



Gulliver in Brobdingnag by Richard Redgrave

Comedy and Satire: It's No Joke

*From Jonathan Swift to Jon Stewart,
Ridiculing Vice and Folly*



Vermont Humanities Council 2010 Annual Fall Conference

November 12 and 13

Begins Friday afternoon and runs through Saturday

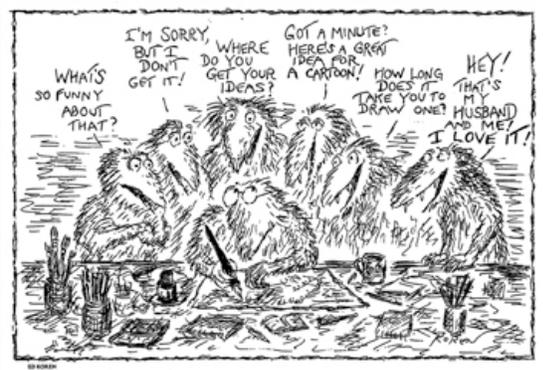
Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa, Stowe, Vermont

Comedy and Satire: It's No Joke

From Jonathan Swift to Jon Stewart, *Ridiculing Vice and Folly*

Friday and Saturday • November 12–13, 2010

Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa, Stowe, Vermont



Humor must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever. – Mark Twain

You are invited to explore and enjoy the treatment that satirists and humorists throughout history have visited on the foolish and the wicked.

This November, the Vermont Humanities Council presents its 37th annual conference, **Comedy and Satire: It's No Joke**. From satire's classical origins, through the golden age in eighteenth century Great Britain, to the brilliance of Mark Twain, and on to modern mass media, satirists in all the arts have wielded razor (and bludgeon) in pursuit not just of humor, but of justice—and just deserts.

As both a literary device and as a genre, satire has been a means of commenting on all manner of failings, from character weaknesses to broad injustice, in order to promote a better world. We will explore these traditions, asking ourselves along the way: How do satire and comedy work? Does satire really achieve its purported purposes? And what's the status of contemporary satire?

On Friday afternoon, **Barry Snyder, the former chair of film studies at Burlington College**, will examine the roots of satire in film and television, and how those industries have had an impact on satire as a genre. After dinner, **New Yorker cartoonist Edward Koren** and **National Portrait Gallery Director**



Emeritus and former Director of Prints and Drawings at the Library of Congress Alan Fern will look at satirical drawings and cartoons. A reception (cash bar) will follow, with the opportunity to renew old friendships and meet some of this year's presenters.

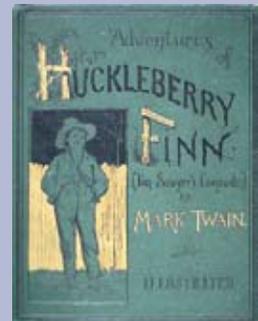
Saturday morning's opening plenary session features acclaimed **Williams College professor Robert Bell's** overview of satire and its limits, followed by **Dartmouth Professor Emeritus of Classics James Tatum's** examination of what makes us laugh. Both professors Bell and Tatum will take a longitudinal perspective, drawing on history as well as modern examples.

The afternoon plenary features award-winning **British author Claire Harman**, who also teaches at both Columbia and

Oxford Universities. Her latest book is *Jane's Fame: How Austen Conquered the World*. Harman will speak to Austen's use of satire in her early works, and some of its manifestations in her later and much beloved novels.

Afternoon breakout sessions offer the opportunity to dig more deeply into Swift, Shakespeare, Twain, and others with such accomplished scholars and writers as **UVM's Philip Baruth, Williams' David L. Smith, Dartmouth's David Wykes**, and our plenary speaker Robert Bell.

The afternoon concludes with a conversation with two writers from the *Onion* about its comedy, satire, and its sometimes irreverent take on the news of the day.



Lodging – Rooms at the Stoweflake are \$129 (plus tax) single or double on a first-come, first-served basis. For reservations, 800.253.2232 or stoweflake.com. Be sure to mention the conference to receive the conference rate. The conference rate is good November 12–13.

Contact • 802.262.2626 x304
• info@vermonthumanities.org
• vermonthumanities.org

Comedy and Satire Fall Conference Schedule

Friday, November 12

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM **Early registration.** *Room: Gallery*

4:30 – 5:45 PM **Reel Satire.** Movies carried the satiric tradition through the twentieth century, enhanced by the enormous power of the new medium itself. But in helping popularize satire and mixing it with elements of other comic traditions, did the mass medium of movies reinvigorate satire or undermine it? Burlington College film scholar Barry Snyder takes a close look at the evolution of satire in film and video, from Chaplin and the Marx Brothers to modern television. *Room: Beatrice*

5:00 – 7:00 PM **Registration.** *Room: Gallery*

7:30 – 8:45 PM **The Sharply Pointed Pen: Satire and Humor in the Visual Arts.** *New Yorker* cartoonist Ed Koren and National Portrait Gallery Director Emeritus Alan Fern look at the history of comic and satiric art, with Koren focusing on artists whose work has influenced his own. *Room: Stowe*

8:45 – 9:30 PM **Reception.** *Room: Atrium*

Saturday, November 13

7:15 – 8:30 AM **Registration.** *Room: Gallery* **Continental breakfast.** *Room: Collins*

8:30 – 9:00 AM **Welcome.** Peter Gilbert, VHC executive director; Sylvia Robison, VHC board chair; Presentation of 2010 Victor R. Swenson Humanities Educator Award. *Room: Pinnacle*

9:00 – 10:15 AM **The Art of Satire.** What is satire? What is the difference between satire and comedy? Why does satire thrive more in some ages than in others? How do social constraints affect contemporary satirists? Is nothing sacred—or should it be that anything goes? Williams College professor Robert Bell examines satire from writers long past and writers and movies from more recent times: Ben Franklin, Mark Twain, Shakespeare, Swift, Fielding, Pope, Byron, James Joyce, and Kingsley Amis, *Dr. Strangelove*, *This is Spinal Tap*, and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. *Room: Pinnacle*

10:15 – 10:30 AM **Break with coffee and tea.** *Room: Collins*

10:30 – 11:45 AM **The Muse of Comedy.** What do satirists and comedians do to make us laugh? How do they do it? After examining theories about why we laugh, Dartmouth Classics Professor Emeritus Jim Tatum looks at outstanding examples of the insane mental music that comic and satiric writers and artists have been composing since antiquity, ranging from Aristophanes and Plautus to Jonathan Swift and Voltaire, to filmmakers like Charlie Chaplin, Spike Lee, Woody Allen, and the Marx Brothers, to the one-liners of Henny Youngman and the action-news-update parodies of Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*. *Room: Stowe*

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM **Buffet luncheon.** *Room: Pinnacle*

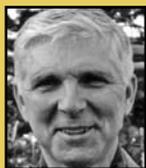
1:00 – 2:15 PM **Jane Austen, Veiled Satirist.** Jane Austen is not usually considered a satirist, but she began her writing life in imitation of the great practitioners of the eighteenth century. Prize-winning author Claire Harman, who teaches at Oxford and Columbia Universities, looks at Austen's beloved novels in the context of that earlier tradition and considers how and why she molded the tones and techniques of Swift and Pope to her own purposes. *Room: Pinnacle*

2:15 – 2:30 PM **Break with beverages.** *Room: Atrium*

2:30 – 3:15 PM **Breakout sessions (see right)**

3:30 – 4:30 PM **The Onion: A Thoroughly Modern Voice.** Self-described as “America's finest news source,” the *Onion* is known for its deadpan irreverence and its needling of public figures of all stripes, both real and imagined. Writers from the *Onion* share the joys and challenges of working in a world in which, as they see it, the absurdity of the actual sometimes seems to surpass that of the fictional. *Room: Pinnacle*

Key Speakers



Robert Bell

Frederick Latimer Wells Professor
of English, Williams College

Bell has taught at Williams for nearly forty years. Named Outstanding Baccalaureate College Teacher for 2004,

he has published on Shakespeare, Dryden, Hogarth, Sterne, Joyce, C.S. Lewis, Kingsley Amis, Bob Dylan, David Foster Wallace, and others.



Alan Fern

Director Emeritus,
National Portrait Gallery

Before his eighteen years as director of the National Portrait Gallery, Fern was

on staff at the Library of Congress for twenty-one years. He has written and lectured extensively, especially on the history of the graphic arts.

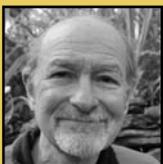


Claire Harman

Critic and prize-winning author

Harman's biography of Sylvia Townsend Warner won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and *Fanny Burney: A Biography*,

was shortlisted for the Whitbread Award. She published *Jane's Fame: How Jane Austen Conquered the World* in 2009. Harman teaches at Columbia and Oxford Universities.



