

The Tradition of American Satire as Reflected in *South Park*

Vanda Hargašová

Bachelor's Thesis
2023



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2022/2023

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: **Vanda Hargašová**
Osobní číslo: **H190227**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **Prezenční**
Téma práce: **Tradice americké satiry vyobrazená v *South Parku***

Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění materiálů k tématu
Studium odborné literatury
Formulace cílů práce
Analýza satiry ve vybraných epizodách *South Parku*
Vyvození a formulace závěru práce

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Arp, Robert, Per Broman, and Henry Jacoby. *South Park and Philosophy: You Know, I Learned Something Today*. Boston: Blackwell, 2006.
Freud, Sigmund. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1968.
McClennen, Sophia. *Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011.
Vittali, Michael. *South Park's Ambiguous Satiric Expression: Satire and Carnavalesque Imagery in South Park*. Saarbrücken: VDM, 2010.
Weistock, Andrew. *Taking South Park Seriously*. Alben: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Daniel Paul Sampey, MFA**
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **15. června 2023**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **17. srpna 2023**

Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.
děkan



doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.
ředitel ústavu

Ve Zlíně dne 29. června 2023

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby ¹⁾;
- beru na vědomí, že bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3 ²⁾;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 1 autorského zákona má UTB ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 ³⁾ odst. 2 a 3 mohu užít své dílo - bakalářskou práci - nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům.

Prohlašuji, že

- elektronická a tištěná verze bakalářské práce jsou totožné;
- na bakalářské práci jsem pracoval(a) samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem citoval(a). V případě publikace výsledků budu uveden(a) jako spoluautor.

1) zákon č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 47b Zveřejňování závěrečných prací:

(1) Vysoká škola nevydělečně zveřejňuje disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce, u kterých proběhla obhajoba, včetně posudků oponentů a výsledku obhajoby prostřednictvím databáze kvalifikačních prací, kterou spravuje. Způsob zveřejnění stanoví vnitřní předpis vysoké školy.

(2) Disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce odevzdané uchazečem k obhajobě musí být též nejméně pět pracovních dnů před

konáním obhajoby zveřejněny k nahlížení veřejnosti v místě určeném vnitřním předpisem vysoké školy nebo není-li tak určeno, v místě pracoviště vysoké školy, kde se má konat obhajoba práce. Každý si může ze zveřejněné práce pořizovat na své náklady výpisy, o pisy nebo rozmnoženiny.

(3) Platí, že odevzdáním práce autor souhlasí se zveřejněním své práce podle tohoto zákona, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby.

2) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 35 odst. 3:

(3) Do práva autorského také nezasahuje škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení, užije -li nikoli za účelem přímého nebo nepřímého hospodářského nebo obchodního prospěchu k výuce nebo k vlastní potřebě dílo vytvořené žákem nebo studentem ke splnění školních nebo studijních povinností vyplývajících z jeho právního vztahu ke škole nebo školskému či vzdělávacímu zařízení (školní dílo).

3) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 60 Školní dílo:

(1) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení mají za obvyklých podmínek právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla (§ 35 odst.

3). Odpirá-li autor takového díla udělit svolení bez vážného důvodu, mohou se tyto osoby domáhat nahrazení chybějícího projevu jeho vůle u soudu. Ustanovení § 35 odst. 3 zůstává nedotčeno.

(2) Není-li sjednáno jinak, může autor školního díla své dílo užít či poskytnout jinému licenci, není-li to v rozporu s oprávněnými zájmy školy nebo školského či vzdělávacího zařízení.

(3) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení jsou oprávněny požadovat, aby jim autor školního díla z výdělku jim dosaženého v souvislosti s užitím díla či poskytnutím licence podle odstavce 2 přiměřeně přispěl na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložily, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše; přitom se přihlídí k výši výdělku dosaženého školou nebo školským či vzdělávacím zařízením z užití školního díla podle odstavce 1.

ABSTRAKT

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na tradici americké satiry a témata, která jsou s ní spojena. Hlavním zaměřením je analyzovat styly satiry používané v *South Park* (Comedy Central), americká témata v satíře, tradice Americké satiry v animovaných seriálech a jak jsou vyobrazené ve vybraných epizodách *South Park*. První teoretická část bakalářské práce se zaměřuje na satiru a styly satiry, které byly použity v americké animaci a jak se témata v satíře v americké animaci měnila v čase v souvislosti s dalšími významnými historickými událostmi, které se v Americe odehrávaly. Druhou částí práce je analýza toho, jak se tato tradice animace a satiry odráží v animovaném seriálu *South Park*. Práce analyzuje změny v satíře ve vybraných epizodách a jak historické události formovaly satiru v *South Park*. Zmiňuje také, jak jsou témata ve vybraných epizodách spojena s politickým kontextem v Americe.

Klíčová slova: *South Park*, americká satira, humor, americká kultura, americká animace, historie americké animace, tradice americké satiry

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the tradition of American satire and the themes that are connected to it. The main focus is to analyze the styles of satire used in *South Park* (Comedy Central), American themes in satire, the traditional satire in American animated series, and how they are reflected in the chosen episodes of *South Park*. The first theory part of the bachelor thesis focuses on the satire and styles of satire that were used in American animation and how themes in satire in American animation changed over time in connection to other important historical events that were happening in America. The second part of the thesis is an analysis of how this tradition of animation and satire reflects in the animated series *South Park*. The thesis analyses the changes in the satire in the chosen episodes and how historical events shaped the satire in *South Park*. It also mentions how the themes in the chosen episodes are connected to the political context in America.

Keywords: *South Park*, American satire, humor, American culture, American animation, history of American animation, the tradition of American satire

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Daniel Paul Sampey, MFA, for his supervision of this thesis.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
I THEORY	10
1 SATIRE	11
1.1 STYLES OF SATIRE	15
1.1.1 Horatian satire	15
1.1.2 Juvenalian satire	16
1.1.3 Menippean satire	17
1.2 A SELECTION OF THEMES OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SATIRE.....	19
1.2.1 The American dream.....	20
1.2.2 Gun violence	21
1.2.3 9/11, politically correct and woke culture.....	22
1.3 SATIRE IN AMERICAN ANIMATION.....	23
1.3.1 American animation	23
1.3.2 Satire in American animation.....	24
II ANALYSIS	29
2 SATIRE IN <i>SOUTH PARK</i> (COMEDY CENTRAL).....	30
2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE EPISODES.....	32
2.1.1 “Cartman Gets an Anal Probe” aired on August 13, 1997, and “Weight Gain 4000” aired on August 27, 1997.....	32
2.1.2 The Episode after 9/11 - “Osama bin Laden Has Farty Pants” - aired November 7, 2001.....	35
2.1.3 Woke culture – “Cupid Ye” - aired February 8, 2023	38
CONCLUSION	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

INTRODUCTION

Satire has been part of culture from Roman Empire to 21st century animated series. American satire has its roots in the old Greek and Roman styles, but it brings new themes into the satire. These themes are connected to American life and struggles people face in their lives in America. American satire helps to point out the political and social situations in the society that people live in. In the 20th century under the influence of social and political changes a show came out that was supposed to be just Christmas special.¹

South Park (Comedy Central) is vulgar and vile and definitely not for kids. *South Park* is a show that criticizes in a controversial way that the audience does not often appreciate. However, despite being perceived as offensive, *South Park* has become a hit animated show for Comedy Central. The point of this thesis is to find what are the roots of satire in American animated series and whether *South Park* reflects these roots. The thesis also comments on *South Park* not being just fart jokes, but also its commentary on American society and its reaction to changing political and social situations.

In the first chapter, this thesis focuses on what satire is as well as being an introduction to three styles that satire can be divided into. American satire has roots in these styles and a number of different American works can be categorized using these styles. However, not all American fits so easily into these styles. To define American satire, this thesis focuses on themes in American satire and characteristics that can be typically found in it. The first chapter also mentions a brief history of the development of American animation so that satire in American animation can be better understood. The last part of the chapter overviews satire in American animation, including the roots of satire in American animation and how these roots are reflected in the animation. The point of the first chapter is to give background to satire that is connected to American tradition, American themes, and styles. The second chapter is an analysis based on the first chapter. The first part of the second chapter is an introduction to *South Park* itself satire in the series. After the introduction, four episodes of *South Park* are analyzed based on the theory in the first chapter. The point of the second chapter is to analyze which styles *South Park* uses and its use of American themes and how the traditional style of American animated satire is reflected in *South Park*. The thesis concludes with the findings from the analysis of the episodes.

¹ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 7.

One main focus of this thesis is how the satire in *South Park* is connected to the American tradition of satire and American culture. By understanding the tradition of satire in America and its culture, it can be understood why *South Park* became a popular show and how significant in the context of American animation and satire *South Park* is.

I. THEORY

1 SATIRE

Satire has been a part of cultures across the world for a long time. Yet, despite its historical significance, there is a what seems to be a never-ending debate within the academic circles in regard to defining what satire is. For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to have a working definition of satire. To be able to do so, we will first look at the various academic attempts and successful definitions of satire.

