Developing a Normative Approach to Political Satire:
A Critical Perspective

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See the companion work to this article
"Developing a Normative Approach to Political Satire: An Empirical Approach"
by R. Lance Holbert in this Special Section

Over the past decade, scholars have turned their attention to the study of entertainment media and politics. Unfortunately, lacking any established criteria by which to evaluate satire, scholars' arguments have been judged on their own merits, with no means of assessing the validity of competing claims. Consequently, a normative theory approach to the study of political satire is essential in providing a foundation from which assessments of satire can be debated and progress in the field can take place. The normative approach to political satire offered here attempts to answer the following questions: What are the ideal functions of political satire? What role(s) should political satirists play in a democracy? Taking a critical approach, this article situates satire within narrative studies, conceptualizing satire as a type of counternarrative intended to resist entrenched accounts of how the world works. Resistance is thus a constituent feature of satire and one measure of its ideal functions. This article grapples with the consequences of these functions and with the complexities of establishing a satiric ideal within a critical framework.

Over the past decade, a critical mass of scholars has turned its attention to the study of entertainment media and politics. Recognition of the increasingly unstable distinction between "the serious and non-serious . . . the political and non-political" has engendered scholarship that focuses on the sociopolitical ramifications stemming from the consumption of political information in all its guises, from traditional news broadcasts and newspapers to contemporary satirical news shows (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2011, p. 184). At a time when politics at all levels (local to international) are as rife with tension and upheaval as any time in recent memory, it is the proliferation and popularity of political satire across media and geography that is of particular interest to audiences the world over.

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In academe, debates surrounding the potential benefits and pitfalls of satirical shows have been stoked not only by different theoretical assumptions (see Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Young & Esralew, 2011) but also by competing (if often unstated) conceptions regarding the function and purpose of satire (Althaus, 2012). At the heart of these debates are two interrelated questions: First, does viewing political satire influence citizens' political beliefs and values? Second, assuming an affirmative answer to the first question, does this influence have a positive or negative effect on the health of democratic government?

Not only have different epistemological approaches produced competing answers to each question, but both questions have primarily been framed with respect to political entertainment programs in the United States (Holbert, Hill, & Lee, in press). In fact, the literature has been so focused on American programs that Baym and Jones (2012) recently called on scholars to "recognize that American satirists claim no monopoly on the genre" (p. 2). Thus, despite recognition of the transnational growth and interconnectedness of political entertainment and soft news programming (see Bruun, 2012; Cosentino, 2012; Harrington, 2012; Imre, 2012; Kleinen-von Königslöw & Keel, 2012), the field has largely viewed this phenomenon from a narrow lens, concentrating on American television news parodies to the exclusion of similar programs in other countries (e.g., *the haute show* from Germany, the *Witty Seven* from Hungary, and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and the *Rick Mercer Report* from Canada), as well as from other media, such as plays, books, magazines, radio, graphic novels[1], and the Internet, to name a few.

However, lacking any established criteria by which to evaluate satire, scholars' rival arguments have been judged on their own merits, with no means of assessing the validity of competing claims. If progress in the field requires adding to our knowledge in a systematic fashion, discarding ideas that do not work and modifying those that need revision, the failure to develop critical perspectives across the myriad sources of political information currently being consumed is inexcusable. For this reason, a normative theory approach to the study of political satire is essential in providing a stable foundation from which assessments of satire can be productively debated and progress in the field can take place.

Given the diversity of genres (i.e., irony, parody) inherent in any single act of political satire, developing a normative theory that sufficiently encompasses this form of political communication is a difficult task. Nevertheless, all forms of political communication should be subject to normative theory; political satire is no exception. As Williams & Delli Carpini (2011) argue, the legitimacy now afforded political entertainment media forces mass communication scholars to wrestle with a set of normative-based concerns over the role and purpose of political satire in democracy (see also Day, 2011).

To do so, we can turn to the relatively stable criteria used to assess the press's role in democracy (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; McQuail, 2000). When surveying the role normative theory has played in journalism, the focus has been on defining a set of principles for evaluating how the press ought to behave with regard to the public interest (McQuail, 2000). Put simply, normative theories of journalism assess what the press should do for the good of society as a whole, with

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[1] Versace (2007) argues that, despite being confined to the outskirts of the intellectual mainstream, graphic novels are unique narrative forms capable of serving as "a viable vehicle for subversive and even incendiary political messages" (p. 27).

the most common journalistic values concentrating on the provision of objective (neutral), reliable, and truthful (factually correct) information.

