

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY**

**CONTEMPORARY BRITISH HUMOR: IN
CONTRAST TO ITS GLORIOUS PAST AND
MAIN-STREAM AMERICA**

Master's Thesis

SINA SAMAVATI

ISTANBUL, 2013

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
M.A. IN FILM AND TELEVISION**

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Supervisor: PROFESSOR SELIM EYUBOGLU

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ABSTRACT

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH HUMOR: IN CONTRAST TO ITS GLORIOUS PAST AND MAIN-STREAM AMERICA

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This particular study is structured upon the nature of British Humour and the means in which it's televised in contemporary British television as consequential comedy. Through a construction of inevitable mainstream perceptual approach alongside an embodiment of purposefulness against social repression, it tends to contrast the means hired in the past by British humour against the intentionality of televised comedy in the present. It's an examination of the very existence of the practiced humour that was weaponized so often by literary practitioners as well as contrarians of cultural enforcements. It observes the similarities and disparities of the practiced genre against and alongside, the American main-stream monopoly on televised comedy, where the discourse of television is more often used as a tool against individuality and is employed in the means of submission and selective intentionality.

In an environment where the grounds of crossing cultures is considered an easily accessible agenda, an observation of the classical tool that is humour against certain ideological mass representations is the basis of examination that this study reflects upon. Exemplifying influential figures of the past and present of the genre, like Stephen Fry , this observation builds the necessary connection between the evolved British humour of Oscar Wilde, P.G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh and the televised version of humour practiced in contemporary Britain that is a process of development within humour on the discourse of television representation. Providing a critical perspective towards the practice of humour in contemporary television of Britain through using the platform of American mainstream and the so-called alternative televised comedy, the study challenges the apparent intentionality of the content of Britain's televised approach towards humour.

Keywords: British Humour, Televised Comedy, Alternative Comedy, Controlled Television, Preferred Meaning

ÖZET

ÇAĞDAŞ İNGİLİZ MİZAHI: ETKİLEYİCİ GEÇMİŞİ VE POPÜLER AMERİKAN MİZAHININ KARŞILAŞTIRMASINDA

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Bu araştırma karakteristik İngiliz mizah anlayışı üzerine ve onun çağdaş İngiliz televizyonunda dolaylı mizah olarak yayımlanan biçimleri üzerine temellendirilmiştir. Toplumsal baskıya karşı duruş sahibi olmanın yanı sıra kaçınılmaz bir popüler algısal yaklaşım oluşturarak, İngiliz mizahının geçmişte kullandığı araçlarla günümüz televizyonunda yayımlanan komedinin amaçlılığı arasında karşıtlik kurmaktadır.

Bu araştırma, edebiyatçılar ve kültürel dayatma karşıtları tarafından sıklıkla bir silah olarak kullanılan uygulamalı mizahın varolusunu inceleyen bir çalışmadır. Televizyondaki söylemin sıklıkla bireyselliğe karşı bir araç olarak, teslimiyet ve seçimli kasıtlılık hedefleyerek kullanıldığı Amerikan popüler medyasının görsel televizyondaki tekeli ile İngiliz mizahi arasındaki paralellikleri ve karşıtlıkları belirlemektedir. Etkileşim içindeki kültürlerin kesistikleri alanların kolay erişilebilir bir hale geldiği bir ortamda, klasik bir araç olan mizahın belirli ideolojik kitlesel yansımalar karşısındaki tutumunun gözlenmesi, bu çalışmanın temelini oluşturur. Türün geçmiş ve bugünüden, Stephen Fry gibi tür üstünde etkili olmuş kişilerin örneklenmesi aracılığıyla bu çalışma, Oscar Wilde, P.G. Wodehouse ve Evelyn Waugh ile çağdaş İngiliz mizahının televizyonda yayımlanan hali arasında gerekli olan bağlantıyı kurmaktadır. Amerikan popüler ve alternatif televizyon komedisini bir zemin olarak kullanmak suretiyle çağdaş İngiliz televizyonundaki mizaha yönelik eleştirel bir bakış sunularak, İngiltere'nin televizyondaki mizaha yönelik açıkça yönelimsel tutumuna karşı çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Mizahi, Televizyon Komedi, Alternatif Komedi, Denetimli Televizyon, Preferred Meaning

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	:	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBS	:	CBS Broadcasting Corporation
HBO	:	Home Box Office
NBC	:	National Broadcasting Corporation
SNL	:	Saturday Night Live
NMTB	:	Never Mind the Buzzcocks

1. INTRODUCTION

When the controversial Scottish stand-up comedian and television personality, Frankie Boyle started a twitter account, no one could've predicted that he could get any more offensive than he had already been on British mainstream media. After all he repeatedly upset numerous people, organizations and sections of society by the way he made outrageous, extremely offensive and politically incorrect remarks towards them on television already, yet to everybody's surprise he managed to top himself by causing controversy more than once a month, targeting Paralympic athletes, popular television personalities and politicians with harsh attacks. His approach towards comedy and the way in which he utilizes British humour can be considered an extreme example of the nature of British humour from the world's perspective, from which British humour is perceived as a narrative of blunt anger, sometimes an ironic form of expression that pays almost no attention to political correctness, a controversial form of entertainment that can move to destroy careers and reputations disregarding personal sensitivity. However this particular study progresses to assert a different point of view, not necessarily towards the nature of British humour, but rather a critical understanding of comedy on British television, that reflects a narrative in which aspects of a generality of British humour is hired but the importance of constructive potency is relatively misunderstood for aggressive approach.

The first chapter of the study is a detailed structure of the 'bridge' that connects the practiced humour of the past to the version represented by television today, through exemplifying one particular figure in contemporary British comedy that is *Stephen Fry* whose range of work on television as a humour practitioner expands to three decades. *Fry* who started his comedy career as part of the renowned college comedy club 'Cambridge Footlights', has characterised his unique take on life over the years as a result of being influenced by "Three W's" – *Oscar Wilde*, *P.G Wodehouse* and *Evelyn Waugh*. *Fry's* career on television plus his consistent and active part in the development of comedy on British television from the 1980's up until recent times and observation of his choices of authors and influential figures in his career, provides an exclusive opportunity for an observation that contemplates the platform in which the British

comedy on television today has formed itself as well as an actual provider of the nature and true identification of British humour in the past.

