrary, feel compelled to express their dissent. Juvenal is as typical a satirist as he is a great one for being so singularly dissatisfied and wanting to tell others about it. Living in an imperial Rome that has thoroughly surrendered its former republican glory, he tells his readers from the outset that it is difficult for him *not* to write satire (*difficile est saturam non scribere*; *Satires* 1.30). Indignant, he must speak out against the decadence and corruption he sees all about him. Thus satirists write in winters of discontent.

And they write not merely out of personal indignation, but with a sense of moral vocation and with a concern for the public interest. In his second "Epilogue to the Satires" (1738), Alexander Pope's poetic speaker is called "strangely proud" by his adversarial friend, who would have him stop writing satire altogether. The poet agrees that he is "odd" – for "my Country's Ruin makes me grave" – and that he is "proud" – "proud to see / Men not afraid of God, afraid of me: / Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne, / Yet touch'd and sham'd by *Ridicule* alone." The poet's satire is a

“sacred Weapon! Left for Truth’s defence, / Sole Dread of Folly, Vice, and Insolence!” and that prosecutorial weapon of words has been entrusted only to his “Heav’n-directed hands” (*Dialogue II*, 208–15). As in the formative Roman verse satires of Horace and Juvenal, Pope’s poetry creates a people’s court of blame and shame, and his satirist litigates and adjudges misconduct that, though not restrained by legislated law, is subject to the unofficial law of satire (*lex per saturam*).

Such sanction for scorn or ridicule, however, does not mean that the satirist can lash out or laugh at just anything. Not only must a boundary between truth and libel be respected, but also a socio-ethical boundary regarding satirical subject matter. It may be true, as Ronald Paulson observes, that punishment is “the most extreme, and at the same time most common, consequence in satire” and “conveys a definite admonition: this is the consequence of your foolish act, this is the effect of X’s evil act; or, beware! This is what you could look like or what X in fact looks like” (1967: 10, 14). But, in order to be laid bare and satirized, X’s “evil act” must be an evil of error, not pure evil, nor can X be hypothetically incorrigible, that is, beyond punishment. The immutably divine or demonic cannot be made satiric, except through a humanizing or a thoroughly iconoclastic perspective, such as we find, for example, in *Paradise Lost* (1667), in which John Milton ridicules a foolish, despairing Satan by presenting him as a parody of Christ, or in Mel Brooks’s film *The Producers* (1968), in which Hitler indirectly becomes the butt of comedy when a vulgar theater-going public makes a hit of *Springtime for Hitler* – mistaking this tasteless, morally objectionable play, intended as a flop, for a mock-musical satire on the Third Reich. Hitler, *qua* genocidal monster, cannot be dressed down, satirized, though it appeared possible before full disclosure of his atrocities, as in Chaplin’s cinematic satire *The Great Dictator* (1940). As another example of the limits of satire, Joseph Conrad first drafted *Heart of Darkness* (1902) with the expressed intent of writing a political satire of colonial exploitation in the Congo, but when he added and then developed the character Kurtz into an “unlawful soul” who went “beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations,” Conrad’s novel became more of an exploration of the mystery of human evil than a satiric condemnation of institutional misconduct. Similarly in political rhetoric, when one national leader demonizes another, calling him a Hitler or a devil, satire ends and propaganda begins. Satire requires the inclusion, not the exclusion, of human failing.

Not only concerned with what has happened but also with what may happen, the satirist, through an historical logic of inference and extrapolation into the future, may also serve as a cautionary prophet or an idealistic visionary. The satirist is fundamentally *engagé*, as Patricia Meyer Spacks states:

Satire has traditionally had a public function, and its public orientation remains. Although the satirist may arraign God and the universe . . . he usually seems to believe – at least to hope – that change is possible. Personal change, in his view, leads to social change; he insists that bad men make bad societies. He shows us ourselves and our world; he demands that we improve both. And he creates a kind of emotion which moves us toward the desire to change. (1971: 363)

So pervasive is the satiric “public function” remarked by Spacks that we might suspect satire to be, at bottom, a product of our biological grammar. Robert C. Elliott, perceiving a deeply rooted impulse within the art of satire, declares that magical satire, a ritual form present in the earliest of cultures, sprang “from one primordial demand – a demand that out of the fears and confusions engendered by a hostile world man shall be able to impose some kind of order” (Elliott 1960: 58). Satirists were our first utopians.

