Humour in films of Woody Allen and Monty Python

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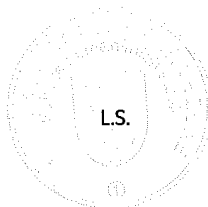
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o humoru ve filmech Woodyho Allena a Monty Python. Teoretická část vysvětluje co je humor, co ovlivňuje jeho chápání a zmiňuje nejčastější typy verbálního a neverbálního humoru. Také je zde stručný náhled na život a tvorbu obou autorů.

Analytická část analizuje dva filmy, jeden od Allena a jeden od Pythonů, a ukazuje nejtypičtější typy humoru, které používají ve svých komediích.

Klíčová slova: humor ve filmu, Woody Allen, Monty Python, Darebáčci, Monty Python a Svatý Grál

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the humour in films of Woody Allen and Monty Python. The theoretical part explains what humour is, what influences our understanding of it and mentions the most common types of verbal and nonverbal humour. There is also a brief insight into the lives and production of both authors.

The analytical part analyses two films, one by Allen and one by Monty Python, and shows the most typical types of humour that they use in their comedies.

Keywords: humour in the film, Woody Allen, Monty Python, Small Time Crooks, Monty Python and the Holy Grail

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INTRODUCTION

It is really difficult to define humour. Many scholars have attempted to specify different types of humour, and have published many books and articles about verbal and written humour and the different semantic mechanisms employed in these delivery methods. The problem that scholars face is that each individual, based on a wide variety of variables, has a different sense of humour, so it is not really easy for scholars to say definitively what is funny and what is not.

This thesis focuses on a particular type of humour – film humour. At present, the film industry is one of the most common sources of entertainment and therefore has the biggest influence on people and things they consider funny. This makes some of the important personalities of show business the most influential figures in the world. Famous directors, screenwriters, actors create the basis of today's humour. Among the most important personalities in the comedy world are the American director Woody Allen and the British comedic group Monty Python. Both, however, utilize two different types of humour and work in distinct movie genres. Woody Allen is most famous for his funny characters. His work is also unique and easily attributable. Although his humour is not for everyone, he is still widely recognized as a master of comedy. Monty Python, on the other hand, focuses especially on slapstick comedies. Their simple sketches perfectly combine into an integrated story that creates a film full of fun. Their first significant work was *Monty Python´s Flying Circus*, a British television comedy programme that went into syndication and achieved a worldwide following. The group then turned to making films, such as *The Holy Grail* and *Life of Brian*, which only cemented their fame and improved their reputations as great comedians.

Ultimately, the thesis will focus on the humour of Woody Allen and Monty Python and it will analyse characteristic features of their comedies. The analysis aims to show what makes them so special that the audience all over the world considers them so funny and tries to explain what helps them overcome the differences between cultures.

The theoretical part of this thesis will explain what the humour is and briefly characterize types of humour that can be found in films. It will also provide a brief look in the lives and work of Woody Allen and Monty Python. The practical part will provide a more detailed analysis of two films that are somehow typical for their production.

I. THEORY

1 HUMOR

Humour permeates every level of human existence and therefore is a very important part of our lives. Many philosophers tried to explain how humour works but this topic is so wide and complicated that it is nearly impossible to cover up all the aspects. This thesis will focus only on verbal humour and especially on humour in films.

1.1 What is humour?

When people say "humour", they usually connect it with laughter. But that is not necessary attached. Humour may also bring along smile or a giggle which is also a part of humour. Sometimes a thing can be humorous, but it does not bring any reaction. This can have many reasons and some of them will be mentioned later. As humour does not always mean laughter, at the same time a laughter does not always mean humour. People laugh when they feel uncomfortable or nervous, they laugh at someone and we also distinguish a hysterical laughter that we can hear in some stressful situations or in mentally disturbed people. We also know some physical reason to laugh, for example a tickle. But the important thing for this thesis is humour, with or without laughter, so let´s get back to this topic. (LaFollette, Hugh, and Niall Shanks)

It is obvious that humour and language are closely connected. Some philosophers even say that humour directly depends on context of the joke. There are many jokes that stand on the audience. Some group of people may found a joke really funny whereas other group of people from a different background and with different experience would not find it funny at all. Another kind of humour is based on ambiguity of language. This is a very common kind of jokes because there are many possibilities how to set it up. But again, there are some people that are not capable of understanding these, especially people with no imagination or, as these jokes are commonly a little bit nasty, prudish people. Some works are humorous not because the thing that it said but because of a set of circumstances that accompany the thing. Like in Swift´s Gulliver´s Travels, where the satirical illustration is funny only thanks to little details that refer to a real society and the author so mocks at politicians of that time. In some other cases the humorous part depends on the background. It is possible that jokes that were really funny a long time ago will no longer be funny because some things in the world changed. This is especially valid for political jokes as the government changes quickly and we do not know the politicians that the joke was about. (LaFollette, Hugh, and Niall Shanks)

Even though most of humour is really based on language, people find many things funny. When we talk about film, there is a silent film that still after long years makes many people laugh. Kids (also some adults) guffaw on animated cartoons and watching a dog doing something silly is also funny. Though films are a common way how to make people laugh, the richest source of humour is personal experience from everyday life. Sometimes is this experience funny, sometimes embarrassing. Some stories are forgotten and some retold again and again for a long time. There are many various types of humour but they have something in common. Some make us laugh and some don´t. In the next chapter we will focus on understanding of humour and features that have some influence in this area. (LaFollette, Hugh, and Niall Shanks)

1.2 What influences the understanding of humour?

This whole chapter is based on an article published by Hugh LaFollette and Niall Shanks. The article fits the topic perfectly and therefore was used to explain things that influence the understanding of humour.

The recognition of humour in speech depends on many things. Many scholars agree that the most important is human belief system. That is the basis for almost everything connected to humour. At first it is necessary to explain, what the belief system is. Basically it is a set of rules that guides you through your life, a network of beliefs that influence your conscious and unconscious behaviour. Every person develops this system during his/her life and it provides a background for comprehension of every joke or funny situation. There is a simple way how to prove this theory. When we compare an unintelligent person and an animal, their sense of humour will differ. The animal has a small, if any, belief system and therefore is incapable of understanding humour. On the other hand even a really silly person is still able to laugh at certain types of jokes because he has some beliefs.

If we compare these two with an intelligent person, we find out that the richness the most important feature of the belief system for understanding not only humour but also many aspects of the daily life. A child is not able to laugh at jokes that are based on knowledge and personal experience of an adult. This ability will come with time and age. But there are some people who are humour resistant probably for a lifetime. People who are unintelligent (who does not understand humour), unimaginative (who does not appreciate it) or humourless (who does not want to see it) will have big difficulties to comprehend any kind of humour if they try.

As well as the belief system, the humour also depends on the context. People do not believe only in one thing. Every belief has a set of related beliefs that support or develop it. The humour depends on circumstances that surround it, beliefs of the speaker and the listener and the relationship between them. But even when all of these aspects support the funniness of the statement, there is still one thing that is inevitable to achieve laughter: the adequate psychic distance. When a person looks at an event right when it happens, it usually does not seem humorous for the "lead actor" but when he looks back after some time, the event can be very amusing. This occurs especially when something embarrassing happens. The person needs to step back and look at himself from other perspective. But this is still not enough to guarantee that people will laugh when you tell the story. To understand how the humour works we must dig a little deeper.

