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"This is getting too silly" - Pythonesque humour in
Kottan ermittelt

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**In loving memory of my mother
Karin Birnbaum**

*Thank you for your support and care,
for your love and being there.*

*Thank you for your laughs and glee,
for everything you've done for me.*

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1. Introduction

“This is getting too silly!”: The phrase is uttered in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* whenever a gag is highly absurd, irrational or simply silly. It is clear that *Monty Python* is an innovative television show which dared to stretch the limits of comedy. Concerning the popular cultural context, the members and creators of *Monty Python*, also known as the Pythons, managed to create a comedy universe whose effects are still evident in the present time. A great number of television shows and films, comedians and the popular culture as a whole were tremendously influenced by the inventive comedy concept of the Pythons. The same assumption applies to a popular Austrian television series which was aired in the 1980s. Two years later after the final broadcast of *Monty Python*, the first episode of *Kottan ermittelt* was aired on FS 1 (now ORF 1). (Gölsdorf 2007:9) The television show was often compared to the English comedy show and Pythonesque humour. The main goal of this analysis is to find out whether this assumption is true or not and if the implication of Pythonesque humour in an Austrian setting was successful or not.

The first part of this paper will present several theoretical concepts of humour. The central goal of this chapter is to define laughter and the corresponding triggers. In order to understand the impact that *Monty Python* had on *Kottan ermittelt*, it is necessary to gather a basic theory of why we laugh. Additionally, since both television shows evidently use traditional elements of film comedy, a short introduction to comedy, its instruments to provoke laughter and its typical character roles is presented in the third chapter. This includes the presentation of slapstick techniques, the character of the clown and the fool and equally the genre of the grotesque.

The fourth part will then present factual information on *Monty Python* and their chronicles. Based on a number of autobiographical references but also on other researchers' conclusions, this chapter analyses the origin of the cast, the beginnings of *Flying Circus*, the movies as well as the audience's reception. It is crucial to concentrate on the origins of *Monty Python* in order to understand the effect this television series had on other comedy shows including *Kottan ermittelt*. The most frequently used strategies of the Pythons to produce humour and comedy will also be dealt with in this section by focusing on a general definition of Pythonesque humour.

In contrast to *Flying Circus*, *Kottan* experienced a continuous development from a serious crime television series to a surreal comedy. For this reason, the fifth chapter does not only investigate the origins and the specific kind of humour in *Kottan ermittelt* but also the stylistic changes that the television series experienced. *Kottan ermittelt* can be considered as a highly innovative comedy show that introduced parody, dark humour and surreal sketches to the Austrian audience and it excessively received negative response which was mainly conveyed through letters or phone calls by outraged viewers.¹ Numerous viewers were shocked that *Kottan ermittelt* dared to make fun of others and to fool about serious subjects. This part of the paper will attempt to analyse the triggers of the disapproving reception and specifically, how the producers reacted to it.

The sixth chapter presents the major focus of this research, namely a comparative analysis of a number of sketches from *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The reason for choosing the television series of *Monty Python* instead of their films is due to the serial character of *Kottan ermittelt*. Both television shows were broadcasted in a periodical interval so that a comparison to *Monty Python's Flying Circus* appears logical.

The main purpose of this comparison is to find out whether Pythonesque humour is actually employed in *Kottan ermittelt* and which methods were influenced by the Pythons in order to create humour. The sketches are subdivided into different chapters to analyse the sketches in detail. The main questions that this research attempts to answer is, How do *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt* provoke laughter amongst their audience, Are there any similarities between their methods and their use of gags and finally, Does the audience laugh or not? Do the Pythons actually use traditional elements of comedy? Which humour theory can be identified in both television shows? And last but not least: Were the producers of *Kottan ermittelt* de facto inspired by the humour of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*?

After this comparative analysis, the chapter of conclusion presents a clear answer to the questions whether *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt* are comparable or not and whether Pythonesque humour was actually approved by the Austrian audience in the 1980s.

¹ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf

2. Theories of humour

In order to analyse the humour in *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, it is necessary to give a factual overview of the most important basic humour theories. As the Pythonesque style of humour is the object of this analysis it is obligatory to already have a fundamental knowledge of laughing theories. The most essential questions are, How can humour be defined, Why do we laugh, and What are the basic triggers of humour?

Humour offers a vast area of scientific analysis especially in the fields of psychology, linguistics, philosophy and cultural studies. A number of well-known theorists and philosophers such as Kant, Schopenhauer and Freud have already explored the field of humour and attempted to discover the answer to the most significant question, namely which stimulus provokes laughter. (Critchley 2002:3) Since humour is a complex subject that allows diverse scientific approaches, only the most popular theories are presented in this chapter.

First of all, it is important to mention that humour is a mental phenomenon restricted to humans, or in other words, the homo sapiens is the only race that produces humour and equally reacts to it. (Gelfert 1998:12) Behaviourist scientists have discovered certain mimic reactions amongst primates which are similar to a smile but it was not comparable to the response of humour or human laughter. (Gelfert 1998:12)

This claim could lead to the assumption that humour is a highly complex process which depends on certain factors such as context, social relationship and intellect. In addition, theorists argue that humour is universal and, thus, occurs in every culture although its use, its content, its producers and its responders might differ significantly due to cultural distinctions. (Berger 1997:71) As already mentioned, humour offers a vast field for various theories from diverse scientific fields. Nevertheless, three theories have become prevalent in humour research:

(1) The first theory of humour that is mentioned in this chapter is the theory of superiority which is based on Aristotle and Plato. (Critchley 2002:2) This idea is associated with the 18th century but it is still used by modern theorists. (Critchley 2002:2)

(2) The second humour theory is the so-called relief theory which was supported by theorists such as Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud. (Critchley 2002:2) The main

focus is a certain feeling of relief or pleasure that is triggered by the punchline. (Critchley 2002:2) The sentiment of relief is equally called the *comic relief*. (Critchley 2002:5)

(3)The third idea attempting to explain the humour process is the incongruity theory which was supported by Kant and Schopenhauer. (Critchley 2002:3)

It can be argued that a majority of theorists regard the theory of relief as the most useful. For instance, Apte (1985:13-14) describes the theory of relief by subdividing humour into three stages,

(1) sources that act as potential stimuli; (2) the cognitive and intellectual activity responsible for the perception and evaluation of these sources leading to humour experience; and (3) behavioural responses that are expressed as smiling or laughter or both. These attributes of the conceptualization of humour generally occur sequentially as I have ordered them; however, it is the second phase, the mental activity experienced by an individual, that is most crucial.

In other words, the main focus of Apte's (1985:13) definition is on a mental process which occurs in the experience of humour which equals the sentiment of relief. Apte (1985:13) further stresses the importance of the second phase of a humour process that starts after introducing the stimuli (for instance, the beginning of a joke) and ends with a response (laughter).

Latta (1999) also addresses the importance of this shift by introducing the theory of L. He argues that the process of humour can be subdivided into two significant categories: The stimulus side and the response side. (Latta 1999:8) For instance, the stimulus side can be a joke, a gag or a visual humorous body movement, whereas the response side corresponds to laughter that can either be a loud, uncontrolled outburst of laughter or a faint smile. (Latta 1999:13) In order to release the tension, it is necessary to have a certain trigger that can be considered as a release button initiating laughter. (Gelfert 1997:17) In his theory of L Latta (1999:38) argues that at the beginning of every humorous process, the responders feel tensed either due to fear or a simple sentiment of unrelaxation. The second phase of the process is the cognitive shift or how Latta (1999:39) states, "the primary cognitive shift" which is similar to the emotion of surprise. (Latta 1999:91) The final stage corresponds to the feeling of relief because what follows is a "rapid or fairly rapid relaxation through laughter." (Latta 1999:41)

Palmer (1993:99), however, argues that the final emotion of a humorous process is not relief but rather arousal. This means that the responder does not laugh because he finally experiences relaxation but rather he or she is aroused by the outcome of the humorous performance. In this regard, it has to be asked whether laughter is the result of the release or rather the augmentation of tensions.

As previously mentioned, Apte (1985) also presents the relief concept of humour but his main focus actually is on the social bond between joking relationships. Although this analysis of relationships is not highly relevant for the study of the humour in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt* it should still be concisely mentioned. Apte (1999:16) focuses on the social structures of the humorous process which he also defines as "external stimuli." The main focus of his research is kin-based and non-kin-based joking relationships which differ considerably from each other. (Apte 1999:31) The major distinction between these relationships is that kin-based humour is standardised by certain rules while non-kin-based are clearly person-oriented. (Apte 1999:31)

Monty Python's Flying Circus as well as *Kottan ermittelt* have quite different relationships to the responders of humour since they are separated by the fourth wall. The humour of these television shows cannot focus on specific individual personalities (they cannot be person-oriented) since their audience is not only highly varied but also invisible to the producers. The only aspect which is important for the relationship between the television series and their viewers is cultural based. As already mentioned, humour is universal but it differs from culture to culture. (Berger 1997:71) Apte (1985:16-17) argues,

Humor is culture based in the sense that individual cultural systems significantly influence the mechanism that triggers the humor experience. Familiarity with a cultural code is a prerequisite for the spontaneous mental structuring of elements that results in amusement and laughter or for the recognition of such restructuring in the sociocultural reality.

Alexander (1997:120) addresses the importance of this cultural based, common sense of humour by arguing that it is necessary for any social interactions.

Gruner (1997:8) compares the concept of humour and laughter to the general design of games so that he concludes that "laughing equals winning." However, it is necessary to mention that game and winning do not include the basic idea of

receiving a trophy or standing on a winner's podium but rather the conception of "getting what you want." (Gruner 1997:8) In this case, winning can rather be compared to pleasure, to satisfaction, to happiness and to outdo one another.

Gruner's (1997:6) concept of comparing humour to winning correlates with the theory of superiority by introducing a winner (the one who laughs) and a loser (the one who is laughed at). However, it is clear that the victim or the one who is laughed at is an idea that does not correspond to realism. (Gruner 1997:14) Jokes for example do not include genuine persons so that we do not laugh at someone who suffers real pain. Gruner (1997:14) rather compares humour to a sort of play that does not have to be taken seriously since the recipient laughs due to his sentiment of being superior to the target.

He suggests that humour functions on the butt of inferior targets because the concept of superiority is linked to an animal-like instinct remaining from the course of evolution. (Gruner 1997:16) In continuity of evolution, man created a kind of sense of victory in his struggle for survival, which is comparable to releasing a tension built up through competition. (Gruner 1997:16) Gruner (1997:17) thus concludes that "[l]aughing became the natural reaction to "winning", especially if that "win" came suddenly, and after a mighty struggle." Davies (1998:13) also compares the reaction to humour (laughter) as a "sudden burst of glory" because one is aware of one's individual superiority.

It can be argued that this theory derives from a certain primitive sense of survival. The urge for competition is equally evident in modern times, which can be exemplified by a general interest in board games, puzzles, television quiz shows and also sports. (Gruner 1997:32) In this case competitive behaviour is used for entertainment, which again supports Gruner's (1997:6) theory that the winning/losing game of humour causes satisfaction.

The theory of superiority claims that humour is produced when someone inferior is mocked. A specific characteristic of the inferior victim is his or her stupidity. According to Davies (1998:28), "with the exception of jokes about sex, there are more jokes about stupidity and particularly ethnic stupidity than any other theme."

Davies (1998:63) argues that the most popular jokes target the theme of stupidity and ethnicity.

People of this kind are also likely to be anxious about stupidity. They are anxious about their own low status in a society which prizes skill, intelligence and rationality, and are anxious lest the complex and baffling society in which they live should make unexpected demands on them which they will not know how to fulfil. Such anxieties are relieved by jokes about ethnic groups [...] (Davies 1998:69)

Alexander (1997:125) adds that jokes about ethnicity are necessary for maintaining group membership. It can also be reasoned that only because the target of humour is known it can be transformed to objects of jokes because otherwise the content of a joke would not be comprehensible. Davies (1998:13) compares this claim to a mirror the joke-tellers look at “laughing at the reflections of ourselves.”

However, the outcome of a joke based on inferiority may also be negative when the recipients sense a close, familiar or positive bond with the group that is the victim of the joke. (Gruner 1997:76) The theory of superiority was mainly replaced by the theory of relief by a number of theorists. Critchley (2002:14) for example defines the theory of superiority as untrue by arguing that humour always contains the notion of self-mockery and not (or not only) the ridiculing of others. For this reason, humour is often used as an instrument to solve psychic issues, which means that humour is also therapeutic because it allows persons to have a critical view on themselves (self-mockery). (Critchley 2002:15)

The third theory of humour that is frequently mentioned in scientific works about humour is the so-called incongruity theory. This theory states that there has to be a compliance with a joke and the social structure and if these structures experience incongruity in a humourous action (telling a joke), laughter is evoked and the humorous process was successful. (Critchley 2002:3) Critchley (2002:10) defines the theory of incongruity as follows,

[...] jokes are a play upon form, where what is played with are the accepted practices of a given society. The incongruities of humour both speak out of a massive congruence between joke structure and social structure, and speak against those structures by showing that they have no necessity.

The precondition for the theory of incongruity is that the two concepts have to be congruent because if that is not the case, laughter might not be provoked. (Critchley 2002:4) However, Palmer (1993:99) argues that the incongruities of humour are at

risk that they might not be noticed by the responder of humour so that the outcome of a joke may be unfunny.

Apart from these three basic theories of humour many theorists investigate more specific aspects of humour. Critchley (2002:10) for example, argues that humour is a mere "surrealization" of the real world which means that it simply projects real concepts of our society, culture and norms and presents them in an abstract manner. This surrealization of real concepts is frequently used in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as in *Kottan ermittelt* to evoke laughter. Specific ideas, such as buying groceries, visiting a marriage counsellor, spotting animals or buying a cup of coffee, are used as basis for gags. However, these concepts which are part of everyday life are presented as surreal abstracts e.g. buying cheese is impossible because the merchant ran out of every single sort, the marriage counsellor seduces the wife in front of the husband's eyes, the animal spotter does not notice that he is not spotting animals but trains, the coffee vending machine refuses to deliver a cup of coffee and instead abuses the customer. It is evident that these sketches are funny because they normally do not occur in the real world. So, they are an abstraction, a surrealization and an exaggeration of everyday practices.

Critchley (2002:1) explains that,

jokes tear holes in our usual predictions about the empirical world. We might say that humour is produced by a disjunction between the way things are and the way they are represented in the joke, between expectation and actuality. Humour defeats our expectations by producing a novel actuality, by changing the situation in which we find ourselves.

Gruner (1997:45) also mentions the existence of so-called sick jokes which include themes such as "infanticide, matricide, mutilation, infirmity, disability, debilitating illness, dismemberment, amputation monsterism, vampirism, and [...] incest [...]." This sort of jokes makes fun of death and they are the unreal restriction of jokes which allows them to make fun of a subject which should normally be treated with dignity and respect. (Gruner 1997:44) Sick jokes are frequently used in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* when themes such as cannibalism or death are ridiculed.

It is evident that the humour process is not only a highly complex construction but humour can also be unsuccessful. This means that a humorous action such as telling a joke does not always receive a positive response so that the producers of humour

experience failure. One of the most important factors contributing to the success of humour is a shared sense of humour, which means that both producer and responder share the same humorous background or as Palmer (1993:150) puts it, “a common frame of mind.” In this regard, Critchley (2002:4) argues, “Joking is a game that players only play successfully when they both understand the rules.” Palmer (1993:150) defines this shared cultural knowledge as a precondition for successful humour.

So, in order to perform a successful humorous action (telling a joke) it is important that common knowledge is shared since humour highly depends on context. (Critchley 2002:66) If this context is not understood, the humorous process does not fulfil its goal: evoking laughter. Palmer (1993:149) differentiates between whether humour is comprehensive or incomprehensive. If the same knowledge or sense of humour is shared, a joke might be comprehensive and consequently provoke laughter. If the knowledge is distinct the responder might not understand the context of the joke (the joke is incomprehensive) and, thus, he or she might not laugh.

In addition, one of the most crucial factors for a successful humorous process is timing. (Critchley 2002:6) Jokes and gags include pauses, stoppages and muteness. If a joke is told rather quickly without any pauses, the punch-line does not receive enough attention from the responder so that the joke-teller takes the risk to fail. Critchley (2002:6) further stresses the temporal dimension of joke-telling by subdividing time into two categories: “duration and instant.” When a joke is presented to the responder, the time is expanded or stretched, which Critchley (2002:6) refers to the duration of humour while the intrusion of the punchline equals an explosion that interferes with duration. This brusque interference equals the instant of humour. (Critchley 2002:6)

Although a great number of Pythonesque sketches lack the punchline and have no linear structure, timing is still important. In *Monty Python's Flying Circus* the instant of a joke rather refers to a quick change of scene, the introduction of cartoons or a completely surreal twist that interferes with duration of the sketch. Critchley (2002:7) compares the punchline to an “acceleration of time” while in the case of *Monty Python*, it is the unusual structure of gags and sudden changes of scenes, characters or themes accelerating time.

Another decisive factor whether a joke is successful or not are the performative skills of the producer of the humorous action. (Palmer 1993:161) It highly depends on the

skills of a joke-teller whether a joke is comprehensive and successfully evokes laughter. Does the joke-teller use the correct expressions? Does he follow the correct structure of the joke? Does he convey humour by using mimic, gestures and body movements? It is clear that telling a joke without using methods to build up tension (pauses, visual effects etc.) will probably not catch the responder's attention. *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as *Kottan ermittelt* use various performative instruments to create humour including exaggerated body movements (Ministry of Silly Walks), voices (The Pepperpots) or music (Kottan's Kappelle).

Generally, if a joke is told on an inappropriate occasion, for example at a funeral or a job interview, humour might also fail since the responder may find it offensive. (Palmer 1999:163) This also depends on the occasion, the structure or relationships (the joke-teller and the responder dislike each other). (Palmer 1993:164)

Palmer (1993:161) further states that professional comedians face the highest risk of failing in a humorous process since their audience is not only highly varied but it also might differ at each performance. This also applies to the television show *Kottan ermittelt* which had to face severe criticism after the broadcasting of the first episodes. Even though the Austrian viewers shared a common knowledge since they all had the same cultural background, the humour of *Kottan* was not consistently successful. For this reason, the theories of humorous failure can be added by the assumption that the success and comprehensibility of humour equally depend on individual tastes, experiences and preferences.

Finally, there is still one important aspect of humour that has to be mentioned: the punchline. As previously mentioned in this chapter, a number of theorists highlight the importance of a punchline and argue that it is decisive for the success of a humorous process. However, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* clearly demonstrates that a joke or a sketch does not need to have a punchline in order to be funny, quite the contrary. The missing of the punchline can be regarded as a playful change of traditional joking structures. The expectations of the audience are deceived since it expected traditional comedy, which is: The joke is introduced, the tension is built up, the punchline releases the tension and laughter is evoked. Nevertheless, even though *Monty Python* frequently avoids the use of punchlines their humour can still be considered as successful.

3. Comedy

In order to analyse the humour of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as of *Kottan ermittelt*, it is necessary not only to mention and investigate the most common humour theories but it is equally important to look at the genre of these two television shows: comedy. Even though *Kottan ermittelt* cannot clearly be defined as a comedy television show since its main genre is actually crime investigation, the comical elements prevail and are significant stylistic devices of the show. For this reason, *Kottan ermittelt* is also categorised as comedy rather than as a typical crime series.

This passage of the thesis attempts to answer the following questions: How can comedy be defined? What methods are used to amuse the audience? Which characters, structures and styles are used in comedies?

Palmer (1993:120) mentions that historically, comedy was different from farce. While farce rather belonged to mass, popular culture, comedy had a canonical and literary connotation. He further explains that farce used to be "a sub-genre of theatrical comedy." (Palmer 1993:142) Today, both genres have intermingled and the result of this mixture is the comedy of today. (Palmer 1993:142)

Especially film comedy offers various ways of evoking humour such as milking a gag. Palmer (1993:111) mentions the gag (a small guy gets out of a car, a large man follows him outside the car), milking the gag (a long line of large men getting out of the car) and topping the gag (a midget follows the long row of men). (Palmer 1993:111) An ideal example for milking a gag is the accidents sketch in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, which will be discussed in chapter 6. This example makes obvious how sketches, jokes and gags are developed and how laughter can even be increased. Palmer (1993:111) compares this growth of the gag to a "crescendo effect", which means that gags can have a sequential characteristic. This effect is visible in *Kottan ermittelt* as well, particularly concerning the running gags which are constantly augmented in terms of absurdity.

It is also necessary to mention the genre of black comedy since especially *Monty Python* frequently uses sick jokes and plays with taboos which are both elements of black comedy. Black comedy employs humour and connects it to suffering by introducing taboos or violence (Palmer 1993:118) Basically, black comedy belongs to the genre of the grotesque. Stott (2004:83) defines it "as an embodiment of the abject." The term derived from the Italian word grotto, which referred to underground

chambers that were discovered in the late 15th century. (Palmer 1993:156) In these chambers, paintings, or rather ornaments were found which completely contradicted the artistic preference of that time. (Palmer 1993:156) The term was soon connected to visual art and to a specific decorum until it lost its artistic connotation and was used as a comedy genre. (Palmer 1993:156) Grotesque comedy mixes humour with fear, laughter with monstrosities or, as Stott (2004:83) argues, “repulsive and comic.” In fact, the original connotation of the word grotesque referred to contradiction (grotesque décor did not follow the standards of art) and it still is connected to opposition today, namely humour and the fearful. Stott (2004:83) argues that grotesque comedy aims at arousing “ambiguous feelings” amongst the audience, for instance, by telling a joke with a highly tabooed subject. Grotesque humour is extensively used especially in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* but also in *Kottan ermittelt*. The perfect example for grotesque comedy in *Monty Python* is the “Undertaker Sketch”, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6. In this sketch, the Pythons mix humour with a tabooed theme that also triggers fear and rejection. Nevertheless, *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* not only use repulsive themes to evoke laughter but they employ a classical element of film comedy: slapstick.