The academic discourse aimed at defining satire tend to conclude as satire being impossible to define. However, for the purpose of this study, I will be working with Dieter Declercq's definition of satire as "a genre which necessarily sets out to critique and entertain."²

Mostly in terms of criticizing other works, satire is often also connected with parody. Although Declercq defines satire as entertaining, it is later stated in his article that other academics also argue that satire can be non-entertaining and simply criticism.³ This idea refers to the notion of satire being not only amusing but also to humiliate or subtly insult the selected target. As such, satire can be used in serious situations as well. The main purpose is to critique as within the last few years satire has become synonymous with political issues of western society. Considering the variety of characteristics linked to what satire is understood as, it is understandable that could be perceived as satirical works while receiving criticism of not being satirical work. Literary devices that are typical for satire are ridicule, irony, and sarcasm but satire also uses multiple literary devices same as other genres. For example, it uses intertextuality, which is a reference inside of the text to a different text. Text can be seen as any medium to communicate an idea or a message.⁴ Another characteristic is implicitness. Like many other art forms, satire is not an explicit statement, but the audience must look within to find a meaning of an observed work.⁵ In satire, the author helps the audience find the implicit meaning by creating situations that are either exaggerated or they are clearly out of the ordinary.⁶

Unlike most other genres such as advertisements or works in a legal and scientific field, satire is offensive, provocative and often antagonistic on purpose. According to Charles A.

² Dieter Declercq, "A Definition of Satire (and Why a Definition Matters)," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, no. 3 (2018): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12563>.

³ Dieter Declercq, "A Definition of Satire (and Why a Definition Matters)," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, no. 3 (2018): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12563>.

⁴ Graham Allen, *INTERTEXTUALITY Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

⁵ Peer, Willie van. "Hidden Meanings." *Contextualized Stylistics* 29 (2000): 39, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004487390_006.

⁶ Megan LeBoeuf, *The Power of Ridicule: An Analysis of Satire* (Rhode Island: University of Rhode Island, 2007), 5.

Knight, satire is either an imitation or an adaptation of a different text. Satire does more than imitate the dialogue or discourse⁷ as it does not only uses gestures or appearances to imitate a different text that the satire is meant to criticize or make fun of. Satire often uses these references to people or situations in a way that may be seen as unethical or even cruel. There is an unspoken agreement between the audience and the satirical piece that justifies the cruelty of a particular satire. A satire is successful as long as the audience understands the message the satirical text tries to give. The satire becomes unsuccessful if the speaker and listener are not in agreement and the speaker tries to communicate their point, theoretically without the listeners' agreement.

When the audience does not partake in the agreement, this often leads to satire being uncomfortable for the listener, as the listener realizes that they enjoy ridiculing the groups of people on which the satire is focused and realize that not the satire but they themselves are cruel. In the episode "The China Problem" of *South Park* the main protagonist ridicule Chinese language by using "r" instead of "l" to imitate the Chinese accent. They ridicule Chinese and Asian appearance by squinting their eyes. One of the protagonists believes that Chinese are going to invade America. Thanks to the over-the-top idea of the protagonist that Chinese are going to invade America and the depiction of Chinese in the episode the audience realizes that they themselves sometimes might stereotype Chinese or Asian people and be cruel towards them. However, the listener perceives the satirical pieces as offensive if the listener identifies as part of the group the satire is aimed at.

In satire, the chosen target is mostly outside the world of the satirical text itself. For satire to work, the piece showcases characters with specific characteristics that should be familiar to the audience. The character does not have to be a person that they are familiar with, but it will have characteristics that are exaggerated. The character will behave in ironic or exaggerated ways in specific situations. Then the audience is able to ask themselves if this character is someone they are familiar with or if it can represent the audience itself.

By exaggerating certain aspects of the text, the satire makes it easier for the audience to understand and see the criticism the satirical text gives. This makes satire sort of ironic translation of the texts. To have an agreement with the audience, the audience has to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the topic of satire as well as general background facts and history. For example, suppose the satire is trying to make a political point. In that case, the

⁷ Charles Knight, "Satire, Speech, and Genre," *Studies in Popular Culture* 26, no. 1 (October 2003): 23-24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1771166>.

audience should be aware of the politics but also of the history of the politics and important events that took place within the mentioned politics. If the audience is familiar with Swift's 1729 essay *A Modest Proposal*, they will think about the story differently if they are aware of the politics of place and time in which the author was writing this work. The unfamiliarity with the topic is one of many possible reasons that the speaker and the listener do not reach an agreement. The essay *A Modest Proposal* was written as a reaction to the cruel treatment of the poor at that time. If the audience is not aware that the poor were treated unfairly at the time that the essay was written, they will not understand that the proposal is exaggerating the problem by suggesting selling children as food. Therefore, if they don't reach the agreement the audience might think that Swift is just a fan of cannibalism.

How individual listeners process satire is why the form is so subjective, but subjectivity is inseparable from satire. If there is a certain topic that the listener has a bias against, or the satire attacks his belief system, or it attacks them personally, the listener may just ignore or deny the point that the satire is trying to make.⁸ As satire combines the act of mocking and ridiculing, the consumption of satirical works can have two main outcomes: 1 – people see it as useless or meaningless, 2 – people enjoy it. Since the individual reviewing the satire is biased, satire has always remained difficult to explain for even the best theorists, because satire is mostly subjective.⁹ What one theorist describes as satire others might see as plain critique or simply rude statements. According to Thomas Hobbes the act of ridiculing someone is cruel, and therefore satire and humor are a kind of human cruelty. This cruelty is often used by someone to show their superiority over another. Hobbes perceived satire as something cruel and evil and the people who created the satire to be corrupted and evil as well. In the satirical article "Joe Biden Officially Wishes Student Loans Away By Blowing On Dandelion" by *The Onion* the article is a critique of Joe Bidens incompetence and is ridiculing Biden by making a non-sense article. This might be seen as being cruel towards Biden. The people using satire to be cruel can be viewed as strong and charming by their close social circle but can also be seen as arrogant. Authors that create text for the purpose of being viewed by a larger audience, mostly try to avoid being blamed for the arrogance of the satirical work and put the blame on a fictional character.¹⁰ In this way, satire can be cruel and used to try to climb the social ladder. People

⁸ Charles A. Knight, "Satire, Speech, and Genre," *Comparative Literature* 44, no. 1 (October 1992): 32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1771166>.

⁹ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

¹⁰ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

can use satire to ridicule others or themselves with self-deprecating humor to better fit in social groups. This can be observed in social places such as schools.¹¹

On the other hand of the debate, Twain believed that humor was not cruel but just the opposite. It helped people to fight against despair. In other words, a good joke or a little humor can help people survive in the harshest and worst situations.¹²

Similarly to Mark Twain, Sigmund Freud believed that humor positively affected the human psyche and suggested that humor can help heal the human mind. Freud also believed that humor could help with past trauma. So, it can be said that humor can heal the soul and body, which is in obvious contrast to Thomas Hobbes, the first man from these examples, who argued that satire and humor are cruel and, therefore, can damage mental and physical health. Some described the humor as irony as the difference between what is supposed to be and what is.¹³

The difference is not only if the people see the satire as dark or healing. Same as for individuals goes for a culture or a group of people. In one culture, something that is considered humorous, satiric, or ironic in one culture can be completely normal in a different culture. For some groups of people, there is not even a need for the same culture. They can simply have the same hobbies or be in the same field of study, and every one of these groups will have different opinions on what is considered humorous and what is not. If a supporter of Joe Bidens reads the article “Joe Biden Officially Wishes Student Loans Away By Blowing On Dandelion” by *The Onion* they might just see it as insulting not humorous. The author of any text can try to appeal to as many people as possible with their humor. Still, in the end, only a certain group of people can be a real target audience because it seems that no satire would transcend all human differences.

What can be defined as satire and if satire is hurtful or helpful is subjective and depends on multiple factors. Some of the factors are the biases of the audience, the social group they are part of, and what background information they have about references outside the satirical text that satire is referring to.

¹¹ David B. Wooten, “From Labeling Possessions to Possessing Labels: Ridicule and Socialization among Adolescents,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 33, no. 2 (2006): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1086/506300>.

¹² Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

¹³ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 3.

1.1 Styles of Satire

It is hard to because one type of satire can have very similar characteristics to another type of satire. Different academics can also argue about the characteristic of one type of satire being different, even if discussing the same subject. One of the factors by which the style of the satire can be described is how controversial the satire is. However, what one listener can perceive as controversial, other can see as within the norm.¹⁴ In *South Park* episode “Osama bin Laden Has Farty Pants” the depiction of the Afghan suffering might seem controversial to American people dealing with tragedy of 9/11 and losing people that they lost in the attack on the World Trade Center and having resentment towards Afghan people.¹⁵ But since Afghan people are really suffering and losing their loved ones that are being killed by Americans for them the scene might not be controversial at all. But even though satire or humor is very subjective, groups of people with similar characteristics in either demographics, geography, or in their political and social views can have a similar sense of humor that can be put into categories. Satire can connect people and has been an important literary form since the Roman Empire. Humans have been making fun of each other since the dawn of time. The first recorded joke is more than a thousand years old.¹⁶ A genre of satire that still remains popular is the ridicule of others and ridiculing of the society at the time that the satire refers to. These targets of satire are the same as the jokes from 400 AD.

1.1.1 Horatian satire

There are 3 main genres of satire that were inspired by and named after famous satirists or theoreticians: Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean.¹⁷

The Horatian satire is named after the Roman satirist Horace. Horace wrote his satires in the times of changes in the Roman Empire. He wrote many poems and satires. The satires he wrote were mostly named “Satire I,” “Satire II.”...¹⁸ Horatian satire is not harsh or aggressive. It was witty and modest, not aimed at ridiculing people in a way that may anger them but rather

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud and James Strachey, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Norton, 1960), 15-19.

¹⁵ Sophia A. McClennen, *Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 41-45.