There are many studies about the complexity of human brain. Scholars focus on various parts of the brain and processes that take place here. Between these processes there is one that is really important for this thesis. Basically it is an ability of human attention to jump very quickly from various related sets of beliefs. This oscillation of focus can be called "the flickering". The best known example of humour caused by this flickering is a story retold by witnesses used in TV sitcoms and theatre plays. A viewer firstly sees how the real story happened and then listens to different descriptions of witnesses. Each witness has his own perspective and the viewer starts to participate on the story and oscillate between those perspectives. This fast and active flickering is what makes it funny. Now we know where the humour stems from.

Every person has his own approach to humour. Some people are known as funny some as really boring. But what determines which group do we belong to? There are various factors that influence our understanding of humour and also our ability to be humorous. We have already mentioned the psychic distance. One of the humour "killers" is a pain, which prohibits the person in creating the necessary psychic distance. The brain is focused only on the pain and therefore incapable of flickering. After some time, when the pain vanishes, the person can find the situation very funny. A perfect example is when you run into a signpost while walking down the street. At first it hurts but after a while, when the pain goes off, you must laugh at your gawkiness.

Very interesting is the effect of moods on the humour. The state of mind that we know as the mood is basically a set of beliefs. As we jump between the sets, our mood changes. When we focus on positive beliefs, the mood gets better and vice versa. When we focus on

negative parts of our lives, we are not able to see any other sets of beliefs and we can´t flicker between them, therefore understand humour. In some cases we are in a bad mood but still able to flicker a little bit. Then we understand humour but we still don´t appreciate it fully. Also our other abilities are subdued while we are in a bad mood. When we read a book, it is difficult to sympathize with the characters, when we talk with another person, it is almost impossible to really listen and care. When we try to wonder about our inner problems, we have misrepresented view of the subject and it is difficult for us to focus fully. The same applies to the comprehension of humour; things that would normally be humorous are not under the influence of the bad mood.

As it was mentioned earlier, some people are just not able to understand humour; due to low intelligence, lack of imagination or simply nice-nellyism. Very interesting is the reason connected with the belief system. Some people are humourless just because they are so committed to a certain set of beliefs that they are incapable to see any other sets. This person doesn´t have the needed psychic distance and therefore is not able to flicker. For example when someone blindly believes in some religion, it is impossible for him to understand and appreciate jokes about his beloved god. We can find the same thing with some political activists. They are so committed to their belief that they don´t see the point of any joke related to it.

There is one thing that does not influence the humour but it is closely connected to it. Why are some jokes funny just once and some are immortal? Mainly it is a matter of the topic of the joke. It is funny right now, but after some time, when the topic is not relevant, the point will be gone. A great example is political joke. When an era of a politician ends, he´s forgotten after some time and jokes on him and his policy lose sense.

The humour can be used for many purposes. The main way how to use jokes is as an amusement. It is also very useful when we want to deal with painful experience in life, thanks to humorous distraction we achieve a totally new look on the problem and we are able to handle it better. After some time, we are even able to laugh at the situation and also at our reaction to it. And of course, some people use humour to influence other people. When we want to change someone´s opinion on some ethical, political or social issue, the easiest method is to make fun of it. That way we make it look less serious and therefore less important. (LaFollette, Hugh, and Niall Shanks)

1.3 Verbal humour

When you ask someone what is verbal humour, almost everyone answers correctly. It is a part of our everyday life; we encounter it at work, at home and almost everywhere. There is one term for the verbal part of humour that is used more often – the word play. It involves intentional humour, but also many kinds of mistakes that in consequence cause humour.

1.3.1   Word play

The word play is perfectly explained in the book of Delia Chiaro. Her division is not difficult to understand and it helps to show the basic types of verbal play. Almost this whole chapter draws from her ideas.

There are many ways how to divide the word play. But the simplest division is on the slip of the tongue, the reported slip and the deliberate word play. Each of these categories has its own division and many types of humour that belong to these groups.

The slip of tongue, alias Freudian slip, draws humour from maliciousness of people. It is close to a verbal banana skin, when we, as a bystander, laugh at other person´s mistake or blunder.   Under this category we can place metathesis and also misplaced words. The metathesis is basically the same as spoonerism (will be mentioned later) and misplaced words are not difficult to explain. It is simply a funny exchange of words in a sentence. We all know how that looks like. Some scholars though note that this mistake is conscious and therefore has no place in Freud´s theory about these slips. But his theory is not closely connected to this thesis, so we´re not going to unwind it.

The reported slip is somewhere in between the conscious word play and laughing about someone´s mistake. Everyone sometimes found out that it is really funny to retell a story about someone´s awkwardness. One of the main sources of reported humour are children. They do not understand the humorousness of their action so their parent or other adults often retell these funny stories.

The deliberate word play seems accidental but it is mostly well thought-out. The teller modifies the language or the context of the statement to evoke laughter but still wants to have an effect of a random slip. The main difference between those two is that the slip just happens to be funny accidentally and the deliberate humour just tries to be funny on purpose (sometimes successfully, sometimes not). There are many groups of intentional word play depending on what part of language changes to create the humour. Well known are anagrams, which contain some encoded words that need detection. The original

sentence does not really make sense but after understanding "the code", the true meaning appears. We should also mention palindromes, phrases that are read the same way in both directions. These words or sentences are funny only for some people, others find them just interesting. (Chiaro 1992, 17-31)

Another group of words plays with the sound.

The most common types are:

- alliteration – use of the same sound at the beginning of words in the phrase. It is one of the first word plays that children learn (Peter Piper´s pickled pepper).
- rhyme – as in a poem, it is a use of words with the same or similar sound at the end
- assonance – use of words with an internal vowel sounding the same
- consonance – use of words with an internal consonant sounding the same
- repetition – repetition of word or a phrase to intensify the meaning (Susan)

When we play with lexis, there are three important subsets. Homophones, homonyms and polysemes. Homophones are words which are pronounced the same way but have different meaning. We often use them to create jokes based on their multiple meaning and they are also common in poetry. Homonyms are homophones and at the same time homographs (they are written the same way). They have the same form but do not mean the same thing. Polysemes are similar to homonyms. A word is called polysemic if it has more related meanings.

There many other ways how to create a humour using some changes in the language. We can for example play with the syntax. In this area we usually play on the ambiguity of words to achieve laughter. Thanks to the richness of almost every language, it is not difficult to create many word plays. And of course, the words are not the only thing to play with. We can change whole meaning, just by misunderstanding it. Like in the well known joke when a customs officer asks if a person have something to declare (Cigarettes, alcohol?) and he takes it as an offer (No, thank you). (Chiaro 1992, 37-43)

1.3.2   Common types of word play

A lot of people use the word play in everyday conversation, at work and at home. Here are some of the most frequently used types of humour.

- absurdity – type of humour that is based on ridiculous situations and foolish language. A perfect example is Monty Python´s Flying Circus. (Susan)

- anecdote – exciting story that is narrated to help the speaker make a point. Anecdotes penetrate almost every kind of verbal humour and they are often used to variegate any speech. (Adams, Tyrone)

- banter – harmless teasing between people, exchange of funny comments. Sometimes there are other people that watch this discussion and laugh at it. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- blend word - a connection of two (or more) words that creates a new word with a new meaning. A well known example is a blending of the smoke and the fog creating the smog.