Slapstick refers to early American cinema, particularly to the films by Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton and mainly involves body movements and physical violence. (Stott 2004:87) It also derives from a theatrical background and was usually considered as 'low' culture. (King 2002:24) Best known for typical slapstick clowning were *The Three Stooges* where “no opportunity is missed for the slap on the head, the punch in the belly, the poke in the eye. Carefully orchestrated, their collisions sound almost musical.” (Stavacre 1987:48) The term itself derived from the sound that was produced by wooden bats. Clowns used these paddles in order to hit each other. (Stott 2004:87) Specific cartoons such as *Tom and Jerry* or *Coyote and Roadrunner* belong to the genre of slapstick. Stott (2004:79) explains that “Any Tom and Jerry cartoon exemplifies this extenuated corporeality in its parade of bodies that mutate, disassemble, reconfigure, and suffer endless punishment while refusing to die.”

It is evident that the cartoon uses typical elements of the slapstick genre. The cartoon's protagonists use violence to reach their goal (catching the mouse or roadrunner), constantly fail (the bomb spares the roadrunner but later hits the coyote)

and laws of physics are completely ignored (coyote walks on air for a few moments, before he falls down). Typical gags for slapstick are

disproportionate sizes, the animation of the inanimate, the slowing down or speeding up the events, the personification of objects, and the reversal of rejection of linear cause and effect that allows things to be re-contextualized or entirely reused. This belongs to a rich tradition of clowning. (Stott 2004:89)

Monty Python's Flying Circus and *Kottan ermittelt* use both slapstick to produce humour. Characters are hit, beaten up, seriously hurt and they constantly fail to reach their goal. Examples for slapstick elements in *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* are Heribert Pilch being physically abused by a coffee vending machine in *Kottan* or *Monty Python's* knight who tends to hit a character whenever a sketch is in danger of becoming too silly. They follow a classic clown tradition and re-use in a modern media, the television series. Especially the ridiculing of body movements (Ministry of Silly Walks) or the absence of physical laws (someone falling out of the window and re-appears unscratched) are frequently used in both shows. The use of slapstick in both television shows will be discussed in chapter 6.

In addition to grotesque and slapstick comedy, specific character roles and stereotypes that derive from traditional comedy are equally significant aspects of the humour in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt*.

A highly important figure in comedy is the fool, “[a]n historically complex and paradoxical character, claiming a variety of overlapping roles including clown, buffoon, jester, scapegoat, and clairvoyant, the fool recurs as a symbol of contradictions and quandaries.” (Stott 2004:45) However, it is necessary to mention that the fool is not comparable to an idiot, but he rather combines “wisdom and folly” in his character. (Stott 2004:45) The role of the fool and the clown whose main purpose is being the target for laughter and entertaining the audience with his clumsiness occur in both television shows. Especially *Kottan ermittelt* comprises many roles that equal the traditional clown of comedy. Their main purpose in the series is to create humour and to entertain the audience by revealing their failure and stupidity.

Concerning the gender roles in both television shows, the comedy of *Monty Python* is highly men-oriented since there are rarely female roles in their comedy show. In

contrast, *Kottan's* protagonists are equally male, but the female supporting roles are presented as strong and independent characters.

For a long time, women had not been part of comedy since it was argued that females lack natural humour which means that women are not the ideal producers of humour or comedy. (Stott 2004:93) Furthermore, it was claimed that humour was often connected to sexual themes and since women are not as open to this theme as men, they could fail in producing comedy. (Stott 2004:94) Today, the image of female comedians is a different one and they even enjoy great popularity. Stott (2004:96) argues that this new role of females as producers of humour came into being through the struggles of feminism in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, women do not have a central role in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The reason for this lack is not due to female discrimination but rather to the decision to use cross-dressing as a main humorous device in their show. Instead of portraying genuine women, the male creators of *Monty Python* simply took over the roles of their female characters.

Even though women were excluded from comedy for quite a long time, cross-dressing has a long tradition in comedy. Cross-dressing was already used at the time of Shakespeare when female roles were played by men. (Stott 2004:61) Today, it is still a frequently used method to entertain the viewers by simply reversing gender roles. In conclusion, it is evident that *Monty Python* as well as *Kottan ermittelt* both use traditional comedy elements, gimmicks, traditions and especially character roles in order to produce humour.

4. Monty Python's Flying Circus

After a concise introduction of humour theories the fourth chapter focuses on the television comedy show *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. First of all this theoretical part illustrates the pre-history of *Monty Python* or to be more precise the distinctive media shows that influenced the cast of *Monty Python*, the cast, the films, the series and the reception of *Monty Python*.

According to various autobiographical references such as *The Pythons* (2004:102) or *Monty Python speaks!* (2005:6) the Pythons have already been influenced by comedy and humour in early stages of their personal life. It can be assumed that these initial impacts contributed to construct the typical Pythonesque style.

Additionally, there was a recognisable trend for satire in the 1960s .In fact, *Monty Python* and its use of comedy can be regarded as a result of preceding influences of other media including the radio show *The Goon Show*. (Landy 2005:34)

The BBC radio series *The Goon Show*, which was aired from 1951 to 1961, can be defined as clearly innovative in the genre of satire. (Landy 2005:34) Especially the use of surrealistic sound effects, language and character development are typical markers of *The Goon Show*. (Landy 2005:34) Morgan (2005:5) defines this show as a format that “was to radio comedy what Picasso was to postcards.”

Indeed, the Pythons are quite aware of the fact that their style and mastery of comedy have been determinedly framed by previous comedy shows, as Eric Idle (Chapman et al. 2004:168) argues

That’s why Python isn’t like this huge thing that comes out of nowhere, it’s this forth of ongoing shows, a bubble that got bigger, where everything else isn’t remembered so well [...]

In addition, Landy (2005:33) also mentions the *Carry On* films as a further antecedent and influence of the Pythons. The films were broadcasted from the late 1950s to the late 1970s and compared to the *Flying Circus* and they equally used a highly surrealistic humour. (Landy 2005:33) Concerning structure, gags and stereotypes, *The Carry On* films can be regarded as predecessors of *Monty Python*. (Landy 2005:33)

It is important to note that although *Monty Python* is defined by several theorists, including Morgan (2005:1) as a ground-breaking television show the influential factor of pre-Python comedy is substantial for the success of the Pythons. It thus can be argued that *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* was indeed an innovative concept, but it could only originate from impacts of its predecessors. Hence, it can be concluded that previous comedy shows including *The Goon Show* formed a significant fertile soil that the idea of *Monty Python* could ideally grow on.

In order to conduct a theoretical study of Pythonesque humour and the Python’s usage of comicalness, it is equally essential to examine the creators who conceived the television show *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. The original *Monty Python* cast consisted of six members including John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Terry Gilliam,

Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin. In 1989 Chapman died from cancer and left five members of *Monty Python* behind. (Morgan 2005:294-295)

With the exception of Terry Gilliam, each Python had an academic background. They all either went to Cambridge or to Oxford. In fact, the academic years intensely influenced the creativity and artistic abilities of the Pythons. (Chapman et al. 2004:128) After university and before the Pythons united in 1969, they were working on several television shows as performers and writers, including *The Frost Report* and *Do Not Adjust Your Set*. (Morgan 2005:7-9) In other words, the Pythons had already collected significant experiences in the television and comedy production before they created the *Flying Circus*.

Concerning the initial step which combined five of the six Python members, Cleese and Chapman were both fond of *Do not Adjust Your Set* as well as *Complete and Utter Work of History*, which was written and performed by Palin, Jones and Idle. (Morgan 2005:23) After a short telephone call and the positive answer of Palin and his colleagues, the beginning of a new television show was determined. (Morgan 2005:23)

The reason for focusing on the Pythons as creators of the show in this chapter is crucial for further investigations especially concerning Pythonesque humour. One of the major characteristics of the particular style of *Monty Python* is the productive team work. Most of the sketches, with only few exceptions, were written, and performed by the Pythons themselves. (Morgan 2005:39) Generally, the Pythons wrote scenes and sketches in pairs (Cleese and Chapman, Jones and Palin and Idle by himself) and after they had gathered enough material, they assembled and performed the sketches using their colleagues as audience. Based on the reaction of the group, the sketch was either performed, re-written by another Python or simply eliminated. (Morgan 2005:39)

According to the Pythons (2004:159) themselves, each one of them had a specific, unique talent concerning writing the sketches for the show. Eric Idle (Chapman et al. 2003:197) rightly observes: "Everybody was mad, but in a slightly different way, each had his own element of madness. But together we made this perfectly mad person." It can be thus argued that the Python's humour is the result of mingling and combining individual notions of humour and creativity.

Another significant aspect concerning creating Pythonesque humour is that almost every Python member (with the exception of Terry Gilliam) shared a similar history

concerning their social and academic background. Landy (2005:5) argues that due to this common background, they were able to create a perfect and beneficial group dynamic. Although the diverse characteristics and attitudes led to frequent disagreements and disputes, they all equally contributed to the creative and constructive process.

On October 5, 1969 *Monty Python's Flying Circus* started to be broadcasted on BBC. (Landy 2005:4) A number of authors such as David Morgan (2005:1) have argued that the cultural and social effects due to the show in the 1970s are still recognisable in cultural and media sections of present times. This basically means that *Monty Python's Flying Circus* can be defined as a cultural and media phenomenon which influenced and formed not only the British nation but also other television shows worldwide.

As previously mentioned, Cleese and the other Pythons decided after a short telephone call to collaborate and create a television show of their own. The next significant step was to find an ideal concept for the show. According to the Pythons themselves (Chapman et al. 2004:215), even finding a suitable title for the show was indeed a demanding task. There were several proposals, including *A Horse, a Spoon and a Basin*. (Bleck 2008:25) However, the members finally agreed on a combination of the name of "a chap in [a] local pub" and Cleese's fondness of reptiles. (Idle in Chapman et al. 2004:216) The supplement of *Flying Circus* was added by the BBC. (Chapman et al. 2005:217)

Concerning the contextual draft of the show, the Pythons agreed that their main ambition was to create an innovative, humorous concept not constrained to normative rules of comedy. (Chapman et al. 2005:204) In fact, a highly crucial key factor for *Monty Python's* success and its long-lasting influence on other media shows is due to their large amount of creative freedom that BBC granted them from the beginning. This means, that at the onset of the first series the Pythons were not concerned with censorship even though their show contained devices of violence, strong language and dark humour. (Morgan 2005:137)

To put it differently, in the process of writing and performing the Pythons were not restricted to any conventional rules and orders from any executives so that the *Flying Circus* can hence be defined as a vast playground that could be filled with the most surreal and outrageous content. Eric Idle declares (Morgan 2005:37):

There were no executives. This freedom allowed us to experiment without having to say what we were trying to do- indeed, we didn't have a clue what we were trying to do except please ourselves. This was the leitmotiv: If it made us laugh, it was in; if it didn't, we sold it to other shows.

Concerning typical Pythonesque humour, the show concept does not follow a particular narrative line which basically means that loose sketches are connected to one another. However, this does not mean that the scenes lack any form of contentual connections but they can also be regarded as individual sketches which do not have to be related to each other.

The opening scene always proceeds after the same scheme. A man dressed in ripped clothes enters the scenery either running, crawling or towards the camera and utters the popular expression "It's." Then, an animation by Terry Gilliam (flowers prospering from the ground) and Cleese uttering "*Monty Python's Flying Circus*" follows, accompanied by the theme of the Liberty Bell. (Chapman et al. 2005:232)

As already mentioned, the sketches are frequently loosely connected to one another. Moreover, they have no clear beginning, middle or ending and often continue at a later point of the episode. Nevertheless, some scenes are indeed related either by Gilliam's animation or clear markers. Beyond any doubt, Terry Gilliam and his usage of animations and cut outs are essential for the humour and successful reception of Monty Python. Altogether, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* comprise four seasons which were broadcasted from 1969 to 1974. However, the last season was filmed without the participation of John Cleese. (Bleek 2008:84)

The following passage gives a factual overview on the films of *Monty Python* including *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *Life of Brian* and *The Meaning of Life*. Even though this part is kept rather short, since the main focus is on the comparative analysis of the television series *Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt*, the Python's expedition to films is equally crucial for the scientific research of this paper.

The first film production of the Pythons was *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, which was inspired by the Arthurian legend. (Morgan 2005:144) Morgan (2005:145) indicates that "With the Holy Grail, the Pythons were not only able to redefine the limits of narrative structure, but also to take innovative and conventional styles of filming [...] and apply them to comedy."

Indeed, the usage of coconuts to represent horseshoes, a man-eating rabbit and a limbless knight trying to combat with his remaining torso can be undeniably defined

as *unconventional styles* of comedy. As previously mentioned, the Python films are not in the centre of this paper, so the information concerning the filmic excursions has to be limited to just a few basic facts.

The second film production of *Monty Python* was *Life of Brian*, the story of a mistaken saviour who coincidentally ends up being crucified. (Ross 1997:178) The response to *Life of Brian* was actually fairly outrageous and in some parts of Great Britain, the film was even banned from cinemas. (Schilbrack 2011:14) In general, the Pythons were alleged of blasphemy since a number of spectators claimed that the film defamed Jesus and the Holy Bible. (Schilbrack 2011:13) However, the Pythons argue that their intention and idea had been quite the contrary. (Morgan 2005:247)

The third film production of *Monty Python* was *The Meaning of Life*, which basically portrays human life from birth to death by representing the most significant station in one's existence. (Ross 1997:184) Nevertheless, among critics and even the Python's themselves, the film was regarded to be the most improvable. (Morgan 2005:289) In addition to the films the Pythons also published *Live at the Hollywood Bowl* in 1982, which is a recording of a live performance (Morgan 2005:321) However, the Pythons also had to face harsh criticism and rejection. As Terry Jones (Chapman et al. 2003:72) rightly observes,

[...] comedy is a dangerous business. If people find something funny you're OK. But the moment you do something that's meant to be funny and someone doesn't find it funny, they become angry. It 's almost as if they resent the fact that you tried to make them laugh and failed.

In 1975 some episodes of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* were broadcasted on ABC, The American Broadcasting Company. (Landy 2005:1) Due to strong language, including cuss words and the Python's expression of *naughty bits*, as well as to controversial content, the television network decided to censor the show. The consequence of this censorship was the Python's response to sue the television broadcaster. (Landy 2005:1)

In this regard, it is necessary to point out that it was mainly the effect of reducing their copyright and creative property that induced thy Python members to sue the American Broadcasting company. Concerning the common reception of British viewers Eric Idles (Chapman et al. 2003:264) states:

We got some feedback, particularly when we went filming the second series. I remember people saying, '*Monty Python*, I hate you lot!' And others saying, 'YES!' For many years we were hated and abused by people and it was something of a shock to find we'd become the darling, loveable boys of comedy.

4.2. Pythonesque humour

Morgan (2009:3) is clearly right in saying that "Python was not about jokes; it was about a state of mind". A number of researchers have already discussed *Monty Python's* style of comedy and its use of humour as a ground-breaking concept whose effects have lasted to the present day. For instance, Landy (2005:3) points out that "the Flying Circus experimented with a complex form of comedy that wreaked havoc not only with the TV apparatus but also with contemporary culture." It is right to describe *Monty Python's* use of humour and satire in their television shows as innovative.

In fact, a primary aspect of Pythonesque humour is an absent punchline in certain sketches. Terry Gilliam (Chapman et al. 2003:195) affirms this statement by arguing "We don't need punchlines. We'll keep it running until we think it's run out of steam then we'll pass onto something else. And that was really freed us up." It can hence be observed that the punchline was considered by the Pythons as a restriction and limitation intervening with the Python's creative freedom.

Furthermore, it can be suggested that eliminating or avoiding a proper punchline is also a stylistic element. The absence of punchline violates traditional norms of comedy which can be defined as an innovative change of comedy design.

As already mentioned in chapter 2, punchlines are the triggers to provoke laughter. That is to say, with a joke, the stimuli generate expectations on the side of the recipient which are finally released by the punchline. As a result, laughter is released since the recipients sense a certain form of relief. (Critchley 2002:2) Regarding this claim, the absence of a punchline consequently prevents the recipient from laughing because his expectation is not resolved or fulfilled. Nevertheless, *Monty Python's* concept of avoiding the punchline can be still defined as successful in provoking laughter since they confuse the recipient's expectation by violating generic norms. Another substantial stylistic component of the Pythonesque style concerns the structure of the sketches. Speaking in traditional terms, a comedic sketch consists of

an introduction, a central and a conclusion which is the punchline. However, several sketches of *Monty Python* violate these norms by simply eliminating either the introduction or the end of the sketch or starting in the midst of it.

Another central theme that is continually ridiculed by *Monty Python* concerns the television genre including interviews, sports programmes or documentaries. The Pythons simply use standard television shows and satirize them by introducing absurd elements or completely converting the purpose of such programmes. The following scene illustrates this argumentation.

Host: And do you in fact have two sheds?

Jackson: No, no I've only one shed. I've had one for some time, but a few years ago I said I was thinking of getting another one, and since then some people have called me "Two Sheds".

Host: In spite of the fact that you only have one.

Jackson: Yes.

Host: I see. And are you thinking of purchasing a second shed?

Jackson: No!

Host: To bring you in line with your epithet?

Jackson: No.

Host: I see, I see. Well let's to return to your symphony.

Jackson: Ah yes.

Host: Did you write this symphony in the shed?

Jackson: No!

Host: Have you written any of your recent works in the shed of yours?

Jackson: No, it's just a perfectly ordinary garden shed.

Host: I see, I see. And you're thinking of buying this second shed to write in!²

By focusing on a complete irrelevant detail (Arthur's nickname and his estate of two sheds), the Pythons transform this interview into an absurd version of an interview. Generally, television interviews have rather serious connotations and fulfil the purpose of either inform or provoke. *Monty Python's* comedic version of the interview does indeed inform the audience -namely about the fact that Arthur has two sheds- but first the information can be considered as irrelevant and second they are completely overacting the scene by showing pictures of the shed and continually offending the interviewed person.

In addition to interviews, sports programmes are also central themes regarding Pythonesque humour. This includes sketches about the Olympics of wealth idiots

² *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 1. *Whither Canada?*

(Upper Class Twit of the Year) or a cycling tour with Picasso. Again, traditional television shows are used as basics and presented in a humorous way.

Violating taboos and an exorbitant use of violence can also be attributed to the Pythonesque style. As previously mentioned, the Pythons were granted a significant amount of freedom by the BBC in producing their show (at least in the initial seasons). (Morgan 2005:135) Beyond any doubt, ridiculing certain taboo themes such as death, violence or sexual intercourse are typical of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. One of the most frequently cited sketches in regard to breaking taboos is the *Undertaker Sketch*, which will be discussed in a comparative analysis in chapter 6.

Nevertheless, the constant ridiculing of issues that were commonly considered as taboos also resulted in a gradual augmenting censorship from the BBC. Whereas the Pythons were rather unconcerned by the BBC's intervention at the beginning of their show, the television broadcaster gradually became concerned about the content of the show so that the BBC required to view written material beforehand. (Morgan 2005:137)

Carol Cleveland is often regarded as the seventh member of the *Monty Python* group. She impersonates female roles, whenever the role demands a connotation of sexual attractiveness which means that Cleveland only represented an attractive woman who is not the target of ridiculing. (Landy 2005:71) However, the Pythons themselves also slip into female roles in order to emphasise the absurdity and silliness in the sketch. They dress up in rather tawdry clothes and speak in high-pitch voices. (Landy 2005:71) As a result, the sketches containing the Pythons dressed up as females automatically provoke laughter since already the appearance of the characters was ridiculous and absurd.

In fact, animals and other creature-like objects are equally used in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* in order to create a comedic ambiance. Often, animals were further attributed with grotesque characteristics contradicting any nomological norms. An ideal example to verify this claim is the sketch of the nesting sheep. Two men meet at a fence, and it appears that they are sighting something that the audience cannot see in the frame. It is then clarified that they are observing sheep nesting in trees. The animals even attempt to fly, but constantly fail and fall from the tree. This scene cannot be seen in the frame, but one of the characters describes this bizarre event, and the sound of sheep is played in the background. Evidently, tree-nesting sheep

contradict the natural law and consequently provoke laughter because this violates norms.

The human body is equally misused in a grotesque manner. Probably the scene that ideally exemplifies this argument is the *Ministry of Silly Walks Sketch*. John Cleese performs an utmost funny walk that contains obvious slapstick elements. Additionally, ethnic groups are frequently ridiculed in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* by an exaggerated portrayal of stereotypical qualities. In addition to the French, also other nationalities including Germans, Italians, Scots or Americans are ridiculed. This also applies to the French sketch which includes two Frenchmen, dressed in striped shirts, a bonnet and a convertible moustache. In the sketch, they try to explain the aircraft interior of a sheep with the help of a poster .