¹⁶ Dan Crompton, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum: The World's Oldest Joke Book* (London: Michael O'Mara, 2013), 5-7.

¹⁷ Sitti Rahma, Syahron Lubis, and Alemina Perangin-angin, “The Analysis of the Use of Satire in The Daily Show with Trevor Noah,” *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2023): 231, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v10i2.16611>.

¹⁸ Horace, Christopher Smart, and Theodore Alois Buckley, *The Works of Horace: Translated Literally into English Prose* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 183.

in a way that causes laughter without offending people.¹⁹ The Roman satirist Horace achieved this by focusing on ridiculing character types and not real individuals. Horatian satire explores those human habits that may seem illogical and unnecessary. Horatian satire is created and presented in a way, that one can identify with the characters without feeling called out or judged on some of our actions. Horatian satire being tolerant and modest makes it the least controversial of the styles. A well-known example of Horatian satire is *Doonesbury*, a satirical comic featuring people of many different backgrounds.²⁰ *Doonesbury* is not ridicule of specific individuals and it is not perceived by its audience as cruel or controversial. It is meant to entertain not to provoke action from its reader. One of the short stories in *Doonesbury* is just character Micheal talking to a woman about feminism. There are no controversial images or vulgar language. Michael simply states that he thinks that women are equal to men and the woman states that women are better.

If something is controversial, it will get more noticed than something not as controversial. In other words, if something is controversial it has a greater impact on the audience and critique made in the satire is more noticeable. Therefore, the Horatian style is not used to influence society or people. Even though the author often uses satire to make a statement, and it is a chance for the author to try to make a change to the way the people see the world, it would be rather hard to make a statement with satire in Horatian style as it is mostly too modest to make someone change or question their world view. This also contributed to the fact that Horatian satire is not as prominent and memorable, and some of the Horatian satire can be easily lost. Horatian satire could be described as one that can heal the mind but is not enough to heal society. This does not change the fact that Horatian satire is an important part of satire often present in texts and everyday life.

1.1.2 Juvenalian satire

Contrary to Horatian satire, Juvenalian satire does not shy away from being controversial or rude. Juvenalian satire refers to the Latin satirist Juvenal who lived in the first century AD. The satires he wrote were titled just “Satires.” This style primarily uses sarcasm as its main goal

¹⁹ Sitti Rahma, Syahron Lubis, and Alemina Perangin-angin, “The Analysis of the Use of Satire in The Daily Show with Trevor Noah,” *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2023): 231, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v10i2.16611>.

²⁰ W. Clark Hendley, “The Horatian Satire of Trudeau’s *Doonesbury*,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 16, no. 4 (1983): 103–105, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1983.1604_103.x, 103.

is to attack, not just to describe.²¹ Whereas Horatian satire highlights human flaws and ridicules them in a way that makes the audience laugh but does not make the audience think, Juvenalian satire is made to make people remember what they saw, heard, or read and think about it. Juvenalian satire also does not attack individuals but the whole society. It criticizes the way that people work and co-exists as a society. It exaggerates the problems within selected society to make people realize that there are problems in our society.

Of course, not all authors are visionaries or people trying to help. The aggressiveness of the Juvenalian satire can also be used simply for the author to stand out from other authors. Controversies make the public talk, and making people talk about you is a good way to become known. Therefore, Juvenalian satire can be used to make the author known and talked about. Works in this style may not always be taken very positively by the audience, but that does not change the fact that the author of such work will be known. Another reason for Juvenalian satire is that some people find a more aggressive style amusing than a more modest one. This type of satire can be found in *South Park*, where there is no censorship of sex or gore, but also in *The Onion* which is a satirical fictional journal that exaggerates topics in the news. *The Onion*, a journal that writes fictional stories to critique real news events, is not as brutal as *South Park*, but it does criticize existing people, politicians, and situations and calls them by name, which Horatian satire tends to avoid.²² For example, *The Onion* article “Republicans Explain Why Trump Is Innocent” calls out Trump by name and continues to ridicule him by listing non-sense reasons why he is innocent such as the Trump being framed by Democrats so that people are distracted while driving and committing manslaughter. In short, the difference between Horatian and the Juvenalian style is that the Horatian style nudges us toward the answer and the humorous point while the Juvenalian style shoves us.

1.1.3 Menippean satire

The third style is Menippean. This style was named after the Greek satirist Menippus. His works were all lost but through references some of his works and the style in which he has written has been preserved. One of his works had title *Necromancy*.²³ This style is used in a

²¹ Sitti Rahma, Syahron Lubis, and Alemina Perangin-angin, “The Analysis of the Use of Satire in The Daily Show with Trevor Noah,” *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2023): 237, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v10i2.16611>.

²² R. Lance Holbert et al., “Adding Nuance to the Study of Political Humor Effects: Experimental Research on Juvenalian Satire versus Horatian Satire,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 3 (2011): 187–190, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210392156>.

²³ Richard Hunter, “Menippus (1), of Gadara, Cynic Philosopher,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.4113>, 1.

way that a Juvenalian style is being used, and that is to make a change in people's thinking. Menippean satire uses fictional scenarios to critique real situations. It also changes story in a way that is ridiculous and obnoxious.²⁴ It retells real stories with a fake narrative that is constructed to critique the real situation that it is referring to. The difference from Horatian satire is that Menippean is not shy and can be controversial. Juvenalian exaggerates situations and Menippean changes them while still clearly referring to real situations. The point of Menippean satire is to challenge social norms and ideas by capturing the real concept of the story, not the narrative. This means that Menippean satire focuses not on how things happened but what was the reason they happened and what was the result of the situation in a bigger context. Menippean satire also reacts to recent events and has a kind of journalistic style. It can be interpreted as journalistic as it reacts to recent events, and it gives its own interpretation of the events to its audience.

Even if one satire is written in the style of Juvenalian it can still contain some characteristics of Menippean or Horatian. Roots of almost all the satire in America is within these three styles. Because satire is so subjective it would be hard to tell specifically what style is used for what American work as characteristics of multiple styles can be found in the same work. However, true of all the satire is that it critiques the social and political situations. These critiques are more noticeable in Juvenalian and Menippean style. Both of these styles critique situations in controversial ways to influence the audience to change their behavior. Juvenalian critiques more of the behavior of the audience by exaggerating and ridiculing the relationships within the society and the behaviors of individuals within the society. Menippean focuses more on the events and human behavior that led to these events by changing and exaggerating the events. This style can be seen often in multiple satirical American cartoons such as *The Simpsons* (Fox), *Family Guy* (Fox), or *South Park*. This style can be seen in these cartoons as their episodes are stand-alone fictional narratives, that comment on the social situation through satire. The episode "Dead Kids" of *South Park* is a critique of society not caring enough about these shootings and it is shown in the episode by exaggerating this. In the real shooting, the people are distraught after the shooting, paralyzed by fear, and mourning the deaths. In the episode as the shooting is happening in their school, the main protagonists are still more worried about their tests not even mentioning the death or shootings even as a SWAT team member enters the classroom. To use any of these styles in an analysis of any work it is important to have some background to both

²⁴ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 51.

events and behaviors that the satire is trying to critique. That is why it is important to look at themes that are connected to American satire to understand American satire.

1.2 A selection of themes of contemporary American Satire

American satire and humor are connected to the way of American living and American values. American satire has its roots in old Roman and Greek styles but there are multiple themes that are closely connected to America. As satire strives to comment on political and social issues within its target audience themes in American satire reflect themes that are current and impactful for America. American satire is also connected to the history of America, politics, and differences in culture and race within America. This means that American satire is even harder to specify than other nations as there are many different types of satire mixing in America the same way the cultures and races are mixing in America.²⁵ America is also called a melting pot, referring to the fact that in America different cultures, ethnicities and races meet all with their own traditions.²⁶ The clash of races can be noted in the episode “The China Problem” of *South Park* in which the protagonists are being hateful towards Asians because one of the protagonist had a dream that the Chinese are going to invade America.

American satire can contain aspects that are darker and can be viewed as controversial. The darkness of the American satire is rooted in the problem of wealth disparities within the American citizens and the suffering of the less fortunate that is only observed by the ones that have enough resources for themselves. Darkness in America can come from hunger, sickness, drugs and the abuse of power.²⁷ The authors that see this darkness do not hesitate to point at it. The satire, even though its primary goal is to be amusing, can also help people see things they are uncomfortable seeing. The darkness can also be unintentional as it is seen as dark by the critics of other nationalities, but it does not have to be seen as dark by the American author. The darkness around an American can make them used to it and blind to it. This brings me back to the first point of this argument: to make someone see the problem, the problem has to be exaggerated. That means that the darker the reality is, the darker the satire will be to stand out from reality. In the episode of *South Park* “Dead Kids” the satire reacts to reality of school shootings which is already dark theme of death and violence. It exaggerates the problem by

²⁵ Herbert J. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1979.9993248>.

²⁶ David Michael Smith, “The American Melting Pot: A National Myth in Public and Popular Discourse,” *National Identities* 14, no. 4 (2012): 387–390, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2012.732054>.

²⁷ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

having not just the protagonists but most of the fictional town of *South Park* not caring about the shootings at all and the one character that is having reaction closer to a real life reaction standing out as emotional. The huge gap between reality and the promises of America makes the satire even darker.²⁸ Darkness in American satire is not only reflected in the gore and violence that the satire is using but as mentioned before, in the themes that the American satire focuses on, which will be described in the next section.

