

SOUTH PARK'S SATAN:  
SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER AND CRITICAL CULTURAL MIRROR

by

Joshua Casper

A thesis proposal submitted to the faculty of  
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Religious Studies

Charlotte

2020

Approved by:

---

Dr. Sean McCloud

---

Dr. Alexandra Kaloyanides

---

Dr. Eric Hoenes Del Pinal



## ABSTRACT

JOSHUA CASPER. *South Park Satan: Sympathetic Character and Critical Cultural Mirror*. (Under the Direction of DR. SEAN MCCLOUD)

In this thesis, I argue that Satan in *South Park* is portrayed as a sympathetic character who acts as both a role model of individuality and responsibility in a manner that supports what religious studies scholar David Feltmate refers to as the "unseen order" proffered by the show's creators. I will support this argument through three case studies that compares Satan to other prominent *South Park* characters: Jesus, Saddam Hussein, and Mr. Garrison.

This thesis engages with several different fields of scholarly work, including religious studies, media studies, and popular culture studies. While this work is influenced by such scholarship, the main subject, *South Park*'s Satan, has not been the focus of any work on religion, media, and popular culture broadly, or scholarship on *South Park* specifically. In this manner, I hope to add to the existing literature on *South Park* and religion and popular culture studies. I will discuss Lisle Dalton, Eric Greene, Jane Iwamura, David Feltmate, and Scott Poole and show how they will help me set up the main arguments of my analysis.

The academic study of religion and popular media is a massive subfield within religious studies. My thesis will strive to explore how *South Park*'s Satan represents many of the show's writers' most sacred ideals. While *South Park* has been one of the longest running, most influential, and perhaps most divisive pieces of animation to be produced in America, this show holds some interesting beliefs and, thus, raises several talking points with each episode involving Satan.

The character of Satan has changed and morphed in some interesting ways from biblical stories to a background or lead character in several contemporary television shows and films. One might suggest that from his inception as a religious and literary figure, Satan has always been a popular culture icon. But the way in which this character has appeared in American television is something that has been under analyzed and could offer some new insight to how the stereotypical Satan may continue to change.

## DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to my loving family, friends, and the professors who mentored me along the way. I would like to explicitly thank Dr. Sean McCloud for his hard work and dedication to be my mentor academically and his wonderful advice throughout the years. I would like to thank Dr. Eric Hoenes who helped me workshop ideas and inspired me to write this almost two years ago. I would also like to thank Dr. Alex Kaloyanides for helping me in every step of my journey involving this thesis and the challenges of finishing a master's degree. I would like to thank my parents David and Sybil Casper for always supporting me and always pushing me to do my best even when it seemed impossible. Thank you to my brothers David and Jacob Casper for giving me stiff competition, without the fierce lifelong sibling rivalry I could not have achieved this far. Lastly, an unnamed friend who pushed me to excel past my own expectations and has read this document as many times as I have. I want to say thank you to every single one of you and without the help and encouragement this would still be a dream and not a reality.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte for providing a Stipend for me to work on my research while gaining invaluable teaching experience. I would like to thank my Thesis committee for helping me with anything that arose. Alexandra Kaloyanides helped greatly with the sound advice when work became overwhelming and provided great help when it came to the sensory aspects of this project. Eric Hoenes deserves a great deal of thanks. Without him this paper would have never been written and sparked my fascination when it comes to the Satan character. Sean McCloud helped greatly by pushing me to improve as a scholar in the regards of editing and even giving me advice on academic matters that fell outside of this thesis. More importantly Dr. McCloud gave me frank advice that was sometimes hard to hear, but his commitment to be a great educator is something I can hope to follow one day.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Selected Previous Scholarship on South Park and Religion and Media	3
Satan in History and Popular Culture	3
Studying Religion and Popular Media	5
Caveats and Benefits of this Study	16
SATAN AS A SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER	18
Jesus and Violence	19
Saddam Hussein and Domestic Abuse	29
Mr. Garrison and LGBTQ Treatment	38
CONCLUSION	44
REFERENCES	48

## INTRODUCTION

The 1999 movie, *South Park, Bigger Longer, and Uncut* culminates with the final scene of Satan coming to earth and bringing Hell with him. Satan is accompanied by his boyfriend, Saddam Hussein. Satan's goals have finally been accomplished and the biblical prophecy of Revelation has been fulfilled, but the day is stolen by Saddam. Satan stands up for himself when Saddam tried to take his place as the ruler of the world, Saddam physically abuses and belittles Satan for all to see.<sup>1</sup> By making a Muslim leader commit more evil acts than Satan *South Park* demonizes not just the person, but an entire religion. This scene shows the attitude more conservative Americans had for their enemies and more broadly Muslims during the later nineties. Creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker made the literal devil into a victim in this scenario and thus used their widely popular adult cartoon to criticize a political opponent of the United States by making the character of Saddam Hussein into an outrageous caricature of who the actual person was. In the end, Satan stands up to Saddam and fights another day against oppression in a broad abstract sense. Satan stopped the end of the world Saddam was planning and does the opposite of what a devil character would normally do. This makes Satan more than a stereotypical evil character that has different motivations than the audience expects.

In this thesis, I argue that Satan in *South Park* is portrayed as a sympathetic character who acts as both a role model of individuality and responsibility in a manner that supports what religious studies scholar David Feltmate refers to as the "unseen order" proffered by the show's creators. I will support this argument through three case

---

<sup>1</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

studies that compares Satan to other prominent *South Park* characters: Jesus, Saddam Hussein, and Mr. Garrison.

While several scholars have written about *South Park*, they have said little about the role of Satan in the series.<sup>2</sup> I am the first to write a sustained academic analysis of the character of Satan. Many scholars mention him in passing but pay little attention to him. Some of the questions that drive this study are: What do his childish antics and demonic physical appearance signify? Why is he portrayed as a positive character and what is the significance of his hyper-muscular and butch appearance, his kind nature, and his reflective personality? What ideals does he support throughout the show and what does his character stand against? I will answer these questions through an analysis of episodes using the theories of David Feltmate with supporting approaches and concepts from other authors such as historian Scott Poole, religious studies scholar Lisle Dalton, and film scholar Eric Greene. I approach this analysis of *South Park* by doing a close reading of all thirteen episodes and the *South Park* movie in which Satan appears during the twenty-three years that *South Park* has aired. I pay close attention to each episode's images, dialogues, and plots. Through these observations I will argue that Satan is a sympathetic character that is used to critique others, a cultural mirror who points a finger at American society, and a positive role model to demonstrate individuality and responsibility.

---

<sup>2</sup> Arp, Robert, Decker, Kevin S. *The Ultimate South Park and Philosophy: Respect my Philosophah*. John Wiley & Sons, Blackwell Publishing, 2013.

Cogan, Brian. *Deconstructing South Park: Critical Examinations of Animated Transgression*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012. 76.

Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods: Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. *Taking South Park Seriously*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

### Selected Previous Scholarship on South Park and Religion and Media

This thesis engages with several different fields of scholarly work, including religious studies, media studies, and popular culture studies. While this work is influenced by such scholarship, the main subject, *South Park's* Satan, has not been the focus of any work on religion, media, and popular culture broadly, or scholarship on *South Park* specifically. In this manner, I hope to add to the existing literature on *South Park* and religion and popular culture studies. In the following literature review section, I will discuss Lisle Dalton, Eric Greene, Jane Iwamura, David Feltmate, and Scott Poole and discuss how they will help me set up the main arguments of my analysis.

### Satan in History and Popular Culture

The academic study of religion and popular media is a massive subfield within religious studies. My thesis will strive to explore how *South Park's* Satan represents many of the show's writers' most sacred ideals. The character of Satan has changed and morphed in some interesting ways from biblical stories to a background or lead character in several contemporary television shows and films. One might suggest that from his inception as a religious and literary figure, Satan has always been a popular culture icon. But the way in which this character has appeared in American television is something that has been under analyzed and could offer some new insight to how the stereotypical Satan may continue to change.

Satan emerges as a character that has a large cultural impact outside of the scope of religion and the visual medium of television. Elaine Pagels' main points in *The Origin of Satan* is that Satan as a character emerged after the death of Jesus and became an

allegory for the Jewish sects that opposed the Jesus movement.<sup>3</sup> While this has nothing to do with *South Park*'s Satan, ignoring some of these notions would be a misstep because Pagels' understanding will help us unpack some of the work Satan traditionally does. Pagels' offers a point of origin for the stereotypes many authors of a Satan character employ. Using Pagels' insights on Satan's origins we can better dissect the character as a literary trope. Pagels' assertions can be applied to *South Park*'s Satan and offer a chance to understand when this Satan is being a stereotypical character, and he is not acting as a Satan character should.

While Pagels' work shows the origins and early life of Satan in Christianity, the historian Scott Poole describes how he has also been an important and prevalent figure in American religious history. In *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*, the historian Scott Poole writes that "the devil played a significant, and at moments determinative, role in the shaping of the American religious and popular opinion" and "examines religious ideas not only in relation to popular culture, but also as an aspect of popular culture."<sup>4</sup> Scott Poole's analysis is useful to understand why and how Americans were using Satan long before *South Park*. The first, second, and third chapters labeled "Diabolical Beginnings" discusses the Colonial period, the Great Awakening, and the rise of the middle-class' fascination with Satan during World War I to demonstrate that the Christian Devil has been a significant influence on culture and politics in America since the country's beginning.<sup>5</sup> The second section of the book, labeled "The Satanic Century,"

---

<sup>3</sup> Pagels, Elaine H. *The Origin of Satan*. New York: Random House, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Poole, W. Scott. *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. XIV, XVI.