First Frenchman: Bonsoir, ici nous avons les diagrammes modernes d'un mouton anglo-français ... maintenant ... (*some incomprehensible muttering*) nous avons, dans la tête, le cabine. Ici, on se trouve le petit capitaine Anglais, Monsieur Trubshawe.

Second Frenchman: Vive Brian, wherever you are.

First Frenchman: D'accord, d'accord. Maintenant, je vous présente mon collègue, le pour célèbre, Jean-Brian Zatapathique.

(*He converts his moustache to his colleague*)

Second Frenchman : Maintenant, le mouton ... le landing ... les wheels, bon.

(*He shows some wheels on the legs of the sheep.*)

First Frenchman: Bon, les wheels, ici.

Second Frenchman C'est formidable, n'est- ce- pas? (*he shows the motor at rear of sheep*)³

Running gags are also an essential method to create comedy in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Certain procedures such as the knight with a rubber chicken or a 16-ton weight falling on characters but also specific protagonists perform significant running gags in *Monty Python*.

It is evident that Pythonesque humour offers many interpretations since the Pythons used a lot of humorous instruments to provoke laughter. After analysing the humour of *Monty Python* it is equally necessary to investigate the humour in *Kottan ermittelt*.

³ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 2. *Sex and Violence*.

5. Kottan ermittelt

Kottan ermittelt was initially written by Helmut Zenker as a short story and released as an audio book in 1976. (Fuchs 2010:207) In the same year, Peter Patzak and Zenker collaborated and created the first film of *Kottan ermittelt*. It was broadcasted on ORF 1 from 1976 to 1983 with a total amount of nineteen episodes, directed by Peter Patzak and written by Helmut Zenker. (Gölsdorf 2007:9) This chapter focuses on a short factual summary of the beginning, content and cast of *Kottan ermittelt*. According to Patzak, *Kottan* was actually proposed to be just a one-time project but due to the subsequent polarisation after the first film they decided to produce further episodes. (Gölsdorf 2007:96)

The protagonist of the television series is police inspector Adolf Kottan. The character was played by three different actors, Peter Vogel, Franz Buchrieser and Lukas Resetarits. In the course of the nineteen episodes the character of Kottan experiences a gradual development from a rather unappealing identity with a noticeable tendency to racism and hostility towards women to a rebellious, rock and roll singing police inspector. Concerning basic facts, Adolf Kottan is married, has two children and works at the murder squad in Vienna.

One of the minor characters is Kottan's assistant Alfred Schrammel who has a certain fondness of cheap crime literature and Lucky Luke comics. The character, performed by Curth Anatol Tichy, also offers a suitable goal for malicious taunts and jokes which equally constitutes the running gags of the episodes. The character is portrayed as a rather dull and clumsy image of a police assistant who constantly incurs in inconvenient situations. Schrammel's dullness is the target for any vicious remarks and jokes by Kottan or his colleagues who constantly make fun of him. The description and usage of this sort of running gags in *Kottan ermittelt* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6. The next significant role is Paul Schremser, played by Walter Davy, head of the murder squad. Whereas Schrammel offers quite a humoristic, almost clownish personification, Schremser impersonates the serious and moderate centre of the cast.

Nevertheless, the most essential character which chiefly determines the humour in *Kottan ermittelt* is police president Heribert Pilch, initially played by Harald von Koeppelle (who was actually a funeral orator and not a professional actor) and from episode number seven on by Kurt Weinzierl. The persona of Heribert (even the name

has quite a peculiar connotation) offered the producers an ideal resource to create a surreal scenery. For instance, there are Heribert Pilch's uncanny affection for flies, his bitter feud with a coffee vending machine and his continual eight-meter- fall out of the window, which are only few aspects revealing this character as somewhat highly silly.

Due to the various changes of actors playing Adolf Kottan, the films and episodes equally experienced a number of modifications. Generally, the episodes can be subdivided into three sections:

7. Peter Vogel - Adolf Kottan is portrayed rather negatively.
8. Franz Buchrieser - Transformation to a pleasant character. The first running gags are introduced. Slight tendencies towards surrealism are noticeable.
9. Lukas Resetarits - Complete outbreak of surrealism. Humour becomes absurd and the main element in *Kottan*.

The reasons for this transformation are not quite obvious. It can be argued that the producers take advantage of the several changes of the main protagonist to add new and innovative aspects and to adapt the concept of the series to the personality of the new impersonator. The continual development and the main components that were changed throughout the series will be discussed in this chapter, presenting three different types of Adolf Kottan.

The first film of *Kottan ermittelt* was entitled *Hartlgasse 16a* and was first aired on August 8, 1976 on ORF 1. (Gölsdorf 2007:15) The content of the episode basically follows generic rules of crime series which means that a murder victim is found and the entire narrative structure of the film is constructed around the solving of the crime. In *Hartlgasse 16a*, Adolf Kottan and his colleagues arrive at a murder scene. 60 year old Miss Klenner was found murdered in her tenement flat, fatally stabbed with a screw driver. The following events in the episode evolve around Kottan's investigation to find the murderer. However, the main narrative theme in the first film of Patzak and Zenker is not solely focused on the murder and police work, since the film can also be regarded as a milieu study. Zenker focused on the portrayal of the characters, and it is indeed a genuine portrayal, that also depicts the flaws and idiosyncrasies of the residents of Hartlgasse 16a. (Fuchs 2010:208)

As the following research will demonstrate *Kottan ermittelt* does indeed not follow generic rules of a crime television series. Although each episode contains a murder victim, detective constables, car chases and arrests, *Kottan* can truly not be defined as the typical TV crime investigation type such as *Derrick* or *Der Alte*. Its satirical tone, its usage of surrealism and its dark, absurd humour converts *Kottan* to a unique television show.

In contrast to subsequent episodes, the first broadcast of *Kottan* was clearly marked by a xenophobic and misogynistic tone which is conveyed throughout the entire episode. A specific scene that exemplifies this statement is when Schrammel and Kottan interview two suspects of ethnic background. Lukas Maurer (2009: 101) rightly describes Kottan's personality:

Kottan ist ein ungueter Typ, ein notorsche Runtermacher und Geizkragen, kurzum: ein buchstäblicher Antiheld, (...) der einseitig nach seiner xenophoben Ader und darüber hinaus in die falsche Richtung ermittelt.⁴

Specifically the protagonist Adolf Kottan is portrayed with a rather pejorative connotation regarding his social intercourse. He is shown as a morose police inspector lacking any respect for women or other ethnicities. Nevertheless, this highly negative depiction of the protagonist is conveyed solely in the first episode. As previously mentioned, the character of Adolf Kottan evolves throughout the series. This tendency is already perceivable in the second film entitled *Der Geburtstag*, which was aired in 1977 on ORF 1. (Gölsdorf 2007:30)

Even though Peter Vogel provides the role of Kottan with a slightly dark and aggressive tone, he also has positive characteristics. His disrespect towards women and his racist views have diminished, and the presentation of his family makes him a more pleasant character. It may be argued that the viewer subconsciously draws the conclusion that he cannot be such an unpleasant character if he is married and has two children.

Due to health issues, Peter Vogel determined to quit *Kottan ermittelt*. In his stead Franz Buchrieser was chosen to play the protagonist from the third episode onwards. (Gölsdorf 2007:45) At the same time, *Kottan ermittelt* underwent extensive

⁴ Kottan is an unlikeable guy, a notorious nagger and a miser, in short: a literal anti-hero, (...) who investigates by his xenophobic way and beyond that, in the wrong direction. (My translation)

modifications concerning the character's development and the general concept of the series.

Kottan war immer noch mürrisch, kleinlich und verbohrt, gleichzeitig aber wurde er sympathischer, liberaler und lethargischer - immer noch genervt auffahrend, aber auch sanfter, müder resignierender. (Maurer 2009:103)⁵

Not only does the film lose his sombre atmosphere, but also significant innovations are introduced such as running gags, new characters or experiments with surrealism. The producers even emphasise the positive development of Adolf Kottan by accentuating Kottan's respectful contact with immigrants. "Bei mir sein' die Jugoslawen nicht von Haus aus verdächtig!"⁶

In episode number three which is entitled *Wien Mitte* and which was aired on April 19, 1977, Franz Buchrieser makes his first appearance as Adolf Kottan. (Gölsdorf 2007:45) Moreover, new characters are presented such as the derelict Draballa who evolves into a major running gag of *Kottan ermittelt*. He constantly discovers the homicide victims or at least has subtle connections to them. However, the significance of the running gags in *Kottan ermittelt* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.2. and 6.1. In addition, initial contact to the audience is produced by reacting to the torrent of infuriated letters from the audience which the producers received after the broadcast of the first two episodes.

After three further episodes, the protagonist is played by yet another actor. After the airing of the fifth episode of *Kottan ermittelt*, Franz Buchrieser noticed the significant increase of his popularity. (Gölsdorf 2007:104) For this reason, he retired and a new Adolf Kottan had to be casted. The third and last Adolf Kottan is finally played by Lukas Resetarits, who can be regarded as one of the most significant cabaret artists in Austria today. Peter Patzak argued that he had wanted to cast an unknown face, why Resetarits appeared as the ideal replacement.

In fact, the new change entailed further considerable transformations in *Kottan ermittelt*. The wall between fiction and reality as well as between realism and surrealism becomes tremendously blurred. This means that from the first episode

⁵ Kottan was still grumpy, mean and stubborn, but simultaneously he became more likeable, more liberal and more lethargic - still annoyed and irritable- but also more gentle, more tired and more resigning. (My translation)

⁶ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 3. *Wien Mitte*. For me, the Yugoslavs are not inherently suspected. (My translation)

onwards, which primarily featured Lukas Resetarits as Kottan, the running gags received a quality of even more courtesy and richness of detail, surrealism became more apparent and the character of Kottan was modified.

Vogel war ein grindiger Polizist, selber ein schlecht aufgelegter Abschaum der Gesellschaft, böse und isoliert. Er war gemein, ein Soziopath - Resetarits, der Kottans Egoismus nicht verbarg, war in der Gesellschaft besser verankert. Er hatte so was wie Schmach, der ruhig auf die Kosten der anderen gehen konnte, der die anderen aber nicht ausschloss und der daher den Schmähführer nicht isolierte. Dieser Kottan des Lukas Resetarits war wahrscheinlich einer der letzten satirischen, bereits nostalgischen Idealisierungen auf einer künstlerischen Ebene, die die Wiener proletarische Mentalität erfahren wird.⁷
(Schuh 2007:10)

Since Resetarits is by far younger than his predecessors, the character of Kottan equally receives a rebellious and impudent tone. Additionally, music and especially rock and roll music are introduced as major art elements, and Adolf Kottan even forms the band "Kottan's Kappelle." Moreover, Kottan develops a fascination for other women (the prostitute Elvira), which provokes marital disputes and even ends in divorce. Towards the end of the series, Adolf Kottan is revealed as an unlucky person who loses his wife, his home and his employment. It, thus, could be argued that again a development is portrayed although rather the social decay of the protagonist of the film is depicted.

5.2. Humour in *Kottan ermittelt*

One of the most effective elements of creating humour in *Kottan ermittelt* is the usage of running gags. They are introduced in the first episode, *Hartlgasse 16a* (for example, Kottan's car door is ripped off and he burns his tongue from the hot coffee) and evolve throughout the series to a crucial humorous marker.

Beyond any doubt, running gags are essential to create the humour in *Kottan ermittelt* since they enable the creation of a linear line which connects each episode to its predecessor and additionally, they permit a constant augmentation of

⁷ Vogel was a disgusting police officer, a moody lee of society, evil and isolated. He was mean and, a sociopath- Resetarits, who did not disguise Kottan's egoism, was better positioned in society. He had something like wit, making fun of others, but it did not exclude others so that it equally did not isolate the joke-teller. This Kottan by Resetarits was probably one of the last satirical, already nostalgic idealisation on an artistic level that experienced the Viennese proletarian mentality. (My translation)

surrealistic, absurd interludes. The most significant sorts of running gags which are utilized in *Kottan ermittelt* will be presented and analysed in this chapter. As the following example demonstrates, running gags offer an ideal opportunity for the audience to follow the series in a linear line.

In the first episode the so-called coffee sketch is introduced which develops to a running gag in the course of the series. It begins as follows: The secretary offers Kottan a cup of coffee; he takes a sip, burns his tongue and consequently curses. The secretary responds: "Na, koch'n, muss ich ihn schon."⁸ In this regard Peter Patzak argues (Moser, Ungerböck 2009:28)

Am Anfang war das bloß eine Veränderung der Kriminaldramaturgie. Dann kam es zu den ersten Absurditäten. ... Und dann war es schon so, daß wir, wie Kinder, die ein Glas immer weiter an den Rand schieben, bis es endlich vom Tisch fällt, gesagt haben: „Da muss man was machen“, und haben die dramaturgische Schraube ein bißchen weitergedreht, aber nicht im Sinne des reinen Klamauks, sondern schon auch immer mit einem realen Bezug, denn es sind ja Hunderte mediale Anspielungen versteckt.⁹

It can be argued that the coffee sketch by itself is not particularly humorous but regarded as a joke that appears in every episode, it receives a noticeable slapstick connotation. However, the coffee running gag even advances by introducing a humanoid coffee vending machine which starts a personal feud with police inspector Heribert Pilch. The detailed analysis of this sketch will be discussed in chapter 6.1.

Another running gag which is connected to the character of Heribert Pich is the so-called fly sketch which introduces the audience to Pilch's slight insane and demented inner life. The police inspector feels a hostility towards flies which seem to continually mock and tease him. In the initial episodes Pilch is constantly chasing imaginative flies and instead of accomplishing his goal and catching them, he tumbles out of the window and falls several meters to the ground. In the next scene he re-enters the room unscathed.

⁸ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 1. *Hartlgasse 16a*. Well, I do have to cook it. (My translation)

⁹ At the beginning it was a simple change of the composition of the detective story. Then, the first absurdities followed.... And then it seemed as if we were children pushing the glass further to the edge, until it drops down, and we said: „We have to do something“. We turned the dramatic screw a little bit further, but not in the sense of true horseplay but still connected to reality, since there are hundreds of hidden- media allusions. (My translation)

In fact, the fly running gag is gradually augmenting in terms of absurdity so that at the end Pilch's office is filled with enormous models of flies, scientific posters of flies and other absurdities. As a theatrical climax, Pilch is committed to an asylum where he receives appropriate treatment. When he finally returns, he is cured and the running gag is eliminated.

Another crucial running gag stultifies the television genre itself, which can basically be regarded as self-irony. The sketch mainly involves breaking the rules of realism and surrealism by interacting with the character in a television (in this case the newsreader on television, impersonated by Chris Lohner). Certainly, the entire scene appears fairly preposterous and far from reality. Hence, it can be regarded as comical and humorous since it goes beyond nomological limits. In general, the audience knows that television programmes are passive and not active devices so that the active contact between Kottan and the newsreader is not possible physically. Moreover, the television sketches are, so to speak, certain devices of mixing two media genres.

Two more sorts of running gags are important to be mentioned in this chapter. One is the case of Draballa, as already mentioned, a derelict who constantly discovers dead bodies or stands in a certain connection to them. This specific running joke is successful concerning its goal of making the audience laugh, because it lies beyond any normality. Put differently, the chances that one individual person is continually involved in murder cases are generally very low. Thus, the running gag fulfils its duty: It is funny because the constant repetition of one and the same situation creates laughter. *Kottan ermittelt* offers a great number of other running gags, but a detailed description of every single one of them is not in the main focus of this paper. Only a precise analysis of the coffee vending machine running gag will be presented in chapter 6.1.

Besides the running gags, the humour in *Kottan ermittelt* is a mixture of surrealism, slapstick elements and word plays. The major aspect that contributes to the comical atmosphere are scenes which abruptly step out of a linear narrative and present a completely surrealistic scenery which is often not connected to the actual story line.

The usage of these surrealistic moments start in the third episode and gradually increase throughout the series. Specifically, the episodes with Lukas Resetarits can be considered as the films that contain the most absurd and abnormal material.

It is necessary to note that surrealistic and preposterous elements are not implied in generic norms of a crime television series. For this reason, a great number of viewers complained that *Kottan ermittelt* was not a typical television crime series. (*Kurier* 10/08/1976)

One of the most cited catchphrases in *Kottan ermittelt* is “Inspektor gibt’s kann”.¹⁰ It is important to note that the game with verbal language including jokes and puns form an essential basis of the humour in *Kottan ermittelt*. Similar to *Monty Python’s* catchphrase *And now for something completely different*, Kottan’s usage of *Inspektor gibt’s kan* conveys a certain recognition value and also creates a significant continuity throughout the series. Resembling the concept of running gags catchphrases not only arouse attention but they also provoke laughter, since certain phrases such as *Inspektor gibt’s kan* are continually used throughout the series so that the constant repetition provokes laughter. In addition to catchphrases, jokes are used to produce humour. The targets of these jokes are frequently unlikeable characters such as Schrammel or Heribert Pilch.

Pilch: Kottan, was haben Sie sich bei diesem Bericht gedacht?
Kottan (to Schrammel): I’ hab scho’ immer vermutet, dass er net lesen kann.
Pilch: Der Bericht hat Eselsohren.
Kottan: Der war für Sie bestimmt.¹¹

Especially the one Adolf Kottan that is played by Lukas Resetarits, who is a rather rebellious individual, can be regarded as insolent character who constantly teases his colleagues and his family. As a consequence, Kottan continually mocks the police president or Schrammel which finally leads to his dismissal from the crime department.

Another evidence that supports the theory of playing with language in *Kottan ermittelt* is the use of signs at the beginning or the end of the film. Throughout the last episodes, a short introductory text is presented that is either completely nonsensical or makes allusions to the television show. For instance, in episode 18, *Der Kaiser*

¹⁰ There is no detective! (My translation)

¹¹ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 8. *So long Kottan*.

Pilch: Kottan, what were you thinking by writing this report?

Kottan (to Schrammel): I have always assumed that he could not read.

Pilch: This is a dog-eared report!

Kottan: It was meant for you.

(The allusion to a donkey in the German language, is lost in the English translation) (My translation)

schickt seine Soldaten aus, the audience is confronted with the following passage: „Sollten Sie einen Fehler im folgenden Film entdecken dürfen Sie ihn behalten“.¹²

In this chapter, it has become clear that *Kottan ermittelt* cannot be classified as a crime series in terms of generic norms. The extensive use of irony, running gags and surrealism converts the television series to a unique genre that contradicts the standards. Due to this use of unconventional elements, *Kottan ermittelt* gained cult status back in the time when it was first broadcasted, to the present day.

However, since *Kottan* is very distinct from typical television crime series, it also provoked an intense negative response after the broadcast of the first episode. The adverse audience reception continued throughout the entire series. The chronology and facts of this intense polarisation will be discussed in the following chapter.

5.3 The reception of *Kottan ermittelt*

The following chapter focuses on the reception of *Kottan ermittelt* in Austria and on how the producers of the films reacted to the response of the audience in turn. Peter Patzak and Helmut Zenker initially planned the first episode of *Kottan ermittelt*, entitled *Hartlgasse 16a*, to be a one single project with no sequels to follow. (Fuchs 2010:209)

The first broadcast of Adolf Kottan provoked numerous people calling the ORF. These phone calls can be subdivided into two parts: On the one hand, there were incensed viewers who denoted *Kottan ermittelt* as outrageous, and on the other hand there were content viewers who described *Kottan* as an entertaining diversion. It was, however, the negative response that significantly prevailed. (Moser 2009: 27) More detailed information, including numbers and excerpts from these sorts of telephone calls will be presented in this chapter.

Beyond any doubt, *Kottan ermittelt* is a TV show that contained controversial substance which caused turmoil amongst Austrian and also German viewers. Due to this intense polarisation, Patzak and Zenker decided to continue with *Kottan ermittelt*. Patzak himself declares,

¹² *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 18. *Der Kaiser schickt seine Soldaten aus*. If you detect any mistake in the film, you may keep it. (My translation)

Das war ja nur als 90-Minuten-Einzelfilm gedacht, und aufgrund der extremen Polarisierung von großer Begeisterung und totaler Ablehnung - weil der Peter Vogel ja eine wirklich politische unkorrekte Figur gespielt hat, was ja auch das Konzept war- kam es dann zu der Idee, einen zweiten Film zu machen.¹³ (Gölsdorf 2007: 96)

In the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (14/08/1981) Carola Studlar argues, „Sie haben aus „Kottan“ die Laus im Pelz der TV-Krimi-Profis gemacht, und das gefällt den Leuten.“¹⁴

Without doubt, the comparison to a parasite is exaggerated, but it does contain a notion of truth. In other words, the character of Adolf Kottan is undeniably scandalising in terms of his use of language, his attitude and his sarcasm.

Studlar rightly observes that Kottan is noticeably different from his other television colleagues and that this sort of characterisation offers the audience an innovative diversion from conservative, generic portrayals of criminologists. However, deviations from long-known norms and standards do not always generate an all-embracing positive reception. This claim can equally be transferred to the audience responses of *Kottan ermittelt*.

Evidently, the audience complained for various reasons. Firstly, the viewers are indignant at the adverse portrayal of Austrian police officers which is shown in *Kottan ermittelt*. This sort of negative response came from the professional group itself who argued that their image was sullied. (Fuchs 2010:214)

Secondly, the use of language in *Kottan ermittelt* or, rather, the use of vulgar language was condemned and disapproved of the majority of upset phone callers. Thirdly, the usage of surreal, absurd and silly humour in *Kottan ermittelt* equally provoked a rebellious counter reaction from the Austrian audience.¹⁵ All these types of negative response will be examined in this chapter.