Based on these values, the following queries are central to developing normative research on political satire: What are the ideal functions of political satire? What role(s) should political satirists play in a democracy? There are a number of different ways to address these questions epistemologically, and this article will outline a critical point of view. These broad-based lines of inquiry can and should be assessed critically, and it is the charge of this essay to outline what this type of research agenda would entail. The normative theory of political satire offered here will thus focus its attention not only on the content provided by the satirist, but also the boundaries within which a satirist must function to maintain his[2] position as satirist (Caulfield, 2008). More specifically, the current effort will examine political satire as a particular narrative form that has "the unique ability . . . to speak truth to power" (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009, p. 6). This approach will attempt to provide a faculty for judging how political satire ought to perform with regard to the public interest.

Positioning Satire within Narrative Studies

Many scholars have noted the "narrative turn" that has taken place across multiple fields of study (e.g., psychology, education, medicine, law, theology, cognitive science, communication) over the past several decades (Herman, 1999; Hyvärinen, 2006; Kreiswirth, 2005). What is clear from this growing body of work is that interest in stories is driving research in multiple and varied ways, including attempts to understand how narratives help individuals make sense of the world—not only how it works but also their place in it.

One of the primary means by which narratives help individuals make sense of the world is by organizing actions and events into intelligible sequences. The ease and speed at which most events are recognized and (unconsciously) incorporated into individual experience is a testament to the organizing power of master narratives. Indeed, the control that master narratives exert over our understanding of daily life is a function of their ability to normalize particular actions and events as routines, "with the consequence that the more we as subjects become engaged in these routines, the more we become subjected to them" (Bamberg, 2004, p. 360). In other words, master narratives become a natural part of our interpretative process, escaping conscious detection as they continually work to organize our perception of the world (2004). Hence, many master narratives are socially indispensable, allowing us to make sense of ourselves and one another in part by tying us to cultural groups that provide us with a sense of group identity (Bamberg, 2004; Nelson, 2001).

To adequately conceptualize master narratives and their relevance to a normative theory approach to political satire, we must first understand positioning theory, a method of analysis developed by researchers working in discursive psychology. Briefly, positioning theory asserts that individuals use

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[2] The gendered positioning of the satirist is crucially important in assessing the power dynamics at work in political satire, with specific features of the embodied performer (e.g., gender, race, class) determining what, to whom, and in what context the satirist can perform (see also Day, 2011).

speech acts to assign positions to social actors (e.g., themselves and others). Positions represent embodied locations on a moral continuum ranging from, for example, powerful to powerless, confident to apologetic, dominant to submissive, and so on (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Positioning is thus a discursive construction of storylines that allows participants to make sense of each other's actions relative to the specific positions they have selected or that they have been assigned during conversation.

The literature on positioning is predominantly situated in the analysis of oral narratives. However, as a theoretical tool, narrative has been characterized as "domain-general," a distinction highlighting the utility of narrative to facilitate "humans' efforts to organize multiple knowledge domains" (Herman, 2003, p. 165). Given the domain-generality of narrative, positioning theory should be applicable across a range of communicative forms for storytelling, a proposition supported by Herman (2009), who argues that the expressive resources afforded by each medium generate the means by which interpreters of various texts can be positioned. Moreover, Herman (2003) asserts that, "positioning is a relevant parameter for analysis on several levels . . . [including] the level of [the] narrative's bearing on more or less dominant storylines, or master narratives, about the way the world is" (p. 59).

Positions can thus be understood as being grounded in master narratives (Bamberg, 2005). As preexisting forms of interpretation, master narratives provide a template with a set range of moral positions that individuals utilize to make sense of themselves, others, and society. It is this set constellation of positions that produces a sense of normality between individuals and social institutions that satirists attempt to disrupt and distort.

More specifically, master narratives are the stock set of stories drawn from a particular culture that circulate frequently and widely among the members of the culture and embody the culture's shared understandings. As a result, the more we are exposed to our culture's master narratives, the more likely we are to use them to make sense of everyday life. In doing so, master narratives become a natural part of our interpretative process, escaping conscious detection as they continually work to organize our perception of the world (Bamberg, 2004). That is, "like the lenses in a pair of glasses . . . they are not the things people see when they look at the world; they are the things they see with" (Bennett, 1980, p. 167).