1.2.1 The American dream

One of the main themes in American satire is the American dream. The dream of wealth and life in luxury and how in real life in America is far from the American dream. The struggle for the American dream is described in significant works such as *The Great Gatsby* or *Death of a Salesman*. In both of these works, the American dream is shown as something much darker than a dream life of a self-made man. The American dream is the idea that America is a land of opportunities.²⁹ It is about coming to America and being able to build yourself up from nothing. It is a dream of a poor man coming to America with no money and becoming rich by working hard. The reality often is that people are either born into rich families or simply have luck, original ideas, or original talent and do not get rich by mere hard work, while most people who work hard their whole life stay poor no matter how hard they work.

These differences between reality and what the American dream is supposed to be are portrayed in many different circumstances. It is not only the American dream of a self-made man that is spoiled but also many different values Americans hold dear. Another ironic thing about America is closely connected to the dream, as mentioned before, and that is how America is often viewed as an extremely wealthy country. Even though the view that America is wealthy is not completely wrong, it does not mean its citizens are wealthy. A big difference exists between an American millionaire, e.g. the “self-made man,” and an average American citizen. Then there are, of course, also citizens that are below average. These citizens make annually less money than what is considered adequate for a country. In 2004 it was 10000 USD as an individual and about 12% of US citizens were under this line.³⁰ With these people that are below average, we can see the irony of this wealthy country. In this wealthy country with skyscrapers

²⁸ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.

²⁹ Lawrence R. Samuel, *The American Dream: A Cultural History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 1-2.

³⁰ Hilary Hoynes, Marianne Page, and Ann Stevens, “Poverty in America: Trends and Explanations,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 1 (2005): 49, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w11681>.

and cities wrapped in luxury, some people do not have homes. In a country where eating contests exist, some people do not have anything to eat. A country with one of the best medical professionals, but some people cannot afford an ambulance ride to the hospital. The irony is that not a very high percentage of Americans can be considered wealthy. Wealthy Americans are a considerably small group of people (1%), while the rest are middle to lower-class individuals who are trying to avoid debt from medical bills or college, or they are below average and trying to avoid starving to death or dying in the cold. In America, universal healthcare in the form of socialized medicine is not accessible. This means that if someone is not wealthy enough to afford insurance, they will often not be wealthy enough to afford healthcare at all and is most likely fall into debt or pass away.^{31, 32}

1.2.2 Gun violence

Besides the American dream, another dark topic that is stereotypical in discussions in America is violence, more specifically, gun violence. Not only does the news media seem to be focused on the violence in the country, but also other mass media such as films and TV portray a great deal of violence.³³ *South Park* explored this theme in the episode “Dead Kids.” In the plot of this episode there is a school shooting, but the teacher and students in the episode seem unmoved by the event. Even as the shooting is happening, and member of SWAT enters the classroom the teacher and the students still focus on the math test and they ignore both the shooting and the SWAT. This can also lead to just strengthening the stereotypes of Americans, which is just another way satire can be used, and that is to ridicule the American stereotype. One may think only foreigners can enjoy this type of satire, as it directly ridicules America. Still, it is shown that many Americans are quite cynical about their own country and enjoy this type of satire. This can be seen thanks to the fact that many of the shows that directly ridicule America are popular in America. Even though they may be controversial and can make other Americans angry, it is still popular enough to be successful in America.³⁴

³¹ Andy Davis, Neil Batra, Asif Dhar, Jay Bhatt, Wendy Gerhart and Brian Rush, “US health care can’t afford health inequities,” Deloitte Insights, June 22, 2022 <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/economic-cost-of-health-disparities.html>.

³² Peter Edelman, *So Rich, So Poor: Why It’s So Hard to End Poverty in America* (New York: The New Press, 2013), 1-2.

³³ James Garbarino, Catherine P. Bradshaw, and Joseph A. Vorrasi, “Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth,” *The Future of Children* 12, no. 2 (2002): 72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1602739>.

³⁴ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 10-20.

1.2.3 9/11, political correctness and woke culture

American satire was also shaped by 9/11, when multiple media noted that this would be the end of satire. Narratives changed considerably with time regarding the tragedy of the terrorist attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon. After the fall of the Twin Towers and death of 2995 people shook not just America. Official narrative at that time was that it was unprovoked terrorist attack. The event prompted hate towards Islam in America, grief for the victims and paranoia that these attacks were not the last. This attacked were also viewed as invasion of America and spiked patriotism in America³⁵ After the event the survivors near the World Trade Center were prompted to wear masks in case of the pollution and toxic fumes in the air after the attacks.³⁶ It was also around this time when politically correct humor became more of a standard as more got censored due to the fear of 9/11.³⁷ This can be noted in the cancelation of *South Park* episodes that got canceled because they featured Muhammad, and according to Islam, any depictions of Muhammad are strictly prohibited. The politically correct movement supports this prohibition and respects Islam. According to people supporting politically correct language, such language protects people who are victims of offensive stereotypes. Supporters of politically correct language also claim that such language promotes respect toward all people, and a society that uses politically correct language is a civilized society.³⁸ Politically correct language also discourages bullying. An example can be that the “correct” term for a gay person is homosexual, so the people who use politically correct language will call them homosexuals. People who are not politically correct will call them, e.g. “homos,” and they will not be concerned about depictions of Muhammad.

Connected with the term politically correct is the term “woke culture.” To be woke used to be used in America to describe someone who was aware of racial issues within America. It was used to raise awareness together with politically correct language. Unfortunately, this term changed its meaning recently. Companies started using the term woke as advertising campaigns and the term changed from something positive to something ironic and rather negative.³⁹ The term does not really mean to be aware anymore. It is used by companies to promote their products and by celebrities to further their popularity. The irony and easy theme for a satire is

³⁵ Richard Gray, *After the Fall: American Literature since 9/11* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1-8.

³⁶ Richard Gray, *After the Fall: American Literature since 9/11* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 37.

³⁷ Sophia A. McClennen, *Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 59-60.

³⁸ Ben O'Neill, “A Critique of Politically Correct Language,” *The Independent Review* 16, no. 2 (2011): 279, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/24563157>.

³⁹ Carl Rhodes, *Woke Capitalism: How Corporate Morality Is Sabotaging Democracy* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2023), 1-2.

that by companies and celebrities promoting themselves by associating with the term woke they are no longer promoting the message of racial inequality.

1.3 Satire in American Animation

As time passed, the media through which the satire was expressed changed from spoken form to written form to drama. It was when caricature became popular, and short satirical comics appeared in the newspapers. After the comics, satire moved to animated shorts. It can be said that the media of satire changed a lot throughout history because it was not that hard for a skillful satirist to express the same thoughts as before, just in a different format. Even though the media changed, American humor did not change that much. Animated shorts easily took these themes and were able to express them in their means. These themes in America were mostly the difference between reality and the dreams and propaganda of the United States of America. It seems that from the beginning, America was not what many people dreamed it to be. Thanks to this, many caricatures were made depicting the fallen dreams of Americans in a satirical way. And Americans seem to have gotten used to this American joke.⁴⁰

1.3.1 American animation

In the very beginnings of the media known as animation, it was used as any other media, and that was to communicate any message that the author was trying to communicate. As with any other media of that time, anyone interested and had the means to do so could see the new media. It was for all age groups. American animation and Disney, who influenced the media to being for children mostly, had an important role in the history of animation overall because it influenced most of the world with its animations.⁴¹ To this day, most people see animation as cartoons for children only.⁴² In America, they even stopped calling animation “animated movies” and started calling them carto. Nowadays there are many satirical cartoons such as *Bojack Horseman* (Netflix), *Rick and Morty* (Adult Swim), but they mostly aired after the popularity of *The Simpsons* (Fox). If someone made an animated movie for adults, it was mostly considered as merely art, as it was almost impossible for the author of such an animated movie to make any money off his work in the mass media.⁴³ There were multiple satirical cartoons

⁴⁰ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 1-2.

⁴¹ Cecilia von Feilitzen and Ulla Carlson, eds., *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation* (Nordicom: International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, 2002), 111.

⁴² Mitchell Tracey, “*Kids' Stuff*”: *Television Cartoons as Mirrors of the American Mind*, (Texas: West Texas A&M University: 1995), 1-3.

⁴³ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 1.

before *The Simpsons* but none as popular. It was so engraved in people's minds that animation is a cartoon that they just did not want to see animated cartoons, even if they are made for adults specifically.

After years of Disney and his movies for children only, Matt Groening decided to change this. He tried to have commercially successful by going back to the beginning of the animation. As mentioned before, one of the very first animated shorts *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* was humorous. These were similar to short comic strips that could be often found in newspapers, and these newspapers were more often than not read by adults. This means that even though these were drawn pictures, they were aimed at adults. These comic strips evolved from caricatures for adults and were mostly not understood by children. Matt Groening might have learned something from this history as his first popular animated series aimed at adults, also known as *The Simpsons* (Fox), was satirical.

Following Matt Groening, many other authors also decided to go for satire in animation. Some made an animation aimed at adults only with darker themes than *The Simpsons* (Fox), and some were made so that even younger generations could relate. One thing that remained the same is that the moment it is made for another age group than children and is commercially successful, it is almost always a satirical animation.⁴⁴ Another thing that does not seem to change is that America is still a giant in animation, which not many can compete if anybody at all.