### Satirical Purpose

The satirist attempts more than visceral laughter or corrosive spite. Surely, a satire may fall dully flat, and the satirist may appear unfairly prejudiced or sanctimonious; or a satire may be vacuously humorous, playful, witty, or ridiculous without point. But any satirist deserving the name must be more than a partisan advocate or a clownish entertainer, for a true satirist must be a true believer, a practicing humanitarian, responsible even in his or her own subjective indulgence or personal indignation. “The satirist, in short, demands decisions of his reader, not mere feelings”; he “wishes to arouse [the reader’s] energy to action, not purge it in vicarious experience” (Paulson 1967: 15). Through either mimetic or discursive art, the satirist provokes mirth or sadness, a concern for the innocent or the self-destructive fool, or a revulsion for the deceitful knave, and always either laughter or scorn at the anatomized subject. As with the agon of tragedy and comedy (the conflict of characters), satire also moves heart and mind through building tension and provoking conflict, but, unlike tragedy and comedy, stops short of any reconciliation with its subject. And as the prism does to light, it leaves its subject refracted and disharmonized. Satire remains militantly rhetorical and hortatory.

Satire cannot function without a standard against which readers can compare its subject. We praise with delight what we admire, enjoy, or profit from, and we censure with indignation the despicable or what causes ill because we have an acquired sense of what the world should or might be. How could we perceive something as ridiculous, monstrous, wicked, or absurd without having a comparative sense of what would *not* be the case? How could we believe that something is wrong with the world without some idea of what the world should be and of how it could be righted? The satirist, either explicitly or implicitly, tries to sway us toward an ideal alternative, toward a condition of what the satirist believes should be. It is assumed that the satirist has our best interests at heart and seeks improvement or reformation. Whether that standard is incontrovertibly right does not really matter. But what does matter is that the satirist and the reader share a perception of that standard.

Yet, the satirist is not obligated to solve what is perceived as a problem or replace what is satirically disassembled or unmasked with a solution. It is missing the mark to claim, as some have done, that Joseph Heller’s World War II novel *Catch-22* (1961) is not satirical because it offers no alternative to the self-defeating logic of an

inescapable *Catch-22*, which not only victimizes the main character, Yossarian, but everyone else except the advantageously situated military bureaucrats who profit from the death and destruction of the war. Absurdity in itself, even if it permeates a literary universe, does not undermine the possibility of satire, unless, of course, the reader obdurately subscribes to a larger belief in a world completely subversive of all human intention. The satirist's responsibility is frequently that of a watchdog; and no one expects a watchdog to do the double duty of alarming others that the barn is on fire and of putting out the blaze. Satirists, that is, rouse us to put out the fire. They encourage our need for the stability of truth by unmasking imposture, exposing fraudulence, shattering deceptive illusion, and shaking us from our complacency and indifference. Philip Wylie, author of the once highly controversial *Generation of Vipers* (1942), a satiric tour de force, expressed his pleasure at the response of one reader who wrote to his publisher: "PUT OUT THE LANTERN OF DIOGENES FOR HERE BY GOD IN THE PLAIN LIGHT OF DAY IS AN HONEST MAN" (Wylie 1970: xi). Honesty promulgates criticism, and, as Wylie himself explains, "Criticism . . . and the *doubt* out of which it arises, are the prior conditions to progress of any sort" (Wylie 1970: xiv).