Such invisibility is a key function of master narratives, for they operate as a culture's "taken-for-granted assumptions," identifying what is ultimately defined as normal (i.e., what is good and right) and providing the template within which we comprehend stories about ourselves, about others, and about society (Randall, 2001). In doing so, master narratives constrain narratives of personal experience by "holding the narrator to culturally given standards, to taken-for-granted notions of what is good and what is wrong" (Talbot, Bibace, Bokhour, & Bamberg, 1996, p. 225). As the scaffolding by which individuals personally construct meaning, master narratives compel life experiences to be positioned relative to society's social and cultural expectations. The specific details of any individual story must therefore remain within the master narrative's structural boundaries, ultimately shaping how an individual's experience fits within the cultural landscape. Simply put, although we may exchange one pair of frames for another, the lenses we see through remain the same.

The degree to which master narratives permeate every aspect of a culture's discourse, from "dinner table conversation, to the morals of television programs, to the lofty policy debates of Congress," make them difficult to identify, and in turn, analyze[3] (Andrews, 2002; Bennett, 1980, p. 167). Not to mention that the concept, initially developed by Lyotard, has come under great suspicion in the postmodern era, where such "grand" narratives are not to be trusted any more than is the society that declares them to be true (Wood, 2004). As a result, the very notion that master narratives continue to exist is often received critically.

Nevertheless, Fredric Jameson argues that rather than disappearing, master narratives have gone underground, continuing to exert influence unconsciously "as a way of 'thinking about' and acting in our current situation" (as cited in Lyotard, 1984, p.xii; see also Bottici, 2007; Cox & Stromquist, 1998). Likewise, it may be that "in an age of contradictory faiths and 'globalized' culture . . . people reassert [master narratives] all the more tenaciously . . . to restore a lost sense of faith, meaning, selfhood, and community" (Hackett & Zhao, 1994, p. 540). Therefore, regardless of the extent to which citizens have grown accustomed to exhibiting incredulity toward master narratives, "there remain 'official'. . . and 'hegemonic' narratives of everyday life: those legitimating stories propagated for specific political purposes to manipulate consciousness by heralding a national set of common cultural ideals" (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 2). It is in the uncommonness of this supposedly common set of cultural ideals that satirists find useful fodder.

Satire as Counternarrative

For individuals whose lives do not reflect their culture's common ideals, counternarratives serve as an alternative form of sense making. As "stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives" (Andrews, 2002, p. 1), counternarratives "contest entrenched accounts of how the world is" (Herman, 2007, p. 187). In essence, counternarratives "serve the strategic political function of splintering and disturbing" what a culture considers normal (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 2).

The question of when and why individuals construct counternarratives is thus an important piece to understanding how stories are capable of both reinforcing and undermining hegemony. According to Nelson (2001), there are at least three major defects in master narratives, each of which may be conceptualized as a gap or opening that is capable of rupturing the master narrative's dominance and thereby creating a space for a counternarrative. The three openings emerge as a result of (a) most master narratives not being unified wholes, but rather an "ensemble of repeated themes" that are incorporated into maxims, sermons, stories, songs, commercials, and so on with resulting tensions and inconsistencies that can be exploited by counternarratives; (b) the lack of fit between connected master narratives; and (c) the gap between the master narratives' prescriptions and actual, lived experience (pp. 165–169).

If we extend the function of counternarratives beyond the individual, we can see how such stories challenge a culture's predominant sense-making strategies. Emerging from the gaps and fissures of a master narrative, from the lack of fit between the perception created by a master narrative and an

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[3] In other words, we can't see the forest through the trees.

individual's lived reality, a counternarrative chips at a society's preferred frame, exposing the hypocrisy and inequality its master narratives work to conceal.

It is thus not difficult to understand why counternarratives are particularly attractive for members of out-groups, "whose marginality defines the boundaries of the mainstream, whose voice and perspective—whose consciousness—has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2412). For such groups, counternarratives create bonds, shared understandings, and social cohesion, establishing a kind of "counter-reality . . . [that] aim[s] to subvert" the reality imposed by the master narrative (pp. 2412–2413). In doing so, counternarratives are capable of highlighting how self-serving and cruel master narratives can be in foreclosing alternative visions of reality. At their heart then, counternarratives aim to shatter complacency, to challenge the status quo, and to "provoke by holding up to scrutiny our idealized images of ourselves— forcing us to admit that such images are forever out of reach, unavailable to us, or even the last things we would really want to attain" (Griffin, 1994, p. 60).