1.3.2 Satire in American animation

American satire in animation, even though present from the beginning of the animation and the animated shorts, seems to have a comeback after over two decades. After the launch of *The Simpsons* (Fox), when they were introduced as something new to television, not many expected the show to become as popular as it is now.⁴⁵ After it became vastly popular, *The Simpsons* (Fox) started to be celebrated and regarded as a significant part of American culture. As an important part of American satire, American animation continued in the American tradition of satire. They were connected to the strain, and even after changing medium, the subjects for the American satire stayed the same. Other than the subject, satire in animation also used different tools previously used in other American media. With television becoming one of the most dominant media in today's world, the importance of animated satire has also risen.

⁴⁴ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 1.

⁴⁵ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 1.

Animated satire on television is different from played sitcoms and has its characteristics. While sitcoms are mostly for amusement, animated satire focuses more on critiquing society or individuals. The animated satire also adapts the subjects on which most of the previous satire was focused. These subjects in satire are important, and all the subjects in any satire are important, as satire influences people more than some other genres. Especially satire in animation, as this satire can be more straightforward, grotesque, evil, or unkind than sitcoms or romantic comedies. Satire in animation pushes people to see the problem and act for a change.⁴⁶

One of the most used tools in satire that are not used to criticize and push people toward something and more to amuse is a misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is often used in more broad satire and not very specific to American animated satire, even though it can be found in satire often. Specific for animated American satire is episodic stories. American satire often had satire where the story was only important for one specific story in a collection, and the collection did not tie to each other. This translates well into animation as the satire can be shown in short episodes, and the episodes may sometimes be two partners, but most of the episodes are standalone stories. There are many satiric animated series made in America that are linear but the tradition of satire in cartoons is connected to Southwest satire that is episodic. This is because the conflict in the satire is only important in that one episode. The author is trying to highlight one problem and not write a lengthy story. This just goes back to the fact that satire is trying to push people towards something, and even if they see one episode, the author can show them at least one problem. The author in the satiric animated story is more than a story focused on the characters and the place. Both the place and the characters will have very exaggerated and specific characteristics.⁴⁷ This means that the place will represent some idea of the place more than a place. In the episode of *South Park* “Osama bin Laden Has Farty Pants” there is not much shown of Afghanistan. There is no usual real life of people in Afghanistan or undestroyed buildings. All the buildings in Afghanistan in this episode are being destroyed and life is disturbed by bombs. This is not because everywhere and every day in Afghanistan is this how it really looks but because it is important for the author to show that Afghanistan is being attacked. The character in the story will also be exaggerated, and it will be easy to tell what the focus of this character is. In *South Park*, Cartman is the fat kid so he is often called fat, and in the episode “Weight Gain 4000” he is so fat he breaks the podium. The audience will not have

⁴⁶ Robert Arp, *South Park and Philosophy You Know, I Learned Something Today* (Boston: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 1-12.

⁴⁷ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 23-25.

to look for other clues about this aspect of the story. If there is an alcoholic in a satire, he will not be drinking too much, or the people will just notice that something may be off about him. He will be dirty, acting drunk, and holding a bottle. Thanks to this, the author does not have to care about the story. More important are the characteristics that the characters have been given and how they react to the story concerning the characteristics they bear. Peter Griffin from *Family Guy* is stupid and thus the satire part of the episode “Big Man on Hippocampus” is not that he could get 5000 USD but his stupid reaction and idea of what to do with 5000 USD which is to buy a cave. Moreover, the characters will keep their characteristics to the point when the audience expects a certain reaction from the character. Therefore, there is not much character development in American animated satire.

Very specific for American animated satire is also the use of carnivalesque, a concept developed by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1930s: “The carnival for Bakhtin is an event in which all rules, inhibitions, restrictions, and regulations which determine the course of everyday life are suspended, and especially all form of hierarchy in society.”⁴⁸

Carnavalesque is important to American satire, and what it means is the freedom to show the grotesque, violent, and disgusting images that have already been mentioned above. America likes the carnivalesque more than being polite and formal. Not only in spoken word and images, but they may also favor the rude, poor man over a rich gentleman. It favors low over high, market over dominant culture. Carnavalesque is also about regeneration and a free spirit.⁴⁹ In all *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, *South Park*, *Rick and Morty* the main protagonist are members of the middle class, and the rich are often depicted in these series as evil such as Mr. Burns in *The Simpsons*. *South Park*, *Family Guy*, and *Rick and Morty* also feature a lot of explicit humor and violent and dark themes.

Carnavalesque uses dark humor, which is humor that uses themes that are considered taboo in a particular culture.⁵⁰ This is done by twisting generally accepted attitudes. Meaning that the themes that are normally considered acceptable are twisted into unacceptable, and themes that are normally not explored are featured, such as sex, vulgarism, and death. The absurd of the characters as talking dogs, aliens, and situations that are only possible due to being drawn are noticeable in the American satiric animation. These animations, despite the absurd, can still be considered realistic due to the themes that these absurd characters and situations represent. The

⁴⁸ “Mikhail Bakhtin: “Carnival and Carnavalesque” – summary and review,” Cultural Reader, Accessed April 24, 2023, <https://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.com/2011/07/mikhail-bakhtin-carnival-and.html>

⁴⁹ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 26-28.

⁵⁰ Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby, *Dark Humor*, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 134.

ironic realism connected to this absurd often involves themes of conflict between religion, capitalism, and democracy. These themes America seems to hold very dear.

Since the 19th century, not only have these themes been held dear by the common people in America, but also the absurd, vile representation of them in the satire.⁵¹ Due to satire being *this vile, it was not very liked by the orthodox critics. Vile can be described as something unacceptable. Being part of the dark humor and unacceptable are themes that are taboo for the general public, such as themes of sex, suicide, death, abortion, and any other theme that would make any conversation uncomfortable. This style is connected to the beginnings of America and evolved mainly from satire in American animation, such as Southwest satire. Southwest satire was a tire of the people of the suburban class. It often noted the differences between the suburban and high class. To show the difference, tools such as dialect were used. The performance and the way that the performers were clothed and other details of their appearances also represented the difference. At this time, satire was affected by industrialization. Thanks to industrialization, opportunistic men were the ones that started to be criticized, e.g. the man that would become rich at the expense of others. At this time, industrial capitalism and the so-called robber barons that profited from it were at the top of the hate list and therefore became a popular topic for satire. These men were considered shady con men who acquired their wealth by manipulating others using the threat of poverty, religion or any other method they could find and exploiting the poor for labor. This satire bashed these men using toilet humor that the higher class despised. This was disagreement between the higher and working classes, conservatives and liberals. The conflict was evident in real life and was exaggerated in the satire, with no logical middle ground or solution to be found.

One theme that also translated well from the Southwest satire to American animated satire is the frontier. Historically the frontier marked new opportunities better life. This translated into today's suburban life. Ideally, suburban life is supposed to be the perfect place without economic, racial, or cultural conflicts. The satire points out that no such thing exists, and the happy suburban family is a lie. This also goes to the broken American dream, as described above, and that nothing is ideal. Even though there is supposed to be no conflict between races and religions, people in suburban areas can also experience racism and be discriminated against because of their religion. Southwest satire that appeared in America was a type of satirical work that described life in the Southwest of America, the American frontier, and that the life there

⁵¹ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 5.

was not as idyllic as imagined by the Americans who traveled there for a better life. Shows this in today's American satiric animation in a form similar to Menippean satire. This satire was typically dark. Menippean uses a vile, grotesque type of humor.⁵²

⁵² Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 50.

II. ANALYSIS

2 SATIRE IN *SOUTH PARK* (COMEDY CENTRAL)

South Park (Comedy Central) was created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone in the year 1997. Trey Parker and Matt Stone wrote, produced, and they are the voices of most *South Park* characters. The main protagonists of *South Park* are Stan Marsh, Kyle Broflovski, Eric Cartman, and Kenny McCormick. Stan, Kyle, Eric, and Kenny are four fourth graders in the rural mountain hamlet of *South Park*, Colorado.⁵³ The series is currently on its 26th season. *South Park* focuses on the town the four protagonists live in. *South Park* was originally just a short comedy special for Christmas. After being successful as a short comedy special, the authors made a series featuring the four main boys from the Christmas special.⁵⁴ *South Park* aired in 1997. The authors decided to use Kenny even though he died in the Christmas special, and they were advised by Comedy Central executives against using this character again because it would break the narrative, and Kenny would have to be revived.⁵⁵ By breaking this rule, they establish one of the main running jokes in *South Park*: Kenny is often killed but is fine in the next episode. Besides the four boys, there are many recurring characters in *South Park*. Many of the *South Park* characters are people that the authors know, and they exaggerate their characteristics. This kind of comedy or creating characters is popular with many shows. Peter Griffin who in the episode “Big Man on Hippocampus” of *Family Guy* stated that for 5000 USD he can buy a cave and tell people to stay out of it. It is an exaggeration of stupid people who just say whatever they are thinking that MacFarlane knows in reality, and Peter Griffin is based on such people which the creator Seth MacFarlane stated on *The Graham Norton Show* (BBC) on the episode that aired on June 12, 2015. From the beginning, *South Park* targeted a mature audience, which was also a part of the advertising as they hoped that a cartoon targeted towards adults would be more successful than another cartoon for children.

South Park and its style of comedy was controversial from the beginning. The controversy of *South Park* is also closely connected to American culture, although in other parts of the world this show is also controversial. Because of this, they were not very well received by the liberals.⁵⁶ However, *South Park* was not very well received by conservatives either. *South Park* often goes against Christianity by being very obscene. By making fun of Christianity, God,

⁵³ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Taking South Park Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 1-10.

⁵⁴ Silas Kaine Ezell, *Humor and Satire on Contemporary Television: Animation and the American Joke* (London: Routledge, 2020), 7.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Taking South Park Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 1-10.