<sup>5</sup> Poole, W. Scott. *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

explores the influence of popular culture on images of Satan from World War II to 2010 through the analysis of specific popular music, movies, and cultural events. Overall, Poole draws upon sermons, academic and spiritual books, as well as the categories listed previously to support his claims of the Satan character being a notable influence on American culture. Poole provides multiple examples and interesting stories, but his chapters often lack any clear thesis argument, and he recounts interesting stories about Satan's cultural impact citing historical examples that are difficult to argue against because there is no argument attached to the stories. For example, Poole mentions that satanic iconography and themes started to appear in the blues music of Robert Johnson, and subsequently the blues genre of music.<sup>6</sup> This book has a large timespan that makes it difficult to effectively dissect and make a strong argument for anything other than large sweeping claims of the Devil's impact on American culture. Satan has affected American culture and has been affected just as much by it. Poole's discussion of the middle-class' fascination of Satan will be a great reference point to understand which stereotypes *South Park* creators employ to form their Satan character and the critic of middle-class work along with suburban life through Satan.

#### Studying Religion and Popular Media

There is an overwhelming number of scholars who study popular media. When writing about religion and animation authors tend to group *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy* together, because they are easy to compare and contrast. They easily lend themselves to similar analysis because they all deal with topical issues in American culture and have been airing on major networks for several consecutive years. While

---

<sup>6</sup> Poole, W. Scott. *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. 125-153.

there are some who choose to just write about a singular piece of animation, much of the scholarship can apply to the traditional grouping of *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy*. For example, the religious studies scholar Lisle Dalton's main argument in "*Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in The Simpsons*" is that *The Simpsons* is a good microcosm to understand what Americans do and do not hold sacred. *The Simpsons* is one of the longest continuous running American animations. The show serves as a good example for the idea of the "us" and "not us" debate, thus suggesting that *The Simpsons* acts as a sort of cultural mirror, or as Dalton argues that it is often more of a "fun house mirror" reflection of American values and morality.<sup>7</sup> The "fun house mirror" analogy means that something is recognizable, but the details and magnitude are overemphasized for comedic effect. I mentioned above regarding how the audience experiences and empathizes with the characters in the show, the "fun house mirror" makes it easier to identify the portion of the show that the audience can empathize with. The "us" portion is described as what the audience can identify with easily. The "not us" portion refers to the outrageous things the show presents, and the humor that is associated with taking ideas and situations to their illogical extreme. I use the term illogical extreme to refer to a writing technique used by *South Park* that takes a logical scenario to the extreme where the logic seems to be illogical. For example, when Sheila Broflovski doesn't want her sons to watch a Canadian movie, she ends up getting the United States and Canada to go to war. This eventually ends up in Saddam Hussein

---

<sup>7</sup> Dalton Lisle, "*Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in The Simpsons*," in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001. 231.

and Satan trying to take over the world.<sup>8</sup> The logic and thought processes make sense, even though it seems illogical and extreme when described. While viewing both of these aspects within a given episode it helps the audience piece together a type of reflection of American culture. That reflection includes things such as religion and stereotypical depictions, but as Dalton asserts many times this mirror can be heavily influenced by several things and tends to be outrageous.<sup>9</sup>

The film scholar Eric Greene's main point—and one that I take to heart in examining *South Park's* Satan—is that popular culture items such as B movies (his focus is on *The Planet of the Apes* franchise), television shows, and other things are important to study because they illustrate ideas and assumptions that are deeply ingrained in American culture.<sup>10</sup> *Planet of the Apes* is an American science fiction media franchise that began in 1968 which focuses on apes such as gorillas and orangutans being the dominant species on earth. Greene's first main questions about the *Planet of Apes* films and television shows are “First, how is it possible for accounts of ape behavior to serve as a device for exploring human racial relations?”<sup>11</sup> The movie was seen as an allegory for racial relations in which people of color were compared to the apes, who for the uninitiated, were the movie's main antagonist. The second part of Greene's argument is “how can popular fiction and entertainment engage social and political conflicts?”<sup>12</sup> The

---

<sup>8</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Dalton Lisle, “Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in *The Simpsons*.” in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Greene, Eric. “*Planet of the Apes*” as *American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, Eric. “*Planet of the Apes*” as *American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Greene, Eric. “*Planet of the Apes*” as *American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 3.

apes films are not unanimously on one side or another of the social conflicts; Greene mentions that each movie seems to be inconsistent with its message and has a hard time piecing together a solid stance on some issues. When viewing the films together the message conveyed can make a confusing analogy, however they consistently comment on social and political discourse. Greene's third segment asks, "how can there be such a vast discrepancy of interpretations between producer and viewer?"<sup>13</sup> Greene tells a story about when Sammy Davis Jr, an African American singer, mentioned to the creators of the films that it was one of the best films about black-white relations. This shows that there can be a large discrepancy between the intended function of a piece of media and the reception.

Greene's main questions about the entertainment media's engagement with social and political change are similar to what I want to examine in this study. More importantly, the justification Greene provides has inspired the rationale for this thesis. *South Park* is not some silly cartoon, but a product of an era that has had far reaching influences on political and social interactions. This highly religious codified image is doing some specific work and has been doing this work since the inception of *South Park*. Greene notes that

When considering the political agenda of popular culture, some may be inclined to object that movies should not be taken so seriously, that they are just fiction with little to no social pertinence, simply entertainment for an afternoon or evening that should be enjoyed with popcorn and forgotten. This view is too uncritical and dismissive. Since their producers and their consumers do not exist

---

<sup>13</sup> Greene, Eric. *"Planet of the Apes" as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 3.

in cultural vacuums, any cultural product—and by this I mean everything from books to films to political speeches to food packaging—can and should be seen as a text that is suggestive of the cultural context out of which it came.<sup>14</sup>

This helps tremendously when answering the “so what?” question. *South Park*’s Satan represents the assumptions and ideas about the way the world is. The show’s and figure’s popularity suggests that it is hitting something important for viewers as well. Greene discusses why some films and media have the staying power many others do not have and why. This further legitimizes the observation of *South Park* on the basis of its “staying power.” *South Park* being a constant market and cultural presence causes their views to continue long after the television is turned off and influences public opinion about several issues.

Eric Greene’s observations on *The Planet of the Apes* franchises gives insight into how audiences perceive negative racial stereotypes while Jane Iwamura observes how positive stereotypes from the television show *Kung Fu* are still damaging. The religion and media scholar Jane Iwamura explored the 1970s television series *Kung Fu* with a focus on both its orientalist leanings and its cultural impact. While some praised the show’s diversity, others discounted it as racist. The title character, Caine, is half Chinese, but is played by the white male actor David Carradine.<sup>15</sup> Similar to Greene’s suggestions about the ability pieces of media possess that help scholars understand unstated views when talking about racial relations, Iwamura suggests that “implicit attitudes, expectations, and hopes in circulation since the 1950’s and further cultivated in the 1960s

---

<sup>14</sup> Greene, Eric. *“Planet of the Apes” as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 112.

were made explicit through the popular media of film and television.”<sup>16</sup> Iwamura explores the ideas and stereotypes this show helped form or perpetuate, often the very things that they are trying to fight against and discredit. The show would rebel against such traditional norms of the western genre, and thus created something of a postmodern work, like *Kung Fu*.

*Kung Fu*'s use of orientalist stereotypes is something different than *South Park*'s, but it can be viewed using the same tools. *Kung Fu* was telling a heartfelt story and would fight against stereotypes of the noble Chinese martial artist and the western genre tropes. *South Park*'s goal was to make a joke, the satire comes secondary in the earlier seasons. In the early seasons the jokes were more important and overarching satire was not as strong or made to be a priority. This tendency has reversed in later seasons. *South Park*'s use of stereotypes was normally used to establish a norm, invert that norm and then take it to an illogical extreme for the sake of humor. *South Park* pushed against stereotypical depictions of Satan through engaging in other stereotypes for comedic effect. Satan looks like a normal devil, but he did not act like a normal devil. He did not delight in suffering but treated it as “part of the job.” While an entire anthology can be devoted to what forms the “stereotypical devil” what this means is that Satan is not evil, and he certainly does not seek out people to trick into sin.<sup>17</sup>

Iwamura also explored the cultural impact of *Kung Fu* through different testimonials of people and critics. Then, the evidence is laid out through the observations of how the audience understands stereotypes, and the harmful and helpfulness of each.

---

<sup>16</sup> Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “Freemium Isn’t Free.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 5, 2014.

Iwamura's observation on the effects of resisting certain stereotypes helped facilitate other stereotypes through the show's widespread cultural influence. The show would portray a half Chinese main character who was not playing into stereotypes, but ultimately helped establish a long standing one. Then the main character would stand up for other Chinese people against a stereotypical bandit. While fighting against Chinese stereotypes, the show would still reinforce Asians stereotypes of mystical monks. Iwamura explains that it cast a mixed message even when using positively perceived notions. Why are some stereotypes bad, and why are the ones the show was using helpful? While the show was supporting and forming new single stories, it relied upon tired stereotypes the audience would recognize. Iwamura makes valid points regarding positive stereotypes being harmful when they are used as a part of a network of suppression, exploitation, and domination of others.