On April 19, 1978 the episode *Wien Mitte* was first broadcasted on FS 1 (ORF 1). This *Kottan* film equally presented the new cast of Adolf Kottan and it also used new humoristic elements. (Gölsdorf 2007:45) On the same day the ORF (FS 1) received 497 calls concerning the broadcast of *Kottan ermittelt* whereby 484 calls were negative reactions.¹⁶

¹³ It was conceived as a single film of 90 minutes, and due to the extreme polarisation of great enthusiasm and total rejection- because Peter Vogel played indeed a politically incorrect character (which was the original concept)- the idea arose to make a second film. (My translation)

¹⁴ They turned Kottan into a burr under the saddle of television crime detectives, and people like it. (My translation)

¹⁵ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf

¹⁶ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf

Primitiver geht's wohl nicht! Wo sind wir denn, die Wiener als Trotteln hinzustellen! Skandal, Schweinerei, Sauerei! ORF gehört ins Irrenhaus! Die Schauspieler waren Kasperln!¹⁷

These highly offensive and critical statements are merely a few excerpts from the ORF telephone protocols. The nine calls which included positive remarks (*Sehr gut. Ausgezeichnet. Absolut positiv.*)¹⁸ were completely neglected amongst the enormous amount of negative responses. Nevertheless, the torrent of abusive phone calls continued.

On April 20, 1978 the ORF received a total amount of 621 phone calls, each of them concerning the broadcast of *Wien Mitte 555* of them were negative, 65 of them were clearly positive.¹⁹ While the affirming phone callers lauded the highly entertaining factor of the episode - "Wir haben uns gut unterhalten. Schade, daß (sic!) man ihn nicht öfter bringt. Eine sehr unterhaltsame Sendung."²⁰ - the critical viewers savaged the broadcast with affronting remarks,

Typischer österreichischer Dreck. Größter Skandal seit langem. Ein ganz minderwertiges Programm. Abstoßend. erniedrigend. So ein Dreck ist nicht mehr zu überbieten.²¹

Judging from these critical responses of Austrian viewers, it is clear that *Kottan ermittelt* was a television show that comprehended controversial thoughts, which equally induced negative reception. Although the series of *Kottan ermittelt* was constantly attended by bad press, negative reviews and enraged viewers, the producers and the ORF decided to continue broadcasting. In fact, Patzak and Zenker regarded these antagonistic responses as a motive force to even increase the provocation and to utilise the audience's criticism as a humorous device. Instead of retrieving and bending to the viewer's request, the producers started to play with their

¹⁷ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf
Scandal, disgrace, disorder! ORF belongs to the madhouse! The actors were clowns! (My translation)

¹⁸ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf Very good, excellent, absolutely positive. (My translation)

¹⁹ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-20-4-1978.pdf
We were quite entertained. It's a pity that he is not shown more often. A very entertaining show. (My translation)

²⁰ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-20-4-1978.pdf

²¹ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-20-4-1978.pdf
Typical Austrian filth! Greatest scandal ever! A highly pulpy programme! Repulsive and humiliating! This filth cannot be outpaced! (My translation)

audience and to ridicule their attitude. How and to what extent this ridiculing occurred will exactly be described in the chapter of the scene analysis

It, thus, can be concluded that one of the major factors which is responsible for the continuous development of *Kottan ermittelt* is definitely the negative audience reception after the first broadcasting. Certainly, Peter Patzak and Helmut Zenker were conscious that their work had scandalising characteristics, especially regarding the xenophobic attitude of the protagonist, but as Patzak indicated, they did not expect such intense negative responses.

Mir war schon klar, dass KOTTAN etwas auslösen wird, aber die Dimension war mir nicht klar. Nämlich eine ungeheure Verletzungs- und Beschimpfungsorgie, von einer Dramatik, die in überhaupt keiner Relation stand. ²² (Moser 2009: 27)

It is obvious that, on the one hand, the producers indeed reacted to the negative criticism by changing some characteristics of the protagonist (his attitude towards immigrants and women, his quick temper) but on the other hand they increased the level of absurdity and surrealism and consequently provoked the already upset audience.

Undoubtedly, Adolf Kottan and his colleagues are not constantly portrayed as exemplary, impeccable role models. The characters are equipped with noticeable flaws and spleens which offer an ideal space for any humorous remarks. For instance, Adolf Kottan is portrayed as rather motiveless, insolent. Schrammel's character traits range from idleness, silliness and clumsiness, whereas Heribert Pichl's mental problems are adjacent to insanity. In other words, the profession of criminal investigators did not receive an overall positive connotation throughout the series. For example, Moser (2009:128) describes Adolf Kottan as follows,

Ein kleinlicher, depressiv-streitsüchtiger Grantler, der Kollegen, Frauen und Ausländer genussvoll erniedrigt, als Ermittler, "begrenzte" Machtposition anmaßend demonstrieren und jedes noch so kleine, lächerliche Privileg verteidigen?²³

²² I was aware of the fact that KOTTAN would trigger something, but I was not aware of that great dimension, namely a tremendous debauchment of insults and violations. (My translation)

²³ A pedantic, depressive, quarrelsome curmudgeon who delightfully humiliates colleagues, women and foreigners, presumptuously demonstrating his limited position of power as investigator and defending every little, ridiculous privilege? (My translation)

As a consequence, a great number of members of this profession felt offended and argued that their professional honour was violated by the negative image that *Kottan ermittelt* promoted. The following statements are excerpts taken from the ORF telephone protocol from April 19, 1978.

Eine Frechheit, die Polizei bzw. Gendarmerie so zu diskriminieren. Schande und Spott auf unsere Kriminalpolizei [...] Für wie blöd hält man die Wiener Polizei? Anarchistische Tendenzen, wieso fällt man der Polizei so in den Rücken?²⁴

After the broadcast of the fourth episode *Nachttankstelle* on April 19, 1978, the chairperson of the union of officials Rudolf Sommer required the immediate cessation of *Kottan ermittelt* by threatening to take appropriate measure. (Gölsdorf 2007:44) Additionally, police constables refused acting as extras. However, according to Helmut Zenker it was not the main goal to ridicule the professional group but rather to convey genuine characters. Zenker argued,

Es ging mir weder um die Schilderung ausschließlich realistischer Polizeiarbeit noch um die Zeichnung eines Superpolizisten. Ich versuche vielmehr in der Reihe Polizisten als ganz normale Menschen zu zeigen. Sie sind nicht über den Durchschnitt, sie können sich ärgern, aber auch freuen, sind manchmal grantig, kleinlich, nachtragend, machen Fehler. Es kann auch vorkommen, dass ein Fall nicht von Kottan gelöst wird, sondern bloß der Zufall hilft. Und noch eines: Die Polizisten arbeiten keinesfalls unbelastet von ihren Sorgen.²⁵ (*Arbeiter Zeitung* 05/05/1977)

In fact, the most popular incident that was connected to *Kottan ermittelt* and negative audience response was the announcement of an UFO sighting over the German city of Duisburg. That is to say, in the middle of the episode of *Kansas City* a message is collimated: “Unbekanntes Flugobjekt bei Duisberg gelandet. Sonderbericht im

²⁴ http://www.kottan.info/pdf_telefonprotokolle/telefonprotokoll-19-4-1978.pdf

It is insolent to discriminate against the police. Disgrace and mockery of our criminal investigation department. Do they take the Viennese police for idiots? Anarchistic tendencies, why do they stab the police in the back? (My translation)

²⁵ My intention was not neither an exclusive description of real police work nor the image of an Über-police officer. I rather attempted to show police officers as normal persons. They are not above average, they can be annoyed but also pleased, sometimes they are grumpy, pedantic, resentful, and they make mistakes. It may occur that a case is not solved by Kottan, but by accident instead. What is more: The police officers do certainly not work without worries. (My translation)

Anschluss an diese Sendung.”²⁶ The text overlay was a subtext and not actively connected to the narrative line of the episode so that the audience was made to think that the message is genuine information by the television channel. Since no further declaration followed after the episode, the television broadcasters (ORF and ZDF) were battered with countless telephone calls from concerned and anxious viewers who believed that the previously shown information was true. (*Südosst Tagespost* 05/12/1982) In addition, police stations and newspapers were as well concerned with hundreds of inquiries about the unidentified flying object. (*Südosst Tagespost* 05/12/1982) After the announcement was declared as a practical joke, the anxiety converted to anger.

It was argued mainly by Austrian viewers that this sort of pleasantry simulated false actualities, so that the audience were not able to differentiate between reality and fiction. (Gölsdorf 2007:188) Hence, they failed to judge whether a fact was true or not, and in a case of a nuclear catastrophe, for instance, they would not be capable of recognising the degree of verisimilitude of such an announcement. (Gölsdorf 2007:188)

As a consequence of the turmoil caused by this false announcement, the German television channel ZDF decided to avoid and eliminate such a kind of misleading texts and to utilize overlays merely for informational reasons. (*Südosst Tagespost* 05/12/1982) Evidently, this practical joke can be regarded as another playful interaction with the audience. This leads to the assumption that the producers were actually conscious about the consequences and that in all probability a great number of viewers would concede this gag as true.

Due to the negative reception that began after the broadcast of the first episode and lasted to the final episode, the ORF decided to cancel the television series in 1983. (Fuchs 2010:213)

Even though the TV ratings were constantly on a high level, the constant critical complaints the ORF received in form of letters and phone calls must have convinced the persons in charge to determine the end of the series. This decision was announced shortly before six new episodes would have been filmed. The end of *Kottan ermittelt* came quick, unexpected and it was definitely not welcomed by the producers and cast of the show. (Moser; Ungerböck 2009:28)

²⁶ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 10. *Kansas City*. Unidentified Flying Object has landed near Duisburg. A special report follows subsequent to this show. (My translation)

6. Monty Python's Flying Circus and Kottan ermittelt- A comparative analysis

6.1. Running gags

This chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of various scenes and sketches of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt*. The first category that is presented is the use of running gags. As already mentioned in one of the previous chapters, running gags are essential humorous effects in *Kottan ermittelt*. The coffee vending machine running gag experiences a major development from a coffee being boiled too hot to a humanoid, malicious coffee vending machine that constantly abuses and mocks the police president, Heribert Pilch.

Heribert Pichl, disguised as Santa Clause, approaches the coffee vending machine. He quickly inserts a coin, presses a button, and takes the cup of coffee.

Pilch: Zu helfen muss man sich wissen.

A yodelling resonates from the coffee vending machine, a small door opens behind Pilch, and an artificial foot appears.

Vending machine: Gehen Sie einen Schritt nach rechts, Herr Präsident.

Pilch smiles and steps to the right.

Vending machine: Danke.

Pilch sighs and drinks his coffee, when all of a sudden the foot kicks him through a door.

Pilch (yelling): Und ich sitz' trotzdem am längeren Ast.

Cut.

Heribert Pilch, dressed in his normal clothes, drives a tractor with the coffee vending machine stored at the back. Jolly music from the off. He stops at a junk-yard.

Pilch (waving his hand): Auf, auf mein Herz.

The coffee vending machine is lifted by a claw and thrown into a scrap metal press where it is immediately pressed flat. The coffee vending machine screams while Pilch watches smiling.

Vending machine (crying): Aua Mama!

*Pilch pokes his tongue out at the machine. The last image of this scene shows the destroyed vending machine, pressed into the form of a cube.*²⁷

The scene reveals the setting of the crime investigation department while the establishment shot shows Heribert Pilch dressed in a Santa Clause costume. He

²⁷ *Kottan Ermittelt*. Episode 15. *Die Enten des Präsidenten*. Translation in appendix, Number 1.

tiptoes and looks around so that he creates a mysterious atmosphere and the audience is curious to know his plans. The camera is on eye-level with short cuts between close-ups of Pilch and the vending machine showing his artificial foot. Then the scene is cut and a long-shot reveals another setting: Pilch driving on a tractor followed by the camera. Non-diegetic jolly music can be heard.

It can be argued that the sketch succeeds in evoking laughter since the absurdity and the surrealism continually augments. For this reason, the audience is curious to learn how the story line of Pilch and the vending machine continues and above all, which elements are utilised to increase the level of humour.

Und wenn wieder ein Kaffee serviert wird mit der stereotypen Redensart: "Vorsicht, heiß", und der Kaffeetrinker verbrennt sich trotzdem die Lippen (...), dann ist das so etwas wie ein Symbol der ganzen Serie, die immer gleich schon in den ersten Szenen eines neuen Films klarmacht: Vorsicht, Realität!²⁸ (Dieter Forte in Ungerböck 2009:61)

Additionally, the sketch can be defined as humoristic since it enters the spheres of surrealism and ,thus, the audience is confronted with something unexpected provoking surprise. The surrealistic elements in this sketch are obviously connected to the speaking vending machine, which has a human-like interior. In other words, the machine speaks, thinks and reacts. As previously mentioned in chapter 3, *Kottan ermittelt* uses slapstick comedy in order to evoke laughter. Slapstick consists of typical gags and elements that define the genre as such. One of this elements is "the animation of the inanimate" and "the personification of objects." (Stott 2004:89) Since the coffee vending machine (inanimate object) is brought to life (animated) and equally personified (acts like a human being) it definitely belongs to the comedy genre of slapstick.

Humour can be defined as an abstract of the real world and of concepts of everyday life. (Crtitchley 2002:10) The image of a speaking, humanoid vending machine is not genuine since it does not fit into the reality of our society. It is a mere reflection of our conception of the world and due to this abstraction humour is created.

In addition to its human behaviour, the physical appearance of the coffee vending machine equally plays with the audience's expectation. Indeed, the technical concept

²⁸ And when coffee was served with the stereotypical expression: "Caution, hot!" and the coffee drinker still burns his lips, (...) than this may be a symbol of the entire series that makes clear right at the beginning of a new film: caution, reality! (My translation)

of a coffee machine is generally familiar which means that most of the viewers can imagine of what a typical coffee vending machine looks like. However, the machine in *Kottan ermittelt* differs noticeably from the generic conception by rather resembling a slot machine. It is equipped with flashing lights and a lever and sometimes even changes its appearance completely. The content of the sketch is, thus, not congruent with the viewer's expectation so that the theory of incongruity can be mentioned in order to explain why the audience laugh.

Clearly, the functional devices of the coffee vending machine are designed to tease Heribert Pilch in diverse ways. For instance, the artificial foot that appears from a small door of the vending machine and kicks the police president is only presented in this specific scene. That is to say, every episode presents new technical items of the machine whose main function is to torture the character of Pilch. As a consequence, the spectator is constantly entertained because he or she in a way expects that the machine will again punish the anti-hero of the film. These specific expectations are not only always fulfilled but they are also realized in distinct ways. For instance, the coffee vending machine either punches Pilch in the stomach with a boxing glove, or it kicks him through a door.

In addition to a diverse variety of presenting the feud between Pilch and the machine, the running gag equally fulfils the audience's wish by letting the machine permanently win. Since the character of the police president is not portrayed as a crowd favourite, the audience enjoys malicious pleasure when the character continually fails to reach his goal, which means getting a cup of coffee. Hence, the central theme of this running gag basically is that Heribert Pilch never achieves this goal. Along with his his constant failure of not receiving what he desires he is also physically and mentally punished. Again, failing and missing a goal are clearly slapstick elements. (Stott 2004:84) Without doubt, the feud between Pilch and the machine definitely resembles the cartoons of *Tom and Jerry* or *Coyote and Roadrunner* which equally belong to the slapstick genre. (Stott 2004:84) Heribert Pilch can be compared to Tom or the coyote since all three of them fail to catch the mouse, the roadrunner or a cup of coffee. The coffee vending machine, on the other hand, is reminiscent of Jerry or the Roadrunner who constantly win and prevail over their antipodes. In this regard, the sketch can be also connected to the humour theory of superiority which argues that someone laughs at the inferiority of others.

However, the target of this jokes are not ethnicities that are mocked of being stupid and inferior but rather character roles who reveal their constant failure.

One of the major humorous effects in this scene is Pilch disguising as Santa Claus to mislead the coffee vending machine. First of all, it is undeniably absurd to outsmart a technical apparatus so that the audience laughs simply due to the preposterous undertaking of the police president. Secondly, the scene provokes laughter because the character considers himself at the final end of his goal, holding a cup of coffee in his hands when all of a sudden his mechanical enemy kicks him, and, thus destroys his desires.

Thirdly, the scene can be regarded as comical since Pilch carries the running gag to the utmost by wrecking the coffee vending machine in a scrap metal press. This can be regarded as the technique of topping a gag, which was mentioned in chapter 3. As a solution, this means, that if he is not capable of fulfilling his desires (a cup of coffee) he simply destroys the vehicle that denies him his requests. In addition to this highly dramatic step, a technical machine whining and crying for its “mother” while slowly approaching death can be also defined as quite grotesque and evidently abnormal so that again the audience is confronted with something unexpected and overrated.

Nevertheless, the vending machine survives, and in a later scene of the same episode, it appears in a pater noster. Towards the end of *Kottan ermittelt*, in episode number 19 to be more precise, the police president finally accomplishes his goal and murders his long-time fiend. The coffee vending machine is presented turned off with a signboard nailed to its front. “HINGERICHTET AM 12. NOVEMBER 1983. Der trauernde Aufsteller A. Kottan.”²⁹ It thus, can argued, that the coffee machine running has also come to an end.

As already mentioned in one of the previous chapters, running gags are also used in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Examples for typical silly running gags in *Monty Python* include the knight who hits the characters with a rubber chicken when the sketch is getting too absurd, a 16- ton-weight that falls on characters when they sketch also reaches the limits of rationality, or John Cleese’s announcement *And now to something completely different*. Additionally, certain characters such as the Gumbys or the Vox pops can also be considered as running gags. The sketch of the Spanish inquisition is chosen to exemplify the use of this sort of comical device

²⁹ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 19. *Mabuse kehrt zurück*. Executed on the 12th of November 1983. The grieving positioner. (My translation)

because it mocks and ridicules the generic rules of running gags. The following sketch exemplifies this claim.

Man: I didn't expect a kind of Spanish inquisition.

The door rushes up, dramatic music. Three cardinals, dressed in red uniforms, charge into the room.

Cardinal 1: Nobody expects the Spanish inquisition. Our chief weapon is surprise, surprise and fear, fear and surprise, our *two* weapons are fear and surprise and ruthless efficiency, our *three* weapons are fear, surprise and ruthless efficiency and an almost fanatical devotion to the Pope. Our four... amongst our weaponry... *Stunned looks.*

Cardinal 1: Amongst our weaponry are such elements as fear... I'll come in again. *Cardinals are sneaking through the door.*

Man (again): I didn't expect a kind of Spanish Inquisition. *Dramatic music, door rushes up, cardinals enter.*

Cardinal 1: Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition. Amongst our weaponry... *(The same procedure)*

Later in that episode. In court.

Lawyer: I didn't expect that kind of Spanish inquisition.

Everybody looks to the door. Nothing happens. Scene is cut. A different setting. The entrance door of a house opens, the three cardinals rush out, accompanied by fast playing music. They run, jump into a bus. Credits start to roll.

Cardinal 1: Look they started with the credits. Hurry, hurry.

Cardinal 1 (pointing into the camera): There's the lights credit, only five left.

They rush into the court building, the door opens (no dramatic music), the cardinals jump in.

Cardinal 1: Nobody expects the Spa...

The scene is cut. The phrase "The end" is screened.

Cardinal 1: Oh bugger.³⁰

Concerning the *mis en scène* of the scene, a room is shown that is decorated with expensive furniture, showing a dark-red sofa, heavy blue curtains and a number of classic *décor*. The actors are also dressed in fancy costumes that emphasise the noble, elegant atmosphere and the *décor* of the *mis en scène*. The entire scene takes place in the foreground of the film (with a few exceptions when some parts of the man's body can be seen in the background). The lightning is classical three-point lightning. The scene is shot in medium-long shot from an eye-level angle. When the focus shifts to the door the cardinals are going to rush through, a close-up is used to build up tension. Also when the cardinals speak the woman is shown close-up.

³⁰ Monty Python's *Flying Circus*. Series 2. Episode 15. *The Spanish Inquisition*.

The cardinals are constantly accompanied by a non-diegetic dramatic sound theme from the background when they rush through the door. As a consequence, the entrance of the cardinals even receives a more dramatic element. Also the laughter is a voice-over but one can assume that it occurs simultaneously since *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was frequently shot in front of an audience in a studio. One of the most interesting features in this scene is that the credits appear on the screen.

Concerning the humour in this scene, the sketch creates humorous atmosphere simply due to the characterisation of the cardinals. Generally, this specific group of religious heads conveys a certain attitude of sternness and respect. However, in this scene, the cardinals are portrayed as clumsy, chaotic and oblivious clowns who represent the exact opposite of the representative image of genuine cardinals. Specifically, the Spanish inquisition has obviously quite negative connotations, and certain images of torture, suffering and death are connected to this concept. Hence, it can be argued that the complete contrary representation of such a morbid concept creates laughter because it deviates from standards and normal expectations. Again the humour of this sketch can be described by the theory of incongruity. The viewer does not expect cardinals to behave in this highly silly and clumsy way. It is not compatible of the audience's view on the subject of the Spanish inquisition.

This scene can also be categorised to the grotesque genre of comedy. As already mentioned in chapter 3, grotesque comedy combines humour and fear and evokes ambiguous feelings. (Stott 1999:83) These ambiguous feelings are definitely evoked by combining something fearful (Spanish inquisition, torture, punishment) and humour (failure, wrong torture instruments, ridiculous characterisation).