If satirists are sometimes prophets and idealists, they are also artists, even or especially when they conceal their art. For instance, the satiric films of Michael Moore – *Roger & Me* (1989), *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), among others – are cleverly crafted *faux* documentaries that through the eye of a camera employ radical juxtaposition, visual metaphor, ironic debunking, selective compression for dramatic effect, a carefully positioned naïve narrator, and other techniques commonly utilized in literary satire. Moore's skilful cinematography and editing, and the journalistic character of his work, create a cinematic realism not unlike the literary realism and detailed verisimilitude of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). In Moore's films, we travel as Lemuel Gullivers through an all-too-familiar world, at first happy in being well deceived, then seeing things from disruptively new but believable angles. We see how we and our world are manipulated by powerful industries, lobbies, and government officials. We see, or think we see, behind the curtain that conceals the cruelty, deceit, or folly of the corporations and government administrations. Yet, we who are being enlightened may sometimes fail to perceive that artifice plays as great a role in this process as fact. By the same token, those who see themselves as being attacked, as suffering the brunt of Moore's satire, for example, see only artless and unfounded invective or diatribe in his films: Moore is not funny, they protest, and he is not honest; he is the knave, and anyone who takes him at his word is the fool. As occurred in Swift's time, when a purblind Irish bishop proclaimed that he for one did not believe a word of the *Travels*, today we have critics, perhaps, imperceptive, humorless, or apologetic defenders, maybe blinded by partisan politics or an exuberant sense of patriotism, scoffing at Moore's veracity, making lists of his deceits, and wholly misunderstanding his objective of finally promoting more criticism and open inquiry of perceived injustice. In the plain light of public scrutiny, the satirist would contend, there should appear nothing wrong if, really, there is nothing wrong.

Such confusions between literal fact and the truth of art remind us that satirists must ultimately rely on audiences to share a common ground of reason and, as far as literary satire is concerned, of belief. Readers of satire are expected to suspend disbelief, to play along with the game, but not ever to surrender sanity or sound judgment. And satirists may employ fiction for seeking truth but not establishing falsehood. The satirist, in seeking a re-formation of thought, expects readers to engage the satire by applying their reasoning, moral values, and taste to the subject. Through an aggressive strategy of distortion or defamation that demands our critical judgment, the satirist seeks to affect our attitude or perspective, and often through the indirection of a narrator purposely designed to befuddle and obscure whatever exact direction the satirist would probably have us go. As Wayne Booth notes, "Since the rhetorical intent of these works [innumerable satires and burlesques, from Rabelais through Erasmus and Swift] is evident to every reader, the function of the dramatized spokesman, whether fools, knaves, or sages, is usually quite clear; no one accuses them of mad incoherence" (1961: 229). The unreliability of the narrator's position observed in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), which may confuse our understanding of Swift's latent attitude at any one time, does not disqualify the work as a satire. From a distance of time, the work may now appear more pointless in its ridicule than the topical blunderbuss it once was. Yet, despite the seemingly ludicrous narration, the larger satire remains palpable because we, poised outside the text, are not giddy inhabitants of an absurd, material, and godless world. Swift's satiric purpose, in the playful humanist spirit of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1511) and consistent with his other satire, may have been simply to illustrate how contemporary examples of scholastic intellectualism may be reduced to absurdity. A similar cautionary function may also have been the thrust of Swift's parodies of actual science in Gulliver's third voyage.

Finally, satire castigates the representative bad behavior or thought of an individual, but not any one individual who misbehaves or errs. In his *Dictionary* (1755), Samuel Johnson makes a broadly applicable distinction between *satire* and *lampoon* while defining the genre of formal verse satire: "[Satire is a] poem in which wickedness or folly is censured. Proper *satire* is distinguished, by the generality of the reflections, from a *lampoon* which is aimed against a particular person; but they are too frequently confounded." The same disavowal of personal attack is expressed by Swift's apologist, who defends his satire:

Yet, Malice never was his Aim;  
He lash'd the Vice but spar'd the Name.  
No Individual could resent,  
Where Thousands equally were meant.  
His Satyr points at no Defect,  
But what all Mortals may correct.  
("Verses on the Death of Dr Swift," 459–64)

Satire has a wide range of strategies. At one extreme is *invective*, only a scant shade away from gross individual insult of unequivocal censure or condemnation. Though

some form of attack or ridicule is necessary for something to be satiric, without intentioned art there is no satire. A direct, unregulated insult, for example, is not satiric – as, for example, “That guy is an SOB!” Reviving the clichéd language of dead metaphor to serve a purpose of ridicule, on the other hand, may make insult satirical. In retirement, US President Harry Truman was asked if he had once called Richard Nixon an SOB. Truman replied that that could hardly be true because he had understood Nixon to be “a self-made man.” Tonally ironic and metaphorically playful, Truman’s wit had transformed a common insult into satire by mocking a linchpin of Nixon’s Republican Party politics – self-reliance.