The arguments about the racial significance and the unintended harm of the stereotypes is helpful to my thesis in regard to understanding what Satan is used for. Even if Satan, or the main character of *Kung Fu*, is used to subvert the norm, there are other characters that are used to establish the norm and actively hurt the communities the creators are stereotyping. While the character of Satan is used to break down stereotypes of LGBTQ characters, showing him in a positive light by living in a tastefully decorated apartment building in Hell, other characters like Mr. Garrison are used to make fun of LGBTQ people by using words such as "queer" or fag."<sup>18</sup> This piece of literature is

---

<sup>18</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Go God Go." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 1, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Go God Go. XII" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 8, 2006.

helpful to explore the stereotype Satan is made into, and how even though the stereotype may seem positive. Iwamura's observations suggest that the stereotypes employed are harmful. This piece raises the question of some aspects within *South Park*. Some examples include "Does it help or hurt one of the only positive LGBTQ characters of the show when it shows him living in suburban bliss with a new and understanding boyfriend?"<sup>19</sup> Views and dynamics of LGBTQ characters are changing. Satan is a primary example of this, and as the view changes so does Satan.

Iwamura's work in dissecting stereotypes will be helpful when discussing Satan, but the bulk of the thesis argument will rely heavily upon David Feltmate's book *Drawn to the Gods: Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*.

Religious studies scholar David Feltmate focuses on *South Park*—even if not on the character of Satan within it. The three main questions Feltmate addresses include "what do you have to believe about different groups classified as 'religions' and the role of 'religion' in society to find jokes in these sitcoms humorous?"<sup>20</sup> This question helps answer the questions on why a wide American audience might find something humorous. The second question is "What do the patterns in these programs tell us about the popular construction of 'religious' significance in America?"<sup>21</sup> Feltmate's answer to this question helps us understand what Americans consider religious. The third question is "what can a critical assessment of religion in the public sphere through popular culture tell us about

---

<sup>19</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods: Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods: Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 2.

American civil life?”<sup>22</sup> Feltmate answers his research questions by first suggesting that “jokes about religion are tools for teaching audiences how to interpret and judge religious people and institutions.”<sup>23</sup> Feltmate argues that the programs create and codify ideas about religious people, groups, and social interactions through reinforcing their core values. Feltmate’s primary and secondary arguments depend on the idea of “the unseen order,” which refers to the constructed ethics and beliefs of a community that is presented through the groups’ or creators’ actions.<sup>24</sup> The unseen order is borrowed from William James’ third lecture in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and according to Feltmate is essential for understanding the show’s actions and helps us interpret their criticism more thoroughly. Feltmate also defines ignorant familiarity as the widespread superficial knowledge of other groups that others use to facilitate social interactions.<sup>25</sup> Through the use of ignorant familiarity Feltmate explores the plots of *South Park*, *Family Guy*, and *The Simpsons* to expose the unseen order of each show and how it informs the creators’ and show’s views on religion, as well as teaches their audience how to view religion.<sup>26</sup>

*Drawn to the Gods* is organized into five chapters that discuss which religions are portrayed as good in each show, why religious and ethnic groups are excluded, when Christians are depicted as good or bad, how new religious movements and cults are treated, and then concluded by a discussion on why this is seen as funny.<sup>27</sup> Feltmate’s

---

<sup>22</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 29-30.

argument is particularly persuasive when discussing the unseen order of the shows, what work that social commentary of the show does, and the impact the satire has on American social consciousness. For example, the author explains that *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* accept truth seeking and spirituality through plot lines, and incorporate this ideal into their acceptable centers, also known as ideas that they support and find acceptable, and thus support the shows creators' world view, and in turn form their unseen order.<sup>28</sup> When Feltmate refers to acceptable centers, he means the specific actions that the show supports, and finds acceptable.

Feltmate's thesis will be useful when discussing the seemingly random decisions Stone and Parker make in some episodes, and when used to account for the unseen order, many of their decisions seem to make more sense. For example, *South Park* supports individuality and shuns conformity, and when Satan demonstrates individuality he is held up as a good or moral character in the show and is used to subvert expectations of the audience, thus providing much of the humor of this character. Satan has individual quirks that are uniquely special to him, such as his collection of Hummel figurines in a two-part story that focuses on Satan.<sup>29</sup> The one complaint about Feltmate's work would be the tendency to favor *The Simpsons*. He would discuss the show in greater detail and length than the other two shows and it seemed as if the other shows were used as a counter to *The Simpsons* instead of worthy of their own attention. Interestingly, Feltmate does not analyze the role of Satan in *South Park* or the other shows. Satan, as a character archetype, appears in each show and is often featured in some capacity through the main

---

<sup>28</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

storyline of the shows. While this leaves my thesis a place to occupy within the field, it seems like an obvious mistake given the last chapter discusses heavily the effects 9-11 had on all the shows, and Satan's relationship with Saddam Hussein was not mentioned. This is what the second section of my thesis will explore, because post 9-11 *South Park* grappled with the islamophobia in America during the aftermath in an interesting manner. Feltmate's thesis will be used in each section, because the unseen order of the show helps explain the reasons Stone and Parker make Satan do certain things. They made their first Islamic character, Saddam Hussein, to be arguably worse than the literal devil of the show's universe. This characterization can be read and attributed as a direct response to America's strained diplomatic relationship with Iraq and later the 9-11 attacks. Using Dalton's idea of cultural mirror we can understand how this was incorporated into their unseen order.

Feltmate's argument fits well with Eric Greene, Lisle Dalton, and Jane Iwamura's main arguments, and will be the basis of many sections of this thesis.<sup>30</sup> Feltmate's unseen order is limited to the actions and dialogue that is taken, but much of Satan's character includes visuals, and the visual stereotypes Parker and Stone employed when creating him rely on old racial stereotypes used against people of color and Jewish people. Greene's discussion of the racial aspect of the visual representation of *Planet of the Apes* will help supplement some of Feltmate's shortcomings in this regard. Feltmate and Greene's thesis will be used to explore the way in which *South Park*'s Satan uses racial

---

<sup>30</sup> Dalton Lisle, "Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in *The Simpsons*," in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Greene, Eric. "Planet of the Apes" as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998.

Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

stereotypes and turns them into a “fun house mirror” of American racial relations, and when supplemented by Iwamura’s thesis, it can be understood how accurate this representation is when referring to general American notions.<sup>31</sup> Then, using Dalton’s and Feltmate’s argument, we can explore the notion that Satan may help influence the way in which the American public perceive the character of Satan, ethics, LGBTQ, and racial relations.<sup>32</sup>

### Caveats and Benefits of this Study

While *South Park* has been one of the longest running, most influential, and perhaps most divisive pieces of animation to be produced in America, this show holds some interesting beliefs and, thus, raises several talking points with each episode. *South Park* is something worthy of study, however this study is not interested in emulating or condoning their offensive tones, contents, and language. The contents of this show are ignorant while raising insightful points, but still borders on the ludicrous and offensive. With that being said, none of these views or themes are supported by this author.

One of the main things this study needs to remember is that if this thesis and arguments were posed to the creators, they would undoubtedly deny them. Some of my peers have quipped that this subject is something that has no room in academia, but these views and the stories of the unseen order are something that represents a cultural

---

<sup>31</sup>Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.

Greene, Eric. *"Planet of the Apes" as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998.

Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>32</sup>Dalton Lisle, “Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in *The Simpsons*,” in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.

movement in America of young adults who subscribe to the ideas shown in *South Par*, and thus provide a rallying cry to some. By studying the hidden messages and themes of this show we can better understand what the creators are pointing a finger at, and ultimately what they agree with and disagree with.

## SATAN AS A SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER

Repeatedly throughout his tenure on *South Park*, Satan has been a character many could sympathize with and is often used to compare to other characters. Satan is shown in the feature film, *South Park Bigger Longer and Uncut*, and in subsequent episodes as a character that many can identify with despite his flaws.<sup>33</sup> Satan is a complex character that struggles with issues like his explosive temper, but then is shown to be dealing with difficult subjects that make the audience understand and identify with him. Unlike other characters in the film, Satan can be related to and is often called on by the main cast for larger than life problems. This mirrors how the creators want Satan to be perceived by the audience. Satan is portrayed as a sympathetic character that is used to criticize actions and people (other characters and those outside of the cartoon) that the writers consider to be unsupportive of their values, worldview, and what the religious studies scholar David Feltmate refers to as the “unseen order.”<sup>34</sup> The three main characters from the film that I will compare Satan to are Jesus, Saddam Hussein, and Mr. Garrison. These three characters are either closely related to Satan or exhibit similar characteristics. For instance, Jesus exhibits violence and is treated differently than Satan most of the time. Saddam Hussein displays an abusive attitude towards Satan, which will be discussed in depth throughout this paper. Last to be examined is the treatment of Mr. Garrison and Satan as LGBTQ characters.

---

<sup>33</sup>*South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods: Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017.10.

