

# How Funny?:

## Spectacular Ani in Animated Television Cartoons

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<sup>1</sup> Images of anal flesh have been flashed on Australian television in the popular animated American 'kidult' cartoon series, [Ren and Stimpy](#) (1991-95) and [South Park](#) (1997-). Ren and Stimpy relates the tales of two male human-voiced animals: Ren, a skinny hyperactive chihuahua, and Stimpy, his stupid fat cat friend. The "Son of Stimpy" and "Blazing Entrails" episodes of the series contain landmark references to the anus which have informed the broader range of representations of the orifice in the South Park series. South Park explores the lives of four pre-pubescent Colorado schoolboys -- Stan, Kyle, Cartman and Kenny. Commentary about the excessive depictions of violence and viscera in these masculinist comedy cartoons has avoided analysis of their representations of anal flesh. How have ani been represented in these popular cultural productions?

<sup>2</sup> "Son Of Stimpy" pioneered with a narrative of male anal birth. At Christmas, Stimpy passes his first fart. His bare buttocks gurgle and a fart cloud rises and disappears. Stimpy's anus is not visually (re)presented. His attempts to produce another fart fail. Stimpy and "Stinky" search desperately for each other. Stinky, the personified fart, resembles a wrinkled hybrid of Casper The Friendly Ghost and Tweety Bird. Appearing outside the closed window of Ren and Stimpy's bedroom, Stinky ogles the sleeping Stimpy's unreachable buttocks. "Oh why did I leave home? I'll never find a home as warm and snuggly as the one I left", he reflects on Stimpy's anus. Father and son eventually meet, the adult Stinky marries a rotting dead codfish, and the newly-weds then live in Ren's nostrils.

<sup>3</sup> As probably the most conspicuously homoerotic televised cartoon, "Son of Stimpy" also shows Ren flirtatiously snuggling up to Stimpy under some mistletoe, the pair sharing a bed, and reminiscences about their nuptials. Thus, the unavoidable thrust of this play is that Stinky-the-fart (the son) was farted (born) through the anus of Stimpy (the male mother) after sodomitical penetration by Ren (Stinky's father). Moreover, Stimpy's search for his fart-child and Ren's relishing of Stinky's smell provide a clear metaphor for Ren and Stimpy's continuing desire for more fun, fart-producing, "gay", an(im)al sex. Although Stimpy's anus and Ren's penis are not depicted, the fleshy intercourse between them (that produced the cherished Stinky) can hardly be ignored in the imagination of the viewer.

<sup>4</sup> "Blazing Entrails" includes a groundbreaking image of inner male anal flesh. The title refers to [Blazing Saddles](#) with its famous comedy scene involving bean-eating, farting cowboys. The plot loosely reworks that of [Fantastic Voyage](#), with Ren taking a crazed Stimpy to see a scientist who inflates him into a giant. Ren then travels through Stimpy's (unseen) anal sphincter (in a significant departure from the plot of Voyage). Ren is shown reading The Bowel Daily News on a speeding subway train that travels along the giant Stimpy's rectum. After this close-up depiction of Ren's (total body) penetration of Stimpy's anal canal, Ren travels via various vital organs to Stimpy's brain, which he shatters. Stimpy soon recovers. The fundamental thrust is that Ren 'fucks Stimpy brainless' through his anus for another mutually happy ending.

<sup>5</sup> The South Park series (Parker and Stone) also contains spectacular depictions of anal birth, a personified anal product, and anal sex between male animals. However, none lead to consensual homoerotic ecstasy. In "Cartman Gets an Anal Probe", which spoofs [Communion](#), Cartman is [raped in his sleep](#) by male space aliens who [penetrate his anus with a probe](#). Thus 'impregnated', he experiences immense pain (and ridicule), until his blazing anus delivers an enormous [satellite dish](#). Instead of Stinky-the-fart, South Park features the more 'fleshy' [Mr Hankey](#), a non-denominational talking Christmas turd that [resembles Mr Potato Head](#). "Big Gay Al's Gay Boat Ride" contains the only reference to 'gay' male sex in the series. Sparky, a stray "gay homosexual" dog [mounts another male canine](#) before anally raping yet another. The anus is not depicted in these scenes.

<sup>6</sup> Anything but eroticised, the unexposed human male anus is valorised in South Park as an arsenal of multiple farts which are either deployed as weapons against male enemies, or shared between male friends as penultimate acts of affection and sacrifice. In "Not without My Anus", [Terrance and Phillip](#) organise a stadium full of Canadians to [don gasmasks](#) and fart on cue, thus generating an enormous [cloud of gas](#) that kills [Saddam Hussein](#). In "Chicken Pox", Phillip worries that he "won't be able to fart anymore", due to his anal cancer. After he and Terrance appear in surgery with their [buttocks and heads](#) (but not ani) exposed, the two men literally 'bond' through an (unseen) "anal transplant". Terrance donates half his anus to Phillip, who happily farts again after the successful operation.