### Problems of Origin and Definition

Questions remain about the origin of *satire* or *satyr* (a popular alternative spelling during the English Renaissance), probably because no literary genre has a lexicon with more nominal red herrings. The classicist G. L. Hendrickson modestly understates the case: “Few of us I imagine are conscious that in using the series ‘satire,’ ‘satiric,’ ‘satirist,’ ‘satirize,’ we are dealing with words unrelated etymologically” (1971: 49). If this is not enough, add further the consanguineous confusion of trying to define satire with the help of similarly pettifogging critical terms, such as “parody,” “irony,” “comedy,” and “humor.” We are better able to circumscribe than define satire, though we continue to try.

Renaissance satirists, in believing that the poetic genre of satire had descended from ancient Greek *satyr* plays, availed themselves of a dramatic license for a crude, animated, and hostile language appropriate to the coarse but wise woodland creature; as Alvin Kernan explains, “The idea that poetic satire had its origin in a dramatic form distinguished for its viciousness of attack and spoken by rough satyrs was the basis for nearly all Elizabethan theories of satire” (1959: 55). On the other hand, critics (such as Mikhail Bakhtin) claim that popular cultural festivals, such as Roman *Saturnalia* and the public spectacle and free-for-all of medieval carnivals, spawned satire. For Matthew Hodgart, “The essence of the carnival and saturnalia is the glorification of irresponsibility, even to the point of anarchy,” and from such festive eruptions flowed a magma of demotic transgression into the tradition of satire, for “there are strong elements of travesty and anarchistic parody in *all* good satire” (1969: 24).

*Formal verse satire*, our name for a discernible tradition of poetical refinement that evolved in the genre-conscious Roman period, was more precisely called *satura*, which suggests a medley or a hodgepodge. In this tradition, the satirical poet provides a virtuoso offering of theme, fable, tone, parody, and figurative expression, something like a platter or a bowl displaying mixed fruits or food dishes (*lanx satura*) in a variegated but artful composition. For the highly influential first-century Roman rhetorician Quintilian, *satura* was a generic creation totally Roman (*Institutio oratoria* 10.1.93) in that it was a relatively newer kind of poetry, becoming metrically disciplined into hexameters and stylistically purified into an identifiable verse genre

by the Roman poets Lucilius, Horace, and Persius (as well as Juvenal, who later, true to his iconoclastic spirit, will mock Quintilian's authority in *Satires* 7.186–94). In formal verse satire, a first-person poet-persona typically attacks forms of vanity or hypocrisy, those vices of “affectation” that satiric novelist Henry Fielding compactly called “the only source for the true Ridiculous” (Author's Preface, *Joseph Andrews*, 1742). Ronald Paulson, in examining modern fictions of satire from the perspective of classical satire and rhetoric, perceptively observes: “As a structure of exposition, *satira* is like a house of mirrors in which one theme (or vice) is reflected over and over, with distortion and variations but without essential change” (Paulson 1967: 43). How a subject is presented (arrangement, design, patterning) and with what expression (style, tone, diction, figures) for the purpose of positioning an audience and promoting an opportunity for persuasion (*kairos*) – what we may more simply call “the rhetorical form” – is constitutive of satiric content in classical *satira*.

Quintilian recognizes other types of satire. He briefly praises the poetic style of the Greek Archilochus (10.1.59), the iambographer famous for his vindictive satires against Lycambes, and also mentions the satiric power of Aristophanes and Attic Old Comedy (10.1.65). The comedies of Aristophanes will supply us with our earliest assembly of stock characters: the imposter, the self-deceiving braggart, the buffoon, the rustic, and, of course, the ironist. More cosmopolitan character types will become satiric fodder for the dramatic or narrative undercutting of foolish or knavish behavior (Frye 1957: 172–6). Quintilian also refers to an older and more diffuse sense of *satira* among Greek and Latin writers (10.1.95), such as Terentius Varro, who mixed his verse with prose, as did Varro's model, the Cynic philosopher Menippus (not mentioned by Quintilian), whose prosimetric work has been lost to time. Today, we loosely classify generically mixed works as *Varronian* or *Menippean* satire, or, less often, as “anatomy.” Two extant classical examples of Menippean satire are Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Petronius' *Satyrica*. This form of indirect satire uses narrative to lambaste, parody, or make ironic fun of its satiric objective, usually through dialogue between fools, knaves, or ironists. An obtuse fool or naïf may also narrate. This branch of ancient satire, which has grown into our most popular type by becoming so inclusive, is even more difficult to define than formal verse satire, and without clearly delineated generic features one may wonder what is in a name.