The portrait of the three cardinals even augments in terms of absurdity when they try to torture their victim by using cushions and a comfy chair. Again, this behaviour is the complete opposite of what one might expect from active members of the Spanish inquisition. Normally, the instruments of torture are construed to inflict pain and not to convey pleasure. Hence, the general knowledge of the audience is completely distorted so that the goal of provoking laughter in the audience can be regarded as fulfilled by incongruity. Besides, continually forgetting their lines presents the cardinals as clownish and inept characters who are not to be taken seriously. These characters refer to the classical roles of clowns who attempt to amuse their audience by presenting himself as foolish and clumsy.

The first time when the cardinals charge into the room, the spectator has no expectation that this action might occur, similar to the character who utters that he *expect a kind of Spanish inquisition*. However, the second time when the phrase is uttered *I didn't expect a kind of Spanish inquisition*, the viewer is prepared and the running gag fulfils its function.

Furthermore, the cardinals re-entering the room after they messed up their lines is also a self-reflexive annotation to the generic rules of a running gag. Nevertheless, the climax of this running gag is reached when the expectation of the audience is again tricked. That is to say, after the viewer has learned that three cardinals rush into the room after the specific phrase is uttered he is again deluded when in the final scene, which is the court scene, the line is recited and nobody enters the room. This gag can be regarded as a mockery of the general rules of a running gag. Throughout the entire episode the viewer is trained that after the phrase "I didn't expect that kind of Spanish inquisition", three cardinals dramatically charge into the room. When this expectation is not fulfilled in the final scene, it creates even more laughter as it would do if the running gag followed its rules. Gelfert (1998:17) explains jokes which play with the responder's expectation, as follows,

Die komische Spannung, deren Auflösung das Lachen bewirkt, liegt folglich in dem Intervall zwischen der erwartenden Vorstellung A und der Wahrnehmung B. Wenn B von A erheblich abweicht, erfordert seine Wahrnehmung mehr psychische Energie als die Vorstellung A. Der Überschuß wird durch das Lachen abreagiert, sobald B nach A hin aufgelöst wird.³¹

In the case of the Spanish inquisition sketch, imagination A would be that the cardinals rush through the door but it is replaced by perception B, the cardinals do not enter the door. The audience observes the cardinals who are aware that it is their turn to rush through the court room doors, but due to local distance, they are not immediately capable of fulfilling this request.

Another humoristic device in the final scene is the cardinals' awareness of the existence of the fictionality of the show since they are able to see that credits are inserted on the screen. As a consequence, the wall between the audience and the fictional character collapses. King (2002:7) argues that the genre of comedy allows

³¹ The comical tension causing laughter is consequently in the interval between the imagination A, which was expected, and the perception B. If B differs decisively from A, its perception demands more psychical energy than the imagination A. The surplus is worked off by laughter when B is resolved after A. (My translation)

“departures from the norm”, so that the collapse of the wall between fictionality and the audience does not appear violating or disturbing filmic rules but it rather provokes laughter.

When the cardinals are finally at the end of their goal, fulfilling their duty of presenting the running gag, the scene is cut and the words *The End* are overlaid. The final curse “Oh bugger” concludes the absurdity of this scene. So, in the end, the cardinals are not able to fulfil their obligation as characters of a running gag which equally can be regarded as humorous since the writers of the scene play not only with the expectation of their audience but also with strict generic rules of running gags.

In general, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as *Kottan ermittelt* use both the concept of running gags in order to create humour. However, it is important to note that there are significant differences of the employment of these comical devices between *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python*.

First of all, it has to be annotated that both television shows benefit consistently from the use of running gags throughout the entire seasons or episodes. That is to say, from the beginning of the broadcasting, both shows introduced specific sketches or characters that persistently reoccurred in subsequent episodes. In the case of *Monty Python*, this includes the knight with the rubber chicken or for example the hermit immediately at the beginning of the episode. Concerning *Kottan ermittelt*, the sketches of the hot coffee or the ripped-off car door were introduced in the first film. So it can be agreed that both television shows utilise the concept of running gags. Nevertheless, a significant distinction can be observed regarding the continual evolution of a running gag. To be more precise, while *Monty Python* applies the method of running gags and even plays with its boundaries and norms (which was illustrated previously) they do not present these running jokes as a developing, constantly evolutionary concept as the producers in *Kottan ermittelt* tend to do. The ideal example to testify this hypothesis is the sketch of the coffee vending machine. It all commences when Adolf Kottan burns his tongue with the hot coffee which gradually evolves to this almost lunatic conflict between human and machine.

In contrast to this quite extensive use of a running gag, *Monty Python* does not advance this sort of jokes to such an extreme climax. Although the Pythons frequently shift the structures of their running gags or introduce attributed elements they do not present them in a progressive line.

In addition, running gags are essential to Pythonesque humour but they cannot be regarded as the main key factor while in *Kottan ermittelt* they form a crucial contentual component not only concerning humour but also the basic narrative structure. Furthermore, running gags also comes to an end in *Kottan ermittelt*, which underlines the theory of their narrative use in *Kottan*. Hence, it can be argued that while *Monty Python* employs the method of running gags as instruments to provoke immediate laughter, *Kottan* rather uses this sort of sketches to include them in the narrative line throughout the episodes. As a result, the audience receives a kind of a guideline that contributes evoking a connection to the story and the characters, while the viewers of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* are rather entertained by the unfamiliar usage and continuity of running gags.

Nonetheless, both television shows also share common elements concerning the usage of running gags. First of all, *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python* affiliate their running gags with a high application of absurdity. Both scenes - the coffee vending machine as well as the Spanish inquisition sketch - can be attributed surreal quality since they utilise elements which go beyond reality. For instance, *Kottan* presents a human-like technical apparatus, while *Monty Python* depicts characters which portray the exact opposite of the original versions.

Additionally, both comedy shows play and delude the expectation of their audience. While viewers of *Kottan ermittelt* are constantly surprised with innovative functions of the coffee vending machine, *Monty Python* plays with the expectation of their audience. Both elements are not congruent with general expectations.

It can be concluded that a significant Pythonesque influence is noticeable in *Kottan ermittelt*, since both use persistently the conception of running gags. Nevertheless, *Kottan ermittelt* took *Monty Python's* usage of running gags as a basic and enhanced it with a narrative and progressive connotation. But it is necessary to mention that the concept of *Kottan* is indeed quite different from the Pythons, since *Kottan* can be regarded as a television series following a narrative structure while *Monty Python* is rather a fusion of several individual sketches. For this reason, it can be suggested that *Kottan ermittelt* adapted the usage of running gags to its individual narrative content.

6.2. Addressing the audience

In fact, this following scene is filled with a number of self-references which basically function as a reactive response to the negative audience reception after the broadcasting of the first three episodes.

Adolf Kottan parks his car next to an open sewer cover. He steps out and falls into the hole, screaming. A girl also steps out of the car and yells into the hole.

Girl: Herr Inspektor!

The scene is cut. Another setting. Mrs. Kottan sits in the living room and watches an episode of Kottan (Wien Mitte) on television. Adolf Kottan enters the room, dressed in a trench coat.

Kottan: Und du bist no' auf?

His wife: Ja.

Kottan: Soll des der Inspektor sei?

His wife: Ja.

Kottan: Wie der schlampert anzogn is.

He opens his coat and relieves a smoking underneath. His wife jumps from her seat.

His wife: Wie schaut denn du aus?

Kottan: No wie i immer im Dienst ausschau.

The wife falls back into her seat, a hand in front of her mouth and a short look at the television, where Kottan is still singing.

Kottan (looking at the television): Die untergraben unsere Arbeit

His wife: Des is doch nur ein Film, Dolferl. Film!

Kottan: Des is mir egal. Ich beschwer mich beim Fernsehen.

He dials and takes the phone to his ear.

Kottan: Ja, der Film der gerade im Fernsehen läuft, der ist eine Schweinerei. Eine absolute Schweinerei, ja?

He hangs up and looks at his wife. She shows him the OK symbol.

He smiles and looks directly into the camera. ³²

A long-shot, from an eye-level angle reveals the setting of the scene: the living room of Adolf Kottan that is equipped with furniture typical of the 1970s. Kottan's wife does not face the camera, but the viewer only sees her back while she is watching television. The sound in this scene is diegetic and derives from the television in Kottan's living room. The tone and atmosphere of this scene is highly sarcastic and Franz Buchrieser even emphasises the ambiance with his gestures and mimic. When Kottan finally picks up the phone in order to complain he is shown in close-up and then looks straight into the camera and performs a direct address to the audience.

³² *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 4. *Die Nachttankstelle*. Translation in appendix, number 2.

Concerning humour, this specific scene depicts the first intensive surreal element when Kottan falls into the hole and in the next scene he enters his living room in one piece. The theory of incongruity can be applied to this scene. Under realistic and nomological circumstances the character would at least have been seriously injured. Hence, humour is created by misleading the audience's expectation.

When the unscathed Kottan enters the room, his wife is watching the previous episode on television, showing Kottan singing in the car. Beyond any doubt, this is a substantial self-reference because it breaks filmic rules of fictionality.

This so-called violation of these rules provokes a specific consciousness in the viewers that they are currently conceiving fictionality. That is to say, the double presentation of the protagonist and his awareness of this self-reference remove the audience from a linear stream of fictionality so that they actively become aware of watching a television film. The fact that Adolf Kottan accepts this double vision of himself as a natural occurrence, which means that he is not at all surprised observing himself in a fictional setting in television, even emphasises the absurd and non-linear aspect of this scene. Indeed, Kottan does not even recognize the character shown on television as himself since he argues "Soll des der Inspektor sein?"³³ Hence, he regards Adolf Kottan on television from the same point of view as the audience, namely as a fictional inspector.

Another essential self-reflexive element, which is actually aimed at the audience, can be found when Kottan reveals a tuxedo under his trench coat. As already discussed in chapter 5.3., *Kottan ermittelt* experienced a tremendous polarisation after the broadcasting of the first episodes. Many outraged viewers complained that there is no place for the portrayal of the protagonist as a highly unlike-able character in Austrian broadcasting. Specifically, mocking the professional group of investigators was intensely criticized. (Fuchs 2010:214)

This scene can be regarded as the counterstrike of the producers against this critical audience. In fact, it appears quite preposterous that Kottan wears a tuxedo as uniform. Again, due to general knowledge, the audience is aware that police officers do not usually wear such fine clothing for work so that the viewers are conscious about the satirical tone of this scene. The mocking of the critical audience even continues when Kottan argues: "Die untergraben unsere Arbeit!" He, thus, states

³³ This is supposed to be the detective? (My translation)

exact that kind of criticism which outraged spectators accused the producers of the films of in various telephone calls or letters.

When Adolf Kottan picks up the phone in order to complain about this television show he is imitating his audience. As a result, he simulates the position of the audience and, thus, mocks and ridicules their behaviour. The final climax of the scene occurs when Kottan looks directly into the camera after he has hung up. This direct look can be defined as a direct contact to the audience. Indeed, the scene conveys a substantial sense of provoking and challenging the public. Patzak argues,

Ja, wir haben ganz einfach auf Kritik reagiert, wie z. B. ein Kolumnist oder ein Glossenschreiber in einer Zeitung reagieren kann. Und nachdem eine bestimmte Tageszeitung kritisiert hat, dass eine andere bestimmte Tageszeitung zu oft im Bild war, haben wir einfach „Die Österreichische Einheitszeitung“ erfunden. [...] Das war ja alles öffentlich. Z. B. hat die Empörung darüber, dass ein Kommissar so schlampig angezogen ist wie der Franz Buchrieser, dazu geführt, dass wir ihn das nächste Mal im Frack haben auftreten lassen.³⁴
(Peter Patzak in Gölsdorf 2007:99)

In addition to this scene, which can be defined as the specific scene containing the highest quality of self-reference, the producers continue to be provocative. Either Kottan observes himself on television (this time impersonated by Lukas Resetarits) or there are angry viewers leaving equally angry messages on Kottan's answering machine. Evidently, this method of self-reference is used as an essential device to interact with the audience throughout the entire series. Similar to *Kottan ermittelt*, *Monty Python* equally employs the usage of self-referential devices.

A man in a trench coat enters.

Man in trench coat 1: Right hold it there! Allow me to introduce myself, I'm Inspector Fox of the Light Entertainment Police Comedy Division, Special Flying Squad. [...] I'm charging you under section 21 of the strange sketch act.

Man 1: The what?

Man in trench coat 1: You are hereby charged that you did wilfully take part in a strange sketch. That is a skit, spoof or humorously vignette of an unconventional nature with intend to cause grievous mental confusion to the Great British public.

³⁴ We just reacted to the criticism in a way that for example a columnist or journalist is able to react. And after a specific daily charged that another specific daily was shown on the screen too often, we just invented "The Austrian standard newspaper" [...] This all happened in public. For example, the outrage that a police inspector is dressed in a messy way like Franz Buchrieser led to the decision that he would appear in a tuxedo in the next episode. (My translation)

Straight look into the camera.

Man in trench coat 1: Evening all.

Another man in trench coat enters the room.

Man in trench coat 2: Hold it, hold it, hold it! Allow me to introduce myself, I'm inspector Thompson Gazelle of the programme planning police light entertainment division, special flying squad. [...]

Right, I'm arresting this entire show on three counts. One: acts of self-conscious behaviour contrary to the 'Not in front of the children' Act. Two: always saying It's so and so of the Yard' every time the fuzz arrives. And three and this is the cruncher: offence against the getting out of the sketches without using a proper punch line act. simply ending every pleading sketch by just having a policeman come in and...

He pauses and thinks. Everybody looks confused.

Man in trench coat 2: Wait a minute!

The door opens and another man in a trench coat reaches for the policeman's shoulder.

Man in trench coat 3: Hold it.

Man in trench coat 2: It's a fair cop!

*Another hand grabs the shoulder of the third policeman. The end is screened.*³⁵

The *mis en scène* of the scene reveals a room that cannot be seen entirely. It is poorly equipped and the colours are rather bland. The spare décor reveals that the room is an office. A telephone can be seen on a desk. The actors are dressed either in suits or in brown trench coats which fits to the unspectacular equipment of the room. The only instrument is a gigantic hammer that somehow disrupts the serious setting. The entire scene is presented in medium shot from an eye-level angle. Additionally, it is shot without any editing except for two close-ups. The first close-up is shown when the man in the trench coat says *Evening all* and directly looks into the camera, which means that he performs a direct address to the audience. The only sound derives from the staging or again from the background, which reveals an invisible audience, laughing at the scene. At the end of the scene, several men in trench coats appear in the background of the screen but solely their hands can be seen in the frame.

Basically, self-references are employed in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* in different ways. There are letters read out, people interviewed on the streets, or an individual character intrudes in the middle of a scene. In most cases, the characters condemn the silliness of the show. The title of this paper, *This is getting to silly* refers to a character created by the Pythons who constantly intervenes a sketch when he thinks

³⁵ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 3. Episode 29. *The Money Programme*.

the humour is getting too imbecile. This character portrays a military officer who is pictured as a highly conservative, severe personality feeling personally offended by silly sketches. As a consequence, he commands in a harsh military tone to cease being silly and to show sensible sketches instead. In the next scene the order is completely ignored or even ridiculed by increasing the level of absurdity.

Other crucial characters which serve reflexive devices are the so-called Vox pops.

The scene in the argument clinic can not only be defined as intensively farcical but it also ideally exemplifies how the Pythons tend to address the audience. The prehistory of this scene shall be shortly discussed. Before the man meets the aroused inspectors of the Flying Squad, he intended to buy an argument that should last for five minutes. First of all, the fact that a business sells the goods of having an argument can undoubtedly be defined as grotesque, since arguments are a natural occurring and does not have to be artificially provoked. Besides, disputing is generally negatively connoted and in ordinary situations usually avoided.

Also, the individual rooms of this office have different purposes (one for complains, one for abuse, one for arguing and one for getting hit on the head), which even increases the level of absurdity. That is to say, *Monty Python* uses general concepts, for example a hospital or an office, and equips them with surreal, abnormal elements such as purchasing five minutes of having an argument. The appearance of executives of the light entertainment division even emphasises the surrealistic level of the sketch by making the audience actively aware of the fact that they are currently watching a silly sketch.

It can further be noticed that not only the contentual elements or the introduction of the police officers provokes laughter but also the use of direct address. Similarly to the previous scene of *Kottan ermittelt*, the character of the first executive also looks straight into the camera and even addresses the audience directly with a short *Evening all*. As a consequence, the spectator feels immediately addressed.

The absurdity of this sketch reaches a climax when even more police officers appear. This is an ideal example of milking a gag. The gag is the inspector of the Flying Squad, milking the gag is the appearance of another inspector of the Flying Squad and topping the gag is when more and more inspectors seem to rush the stage.

Generally speaking, *Kottan ermittelt* as well as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* use self-referential devices throughout the entire shows. The reasons for applying such implements in their respective shows are quite similar. First of all, both shows employ

such references in order to establish a connection to the audience through the barriers of fictionality. For example, by directly looking into the camera the fictional character makes clear that he is aware of his audience and due to this interruption between reality and fictionality, the viewer is also completely drawn out of the fictional setting of the television series.

Both TV shows address the audience, both refer to themselves, and both breach the wall of fictionality. Nevertheless, certain differences are still noticeable in this regard.

Monty Python mainly uses the concept of self-reference as a tool for creating comical effects. Making the audience aware of the absurdity of the sketch elicits laughter because again such methods are not consistent with generic film rules. It can be argued that the spectator does not expect the sketch to be interrupted and that the producers themselves emphasise that their work is preposterous and silly. As a consequence, the audience laughs and regards the sketch as humoristic because again the joke is not congruent with reality.

On the contrary, *Kottan ermittelt* makes use of self-referential methods not only to provoke laughter but also to respond to negative reception. According to Patzak, he was quite surprised and shocked about the intense rejection he and his colleagues experienced after the first films of *Kottan* have been broadcasted. (Moser 2009: 27) Although he had indeed expected negative response, especially because he was aware of the fact that he had created a sort of an unlikeable anti-hero in the first episode (Adolf Kottan), it was the rigorous harshness of the Austrian public that somehow scandalised him. (Moser 2009: 27)

It can be argued that Patzak considered the usage of self-reference as a sort of weapon to fight against the negative response and to transform the critical reception into a tool for creating satire and humour. It can be further disputed that Patzak holds up a mirror at the audience and ridicule them in this way. In conclusions both television shows employ the method of self-reference to address the audience.

6.3. Advertisements

Monty Python's Flying Circus as well as *Kottan ermittelt* show both advertisement sketches that are quite similar. The following scene is taken from *Kottan ermittelt*.

Kottan and his wife are eating soup while watching a television commercial. A hunter appears on the screen.
 Hunter: Halali, Frischpilzjagdsuppe aus dem Hause Sterz. (*Pause*).
 Auf was freut sich der müde Weidmann? Auf die frische belebende Halali Frischpilzsuppe, aus dem Hause Sterz.
He begins to spoon.
 Hunter: Halali Frischpilzsuppe, bekömmlich. (*Pause*). Erfrischend.
He eats another spoon of soup.
 Hunter: Belebend. (*Coughing*). Auch für den harten Gaumen.
 Hunter (*wiping his forehead*): Von Schwammerlexperten aus unserer Heimat zusammengestellt. Wachsende heimischer Moosernte.
He is obviously in a bad condition.
 Hunter: Auch die Hausfrau weiß, was Halali verspricht.
He stands up, gasping.
 Hunter: Halali, bringt den Wald ins Haus. Halali
 He can barely stand upright..
 Hunter: Frischpilzsuppe.
He falls into the plate of soup, looks into the camera.
 Hunter: Zum Sterben gut. Halali, hallo, halleluja.
*He sighs and collapses dead, his face placed in the plate of soup.*³⁶

The camera in this scene mainly focuses on the television, which is mostly shown in close-up. The setting is Kottan's living room and the protagonists are Kottan and his wife eating at the table. The atmosphere is gentle and quiet. An interesting effect is produced in this scene by cutting from the close-up of the television to the medium-shot faces of Kottan and his wife. These cuts are used to demonstrate the emotions of Kottan and his wife while watching the advertisement. They seem to be surprised, irritated and finally shocked. While the scene in *Kottan ermittelt* is portrayed in colour, the advertisement in the television was filmed in black and white.

The advertisement of Halali- Frischpilzsuppe is one of the most frequently cited scenes of *Kottan ermittelt*. The employment of advertisements only occurs twice throughout the series, so it can be concluded that it is not a basic method to provoke laughter but it ideally represents the applied sense of humour in *Kottan ermittelt*.

First of all, advertisements have the major purpose of selling goods which equally means that their main ambition is to praise and advertise. The advertisement that is broadcasted on Kottan's television does not fulfil this purpose in any kind, quite the contrary. It is obvious that the producers again play with generic rules of media and ridicule them by completely reversing the structure of advertisements. Under normal

³⁶ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 5. *Drohbriefe*. Translation in appendix, number 3.

circumstances the hunter in the commercial would enjoy his soup, smile into the camera and the scene would be cut. In *Kottan*, the protagonist in the television commercial also smiles and praises the product but instead of smiling at the end he simply dies on the consequences of consuming that product he intensively advertised. Again, the expectation of the viewer is not compatible to the content of the joke. As a consequence, the audience laugh.