<sup>7</sup> The "Cow Days" episode of South Park includes close-up images depicting the outside and inside of an anus. The Chamber of Farts sideshow ride first appears from the outside as a giant pair of pink body-less buttocks, decorated with a vampire bat, spider and cobwebs. After buying tickets, the schoolboys take the traincar ride into the Chamber through the front door -- a giant asterisk which designates the anal sphincter. Inside, the boys pass clothed male dummies (one with a bare front bottom) and a farting black oval anus. They exit through a back door between the spread legs of a farting clothed female dummy. This arrangement codes the anal chamber as female (or feminised), with the rear door configured as a 'pussy-farting' vagina, or (to borrow a gay term for the male anus), as 'backpussy'.

- <sup>8</sup> Therein, the confusing boys-in-the-train-in-the-haunted-Chamber-of-Farts scenario seemingly expresses heterosexual male anxieties about engaging in (paid group) penetration of a female anus, because the act too readily evokes visions of the beastly queer male things gay men and Sparky do with (their or other) male ani. Eve Sedgwick has stressed that "there has been no important and sustained [modern] Western discourse in which women's anal eroticism means anything" (129). In the form of the Chamber of Farts, the eroticised female anus has been conflated by hysterical heterosexual males to mean something horrific.
- <sup>9</sup> There are few other farting females in these cartoons. In the "Powdered Toast Man with Vitamin 'F'" segment of Ren and Stimpy, a girl and boy fart after eating Powdered Toast. An empowering image of an exploding atomic bomb is superimposed only over the fart-inflated pants of the girl. In South Park's "Not Without My Anus", Terrance's [baby daughter](#) farts once, but only to establish her resemblance to her father. Women contribute only in [long shot](#) to the fart cloud that kills Saddam Hussein.
- <sup>10</sup> While the female anus is demeaned in South Park, other female flesh is overwhelmingly cast as terrifying. Barbara Creed has demonstrated that classic horror films feature seven female archetypes (archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, possessed body, monstrous mother and castrator) that express male fears of the mythical vagina dentata. Versions of these 'monstrous-feminine' figures in South Park include the [Conjoined Fetus Lady](#); [Frieda](#) (the herpes-spreading prostitute); Cartman's highly-sexed hermaphrodite-born [mother](#); Aunt Flo (the red-haired "monthly visitor" who personifies menstruation and gives away a serial killer fish), Barbra Streisand's "spooky" face; [Wendy](#) and [Ms Crabtree](#) (with their gnashing teeth); and Stan's mother with her herpes-infected genitalia.
- <sup>11</sup> While male genitals are celebrated in South Park, the anus is configured as the most grotesque zone of male flesh, sometimes through misogynist references. The penis and "chocolate salty balls" of the black man, Chef, are praised through descriptive (heterosexual) innuendo. One father's insult to another, "I wasn't born with a silver enema up my ass", exploits the experiences of birthing women who have received enemas. In Ren and Stimpy, on the other hand, horrific (hairy, muscled, excretive, male) flesh belongs to hyper-masculine bodies, and sex organs other than male genitalia are celebrated. The joyous anal birth of Stinky mimics, yet edifies, non-vaginal birth. Stinky-the-fart and his female codfish wife celebrate the joining of the odours of anal and vaginal flesh, which they respectively incarnate.
- <sup>12</sup> Key episodes of Ren and Stimpy provided the seminal subversive representations of ani in the history of televised animated cartoons. In "Son of Stimpy" and "Blazing Entrails", the meta(eu)phoric valorisation of the creativity of gay anal eroticism, orgasmic farting, and gay fatherhood (through metadiegetic narratives of inter-male conception and anal birth) challenges the dominant homophobic culture which demonises the (anal) sexuality of gay men and denies them access to reproductive technologies and families. Ren and Stimpy also pioneered with a skit celebrating the farting power of the female anus.
- <sup>13</sup> In South Park, these subversive themes have been twisted into misogynist and homophobic contexts. Perhaps the anal transplant innovatively satirises the seriousness of rectal (bowel, colon, and prostate) cancers. However, this scenario is overshadowed by the show's gynophobic grotesquerie of female flesh, exemplified by the disturbing graphic imag(in)ing of the sexualised farting female anus as a chamber of horrors. The representation of collective killer ani and inter-male (human and animal) anal rape as comedy, is also disturbing. There are no references to fleshy practices -- such as anal masturbation, pleasurable inter-male or inter-female human anal eroticism, or female penetrations of male ani -- which could upset the hetero-masculinist homosocial phallogocentric order. How sad.

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