Edward Koren

Award-winning *New Yorker* cartoonist

Koren has published over one thousand cartoons in the *New Yorker* and contributed to publications including the

New York Times, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *Boston Globe*. He has written and illustrated children's books and holds degrees from Columbia and Brown Universities.



The Onion, Writers

Satire and news organization

The Onion, a national publication and website with more than three million weekly readers, offers award-winning news and satirical views. When the *Onion*

received a Peabody Award in 2008, the awards committee characterized its launch of a 24-hour video news network as "hilarious, trenchant, and not infrequently hard to distinguish from the real thing."



Barry Snyder

Former Chair of Cinema Studies and
Film Production, Burlington College

Snyder has been a film critic, president of the Vermont International Film Festival, an educator, and a writer. At

Burlington College he taught film history, critical theory, interdisciplinary studies, and photography.



James Tatum

Aaron Lawrence Professor of Classics
Emeritus, Dartmouth

Tatum, a Dartmouth professor for forty years, is a scholar and author

whose translations of Roman comedy are performed around the country.

Breakout Sessions

Shakespeare's Foolish, Comic, and Satiric Voices. Some of Shakespeare's most charismatic and vivid characters are satirists. What is the significance of satire in Shakespeare's world view? Consider examples from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *As You Like It*, and *Othello* to understand Shakespeare's satirical figures, and compare them with comic and tragic perspectives. **Led by:** Robert Bell, Frederick Latimer Wells Professor of English, Williams.

Mark Twain: Satirist? Much of Twain's work is obviously satirical, and yet the object of its satire is elusive. This is true even in works such as *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. How ambiguous can satire be before ceasing to be satirical? Was Twain a satirist? **Led by:** David L. Smith, John W. Chandler Professor of English, Williams.

Swift's Hard-Mouthed Imagination. Drawing on *Gulliver's Travels* and some of Swift's later indecent poems, we will examine Swift's ferocious imagination and how it eventually made him the unwitting object of his own satire. **Led by:** David Wykes, Professor Emeritus of English, Dartmouth.

Satire and Technology: The Eighteenth Century (the Golden Age of Satire) and Today. The popularity of Swift, Samuel Butler, John Dryden, Henry Fielding, and Alexander Pope coincided with developments in printing and communications, from typesetting efficiencies to coffee houses, that have their analogues in today's electronic media. Compare the golden age of satire with the proliferation of satire in mass media seen today. **Led by:** Philip Baruth, author and Professor of English, University of Vermont.

VHC Fall Conference Registration Form

Conference fee – The \$99 (\$69 student) fee includes includes all conference programs, continental breakfast, buffet lunch, and snacks as well as the conference text *Satire: From Horace to Yesterday's Comic Strips* (one per household) and an additional packet of conference-related reading. Students and teachers are encouraged to attend; certification letters are available. An on-site bookstore will be open during the day. Space is limited; registration is first-come, first-served.

Registration and payment deadline is October 22; after the deadline, registrations will be accepted as space is available. One person per registration form. **Cancellations:** refund less \$25 fee until October 22; no refund after October 22. Full and partial scholarships are available; deadline is October 15. Scholarship form and additional materials are available at vermonthumanities.org. **Groups:** special pricing is available to groups affiliated with an institution such as a school. Make checks payable to **Vermont Humanities Council** and send to 11 Loomis Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602 or fax to 802.262.2620 or **register online at vermonthumanities.org**.

First name _____ Last name _____

Mailing address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ E-mail _____

First VHC conference? Yes No _____ I am a teacher and need a participation letter for recertification.

Special needs? _____

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY SESSIONS (please check yes or no for both)

- 4:30-5:45 PM Reel Satire _____ I will attend OR _____ I will not attend
- 7:30-8:45 PM The Sharply Pointed Pen: _____ I will attend OR _____ I will not attend
Satire and Humor in the Visual Arts

SATURDAY BREAKOUT SESSIONS (rank preference 1-4)

- _____ Shakespeare's Foolish, Comic, and Satiric Voices
- _____ Mark Twain: Satirist?
- _____ Swift's Hard-Mouthed Imagination
- _____ Satire and Technology: The Eighteenth Century (the Golden Age of Satire) and Today

REGISTRATION FEES

\$99 registration (\$69 student) \$ _____

Conference scholarship donation \$ _____

Total due \$ _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ OR charge to (circle) Visa MC Exp. date _____

Card no. _____ Signature _____