## Jesus and Violence

Several religious characters are shown to be repeatedly having trouble connecting to the people of *South Park*. Jesus is one of them, as he even has trouble connecting with the main cast. Jesus lives in the town of *South Park* and hosts a reality talk show named *Jesus and Pals* that airs on the public access channel. Jesus' show is repeatedly outperformed by Ned and Jimbo's show *Huntin' and Killin'*.<sup>35</sup> This competing public access show centers around the two Vietnam veterans hunting uncommon animals and shooting large firearms. *Huntin' and Killin'* is portrayed as infinitely more entertaining than *Jesus and Pals*. Another example of Jesus struggling to connect with the people is when Father Maxie, the local Catholic priest, proclaims, "Look! It's the guy from the public access show!" when he sees Jesus face off against Satan in the episode *Damien*.<sup>36</sup> One of the main themes associated with Jesus is that nobody recognizes or pays attention to him until he commits violence. Jesus will commit extreme acts of violence such as fighting Satan or killing terrorists. Everyone recognizes Satan upon first glance. Some may use the pragmatic approach and say it is because Satan looks like a stereotypical devil. This point is moot because Jesus looks stereotypical as well. Jesus wears white robes with a red sash, with long brown hair and a beard. His stereotypical look is completed with a halo above his head. There is an intrinsic difference between the violence Jesus is celebrated for and the actions Satan is condemned for. In this section we will discuss the two different types of violence each character employs.

---

<sup>35</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "The Mexican Staring Frog of Southern Sri Lanka." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. June 10, 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "The Mexican Staring Frog of Southern Sri Lanka." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. June 10, 1998.

Satan's first appearance in the episode *Damian* revolves around him coming to *South Park* because of his son, Damian Thorn. Satan challenges Jesus to a boxing match and Jesus is reluctant.<sup>37</sup> Satan's towering presence leads all the citizens of *South Park* to bet on Satan winning. Jesus refuses to fight for most of the episode and ends up being pressured into it. Satan ends up losing the fight on purpose. The audience finds out Satan was the only one who bet on Jesus to win, thus, winning everyone's money and making Jesus take the blame. Jesus was beaten savagely until the very end when Satan loses on purpose.<sup>38</sup> This portrayal of Satan's character is not consistent with his development over the series' run. In this section I will argue that Jesus and Satan's use of violence is treated in different ways, and their motivations are vastly different. Jesus is violent when he is pressured or annoyed into committing acts of violence, while Satan is typically non-violent until he is put in a situation where he must commit violence. The observations contrasting Jesus and Satan help demonstrate how Satan is different from not only religious characters, but every character in the show. The creators use the good and evil dichotomy to illustrate the subversion of normative constructions to better satirize American culture.

Jesus' acts of violence continue to get more outrageous with each episode. Jesus is consistently portrayed as fighting and killing others on multiple occasions, but Jesus' biggest act of violence is emblematic of the pattern of behavior he exhibits.<sup>39</sup> The episode

---

<sup>37</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Damien." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. February 4, 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Damien." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. February 4, 1998.

<sup>39</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "The Mexican Staring Frog of Southern Sri Lanka." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. June 10, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Super Best Friends." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 4, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Imaginationland Episode I." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 17, 2007.

in which Jesus seems to be the most violent is *A Scause of a Clause*. There are three notorious episodes that feature Jesus as well as other religious figures like Krishna, Muhammad, and Joseph Smith. These episodes are entitled *Super Best Friends*, 200, and 201.<sup>40</sup> However, these will not be discussed in depth because there are better episodes that demonstrate Jesus's violent tendencies.<sup>41</sup> There are several scholars who write about censorship and *South Park's* ethos that directly focus on these three episodes. There will be less attention given to this section because Jesus in these episodes is represented as a superhero spoof and not as violent. In *Super Best Friends* Jesus doesn't commit any violent acts and in 201 he punches a red-haired child.<sup>42</sup> That is the least violent we see Jesus in *South Park*.

A more fitting observation for this section will be drawn from the episode *A Scause for Applause*.<sup>43</sup> In this episode the people of *South Park* stop using their "What Would Jesus Do?" bracelets once a performance enhancing drug was found on the Shroud of Turin. In Christian folklore the Shroud of Turin was a length of linen cloth that had a negative image of a man on it. Many believe it to be the burial cloth Jesus was

---

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "Imaginationland Episode II." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 24, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Super Best Friends." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 4, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "200." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 14, 2010.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "201." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 21, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> *Super Best Friends* show the Prophet Muhammad which led to threats of harm towards the creators.<sup>41</sup> The episodes 200 and 201 made fun of this censorship and the responses they received over *Super Best Friends*. These episodes are some of the few episodes that are universally banned from ever being played on *Comedy Central*. *Super Best Friends* was pulled from airing soon after release, and the other two episodes were heavily censored before they were aired.

<sup>42</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Super Best Friends." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 4, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "200." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 14, 2010.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "201." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 21, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "A Scause for Applause." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

buried in after the crucifixion.<sup>44</sup> This episode mocks the time when Lance Armstrong was found using performance enhancing drugs in the *Tour De France*. Stan refuses to remove his bracelets and eventually gets a bracelet deal from the *P.F. Pityef Bracelet Factory*. The owner is a parody of Dr. Seuss using rhymes and strange names such as calling bracelets “scauses.”<sup>45</sup> The owner comments “Scauses are causes that are worn on the wrist...” and then continues to explain all the causes that have scauses.<sup>46</sup> The owner continues to capitalize on the ignorance of the townspeople by selling them scauses and taking all of their money. Jesus subsequently takes a large dose of human growth hormone and becomes a large muscular version of himself while the *Rocky* theme is playing. Jesus destroys the factory and eventually kills the owner while yelling things like “Vengeance is Mine.”<sup>47</sup> After using a performance enhancing drug that they chastise him for in the beginning of the episode, he commits first degree murder but is praised.<sup>48</sup> This is not the only murder Jesus commits. Jesus is seen killing Al-Qaeda members, Xenomorphs, Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman, and several Catholic priests on numerous occasions.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Nicolotti, Andrea. *From the Mandylion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin: The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend* Boston: Brill, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “A Scause for Applause.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “A Scause for Applause.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “A Scause for Applause.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “A Scause for Applause.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “Red Sleigh Down.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 11, 2002.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “Cartoon Wars Part I.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 5, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “Cartoon Wars Part II.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 12, 2006.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. “*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Frosty*.” December 8, 1992.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. “*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Santa*.” December 1, 1995.

The first shorts ever created resembling *South Park* include Jesus fighting Santa and Frosty the snowman to the death in the shorts collectively titled *The Spirit of Christmas*.<sup>50</sup> The resemblance to *South Park*'s Jesus is clear even though these shorts are not part of the *South Park* canon. In the main series Jesus kills Al-Qaeda members to save Santa Claus when his sleigh was shot down in Iraq.<sup>51</sup> Then Jesus kills Xenomorphs, the black aliens from the *Alien* franchise, in both *Imaginationland* episodes to protect the good of all "created or imagined beings."<sup>52</sup> Jesus also killed several Catholic priests and Pope Bill Donohue with a shuriken to save Stan and Randy Marsh from being killed.<sup>53</sup> Each one of these short examples show that even though Jesus kills sometimes for altruistic reasons, he is normally forced to do so by external pressure, or his own irritation. The boys normally plead with Jesus to fix a problem and Jesus' first answer is normally to go and kill the problem. Satan however normally takes the time to speak with the children and talk them through the problems. Jesus seems to take pleasure in some aspects of violence. Jesus is seen killing with Armalite AR-15 rifles, lightsabers, and ninja tools. Jesus is cheered for whenever he kills or perpetuates violence. Satan takes no

---

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Fantastic Easter Special*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 4, 2007.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode I*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 17, 2007.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode II*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 24, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Frosty*." December 8, 1992.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Santa*." December 1, 1995.

<sup>51</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Red Sleigh Down*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 11, 2002.

<sup>52</sup> *Alien*. 20<sup>th</sup> Century fox, 1979.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode I*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 17, 2007.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode II*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 24, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Fantastic Easter Special*." April 4, 2007.

joy in violence, while Jesus is seen actively enjoying it. Jesus is cheered on by the entire town when he kills the Scause maker and this is the attention Jesus normally doesn't get.

Jesus go-to tactic for solving problems is murder and violence. Satan has far less violent tendencies. Satan only actively kills two people in the show. To put that into perspective that is a smaller kill count than Mr. Garrison, Al Gore, Butters, and Jimbo. The first murder is Saddam Hussein. Saddam was a human who lived a terrible life on Earth. He was the real world's Saddam Hussein, a dictator and war criminal. Saddam reappears in Hell after he is killed in the movie. In the following section the murder of Saddam will be analyzed in depth, but Saddam begins to date Satan to take over the world. When Satan realizes how much death, destruction and abuse Saddam has brought into his life Satan picks Saddam up and throws him back into the portal to Hell they entered from. Saddam dies when he hits the rocks on the bottom. This is after Saddam beats, belittles and overshadows Satan the entire film and this saves the world from eternal damnation.<sup>54</sup> When Satan first sees Saddam, he says it's impossible for him to be here because he killed him. Saddam says, "Yea, you killed me! So? Where did you think I was going to go? Detroit?"<sup>55</sup> It seems that Satan was under the impression that Saddam would disappear out of existence. Death means nothing for someone who has already died. When Satan murders someone it is treated as a minor inconvenience. In the next episode, Saddam and Chris, Satan's boyfriend at the time, keep killing each other. After one kills the other, they return to Hell and repeat the cycle.<sup>56</sup> Satan has to separate them

---

<sup>54</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Probably." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

to keep them from fighting. He sends Saddam to Heaven. This is a good deed, for partially selfish reasons. He wants Saddam out of his life and for them to stop fighting. This is important to understand that Satan is actively helping one of his worst enemies. Unlike Jesus just killing someone to solve a problem Satan finds solutions that help demonstrate his character and unseen order of the show.

