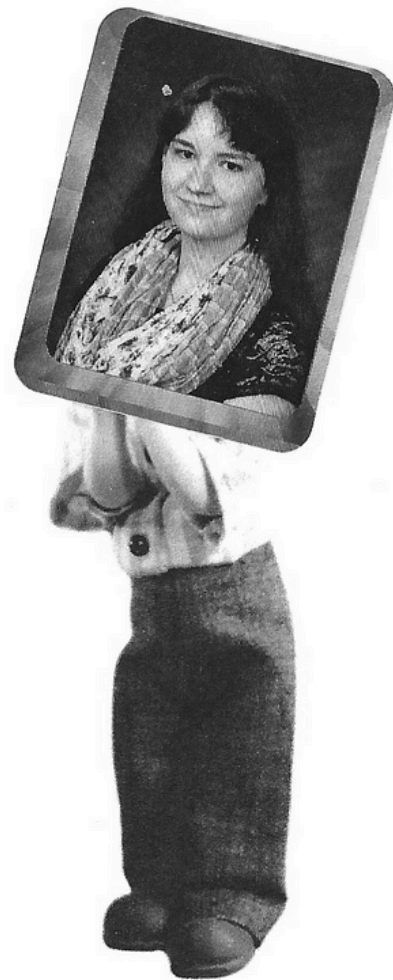
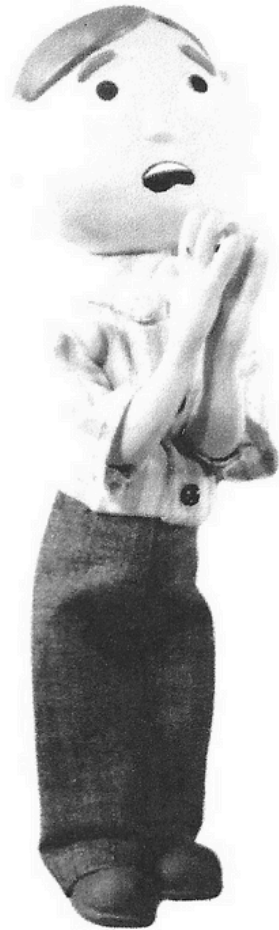


# **The Tragedy and Trauma of Moral Orel (and My Life)**

**Jess Eavenson**



# Introduction



**Moral Orel is a claymation series created by Dino Stamatopoulos that aired on Adult Swim from 2005 to 2008. It follows titular character Orel Puppington, a young boy in the fictional hyper-religious town of Moralton, Statesota (situated between Kansas and Missouri). Moralton houses an overwhelmingly W.A.S.P. demographic and thus the social pressure is on everyone to perfectly appeal to white suburban ideals. As the series progresses, this façade slowly cracks to reveal the real people of Moralton and their struggles.**

**I'm not from Moralton. Far from it, in fact; I'm a stone's throw from Portland, OR— if you have a good arm, anyway. Regardless, Moralton can manifest anywhere if shit hits the fan hard enough. Much like a boy can be a church, a household can become a fictional midwestern town.**



# Past



**Nobody wants to believe their parents are bad people, but this is an idea that adolescents are frequently forced to reckon with. No work I have seen displays this better than the two part special, “Nature.” Orel is taken on a hunting trip with his father, Clay, who becomes increasingly drunk throughout the trip. This culminates in Clay shooting Orel in the leg before passing out until well into the next evening, leaving him to lay in agony at the mercy of the forest.**

**This storyline marks a tonal shift in the series where Orel is no longer his innocent, faithful self. To the audience, Clay has been a bad person all along; he uses corporal punishment frequently enough that it's a running trope in the series, is constantly drunk, and teaches Orel shoddy lessons. Orel, however, has trusted his father up until this point to provide for him, teach him right from wrong, and otherwise be a good father.**

**“Nature” hit different for me because I remember when I had the same epiphany. I remember learning that my father was a bigot and having to reckon with the implications of that. I grew up rural and religious with all of the associated baggage. There were (and still are) a lot of misguided ideas for me to unlearn; when I tried to share my burgeoning knowledge of how the world actually works, he would get drunk and shout at me. He never hit me, but he seemed to feel a sense of moral superiority because he didn't, rather than that just being the bare minimum.**

**I was beginning to resent how he spoke to my mother as well and I took pity on her. After all, she at least came to my defense when I questioned my father’s bigotry. At the end of “Nature,” Orel asks his mother, Bloberta, “Why did YOU marry DAD?” I remember lamenting to my own mother, “You could’ve had anyone, but ended up with him!” I viewed her as a victim in her marriage, and maybe there’s some truth to that. Much like Bloberta, however, she actively chose to marry a bad man, and continuously enabled him to make bad choices. Plus, she is fairly prejudiced as well, so she would never detach from my father because of differing opinions.**



# Present



**The tragedy of Miss Secondopinionson, a minor character whose circumstances are explored in more depth in the episode “Dumb,” mirrors my own current life to an uncomfortable degree. She is aware of her father’s misdeeds, but bravely cares for him because she’s the only one who will, and she has to be there to care for her half-brother, Joe, as well. In my situation, I take a mini vow of silence every time my parents talk over Fox News. I’ve learned that they have no desire to change; all I can do is damage control to make sure that they don’t hurt anyone else.**

**She’s also trans-coded, so fuck yeah.**

# Future

**At the end of the final episode, “Honor,” Orel is seen with his future family as a seemingly well-adjusted father. He is a loving parent and husband in a healthy household. On his wall are three framed photos: portraits of his now-grown brothers, Shapey and Block, who seem to be doing well for themselves despite their developmental disabilities and childhood neglect, and a photo of his parents together, who look miserable. The presence of this photo has haunted the back of my mind ever since I finished my first watch of the series. It shows that while Orel has grown past the circumstances of his youth, he still carries that weight with him. He may forgive his parents for the situations they put him in, and they are likely still part of his life. His parents and their misery literally hang over him in his adulthood.**





**Likewise, I know that I will probably carry the trauma of my youth with me for a long time. I can only hope that I can build a better life for myself like Orel did someday.**