In this regard three conclusions can be drawn. First of all, it appears grotesque that the advertiser continues to advertise the product even though he approaches death. It seems that the protagonist of the commercial attempts to bring the advert to an end even though this may signify his death.

Secondly, common media norms suggest that even if any kind of such misleading advertisement would be caught on camera it would never be broadcasted on television. Consequently, the audience recognises another element of absurdity because the director decided to air this extremely disturbing commercial. Indeed, he must have been conscious that his product has a high risk of being rejected by the audience.

Thirdly, the effects that the Frischpilzsuppe commercial provokes are the exact opposite of usual purposes. Normally, “the purpose of advertising is fairly straightforward to persuade people to buy goods and services in a market economy.” (Casey et al. 2008:6)

After the commercial has ended and the last shot shows the dead hunter, lying face-down in the soup, Kottan and his wife shove their plates of soup away portraying a disgusted and scandalized look on their faces. It thus can be assumed that they were currently consuming the same product. Therefore, it is obvious that the Halali commercial has a negative impact on the audience and it consequently fails to fulfil the basic purpose of an advertisement.

This sketch can be also compared to the relief theory. Throughout the gag, the viewer experience unrelaxation and a tension (he or she is curious to know what might happen to the hunter), a mental shift takes place (we are informed that the hunter dies) and, thus, the audience experiences relief and it laughs.

The second commercial that is shown on television in *Kottan ermittelt* follows the same scheme but without the dramatic final. In this commercial the protagonist (who is the same actor as in the Halali spot) smokes and advertises the brand of the cigarettes *Schönbrunner Zigaretten*. However, he has severe difficulties to utter

because of heavy coughing caused by smoking the advertised products. Again, the product receives a highly negative connotation by conveying *Don't smoke these cigarettes, they are bad for your health*. This equally applies to the Halali commercial which leads to the dramatic conclusion: If you consume this product, you will die.

Monty Python presents a similar advertisement.

A couple is sitting in a restaurant. Lively music. A voice-over can be heard.

*After the show why not visit the La Gondola restaurant, just two minutes from this performance. The manager Mister Luigi Vercotti (a rather dubious looking man with sunglasses greets the couple and places himself at the front) will be pleased to welcome you and introduce you to a wide variety of famous Sicilian delicacies. (A dozens of policemen enters the restaurant and rushes to the back of the room. No reaction from the manager.) Either you can relax in comfort, in friendly surroundings or if you wish you may drink and dance until midnight. (Some women are dragged out by police officers). At the La Gondola restaurant you can sample all the spicy pleasures of the Mediterranean. The head waiter will be pleased to show you his specialities (a man, who is assumed to be the head waiter, is also dragged out of the scene) or why not ask the cook for something really hot (a man, dressed in a cooking uniform is removed by the police. Still no reaction from the manager or the couple). Yes, for an evening you will never forget, it's the La Gondola restaurant, Chelsea. (The manager is removed, still smiling into the camera) Parkhurst, Dartmoor and the Scrubs. At the end of the scene, just the couple is left, still eating.*³⁷

The scene portrays the setting of a typical Italian restaurant showing a few tables including table cloths, chairs, candles and other décor. The scene is shot from low-angle and is shown in long-shot. The entire scene is shot in deep focus.

The most important features in this scene are the background where a highly hectic and chaotic action takes place (the police arresting people) and the sound.

The entire scene is accompanied by a voice-over, speaking in a soft tone, which is equally supported by quiet music. The sketch is shot without any editing and constantly remains in the same frame.

Compared to *Kottan's* Halali commercial, the advertising of La Gondola restaurant equally fails in fulfilling the general purpose of an advertisement. First, the audience perceives a fancy-looking restaurant that is filled with a couple sitting and eating and obviously enjoying their stay. At the front of the screen a sign reads *La Gondola*,

³⁷ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 13. *It's The Art's*.

referring to the name of the restaurant. The music and the soft voice-over are typical features of television commercials, since both convey a certain atmosphere of comfortableness. When the manager of the restaurant appears on the screen, introduced by the voice-over, the viewer receives a first clue that the commercial might depart from its normal generic standards. The portrayal of the restaurant manager evidently has a stereotypical connotation. Despite the darkened light, he wears sunglasses, chews gum, is dressed in a black suit and positions himself at the front of the setting with crossed arms. In other words, this is a highly negative stereotypical image of an Italian.

When the voice-over continues to speak in a soft tone, the sudden appearance of police officers rushing into the back of the restaurant initially creates surprise.

At this specific point, the commercial drifts up from usual rules of advertising, namely the ambition of selling a good to customers. Generally, the image of police officers is subconsciously connected to crime, which equally has a highly negative connotation. Therefore the audience is aware that the appearance of the police officers cannot be regarded as a positive sign which equally leads to a negative image of the commercial. Throughout the sketch various persons are removed by the police including the head waiter and the cook. One particular humorous effect that is implied in this sketch is that the voice-over continually mentions a person by introducing positive characteristics for instance "The head waiter will be pleased to show you the specialities", and at the same time, the person is visually shown in a negative image, namely being removed by the police.

The comical and surreal atmosphere is even emphasised by the reaction of the eating couple and the restaurant manager, who simply does not respond at all to the hectic action. While the couple is not disturbed by the police and continue to eat the manager, whose duty would normally be to react to the situation, keeps smiling into the camera. For this reason, the entire scenery appears grotesque and surreal because the characters are not acting as standard advertising characters. The expectation of the viewer is misled and not congruent to general concepts of advertisements. The theory of incongruity explains the humour in this sketch.

As a consequence, the commercial can be subdivided into two levels: the sound layer including the voice-over and the music and the visual layer portraying the scene in the restaurant. This categorisation leads to the following conclusion: The sound layer ideally represents generic advertising rules since it praises a product (La

Gondola restaurant) in the most comfortable way. By using a soft voice, a colourful language and appealing descriptions of the products, the sound layer succeeds in the intention of selling the good. The visual image forms the exact contrary to its sound overlay.

As a consequence, the commercial fails in advertising the product by introducing a negative event that completely destroys the advertising atmosphere. Therefore, the sketch provokes laughter because the audience is confronted with totally reversed commercial rules and a significant failure.

Comparing both television commercial sketches, there are significant similarities. First of all, both comedy shows reverse the standard norms of advertising. *Kottan ermittelt* as well as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* create humour because they both confront the audience with something unexpected and completely reversed. In both commercials, the protagonists fail to advertise their products because unexpected events (death or arrest) interrupts the advert. Most of the viewers presumably have a general concept of advertisement in mind. Generally, commercials are appealing and attractive so that the consumer is tempted to buy the advertised good.

If the Pythons and *Kottan* present commercials where the completely opposite image is portrayed, it provokes immediate laughter because it is not congruent with reality. Nevertheless, there are also noticeable differences of the employment of television commercials in *Kottan ermittelt* and the *Flying Circus*.

Compared to the La Gondola commercial, the Halali advertisement in *Kottan* reaches a more dramatic climax at the end by simply murdering the protagonist of the commercial. Thus, the audience is more scandalised by the outcome of the sketch in *Kottan* as they would be after watching the *Monty Python* sketch.

However, the Pythons use the genre of commercials in a more complex manner by simply subdividing the advert into a sound overlay, which is successful in its ambition to advertise a product, and a visual layer, which completely fails to do so. Moreover, in contrast to *Kottan* the Pythons even utilise a stronger visual context in creating humour by continually contrasting the individual protagonists (head waiter, cook and manager manager) to their visual failure (getting arrested).

6.4. The cannibalistic baby- An almost identical sketch

The most interesting similarity of the humour in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and in *Kottan ermittelt* is an almost identical sketch. The following one is taken from *Kottan ermittelt*.

Schreyvogel enters a shop.

Schreyvogel: Grüß Gott!

Vendor: Gott sei Dank, Herr Inspektor, dass Sie kommen. Des Baby, des Baby...

At the back of the scene a diver leaves the store, Schreyvogel looks startled.

Vendor: Des Baby is vergessen worn und es schreit die gaunze Zeit.

Baby is screaming.

Schreyvogel (steps up to the baby): Jo, was sui i mochn?

Vendor: Die Polizei weiß doch immer Rat, heißt's.

Schreyvogel (*speaking a high pitched voice*): Jo, was hot denn des Scheißerl? (*Pause*). Jo, an Hunger wird er hom.

Schreyvogel (*looking at the breasts of the vendor*): Do bin i gaunz falsch.

The vendor is upset and disappears.

Schreyvogel: So, was moch ma denn jetzt mit dir? Also, zuerst musst dich beruhigen und dann gibt's was zum Pappi, Pappi.

He takes a baby-rattle and approaches the pram. He is suddenly dragged into the pram from head onwards, accompanied by munching noises, until he is completely sucked in. The baby stops screaming. The vendor reenters the scene.

Vendor: Hat er doch Rat gwusst, der Tiefstapler.

*The baby burps and Schreyvogel's police cap is ejected from the pram. The vendor is scandalised and flees.*³⁸

The scene introduces Schreyvogel entering a shop that sells sports goods. Schreyvogel is shown in a panning shot approaching a baby in the pram. During the conversation of the police officer and the vendor the scene is shown in shot/reverse shot accompanied by the off-screen sound of the crying baby. During the entire scene, the foreground is mainly filled with the pram and the police officer. Without editing a medium-shot shows Schreyvogel being pulled into the baby pram attended by off-screen munching noises.

The sketch of the cannibalistic baby can be regarded as Patzak's homage to *Monty Python*. Although there is no clear reference where he openly refers to this scene in

³⁸ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 19. *Mabuse kehrt zurück*. Translation in appendix, number 4.

connection to *Monty Python*, the similarity of the two sketches is recognisable. The scene appears in the last episode of *Kottan ermittelt* and equally depicts the end of police officer Walter Schreyvogel, who is presented as a highly dull character in *Kottan*. This means he is constantly interfering with the police work through his idiotic behaviour so that Peter Patzak gives him an equally funny death: getting eaten by a baby.

The sketch provokes laughter for several reasons. First of all, as previously mentioned, Schreyvogel is a clownish portrayal of a character whose gestures, language and mimic evoke laughter. Secondly, the man in the background, fully dressed in a diving suit, who leaves the store while Schreyvogel is talking to the vendor can be defined as a highly absurd visual image. The image of a diver is taken out of one context and placed into another one where he definitely does not belong. As a result, the viewer laughs because he is again confronted with something unexpected.

Thirdly, the cannibalistic baby is the most important element in the sketch to provoke laughter. Generally speaking, the image of a baby is connected to innocence and purity. Due to nomological knowledge we know that a baby is not harmful. For this reason, the depiction of a man-eating baby in *Kottan ermittelt* can be seen as a film moment of intense absurdity and surrealism. The fact that the baby is cannibalistic is not compatible to the viewer's usual image of babies. The recipients laugh because the subject that is presented by the Pythons is not congruent to any social standards. Due to Schreyvogel's reaction (he speaks in a high-pitched baby voice) the audience knows that in the pram, there is neither a dog nor any other kind of flesh-eating animal. For this reason, the viewer is aware that it is a baby that consumes Schreyvogel and not a monster, which equally even has a more scandalising effect since the viewer is aware of what is happening.

The gag is topped when the baby burps and Schreyvogel's police cap is ejected. As previously mentioned, *Monty Python* used a similar sketch that is the predecessor to *Kottan's* version.

An elderly woman is pushing a pram.

Another elderly woman (bending over the pram): Oh, isn't he a lovely little...

She gets dragged into the pram, the pram closes and we hear munching noises. The old woman giggles. The baby burps. She continues to walk.

The same woman: Oh isn't he a lovely little...

*The same procedure follows. She walks on.
The same woman: Oh, isn't he a lovely little..
She gets interrupted by a voice-over.
Voice-over: Wait a minute, this has gone far enough.
A real hand appears and turns the pram around, facing the old woman.
The pram opens similar to a dog's mouth, and barks, while the old woman is running away. The pram chases her off the scene.*³⁹

The scene is animated by Terry Gilliam and functions as the model of Patzak's version. The sketch can be considered as humorous since the image of an innocent infant is converted to a monstrous, cannibalistic creature and, thus, it contradicts the viewer's traditional conception. Due to the utterance *Oh, isn't he a lovely little...* the audience is also informed that there must be obviously a baby in the pram since in any other case, the elderly woman would not have responded in that way.

Another comical effect is the repetition of the scene. The same woman (at least she looks the same) is repeatedly eaten by the baby. Besides, the same phrase is uttered, and it appears that the scene is displayed over and over again. This continuity is then disrupted by the voice-over and the scene changes by transforming the role of the victim. Hence, the woman who continually laughs at the victims who are consumed by the infant is the next victim. The animated sketch is not only interrupted by a voice-over but also by a genuine hand that interrupts the action so that it can be argued that both the voice and the hand have a godlike connotation.

Beyond any doubt, the sketch of the cannibalistic infant is the most explicit connection between *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Concerning the visual and sound aspects, the idea is almost identically transferred to *Kottan*. Both sketches contain a pram, a victim, a cannibalistic baby, munching noises and the final burp sound from the replete infant.

Moreover, the scene in *Kottan* is not connected to the narrative stream of the episode so that it functions as an individual sketch. It thus can be suggested that Patzak included the scene on purpose to make an evident connection to the profound influence of *Monty Python*. In order to establish this connection, Patzak also selects the character that is the most funniest character in the series. Nevertheless, it is evident that Patzak's version can be defined as even more absurd and surrealistic since it includes real humans whereas *Monty Python's* sketch is animated.

³⁹ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 2. *Sex and Violence*.

To conclude, the link between *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* is evident since both sketches share almost identical elements. For this reason, it appears that Peter Patzak had the intention to visually represent the influence of the Pythons which was existent throughout the episodes but rather in a more subtle way.

6.5. Dark humour and taboos

In chapter 2 it was already mentioned that *Monty Python* as well as *Kottan* both use sick jokes to provoke laughter. Additionally, their style of humour also refers to the grotesque as the following scene, taken from *Kottan ermittelt*, portrays.

The murderer: Interessieren Sie sich auch für das Handwerkliche?

Woman: No, i was net.

The murderer (*guiding the woman to a lounge*): Kommen Sie, kommen Sie! Sterben werden Sie hier, auf dem Rücken liegend.

Woman (*bemused*): Ja!

Woman lies down on the lounge.

The murderer: In der Rückenmuskulatur werden zuerst Lähmungserscheinungen auftauchen. Beine und Arme werden Sie noch stundenlang bewegen können, was die Muskeln entspannt und meine Arbeit erleichtert. Wie bei Suppenschildkröten, die sich auf dem Rücken zu Tode strampeln, was das Fleisch besonders zart macht. (*Woman giggles*) Aber keine Angst, mir ist das Kannibalistische fremd. Gelegentlich ein paar Wirbel in der Suppe, aber Sie haben sie ja extra gelobt.

Woman: Ja, die war wirklich sehr gut!

The murderer: Spüren Sie die Sehnsucht?

Woman (*sighing*): Ja!

The murderer: Ich verspreche auch für hinterher nur beste Arbeit! Es werden nur zwei kleine Schnitte sein. Das Blut muss heraus bevor es stockt. Sie können gern darüber im Voraus verfügen. Ich liefere für Blutkonserven und dem Plasmainstitut anonym frei Haus.

*The murderer and the woman are giggling.*⁴⁰

The *mis en scène* presents a highly uncanny, dark setting by portraying a basement resembling a hospital and by decorating the background with a great number of medicinal objects. Not only does the setting convey a specific uncanniness but also the protagonists act very strange (the woman is even drugged). Their tone is very

⁴⁰ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 17. *Mein Hobby Mord*. Translation in appendix, number 5.

soft and has almost a singing quality. Even though monstrosities are presented, the actors are quiet and calm. For this reason, they appear uncanny.

One of the most interesting features concerning the scene analysis is the use of light. The setting is rather dark and the viewer can barely see the faces of the actors. In this case, underlighting is used to produce a sinister effect. When the dead bodies appear in close-up shots, the viewer notices that they are played by real persons since they slightly move their body. This element even emphasises the dark atmosphere.

Clearly, the scene involves a murderer and his victim shortly before he kills her. Before he leads her into his basement where he murders and prepares his murderers, he sedates her so that she is unable to defend herself. He then demonstrates her approaching fate by showing the woman a collection of stuffed dead bodies. The taxidermied women (all played by real persons) wear make-up, hold instruments in their hands, are dressed similarly and smile. As a consequence, the whole scenery appears quite bizarre and uncanny.

Another aspect that conveys a sense of uncomfortableness among the audience is the reaction of the victim. Due to the sedation she has received beforehand, she even appears to welcome death and be content to join the murderer's grotesque collection of dead bodies. The dialogue per se conveys an uncanny atmosphere and it can be argued that the scene does not only provoke laughter but rather conveys a certain sentiment of eeriness.

The detailed description of the murderer what he intends to do and the image of blood, flesh, death and cannibalism rather creates a rejecting response from the audience. It is indeed doubtful whether this scene can be rather categorised as humorous since the scenery can be defined as too morbid and too dark. At least, it can be defined as a scene belonging to the genre of the grotesque since it mixes the fearful and the comic. Instead of release, the recipient constantly feels tension throughout the scene. Helmut Zenker himself once declared that he was quite attracted by dark humour,

Wenn es von einer Geschichte zwei Versionen gibt, gefällt mir immer diejenige, die eine größere Katastrophe beinhaltet. Das kann aber auch mit einem Witz zusammenhängen, da mir makabre Sachen

schon immer gut gefallen haben. Schwarzer Humor gefällt mir in jeder Hinsicht.⁴¹ (Lienerbrunn 1990:124)

So it is evident that the producers attempted to highlight the dark atmosphere and humour in this specific scene. They intended to produce a grotesque atmosphere. *Monty Python* even outdo the uncanny sketch of *Kottan ermittelt*.

Undertaker: Well, what do you think: We can bury her or burn her?
Man: Well, um, which would you recommend?
Undertaker: Well they're both nasty. If we burn her, she gets stuffed in the flames, crackle, crackle, crackle, which is a bit of a shock if she's not quite dead. But quick. And then we give you a handful of the ashes, which you can pretend were hers.
Man: Oh.
Undertaker: Or, if we bury her she gets eaten up lots of weevils and nasty maggots, which as I said before is a bit of a shock if she's not quite dead.
Man: I see. Well, she's definitely dead.
Undertaker: Where is she?
Man: She's in this sack.
Undertaker: Can I have a look.
Undertaker: She looks quite young.
Man: Yes, she was.
Undertaker: Fred!
Fred: (offstage) Yeah!
Undertaker: I think we've got an eater!
F: (offstage) I'll get the oven on!
Man: Um...excuse me, um, are you... are you suggesting eating my mother?
Undertaker: Yeah. Not raw, cooked!
Man: What?
Undertaker: Roasted with a few French fries, broccoli, horseradish sauce ...
Man: Well, I do feel a bit peckish.
Undertaker: Great!
Man: Can we have some parsnips?
Undertaker: Fred, get some parsnips.
Man: I really don't think I should.
Undertaker: Look, tell you what, we'll eat her, and if you feel a bit guilty about it afterwards, we can dig a grave and you can throw up in it.⁴²

⁴¹ If there are two versions of a story, I always like the one that has the bigger catastrophe. This can also be connected to a joke since I have always liked macabre subjects. I like dark humour in every way. (My translation)

⁴² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWWg5shNWR4>

The scene takes place in a rather cheesy looking room, showing purple wallpapers, a display counter and a bouquet of white flowers that dominates the setting. The actors are equally dressed rather elegantly. The scene begins with an extreme close-up on a bell, continued by slowly zooming out and finally portraying the scene in a medium shot, taken from an eye-level angle. The montage then changes from a medium shot showing the two actors from close-ups and finally cuts to the audience. The sound (the laughter) is produced by the present audience but their laughing can mostly be heard off-stage. When the audience finally storms onto the stage, the camera follows them slowly with a panning shot. At the end of the sketch, the camera zooms to an object, presenting the title of the show *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

The Undertaker Sketch is frequently mentioned in the context of *Monty Python's* tendency to violate taboos. The scene is performed in front of a live audience that in the end even storms onto the stage. After a few dialogue lines of the sketch, the viewers start to boo but Cleese and Chapman continue to perform the sketch. Towards the end of the scene the revolt among the viewers in the studio has continually increased and the voices of Chapman and Cleese are barely to hear through the storm of whistles and furious calls. When Chapman finally suggests that Cleese vomits the digested remains of his dead mother into a digged grave dozens of viewers rush onto the stage to prevent Cleese and Chapman from continuing the show.

Whether this outraged performance of the audience can be considered as genuine or not cannot be proved with certainty. It is argued that the scene of the scandalised audience is studied. According to various uncertified sources the BBC only agreed to broadcast the sketch on condition that the Pythons include the faked scenery with the negative response of the audience.⁴³ In this regard, it can be reasoned that the BBC intended to create a certain sense of mitigation among the viewers at home, in front of their television screens. Hence, on the one hand, it was okay to broadcast a sketch containing highly controversial content, but on the other hand, they insisted to moderate the sketch by demonstrating a revolt.

As already mentioned, taboos form an elementary role in Pythonesque humour and beyond any doubt, death belongs to a certain aspect of life that is normally treated with respect and a certain manner of seriousness.

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undertakers_sketch

Gruner (1997:46) claims that “Etiquette and social custom requires that we remain respectful and deferential towards death and disability, that we remain solemn and express sympathy.”