The study of British humour on television in the means of comedy in contemporary era, has recently branched itself with the American version of comedy on television as well. Controversies caused by the English comedian *Ricky Gervais*, while hosting The Golden Globes Awards back in 2010, 2011 and 2012, raised the question of disparities of the nature of humour in those two countries yet again. The second chapter of this study is going to provide a different outlook on American practiced humour on television, not so much in the means of detailed content but rather it challenges the intentionality of comical programming on American television, by observing the monopoly of mainstream approach towards comedy as well as the genre that is called alternative in the American mind-set. Mainstream American comedy is exemplified through one of the most influential and consistent show's in American history of television that is 'Saturday Night Live' and the American alternative comedy is epitomized on the basis of the practice that is carried out by cable television networks like HBO and Comedy Central.

One of the difficulties throughout the conduction of this paper was the selection of the television shows, obviously because of the wide variety of comical television programs in Britain and the different genres throughout the years, it seemed somehow impossible to achieve a full understanding of the totality of comedy on television with focusing on only a few shows. However, the breakdown of different periods of comedy on British television made it easier to correctly focus the attention on certain personalities and television shows. Conclusively the third chapter of this study is a thorough exhibition within which the British comedy on television represents the most in modern times, through simplifying a format in the context of two specific shows; "Never Mind The Buzzcocks", "8 out of 10 Cats", that hires a unique cocktail of active, popular and consistent televised personalities of modern times from different practices of music, comedy, politics and reality television.

The particular approach towards understanding the contemporary way of broadcasting comedy on television also concerns itself with principle basics of television studies. By focusing on the observations of *John Fiske* regarding the longevity of television effects,

the paper sets to pan out the notion of ‘preferred meanings’. By contrasting the content of televised politically aware comedy to other more serious television programming in Britain, a relatively different understanding of what ‘preferred meanings’ stands for arrives at point. An active ignorance of important notions such as religious conflicts and multi-cultural issues is present in comedy shows on British television. This statement is one that slightly negates *Fiske’s* understanding of ‘preferred meanings’ when it comes to practiced humour on television.

The selected shows of today’s British televised comedy are conclusively put in perspective to achieve full understanding of the content they practice. By focusing onto the golden days of comedy on British television, where *Peter Cook* led British comedy into a new path by influencing writers and actors of the greatly acclaimed comedy group “Monty Pythons”. It is relatively at this certain point, when the comprehension of contemporary British comedy is a possible reflection. A certain moment where *Peter Cook* or ‘The Pythons’ are detached from the particular format they practice and they are seen from a point of view that observes the mentality of their approach as well as their intentions, to them, humour was merely a tool to be utterly and effectively serious, whereas in today’s British TV, it is simply not the case.

The analysis of a generality regarding this study, is one that can be simplified in a way that proposes a question of whether the televised comedy in contemporary Britain, bears any resemblance to the structured British humour that have always followed a certain goal of opposition by addressing issues of importance. The study proceeds to discover that the only connection between the two lies only on the techniques they utilized and apart from that, the certain structure of British humour that was asserted in this study has simply nothing in common with today’s British televised comedy. Especially when it comes to terms with purpose and potency. Supporting the statement, the study uses the grounds of American televised comedy, whether main-stream or alternative, as a basis that has been controlled and progressed in the means of certain limitations. This goes to articulate a point about contemporary British televised comedy, a point that asserts uncanny similarities between American and British version of televised comedy, especially in terms of broadcasting politics in subsequent form of controlled comedy.

A segmented study based on different discourses alongside an argument that supports the similar intentionality of televised comedy in the UK and the United States as well as an assertive monumental personification of British humour and the question of its existence in the purposeful form of the past, is the content in which the argument of this particular study is relied upon.

2. CHAPTER ONE: BRITISH HUMOUR IN STRUCTURE – PAST AND PRESENT

Comparatively exploring, British humour, regardless of influences that concerns it with national or more specifically regional collective identity, has always been evolving around the issue of negative connotative symbol of expression, whereas humour in other English speaking countries has always been subjected to change in accordance to aspects of popularity and the common ideology forced upon its very nature. The expressionist assertion of British humour in its very nature distances itself from the topic it is subjected to as well as the times of its practice; it is arguably a form of personification of opposition completely crude of the standards forced by influential elements of politics, religion, epoch or populism. It might however, hire certain characteristics to define its sensibility within a certain period but it will not necessarily be deprived of its very nature that reasonably dictates the effects it was meant to have.

However simplistic the characteristics of British Humour may appear on the surface when it comes to its affiliation with certain attributes and jargons such as irony, bluntness and offensiveness, British humour in its very core has a history of effectiveness and potency that was implanted and rooted from a particular background of public behaviour towards nonsensical yet influential occurrences.

The Three “W’s”: Wilde, Wodehouse, Waugh

References can be made to great British authors such as *Shakespeare* and *Oscar Wilde* and the way in which they coherently utilized humour mostly in the form of adequate political satire. *Oscar Wilde* for example has famously and quite effectively taken a firm stance against the social norms and standards of the Victorian customs and traditions in *The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*. On the same note, *Robert J. Jordan* in an essay entitled "Satire and Fantasy in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*." points and directs the argument of utilization of satire in Oscar Wilde's play towards a social criticism in which the characters consider the satirical thematic contemplation as part of the structure of the play which understandably highlights the play as a literary act rather than a comedy. Nevertheless,

the importance of humour in the form of ridicule for the sole purpose of demystification is inevitable in the play, a point that will have an on-going emphasis and will be of significant importance throughout this paper especially when contemporary Britain and the issues of influence will be involved.

The diversity of elements of what is described in popular culture as British humour can proportionally be understood and characterized as distinctive patterns throughout time in which a certain and distinguishable taste has emerged, regardless of characterisation of it, calibration of the patterns have shown to be in the service of a proposition that is subjectively against social repression which is arguably one of the greatest tools of ideological enforcement towards the ordinary. However, it is rather difficult to successfully separate the registered genres associated with certain periods of history from the text itself, but it no longer limits the text to a certain cause rather it provides a possibility of precision to comprehend the very nature of British humour in any sort of text. A conceptual structure of British humour can be formed through the influences of British writers on contemporary British comedians, for instance when *Stephen Fry*, one of the most influential comedians of contemporary Britain, talks about his approach to what he does, he asserts “*Three W’s*” as his main inspirations and agencies: *Oscar Wilde, P.G. Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh*. Now regardless of what Stephen Fry offers in the way in which he practices attributes of British humour, it is worth examining his particular choices of influence considering his celebrated role as a popular and influential figure in contemporary British comedy.