- blunder – a joke based on a mistake of other person. This type counts with human maliciousness. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- conundrum – a word play that has no standard end because the answer is a joke (Oracle Education Foundation)

- exclusive humour – a humour of a certain group of people. This kind of humour can develop at work, among friends, during some collective activity etc. These people often use jargon and others have difficulties to understand it. (Susan)

- hyperbole – humour achieved by extreme exaggeration (Oracle Education Foundation)

- irony – one of the main parts of humour. The speaker says a complete opposite of what he means and the listener understands that the original meaning is only a cover. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- malapropism – a sentence or a phrase with a misused word. One word is replaced with another word that has a similar sound like the original one. (Susan)

- parody – a copy or imitation of something or someone. The parody usually exaggerates the situation and tries to make it ridiculous. But it is funny only when the listener knows who was imitated. (Susan)

- practical joke – a joke that happens. It is a trick that some person experiences and the situation becomes funny. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- pun – a humorous word play that draws from ambiguity of language. It uses homophones, homographs, polysemes and other linguistic devices that deal with the meaning. (Susan)

- recovery – a combination of blunder and a wit. Sometimes when a person makes mistake and then tries to correct himself quickly, things get funny. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- repartee – a way how to reply brightly. It sometimes takes the form of offence. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- satire – a kind of humour that makes fun of something in a critical way. The satirical jokes want to show a foolishness of some thing by attacking it. One of the frequently used tools is sarcasm. (Adams, Tyrone)

- situational humour – a humour that draws from personal experience. The listener did never hear the story before, so it is surprising and he can also get used to the speaker better, because the life experience of people are similar. (Oracle Education Foundation)

- spoonerism – conscious or unconscious change of sounds in a sentence or a phrase. As mentioned earlier, the spoonerism belongs to the category of the slip of tongue and therefore makes people laugh on some other person´s mistake. (Susan)

- understatement – an intentional minimizing of something that is usually large. It is not supposed to be hurtful but funny. The listener knows what the intention is and therefore he laughs. We also know overstatement, which is the opposite. (Susan)

- wit – basically means the same as word play. The wit includes sarcasm, irony, satire, repartee and other types of humour that are based on quick reactions and funny remarks. (Oracle Education Foundation)

1.4 Nonverbal humour

Nonverbal communication is one of the main parts of our life. Even when we do not realise that we use it, it is still one of the basic ways of expressing your opinion or mood. Therefore it is not surprising that film comedies are also full of nonverbal humour. Some is obvious (gestures, facial expressions, etc.) and some we barely notice (posture, proxemics, etc.). Sometimes the nonverbal part only provides a background for a verbal joke; sometimes the joke can occur completely without words. (The New York Times Company) There are many types of nonverbal communication and humour. Here are some of the best known:

- facial expressions – one the most usual parts of expressing a mood. Many habits can differ from culture to culture, but facial expressions are the same wherever you look.

- gestures – important to etch in the meaning of a statement. The most widespread are pointing, waving and showing a number on fingers. Other gestures vary throughout the world.

- paralinguistics – vocal part of speech but not the language. Paralinguistic signals include the tone of voice, loudness, inflection and pitch. Each of these, especially the tone of voice, can change the meaning (frequently used in irony).

- body language and posture – subconscious confirmation of the statement. Understanding of the body language can help you to influence people, for example to make them laugh.

- proxemics – the same as "personal space". Every person has his/her own personal space, whereof size is modified by many factors (personality, social norms, etc.).

- eye gaze – eyes can tell a lot. Staring, blinking and looking can show emotions, even enmity, attraction, love, etc. These emotions can intensify the humorous situations. (The New York Times Company)

2 WOODY ALLEN AND MONTY PYTHON

2.1 Woody Allen

Woody Allen is a brilliant American actor, director, writer, musician, comedian and playwright. His work is known all over the world. He is best known for foolish comedies he wrote and directed and also for funny-looking main characters he impersonated. Thanks to his ability to deal with every theme that can be ever imagined and concentration during film-making, he became one of the most recognized directors of this period.

His original name is Allan Stewart Konigsberg and he was born in December 1935. He grew up in New York City and he started to publish his works in magazines under the new name. After two years of joke-writing, he tried a television comedy programme and a stand-up comedy. Than he was asked to write a screenplay, but the final film was not much similar to his text so he decided to take a total control of his films. (Lax 2008, 9-10)

2.1.1 Woody Allen as a screenwriter

Woody Allen started his film carrier as a screenwriter in 1966 with *What´s New Pussycat*. His next significant work was *What´s Up, Tiger Lily?*, a comedy based on a Japanese action film. He changed the plot so the film was about secret salad recipe and it became a funny story. His first original script was *Take the Money and Run*. It was also the first film, where he tried three sides of film-making. He wrote it, directed it and also performed the main character. In 1971 he wrote *Bananas*, a comedy about a man accidentally involved in rebellion in Latin America. Next screenplay was *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)* based on a book of David Reuben. Some critics say that the best film of Allen ever is *Annie Hall*, which he wrote in 1977. It won four Oscars and it is set in Woody´s beloved New York. His admiration to this city is really perceptible in *Manhattan* which won two Oscars. The 80s were very rich for Woody Allen, every year at least one film. The most significant were *A Midsummer Night´s Sex Comedy*, where he starred together with Mia Farrow and *September* which was influenced mainly by films of Federico Fellini and Ingmar Bergman. In the next years, Woody wrote many films, comedies like *Mighty Aphrodite*, *Everyone Says I Love You*, *Celebrity* or *Small Time Crooks* and other genres like *Match Point* or *Cassandra´s Dream*. He also participated on many screenplays of other authors, like *Casino Royal*, a famous James Bond film. (Amazon.com)

2.1.2 Woody Allen as a director

Woody Allen is a really extraordinary director. Every actor fights for even the smallest role in his films. Allen cooperated with many people but only few had the opportunity to cooperate with him again. His first attempt as a director was *What´s Up, Tiger Lily?* and till then he had made many films. Almost one film a year. The richest years were 1987-90 when he directed 6 films and also year 2001. In this year he contributed to television programme with *The Concert for New York City* and *Sound from a Town I Love*. The best known films that he directed are *Take the Money and Run, Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask), Match Point* and of course *Annie Hall*. (Amazon.com)

2.1.3 Woody Allen as an actor

Woody Allen is not only a brilliant screenwriter and very talented director. He is also a gifted actor. He starred in many of his own films in the leading role, but also acted in films of other authors. During 1970s all his films were crazy comedies where he interpreted shy, funny and unlucky characters that had their roots in silent grotesque. His bankrupt businessman in *Bananas*, an owner of a shop who wakes up after two hundred years of being frozen in *Sleeper* and many other characters contributed to his increasing popularity. In the end of 1970s, his characters start to be a little bit different. They are not just funny, but they also show everyday problems of a common person. They argue and laugh, love and cheat on each other and they have to deal with everything that comes in their way. Woody wanted to show all these things. But still he stayed very amusing. Neurotic comic who commemorates his love to a songstress in Oscar *Annie Hall*, divorced comic who is caught between love to an adult women and a student in *Manhattan* and film director who recaps his life and carrier in *Stardust Memories* were all just attempts to the world Allen´s inner feelings. Woody found himself in this kind of films so he tried to deal with relationship between people and moral and ethical problems of human soul in all films where he performed in following years. He was able to present these themes with well chosen jokes and gentle exaggeration in *A Midsummer Night´s Sex Comedy*, *Zelig* about a mysterious man who changes his personality, in tragicomedy about fates of three sisters in *Hannah and Her Sisters* and many others. His last film by this time was *Scoop* in 2006 where he plays a magician dragged in an investigation of murders. (Amazon.com)

2.2 Monty Python

Monty Python is a group of six comedians (Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle and Michael Palin) who for the first time joined in a television comedy show on BBC in 1969. Whole team was responsible for both writing and performing their work. They experimented with the form, creating new rules of television comedy. Three of them are even among the 50 best comedians ever.