The second murder Satan commits is more nuanced and warrants further explanation. In the episode *Best Friends Forever*, Kenny McCormick gets hit by an ice cream truck after he is the first person in *South Park* to buy a PlayStation Portable, which was a portable gaming console. Before the accident Kenny played a game entitled *Heaven vs. Hell* and became very good at the game. Once he dies the angel Michael tells him God invented the *PSP* to find a general for Heaven to fight off Satan's army. We see in Hell that Satan is discouraged when he hears about the new general for Heaven and wants to quit planning the assault. His new boyfriend, Kevin, urges Satan to continue with his plan. Kevin is a hooded, grey skinned demon looking humanoid. The assault on Heaven begins, and Hell begins to lose. Satan wants to order a retreat to save the lives of his soldiers, but Kevin tries to stop him. Satan snaps and shouts, "I'm breaking up with you!" and then kills him with his laser vision. He took one life to save billions of other sentient lives. Granted they are hell spawn, but they are Satan's surrogate family and friends.<sup>57</sup> This seems to be irrational, but this relationship is the third toxic relationship Satan has been in, and each relationship has almost destroyed the universe. He has

---

<sup>57</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Best Friends Forever." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 30, 2005.

already endured an abusive relationship with Saddam Hussein that will be explored more in the following section.

The comparison between the violent tendencies of Jesus and Satan helps expose the unseen order of the show and understand whom the creators are critiquing. By making Jesus into a reluctant character that is bullied into violence, *South Park* is criticizing the obsession with violence in American culture. The citizens of the town don't care about Jesus unless he is committing violence for them. They don't care about his miracles, talk shows, or teachings they only care about his ability to fight perceived evil. This is a critique on ultra conservative political rhetoric. When lobbying for policy changes the ultra-conservative religious focus on some of their religious views, but they ignore what Jesus actually teaches in the *Bible*. They care more about abortion rights than helping the poor within their society and keeping immigrants out instead of compassion for a neighbor. This is the ideology that the creators want to point out as something unsupportive of their unseen order. *South Park* creators routinely point out incongruities within mindsets and seek to shed light onto the nuanced issues in American popular culture.

While criticizing some aspects of American culture through Jesus and Satan they celebrate other things. In *A Scause for Applause* Jesus' transformation using HGH is punctuated with the song *Gonna Fly Now*, better known as the Rocky theme song.<sup>58</sup> Rocky is a rag to riches story about a working class Italian-American boxer named Rocky

---

<sup>58</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "A Scause for Applause." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

Bill Conti, *Gonna Fly Now*, 1977.

*Rocky*. MGM Home Entertainment, 1976.

Balboa who gets a chance to fight for the world heavyweight championship.<sup>59</sup> *Rocky* is a piece of Americana that has been referenced and satirized many times. Americana is defined in this study to be an object, place, idea or thing that is associated with the culture and history of America, especially the United States. While using the classic song associated with *Rocky* and showing Jesus do performance enhancing drugs the creators poke fun at America's violent tendencies and love of sport's movies. Stone and Parker seem to still enjoy Americana. They celebrate it through use of fun and beloved stereotypes and film tropes. Before a fight or during a training montage the *Rocky* theme song plays to alert the audience to what is going to happen next. As Jane Iwamura writes, the use of positive stereotypes can still be damaging.<sup>60</sup> Even though Jesus is committing this violence on behalf of *South Park*, he enjoys it, and celebrates in the acts. Not only does Jesus enjoy it, the townspeople love it.

Both characters can be seen taking responsibility for actions that are ultimately out of their control. Jesus must save Santa, *South Park*, and ultimately the kids. When Jesus takes action its seriously flawed and while he produces results it is extremely violent. Jesus is forced into action most of the time and the reluctance to deal with problems is something *South Park* sees as less than ideal. Satan deals with the consequences of his actions. In a show that is episodic in format there are usually no consequences to their actions. Jesus is praised for murdering people and it never comes back into the conversation. When Satan kills Saddam in the movie Saddam returns the

---

<sup>59</sup> *Rocky*. MGM Home Entertainment, 1976.

<sup>60</sup> Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

next time, we see Satan.<sup>61</sup> Satan must be responsible and deal with the mess he allowed to happen. He was the only one who could deal with Saddam and had to protect the entire world from him.

Satan is used as a model for responsibility. Satan's sins come back to negatively affect him, and in doing so we can see a comparison to Stone and Parker in Satan. Satan is used to deal with things the creators have done. When they mocked climate change in the episode *ManBearPig* they mock Al Gore and climate change in the year 2006.<sup>62</sup> In this episode they have vice president Al Gore going around the town scaring people into believing a made up character named ManBearPig is coming to *South Park* to kill everyone. This is a thinly veiled critique of early climate change advocacy. Over a decade later in the episode *Nobody got Cereal?* the real ManBearPig comes to *South Park* and begins killing everyone. It turns out that ManBearPig is a sifter demon who made a deal with the older generation to give them cool stuff in exchange for their grandchildren's future. Satan is called in to help with the problem, and the two demons fight. Satan however is killed by ManBearPig.<sup>63</sup> Stone and Parker use Satan as two things in this section. First, he is used to show that the existential threat of climate change is scarier than anything the human race has faced before. Second, they double down on Satan as a model of responsibility. They use him to deal with their own past mistakes when making fun of certain things. Stone and Parker gave fuel to climate deniers for over a decade and

---

<sup>61</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

<sup>62</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "ManBearPig." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 26, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Time to Get Cereal." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 7, 2018.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Nobody got Cereal?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 14, 2018.

when they realized they were wrong they used one of their favorite characters to atone for their own perceived sins.

In conclusion, we can understand that the violence Jesus commits vastly outweighs the actions of Satan. Jesus is celebrated in his killings while Satan's murders are excused or completely ignored. Satan's killings and attitudes are treated as necessary evil, and Jesus' actions are simply celebrated collateral damage. Jesus and Satan are used to point a finger at American attitudes in general whether it be with inconsolable attitudes. Saddam Hussein needed to be stopped, and the insurgents Jesus killed were just faceless masses that got caught in the middle of a holy war. Satan "kills" two sentient creatures, while Jesus kill count it too large to even begin to tabulate. While both can be seen as taking responsibility within the show, we can see that Satan is a far more fitting representation of responsibility that the creators use to right their past wrongs.

#### Saddam Hussein and Domestic Abuse

In this section I will argue that Saddam Hussein was used as a device to demonstrate that there is something more evil than Satan. This can be attributed to the time period, and political climate in which these episodes were produced in. *South Park* has never been shy about mocking a public figure. Moreover, celebrity and public figure cameos normally drive the plot and conflict of many episodes. This model is so ingrained into the way *South Park* operates that each episode starts with a disclaimer that is satirical, and serious at the same time. The disclaimer reads as follows.

All character and events in this show--even those based on real people—are entirely fictional. All celebrity voices are impersonated... poorly. The following program contains coarse language and due to its content it should not be viewed by

anyone.<sup>64</sup> Saddam Hussein is one of the more notable reoccurring celebrity cameos. Saddam Hussein is a character who is so memorable that his cameo made him the main antagonist in the only *South Park* movie.

Saddam Hussein was the president and dictator of Iraq between July 1979 and April 2003. Hussein was widely criticized for committing genocide and various purges killing well over 250,000 people. In 2003 the United States invaded Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein under the accusations of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction and having ties to Al-Qaeda. Hussein was an active and outspoken opponent of the United States, and the two countries' relationships have been extremely strained. Saddam Hussein mistakenly conflated with Al-Qaeda and terrorism in the United States and many speculated he was responsible for the attacks on 9/11.<sup>65</sup> *South Park*'s portrayal of Saddam Hussein is something that can be seen as coping with the existential dread of a horrific act of terrorism and placing the blame on faceless terrorists and a larger than life character. Saddam is shown to be associated with terrorists in multiple episodes and after the banishment to heaven he makes a chemical weapon plant in Heaven.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "A Scause for Applause." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, January 9, 2020. <https://www.Britannica.com/biography/Saddam-Hussien>.

<sup>66</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Tom's Rhinoplasty." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. February 11, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Terrance and Phillip in Not Without My Anus." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 1, 1998.

*South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Probably." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "A Ladder to Heaven." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 6, 2002.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Red Sleigh Down." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 11, 2002.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Krazy Kripples." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 26, 2003.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "It's Christmas in Canada." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 17, 2003.

Saddam is associated with terrorism and set up to be one of the more sinister characters in the show. There can be an argument made that the only character who is more sinister seems to be Cartman. Jesus, who is typically referred to as a moral character in the show is objectively worse than Satan. Saddam is without a question represented as evil. Satan is seen to be in a relationship with Saddam Hussein, and through his appearances he is normally shown to be physically near or metaphorically connected to Satan.