Having made the case for *Oscar Wilde* and his defined means of British humour earlier, *P.G. Wodehouse* is next on the list. The author who famously wrote “*The Jeeves*” canon that was adapted for Television and was televised from 1990 to 1993, starring *Stephen Fry* himself as one of the main characters. *Wodehouse* and his detailed brand of humour comes much differently than the general understanding of British humour, he is more known to be a traditional humourist, his approach is often characterised as English rather than British and considering the content of his practice in regards to culture and identity, the body of his work is structured rather differently to the public’s perception of regional collective identity. *Richard D. Lewis* differentiates the works of authors like *Wodehouse* from the general understanding.

“Foreigners often refer to the famous British sense of humour as if the fickle climate of the British Isles, the sweepingly dramatic episodes of their history, the rich melting pot of natives and invaders, the intriguing incongruity of Romans, Celts, Saxons, Vikings and Norman French interacting with each other, would produce an inimitable perspective – the British way of life. It seems to have done so, but the humour of Jerome K. Jerome and P.G. Wodehouse bears little resemblance to that of Glasgow or the Welsh valleys.” – (Humour Across Frontiers: Or, Round the World in 80 Jokes – page 136)

Although *Lewis’s* attempted study on humour and more specifically British humour is one that is mostly concerned with different regions of the British Isles, he continuously approaches different types of humour in the region from a cross cultural perspective that constantly avoids sampling humour as a weapon against political platforms. To me however the way in which *Wodehouse* employs humour has a more politically conscious narrative. Regardless of his tone and the categorization of his humour, he structures a critical point of view towards a specific enforced social establishment that he feels can be a cause of suffer to a certain “class” of people, the importance of the socio-economical class structure of Britain in *Wodehouse’s* “Jeeves” canon highlights particular problematic flaws with the development process of Britain’s political structure. In an essay about *Wodehouse*, *Christopher Hitchens* examines and explains the way in which *Wodehouse’s* political embodiment has been shaped.

“Two other boyhood deprecations might have become a source of resentment. Wodehouse, who had always assumed that he would go up to Oxford University, was abruptly told by his parents that the family funds would not run to it.[...] A number of his mature stories demonstrate that he picked up more than a passing knowledge of the leftist vernacular. In the earlier tales most obviously ‘Psmith in the City’, we learn that young Psmith became a devotee of Marxist theory when he was taken away from Eton and robbed of the chance to play cricket for the most snobbish school team in the country” (P.G. Wodehouse: The Honourable Schoolboy, Page 5).

Wodehouse’s inevitable influence on British comedy in the early 1980’s on the likes of *Stephen Fry*, *Hugh Laurie* and so many other pioneers and practitioners of British humour especially on Television may not fully demonstrate the nature of the humour but it can be considered as an indication of a utilization of humour somewhat 40 years

ago as a political weapon against establishments, much like the way *Oscar Wilde's* work effectively toned a generation with political ideologies, *Wodehouse's* comical nature of writing, no matter how personal and innocent in appearance, gave purpose and sensibility to a particular type of comedians whose practice cannot even be considered as alternative but rather traditional with elements of the "English Gentleman".

Moving away from the innocent brand of humour that *Wodehouse* presented and comparatively in contrast to it, we come upon another influential figure in British humour and literature, *Evelyn Waugh* whose work has been described by many as "modern satire", the third "W" that shaped the understanding of *Stephen Fry's* work. *Frederick R. Karl* addresses *Waugh's* writings in a way that is pleasingly familiar for the general public and suits the distinctive conception that exists of British Humour.

"Indiscriminate in its attacks, his humour annoys and disturbs, avoiding personal comment; in a way, it imitates the masks that several contemporary writers have assumed. At first, lacking an assemblage of narrators, Waugh could, with ironic wit, observe dispassionately, even cold-bloodedly" (A reader's guide to the contemporary English novel – page 167-168)

The embodiment of *Waugh's* work have always had an assertive stance, his genre of satire and his accession to British humour, composed him as a social critic. According to *Carlos Villar*:

"Evelyn Waugh is, above all a critical analyst of the English society of his time, one of the most celebrated ironists of the twentieth century English novel, whose sharpen has repeatedly pointed at the weakness and moral deterioration of 'civilized' society." (Waugh without End: New Trends in Evelyn Waugh Studies – Page 106)

Without undermining the terms most scholars use to describe *Waugh's* work (e.g. Ironist), one can point to a direct conclusion of his inescapable position as a contrarian towards Britain's political ideology, his utilization of satire within the boundaries of modern English literature is to some extent, a portrayal of a point, an assertion that certifies the employment of ridicule and extreme humour in order to complete the process of a demystification that is felt needed for the first step of action against social

and political intentionality. This contemplates the framework of influence within British humour and throughout the years as well as providing an explanation of aptitude when the content arrives at the conceptual construction of British comedy in the early 1970's. Similarities in contrast, between the authors mentioned so far, paints a persistent picture of opposition that British humour in general represents. Interestingly the differences in style of writing, the extent of aggression and the techniques of execution among these writers seem to be working for the same imagined effect. Although the potency of the formulated thought in question in regards to any of the authors mentioned is a subject of precise research in which a more general understanding of the era in hand is necessary.

The Disappearance of Cynical 'Fry'

The essence of what has been discussed up until now in this chapter relies solely on what *Stephen Fry* has considered dominant in his career as a comedian. The significance of his preferred choices of British humourists and authors commits directly to the comprehension of his work as a comic performer, actor and television personality. He is mostly known today in Britain as the host of BBC's celebrity panel show "QI", although *Stephen Fry* has had an assiduous and compelling career. His work as an actor and television writer on some the most audacious and refreshing TV shows and programmes such as "Black Adder" and "A bit of Fry and Laurie" and his constant active involvement as a comedian and writer on British television over the years of the contemporary age, is a justifiable reason for exemplifying him as well as his opinionated approach which builds up a perspective for a case for contemporary British comedy utilized on Television in recent times. The collection of his work throughout the years that are of some importance in this discussion, reflect the generality of comedy in Britain. *Fry's* involvement in domestic comedy programs since mid-1980's up until now arises an issue of intention, his professorial manner, vast intelligence and the way in which he personifies himself in the media suggest an authorship of the material he creates, on the other hand his consistent presence regardless of his alternative persona on British television conveys a character whose activity is to establish and maintain certain cultural values and social standards. One can argue that his advocacy for equal rights on the issue of homosexuality as well as his firm anti-theistic beliefs are evened

out by his approach to language and traditional English values of manner and politeness; this of course is based on the assumption of one who critically views and precepts Television as an ideological tool in the hands of western establishment, nevertheless the relevance of his work to British comedy in contemporary domestic television is assured. Although *Fry*'s career and most notably his role as a social critic have deteriorated over the years, this becomes apparent when a comparison of his work on "A Bit of Fry and Laurie" back in 1987 and his recent appearances in Television programming such as a documentary series on technological advances entitled "Gadget Man" is carried out. While different in the format and style, the execution of both have been pulled off on the same platform from the same mentality, but one thing is obvious, *Fry*'s choleric and satiric approach towards text has disappeared which begs the question of the direction of the content in regards to the cynical perspective that British humour has often helped to shape.