Even though a universal definition of Menippean satire may be a will-o'-the-wisp (as, perhaps, the physicist's dream of a unified field theory), scholars continue to enlighten us about this especially complex art form. Northrop Frye preferred to use the term “anatomy” (Frye 1957: 308–12), which classicist Joel C. Relihan finds particularly appropriate:

Frye's anatomy is not a genre in the classical sense but a much broader classification, and his sensible renaming of the genre indicates that we ought not to identify it immediately with the peculiarities of ancient texts, which are, as it were, a subset of it. Anatomy therefore tends to blur distinctions that classical literary criticism would prefer to maintain. (Relihan 1993: 5)

Not surprisingly, W. Scott Blanchard begins his authoritative study of Menippean satire in the Renaissance with a caveat, “Menippean satire is amongst the most elusive genres to define” (Blanchard 1995: 11), but tries nonetheless. Among Renaissance humanists:

Menippean satire is a genre for and about scholars; it is an immensely learned form that is at the same time paradoxically anti-intellectual. If its master of ceremonies is the humanist as wise fool, its audience is a learned community whose members need to be reminded, with Paul, of the depravity of their overreaching intellects, of the limits of human understanding. (Blanchard 1995: 14)

“Menippean satire refuses to allow an ideal type to emerge from its chaotic sprawl, whereas Roman satire achieves its effect by contrasting the debased world of the present to models of human behavior that are acceptable” (Blanchard 1995: 18–19). Howard Weinbrot, a scholar of the eighteenth century, offers his own well-researched reconsideration of this genre from antiquity to the eighteenth century. He desires a more precise generic definition because “[c]urrent theories of Menippean satire based on Frye and, largely, Bakhtin allow too many texts at too many times to be Menippean” (2005: 296), and, through a critical review of available classical texts, discovers that “much of Bakhtin’s theory of the Menippea is alien to actual events in literary history so far as we can reclaim them” (2005: 39). He provides a concise definition:

Menippean satire uses at least two other genres, languages, historical or cultural periods, or changes of voice to oppose a threatening false orthodoxy. In different exemplars, the satire may use either of two tones; the severe, in which the angry satirist fails and becomes angrier still, or the muted, in which the threatened angry satirist offers an antidote to the poison he knows remains. (Weinbrot 2005: 297)

Alas, however successful Weinbrot may be in trimming this unregenerate, “swallowing” trans-generic genre, he fairly accepts “that we can never be precise and never should be rigid when dealing with the products of licentious imagination” (2005: 303).

Another dimension often overlooked in the origin and generic development of satire is the leapfrogging influence of the Bible on a Christianized satirical tradition. Recalling Shakespeare’s words in *King Lear*, “Jesters do often prove prophets,” Thomas Jemielity notes how “[t]his implied equivalence of jest and prophecy, of ridicule and preaching, appears throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, where prophets do often prove jesters. They taunt, gibe, scoff, mock . . .” He further explains: “[t]he nature and characteristics common to both prophecy and satire explain their frequent intermingling and shared identity [in the Scriptures]. The message of biblical prophecy is pervasively and predominantly criticism, and criticism is always the content of satire. Things as they are profoundly dissatisfy prophet and satirist alike” (Jemielity 1992: 84, 85). As one



example of a fructifying combination of biblical and classical texts, we might recall Samuel Johnson's poem "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749), which, while an imitation of Juvenal's *Satires* 10 on the same topic, recalls also Ecclesiastes and the preacher's dark lament about the vanity of vanities.