The main way in which the creators show Saddam to be worse than Satan is by showing him abusing Satan. Saddam beats, belittles and even rapes Satan at one point. The first time Saddam is seen abusing Satan is in the *South Park* movie.<sup>67</sup> The plot of the musical is that Kyle Brovloski's mother is angry and leads a moral crusade against the *Terrance and Phillip* show, requesting they be executed for their crimes of poisoning America's youth through the crude humor their show glorifies. The murder of T&P triggers an ancient prophecy and ushers in the end of the world and subsequently brings Satan to Earth. An important fact to understand is that Kyle's mom, Sheila Brovloski, is the main antagonist of the movie, not Satan. This means that Saddam Hussein is the second antagonist, and uses this to his advantage to further his goal throughout the movie to become dictator of the world. Saddam Hussein and Satan are in a romantic relationship. Saddam throughout the movie slaps Satan in the face then calls him names which follows the pattern Saddam will continue to employ in every appearance he makes alongside Satan.<sup>68</sup> Saddam will manipulate and abuse Satan at every opportunity. Saddam

---

<sup>67</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

is emotionally, physically, and verbally abusive to Satan. During the climax of the movie, when Canada and America are engaged in a large-scale war over the T&P show, Kyle's mother shoots the two television stars, opening a hole to Hell where Satan and Saddam enter from. An American General directing the troops says, "It's Saddam Hussein! Shoot him!"<sup>69</sup> This is funny because the American General ignores Satan, a literal huge devil creature coming from Hell to focus on Saddam Hussein. It relies on the audience's fear of Saddam Hussein as a larger than life character that the media and politicians hyped up as very dangerous to America.

In the following scene Saddam cuts Satan's big speech short by interjecting that Sheila Broflovski has brought more intolerance into the world and that allowed for their coming. Saddam ordered the two armies to bow to him, and they followed the order. Satan interjects that "I am the Dark Ruler, not you." To which Saddam replies, "Relax bitch, you're better seen, not heard." Kenny McCormick, one of the main characters, has been in Hell for the entirety of the movie with Satan and Saddam. When Saddam belittles Satan for the last time, Kenny presumably encourages Satan to stand up for himself. Satan replied, sadly, to Kenny, "I can't."<sup>70</sup> Saddam says he will erect a statue where "that fat kid is standing," which happens to be one of the main characters, Cartman.<sup>71</sup> Cartman calls Saddam a derogatory slur and realizes that when he curses he has a lightning-type power. Cartman begins to curse Saddam out, beating him into submission. Saddam

---

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Probably." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

<sup>69</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

pleads for Satan to protect him, but Satan stands by to allow it. Saddam calls him suggestive and crude names when Satan will not intervene. Satan screams, “I have had enough!” then picks Saddam up and throws him into the pit where he is impaled on pointed rocks.<sup>72</sup> The interaction between Saddam and Satan shows that Saddam treats Satan as an object he can use and discard. Saddam’s violent and abusive actions are used to illustrate that there is a character worse than Satan. This characterization can be attributed to several things. One main thing is that people find it funny. We want to know why people find it funny. Another reason we can point to is the islamophobia and general fear of Saddam Hussein in the early 2000s. The mocking of Saddam can be interpreted as a way of dealing with the existential dread of a looming war with Iraq. This can be seen in other examples like Charlie Chaplin impersonating Hitler or the internet’s seeming obsession with Vladimir Putin.<sup>73</sup>

In doing so the creators set Saddam up to be an antagonistic force throughout the show. Saddam continues to abuse Satan in the episodes *Do the Handicapped go to Hell?* and *Probably*.<sup>74</sup> In this two-part story Satan is in Hell with his new boyfriend Chris when Saddam returns after the events of the movie. Saddam tries to win Satan back, and disrespects Chris and Satan over a tense dinner. Satan then goes by the motel Saddam is staying in to set some ground rules so they can coexist in Hell. Saddam bypasses Satan’s words and waves off his feelings and then Satan a drink. There is an immediate cut to black. Satan comments that his head is hurting, and he can’t remember what happened

---

<sup>72</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> *The Great Dictator*. By Charlie Chaplin. United States: United Artist, 1940. Internet Accessed.

<sup>74</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “*Do the Handicapped go to Hell?*” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. “*Probably*.” In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

last night. The room is littered with various sexual toys and paraphernalia.<sup>75</sup> Saddam had sex with Satan when he was drunk and unable to consent. Basically, at best Saddam took advantage of Satan, but at worst Saddam raped him. We see no ill effects from this night other than Satan blaming himself, but it would have undoubtedly put Satan under extreme mental anguish. The feeling of guilt Satan feels throughout the episode is undoubtedly an effect of Saddam's unwanted advances and Satan blaming himself. Earlier in the episode we see Satan struggle with still being attracted to Saddam. This is no excuse for Saddam to force himself on him. If this was not a comedy show this scene would have been extremely impactful and would warrant a trigger warning. In *South Park*'s past they have treated rape as a gag that can be laughed at. But this is not something that should be let go. We should understand that rape is a horrible act that should warrant further explanation. The creators glossed over this rape for some reason. It was not displayed like other rapes.<sup>76</sup> Of course, the creators should not have to explicitly say that "Rape is Bad. Mokay" It was a missed opportunity to further the plot and show how bad of a character Saddam is, but the show never explicitly mentions the rape of Satan.

The creator's attention to detail in this scene and the way the rest of the episode plays out seems to suggest that Satan made this decision. That could not be farther from the truth; Satan states directly that he does not remember anything from the previous night. Many have written about what the exact definition of rape is, and this is not the

---

<sup>75</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Probably." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "The China Problem." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 8, 2010.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "Crippled Summer." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 28, 2010.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "It's a Jersey Thing." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 13, 2010.

place to argue that. The definition from the Department of Justice gives the new legal definition of rape is: “The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”<sup>77</sup> No means no doesn’t apply when the ability to consent has been taken away completely, or the ability to make decisions has been heavily altered. Rape was not a topic often discussed in the early 2000’s. Some could be said that this is reading backwards something the creators never intended, but it is doubtful. For the creators to make fun of something they must understand it enough to craft gags that get to the heart of the issue. *South Park* has done so innumerable times throughout the history of the show. I would suggest they understood what they are doing and used this opportunity to subconsciously plant this idea into the minds of the audience. It is understandable if they did this to hide the gravity of the situation to make a meta commentary about the state of affairs regarding sexual crimes in America.

The actions that Saddam is portrayed as doing is something that supports the unseen order of the show. The creators celebrate America while poking fun at it. *South Park* is in this interesting place within popular culture. They put things in the show people can relate to and find humorous. This means the creators are innately aware of what their audience thinks and believes. They create stereotypes that are influenced by the general public who is viewing this show, yet they are also influencing the ideas that the audience begins to believe. By putting these ideas into their show, Stone and Parker created things such as characters, plotlines, and themes people can understand and cling

---

<sup>77</sup> Sullivan, Katharine T., and Laura L. Rogers. “An Updated Definition of Rape.” The United States Department of Justice, April 7, 2017. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/updated-definition-rape>.

to. They take stereotypes and reinforce them. This is why the perception of Saddam Hussein many people still hold is influenced by *South Park*.<sup>78</sup> They take Saddam and continue to compound his character with all of his bad traits. Justifiably they portray him as an evil character; there is no room for nuance. There is a term that is used by some internet communities called Flanderization. This term is usually utilized when a fan community is discussing a particular show. Its name comes from Ned Flanders from *The Simpsons*. This process is a common TV trope of taking and exaggerating one aspect of a character until it completely consumes the character.<sup>79</sup> Flanderization normally refers to a process for the sake of humor, but the use of it to describe a character that solely draws inspiration from evil acts and the desire of power seems to be a one note character that can fall within this category. Saddam is one such character. Through this portrayal of Saddam, *South Park* creators have exposed their ideas and beliefs. David Feltmate suggests that shows like *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and *Family Guy* do this unintentionally and unwittingly set up their unseen order.<sup>80</sup>

Saddam is not just an evil character; he is worse than the literal devil. Saddam physically and psychologically abuses Satan, and even rapes him. This evil is something that can be read as a product of its time. These episodes and movies premier before 9-11, but through viewing this media you can see the attitude towards Saddam Hussein, Iraq, and the religion of Islam as a whole. Eric Greene suggests that “producers and their consumers do not exist in cultural vacuums, any cultural product—and by this I mean

---

<sup>78</sup> Greene, Eric. *“Planet of the Apes” as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998.

<sup>79</sup> Nerdstalgic. “How the Design of Spongebob has Changed Over the Years.” YouTube. YouTube, August 6, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBQJ9iYUgoU>

<sup>80</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.

everything from books to films to political speeches to food packaging—can and should be seen as a text that is suggestive of the cultural context out of which it came.”<sup>81</sup> *South Park* uses Satan as a measuring stick. If a character does these things it means he is more evil than the literal devil, and thus should be shunned and disavowed. The creators disagreed with the atrocities Saddam Hussein was committing at the time, and thus used their power as social influencers to satirize Saddam in this way. They drew more attention to this character many have heard on the news but never completely understood. The creators drew upon this and helped form many people’s ignorant familiarity of Saddam Hussein.<sup>82</sup> The unfortunate side effect is that some may conflate Saddam’s actions and beliefs of Muslim culture in general, and this could have fed into the rampant islamophobia of the early 2000s post 9-11.

Accounting for the possible bias of the creators, Saddam Hussein’s actions in real life heavily influence his actions within the show. Satan and Saddam’s relationships are heavily one sided and abusive. Saddam is used to bounce scenarios and ideas off Satan. Saddam is used to show that Satan is one of the most responsible characters in the show. In the episode *Probably* Saddam is causing so much trouble in Hell Satan goes to God to ask for help. Satan knew he was in too much trouble to fix on his own. When suggested the idea he originally rejects it, but eventually he gives the idea a chance. He takes responsibility to handle Saddam and repair his relationship with his father. Instead of choosing either of his murderous suitors he takes God’s advice and chooses neither of

---

<sup>81</sup> Greene, Eric. *"Planet of the Apes" as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.

them.<sup>83</sup> Satan can break out of the stereotype in which the creators put him in. In this aspect he becomes a model of individuality. Satan can be seen as an individual throughout the entire series because he is a rebellion from the norm of what the audience expects a Satan character to be, and even when he established a new stereotype, he overcomes that as well. Some could say he is just playing into the rebellious nature we come to expect from Satan, but it is about Satan's growth as an individual, not for the sake of rebellion.