In this regard, satire can be conceptualized as counternarrative, for it aims to fulfill the same function. For example, satire has been described as taking the form of paradox, carrying within it "the notion of a challenge to 'received opinion,' as para-dox challenges ortho-dox" (Griffin, 1994, p. 53). The challenge, although destructive, is not merely so, for "a paradox serves to 'rouze and awaken the Reason of Men asleep, into a Thinking and Philosophical Temper" (Dunton, as cited in Griffin, p. 53). As such, satire can be understood as the means by which an unorthodox opinion is advanced, a vulgar error exposed, or thought stimulated via rhetorical ingenuity (Griffin, 1994). More simply, satire is a type of counternarrative.

At its core, satire uses laughter as a weapon to diminish or derogate a subject and evoke toward it attitudes of amusement, disdain, ridicule, or indignation (Abrams, 1999). In fact, Feinberg (1967) describes satire as a "playfully critical distortion of the familiar" (p. 19). It is necessary to note, however, that satire is not merely humor for humor's sake (Feinberg, 1967). Rather, satire has a larger purpose, particularly with regard to sociopolitical life, where its influence has historically been assumed to be so great that the Roman emperor Augustus passed a law forbidding the practice (punishment for which was death by whipping), and England forbade its publication in 1599 (Feinberg, 1967).

Such concern has been driven by a belief in satire's ability to reform society by exposing and criticizing hypocrisy and folly. In this light, the satirist's jokes can be seen as a potential means for undermining society's master narratives by pointing out and ridiculing their gaps and fissures. By attacking society's problems, the satirist gives credence to a counternarrative that might inspire individuals to reappraise normative experience, to question the foundations of society's dominant stories and, thus, to challenge power. In short, satire can be considered an important and dangerous weapon for questioning established power structures because it is capable of creating new insights through the use of humor. As a result, people not normally oriented to subversive activity are entered into a contract with the satirist, who attempts to foster perspective by incongruity (Burke, 1984). By offering a new way of looking at "normal reality," the satirists' strategy calls into question the taken-for-granted assumptions (i.e. the master narrative) underpinning social life and, therefore, attempts to awaken citizens' perceptions by illustrating that "one's way of seeing is, inevitably, a way of not seeing" (Burke, 1984;

Gring-Pemble & Watson, 2003, p. 139). The ultimate provocation of satire is thus to make people aware of the lenses they see with.

Generally speaking, the actual force of satire has been as much a mixed bag as satire itself and is likely dependent on the type of satire being examined. Two of the most prominent types of satire have come to be defined as *juvenalian* and *horatian*, where juvenalian is perhaps best classified in the terms of tragedy and horatian in terms of comedy (Sander, 1971). Both forms of satire contain humorous material that can make audience members laugh, and both retain, as with all modes of satire, an "inescapable aggressivity" (Bogel, 2001, p. 50). However, beyond these similarities, the two forms represent vastly different means of "provoking and challenging comfortable and received ideas" (Griffin, 1994, p. 160).

Horatian satire is predominantly designed to comment on the ruling elite and macrolevel norms of social behavior (Highet, 1962). Lighter than juvenalian, horatian satire has as its ultimate goal the prompting of a wry smile from audience members (Sander, 1971). Highet (1962) writes that a horatian satirist "tells the truth with a smile, so that he will not repel them [audience members] but cure them of that ignorance which is their worst fault" (p. 235). Bogel (2001) similarly describes Horatian satire as displaying "urbanity" and "good manners," with satirists in this tradition being "gentle" (p. 30). In short, Horatian satire is softer than juvenalian; its ultimate goal is to "persuade more than . . . denounce," which imbues this form with a sense of optimism regarding humanity's willingness to overcome its deficiencies once made aware of them (Highet, 1962, p. 237). Consequently, horatian satire often appeals to "some vaguely defined Golden Age . . . where man may fulfill his ideal nature" (Bloom & Bloom, 1979, p. 221). In this regard, horatian satire represents a less pungent form of counternarrative that mocks and ridicules humanity's inability to occupy the appropriate, moral positions afforded by society's master narratives without assailing the master narratives themselves. Within these boundaries, horatian satire fulfills many scholars' assumptions that political satire is "essentially conservative in thought and impact" (Schutz, 1977, p. 9).