2.2.1   Life of members of Monty Python

Terence Vance Gilliam is an American cartoonist from Minneapolis in Minnesota. He was born in 1940 and he is an animator, screenwriter, director and actor. Terry is known as an extravagant but great director and a perfectionist. Terry Jones was born in North Wales in 1942. He studied medieval literature before joining Monty Python and then he became an author, director, actor and screenwriter. He on his own directed two Python films and also *Eric the Viking* based on his own book for children. (Fogg, Adam)

Graham Chapman, born in Leicester in England, was an actor and screenwriter. He was alcohol addicted for a long time, but he cured before shooting of *The Life of Brian* started. His carrier ended with his death in 1989. He died of throat cancer when he was 48 years old. John Marwood Cleese was born in Weston-Super-Mare in England in 1939 and he is perhaps the most popular of the Pythons. His company Video Arts Ltd. specialized in funny training films. Eric Idle, born in 1943 in British South Shields is also an actor and screenwriter. After the era of Monty Python, he continued in successful carrier of actor in comedies mainly abroad. Michael Edward Palin was born in 1943 in Sheffield. This British actor and screenwriter is best known for his appearance in *A Fish Called Wanda*, where he played stammering Ken. (Fogg, Adam)

2.2.2   Their work

Monty Python as we know it now started by *Monty Python´s Flying Circus*. In forty-five episodes we can see the most normal comedy show of that time. As we can see also later in Python films, part of the episodes were animations of Terry Gilliam which were mixed with staged parts. The main theme of this popular comedy is eccentricity of British higher society with a little flicker of politics. As all members of the group were very educated, in the series are noticeable references to philosophy and literature. Thanks to humour impossible to categorise that occurred in the Flying Circus, the term Pythonesque had to be invented. Most of the characters were played by members of group themselves, even most

of the woman characters. Only few times somebody else was allowed to enter this reserved circle. This wonderful series ended in 1974 after the departure of John Cleese. (Joe and Mike)

At the end of the Flying Circus, the comedy group started to make films. They put a lot from the comedy series to their filming. First film was *And Now for Something Different* and it was in fact series of sketches originally from the Flying Circus that were reworked for cinemas. Next work of Monty Python was *Monty Python and The Holy Grail*, a parody of Arthurian legends. This film was really a success and the audience hankered for another one. And so, four years late, *Monty Python´s Life of Brian* came into the world. This is in fact not a parody of Jesus and his message. It is a parody of stupid people that follow their dreamt-of Messiah no matter what. Jesus himself is in the film shown with respect. The last film of the Python as a whole is *Monty Python´s The Meaning of Life*. This film is near to Flying Circus, made from sketches and it is full of black humour. This is the last time we can see Chapman in the film together with the rest of the group. After that, Monty Python contributed on various charitable actions (The Secret Policeman´s Ball benefit shows) and then they all set out for solo paths. Every member participated on various films, shows for television and many other actions. Many people hoped that Monty Python will reunite again, but these hopes ended in 1989 with the death of Graham Chapman.

(Joe and Mike)

II. ANALYSIS

3   ANALYSIS OF FILMS OF W.ALLEN AND MONTY PYTHON

The analysis of humour in films is difficult. Every person takes other things as funny. Especially the films of Woody Allen and Monty Python are so specific that the public often disagrees on their benefit to the world comedy. Some say that Pythons are vulgar and rude some think that their frankness and straightness are a breath of fresh air. Also opinions on Allen´s work vary. Generally we can say that his films have a complex plot and many unusual characters, but to enjoy them fully, the viewer has to have the same sense of humour as Woody.

This thesis focuses on the most characteristic features of comedies of Woody Allen and Monty Python. The analysis is a result of repeated thorough watching of two films typical for these comedy masters and it is above all based on the scripts. But as every analysis of humour, it is subjective and everyone should make his/her own opinion on these films.

3.1 Small Time Crooks

This film is one of the classically narrated stories of Woody Allen. There is a parallel between this film and the previous robber film *Take the Money and Run*. Contrary to the majority of the Allen´s films, the main character is not as intelligent as the previous ones.

3.1.1   Plot

The film tells a story of a married couple Frenchy and Ray and their friends. In the first part, Ray and his friends Danny and Tommy, all former criminals, try to dig a tunnel from a shop for rent to neighbouring bank and to deflect attention, they open a cookie shop, where Frenchy bakes her homemade cookies. The tunnelling goes really slow and when they finally dig out they find out that they ended in some clothing shop. A policeman catches them and he has got the idea of focusing on the cookies because there lays the big money.

A year after that, they are all very rich and the cookie shop is no longer a shop but a chain of factories and stores all over the country. And here comes the biggest problem. Ray wanted to earn a lot of money and then move to Florida and relax on the beach but Frenchy, who is in fact the owner of everything, wants to be someone important, someone honourable.

On one of the parties that they arrange, Frenchy meets David, an art dealer, who starts to give her lessons about the art, music, wine and everything that would make her smarter. Ray in the meantime hangs around with Frenchy´s cousin May, who is really stupid and in

some ways funny. Thanks to big differences between the husband and wife, the couple splits up and Frenchy travels to Europe with David. Meanwhile Ray wants to go back to his previous style of living and persuades May to steel with him a necklace of a socialite lady that invited them to a party. Everything goes almost according to the plan but than, as ever, things do not go well for Ray. He wants to exchange the real necklace with the false one but someone comes and he puts them both back in the safe. When he comes back to finish the plan, he does not know which is the real one. He panics and eventually he chooses the forgery.

While Frenchy is gone, her accountants run away with all her money and she has to go bankrupt. David leaves her when he finds out because she´s worthless for him now. After this terrible incident, Ray returns to their common home which they now have to sell to pay the debts and makes everything alright. Frenchy admits that she was blind and that Ray is the only one for her. They sell a diamond cigarette case that she gave to David but was forced to steel it back from him, when he refused to give it back. The happy couple will earn some money and decide to finally go to Florida.

3.1.2 Analysis

The most of the humorous situations in this film are based on banter. The exchange of funny remarks between Frenchy and Ray bring a lot of humour into the film. Right at the beginning of the story, when Ray arrives home, we witness one of these teases:

RAY: Hey, Frenchy, I´m home!

FRENCHY: Who´s that?

RAY: Who´s that? It´s the pope! I always wanted to see your apartment.

They really love each other, but since Ray has been in prison, Frenchy is a bit distrustful. And therefore when he comes with a chocolate box, she feels that something is not right:

RAY: I got you chocolate.

FRENCHY: How come?

RAY: What do you mean, "How come" These are from Belgium. They´re handmade by "Belgiumites."

FRENCHY: Tell it to the marines! You´re up to something. You get caught hitting on a waitress?

An ordinary wife would say thank you and be happy for the chocolates but Allen´s characters usually react unexpectedly. Many people consider his films hilarious because they find them so similar to their own lives but always with something in addition.

One of the basic tools that Woody uses is irony. This is completely understandable because it is a common part of our conversations. In Small Time Crooks, Frenchy is the most ironic person:

RAY: I got a brilliant idea. I´m gonna make us rich.

FRENCHY: How you gonna make us rich? Rob a bank?

In this case, Frenchy meant it ironically, but it eventually turned out to be true.

The next tool Allen uses a lot is that the characters state an obvious fact. But the situation and the context are set up to evoke laughter. In this dialogue Frenchy mocks at intelligence of Ray´s friends and the obvious fact is meant like an insult:

FRENCHY: Where are those bums gonna get that kind of stake?