Thus, satire, as if it were equity interminably disputed in chancery, comes down to us as an enduring creative product of a jumbled and sometimes specious genealogy – rhetorically assertive, concretely topical, and palpable as an art form but with its title and pedigree as a genre perpetually in question. Competing views of the generic origin of satire may be why, as Dustin Griffin observes, "[m]ost satiric theory, at least since the Renaissance, is polemical, ranging itself against previous practice or claim and attempting to displace it" (Griffin 1994: 6). For readers of the twenty-first century, it should be no surprise that such an adaptive genre, somewhat existentialist in nature (i.e., in practice, one might argue that its existence precedes its essence), has found so many niches in popular culture and has become a favored vehicle for assuming a critical posture of a less powerful but contentious underdog or of a selflessly interested, shrewd observer. Satire has come a long way from John Dryden's witty allegory and royalist defense of monarchy in "Absalom and Achitophel" (1681); as George Test asserts, "satire is by no means confined to written forms":

It is found in other art forms from the graphic arts to music to sculpture and even dance. Therefore, works by Gillray, Daumier, Gilbert and Sullivan, Erik Satie, Moussorgsky, sculpture out of the Dada and Pop Art movements, and the dances of the late Myra Kinch and much else must be assimilated into the concept of satire. The mass media teems with satire from such stand-up comics of the 1950s as Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce (Hendra) to newspaper columnists Art Buchwald and Art Hoppe, from rock music to cartoon strips, and films from around the world too numerous to mention. Despite their ephemeral nature, folk expressions in graffiti, almanacs, office memoranda, and mock festivals ought not to be excluded from consideration. In many preliterate cultures satire occurs in trickster tales and oral poetry. (Test 1991: 8)

Such open-ended inclusion is daunting. Surely no omnibus definition can ever pigeonhole all types of satire. It has an unparalleled facility at cuckoo nesting in different media and genres old and new.

This anthology of essays is for new as well as advanced students of satire. There are unavoidable gaps of coverage as one might expect in any attempted study of such a leviathan subject within a single volume, but it is hoped that readers will be pleased by how much ground actually has been covered and with probity. Satire in the English language flowers most completely during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and more satires were written during these centuries than any others. Greater focus, therefore, has been given to this productive period, which provides many of the classics in the language. Our coverage of modern literary developments is necessarily selective, yet I hope illustrative. With such a wide-angle lens, students of satire may begin to see for themselves how tradition and individual talent have combined

catalytically in more recent works of satire. As with other Blackwell *Companions*, our authors, with deference to the more general reader, purposely avoid theoretical jargon and potentially distracting scholarly apparatus, such as routine references to primary texts and the critical use of numbered notes.

Since satire assumes a reasonably sound judgment of its audience, we might expect audiences, however removed, to share a predictable common sense by which a satire may be, at least broadly, understood. But very often the immediacy of a work is not evident to readers, because a satire, in varying degrees, has been rooted within a context of expectation, convention, and local understanding shared by its originally intended audience. Detailed references of satirical subjects are not always accessible or even clear to different audiences across place and across time; as Northrop Frye comments on this all-too-mortal topical nature of satire: "To attack anything, writer and audience must agree on its undesirability, which means that the content of a great deal of satire founded on national hatreds, snobbery, prejudice, and personal pique goes out of date very quickly" (1957: 224). This *Companion* attempts to situate its satiric subjects within a particular time and place and within identifiable domains of ideas and of social life. As the essays that follow demonstrate, the history of satire is as rich as its forms are varied, and its evolutionary ramifications suggest that its future will feature the same lively diversity that has characterized its past.

#### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

The beginning student of satire would do well to locate handy authoritative definitions of satire: Robert C. Elliott in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974) and Alvin B. Kernan in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Weiner, vol. 4, pp. 211–17 (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1973), two foremost scholars in the field, offer especially informative and insightful synopses of "satire"; M. H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 8th edn, pp. 284–8 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 2005) is always a useful reference for critical terms. Simon Dentith's *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000) contains useful discussion of various definitions of parody and further bibliography (pp. 9–21), and D. C. Muecke's *Irony and the Ironic* (London: Methuen, 1982) thoughtfully surveys "the almost cancerous growth of the concept of irony since the 1790s" (pp. 33–55). "Theorizing Satire: A Bibliography," created and maintained by Brian A. Connery, continues to be a valuable, somewhat comprehensive bibliographical resource available on the Internet (search by title).

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