In sharp contrast, juvenalian satire adopts an acidic tone and has been described as "savage and merciless" (Sander, 1971, p. 254). Rather than cajoling audience members to jovially reflect on the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of life, juvenalian satire is designed to disorient, "to wound, to punish, to destroy" (Highet, 1962, p. 235). Satirists operating in this tradition "laugh with contempt at their [the audience's] pretensions and incongruities and base hypocrisies" (ibid.). Juvenalian satirists are thus pessimists who see no opportunity for reform; there is no hope for a humanity "populated by recidivist criminals . . . ineducable morons, simian savages" (p. 237). Rather than appealing to an ideal, juvenalian satire exposes, criticizes and shames humanity for believing such an ideal has ever, or could ever, exist. In this regard, juvenalian satire represents the most pungent form of counternarrative, cutting off society's master narratives at their knees, while simultaneously leveling an ominous eye at members of the public for ignorantly complying with such ideals.

By identifying satire as a form of counternarrative and assessing the degree to which different types of satire represent varying intensities of invective against society's master narratives, this article has attempted to establish a particular set of boundaries within which satire functions. To what extent,

however, are these criteria the ideal functions of political satire? To adequately develop a normative theory approach to satire, we must wrestle with this question.

The Ideal Functions of Political Satire

There is, of course, an irony in discussing the ideal functions of political satire from a critical perspective, which is intended to subvert such totalizing discourse and to draw attention to the unequal power relations embodied by such ideals. If satire is intended to destabilize the ideal, is it sensible then to hold satirists to a set of ideal functions?

In response, one might ask the following: Are such assumptions about satire's ideal functions already implied by scholars, and if so, are we not compelled to articulate those assumptions to advance scholarship in this area? Arguably, current debates regarding the function and purpose of satire are a direct product of such (unstated) assumptions. As a result, by acknowledging the subjectivity of its own positions, the critical perspective offered here makes explicit its standards of evaluation, which are conditioned on a commitment to understanding and explaining systems of domination to reduce their control. The normative claims advanced in this section are thus not merely claims "from the gut" that "feel right," even if they are claims to something that ought to exist rather than how things are (Colbert, 2005).

To that end, as a type of counternarrative, political satire should, at least, assent to show how things could be otherwise by highlighting the gaps and fissures present in the master narratives structuring society. More specifically, political satire should contest the singularity of perspective engendered by the internalization of dominant discourse, and in so doing, it should provide citizens with different, yet equally legitimate pairs of lenses by which to view experience. In this sense, political satire ought to provide a plurality of perspectives that each provides a means of legitimacy within democracy by disrupting and dispelling the mythical consensus created by master narratives. That is, satire should seek to establish the limits of any single position or discourse by being "*skeptical* about the validity of *all dogmas* concerning men and institutions" and by subjecting *all discourse* to potential censure and ridicule (emphasis mine; Feinberg, 1967, p. 5). Such standards require that even satirists, especially the ones we like, be subject to critique.

Political satire should also aim to arouse and awaken the perceptions of "men asleep" by shining the brightest, most piercing light into the gaps present in dominant discourse, thereby highlighting the discrepancy between lived experience and that which is the "ideal." Indeed, the satirist should aim to shatter the complacency created by master narratives by unveiling the ideal as a fantasy created by the constraints of particular social systems that inevitably marginalize and debase certain voices by making them appear unintelligible against the backdrop of "normal reality."

Moreover, satirists should represent embodied opposition (Jones, 2010). As an integral, visual component of the counternarrative being advocated, the satirist's body should become part of "the traditional political world, as he/she physically engages, interrogates, and interacts with the real" (Day, 2011, p. 2). By projecting one's body into the counternarrative, the satirist's communicative acts assume a performative force, physically occupying a position of resistance. This positioning should then serve as a

catalyst to reach beyond the screen and to engage in efforts directly in the political field (e.g., Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear), where the full force of such resistance is capable of being exercised.

Satirists possess their most subversive potential when they move "outside the box" and should therefore expect blowback by members of the traditional political sphere as they "attempt to protect their own power and privileged speaking positions through the diminishing of 'outsiders,' marking some voices as legitimate and others as illegitimate, and similarly labeling political actions as admissible or inadmissible" (Jones, Baym, & Day, 2012; Jones, 2010). Satirists should leverage their popular appeal by extending their bodies beyond the entertainment screen to the traditional political world, where they can assemble the bodies of those who identify with their counternarrative and who "look to the satirists as representatives who will push their particular worldview into the public sphere" (Day, 2011, pp. 10–11).