### Mr. Garrison and LGBTQ Treatment

Mr. Garrison is the last character in which we can compare to Satan. Both characters are LGBTQ characters, but the differences are that Mr. Garrison's sexuality is mocked and used as a punchline. Satan's sexuality is not defining of his personality, yet Mr. Garrison's is because he continues to talk about it and use it to his advantage. The treatment of Mr. Garrison's sexuality is something the creators have received criticism over. In this section I will argue that the creators use Mr. Garrison as a tool to mock trends in media and attitudes the creators see as conflicting. Mr. Garrison is not mocked because he is homosexual or transsexual, but because he represents attitudes that go against the creators' unseen order and Satan supports their views on sexuality. The views that Mr. Garrison represents are his lack of authenticity, using his sexuality as a scapegoat, and generally being unpleasant person.

Herbert J Garrison was the main character's third and fourth grade teacher who underwent two sex changes.<sup>84</sup> He first transitions to a woman, but then realizes he cannot

---

<sup>83</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Mr. Garrisons Fancy New Vagina." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 9, 2005.

get pregnant and, therefore, feels that he “is not a woman.”<sup>85</sup> Throughout the series he has dated men and women, both as a man and as a woman and demonstrated several conflicting opinions. Sometimes he calls men he is dating “fag” and “queer” while partaking in the same activities. Mr. Garrison is also portrayed as being severely racist and eventually becomes the president of the United States, as a mirror of President Donald Trump.<sup>86</sup> Mr. Garrison dawns the red power tie and orange spray tan to run on the platform of anti-immigration. However, instead of President Trump’s stance on Hispanic immigration, Mr. Garrison takes a stance against Canadian immigration. Canadians become the de facto “other” in the series and become a stand-in for everything wrong in the *South Park* universe. Mr. Garrison’s campaign slogan is “F\*ck Them all to Death.”<sup>87</sup> While this is not directly related to his sexuality he does make good on his promise and at the end of this episode he rapes the Canadian Prime Minister to death once he sees that Canada has already built a border wall.<sup>88</sup> In the following episodes Mr. Garrison tries to lose to Hillary Clinton, and just can’t seem to make the uneducated voters not like him. It seems as if every stunt he pulls solidifies his followers.<sup>89</sup> This parody of President Trump is something that indicates the creators’ unseen order and does not support the outrageous political posturing of the 2016 election and following presidency.

---

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Eak, a Penis!" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 9, 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Eak, a Penis!" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 9, 2008.

<sup>86</sup> Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. *Season Twenty*. In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 14, 2016- December 7, 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Where My Country Gone?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 23, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Where My Country Gone?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 23, 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. *Season Twenty*. In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 14, 2016- December 7, 2016.

Satan and Mr. Garrison are both LGBTQ characters, yet Mr. Garrison's sexuality is mocked and used as a punchline. The treatment of Mr. Garrison's sexuality is something the creators have received criticism over. His first sex change is hallmarked by Mrs. Garrison running around *South Park* hugging women calling them sisters and talking about different tampons. The reason Mr. Garrison underwent a sex change in the beginning is because of the struggles with accepting his feelings for Mr. Slave. He exclaimed "I'm not gay, I'm just a woman in a man's body."<sup>90</sup> Once he had the operation, Mr. Slave broke off the relationship because he "liked having sex with men, not women."<sup>91</sup> While this is a complicated issue, the creators play on the audience's ignorant familiarity with the topic of trans and gay issues. They want to establish that these types of things are not black and white. While this is a complicated issue, the creators play on the audience's ignorant familiarity with the topics of trans and gay issues through their satirical representations of their characters. This is seen through the black and white standards of gay men only wanting to be intimate with other gay men and trans women who are attracted to men being labeled as gay. The creators are playing on the fact that Mr. Garrison does not know the nuances of these issues as well, and poking fun at him, and people who claim to be a part of these groups but do not truly understand the issues facing LGBTQ communities.

This is strictly contrasted with Satan's sexuality. His sexuality is not a punchline. The stereotypes he engages with are used for comedic effect. The only time Satan's sexuality is made fun of is by Saddam Hussein, and in the previous section we discussed

---

<sup>90</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Mr. Garrison's Fancy New Vagina." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 9, 2005.

<sup>91</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Mr. Garrison's Fancy New Vagina." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 9, 2005.

that Saddam was used to show that America's political opponents were demonized and made to be worse than the personification of evil. The slights Saddam dished out were not for comedic effect, and served to make the audience identify with Satan, and resent Saddam.<sup>92</sup> The creators do engage in some stereotypical depictions that make Satan seem funny. The main one that can be pointed to is when Satan is setting up his new suburban apartment in Hell overlooking the river Stix with his new boyfriend Chris.<sup>93</sup> Satan is seen organizing his *Hummel* figurines. They are little porcelain figurines based off of the drawings of children by Sister Berta Hummel.<sup>94</sup> Why is this funny? David Feltmate's main question is what people have to believe about religion to find these jokes funny.<sup>95</sup> I would like to extend this question and ask what people have to believe about sexuality and Satan to make this funny. Through ignorant familiarity many people may know just enough about LGBTQ culture and stereotypes for people to agree or laugh at these jokes. People can see a little bit of themselves in these portrayals such as the suburban bliss of moving into a new apartment with a loving partner, but the new apartment is in Hell overlooking a river of lava. That is where the funhouse mirror arrives, and many people see the disjointed nature of the illogical extreme. The situations and back drop of the situation is where the humor comes from, not the homophobic slurs and ridiculous dialogue.

---

<sup>92</sup> *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Do the Handicapped go to Hell?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

<sup>94</sup> "About M.I. Hummel." Shop M.I. Hummel: About M.L. Hummel. Accessed February 21, 2020. [https://web.archive.org/web/20110721192331/https://www.shophummel.com/about\\_hummel](https://web.archive.org/web/20110721192331/https://www.shophummel.com/about_hummel).

<sup>95</sup> Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.

While this episode can be read as fighting back against negative stereotypes of LGBTQ people by showing Satan trying to use reasoning and good judgement to solve his problems, it ultimately backfires. The negative stereotypes end up upon the Muslim character, Saddam ultimately taking advantage of Satan. Iwamura writes about how even the use of positive stereotypes eventually leads to the use of negative stereotypes and reinforces seemingly positive stereotypes.<sup>96</sup> While subconsciously fighting against gay stereotypes *South Park* reinforces Islamophobic stereotypes under the guise of criticizing a political character. The question can be asked why are good stereotypes still bad in this context? Iwamura continues to explain in her work that good stereotypes reinforce a network of suppression and can help contribute to unintentional harm.<sup>97</sup> With *South Park's* writing style it makes some characters very easily quotable, and Saddam is one of those characters, and this undoubtedly was used to mock Islamic people upon its first airing. This scene and story type helped reinforce negative stereotypes of Muslim people in a way that can still be witnessed. This can be seen as a much larger issue because the stereotypes employed fits into a larger power dynamic in which oppressors feel embolden or even justified in marginalizing, oppressing, and perpetuating violence toward racialized Muslim people.

This is the problem when speaking about stereotypes, it is ever changing. Race, gender and sexuality is also changing, and the notions people understand to be true can be in flux. If Stone and Parker were to portray a character that fit into a minority group as doing something notably, eventually that will create a stereotype. If *South Park* shows a

---

<sup>96</sup> Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

trans person being rude and irritating like Mr. Garrison and he says something easily quotable that could possibly become synonymous with trans people. *South Park* is in a strange place culturally speaking. The creators also want to make content people can identify with and laugh at; they eventually play into things the audience will recognize and make them laugh. While some can say that *South Park* is LGBTQ, this section argued that *South Park* may play into the stereotypes they normally use as a vehicle to poke fun at other things that are unsupportive to their unseen order. Satan's sexuality is not something that is mocked or belittled, but something that deepens and adds nuance to his character.

## CONCLUSION

*South Park* is in an interesting position within popular culture. When given seemingly limitless freedom by Comedy Central, Stone and Parker choose to become one of the most outspoken and controversial satirical shows that focus on current events. The approach of satire through illogical plots and visual gags has made very memorable depictions of mythical and real-life characters that continue to resonate with their audience. They made celebrities into caricatures and poked fun at their real-life antics but made characters such as Satan, Jesus, God, and even Santa Claus into nuanced characters who have relatable struggles. *South Park*'s social influence cannot be understated because they are credited with creating or popularizing words, ideas, and phrases people commonly use but don't realize came from *South Park*. Some examples include derp, cheesing, red rocket, "I'm not your buddy guy", and "I thought this was America."<sup>98</sup> This is a testament to *South Park*'s reach. They influence people that have never watched a single episode. When a piece of media seems to be this integral to an entire generation and the culture of the internet, academics should take notice. With authors such as Dana Schwartz speaking out about the damage *South Park* has caused on American culture on *Twitter* it seems irresponsible to not look into a topic so divisive as *South Park*.<sup>99</sup> Eric Greene suggests that every product that is made in a society is worthy of attention and useful to understand the society better. That is precisely why I think that this work is

---

<sup>98</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "The Succubus." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 21, 1999. Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Major Boobage." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 26, 2008. Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Proper Condom Use." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. August 1, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Canada on Strike." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 2, 2008. Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "The Losing Edge." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 6, 2005.