⁵⁶ Brian C. Anderson, *South Park Conservatives: The Revolt against Liberal Media Bias* (Washington, DC: Regnery publishing, 2005), 75.

LGBTQ, as well as other topics, *South Park* manages to be very offensive by being very “inclusive” as to its targets of satire.⁵⁷

Besides being offensive to groups and minorities, *South Park* also includes multiple episodes featuring exaggerated versions of multiple celebrities. Different celebrities react differently to being portrayed by *South Park*; while some like to be featured in popular cartoons some would rather not be featured. Since there are cults of fans devoted to many of these celebrities, this is another reason certain episodes of *South Park* are not very liked by the fans of the celebrities. Fans do not like their favorite celebrity being portrayed negatively, which *South Park* commonly does. *South Park* mocking celebrities is a reflection of American satire as it is mocking of the more privileged that is mentioned. It is also mocking of American dream as some of the celebrities mocked in *South Park* such as the parody character of Meghan Markle in the episode “The Worldwide Privacy Tour” did not have to work hard to get her fortune and fame. In the same way, Christians do not like *South Park* negatively portraying Christianity.

Additionally, *South Park* is also not very liked by critics. Most art mirrors reality. The same goes for *South Park*. The difference is that most other art forms hide their criticism with metaphors. Almost all art is political, but people can complain that *South Park* is too political because their criticism is not hidden in metaphors. The audience does not have to be a movie critic or analyze *South Park* too much to realize what message they are trying to send in a particular episode. *South Park* is also over the top and vulgar. For these reasons, *South Park* is not viewed as high art and is considered trash by people such as Peggy Charren who was an activist and founder of Action for Children's Television – a group dedicated to improving television for children⁵⁸.

Still, for many viewers, *South Park* remains interesting. *South Park* does not censor things that could upset people.⁵⁹ They rarely censor any of their content. One of the few times something was banned was a depiction of Mohammed after 9/11. This way, *South Park* continues to offend some people and amuse others. The Comedy Central network will air most of its content, since the target audience is mainly adults.

⁵⁷ Michael Vittali, *South Park's Ambiguous Satiric Expression: Satire and Carnavalesque Imagery in South Park*, (Saarbrücken: VDM, 2010), 1-10.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Taking South Park Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 3.

⁵⁹ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Taking South Park Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 1-5.

2.1 Analysis of the episodes

This thesis aims to analyze the American tradition of satire in *South Park*. Using the theoretical information in the first part of this thesis, chosen episodes will be analyzed to see if they contain the characteristics of Southwest satire. Besides characteristics of the satire given in the first half of this thesis, the analysis will also focus on prominently American themes such as the American dream, the death of the irony after 9/11, and woke culture in America that were mentioned in theoretical part. The theoretical part also mentioned their connection to America. Other than these themes, many more are connected to America. These themes were chosen because while trying to analyze a tradition and how it is reflected in *South Park*, the fact that *South Park* is a long-running show should be addressed. The American dream is a theme that has always reoccurred in many American works. 9/11 was a significant moment in American history from when *South Park* was already on air. The last theme is a theme that is recent and also prominently American.

2.1.1 “Cartman Gets an Anal Probe” aired on August 13, 1997, and “Weight Gain 4000” aired on August 27, 1997

The analysis starts at the beginning of the series. Omitting the pilot, the following analysis is of the first episode of the series and the third one so that the analysis can start at the start and note any changes in the episodes that follow these first two. Even in these first two episodes, there are multiple ways to recognize the American style of satire using the theory in the first part of this thesis.

The first noticeable thing is that the animation in *South Park* is very simple. The characters are also very simply drawn. Missing most of the real human anatomy but still very well able to get the point across well. Characters in *South Park* can also be read easily regarding their characteristics as the characters in an animated story. The simplest and most satirical characterization after analysis of just these two episodes for me would be Cartman. He is drawn as a fat kid, called “fat-ass” multiple times, even the chef says that “You children watch that fat boy now.” and in the “Weight Gain 4000” already, he is the fattest kid and a good portion of the story is just focused on how fat he is. This exaggeration is a good example of satire as it criticizes the fat and unhealthy by making him so fat and unhealthy that he becomes bedridden.

The “Cartman Gets an Anal Probe” starts with a simple premise that many shows used in the past, and that is alien abduction. The difference that makes it American animated satire is the vulgar abduction itself. *South Park* does not shy away from showing vulgar images of the abduction and the placement of the anal probe. This kind of satire is typical for animated

American satire as this is not something that could be shown in sitcoms or romantic comedies. A Vulgar language is also present as Kyle shouts at the bus driver, "Shut up, you fat bitch!." This vulgar display continues with the characters randomly farting during conversations and class. Exaggeration is also shown when Stan throws up when he talks to the girl. A figure of speech that someone has butterflies in the stomach is well known. Another thing that people might say often is that they are so nervous that they could throw up. However, this is only meant as a figure of speech most of the time. Not in the satire or *South Park*, as he throws up every time the girl speaks to him. Besides being a characteristic of American satire by being vulgar, it is also characteristic of Menippean a Juvenalian satire.

As they continue to talk to the girl, another typical means of satire can be noted. Not typical to just American or animated satire is a misunderstanding. This can be seen as the conversation is not heard by the audience, but one of the boys notes that he did not know that she had a cat to show. The audience, of course, understands the misunderstanding even with this simple scene. The story, at this point, has not advanced much. The story does not advance much for most of the episode, and the premise stays very simple and the same. There are no character arcs or structure to the story. Satire does not focus on the linear story. It focuses on how the characters react to the situation. This focus is characteristic of American satire in animation as stated in the theory part. The point of the story is not what the Cartman is doing to do about the anal probe. It is the fact that the Cartman keeps denying that the anal probe even exists. His denial is his reaction to the situation, and it is the reaction that is satirical and humorous.

Episodic kind of storytelling can be easily noted by watching the "Weight Gain 4000." Despite being abducted by the aliens at the end of the first episode, in the third episode, the Cartman is back with the group. They do not focus on how he got back. They are not even mentioning his experience or anything that happened in the previous episode. The only thing that evolved from the last episode is that Stan no longer vomits while talking to a girl.

Otherwise, the characteristics of the characters stay the same. As mentioned in the paragraph before, Cartman is still fat, and a big part of the third episode is focused on how fat Cartman is. This is brought up in a satiric way as we can see the criticism of the duality of American religion, which is Christianity, and another idol which is television. As an audience, we can see Cartman watching some sort of Christian show before it abruptly switches to a commercial. The cross on the room wall is noticeable, but the story is focused on the commercial and how Cartman confuses well-built with morbidly obese. By changing the channels abruptly, the criticism is easily noticed. *South Park* is also being somewhat self-aware

as it is shown that television easily influenced Cartman to buy whatever he saw on the television. Being a television show, *South Park* acknowledges that people can be influenced by what they see on television.

The second storyline of “Weight Gain 4000” is Cartman winning a competition with a school project. This can be a good example of another important American theme, and that is the self-made man. By now, the characteristics of Cartman should be known to the audience, and the characteristics are not of a hard-working, self-made man. It is the premise of the American dream that the one who works hard, no matter what their heritage is, will have a good life and a lot of money. The humor and the criticism are that even though Cartman is not hard-working and whom many students may work harder on the paper, he still won. This is also shown by the example of the mayor of *South Park*. The mayor despises an important woman that is visiting *South Park*. Using flashbacks, the audience is shown that the hatred is because even though the mayor tried her best at the talent show, she still lost against her rival. This is due to a lot of help that the rival received on stage, presumably because she had money to afford such help. This shows that the self-made man’s reality is not dependent on hard work but on heritage and luck.

The mayor plays well into American satire also by being happy about diversity. Not caring about the people but caring about her image, she is excited to show off the man of color in her town. Which is connected to theme of woke capitalism mentioned in the theoretical part as she uses the racial issues to promote herself pretending that she is doing it to promote the people of the town. Even though she thinks of herself as the victim, she is being criticized by *South Park*. She is criticized for using the citizens of her city for her profit and caring about her position only. As stated in the theoretical part of the thesis, this kind of satire is often used in America as she is taking advantage of the poorer people because she is richer.

“Weight Gain 4000” is very American and also ridicules how easy it is to buy a gun in America. The teacher buying the gun comes into the store and buys a gun as if he was buying groceries. The criticism continues as the teacher walks down the street. Instead of the reaction that would be normally expected from people seeing a gun, he is met with praise.

Throughout these two episodes, many of the characteristics of traditional American satire in cartoons can be seen. The tradition of Southwest satire that is most typical for American cartoon satire is reflected in the vulgar language that is used and vile scenes such as the one with the Cartman getting his anal probe in the first episode. All the families of the four main protagonists are a suburban family which is also connected to the tradition of American satire

as mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis. Moreover, both episodes are episodic in the sense that even though these episodes are just one episode apart there is no narrative that would be continuous from one episode to another. This is also a typical characteristic of Southwest satire. Typical for Southwest satire is also the ridicule of the mayor who is in power. Southwest satire typically ridicules those in power and looks more favorably on the people underneath. As stated before, the four main protagonists are children from suburban families that are lower in the social hierarchy, but they are more important for the story as they are the main protagonists, not the mayor that is above them. Carnavalesque in these two episodes can also be noted as a story with both the weight gain and anal probe are ridiculous and something that could not happen in real life. The placing of the probe is something that the audience can see as controversial and feel as something like that should not be shown on television, which is another characteristic of carnivalesque American satire. These two episodes show characteristics of the Menippean style by critiquing the real problem of obesity with a fictional narrative. It does so by exaggerating the story and the problem by using a character that is also over the top. Even though no one can get as big as fast as Cartman did in this episode, it might make the audience think about how they are treating their own bodies, and about the cult of body perfection in general. Such unexpected depth is also true for the scene where the dad is buying a gun in a shopping mall, a fictional scene that can be easily linked to a reference in real life of Americans/ buying guns so easily. The exaggerated glorification of guns and the way he can effortlessly buy a gun in a cartoon is a critique of a real-life situation of people buying and glorifying guns. Vulgar images are also typical of Juvenalian satire. Both episodes clearly critique multiple problems in society already mentioned in the analysis. The themes that are mentioned earlier in the analysis are also dark as is typical of American satire. The themes include guns, abduction, the failed American dream, morbid obesity, as well as others.