RAY: They´re not bums. Maybe they didn´t go to Harvard.

FRENCHY: Harvard? They never completed kindergarten because they were drafted.

RAY: You´re such a snob, Frenchy. For God´s sakes! Denny´s not stupid ´cause he drives a truck.

FRENCHY: No, he´s stupid because he has a low I.Q.

Playing with words or with the meaning is a popular way how to create a funny dialogue in almost every comedy. Frenchy´s caustic humour provides a perfect background for various word plays:

RAY: Tommy´s got street smarts.

FRENCHY: He is street smart. His brain´s got potholes.

This whole argument shows perfectly the eccentricity of Allen´s character. Every time he tries to explain something he gesticulates a lot and gibbers. When something does not go the way he wants, he starts to talk like a brawler:

RAY: I don´t get your "agreeance" on this, I count to three, there´s gonna be trouble.

FRENCHY: You can count to fifty-three! I did a lot of nails for that money, and it´s all we got.

RAY: That´s what you want to do all your life? Nails?

FRENCHY: Take a hike, okay?

RAY: I´m telling you, I´m countin´.

FRENCHY: Oh, yeah?

RAY: If I lose it, you´re gone.

FRENCHY: Oh, I´m quaking in my panty hose.

A perfect example of irony is one of the dialogues between Frenchy and Ray. It is obvious that she does not really think that he is valuable. The true meaning is a complete opposite and she disparages his profession. The irony can be easily recognizes because no one usually thinks that dishwashers are valuable and especially not Frenchy.

RAY: I gotta get some air. I´m going up on the roof.

FRENCHY: Don´t jump. You´re too valuable as a dishwasher.

One of the sources of humour in this film is the simplicity of one of Ray´s friends, Denny. He is a little bit dumb and his comments on various occasions are really hilarious:

DENNY: You know you´re workin´ with a genius.

RAY: I told him that.

DENNY: I mean, we´re all smart, but he wears glasses.

Of course that the humour in Allen´s films does not lie only in irony and word play. Also the behaviour of characters and their contretemps make the film funny; when Denny dropped a box of dynamite or when they started to drill the tunnel into the bank and they drilled a water pipe. Majority of characters in this film are very clumsy and that creates a lot of humorous situations. This is one of Allen´s characteristic features and his films are easy to recognize among others thanks to these characters.

As in other comedies, here is also used understatement to evoke humour. When something is serious, a lite approach to the problem helps to deal with it. This depreciation is used when they drill the pipe and Ray goes completely wet for some sand bags. In this case the understatement covers what is going on in the basement:

RAY: There´s a slight leak.

And also his commentary of this event later that night is a little bit mild:

RAY: Okay, so we got off to a shaky start.

FRENCHY: Yeah, I´d say it was shaky. Tomorrow bring a bathing suit.

The degree of Ray´s foolishness shows up fully in the tunnel with Denny. This humour is not based on any word play or shift in the meaning. It is just a combination of human foppishness and simplicity of Danny´s and Ray´s characters.

RAY: You´ve got your hat on backwards.

DENNY: So?

RAY: "So?" The flashlight goes in the front.

DENNY: It looks cooler like this.

RAY: Are you a jerk? What do you mean in looks cooler?

DENNY: It´s more stylish than that. Look at that.

RAY: You think so?

DENNY: Yeah. Turn it around. This is chic like this. Look at that. That´s cool.

RAY: You got a mirror?

When Ray mentions May, Frenchy´s cousin, he says "she´s dumb like a horse or a dog or something". When we meet her for the first time, his opinion proves to be true. Her first sentences are at least unusual:

COP: You´re new here, huh?

MAY: Not really. This is my first day.

Here again people laugh at stupidity of other people.

After they give up on the robbery, they become cookie magnates. The whole company is different from others. The reportage about the firm is full of unusual opinions on the company management and the reporter does not miss out opportunity to point it out.

RAY: The cookies have a wonderful smell, a fresh smell. And that´s all put on with a chemical spray.

TOMMY: The board meets once or twice a week, and we take up important issues. Last week the toilet on the fourth floor wouldn´t flush. So the board voted on getting a plumber.

REPORTER: Was it you who came with the idea to advertise baked goods in Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler Magazine?

DENNY: I figured if a guy´s staring at a naked piece of tail, and he sees the breasts and legs, he´s gonna start to salivate. It´s human nature. So if he´s salivating, he turns the page and comes across a picture of, say, our pistachio cream cookies. He thinks maybe that´s why he´s drooling. You understand? It´s psychology. It´s science. It´s like Pablo´s Theory, you know, with the dog when he feeds him.

REPORTER: There is Benjamin Borkowski, vice president in charge of plant safety. (he used to be a fire raiser)

BENJAMIN: First thing I did was make sure the building was fireproof.

REPORTER: May Sloan is in charge of public relations and also physical therapy. I understand public relations. But physical therapy?

MAY: All the chocolate chips are put in the cookies by hand. And that´s really hard on the back and leg muscles. I do deep massage.

After they become rich, one of the basic sources of humour is the contrast of two social classes. Even when they earn a lot of money, Ray and Frenchy still do not belong to the higher society. Frenchy wants to be a patron and so she arranges a soirée. But the differences are too visible and Ray does not help much with his behaviour:

BUTLER: Can I get you drinks?

GUEST:Just some Evian. Unless you have Perrier?

BUTLER: Certainly.

RAY: We got anything you want. Whatever you want, you can have. I usually take tap water ´cause the fluoride keeps your teeth from rotting. Otherwise, they´ll drop right out on you, honey.

And Frenchy with her endeavour to catch the fancy of everyone is a bit too intrusive:

GUEST: Did you do the place yourself?

FRENCHY: Yes. They say I have a flair for decorating. You know this rug lights up?

During the party Ray tries to enliven the fun with some anecdotes. The guests did not find them funny at all. Anecdotes are used in many kinds of speeches to enrich it and conciliate the audience.

RAY: The guy says to him, "What do you do for a living?" He says, "I´m a momback." "What´s a momback?" He says, "I stand behind the truck. I say, momback, momback."

This party is full of various collisions of two worlds. The contrast of formal and informal style is evident in every dialogue. Not only words but also intonation and gestures are completely different.

Another really humorous part of Ray´s character is exaggeration. His overreactions make many situations in this film very funny and sometimes he seems a bit annoying thanks to this feature. For example when Frenchy buys a new painting that Ray does not like:

RAY: What is this?

FRENCHY: It´s a Damon Dexter, a discovery of David´s.

RAY: I say it´s depressing.

FRENCHY: You wouldn´t know a masterpiece if it bit you in the ass.

RAY: I refuse to look at this, Frenchy.

FRENCHY: What is that supposed to mean?

RAY: It means as long as this is on that wall, I don´t look at that wall.

FRENCHY: You´re a head case!

RAY: I´ll bet David made a big profit on this.

FRENCHY: Hey, whose cookies pay the rent, huh?

RAY: Stevens, come here. Tell me what time it is. I no longer look at this wall.

When the married couple break up, Ray starts to pass time with May and their conversations are really amusing because May does not understand what Ray´s trying to explain. In one dialogue between those two, we do not really know if May is serious or if it´s only another example of her foolishness:

RAY: Are you happy being rich?

MAY: It´s okay. I got a lot of charge accounts and a really nice apartment. I got a maid. I´m still a little lonely, though.

RAY: Yeah? How come?

