

topics as sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, stem-cell research, and the war in Afghanistan. The latter, I would argue, marks *South Park*'s darkest satirical moment. It also features one of the show's most hilarious bits; in an homage to Chuck Jones, Cartman as Bugs Bunny "terrorizes" Osama Bin Laden, who plays the role of Yosemite Sam, Elmer Fudd, or any other character unfortunate enough to have challenged Bugs. In its "I learned something today" parodic conclusion, however, the show's message could not be darker. The four boys travel to Afghanistan, where they encounter their Afghani doubles. At the appropriate mock-didactic moment, Stan tries to create a cultural bridge by explaining that "most people in America are good people, just trying to live day by day like you do. Maybe if you took the time to see all the great things about our country, you'd see we're not so different after all." His doppelganger replies, "That's fine, but we'll still hate you." Stan then concludes, "Well, I guess maybe someday we can learn to hate you too." As Dennis defines it, this is tragic satire indeed, perhaps the most disturbing moment in the show's five-year attempt to shock and disturb its audience.

To further delineate the satirical differences between these two shows, it is worth examining how each one treats the same topic. For instance, each has an episode that attacks homophobia. In "Homer's Phobia," Homer befriends guest star John Waters who, Homer is repulsed to learn, is gay. Anxious to ensure Bart's heterosexual development, Homer takes his son on his first hunting trip. No hunter himself, Homer eventually is rescued by John from a group of angry reindeer. At the end of the episode, John concludes, "Well, Homer, I finally earned your respect, and all I had to do was save your life. Now if only every other gay man in the world could do the same, you'd be set." Of course, the satiric jab is missed on Homer. He does show some signs of a budding sense of tolerance, however, when he tells Bart he'll love him no matter how he turns out. Nevertheless, we laugh at Homer's moral obtuseness.

In the *South Park* episode "Big Gay Al's Big Gay Boat Ride," Stan learns that his dog Sparky is gay. When he asks his teacher what gay means, Mr. Garrison explains: