

# READ<sup>®</sup> Interviews Satire

Um, he's a goat?

By Bryon Cahill

Illustration by Dave Clegg

In my few years here at *READ* magazine, I have had the honor and privilege of speaking to some very famous dead writers. I've talked to William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, and Lucy Maud Montgomery. Strange as those interviews were, I never imagined it could get any stranger. I was wrong. Dear *READ*ers, I now introduce to you: Satire.

**Satire:** What is this? Who are you? What do you want with me?

**Bryon Cahill:** Only to pick your brain. To find out who you truly are.

**Satire:** Who am I? Why, I am Satire! King of the Britons!

**BC:** I can see you are going to prove to be difficult. All right, then let me tell you what we do know. We know that you are a very saucy form of tongue-in-cheek writing that goes to great lengths to make your point through humor, parody, and—oftentimes—foul-natured, **ribald** innuendos.

**Satire:** No. I am a goat.

**BC:** A goat? Ha! Doubtful! Is it not true that it was your idea to tell the Irish poor of Jonathan Swift's time that they should sell their children as *food* to the rich?



**Satire:** A modest proposal indeed! If only I could take credit for it! The rich I have known have always been fat with pride, with stomachs to match. Sell a baby, feed a glutton! Sounds perfect! Not everyone can feast on *The Onion* alone.

**BC:** And was it not you who whispered to the great George Orwell that **totalitarianism** and **democratic socialism** must be revealed to the world through the eyes of farm animals?

**Satire:** Nay! Did I not already say I was a goat? What kind of an interviewer doesn't listen? I don't know what you're talking about.

**BC:** Know this, Sir Satire: We know it was you who told Voltaire to drive his man crazy by having him blindly follow his teacher's optimistic views.

**Satire:** I, happily, *can indeed* tell you that you are practicing in buffoonery.

**BC:** Perhaps you are right. But it is not my fault; it is yours. You have a tendency to go over people's heads, you know.

**Satire:** Oh do I? Does helpness wittle Satire baffle and befuddle you?

**BC:** Now you're just being cruel. All I'm saying is that you can be a hard egg to crack. But when your yolk is exposed, it is all worth it.

**Satire:** Goats don't lay eggs.

**BC:** Wow. You know, if we had gotten Stephen Colbert like we originally wanted for this issue, I wouldn't even be talking to you right now.

**Satire:** Really? Stephen Colbert?

**BC:** Yeah, we were pretty close too. Unfortunately, it didn't happen, so now I'm stuck with you. You could at least cut me a little slack.

**Satire:** You're just full of clichés, aren't you?

**BC:** (*hurt silence*)

**Satire:** Fine! I don't usually do this, but you're making such a fuss ...

**BC:** Woohoo!

**Satire:** By my best guess, I was born in ancient Greece around 500 B.C. The Greeks wrote comedic plays that often involved men dressed as Satyrs. A Satyr, I can only assume you do not know, was half man and half goat! See? GOAT! Do you get how cool I am? Anyway, the comedies were, at first, just episodic snippets that came during intermissions of much more serious tragedies. The Satyrs would mock the tragedies in a lighthearted way so that the audience would not get too weighed down by the drama. Dig?

## \* vocab

**RIBALD:** vulgar or indecent

**TOTALITARIANISM:** a form of government in which the political authority exercises absolute control over all aspects of life

**DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM:** a form of government in which all humans are considered equal and the wealth is distributed as equally as possible

**BC:** I'm sorry, what did you say? I was admiring something shiny.

**Satire:** The first play of that time that I can remember using me entirely was *Cyclops*, by Euripides. The great Aristophanes went on to use me in parts of his plays, including *The Clouds* and *The Wasps*, but I wasn't fully understood for the true genius that I am until the great Roman poet Horace came along in about 65 B.C. and wrote with my wit all over the place!

**BC:** Yawn.

**Satire:** Forgive me if I do not have any moments of Zen with which to entertain you. You wanted the scoop; this is it. I have inspired and worked with the greatest of authors! Everyone from Geoffrey Chaucer to Kurt Vonnegut. My brilliance has been used in movies such as *Dr. Strangelove* and pretty much everything Monty Python has ever done! Have you heard of "Weird Al" Yankovic? Borat? Who do you think is responsible for all of those successes? Honestly, what is it that you want to hear about?

**BC:** Um, well, that's all very fascinating. But ... oh, I'll just come out and ask it. Do you know the Simpsons? Can you get me their autographs?

**Satire:** Oh boy. Everyone asks me that. Why doesn't anyone want *my* autograph? Ugh. OK, well fine then. I will leave you with this little bit from a very funny episode that aired a long time ago. *The Simpsons* has always satirized the quintessential American family. Ask me whether I have ever seen any royalties. No, no I have not.

**Grandpa:** Are we there yet?

**Homer:** No.

**Grandpa:** Are we there yet?

**Homer:** No.

**Grandpa:** Are we there yet?

**Homer:** No!

**Grandpa:** Where are we going?

**BC:** Ha-ha! Grandpa. Classic.

**Satire:** Hey, you gonna finish eating that baby? ■