MAY: That guy I was seeing left me...because he just was so embarrassed about being poor. And he hated that I´d pay for everything. So then I stopped paying. And actually, that´s when he left me.

This is a perfect example of situational humour that tells something that actually happened. When May narrates stories from her life, they are usually funny thanks to her naive view of life.

In the rest of the film we can find many repetitions of various types of jokes, Allen has the ability to make almost every situation funny. At the end of the film we see humour without words. At the party where Ray wants to steel a necklace, he tries to behave unobtrusively, but the more he tries, the more he attracts attention. His repeated attempts to walk up the stairs are similar to a silent grotesque. Allen uses style of silent movies a lot in his production because it perfectly fits the characters that he likes to impersonate.

3.2 Monty Python and the Holy Grail

The Holy Grail is the second film of Pythons. It is a parody of Arthurian legends and it is the first Python film with a compact plot.

3.2.1 Plot

The film tells the story of King Arthur. At the beginning he and his trusty servant Patsy seek brave knights to join him in the court at Camelot. The first castle they visit has very strange inhabitants. King Arthur tries to explain the purpose of his journey but the soldier on the curtain wall is interested only on the coconuts they use to make horse-sound. When a heated discussion about swallows starts, King Arthur rather leaves. After a brief insight into the life of the poor, Arthur comes along next castle. He asks a man about the knight who lives there and gets a lecture about rights of subordinates and the system of government. In the next village, Arthur finally meets a brave knight that wants to join his court: Sir Bedevere. He is very wise and solves a witch problem in the village in an unusual way. In an interlude that follows, other knights join the group and they proceed together to the castle Camelot. When they reach the destination, they change the plan. On a way from the Camelot, God gives them a sacred task to seek the Holy Grail.

First castle on their journey is inhabited by French soldiers who obviously do not like English very much. Because they tell Arthur that the Grail is in their captivity, the Knights of the Round Table try to attack the castle and than creep into it by a ruse, but at the end they have to run away. Now there is a scene with historian that explains that after this debacle, knights decide to split up and search for the Grail individually, but he is killed by a knight before he is can finish his speech.

First we follow the steps of Sir Robin and his minstrels. Their panegyric songs turn into mocking after he runs away from a three-headed knight. The Tale of Sir Galahad the Pure takes place at The Castle Anthrax. He mistakenly thoughts that the Grail is there but he only finds plenty of young women, that have very specific "interest". Before he loses his chastity he is saved in the loose by Sir Launcelot and they proceed together. Meanwhile, King Arthur and Sir Bedevere speak with an old man who tells them about an enchanter who knows where the Grail is. When they proceed, they meet a very eccentric group of knights: the Knights who say ´Ni´ who seem to be very infatuated with shrubberies. To pass through the wood alive, two knights have to find a shrubbery (one that looks nice and not too expensive).

In the next scene we can watch The Tale of Sir Launcelot. During his search, he stops to save a prince (he thought he saves a princess) from involuntary marriage. He almost gets married himself but escapes early thanks to his servant Concorde. Meanwhile King Arthur and Sir Bedevere search for a shrubbery. When they finally get possession of it, they

reunite with Sir Robin. But the Knights who say ´Ni´ want another test. So they get rid of them, pass the wood and they meet Sir Launcelot and Sir Galahad and proceed together. Seasons change and they are still on their journey. And finally, after a year, they meet the enchanter who will take them to the cave of Caerbannog, where they should find a final clue to the place where The Holy Grail is hidden. After an exhausting fight with a rabbit they enter the cave and read a holy sign that leads them to the Bridge of Death. Only three of them were able to cross the bridge: Sir Launcelot, King Arthur and Sir Bedevere. Sir Launcelot is arrested by police for murder of a historian. King Arthur and Sir Bedevere finally find the Castle of Aaaagggh which was mentioned in the holy sign. But when they want to enter, our familiar French soldier starts to swear again. King Arthur with the whole army of knights and soldiers are ready to attack the castle when a police truck drives in the scene, policemen arrest King Arthur and Sir Bedevere and confiscate all weapons. At the end the cameraman is forced to stop filming.

3.2.2 Analysis

The humour in this film starts before the story itself. During the credits, there are subtitles in some strange language that should probably look like Swedish but it is still recognisable as English language with a twisted spelling. At first it is all right but then the content of the subtitles changes from the regular ones to some propaganda. The creators of the subtitles advertise Sweden (Wi nøt trei a høliday in Sweden this yër?) and then tell a story about a moose. Then suddenly the credits stop and there is an apology (We apologise for the fault in the subtitles. Those responsible have been sacked.). But the next subtitles are also wrong and therefore we can read another apology (We apologise again for the fault in the subtitles. Those responsible for sacking the people, who have just been sacked, have been sacked.). Then the credits continue without the subtitles until they are interrupted again with another announcement (The directors of the firm hired to continue the credits after the other people had been sacked, wish it to be known that they have just been sacked. The credits have been completed in an entirely different style at great expense and at the last minute.) and then replaced by new credits. This is typical for Pythons. They find humour on places that no one would expect.

When the story starts we can see a sign (England 93^2 A.D.) and hear for the first time the horse/coconut sound that is the beginning of discussion later in the scene. We witness a conversation between King Arthur and two soldiers in the castle. The humorousness of the

situation rises from soldier´s neglect of King Arthur´s announcement that he is a king. The only thing that soldiers care about are the coconuts that servant Patsy uses to create a sound of clacking hooves. This is the first time that we evolve the theory of migrating swallows carrying a coconut. In this conversation we can hear sentences that contain things that were not known at that time (temperate zone, weight ratios, air-speed velocity). The contrast of these recent terms and the medieval setting is a perfect example of the Python´s humour.

The next scene is based on a little bit unusual way how to get rid of the dead. A problem occurs when one of the dead is not exactly dead. Pythons wanted to show here the horrible conditions of the poor at that time in a bit exaggerated way.

While King Arthur continues in his journey, he meets peasant Dennis. The scene starts with a bunter (based on Arthur´s mistake):

ARTHUR: Old woman!

DENNIS: Man!

ARTHUR: Man. Sorry. What knight live in that castle over there?

DENNIS: I´m thirty-seven.

ARTHUR: I... what?

DENNIS: I´m thirty-seven. I´m not old.

ARTHUR: Well, I can´t just call you 'man'.

Arthur´s mistake at the beginning leads to an argument about rights of inferiors and the system of government. In that dialogue we can hear some recent terms again. When we look at historical comedies in general, unexpected terms or tools are used very frequently because the contrast between the past and the present is hilarious. Dennis as a human rights activist hates the royalty:

DENNIS: Oh king, eh, very nice. And how d´you get that, eh? By exploiting the workers! By ´anging on to outdated imperialist dogma which perpetuates the economic and social differences in our society.

This approach was unthinkable at that time and also the words he uses later (dictatorship, self-perpetuating autocracy, working class, etc.) are too advanced for a poor worker from the medieval times. One of the most humorous parts of this scene is Dennis´ interpretation of the famous legend about The Lady of the Lake and Excalibur:

DENNIS: Listen, strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for system of government.

All people at that time believed in myths and nobody would ever doubt the right of Arthur to be a king. A realistic approach to this story turns out to be really humorous because majority of people never thought about it this way.

King and his servant proceed and they meet The Black Knight who guards a bridge. Arthur is forced to fight him. During this bloody clash, we can see many humorous dialogues. When Arthur cuts Black Knight´s first arm off, there is an example of understatement:

ARTHUR: Now stand aside, worthy adversary.