<sup>99</sup> Schwartz, Dana. DANA SCHWARTZ. Accessed April 3, 2020. <http://www.danaschwartzdotcom.com/>. Schwartz, Dana. Twitter. Twitter, February 13, 2020. <https://twitter.com/danaschwartz/status/1228019211311562752?lang=en>.

worth the attention of academics. *South Park* is a shared intellectual property that has been viewed millions of times that helps create people's ignorant familiarity on several issues, and most importantly religious issues like the depiction of Satan. *South Park* may start trends, but they are also influenced by American culture and follow trends. *South Park* does not seem to be the problem of American popular culture, but more of a symptom of sorts. It is a rebellion against a culture that has been rebellious since its inception. This study of *South Park* adds a nuanced look at the way in which Stone and Parker reinterpret themes and ideas related to sexuality, violence, and prejudice. *South Park* fits into a larger narrative of satire in America, and others should take notice. This study was not just of *South Park*, but more of a case study in which American adult animation deals with an ever changing American consciousness. These same principles observed in *South Park* and Satan can be transferred to other shows' interpretations of evil and morality.

If this study would continue there could be several different directions it could advance. The sustained analysis this thesis does of *South Park*'s Satan and the construction of him as a character could also be applied to other works of American animation. Others may interpret Stone and Parker's decisions differently or disagree with me on small points but for the most part this has tapped into the major themes of this character. If pressed to continue to this I have noticed a theme that would be interesting to develop. I believe Satan in *South Park* helped start a shift in the representation of the Devil Character in American animation. With shows like *Futurama*, *Family Guy*, *The*

*Simpsons*, and *American Dad* I would do a similar in-depth study comparing and contrasting all of these show's depictions.<sup>100</sup>

In conclusion, I have argued that Satan in *South Park* is portrayed as a sympathetic character who acts as both a role model of individuality and responsibility in a manner that supports what religious studies scholar David Feltmate refers to as the “unseen order” proffered by the show's creators. I supported this argument through three case studies that compare Satan to other prominent *South Park* characters: Jesus, Saddam Hussein, and Mr. Garrison. I argued that Jesus and Satan's use of violence is treated in different ways. Jesus's violence was celebrated by everyone, and Satan's is largely ignored even though they both served the greater good. I argued that Saddam Hussein was used to demonstrate that there is something more evil than Satan. Saddam repeatedly committed evil and many times it was committed against Satan and was widely condemned by the other creators. Lastly the creators use Mr. Garrison as a tool to mock trends in media and attitudes the creators see as conflicting. Mr. Garrison is not mocked because he is homosexual or transsexual, but because he represents attitudes that go against the creators' unseen order while Satan's sexuality is treated much more positively. Satan as a character is used repeatedly by the creators to convey a message and is used to reconcile with their own changing beliefs. The strongest example to this meta argument came in the first section speaking about their changing beliefs on climate

---

<sup>100</sup> Groening, Matt, and Eric Kaplan, writers. “*Hell Is Other Robots.*” In *Futurama*, Fox Network. May 18, 1999.

Hoffman, Craig, and Seth MacFarlane, writers. “*A Picture is Worth a Thousand Bucks.*” In *Family Guy*. Fox Network. April 18, 2000.

Groening, Matt, and John Swartzwelder, writers. “*Bart Gets Hit by a Car.*” In *The Simpsons*, Fox Network. January 10, 1991.

MacFarlane, Seth, and Erick Sommers, writers. “*Seasons Beatings.*” In *American Dad*, Fox Network. December 11, 2011.

change. While this thesis was in its infancy the creators released the episode, *Nobody got Cereal?* which shows the death of Satan.<sup>101</sup> They sacrificed their favorite character on the altar of their unseen order. Stone and Parker resent it when someone has an unchanging and reasonable attitude regarding anything. Once they realized they themselves were being hypocrites they set to fixing the problem. Upon viewing this episode for the first time It was difficult to interpret the hidden message and ulterior motives of killing Satan. Were they taking the approach of the Simpsons when they retired the old stereotypical character of Apu? Stone and Parker have already retired Big Gay Al, Mr. Slave, and eventually President Garrison. I do not think this is the case because they demonstrate time after time that they loved this character and he is not a “joke character.” The future is hard to predict, but if *South Park* is like life, then a devil’s work is never done.

---

<sup>101</sup> Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "Nobody got Cereal?" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 14, 2018.

## REFERENCES

- “*About M.I. Hummel.*” Shop M.I. Hummel: About M.L. Hummel. Acedded February 21, 2020.  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20110721192331/https://www.shophummel.com/about\\_hummel](https://web.archive.org/web/20110721192331/https://www.shophummel.com/about_hummel).
- Alien*. 20<sup>th</sup> Century fox, 1979.
- Arp, Robert, Decker, Kevin S. *The Ultimate South Park and Philosophy: Respect my Philosophah*. John Wiley & Sons, Blackwell Publishing, 2013.
- Bill Conti, *Gonna Fly Now*, 1977
- Cogan, Brian. *Deconstructing South Park: Critical Examinations of Animated Transgression*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012.
- Dalton Lisle, “Homer the Heretic and Charlie Church: Parody, Piety, and Pluralism in The Simpsons,” in *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Encyclopedia Britinica, January 9,2020. <https://www.Britannica.com/biography/Saddam-Hussien>.
- Feltmate, David. *Drawn to the Gods; Religion and Humor in The Simpsons, South Park, and Family Guy*. New York: NY: New York University Press, 2019.
- Greene, Eric. *"Planet of the Apes" as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1998. 12.
- Groening, Matt, and Eric Kaplan, writers. “*Hell Is Other Robots.*” In *Futurama*, Fox Network. May 18, 1999.
- Groening, Matt, and John Swartzwelder, writers. “*Bart Gets Hit by a Car.*” In *The Simpsons*, Fox Network. January 10, 1991.
- Hoffman Craig, and Seth MacFarlane, writers. “*A Picture is Worth a Thousand Bucks.*” In *Family Guy*. Fox Network. April 18, 2000.
- Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- MacFarlane, Seth, and Erick Sommers, writers. “*Seasons Beatings.*” In *American Dad*, Fox Network. December 11, 2011.

Nerdstalgic. "How the Design of Spongebob has Changed Over the Years." YouTube. YouTube, August 6, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBQJ9iYUgoU>

Nicolotti, Andrea. *From the Mandylion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin: The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend* Boston: Brill, 2014.

Pagels, Elaine H. *The Origin of Satan*. New York: Random House, 1995.

Poole, W. Scott. *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

*Rocky*. MGM Home Entertainment, 1976.

Schwartz, Dana. Twitter. Twitter, February 13, 2020. <https://twitter.com/danaschwartzzz/status/1228019211311562752?lang=en>.

Schwartz, Dana. DANA SCHWARTZ. Accessed April 3, 2020. <http://www.danaschwartzdotcom.com/>

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Frosty*." December 8, 1992.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Spirit of Christmas: Jesus vs. Santa*." December 1, 1995.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Damien*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. February 4, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Tom's Rhinoplasty*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. February 11, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*The Mexican Staring Frog of Southern Sri Lanka*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. June 10, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Terrance and Phillip in Not Without My Anus*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 1, 1998.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*The Succubus*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 21, 1999

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Do the Handicapped go to Hell?*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 19, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Probably*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 26, 2000.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Super Best Friends.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. July 4, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Proper Condom Use.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. August 1, 2001.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*A Ladder to Heaven.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 6, 2002.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Red Sleigh Down.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 11, 2002.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Krazy Kripples.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 26, 2003.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*It's Christmas in Canada.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. December 17, 2003.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Mr. Garrison's Fancy New Vagina.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 9, 2005.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Best Friends Forever.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 30, 2005.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*The Losing Edge.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 6, 2005.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Cartoon Wars Part I.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 5, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Cartoon Wars Part II.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 12, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*ManBearPig.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 26, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Go God Go.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 1, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Go God Go. XII*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 8, 2006.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Fantastic Easter Special.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 4, 2007.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode I.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 17, 2007.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Imaginationland Episode II.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 24, 2007.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Major Boobage.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. March 26, 2008.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Canada on Strike.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 2, 2008.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Eak, a Penis!*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 9, 2008.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*The China Probrem.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 8, 2008.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*200.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 14, 2010.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*201.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 21, 2010.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*Crippled Summer.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. April 28, 2010.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. "*It's a Jersey Thing.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 13, 2010.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*A Scause for Applause.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 31, 2012.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Freemium Isn't Free.*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 5, 2014.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Where My Country Gone?*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 23, 2015.

Stone, Matt and Trey Parker, writers. *Season Twenty.* In *South Park*. Comedy Central. September 14, 2016- December 7, 2016.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Time to Get Cereal*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 7, 2018.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Nobody got Cereal?*" In *South Park*. Comedy Central. November 14, 2018.

Stone, Matt, and Trey Parker, writers. "*Band in China*." In *South Park*. Comedy Central. October 2, 2019.

*South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. By Trey Parker. United States: Paramount, 1999. Internet. Accessed October 11, 2018.

Sullivan, Katharine T., and Laura L. Rogers. "An Updated Definition of Rape." The United States Department of Justice, April 7, 2017.

<https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/updated-definition-rape>.

*The Great Dictator*. By Charlie Chaplin. United States: United Artist, 1940. Internet Accessed.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. *Taking South Park Seriously*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.