2.1.2 The Episode after 9/11 - “Osama bin Laden Has Farty Pants” - aired November 7, 2001

The following episode, the one that had a release date closest to 9/11, was interesting to analyze due to its cultural significance as an episode near a great American tragedy to see if it would be visibly censored. As mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, after 9/11, it was decided by media and works such as The Clear Channel radio corporation and *Seinfeld* that it was the end of the irony as it would be distasteful to make jokes about such a tragedy. But it

was not just the jokes about 9/11 itself. It was also other jokes that seemed to be condemned after 9/11, as everyone was supposed to be in mourning.⁶⁰

This episode did not reflect much mourning. Noticeable was that the episode was more cartoonish in the way it portrayed the ridicule of Osama Bin Laden. The thing that also seemed to be missing was the use of vulgarisms. In the previous episodes words as “bitch” were often used. In this episode these vulgarisms were not present. The thing that was not missing from this episode were farts and vomit, keeping the tradition of American satire in the episode.

The episode starts with the main protagonists wearing gas masks to save themselves from poisoning, even though there is no sign in these scenes that someone is about to attack. This is reaction to public being prompted to wear masks after 9/11 as stated in the theory part. This irony of wearing masks even when nothing seems to be endangering them is exaggerated by the fact that another child that is getting to get on the bus as well but does not have the mask, in an attempt to “save himself,” holds his breath till he dies. In the end, it is not an attack that does not even seem to be happening in the first place, but his own stupidity that kills him. This reflects the tradition of American satire by being dark and showing death. It also reflects American satire by being in Menippean style by being dark and shocking.

As the episode continues, multiple scenes seem to show that America is even worse than Afghanistan. America might seem as worse in this episode since the episode is not featuring any more attacks on America but many bombings in Afghanistan. Even after an explanation that it is not the Afghan people that they are in a fight with, Cartman is still racist. Not only the children but also the adults are shown as racist and paranoid. The paranoid adults call for government backup when the children receive packages from Afghanistan. Racist Cartman calls Afghan people Jawas. The audience is also shown a scene from Afghanistan, where children that are just like the four protagonists are trying to enjoy the day, but Afghanistan is being heavily bombed, and everything is being destroyed. This is in contrast to *South Park*, which is not being bombed, not under attack, yet people are not trying to enjoy the day but are focused on the attack that happened. Stan’s mum seems to be completely apathetic concerning everything due to the attack. She is just on the sofa looking staring. This makes an ironic contrast between these two places. The tradition of American satire reflects in this scene not just by being dark with all the bombings and death and destruction but also by disrupted suburban life. As mentioned in the theory part, Southwest satire, compares the frontier to

⁶⁰ Thomas Shevory, “From Censorship to Irony: Rhetorical Responses to 9/11,” *Poroi* 2, no. 1 (2003): 8–12, <https://doi.org/10.13008/2151-2957.1054>.

suburban life. Same as frontier suburban life should be a paradise. In this episode, there are many instances when this is far from the truth. Suburban people are apathetic due to stress as Stan's mum is, or they are paranoid and racist.

The ridicule of the paranoia is shown when the children from Afghanistan send back a package. The protagonist sent them the previously mentioned four dollars, and it did not seem to be a problem for the Afghani kids, even though it did not help them much. On the other hand, when the package arrived for the protagonists, it was obvious that everyone thought that it was a bomb. Immediately the whole military squad appeared to investigate the box. Not even opening the box and finding the goat persuaded them that the box was indeed a gift, and they still theorized that it was some sort of attack. The scene is a reflection of traditional American satire as the higher power is once again being ridiculed. The whole military squad that is controlled by the government is being ridiculed and this might be seen as ridicule of the government and their reaction to the situation as well.

This is again in contrast to Afghanistan, where they did not have to look for attacks as they were heavily bombed. While being bombed and their own home being destroyed by the bombings, the four similar kids from Afghanistan still helped the four main protagonists. In the meantime, Cartman harasses Osama Bin Laden in multiple ways, and him receiving it in a very cartoonish manner.

In this episode, there is also intertextuality when Cartman refers to Afghan people as Jawas. Jawas are from *Star Wars*, in which they are aliens living on a desert planet which connects to Cartman calling them sand monkeys. The intertextuality of the *Bible*, *Star Wars*, and other culturally significant works seems to be a usual occurrence not just in *South Park* but in satire overall. The intertextuality of the *Bible* is noticeable in the episode "Weight Gain 4000," where Cartman watches Christian shows before switching to a commercial. There is no point in intertextuality unless it is recognizable to the audience. That is why popular works that are easily recognizable to the audience are being used for the references. The most noticeable in the episode are intertextuality, irony, and ridicule, which is normal for satire. The Afghan kids also break the fourth wall while wondering why they are speaking English. The episode ends with both Osama Bin Laden and Kenny dead. This episode included a lot of criticism towards America, which was interesting as it was unexpected for an episode that aired so close to 9/11. As explained in the theory part it was considered controversial to use satire reflecting this tragedy as many people were still mourning. This adds to the controversy of this episode.

The episode is a fictional narrative about the main protagonists interacting with Afghan people. The episode is dark, depicting bombings and death. It is rather controversial with its depiction of America and how America is not a saint. In the book *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* it is stated that “9/11 was not an isolated, irrational act aimed at an innocent nation but rather a direct result of American colonial, economic and military power.”⁶¹ Controversial is also a depiction of Osama bin Laden in a cartoonish scene when Osama is being ridiculed. This episode was also aired not long after the event of 9/11 and therefore the episode is reporting on the event with a fictional narrative. The fictional narrative is an interpretation of the creators of *South Park* and how they see the event and what they are critiquing about the event such as the American paranoia which can be seen by government forces checking the package and kids in the beginning wearing masks and hate towards Afghani people who can be seen suffering just like Americans in the episode if not more. All the things mentioned in this paragraph are characteristics of Menippean satire. Besides Menippean satire, the tradition of American satire is also reflected in the darkness and suburban life. The story of this episode is also a stand-alone story which is typical of American satire. It can also be noted that *South Park* reacted to the event of 9/11 quite quickly and provided its own commentary on the event and issues it caused for American citizens. As explained in the theory part, satire critiques social situations that are relevant to the audience.

2.1.3 Woke culture – “Cupid Ye” - aired February 8, 2023

Multiple episodes were more critical of the woke culture, such as the episode where Cartman decided that he was transgender or the episodes where they explained what you can or cannot call people of color or different sexual orientations. Episode “Cupid Ye” stood out as it was the opposite of harsh criticism of woke people that is normally expected from *South Park*.

At the beginning of the episode, there is a main premise that one of the main characters is separating from the group to film “TikToks” with another friend. This is in a way similar to the weight gain episode as the Cartman was influenced by television to buy weight gain supplements. In this episode, the two friends are influenced by TikTok to post more videos to become more popular. This is not just a problem in America but more of a global problem when people are influenced by using phones and social media to spend more time on the phones because the more time they spend, the more popular they are and the more time they should spend. This is shown in the episode when they make more videos to be more popular even

⁶¹ Martin Randall, *9/11 and the Literature of Terror* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 143.

though the other children are already praising them for their videos in the schools, which prompts them to make more videos. This means that Kyle is still separated from the group to make more videos. In the episode, even when they are playing outside, Kyle can be seen just standing and looking into his phone. Same as the other episodes, this one also features vulgar language as Cartman, after watching the video, asks multiple times, “What the fuck is this?.” This is, as mentioned multiple times, a reflection of American satire in the episode. This premise also critiques a current issue.

Later in this episode, there is information spreads about Kyle being in charge of Hollywood because he is a Jew. After believing that he could influence Hollywood movies, Stan’s father comes to complain to Kyle’s family about today’s television. This is where the unexpected part comes in, as *South Park* is often found criticizing politically correct humor. In this scene, it is the anti-woke that is being ridiculed as Stan’s father is trying to explain to Kyle’s father that the woke culture is destroying today’s media, not realizing that Kyle indeed has nothing to do with it. The woke media, as mentioned in the theoretical part, is a theme connected to American satire as it started as a movement that promoted racial issues awareness in America but. This shows that it does not matter if someone is woke or anti-woke; blindly following a movement is never a good idea.