BLACK KNIGHT: ´Tis but a scratch.

ARTHUR: A scratch? Your arm´s off

BLACK KNIGHT: No, it isn´t.

ARTHUR: Well, what´s that then?

BLACK KNIGHT: I´ve had worse.

Than the Knight loses his second arm and starts to kick Arthur with his boots. The exchange of mocking remarks that follows is called banter and in this dialogue it is combined with understatement.

ARTHUR: You are indeed brave, Sir Knight, but the fight is mine.

BLACK KNIGHT: Oh, had enough, eh?

ARTHUR: Look, you stupid bastard. You´ve got no arms left.

BLACK KNIGHT: Yes I have.

ARTHUR: Look!

BLACK KNIGHT: Just a flesh wound. (Still kicking Arthur)

ARTHUR: Look, stop that.

BLACK KNIGHT: Chicken!

King Arthur starts to be a little bit angry now and so he cuts his enemy´s leg off. But because the Knight is really keen on guarding the bridge, he fights on, hopping at Arthur and trying to strike him to the ground. In this dialogue, we can see a real ridicule:

BLACK KNIGHT: Right. I´ll do you for that!

ARTHUR: You´ll what?

BLACK KNIGHT: Come here!

ARTHUR: What are you going to do, bleed on me?

BLACK KNIGHT: I´m invincible!

ARTHUR: You´re a looney.

The fight ends when the Knight loses his last limb. He lies on the ground, still thinking that he is able to fight and declares:

BLACK KNIGHT: All right, we´ll call it a draw.

ARTHUR: Come, Patsy.

BLACK KNIGHT: Oh, I see. Running away, eh? Come back here and take what´s coming to you. I´ll bite your legs off!

We do not really know if the Knight is just pretending that he is not seriously wounded or if he does not really think that his wounds are serious. His assurance that he is alright and able to fight on therefore results as either stupid or brave. In both cases his approach enriches the fight with a lot of humour. This whole scene is really funny thanks to the Knights obsession for the bridge and his absurd endeavour to fight in any case. These distinctive characters are typical for Python films and create their specific atmosphere.

When we finally meet first knight that will join Arthur on his castle Camelot, he solves a quarrel in a village. Before we witness his wise solution of the problem, a perceptive observer can notice a reference to the beginning of the film when Sir Bedevere lashes a coconut on a string on a swallow. The humorousness of "the witch case" stems from the absurdity of Bedevere´s thinking. He connects seemingly random facts to create nonsensical logical relationship and villagers do not lag behind:

BEDEVERE: So, why do witches burn?

VILLAGER: B... ´cause they´re made of... wood?

BEDEVERE: So, how do we tell whether she is made of wood?

VILLAGER: Build a bridge out of her.

BEDEVERE: Ah, but can you not also make bridges out of stone?

VILLAGER: Oh, yeah.

BEDEVERE: Does wood sink in water?

VILLAGER: No, it floats!

BEDEVERE: What also floats in water?

ARTHUR: A duck!

BEDEVERE: Exactly. So, logically...

VILLAGER: If...she...weights...the same as a duck...she´s made of wood.

BEDEVERE: And therefore?

VILLAGERS: A witch!

In the narrative interlude that follows are two of Pythons´ favourite tools. At the beginning they point out that this is only a film by naming the book showing King Arthur´s journey "The Book of the Film". Then, in the listing of knights that joined Arthur, authors play with the names of knights (Sir Robin the-not-quite-so-brave-as-Sir-Launcelot and Sir Not-appearing-in this film). The word play is one of Pythons´ specialties.

When they finally get to Camelot, they decide rather not to go there. The reason is a silly musical show performed by knights. Pythons often complement their films with short pieces of various genres of course with their own signature. One of the techniques they use really often is animation. The next scene, where knights speak with God, is also partly animated. As usual, Pythons dealt with it in a special way. The God hates whole worship and grovelling and he rejects all that. They make fun of God but only moderately:

GOD: Arthur! Arthur, King of the Britons! Oh, don´t grovel! One thing I can´t stand, it´s people grovelling.

ARTHUR: Sorry.

GOD: And don´t apologize. Every time I try to talk to someone it´s 'sorry this' and 'forgive me that' and 'I´m not worthy'. What are you doing now?!

ARTHUR: I´m averting my eyes, O Lord.

GOD: Well, don´t. It´s like those miserable Psalms ... they´re so depressing. Now knock it off!

The first castle they reach is occupied by French. In this scene the guards use a French accent and there is a reference to a historic event (Grecian horse). History is one of the main sources for Python films because it is easy to parody. They made two historical films about two different historical periods known for two significant historical personalities (King Arthur, Jesus) and they became quite good in this genre.

One of the things that distinguish Monty Python´s films from the rest of the comedy world is that they don´t take the film itself too seriously. They often interrupt it with something that is completely beyond the story. In the Holy Grail they used a commentary of a historian to explain a shift in the quest. To raise the humorousness, he is killed by a knight before he is able to finish the commentary.

In many films we can see an argument of contradictory characters but Pythons made this argument funny by putting three characters in one person in The Tale of Sir Robin. In tales and legends we are accustomed to triple-headed giants but only few are funny. This triple-headed knight is really unbalanced and very quarrelsome:

ALL HEADS: You´re a Knight of the Round Table?

ROBIN: I am.

LEFT HEAD: In that case I shall have to kill you.

MIDDLE HEAD: Shall I?

RIGHT HEAD: Oh, I don´t think so.

MIDDLE HEAD: Well, what do I think?

LEFT HEAD: I think kill him.

RIGHT HEAD: Oh, let´s be nice to him.

After another Gilliam´s animation we follow the steps of Sir Galahad the Pure. Here we can see that Pythons are not afraid of any theme because this tale is full of sexual overtones:

ZOOT: Sir Galahad! You would not be so ungallant as to refuse out hospitality.

GALAHAD: Well, I-- I—uh—

ZOOT: Oh, I am afraid our life must seem very dull and quiet compared to yours. We are but eight score young blondes and brunettes, all between sixteen and nineteen-and-a-half, cut off in this castle with no one to protect us. Oooh. It is a lonely life: bathing, dressing, undressing, making exciting underwear.

In the middle of this scene, there is again a reference that this is only a film:

DINGO: Do you think this scene should have been cut? We were so worried when the boys were writing it, but now, we´re glad. It´s better than some of the previous scenes, I think.

LEFT HEAD: At least ours was better visually.

DENNIS: At least ours was committed. It wasn´t just a string of pussy jokes.

OLD MAN: Get on with it.

TIM THE ENCHANTER: Yes, get on with it!

ARMY OF KNIGHTS: Yes, get on with it!

DINGO: Oh, I am enjoying this scene.

GOD: Get on with it!

The Tale of Sir Launcelot is based on a typical knight story, where a brave knight saves a princess before a marriage. In Pythons´ version, Sir Launcelot saves a prince and almost gets married himself. We can notice this type of humour in almost every film of this group. They are not afraid to make fun of traditional stories and well-known legends. There is also another feature that is typical for Monty Python´s films. They use silly people to create a

humorous situation. A guard that is in this scene has difficulties to understand what he is asked to do. In the script, the dialogue between the king and this guard takes a whole page and nevertheless the guard does not really comprehend the order.

The next animation is used to demonstrate how long the journey took and how difficult it sometimes was. This short tale shows that Pythons are able to create humour even from the seasons:

NARRATOR: And so, Arthur and Bedevere and Sir Robin sot out on their search to find the enchanter of whom the old man had spoken in scene twenty-four. Beyond the forest they met Launcelot and Galahad, and there was much rejoicing.