Indeed, cooking dead bodies, eating them and throwing up into a grave can be undoubtedly defined as violating a tabooed subject. Not only do the Pythons use the theme of death as a subject for provoking laughter but they even increase the level of flouting taboos by topping the gag by suggesting consuming dead bodies. To put it differently, cannibalism is labelled as a highly controversial subject but consuming dead bodies, above all the remains of a beloved member of the family, means a severe provocation. King (2002:68) calls this specific type of comedy “grossed-out” comedy by arguing that the audience is amused but at the same time disgusted.

The gross-out comedy aims to achieve a balance between disgust and comic pleasure, however, rather than unalloyed disgust. [...]A play is offered between elements of the disgusting, the gross or the abject and the comic. (King 2002:68)

Also the audience of *Monty Python* were grossed-out. The detailed description of the gruesome fate that awaits the corpse (*she gets eaten up lots of weevils and nasty maggots*) addresses divisive issues in the human mind. This sketch is a perfect example for grotesque comedy that was previously discussed in chapter 2. The Pythons take a subject (dead bodies and cannibalism) which represent the fearful and mix it with humour (absurd suggesting of throwing his mother into the thames). The audience visually show the response to grotesque humour, namely an ambiguous feeling (Stott 2004:83) On the one hand, they laugh but on the other hand, they storm the stage to prevent the sketch to continue. Furthermore, this scene can be categorised to so-called sick jokes which was already mentioned in chapter 2. Sick jokes contain tabooed subjects and a great number of responders may find it offensive. Additionally, the image of a corpse stored in a sack contradicts any image of a respectful handling with descendants. The Pythons' reflection on death and funeral rites can be considered as an abusive treatment of a tabooed theme that is usually handled with deepest respect. Nevertheless, the sketch can be regarded as successful in regard to comedy and creating humour since it contradicts the norms. It can be suggested that the intention of writing this sketch was not only to provoke laughter but also to scandalise and shock the audience. Evidently, both sketches

approach the same themes, namely death and cannibalism and present tabooed themes in an excessive and grotesque demonstration.

However, even though the sketches of *Kottan ermittelt* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* can be classified as dark humour and although both scenes share same contentual elements there are certain distinctions recognisable.

First of all, *Monty Python's* description of consuming dead bodies excels *Kottan's* sketch in terms of violating a tabooed issue. The Pythons overstep the mark by an excessively detailed description of death and corpses. In the course of the scene the absurdity even augments and increases in terms of provocation.

But in contrast to *Monty Python's* suggestion of consuming corpses, *Kottan's* sketch can undoubtedly be defined as the version whose scenery mediates a higher level of uncanniness. Whereas the audience in *Monty Python* is simply grossed out, the viewer in *Kottan* is confronted with a highly uncomfortable atmosphere and with a morbid, sombre setting. It thus can be concluded that both television shows dare to use tabooed themes and to go to their limits. However, while *Monty Python's Flying Circus* focuses more on a scandalising, provoking and indeed humorous level, *Kottan ermittelt* rather portrays an uncanny scenery that evokes certain sentiments of uneasiness in the audience.

6. 6. Parody

The following scene exemplifies the use of parody in *Kottan ermittelt*.

Newsreader: Meine Damen und Herren, jetzt noch ein Hinweis auf unsere Abendsendungen. (*Invisible cut, the newsreader wears thick lenses of spectacles*) In der letzten Folge unseres Gesundheitsmagazins ging es um die richtige Brille. (*Kottan 's mother also looks through thick lenses*) Heute um 20 Uhr 15 (*newsreader has a bandage on the head*) beschäftigt sich Praxis mit Kopfverletzungen und ihre Verhinderungen. (*Kottan drinks and looks staggered*) Auf besonderen Wunsch der Familie Kottan (*she winks*) in Wien Brigittenau (*Kottan is startled*) bringen wir jetzt anschließend „Der Gendarm von St. Tropez.“
Kottan: Wer hot des bestellt?
Wife: Ich.
Kottan: Die miesesten Filme san des, de si auf die Kosten der Polizei lustig mochn. ⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 16. *Smokey und Baby und Bär*. Translation in appendix, number 6.

At the beginning of the scene, the television is shown in close-up with the newsreader Chris Lohner, dressed in rather fancy- looking pink clothes. When she announces the word "spectacles" an invisible cut equips her with glasses. During the entire scene, the camera moves between Kottan, his wife and the television. The medium- close ups then show either the startled faces of the protagonists or the newsreader wearing different accessories.

Kottan ermittelt employs a number of scenes mocking usual television shows, especially the news genre. Chris Lohner impersonates the news reader who regularly makes peculiar announcements (*Schach der Leberzirrhose*) or interacts with Kottan through the television screen. For instance, she knocks on the screen to wake up Kottan who has fallen asleep in front of the television. Moreover, Patzak also uses the television to contradict any rules of realism. The newsreader, for instance, often responds to Kottan in real-time, which is completely impossible concerning nomological rules. The audience is indeed aware that the technical apparatus is a passive media that cannot be interacted with actively. Therefore, the television scenes in *Kottan* function as comical but also self-referential devices. The scene showing the newsreader wearing different accessories can also be regarded as a parody of the television genre.

The invisible cut that is used to equip the newsreader with glasses appears absurd. Furthermore, it can be argued that it is completely unnecessary that Lohner visually emphasises her announcements by wearing glasses, a bandage or a police cap. This is a surrealization of an usual television programme so that the viewer laughs due to the absurd, abstract presentation of traditional media genres. The sketch can be considered as a parody of the news genre since it converts its generic characteristics, namely being serious and factual.

Besides, the scene also contains other substantial aspects. For instance, the newsreader winks at Kottan after mentioning his name and it appears to the audience that she knows exactly where he finds himself in the room.

Furthermore, Kottan's utterance *Die miesesten Filme san des, de si auf die Kosten der Polizei lustig mochn* can be again defined as a self-referential element that addresses the audience and the negative response *Kottan ermittelt* receives.

Monty Python as well mocks the genre of a television show in the following scene.

Host: Hello good evening and welcome to Blackmail! And to start tonight's programme, we go north to Preston in Lancashire and Mrs. Betty Teal!

Hello, Mrs. Teal! Now this is for 15 pounds and it is to stop us from revealing the name of your lover in Bolton! So, Mrs. Teal, send us 15 pounds, by return of post please, and your husband Trevor, and your lovely children Diane, Janice, and Juliet, need never know the name... of your lover in Bolton! ⁴⁵

Non-diegetic music starts to play. The establishment shot reveals a television studio by using a tilting shot that presents a blinking sign saying "Blackmail" and slowly sways to the presenter of the show who is dressed in a sparkling suit. The entire setting of the studio appears sparkling and glamorous. The presenter sits at a desk and is shown in long-shot. He directly addresses the audience, which is a typical feature of television shows. The scene is accompanied by background music. Editing is performed twice: the first time when the picture of Mrs. Teal is shown and the second time when the sketch ends, cutting to a naked piano player.

This scene can equally be regarded as a parody of a television genre or, to be more precise, of telephone quiz shows. The sketch provokes laughter for several reasons. First of all, traditional quiz show norms are used as a basis and then ridiculed by introducing odd motivations for the viewers to pick up the phone and call.

It is regulated by law that blackmailing offends against the law and thus can be generally defined as illegal. For this reason, it can further be suggested that creating an illegal television show which is actually broadcasted is absurd and abnormal and thus humorous since it is not congruent to real television shows.

Moreover, not only the illegal concept of the show but also the description of highly personal details of the victims appears odd. The whole conception of the show induces questions such as: Why does the producers of the show have this certain knowledge of apparently normal citizens? How do they gather this information? Not to mention, that Michael Palin hosts the show with constant severity which even increases the level of absurdity because it opposes the peculiar content of the show. It can be concluded that "blackmailing" can be defined as a parody of telephone quiz shows since it uses their basic characteristics (to call in order to win a price) and replaces them by absurd attributions (to call to prevent being humiliated).

⁴⁵ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 2. Episode 18. *Live from the Grill-O-Mat*.

Evidently, the television news in *Kottan ermittelt* and the telephone quiz show in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* can be classified as parody. They both present the basics of the parodied genre (factual news and winning a price in a quiz show) but they attach preposterous elements to ridicule and mock the basic genre.

In *Kottan's* version the seriousness of news is parodied while the Pythons simply used the genre of quiz shows as a frame and then filled it with peculiar content.

Equally, both television presenters convey their messages with seriousness and certainty so that the parodies can be regarded as close to the original formats.

However, even though both shows use elements of parody they employ the method differently. Whereas *Monty Python* tends to parody the television genres which basically means that newsreaders are presented as insane or the interviewed person is mocked, *Kottan ermittelt* experiments with the technical functions of the television apparatus and its concept of passive television and active recipient.

6.7. Surrealism

As already mentioned in chapter 2, *Monty Python* frequently uses reflection of reality and present them in a highly absurd surrealistic way. *Kottan* equally uses this methods.

Kottan enters a room which is illuminated.

Kottan: Grüß Gott! Was machen Sie da?

The white: Mir geht eine Melodie nicht aus dem Kopf. Aber ich komm net drauf.

He shakes hands with Kottan: Harry Lime Junior!

Kottan: Is des da Ihre Wohnung?

The white: Immer schon. Von meinem Vater her. Ich kenn nix andres.

Kotta: Dürft I?

He sits down at the organ and starts to play. On top of the organ are two white rats.

The white (delighted): Des is es!

Both stand up and start to dance while the organ keeps playing by itself. ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 12. *Hausbesuche*. Translation in appendix, number 7.

Due to the white décor and the exceedingly bright lightning the scenery appears factitious and rather refers to a theatrical production, including the acting of the protagonists. The white man sitting at his organ is pictured in a long-shot while the focus then slowly zooms in. The scene is then cut to Kottan in medium -shot presenting himself to the white suited man. When Kottan starts to play the organ the camera zooms out, revealing again the wider frame from the beginning of the scene. While the two characters are dancing in the middle of the setting, the music produced by the organ is turned a non-diegetic sound since the instrument seems to play by itself.

Dieter Gölsdorf (2007:232) introduces a description of this sketch by arguing “Und nun wird es surreal!”.⁴⁷ Evidently, the sketch can be understood as surrealistic since it confuses the audience completely and interrupts the narrative stream of the scene.

The man in the white suit already appeared in previous episodes in which a sewer cover is lifted and the man appears arguing that he resides in the canal system. Therefore, this scene can be considered as the climax of a running gag which again proves the hypothesis of a continual evolution of running gags in *Kottan ermittelt*.

So, finally, the audience is confronted with the verisimilitude of the white-suited man’s claim that his apartment is actually located below ground level. This situation exemplifies the humour theory of relief. Throughout the series the viewer produced a certain tension by the continuous appearance of a specific character. The spectator is curious to know whether the home of the character will ever be presented, how a residence in the canals system actually looks like and so on. When the audience then sees this scene it releases this constructed tension and laughs.

However, the scene does not only provoke laughter due to generic rules of a running gag but also because the scene contradicts any logical norms and, thus, can be regarded as a surrealistic moment. In order to trigger laughter it is crucial to have certain knowledge of these norms. Gruner (1997:109) argues,

Reaction to humor is both intellectual and emotional. We must, in order to enjoy a joke, be able to cognitively, intellectually understand its content and the comic strips involved and their relationships to the “punch line;”

⁴⁷ And now it is getting surreal! (My translation)

The encounter of Kottan and the man in the white suit does not accompany the narrative line of the scene but it rather completely interrupts the narrative stream.

Before that scene is screened, Kottan and his colleagues chase a suspect through intricate passages of the canal system. The scene is shot from various angles.

The pursuit ends abruptly when Kottan perceives a white light and enters the room of the man in the white suit.

First of all, the situation contradicts logical norms since a police inspector would rather not abandon a pursuit because he perceives light. Furthermore, it appears that Kottan has completely lost interest in arresting the suspect since he calmly investigates the residence of the white-suited man. Therefore, it is not compatible to the viewer's expectation and, thus, applies to the theory of incongruity. That is to say, it contradicts the rules of how a police officer would react, how the canal system is constructed and how persons reside. The surrealistic element even reaches the climax when Kottan and the man start to dance.

In fact, surrealism forms a specific stylistic device in Kottan ermittelt not only concerning humour but also the narrative. As already mentioned, surrealism increased especially after the appearance of Lukas Resetař as Adolf Kottan.

A certain question arises: Does Monty Python even top the quality of surrealism and absurdity? The answer is yes, it does!

President of the Royal Society for putting things on top of other things: I thank you, gentlemen. The year has been a good one for the Society. This year our members have put more things on top of other things than ever before. But, I should warn you, this is no time for complacency. No, there are still many things, and I cannot emphasize this too strongly, not on top of other things. I myself, on my way here this evening, saw a thing that was not on top of another thing in any way. Shame indeed but we must not allow ourselves to become too despondent. For, we must never forget that if there was not one thing that was not on top of another thing our society would be nothing more than a meaningless body of men that had gathered together for no good purpose. But we flourish. This year our Australasian members and the various organizations affiliated to our Australasian branches put no fewer than twenty-two things on top of other things. *(applause)* Well done all of you. But there is one cloud on the horizon. In this last year, our Staffordshire branch has not succeeded in putting one thing on top of another. Therefore I call upon our Staffordshire delegate to explain this weird behaviour. ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 2. Episode 18. *Live from the Grill-O-Mat*.

The establishment shot reveals a man speaking on the phone followed by a panning shot that presents the actual setting of the scene. Elegantly dressed men wearing tuxedos and bow -ties are sitting at a table. However, not all actors can be seen the scene. The protagonists act highly clinical. The scene then changes from a medium shot to close-ups when the president speaks. Additionally, another panning shows the other participants applauding.

First of all, it is necessary to mention that surrealistic elements appear in mostly every sketch in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* so that this scene can easily be replaced by any other sketch of the Pythons. However, this sketch can be described as excessively absurd since it portrays a completely unnecessary association.

Without doubt, *the society for putting things onto other things* appears as a peculiar formation since its purpose can be defined as redundant. The surrealistic aspect is the fact that there is no need to put things on other things and also to form a society for this use.

The surrealistic aspect is even increased by the fact that other societies for putting things onto other things exist and that these assemblies even compete with each other. One element that specifically creates humour is the fact that throughout the scene, it is never mentioned which things are topped onto each other.

The society for putting things onto other things as well as the residence of Harry Lime Junior go beyond every rule of realism and can, thus, be defined as surrealistic filmic elements. In contrast to Kottan, *Monty Python* simply takes the concept of a society as a basis and adds a peculiar content. In fact, this method is frequently used by the Pythons to create humour by ridiculing generally known subjects. Nevertheless, it is arguable whether this idea is successful if this specific knowledge is not common or if it even does not exist at all. The same claim accounts for *Kottan*. The audience laughs because it knows that canal systems do normally not function as residences and that police work would also proceed differently. To conclude, both comedy shows extensively use surrealism in order to produce a humorous effect.

6.8. Slapstick

As already mentioned in chapter 2, slapstick is a traditional form of clowning that contains physical movements and violence. The following scene in *Kottan ermittelt* can be clearly defined as slapstick.

*Kottan and his wife are strolling, Horrak appears in the background, he tiptoes and starts to jump on a specific spot, -nothing happens, when he jumps again, he falls into a hole.
Music is playing in the background (Never-ending love). Kottan buys flowers, the Kaiser sits in the back of a car and observes Kottan. He shoots a dart from a blowpipe and hits the flower seller.
The scene is cut. Music changes.
Kottan and his wife are standing in front of the embassy of Transylvania which is guarded by a man with bite wounds on his neck. He is shot in the chest.
Music changes again. The Kaiser hands out sweets at the corner of a street and gives Kottan one of them. Before he can consume it, a woman appears and takes it away.
Woman: Ah, ein Zuckerl, das macht dick!
The woman eats the sweet, starts to inflate. Cut to Kottan and his wife, an explosion sound off-stage.
Music changes. A car crashes into an advertisement poster, scarcely missing Kottan and his wife.
Music changes. Kottan and his wife are in a boat, floating on a lake.
The Kaiser appears on the shore behind a cannon. He fires and a film sequences in black and white is shown which depicts a destroyed ship.*⁴⁹

Kottan and his wife are presented in long-shot, strolling through nature and accompanied by jolly non-diegetic music. When Horrak appears in the background of the scene, the camera zooms in to show him in medium close-up. The scene is cut, equally introducing a different music which is again buoyant and non-diegetic. The entire scene changes settings either to nature or to the city constantly attended by different songs. The explosion of the woman is not shown in the frame of the scene but the exploding sound can be heard in the background. At the end of the sketch, the director added a different footage that was shot in black and white colour. Due to the changing sceneries, the cheerful music and the introduction of another film

⁴⁹ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 16. *Smokey und Baby und Bär*. Translation in appendix, number 8.

material the scene comprises elements of film comedy and cartoons. The characters of Horrak and Kottan can easily be replaced by coyote and roadrunner.

The typical scheme of trying to catch (or murder in this case) the opponent by using different tools which even increase in terms of their technical functions and by constantly failing to do so and becoming the chased themselves are traditional principles of animated cartoons. Moreover, the scene can be definitely classified as slapstick since it produces comical moments by portraying the constant failure of an anti-hero character. Gruner (1997:69) provides following definition of slapstick,

Slapstick consists, of virtually *nothing but* mock aggression. It includes the pitfall, the kick in the seat of the pants, the whacking of the head or body with a stick or mallet, the pie in the face, the sudden departure by trapdoor, the quick drenching from a sea of various liquids, a two-fingered poke in the eye [...]

The entire scene is mainly overlaid with music from off-stage which means that it does not contain any or very little dialogue. As Gruner (1997:69) further declares, slapstick “is non-verbal and visual”.

This argument is exemplified by the scene since it does not need any further verbal language to be humorous. The character of Horrak and the Kaiser can be defined as running gags in *Kottan ermittelt* since they constantly attempt to assassinate Kottan but they permanently fail. The entire feud between Kottan and Horrak and the Kaiser can be classified as the coyote/roadrunner theme. The scene equally provokes laughter because other innocent victims take the place of Kottan and are murdered, which even emphasises the complete malfunction of Horrak’s plan.

In general, the character of Adolf Kottan can be described as the hero of the films while Horrak portrays Kottan’s antipode and anti-hero. For this reason, constant tension is caused by the continual attempts of Horrak to destroy his opponent. It can be argued that each time Horrak fails to reach his goal, the audience experiences a sentiment of relief and therefore laughs.

In addition, the concept of superiority is again employed in this specific scene since the viewer feels malicious pleasure that Horrak constantly fails and the hero of the film continually prevails over the villain. Generally, slapstick moments are frequently used in the course of the episodes and they mainly involve the character of Heribert Pilch who gets punched by a boxing glove, squashed between a wall and a door, or

he falls out of the window. In the following scene, the Pythons demonstrate how they use slapstick in order to amuse their audience.

A butler leads Eric Idle into a living room.

Butler: Well, if you'll just wait in here, sir, I'm sure Mr Thompson won't keep you waiting long. Man: Fine. Thanks very much.

He picks up a magazine, a mirror falls off the wall. Butler approaches.

Man: The mirror fell off the wall.

Butler: Sir?

Man: The mirror fell off... off the wall... it fell.

Butler: I see. You'd better wait here. I'll get a cloth.

The man picks up another magazine, the cupboard falls to the ground. Butler reenters.

Man: Ah, it ... it came off the wall.

Butler: Yes, sir?

Man: It just came right off the wall.

Butler: Really, sir.

Man: Yes, I ... I didn't touch it.

Butler: Of course not. It just fell off the wall.

Man: Yes. It just fell off the wall.

Butler: Don't move. I'll get help.

In the course of the sketch he accidentally murders a maid and a man, falling out of a window. A policeman enters.

Butler: That's him.

Policeman: Right, sir.

Man: Hello, officer. There seems to have been an accident. Well, several accidents actually.

Policeman: That's right, sir. Would you come this way, please? Ah!

It's me heart, Sir! *The policeman collapses and dies.*

Butler: You swine. I'll get you for that. *The ceiling drops on him.*

The man rushes out of the house while the house starts to collapse.

*Finally it completely falls to the ground.*⁵⁰

Concerning the *mis en scène*, the sketch resembles a theatrical performance. The main setting of the sketch is a big living room containing elegant furniture, a number of paintings, flowers and other *bibLOTS*. The protagonist is dressed in a gray-coloured suit and rather acts surprised and fearful. The butler, by contrast, appears rather emotionless and distant. At the beginning of the sketch the setting is shown in medium shot, from an eye-level angle. The protagonist of the sketch remains in this setting while the other characters disappear and re-enter through a door. For this reason, the sketch is comparable to a theatre production. After the first accidents, the scene is portrayed by several cuts showing the man or the other characters. When

⁵⁰ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 2. Episode 18. *Live from the Grill-O-Mat*.

the house finally explodes, the scene is filmed in an extreme long shot, accompanied by an explosive sound in the background.

The accidents sketch can be clearly classified as slapstick since the continuous destruction of items or persons without any evident trigger appears humorous and comical. First of all, the scene provokes laughter because the audience has a certain knowledge that is not shared with other characters in the scene. Furthermore, it is a perfect example of milking a gag (the numerous accidents) and topping a gag (the destruction of the house).

The scene in the living room is shot in one continuous shot including characters (the butler, the maid or the policeman) who disappear or re-enter the scene. Eric Idle and the audience are aware of the true events, namely that the items are destroyed without anyone to be blamed for. For this reason, the viewer equally feels superior and, thus, feels malicious joy when the character performed by Eric Idle is constantly blamed for the demolition of furniture or for murdering the maid.