This is also highlighted by Cartman, who is trying to be a good Christian and help people, and instead, he goes back the full circle to Hitler himself. Instead of spreading Christian love, Cartman is spreading antisemitism. This is also a reference to when Cartman appears on television in a black mask preaching about antisemitism which is something that Kanye did, which makes it quite ironic as this is an absurd situation that could not even be made much more absurd by an animation. This is an example of carnivalesque that is typical for American satire. The way *South Park* ridicules this situation is by giving Cartman a little evil angel that is seemingly the one that makes all the bad decisions. The name of the Angel is Cupid Ye which is also a reference to Kanye West as Kanye uses two last letters of his name “Ye” as his artist name.⁶² But it gets back to real life as the little angel is transformed back into a good angel by being drugged much like Kanye was in real life which is a mocking of this celebrity which as stated previously can be often found in *South Park*. Kanye is a famous American rapper whose career took a turn after he started posting on social media that he supported the Nazis. Then he also supported this by going on television and talking about liking Nazis dressed in the black

⁶² “Antisemitism in America.” Web log. *Washington Square Citizens League* (blog), March 2023: 3. <https://thehopkinsonhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Antisemitism-in-America.pdf>.

mask that covered his face. This was the same thing that Cartman wore in *South Park* when he appeared on television, and little Cupid Ye said that “Hitler wasn’t a bad guy.”

Another theme that is typical for American satire is ridiculing someone who uses religion to influence people. Cartman is still Christian in this episode, the same as in the episode about weight gain. In the weight gain episode, there was a cross visible on the wall. Cartman was also watching a television program about Jesus and religion before the television switched to a commercial. This also shows that the character does not have much character development as more than twenty seasons later, he is not only still fat but also still a Christian. He uses Christianity as an excuse to influence people and turn them into Nazis. This episode is in the 26th season, and the main protagonists are still children, which is, as stated in the theory part of the thesis, also a feature of a typical American animated satire. This episode is also in Menippean style as it reacts to the real event of Kanye becoming Nazi and comments on it with the fictional narrative of Cartman becoming Nazi.

CONCLUSION

Episodes of *South Park* have characteristics that can be directly connected to American satire, which itself was heavily influenced by older forms of Western satire, such as from Ancient Greece and Rome. Menippean style satire which is traditional style for American animated satire is present in all of the episodes analyzed. They criticize these situations or characters in an entertaining and sometimes thought-provoking manner, which is often the goal of satire.

All of the episodes analyzed have at least some of the characteristics of American animated satire that have been described in the theoretical part of the thesis. These are the characteristics of the dark and grotesque, such as the themes of death, sex, and vulgar language. This is shown in the farting and vomiting that are mentioned in the analysis. In the scene of the placement of the anal probe but also Cupid Ye always being naked. Kenny often dies at the end of the episode. Cartman cursing and is racist in the episode after 9/11. Another characteristic is that, although the stories focus on current events of the time the episodes were created, the main characters remain “frozen in time” as children. As children, the characters can criticize the events and ideas with a degree of naivety that would be quite strange coming from adult characters. On the other hand, many of the adult characters also behave immaturely, and often the kids, even sometimes the vulgar and extremely politically incorrect Eric Cartman, have to be the voice of reason in this upside-down world.

The episodes analyzed do not reference other episodes. The episodes are also tied to American culture, as they reflect themes that are mainly American such as the American dream, 9/11, gun ownership, and others. The American dream example is mentioned in the analysis when Cartman won the competition even though he did not work hard, but also in the episode after 9/11 when the main characters insisted that America is the best country in the world even though America was just as bad as Afghanistan in the episode. 9/11 example, which was a terrorist attack on America, and the episode aired after 9/11 shows an exaggerated version of America after the attack. Gun ownership example in the third episode where Stan’s dad buys a gun in the store as if the buying the gun was buying the groceries.

As the episodes progress, they focus on themes that were relevant at the time that they were first aired. The difference between the first episodes analyzed, the episode right after 9/11, and the next episode about 9/11, was that the satire in the episodes was even more tied to the current events, such as Kanye going on the news and talking about Hitler, than the first episodes, as the first episodes focused more on the characters and situation, for example, the third episode

focused a part of its story on gun ownership which is a long-term problem in America, than on one specific situation as 9/11 or one specific theme such as woke culture. In other words, they are reflecting current events that happened, such as Kanye supporting antisemitism or TikTok becoming a popular app for children to use. Keeping in mind that these episodes are just two of many, it is possible that once the themes are first introduced (in the episode and the wider culture), more specific situations and themes are criticized in later episodes. As stated above, even though the characters do not change with time, their surroundings do. For example, they are not aging as they should, but in the newer episodes, they can be seen using cell phones and later being influenced by smart phones. In the first episodes, they do not have phones and are influenced by television. Thus, while the situations, events, and technology change over time, the basic attitudes and behavior of the children's characters do not.

Finally, *South Park* is connected to the tradition of American satire, as can be seen in many of the characteristics of this satire mentioned in the main chapters. It also reflects American culture as it reacts to and criticizes new situations in America. Considering that it often criticizes woke culture but also people who are bothered by the woke culture, as well as the episode after 9/11, in which the Americans are just as bad as the Afghans, *South Park* criticizes both sides.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Antisemitism in America.” *Washington Square Citizens League*, March 2023.
<https://thehopkinsonhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Antisemitism-in-America.pdf>.
- Anderson, Brian C. *South Park conservatives: The revolt against Liberal Media Bias*. Washington, DC: Regnery publishing, 2005.
- Arp, Robert. *South Park and philosophy you know, I learned something Today*. Boston: Blackwell Pub., 2007.
- Bloom, Harold and Blake Hobby. *Dark Humor*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.
- Crompton, Dan. *A funny thing happened on the way to the forum: The world’s oldest joke book*. London: Michael O’Mara, 2013.
- Cultural Reader. “Mikhail Bakhtin: “Carnival and Carnavalesque” – summary and review.” Accessed April 24, 2023. <https://culturalstudiesnow.blogspot.com/2011/07/mikhail-bakhtin-carnival-and.html>.
- Davis, Andy, Neil Batra, Asif Dhar, Jay Bhatt, Wendy Gerhart, and Brian Rush. “US health care can’t afford health inequities.” *Deloitte Insights*, June 22, 2022.
<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/health-care/economic-cost-of-health-disparities.html>.
- Declercq, Dieter. “A Definition of Satire (and Why a Definition Matters).” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, no. 3 (2018): 319–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jaac.12563>.
- Edelman, Peter. *So Rich, So Poor: Why It’s So Hard to End Poverty in America*. New York: The New Press, 2013.
- Ezell, Silas Kaine. *Humor and satire on contemporary television: Animation and the American joke*. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Freud, Sigmund, and James Strachey. *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. New York: Norton, 1960.
- Gans, Herbert J. “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1979.9993248>.
- Garbarino, James, Catherine P. Bradshaw, and Joseph A. Vorrasi. “Mitigating the Effects of Gun Violence on Children and Youth.” *The Future of Children* 12, no. 2 (2002): 72.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1602739>.

- Gray, Richard. *After the fall: American literature since 9/11*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Hendley, W. Clark. "The Horatian Satire of Trudeau's Doonesbury." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 16, no. 4 (1983): 103–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1983.1604_103.x.
- Holbert, R. Lance, Jay Hmielowski, Parul Jain, Julie Lather, and Alyssa Morey. "Adding Nuance to the Study of Political Humor Effects: Experimental Research on Juvenalian Satire versus Horatian Satire." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 3 (2011): 187–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210392156>.
- Horace, Christopher Smart, and Theodore Alois Buckley. *The works of horace: Translated literally into English prose*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855.
- Hoynes, Hilary, Marianne Page, and Ann Stevens. "Poverty in America: Trends and Explanations." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 1 (2005): 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w11681>.
- Hunter, Richard. "Menippus (1), of Gadara, Cynic Philosopher." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics*, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.4113>.
- Knight, Charles A. "Satire, Speech, and Genre." *Comparative Literature* 44, no. 1 (October 1992): 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1771166>.
- LeBoeuf, Megan. *The Power of Ridicule: An Analysis of Satire*. Rhode Island: University of Rhode Island, 2007.
- McClennen, Sophia A. *Colbert's America: Satire and democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- O'Neill, Ben. "A Critique of Politically Correct Language." *The Independent Review* 16, no. 2 (2011): 279–291. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/24563157>.
- Peer, Willie van. "Hidden Meanings." *Contextualized Stylistics* 29 (2000): 39–47. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004487390_006.
- Rahma, Sitti, Syahron Lubis, and Alemina Perangin-angin. "The Analysis of the Use of Satire in The Daily Show with Trevor Noah." *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities* 10, no. 2 (2023): 231. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v10i2.16611>.
- Randall, Martin. *9/11 and the Literature of Terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.
- Rhodes, Carl. *Woke capitalism: How corporate morality is sabotaging democracy*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2023.
- Samuel, Lawrence R. *The american dream: A cultural history*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012.

Shevory, Thomas. "From Censorship to Irony: Rhetorical Responses to 9/11." *Poroi* 2, no. 1 (2003): 8–41. <https://doi.org/10.13008/2151-2957.1054>.

Smith, David Michael. "The American Melting Pot: A National Myth in Public and Popular Discourse." *National Identities* 14, no. 4 (2012): 387–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2012.732054>.

Tracey, Mitchell. *"Kids' Stuff": Television Cartoons as Mirrors of the American Mind*. Texas: West Texas A&M University, 1995.

Vitali, Michael. *South Park's Ambiguous Satiric Expression: Satire and Carnavalesque Imagery in South Park*. Saarbrücken: VDM, 2010.

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

Wooten, David B. "From Labeling Possessions to Possessing Labels: Ridicule and Socialization among Adolescents." *Journal of Consumer Research* 33, no. 2 (2006): 188–98. <https://doi.org/10.1086/506300>.