

Comedy and Critique

Homophobia

Homosociality and Gallows Humor

Outline

- Homophobia – fear of difference
- Homosociality – what it means and when we see it.
- Comedic uses, especially in dark/gallows humor.

Homophobia

- We should all know: Phobia = fear. Proposed reasons for this fear:
- **Moral** – God will be angry with any tolerance and judge us accordingly
- **Social** – protecting the family structure, questions of ‘proper’ socialization, legality, economics.

The Slippery Slope and Other Logical Fallacies

- **A slippery slope:** indicates that a first step will cause a chain of events to happen that will end in a drastic and undesirable outcome. This is used mostly socially (e.g. if gay people can marry, then pretty soon, people will be able to marry animals)
- **Irrelevant Conclusion/Appeal to Authority:** ignores an inherent simple refutation of the argument (**Argument:** Homosexuality is an abomination. **Reasoning:** Because God said it is an abomination.)
- **Begging The Question/Circular Reasoning:** gets to a rhetorical conclusion with means that assume the conclusion (Argument: The Bible is the word of God. Reasoning: The Bible tells me it is the word of God.)

Heteronormativity

- The social construction in which Man/Woman relationships are considered the social norm.
- Implies a **discriminatory view of sexual relationships** outside of heterosexuality; because it is outside of the norm, it has been treated as aberrant and criminal.
- Heteronormativity = more births = the sustainability of the established economic system.

Getting Beyond Fear

- **It Gets Better** – a project invested in protecting and intervening in the lives of suicidal gay youth.
- **Don't ask don't tell** – the repeal allows men and women to serve openly without fear of reprisal for their sexuality.
- **DOMA** – Federal law that legally stipulates that marriage is between one man and one woman. Is far reaching; legal, economic, social.

Homophobia and Standup Comedy

Bergson: Laughter is a corrective. This corrective is based on the society you live in.

If we have a discriminatory view of non hetero relationships, then jokes about those different relationships might flourish

Andrew Dice Clay

Routinely adopts a homophobic persona for the sake of laughter.

The ethical barometer in his work is unclear; it's not clear from the surface whether or not he is mocking homophobia or reveling in it.

A certain brand of comedy says intentionally offensive and uncomfortable things (cringe comedy, insult comedy) in order to bring unspoken things into the open.

Homosociality

- Is a relationship or set of emotionally complicated relationships between two or more people of the same sex that is not explicitly sexual, and is not coded as such.

Homosociality (in real life)

- Sports Teams
- Social Clubs
- Businesses

Two Key Film Examples



Thelma and Louise (1991)



Pulp Fiction (1994)

Two Key Comedic Examples



Laurel and Hardy



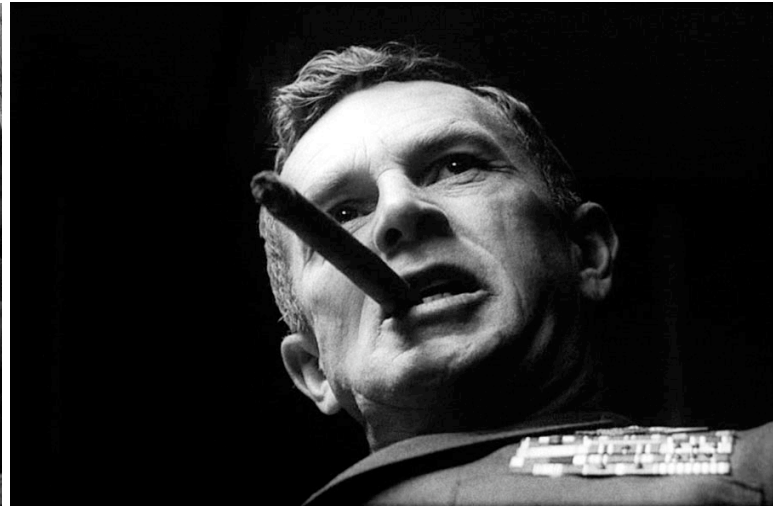
Harold and Kumar

Gallows Humor

Arises from a European Jewish tradition –

Comes in response to traumatic or life-threatening situations where a tragic end seems inevitable.

Homosociality and Gallows Humor



1. Arsenic And Old Lace 2. Dr. Strangelove 3. Man Bites Dog 4. Very Bad Things

A Few Commonalities of Homosociality in Gallows Humor

- **Dysfunctional Relationship With A Person of the opposite sex**, usually involving sexual denial or dysfunction.
- **An dreadful, orgiastic moment.** The main characters do something dreadful or completely evil in a moment where they are getting some sort of libidinal pleasure.
- **Ultimate abjection;** nobody in the film learns anything, really. The audience learns something because of this abjection.

What This Might Imply

- Even though these relationships are not explicitly homosexual, there is a lingering possibility that the relationships are not normal, and somehow eccentric
- If a fear of homosexuality exists in popular culture, then homosocial relationships may be too close for comfort.
- So, media reflects that fear and discourages behavior by implying a terrifying outcome to these relationships.

What This Means Comedically

- Extreme behaviors are ripe for satire, parody, and provide the basis for a lot of comedy.
- If homosocial relationships are not properly socialized, they breed this type of extreme behavior.
- Sexual denial is kind of funny b/c it contains both pathos and absurdity.

Made (John Favreau, 2001)

- What goes wrong in this film? Why does it go wrong?
- How would the gender dynamics between Bobby and Ricky be different if they weren't both men?