"Fry: - Good evening and welcome to another packed half hour of misery and abject desperation, a catalogue of cynicism and emptiness, and a whole ottoman full of vapid excuses. My colleague would like to add something?"

Laurie: - Yes. I'd just like to say a big hi to historians of the future, who may be looking at this show, as part of a higher-education course in the year 2010 entitled, "Britain: Just What the Bloody Hell Went Wrong?""- (Opening segment of *A Bit Of Fry and Laurie*, - Season 4, Episode 4)

3. CHAPTER TWO: TELEVISED COMEDY OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

When asked about the differences and disparities between British sense of humour and American take on comedy, *Stephen Fry* articulates an important point.

“If you go to an American book shop, by far the biggest section is self-help and improvement, The idea that life is refinable and improvable and that you can learn a technique for anything, whether it’s lovemaking, being a businessmen, a marriage, cooking, losing weight, whatever it is there is an NLP way of doing it, there’s an Anthony Robbins way of doing it, there’s a things they didn’t teach you at Harvard way of doing it. There’s an unbelievable sense that life is improvable, that you can be lectured at or in deed given a sermon at.”(Hay Sessions 2009)

Well, one can simply observe this point as a compliment, a rather positive way of looking at the American sense of approach towards achievability, possibility and optimism, but on the other hand, it also acts as a portrayal of acquiescence and conformity, the utter denial of thinking for one’s self. The case for American comedy on Television is one that is mainly concerned with the enforcement of values, one that ‘sets’ the social norms and standards, it coherently avoids reflection and creates culture rather than embracing it, the intentionality of comical programing in American main stream Television is rather difficult to overlook, although the same can be said about the very nature of Television as a medium regardless of the nation in question here. Parallel to what *Fry* stumbled upon in regards to the American way of life, *Stuart Hall* contracts a basic principle of communication, concerning how text posturizes within context. He grasps the mere fundamentals of Encoding/Decoding.

“The domains of ‘preferred mappings’ have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs the everyday knowledge of social structures of ‘how things work for all practical purposes in this culture’, the rank order of power and interest, and a structure of legitimations and sanctions. Thus to clarify a ‘misunderstanding’ at the connotative level, we must refer, through the codes, to the orders of social life, of economic and political power and of ideology. Further, since these mappings are ‘structured in dominance’ but not closed, the communicative process

consists not in the unproblematic assignment of every visual item to its given position within a set of prearranged codes, but of performative rules - rules of competence and use, of logics-in-use”(Encoding/decoding’. In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies – Page 5)

Simply enough, taste of humour through television cannot be distanced from this very basic principle, if one was to examine the preferred contemporary classification of the American taste of humour with considered complexity, observing one of the most influential and consistent shows of the American mainstream would be an appropriate commencement. The show in hand here is “Saturday Night Live”.

SNL; the Monopoly of Comical Taste in American Television

“Saturday Night Live”, also known as SNL, is a live sketch comedy show introduced to the American audience back in 1975, having been broadcast for 38 years consisting of 38 seasons, SNL is considered one of the most influential shows in American history of television broadcasting since it is hugely responsible for introducing a great deal of major-league comic performers, actors and comedy writers to the world of American television. Figures such as *Chevy Chase, Bill Murray, Eddie Murphy* and many more started their career with SNL and writers like *Conan O’Brien and Tina Fey* are just a few of the many writers that have worked on the show. To some, SNL is just another show but the intensity of its monopoly on American comedy shows grows deeper than anticipated. The compositional meaning created and maintained within the frameworks of one the biggest networks in America (NBC) implies and insinuates a role that indulgently affects the society through the agency of corporation support via the means of excessive advertising by enforcing a determined structure of humour. Interestingly the show’s format over the years has proclaimed the content as political satire, putting aside live music performances and situational comedy sketches, a wide variety of SNL’s material is selective, attentive and satirical approach towards the political sphere of the time which arguably, aside from selectively and intentionally inheriting some basics and techniques of satire, the show has nothing to offer in terms of political meaning. According to *Jeffery Jones*:

“Since the mid-1970’s, Saturday Night Live (SNL) has regularly processed presidential politics for viewers, offering interpretations that structured how images of the president were filtered through popular culture. But such caricatures are typically missing any form of meaning political critique, instead depending largely on impersonation humour that is focused more on personal mannerisms and political style than on politics.”
(*Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*-page 38)

Saturday Night Live takes the same humour towards politics and a stance of social criticism, as it takes towards celebrity culture and paparazzi oriented comedy. It behaves rather silly within the structures of serious issues but not necessarily to ridicule the issue rather the character, therefore removes the potential importance of the issue and deprives it from potency and meaning. *Fred Armisen’s* portrayal of different politicians for the past ten years has been an example of the manner in which SNL addresses its notion towards politics. The on-going impersonation of *Muammar Gaddafi* by *Armisen*, during the Arab spring and even after his death was merely a nonsensical reflection of *Gaddafi’s* persona based on a systematic illustration of his style from mostly western liberal media networks, basically not only SNL ignored the political importance of the text, it also created a Western minded observation of a framework that is usually implemented upon celebrities and controversies around them. Although the show usually tries to take a more complex stance while covering domestic issues such as American presidential elections and American foreign policy, it fails to acknowledge the means of the humour it employs, the show illusions as satire targeted towards the general public but simply has nothing critical or important to imply. The comprehension of this proposition is highlighted when the nature of SNL is contrasted against the unique brand of American satire employed by mostly alternative networks such as Comedy Central in the form of a program like “The Daily Show with *Jon Stewart*”. A standardized style of programming that often is hired by a segment called “Weekend Update” in SNL as well, that regards itself with daily social, political and cultural occurrences that are to some extent ignored by the general public.