At the same time, satirists should expect such efforts to be received critically by members of the traditional political sphere to whom such boundary crossing is unintelligible (i.e., inconceivable within the master narrative frame) and therefore threatening. In this sense, satirists should seek to harm the current system and to create confusion, even if only momentarily, in people's understanding of how the world works, challenging their attitudes and opinions, taunting and provoking them into doubt, and perhaps into disbelief (Griffin, 1994). In the words of Stephen Colbert, "We want people to be . . . confused" (Dowd, 2006, p. 56).

When occupying positions of resistance, satirists should also seek to move beyond identification as mere court jesters (see Fox, 2011). By challenging the status quo and "common sense," satirists should pose questions and voice thoughts that members of the traditional political sphere are unable and, more importantly, unwilling to do. Satirists should speak for those groups and classes of individuals outside the mainstream, and in so doing, serve as the focal point, the embodied resistance, around which such groups may identify and coalesce.

What's missing in such an account is the sense of pleasure or enjoyment audience members should also feel in response to the satirist's performance (Feinberg, 1967). Satirists must therefore walk a fine line between derision and reprimand, for "dissembled anger is an unpleasant emotion to observe or read about" (pp. 6–7). As a result, the audience assumes a central role in determining the ultimate success or failure of satire, and to keep an audience, the satirist must first and foremost possess the skills of a comedian, for although satire deals in derision, "man [only] enjoys derision as long as it is not directed at himself" (p. 6).

This is arguably the most difficult criterion for satirists to meet, for it requires the highest degree of deftness to both challenge attitudes and opinions and to do so in a manner that invites amusement. After all, "most readers do not like to be exposed to unpleasantness—or, if they are, they want to be comforted and reassured about the unpleasantness" (Feinberg, 1967, p. 266). It is perhaps for this reason that horatian satire is often the more palatable and pervasive form. From a normative perspective, however, horatian satire is less likely to arouse and awaken the perceptions of its audience. Consequently, horatian satire should function as a gateway to periodic juvenalian performances, with the satirist first

generating enough popularity and rapport with the audience before unleashing the full sharpness of his wit.[4]

Summary Judgments

The evaluative criteria offered here are intended to compel recognition of the unstated assumptions grounding much of the research conducted to date on political satire and to encourage the development of a set of criteria from which assessments of satire can be productively debated and progress in the field can take place. Failure to do so is a death knell for the evolution of our understanding on a topic that only grows more important with every passing day.

The boundaries articulated in this work clearly focus attention not only on the content provided by the satirist but also on the boundaries within which a satirist must function to maintain his position as satirist. To assail society's master narratives requires the satirist to operate from a precarious position,[5] simultaneously speaking from the margins while aiming for the mainstream. Such a position inherently involves the dynamics of power, which are imbedded in society's master frames and determine not only who (i.e., primarily men) can have a political voice but also what can be said and in what context. Despite the potential consequences, satirists are compelled to ask the important questions, for their "unique ability . . . to speak truth to power" has political consequences (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009, p. 6).

These consequences result, in part, from the organizing force counternarratives work to construct for members of the public "whose voice and perspective—whose consciousness—has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2412). Political satire serves to open spaces within public discourse for such narratives, extending the possibilities of what society may ultimately deem good and right (i.e., normal). By providing the "means through which citizens can analyze and interrogate power and the realm of politics rather than remain simple subjects of it," satire is capable of intervening in social conditioning and enlivening democracy with the plurality of perspectives it has always advocated but never fully achieved (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009, p. 17).

It has been said that there is no inevitability so long as there is a willingness to contemplate what's happening (McLuhan, as cited in Marchand, 1998). Satire is what's happening. The question for a normative theory of political satire is, to what end? The position advanced here is that whatever else it ought to do, satire often reveals the truth, and knowledge of the truth, however unpleasant, is generally regarded as a social good (Feinberg, 1967).

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[4] Consider, for example, the degree of trust and rapport Jon Stewart had to build before moving "outside the box" to organize The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear.

[5] Although some satirists may be considered to be operating from a much more mainstream position today (e.g., Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert), their international counterparts may not be afforded the same legitimacy (e.g., the boundaries are much stricter; see Imre, 2012, for example). Additionally, even Stewart and Colbert must work to continuously define their positions as outside the mainstream. If they become too associated with the mainstream, they lose their ability to speak truth to power because they then inhabit the very spaces they initially sought to critique.

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