KNIGHTS: Yay! Yay!

NARRATOR: In the frozen land of Nador, they were forced to eat Robin´s minstrels. And there was much rejoicing.

KNIGHTS: Yay!

NARRATOR: A year passed. Winter changed into Spring. Spring changed into Summer. Summer changed back into Winter. And Winter gave Spring and Summer a miss and went straight on into Autumn.

The next unusual character typical for Pythons is the enchanter. At first his looks like a powerful and spooky magician but that he shows up to be a bit laughable. He introduces himself as Tim and then performs a really horrifying monologue that ends with a ridiculous gesture. King Arthur also lowers his fearsomeness with a little bit sarcastic statement:

TIM: Follow. But! Follow only if ye be men of valour, for the entrance to this cave is guarded by a creature so foul, so cruel that no man yet has fought with it and lived! Bones of full fifty men lie strewn about its lair. So, brave knights, if you do doubt your courage or your strength, come no further, for death awaits you all with nasty, big, pointy teeth.

ARTHUR: What an eccentric performance.

This creature turns out to be a bloodthirsty rabbit. To fight it, knights have to dip into the future and use the Holy Hand Grenade. Here again Pythons connect the medieval times with the present and modify recent weapon to suit the film. When they finally get through that horrible cave we witness another lightening of an old tradition. An old man guarding the bridge requires three answers to let the knight pass:

BRIDGEKEEPER: Stop! Who would cross the Bridge of Death must answer me these questions three, ere the other side he see.

LAUNCELOT:	Ask me the questions, bridge keeper. I am no afraid.
BRIDGEKEEPER:	What is your name?
LAUNCELOT:	My name is Sir Launcelot of Camelot.
BRIDGEKEEPER:	What is your quest?
LAUNCELOT:	To seek the Holy Grail.
BRIDGEKEEPER:	What is your favourite colour?
LAUNCELOT:	Blue.
BRIDGEKEEPER:	Right. Off you go.

King Arthur overcomes the bridge keeper with his knowledge of swallows (a reference to the beginning of the film) and continues in his journey.

At the end of the film, right before the decisive battle, there is another reference to the previous event. The rest of Knights of the Round Table are arrested by police for the murder of the historian. This way Monty Python did not have to make a great battle piece and they ended the film in their own specific style.

In the whole film we cannot find a lot of word play. The humour is mostly based on circumstances and relationships they create and their dialogues are full of contrast and absurdity. Each viewer has his/her own favourite scenes in the film because the understanding of their humour depends on a personal point of view.

3.3 Comparison of humour of Woody Allen and Monty Python

The humour of Woody Allen and Monty Python is unique. They have each their own completely diverse style. Allen´s humour is similar to silent movie comedies and it is based on quaint characters and their ties to other people. His films are like the real life enriched with a bit of exaggeration. Pythons mainly draw from bonding of contradictory things and absurdity of situations that stem from it. Films of this group are full of word play and hidden allusions.

Though their work is different, comedies of these authors are known all over the world. One of the reasons for this could be that these films do not depend on cultures and their humour is universal. They do not make fun of something that is significant for only one country and that makes their films easier to understand for everyone. Of course that Pythons also use some curious characters to invoke funny dialogues and situations but their characters are not as complicated as in Allen´s films. That´s why many people find Pythons films more humorous. They are easy to understand and you do not have to think a lot while

watching. But specialists more appreciate Allen because he creates films that have more complex plot and more elaborate relationships.

It is almost impossible to compare these two artists, their styles are too different. What they have in common is the indulgence in weird characters. Even though Allen is American and Pythons are British, their humour crosses the borders between cultures and the audience loves them.

CONCLUSION

Woody Allen and Monty Python are ones of the most important comedy makers of our time. Their production sets people all over the world laughing and affects their lives. This thesis tries to find out what is so special about them, that they are considered so important in the comedy world. It aims to identify types of humour they use most frequently in their films and explain why they are addressing so many people.

The theoretical part is divided into two parts. First part explains what humour is and what is the basis of majority of jokes. Then there is a brief outline of factors that influence our understanding of humour and you can also find out what is verbal and nonverbal humour. Both categories have their own chapters with a list and an explanation of the most common types used in films. The second part of the theory focuses on Woody Allen and Monty Python. It provides an insight into the lives of these artists and a cross-section of their carriers.

The analytical part consists of an analysis of two films, Small Time Crooks by Allen and Monty Python and the Holy Grail by Pythons. The analysis is based on screenplays and of course on repeated watching of these films. Each film is introduced by a summary of the plot and then follows the analysis itself. It is not a transcription of the script. It mentions only the most common types of humour that Allen and Pythons use and shows them on scenes from these two films. These humorous situations are similar in almost every film that these filmmakers made and therefore provide a perfect background for the understanding of their humour.

Humour of Woody Allen draws from personal experience and everyday situations that are so well-known to everyone. The understanding of his films is sometimes difficult but when the readers try and focus enough, they always get some new point of view on ordinary worries. Monty Python on the other hand bets on the absurd interpretation of almost everything. Their humour is very simple, though they sometimes go a bit far and they can upset someone. These comedy masters have their own unique style, their own way of thinking and there are not many people who would like both of them, since their films and especially concept of humour are so different.

The more detailed look on the comedies of Woody Allen shows his interest in unusual characters. Almost every person that occurs in his films has some small peculiarity. A very good example is Ray, one of the protagonists of Small Time Crooks. In his dialogues with his wife he perfectly shows his temper and unstable character. Irony is the basic tool that

Frenchy uses to taunt her husband, Ray and it is also one of Allen´s favourite instruments to create a humorous dialogue. Irony has a unique ability to lighten every serious situation and every negative statement and that is why it is frequently used not only in films, but also in everyday life. In all comedies, not only Allen´s, there are not very clever or clumsy characters as a source of amusement. They make a perfect target for jokes and also create absurd situations. Danny and May in the film have a lot of humorous conversations with Ray. One of the major sources for Allen´s comedies is personal experience. The situational humour, a retelling of something that really happened, is funny because people can identify with characters and maybe remember something that happened in their life. When May tells the story of her break-up, we can sympathize with her even thought we laugh.

In the analysis of the Holy Grail by Monty Python told a lot about their approach to filmmaking. They do not take the film too seriously and they create humour on improbable places, for example in credits. The Holy Grail itself is full of deflections from the genre: a historical commentary, an animation, a dance interlude, etc. Pythons like to play with the audience, visually and also verbally. In the film, there are many examples of word play. In some scenes characters use understatement, usually to show how powerful they are, but it makes them rather look silly. Pythons usually play with words that other authors let by. The names of knights would be in any other comedy somehow changed to be funny, but in the Python style, one of the knights is called Sir Not-appearing-in-this-film. This unconventional approach to the theme is what makes them so different from other comedy makers. It is obvious for an average viewer that Monty Python proclivity to absurdity influences whole film. Many times we witness the concurrence of the past and the present. They use terms that were not known and the Holy Hand Grenade is also too modern for the Middle Ages. When you watch this kind of film, you expect that everything will be old and suddenly there occurs a recent term, for example air-speed velocity. The contrast is humorous thanks to the disharmony of the language and the setting.

The humour of Woody Allen and Monty Python is so unique that it is really difficult to explain it. Allen, with his complex plot and unusual characters, and Pythons, with their word play and absurd situations, are from different countries. But still they overcome the differences between cultures and create comedies that entertain people almost everywhere in the world.

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