Geoffrey Baym examines the format of political satire that is contracted in The Daily Show and the emergence of programs of such as ‘the epitome of the discursive integrated media’ which initially suggests that in the contemporary western culture the

lines of distinction between different discourses are much harder to find, the appeal of a certain program no longer awaits its wanted audience but rather it tries to hire what it can and functionalize it and solely relies on intertextuality, it no longer respects authority and ironically mocks it by the way the narrative used in other forms of traditional media is implemented, concerning itself with the elements of parody which according to *Linda Hutcheon* is central to postmodernism. The application of such fundamental aspects of political satire in American television onto Saturday Night Live have rendered yet another main stream edition of format inheritance in accordance to the appeal as well as the trend of moderate aggression towards political personalities, though it does not necessarily guarantee content importance and relevance which is an indication of a reluctant censorship among text creators in main stream media regardless of what they personally value. Such long practice of a certain polished format targeted by the main stream American television towards the public, not only shapes public's perception of humour, it also inevitably influences up and coming artists, writers and actors to submit for the means of standardized media described notion of success and on the other hand it creates a platform for opposing alternative ideology whereby the practice of shows like "The Daily Show" and "Colbert Report" gains popularity.

Controlled Comedy in America

In the book "Equal Opportunity Offender: the Uncensored Censor", former NBC network censor supervisor *William G. Clotworthy*, breaks down the manner in which he controlled the actors/writers of the show within the boundaries of network's standards, he regularly refers to the process of censoring the text and the way he managed to stop controversial issues to be covered by the show in a blunt and offensive way. One can argue that the politics of humour in American television have tendencies towards a concentrated, limited and post-modern portrayal of pre-chosen news stories from the beginning with a controlling atmosphere on individuals involved in different comical and humorous TV shows. NBC the home of Saturday Night Live also hosted the biggest and most influential sit-coms in American Television history, shows like "Friends", "Frasier", "The Cosby Show", "Will and Grace" and many more have all been aired through the network that is NBC. Now this particular format accounts for mainstream, exemplified through NBC, it also applies to other big national networks of America

such as CBS and FOX, but on the other side of the field, the alternative American media stands. Cable television programming also referred to as “Pay TV”, hosts a numerous privately owned networks that are only available through a paid encryption process, naturally a limited number of audiences in comparison to national networks. Relatively popular humour and comedy that are a result of production done by cable networks often come from Comedy Central. These productions, often referred to as the “alternative” American media, pose as a direct response against main-stream comedy productions. They are often considered as the main form of practice of political satire and irony in contemporary American television. Popularized “fake” news programs produced by Comedy Central play an important and crucial role when it comes to the public’s approach towards politics and news. According to a study from Comedy Central and TRU insights regarding the “Generation Y” also known as “Millennials” meaning mostly people aged from 16 to 32 and the way in which they turn to television for their political mannerisms, the following statistics is provided:

- a. 68 per cent Network News
- b. 58 per cent Online Aggregator (Yahoo!, Google)
- c. 56 per cent Cable News
- d. 52 per cent Facebook or Twitter
- e. 50 per cent Political Satire Shows (The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, Weekend Update)
- f. 50 per cent News Website
- g. 44 per cent Newspaper
- h. 37 per cent Late Night Talk (The Tonight Show, Late Night)

Also included in the report “Most say that they get facts and insights from a variety of mainstream news sources; however Millennials are going to political comedies/satires to gain perspective on the issues,” the report says. “When it comes to political comedy/satires, Millennials don’t watch to get informed; they watch because they are informed.” (Media Bistro Website)

Moving away from the importance of the demographic in hand (Generation Y), one can argue that in accordance to the mentioned report, political satire provides a rather decisive commentary of the selected issues of the time, not only it informs, it also

creates a framework in which a generation makes sense of the realities around. Now the question of intentionality of these networks emerges. Comedy Central as a network used to be owned by HBO, another popular cable network that is owned and operated by Time Warner Inc, an American multinational media corporation and world's second largest media and entertainment conglomerate from 2010, incidentally the same corporation that owns and operates networks such as CNN, if put in a delicate way, a direct connection with the main-stream media. As of 2003 Comedy Central was sold to Viacom. As another multi-national media corporation, Viacom was created by the CBS corporation and is still today under direct control of CBS when it comes to television production activities.

Consequently, the alternative comedy on American television is mostly under direct control of mass media corporations responsible for the same television programming that airs main stream comedy as well, so the notion of alternative ideology towards comedy is refutable by this basis as the spectator is faced with selective and intentional programming even when the notions of political satire and irony are hired. Controlled comedy in American television offers a complex system of cultural enforcement in which the taste of humour of every possible contender is systematically shaped or at least influenced upon. So in lamest terms, the circle of influence within individualist humour in America is basically non-existent.

4. CHAPTER THREE: A CASE FOR COMEDY PANEL SHOWS ON BRITISH TELEVISION

The uprising popularity of stand-up comedy in contemporary Britain cannot be considered a new phenomenon; however the practice of a distinguishable type of socially and politically aware genre of comedy that is also opinionated with certain levels of aggression is now a dominant force in comical performances both on television and stage. The appealing movement of popular comedy that reflects direct influences of the humour employed by American alternative comics like *George Carlin* and *Lenny Bruce* has been pushing away traditional folklore comedy further away from the main stream. It is fair to reason that “Slapstick”, the comedy practiced by the likes of *Charlie Chaplin* and more recently *Rowan Atkinson* as “Mr. Bean”, has now very little room to juggle around the British household as the first choice of comic entertainment.

A clear cut case for British comedy on television in contemporary Britain can be examined through one of the most popular and successful formats of comedy television programming that is celebrity comedy panel shows. An inheritance of the popular days of radio broadcasting, comedy panel shows nowadays offer a wide variety of different genres within the format of panel shows, usually consisting of first class British comics alongside reality television personalities and even popular television presenters and broadcasters. The process in which comedy panel shows operate in Britain is highly relied on specific discourses, whether the discourse of knowledge and trivial information is up for examination or the internal political discourse is up for question, most of the comedy panel shows address certain issues within a particular structure with the intention of diversity of perception that mostly reflects the disparities within the society by sampling different segments through employing divergent and conflicting personalities. The assessment of the format in question and the amount it can be held responsible as a representative of British television comedy programming in contemporary Britain can be carried out by looking at some of the shows in accordance to the discourses they involve their content with as well as the different networks in which the shows are produced. “Never Mind The Buzzcocks” and “8 out of 10 Cats” are the celebrity comedy panel shows that simultaneously offer such variety of disparity,

popularity and the same tone of humour that is considered dominant in British television.

The Case for “Never Mind The Buzzcocks”:

“Simon Amstell: I forgot to tell you we've had a letter in the Daily Express! I'm very proud of this: "Why are so many BBC comedies unwatchable? Catherine Tate is full of swearing, and Never Mind The Buzzcocks contains gay filth!"

Phil Jupitus: Well, done. Congratulations.

Bill Bailey: Congratulations on the gay filth!”

Never Mind the Buzzcocks began airing back in 1996, as a comedy celebrity panel quiz show, hosted by *Mark Lamarr* and featured team captains *Phil Jupitus* and *Sean Hughes*, the show's main discourse was one in which contemporary popular music shaped the overall theme.

“Never Mind The Buzzcocks is a long-running panel game based on contemporary music. It focuses on the world of rock and pop music - and aims to blow apart the recording industry's delusions of grandeur. How effective it is at this goal is sometimes called into question.” (Comedy.co.uk Webpage)

During the show's 26 seasons, “NMTB” has featured the most controversial comedians as well as pop stars and influential figures and personalities mostly from the popular culture and main stream media. The show has also been a subject of personnel changes throughout the years, with the departure of *Mark Lamarr* as host back in 2005 and the eventual replacement that was *Simon Amstell* after the show had seen a run with numerous guest hosts as well as other changes in the show that resulted into the show that had just finished its 26th season on December 2012, with different celebrity guests every episode as the host and *Phil Jupitus* and *Noel Fieldings* as team captains. The show's formatted in a way that involves two teams captained by *Jupitus* and *Fieldings* (both famous stand-up comics), each team has two other members, differing from popular music personalities and stand-up comedians to comic actors and television personalities, each episode features four different guests who are widely known to the British public as team members.

The show is usually formed around particular “rounds” in a shape of a quiz where no actual importance is given to points but rather the approach towards guest panellists by team captains and the host can be considered the selling point of the show. Moving away from the format of the show, the important aspect of what the show represents in terms of the way British humour is unfolded on main stream media, is the way in which the show consciously challenges certain issues. The first permanent facet of the show’s structure is the patterns emerged from comments made by the host of the show, naturally the type of humour utilized is merely dependent on how witty the particular host of the episode is, regardless, the point of view of the host and the perspective in which the positioning of the show takes place stays relatively consistent. The general embodiment of the comments made by the host are divided into two different formatting, starting with trivial facts and followed by pre-composed ‘jokes’ that mostly contain a certain tone of ridicule towards either the guests of the show or pop musicians, the host tries to assert the intentional harshness of what is ahead early on, then there is the improvisational approach towards the comments made by others on the show which is one of the most essential parts of the panel show programming in general. Demystification of pop culture and celebrity oriented society summarizes the position of the host in *Buzzcocks*, the tendency to never shy away from exposing the irony of the life of pop idols by harsh critical and detailed attacks on personalities who can be categorised as active parts of the celebrity culture within the particular system practiced on the main stream media in Britain, is the driving power of the host’s elucidated role.

Nevermind *The Buzzcocks* can be argued as a case for postmodern television programming, a kind that heavily relies on the production of meaning that is a result of the particular culture practiced in western mainstream media, on the other hand, intertextuality is an essential technique that drives the narrative of the critical perception that the show takes forward. It employs the anger of the populists and reflects it as direct satirical approach towards individuals responsible for the shallow representation that is systematically engineered for the established purposes of the decision makers; **a resemblance of the potency that a writer like *Evelyn Waugh* has had moved to acquire**, therefore demystifies and in cases ridicules the level of intellect that is unnecessarily (in accordance to the show’s perspective) given value and capital. It provides a rather hopeful platform, not only to release anger towards the direction that

Britain in general is headed for, but also to gather the attention of its audience towards the ridiculousness of the characters they so blindly admire. At the same time, the show purposefully relies on a cocktail of characteristics that British humour periodically accomplished, for instance the obscenity that is reflected throughout the show, the usage of a vocabulary that is generally offensive and considered not suitable for television programming, is a direct statement, rather an assertion, regarding the generality that the show is structured upon. The reason behind this approach is neither to provoke nor to gain attention, but rather it is utilized to refute the importance of obscenity as well as to deeply and thoroughly highlight the intensity of the position the show is taking. As mentioned before, the show also regularly hires top class stand-up comedians, given the diversity within the community of stand-up comedians in Britain in term of ethnicity, class structure and styles of humour they employ, *Buzzcocks* enumerates the sphere of perspectives as well as fabricating a process in which these different points of view clash with each other which acts as a sampling contrast that explores and examines the sociology of Britain.

This approach is a reminiscence of what British humour was to authors like *P.G. Wodehouse*, *Oscar Wilde*, *Evelyn Waugh* and even Shakespeare. A weaponization of different types of British humour practiced in the past and present against the political and ideological tool that is social repression. However, one issue that requires consideration is the platform in which this show operates. *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* is aired by the state operated network that is The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a rather important factor when it comes to examining the intentionality of the program. A reference of similarity is due, to the American mainstream networks and the way in which they operate meaning that the material aired on BBC is not necessarily uncensored or left uncontrolled but rather the emphasis on the existence of controlling gatekeepers is inevitably highlighted. The show's dependence on intertextuality is also another factor worth observing, regardless of the show's critical perspective towards the text created by the mainstream media, the dependence on intertextuality is an assertion of limited attention on pre chosen material that reluctantly focuses the attention of the show on publicizing what it so forcefully tries to criticize meaning that the potency of the show is limited to alternative and socially aware intellectuals who may already have the same perception towards the subject of criticism as the show itself takes. The

rationalization of BBC's approach towards providing a platform for such a show can also be observed from a point of view that imagines a story of an intended image of a democracy within media that is controllable by hiring different techniques such as systematic enforced topics of coverage. With this mentality in mind, the notion of controlled comedy within television that was asserted in chapter two regarding the American approach towards televised comedy, makes a strong application for British comedy on television as well, with different spectators and levels of tolerance and a considered approach of the nature of appealing humour in the region, the main stream media in Britain has found the way to moderate the aggression and to turn the appealing alternative comedy that was a danger towards the preferred political ideology of the establishment, into a reality that reflects the alternative ideology but at core is really mainstream normality of a form of comedy that only entertains and deflects the public's focal point.

The Case for "8 out of 10 Cats":

Similar to *The Buzzcocks* in terms of the program's format, "8 out of 10 Cats" is a comedy celebrity panel quiz show currently airing on Channel 4. The show began its programming on British Television back in 2005 and Channel 4 has finished airing the show's 15th season on April 2013. The conceptual observation of this show is relatively different that the one applied to "Never Mind The Buzzcocks", mainly because this show does not necessarily focus on a significant detailed discourse. The show follows a certain format that relies mostly on 'opinion polls, surveys and statistics', employing different personalities to discuss different topics varying from politics to pop culture and celebrity news so in terms of a focal point, the show operates on a much wider platform. Hosted by one of the most popular and controversial stand-up comedians in Britain, *Jimmy Carr*, the show's approach towards popular and most discussed news (by the public) of the week is one that requires further attention as it accommodates a particular stage that scientifically reflects patterns of public's attention towards the issues that are in most cases popularized by other forms of mainstream media, furthermore the show's distinct selection of personalities, celebrities and comedians as guests on the show is an apparent suggestion towards the show's capability to act as a representative of contemporary British comedy on today's television programming. For

instance *Johnny Vegas*, the star of BBC's popular sitcom "Ideal (2005-2011)" has had made an appearance on "8 out of 10 Cats" for eleven times, as well as *David Walliams* who co-created and co-starred in the critically acclaimed comedy sketch series "Little Britain (2003-2006 – BBC Three and BBC One) whose appearances on the show counts to ten times, are only a few of the many other comedy writers and performers who dominated British television that have made usually more than one appearance on this panel show.

Apart from the television comedy practitioners, "8 out of 10 Cats" has also hosted popular reality television stars, as well as, television broadcasters, presenters and athletes. This diversity of mentality on the show, reflects an important notion, regardless of the topical discussion among the guests as well as the team captains and the host, the noticeable aspect of the show is one that presents a conflict in the act, the clash of different classes within the social structure of Britain, however the dominant political sphere of Britain is one that actively denies the existence of the traditional social structure of the region but the way in which the show progresses as a platform for television personalities and more significantly stand-up comedians to make constant references towards the simplified social class structure of the region is a direct hint towards a self-explanatory influence on contemporary stand-up comedians from the emerging days of alternative comedy in the UK, where comedians mostly affiliated with the working class have engineered a movement to criticize the political environment of Britain in 1980's. Although, the twist here relies on a deeper level of intentionality, one can easily label the employment of the aspects of British alternative comedy and the style of humour they carry with the inclination of relatable, understandable and entertaining material, where the typical British spectator regardless of their social status can competently indulge upon, meaning the show's tendency towards purposeful provocation is quite simply non-existent therefore the show's structure can be studied from a perspective that suggests mere entertainment that hires the a diverse set of features from the periodic nature of British Humour but does not necessarily utilize them to build a position that effectively operates against the dominant socio-economic and political ideology. In other words the study of this show as a strong archetype of British humour on contemporary television concludes an alternative resembling production in the means of traditional mainstream television programming. The very

nature of the panel show format also insinuates another important factor of studying television as a discourse for provisional narrative of reality. In accordance to the same principle applied to comedy panel shows, *John Fiske* notes:

“The television discourse presents us daily, with a constantly up-dated version of social relations and cultural perceptions. Its own messages respond to change in these relations and perceptions, so that its audience is made aware of the multiple and contradictory choices available from day to day which have the potential to be selected for future ways of seeing. Of course, the picture does not appear to be so fluid as we watch: there are ‘preferred meanings inherent in every message. But even preferred meanings, which usually coincide with the perceptions of the dominant sections of society, must compete with and be seen in the context of other possible ways of seeing.” (*Reading Television, Page 5*)

Although, *Fiske’s* observations towards television and the platform it provides for conflicting ideologies may seem relatively optimistic to the nature of the television discourse from the audience’s point of view but it also raises the important notion of ‘preferred meanings’, *Fiske’s* approach towards this particular notion is one that affiliates it mostly with the ‘dominant section of the society’, however in modern western oriented television the preferred meaning within the televised narrative can also reflect the perspective of the dominant political ideology enforced by powerful decision makers as well.

A case for this argument can initially form itself by observing the topical issues that are mostly popularized by mainstream media meaning that certain amount of selective attention towards daily social and political news will inevitably create ‘word of mouth’ and ‘buzz’ that subsequently causes a distraction towards issues that are labelled by the media as non-important or in some cases when it comes to comedy programming as politically incorrect to be subjected to humour on television. For instance, in times where the subject of multiculturalism in Britain regarding the Islamic religion is being discussed on numerous documentaries and television programs like “The Big Questions (BBC One)”, comedy in all its different forms tends to shy away from the debate, providing no take on the matter or in cases carefully examined jokes with no real sting. This understandably acts as a direct reference towards a non-flattering history of

reception from the Islamic population against comical approach to their beliefs, nonetheless the collective act of self-censorship within the comedy community of Britain towards certain issues can be considered and seen as a contrary movement against what British humour in general used to stand for. It no longer moves in a direction to demystify certain issues, nor it tries to criticize the way in which the society's mind set has formed in accordance to a certain periodical ideology. Meaning that it not only has shifted but has also moves in the opposite direction of what the first chapter of this study proposes. It does not utilize humour in a way that the 'Three "W"'s' did, but it operates in the means of the establishment and not against it.

To have the today's British televised comedy in perspective, it is required to study the equivalencies of the past as well. "8 out of 10 Cats" can reasonably be considered to have derived from a small section of a certain talk show in the 1980's called "The Late Clive James", where *Clive James* as the host would read out the most popular news of the week followed by a humorous remark and then usually put those news to conversation with celebrity guests. In an episode aired in 1987, a very special guest appeared on the show, one of the most influential comedians of British television history, *Peter Cook*, who is considered to be the leading character of the golden days of British televised comedy.

Satire Boom: Golden Days of Televised British Comedy

The most common understanding of British comedy is often executed through the famous sketch show "Monty Python" and its subsequent cinematic productions such as "Life of Brian", the perfect example of the true nature and essence of British comedy. "Monty Python and The Flying Circus" began airing its first series in 1969 and ran through 1974 with the fourth series. The importance of the 'Pythons' is one that requires attention, however, to fully understand the process of the practice that "Monty Python" employed, it is rather necessary to examine a few of the earlier figures of influence in British televised comedy.

In a survey conducted by *Channel 4* in 2005, American and British comedy writers, performers and directors, voted *Peter Cook* as the greatest comedian of all time. *Peter Cook*, an English comedian, who is often referred to as "the father of modern satire", is

considered one of the most influential comedians of Britain. His unique approach is often said to have started the “British Satire Boom” of the 1960’s. His work has also been mentioned as a major influence on the British alternative comedy movement of the 1980’s. *Cook* alongside a number of other satirists and comedians gave light to the practiced genre of British satire. A relatively popularized version of the same approach writers such as *Evelyn Waugh* took, in the British literary platform. This popularization process started from the stage in Edinburgh comedy festival in late 1950’s and evolved on Television in 1960’s, influencing generations of comedians all the over the world. *Cook*’s political standing point is one that merely reflects a critical position towards Britain’s political sphere of the time. Apart from his work on television, he was also the founder of the infamous *Establishment Club*, where he regularly performed, a night club in London that hosted some of the most *anti-establishment* comedians and performers of the time, such the American comedian and social critic *Lenny Bruce* as well as *Cook*’s long time comedy partner *Dudley Moore*.

Peter Cook’s humour and the technicality of it, is a diverse form of practice. His unique take on comedy was a blend of his time in Cambridge University and his on-going experiences as the ‘common man’. He constantly employed his interpretation of British social life on a platform of intellectually challenging questions. The famous sketch from *Behind The Fridge* (*Cook* and *Dudley Moore*’s Tour) in which *Saint Mathew* interviews *Arthur Shepherd* as part of his research while writing the Gospel of Mathew, is a clear example of his approach towards comedy. In the sketch, *Mathew* appears in a form of a journalist who is writing a story for a popular newspaper and *Arthur* is the ‘common man’ with a cockney accent who appears to know the story of *Jesus Christ*.

“- *Mathew* (*Dudley Moore*): My name is Mathew, You may have heard of me and my colleagues; Mark, Luc and John

- *Arthur* (*Peter Cook*): Oh yeah, I know you lot.

- *Mathew*: We are doing an in-depth profile of Jesus or the Messiah as you may know him

- *Arthur*: Yeah I know him as Jesus, at what paper do you work on?

- *Mathew*: Bethlehem Star

- *Arthur*: Oh the Bethlehem Star, the wife and I take that, actually.”

His particular approach, not only moved in a direction that demystified important issues, it also contemplated a relatable and identifiable platform, in which intertextual and intercultural references were made to mockingly point towards the ridiculousness of issues of importance in Britain. His take, never shied away from controversial subjects, whether it was religious beliefs, political ideologies or traditions. That brand of comedy, used to purposefully attack any kind of authority and enforcement, a quality that is attached to the nature of the humour that was once practiced by writers like *Oscar Wilde*, *P.G. Wodehouse*, *Evelyn Waugh* and many more in British literature.

Peter Cook's influence on 'The Pythons' is inevitable. From 'The Flying Circus' which was a television production up until the controversially perfected version of the genre which is the cinematic production of 'Life of Brian', that particular tone of 'Peter Cook' is present. The most obvious aspect of this influence is the mere satiric treatment of traditions, politics or culture, although the level of direct agency lies much deeper than technicality or a certain utilization of humour between the two. It has much more to do with an agreed mentality, 'Pythons' did not learn wit, anger, cynicism or satire from *Cook*, what they acquired from him was the ability to find ridiculousness and irrationality in and around the world they conceived, their humour in terms of subsequent comedy was not merely to make people laugh and for the sake of entertainment but rather it was to purposefully influence and reflect, it was to hire the necessary means in order to expressively represent the shared mentality of their approach and the one taken by *Peter Cook*.

5. CONCLUSION

The complexity of a region's humour relies not only on the region's history but it also contemplates a generality that does not have much to do with collective identity and in the detailed case of Britain, humour has had much more to offer than laughs and entertainment. As a pierced utility of reflection and opposition, humour was purposefully utilized in British literature, cinema and other forms of narration to celebrate one's attitude of mind, regardless of cultural values, religious beliefs and ideological enforcements, humour walked alongside a mentality that refused to submit. This approach over the years created and maintained to some extent the very core of its nature. It learned how to transmit anger into satire, it popularized the techniques it hired and helped its audience to gain an understanding by exposing the ironies of life.

The framework of this particular study initially relies on a structure that simplifies a renowned figure in British comedy that has been active throughout the many years of televised comedy. *Stephen Fry* whose work and the process in which he practiced comedy on television has turned his body of work into a pattern on which the study of contemporary comedy on British television becomes transparent. His involvement in many of the talismanic comedies on British television, from historical sit-coms to comedy panel shows, is a rather interesting refectory that represents the ups and downs of an important influential process that resulted in the utilization of humour on British television that we acquire today. Relating to the mentality he so strongly stood by, over the years, an observation of the influences he personally retained throughout his practice, made an almost perfect exemplification of the common ground between the practice of British humour in the past and present.

This particular observation provided the platform needed to understand the nature of British humour as well as a hypothetical bridge that connects past generations of humourists to the ones practicing this form of narrative on British television as the biggest provider of humour and subsequent comedy to the British public. Although the evolution of British humour from influential literature to televised comedy was not the mere subject of inspection in this study, it was also important to factor in the postmodern aspects of influence, such as intertextuality and cross-cultural enforcements

of ideological practices by the dominant mass media corporations. This point is where the American practice of comedy on television in contemporary era advances into the picture, where the embodiment of the practices of the genre within television while observed reflects a controlled process of limitation, meaning that even the so called alternative critical humour within American televised comedy is still an operator for the means asserted by main stream media that follows to strongly support the arguments that suggests the non-existence nature of alternative comedy narratives in American television.

In accordance to the findings of American televised comedy, a ground of comparison was provided to examine the generality of British comedy on contemporary television, where by the focus of attention no longer regarded itself with the level of aggression but rather it tried to contemplate British televised comedy in terms of intentionality and potency, meaning that by moving away from the detailed study of the nature of the humour practiced on television in both countries, the bigger picture of reasoning behind this form of utilization came to question where it was established through examining strong representatives of British comedy television in accordance to the embodiment of American version of comical approach on television. The approach interestingly concludes a rather simple argument, that disparities and differences in between televised comedy in both countries is only an implication of appeal and not necessarily purpose, as different as they may appear in terms of style, the tendencies towards comedy programming on television in both countries more or less reflect the same approach that submits, in one way or the other, to restrictions, limitations enforced by dominant political ideology, a notion that the nature of British humour have always tried to protest against. The reasoning behind such suggestion could easily rely solely on the nature of television programming, where 'preferred meanings' are challenged against alternative understandings, but at least within conceptual observation of televised comedy, even alternative perspectives are considered to be easily controllable with numerous techniques, therefore the clash of perspectives in comical narratives on television is not one to be considered as courier of importance and potency.

Although this study is not aimed to relieve British comedy in television from further studies of content and essential understanding and representation of meaning, but rather

reflects a decision of taking a different stance and perspective towards the limited power of change that a generation of copy writers hold when it comes to the process in which they create text. Concluding to a point that asserts an argument against the power within which a social change can be relatively considered a possible outlook. The glorious past of comedy on British television, the days of “The Blackadder”, “Monty Python” and other contenders that caused a controversial discussion rather than just a controversy of political correctness, is relatively forgotten in other words, it is systematically removed from television. The blending humour of Britain that inherited or created artistry, is now mistakenly recognised, as harsh critical looks at the reality that offers no more than entertainment and cheap laughs.

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