Even though the character of Idle is not openly blamed by the butler for the destruction in the living room, his gesture, mimic and tone show his disbelief.

Another important element of the sketch is its continuity in absurdity. A mirror falling off the wall without being touched could possibly happen. However, a constant repetition of such events including an augmentation in fatality completely contradicts any norms, rules or any knowledge that we normally possess. The scene depicts an extreme image of a chapter of accidents which is not congruent to reality. It can be argued that such events may occur but it is the continuity and the escalation that appears preposterous and abnormal. It is the improbability of the occurring accidents that provokes laughter since it completely converts a logical sense.

Additionally, the sketch tops the gag by depicting the house collapsing and being completely destroyed without any consistent reason. The only survivor of this sketch is Idle, who can be considered as an outstanding element of the sketch who is turned into an innocent trigger of fatal accidents. He is the clown of the whole sketch. Indeed, slapstick is mainly connected to the image of circus clowns although "clowns need not be in white face" (Gruner 1997:69) This claim is proved by the protagonist of the sketch.

Without doubt, this exaggerated chain of accidents provokes laughter because it simply uses the well-known conception of a streak of bad luck and transfer it to an excessive and absurd context.

The sketch of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan's* scene with his antipode Horrak both include slapstick elements. Firstly, both versions present failure. In *Kottan ermittelt* Horrak constantly fails to assassinate his fiend and in *Monty Python* Eric Idle fails to testify his innocence. Secondly, in each version, items are destroyed or persons are accidentally murdered. It can be claimed that the aspect of coincidence can be classified as slapstick and that due to the repetitive accidents, both scenes appear absurd and provoke laughter. Thirdly, both versions utilise the concept of accidents and transform it into a progressive and excessive version. In both sketches the audience is confronted with a familiar concept (run of bad luck) and then surprised with a continually augmenting extremeness.

But although *Python's* and *Kottan's* versions have noticeable similarities there is also one significant distinction. It can be suggested that the sketch of *Monty Python* has a more dramatic climax since each character is dead and an entire building is destroyed at the end of the sketch.

6.9. Musical interludes

Kottan: I hob die Million! Im Ernst! (*Close-up of the lottery ticket, stunned views*)

Kottan walks away, towards the camera.

Lemmie Caution: Before we begin, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you all, thank you, thank you!

Music starts to play.

Kottan: I'm not a bad person, (*I know*) I don't drink, I don't kill.
I got no evil habits, and a problem never win,
I don't sing like Elvis Presley, I can't dance like Fred Astaire,
But there's one thing in my favour, (*laughing*) I'm a millionaire.

Lemmie: That's beautiful.

Chorus: And I got more money than a horse has hairs
Cause when my rich old uncle died, I entered all my prayers
But having all this money is gonna bring me down,
If you ain't with me honey,
You help me spend it around.

Kottan seems to be distracted by something off the screen.

Kottan (*addressing the lottery ticket seller*): Wos is? Keine Angst, Sie als Glücksfee, kriang a wos ob!

Lottery ticket seller: Des is a Irrtum. Des Los hot die Nummer eine Million. Gwunna hom's 20 Schilling.⁵¹

The music of this scene comes from the background since Kottan presents the song lip-syncing. The English lyrics are translated and presented in red subtitles at the lower half of the screen. The singing protagonist, who is shown in the foreground of the screen in medium-shot, is dressed in a fancy white suit. While singing, Kottan's face is shown in close-up from different angles. Since he is constantly looking straight into the camera, the entire scene highly resembles a musical whose main goal is to entertain the audience by singing and dancing. The background singers, Kottan's costume and the cinematography add to this assumption. When the scene is cut to Schrammel and the lottery ticket seller, the music is interrupted and Kottan is again dressed in his usual clothes.

Generally, music functions as a crucial stylistic device in *Kottan ermittelt*, especially after Lukas Resetarits is casted to play Adolf Kottan. Kottan's band called *Kottan's Kapelle* is founded, a crime squad choir is initiated by police president Pilch, the well-known Austrian band Drahdwaberl has its appearance, and musical interludes are used, especially in the last episodes. Furthermore, specifically the musical genre of rock'n'roll including performers such as Elvis Presley is constantly intervened in the narrative stream of *Kottan ermittelt*. Generally, Kottan and other characters sing playback with popular musical hits.

In this scene Kottan buys a lottery ticket and starts to sing believing that he has won the grand price. The scene is cut and Kottan is dressed in a white suit. He then sings playback *The millionaire*, which ideally fits into the narrative line of the previous scene. (Gölsdorf 2007:252) His supportive choir is Lemmie Caution (his assistant for several episodes) and a choir of dancing traffic wardens.

Since the scene screens a completely different setting, other outfits and new characters from the previous scene, the set can be regarded not only as a musical but also a comical interlude. From one cut to the next it only takes a few seconds so that concerning logical rules the characters would not have had time to change clothes.

When the musical interludes end, the scene is again cut, and Kottan reappears in his usual clothes. The scene finally tops the gag when it is revealed that Kottan has not

⁵¹ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 13. *Fühlt wie du*. Translation in appendix, number 9.

won the grand price. As a result, Kottan's musical, enthusiastic performance had absolutely no purpose.

All aspects considered, the musical interlude has an obvious excessive connotation concerning visual and contentual terms. Due to this overreaction and the subsequent fail of Kottan a comical effect is produced since the audience has as a certain sentiment of malicious pleasure which exemplifies the humour theory of superiority.

Monty Python equally uses songs such as *The Lumberjack Song*.

Barber: I'm a lumberjack, and I'm okay.
I sleep all night I work all day.

Mounties (*repeating*)

Barber: I cut down trees. I eat my lunch.
I go to the lavatory.
On Wednesdays I go shoppin'
And have buttered scones for tea.

Mounties (*repeating*)

Barber: I cut down trees. I skip and jump.
I like to press wild flowers.
I put on women's clothing
And hang around in bars.

Mounties: (*repeating*)

Barber: I cut down trees. I wear high heels,
Suspenders, and a bra.
I wish I'd been a girlie,
Just like my dear Papa.

Mounties: He cuts down trees. He wears high heels,
Suspenders, and a bra? (*stop singing*)

Girl: And I thought you were so rugged! ⁵²

The scene begins with a cut from the original setting of the sketch (the barber shop) to another setting which is simply decorated with a painting of a forest in the background. The protagonist takes off his clothes and reveals a red flannel shirt, braces and a fur-hat. When he sings, he acts highly enthusiastically. His performance

⁵² *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 9. *The Ant, an Introduction*.

is highlighted by focusing light. A woman stands next to him, but she does not move or speak. The barber and the mounties sing while music plays in the background. The characters are shown in medium shot from an eye-level angle with changing editing between the barber and the Mounties. The mounties appear in front of the identically painted setting as the barber's. At the beginning of the sketch, the barber directly addresses the audience by looking and talking into the camera.

The Lumberjack Song can be defined as one of the most-well-known references to *Monty Python*. The scene can be categorised as a musical interlude between two sketches without any sort of interruption. Before Michael Palin slips into the role of the lumberjack he impersonates a barber who is unsatisfied with his profession. This encourages him to reflect on being a lumberjack and in order to express his desires he starts to sing. Ross (1997:133) described this sketch,

Palin, outlandish chewing action and beloved Connie Booth in place, goes into genius overdrive with flamboyant leg slapping and transvestite undertones as Cleese, Chapman and The Fred Tomlinson Singers cover uneasy reaction with hearty singing on the chorus Peerless stuff.

The scene is shot with just one cut when setting is changed in the background during the one-single shot. Palin simply takes off his barber uniform and reveals his lumberjack outfit underneath. Due to the quick transition from one scenery to the next the audience is taken from one content to another without being disrupted. This method also triggers laughter because the viewer is surprised and confronted with something unexpected, namely the immediate change of setting, clothes and content.

A choir of Mounties functions as a supportive device and they equally form the major element for the humoristic effect. Mainly due to the reaction and response of the Mounties to Palin's lines the scene provokes laughter. Even though the Mounties appear to be scandalised by the content of Palin's words they attempt to fulfil their duty as a supporting choir and to continue singing. This reaction emphasises the traditional image of Mounties, namely being conscientious and responsible.

Additionally, the style of presenting the musical interludes is also unique, namely the lumberjack singing first and the Mounties simply repeating his lines. This approach

creates humour since the audience is confronted with two different reactions, the lumberjack's enthusiasm and the Mountie's revolt.

In fact, the scene cannot only be regarded as humorous due to the scenery and the one-cut transition from one scene to the next, but also due to the content of the song. Specifically, it increases in terms of absurdity. At the beginning, the content can be regarded as ordinary desires (I'm a lumberjack and I'm okay, I sleep all night and I work all day). However, when the barber starts mentioning habits that contradict the usual image of a lumberjack (going shopping, having buttered scones and wearing high heels and a bra) laughter is provoked because the audience did not expect that this scene would take this turn. Similar to the viewers, the Mounties are equally scandalised, and the scene reaches a climax when the Mounties refuse to sing and everybody (including the lumberjack's girlfriend) rushes off the setting.

Without doubt, both scenes can be contrasted in a comparative analysis because they both contain musical interludes. Nevertheless, there are significant differences .

First of all, whereas *Monty Python's* sketch is done with just one cut, Kottan's version is interrupted several times by editing. It is difficult to determine which version can be defined as more successful in provoking laughter. On the one hand, in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* the audience is guided from one setting to another and, thus, becomes aware of the absurdity of the sketch and also to its fictional characteristic. In *Kottan ermittelt*, on the other hand, the audience is equally distracted since the setting changes in a few seconds of just one single editing.

Secondly, while *Monty Python's* Lumberjack song is performed and vocalized by Michael Palin, Kottan uses playback. Therefore, it can be argued that the viewer is more aware of the fictionality in *Kottan ermittelt* since it is evident that the voice is merely an overlay.

However, both scenes also feature crucial similarities. Both Kottan's *The millionaire* and the Pythons' *The Lumberjack Song* employ supporting choirs, an immediate change of outfits as well as a replacement of the setting. Additionally, both reach a climax and a resolution where each protagonist experiences failure. In *Monty Python's* case this is demonstrated by the rejection of the Mounties and his girlfriend and in *Kottan's* case by wrongly believing to have become a millionaire and subsequently, by experiencing a disappointment.

In fact, it can be argued that music in general as well as musical interludes play a more significant role in *Kottan ermittelt* than they do in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*,

especially, because it is not only used to create humour but also to function as a substantial stylistic device.

6.10. Intertextuality

Voice-over: Der Zwischenerfolg wird, wie vom Präsidenten versprochen, mit Singen und einem bescheidenen Fest gefeiert.

Music starts to play.

A man dressed in an Obelix costume dispenses meals, two policemen are shown sitting at a large table, they are eating. Pilch hangs, bound hand and foot, on a tree. Persons are dressed up as Gauls, including a version of Miraculix, Kottan impersonates Asterix. He plays the guitar and sings a Spanish song via playback, looking into the camera.⁵³

This scene is screened at the end of the episode and overlaid by the credits. The voice-over introduces the scene which appears highly factitious and cartoonish due to the rather cheap-looking costumes. The entire crew of *Kottan ermittelt* is dressed up as Gauls, celebrating and eating. The cuts between the different characters occur rather quickly while Kottan, dressed as Asterix, is again lip-syncing to a non-simultaneous music. It can be defined as intertextual reference to the French comics of Asterix.

Mindestens einmal sehen wir die Gallier einmal (fast) alle zusammen an einer Tafel sitzen. Spätestens am Ende eines jeden Heftes wird ein Festmahl angerichtet, weil wieder ein Abenteuer von Asterix und Obelix zu einem glücklichen Ende gekommen ist.⁵⁴

Indeed, such references are frequently employed in the series including Lucky Luke comics or other television crime investigators including Lemmie Caution or Pater Braun. These intertextual references are often used to refer to *Kottan ermittelt* itself for instance by comparing Kottan to other crime investigators. The Asterix scene appears rather surreal since it has no connection to the narrative content of the

⁵³ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 14. *Genie und Zufall*. Translation in appendix, number 10.

⁵⁴ <http://www.comedix.de/lexikon/special/bankett.php>

At least once we see the Gauls sitting together at a table. At the latest at the end of every comic book a banquet is prepared yet again another adventure of Asterix and Obelix had a happy ending. (My translation)

episode. It can be defined as a prologue that emphasises the absurd character of *Kottan ermittelt*.

The image of the bound Heribert Pilch is the intertextual connection to a character of the comics, named Troubadix the singer. Since the original character in the base text is connoted rather negatively (due to his flat singing, he is constantly bound to the tree) the police president automatically receives the same pejorative connotation since he is in the same situation.⁵⁵ The role of Troubadix, thus, emphasises Pilch's role of the typical anti-hero who is characterised as dull and maladroit. Whereas police president Heribert Pilch receives a negative connotation through the intertextual connection, Kottan's impersonation of *Asterix* accentuates his role as a hero and pleasant character.

Er [Asterix]wird zu Beginn der Abenteuer in der Beschreibung der wichtigsten Charaktere als listiger kleiner [...]Krieger beschrieben, der voll sprühender Intelligenz sei und dem alle gefährlichen Aufträge bedenkenlos anvertraut werden.⁵⁶

The base media of the intertextual device can be defined as a humorous comic so that both texts (*Kottan* and *Asterix*) belong to the same genre. However, it is also necessary to note that the surreal, intertextual link intervenes with the generic norm of a crime investigation series.

Monty Python frequently uses intertextuality as well. In the following scene they simply took a classic of English literature and ridicule it.

A picture is showing books and the title The Sephamore Version of Wuthering Heights.

Close-up of a man's face, close-up of a woman's face. Camera is strolling back, revealing that they both stand on rocks, facing each other. Dramatic music off-stage.

Man starts to wave with flags. Subtitled: Oh! Catherine!

Woman also starts to wave. Subtitled: Oh! Heathcliffe!

Wide angled shot. Subtitled: Oh! Oh! Catherine!

Body shot of woman (waving): Oh! Oh! Heathcliff!

⁵⁵ <http://www.comedix.de/lexikon/db/troubadix.php>

⁵⁶ <http://www.comedix.de/lexikon/db/allestrix.php>

At the beginning of the adventures he (Asterix) is among the most important characters as a smart, little warrior who is very clever and who can be unhesitatingly confided every dangerous mission. (My translation)

*Scene cut. Another setting. A man is waving in front of a brick house.
Subtitled: Catherine!
Woman looks and waves: Hark! I hear my husband!*⁵⁷

The establishing shot shows a close-up of a woman, followed by a close-up of a man. The camera zooms out and the protagonists are shown in medium-shot. Equally, the setting is revealed: A beautiful landscape and the protagonists are standing on stones facing each other. Then follows a shot/ reverse shot between the two characters. Non-diegetic music can be heard supporting the peaceful atmosphere. The scene is cut to another man, seen in long -shot, who also does wave -signalling.

The base text of the *Monty Python* sketch is Jane Austen's *Wuthering Heights*. The setting and costumes are authentically designed but as soon as the protagonists of the sketch take out their flags to send each other signals the viewer realises that the scene might take a comedic turn. In this intertextual reference the Pythons combine two different media. The filmic representation of Jane Austen's *Wuthering Heights* and the technique of Sephamore flag signalling.

"The Semaphore flag signalling system is an alphabet signalling system based on the waving of a pair of hand-held flags in a particular pattern."⁵⁸

Both texts that function as basis for the intertextual connection belong to the literary genre, whereas Bronte's is part of the English classical literature and *Asterix'* part of the genre of comics. However, *Kottan's* version of applying intertextual devices is shown in a quite different way compared to *Monty Python*. Whereas *Monty Python* follows its stylistic rules of taking a well-known concept as a basis and then simply add something that has no significant connection to the original text. In the case of *The Sephamore version of Wuthering Heights sketch* the novel is the basis and the signal system is the attribution. Evidently, both conceptions are not incompatible with one another.

Kottan ermittelt, however, uses the intertextual device to construct a certain connotation (Troubadix equals Pilch equals anti-hero, Asterix equals Kottan equals hero).

⁵⁷ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 2. Episode 15. *The Spanish Inquisition*.

⁵⁸ http://www.themeter.net/semaphore_e.htm

6.10. Female roles and cross-dressing

This sketch ideally represents Monty Python's use of cross-dressing in order to provoke laughter.

The stuff of history is indeed woven in the woof. Pearl Harbour. There are pages in history's book which are written on the grand scale. Events so momentous that they dwarf man and time alike. And such is the Battle of Pearl Harbour, re-enacted for us now by the women of Barley Townswomen's Guild. (Cut to a muddy corner of a field. Miss Rita Fairbanks stands talking straight to camera. Behind her are five more pepper pots.)

Interviewer: Miss Rita Fairbanks - you organised this reconstruction of the Battle of Pearl Harbour, why?

Rita: Well, we've always been extremely interested in modern drama ... we were of course the first Townswomen's Guild to perform 'Camp On Blood Island', and last year we did our extremely popular re-enactment of 'Nazi War Atrocities'. So this year we thought we would like to do something in a lighter vein...

Interviewer: So you chose the Battle of Pearl Harbour?

Rita: Yes, that's right, we did.

Interviewer: Well I can see you're all ready to go. So I'll just wish you good luck in your latest venture.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, young man.

She retreats joins the other ladies in the background of the scene.

Interviewer: Ladies and gentlemen, the World of History is proud to present the premiere of the Batley Townswomen's Guild's re-enactment of 'The Battle of Pearl Harbour'.

*A whistle blows and the ladies hit each other with their purses.*⁵⁹

At the beginning of the scene, a medium-shot shows a woman (or rather Eric Idle dressed as a woman) in the foreground of the screen and five other women in the background. The scene is shot in deep focus. The characters are dressed very elegantly, wearing female suits and purses. The entire atmosphere that the *mise en scène* conveys is very distinct and noble. A voice-over talks to Rita Fairbanks who responds by speaking directly into the camera. After she blows a whistle, the scene is cut and shown in long-shot. The atmosphere completely changes since the characters are hitting each other in the mud with their elegant purses.

In diverse media genres such as films or television forms, females are usually connected to roles which embody physical attractiveness, beauty and an ideal image

⁵⁹ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 11. *The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Goes to the Bathroom*.

of elegance. Due to the visual concept of films, women frequently portray an appealing and inviting visible element which functions as an incentive for the viewers. In contrast to this traditional idea of using female bodies as a sort of visual promotion for filmic productions, the Pythons simply reverse this concept by portraying female characters as inept, unsophisticated and unfeminine individuals. However, the humorous effect is not only produced by an uncommon or rather reversed characterisation but also by cross-dressing. In other words, the Pythons themselves slip into the role of female characters and speak in high-pitched voices. They were “grotesque housewives” and they “were labelled ‘pepperpots’ in the original scripts although never referred to in the show. (Ross 1997:125) The costumes of the female Python characters can be considered as rather conservative which means that they mainly consist of colourless female suits, small purses and gray-coloured wigs so that on the whole they lack any aspect of sexual attractiveness and appear rather bland. Actually, the Pythons used their male bodies to portray female protagonists in order to produce a comedic ambiance. Nevertheless, if a specific sketch demands from a female character to convey physical attraction, the role is portrayed by Carol Cleveland who is frequently considered as the sixth member of *Monty Python*. (Landy 2005:71) For example, Cleveland is used for the marriage counsellor sketch which portrays a counsellor who is so heavily drawn by the physics of a woman that he seduces her in front of the woman's husband. For this reason, it can be concluded that whenever the Pythons portray female characters themselves, their main intention is to create a humoristic effect. This effect is conceived by a significant distortion of real images of a female bodies and behaviour.

In fact, the viewer knows that the female characters are represented by men who simply imitate feminine attributes which equally means that the viewers expectations are deceived. Due to this overtly portrayed misinterpretation of a feminine individuals humour is produced. Due to this evident inversion of female attributes the sketch of the women of the Barley Townswomen's Guild can be considered as humorous. In other words, traditional female properties such as elegance, gracefulness, beauty or dignity are completely turned into antonymous characteristics. Not only do the Pythons use visual and auditory attributes (female suits, wigs, make-up and high-pitched voices) to present female characters in a highly satirical manner but they also picture a comical image through interaction. The uncontrolled, savage and aggressive behaviour of the Pepperpots contradict any usual representation of

women. It is clear that such an untamed action (wallowing and fighting in filth and mud) is rather connected to male characteristics. In this sketch humour is created because the cross-dressing is not ideally fulfilled which equally means that the viewer knows that men solely imitate the characteristics of the opposite sex. Secondly, the audience laugh due to this imperfect application of cross-dressing ambiguity. Apart from cross-dressing it can be argued that *Monty Python's Flying Circus* presents female characters that are highly gender specific (housewives, mothers, wives). Wagg (1992:270) equally stresses the passive role of women in *Monty Python* by arguing,

A strong strain of cruelty runs through *Monty Pythons* and much of it is located in the female characters, most of whom are played by 'the Pythons' in drag: a woman contestant in a TV quiz programme, who doesn't like 'darkies', wins a blow on the head; [...] Women were thus often portrayed as reactionary and repressive creatures, holding screeching dominion the domestic sphere.

In contrast to this passive image of women the next scene in *Kottan ermittelt* illustrates how women are portrayed in this show and how they interact either with each other or with the opposite gender, namely as self-confident individuals that constantly speak to men to present themselves as independent.

Kottan taking the package of a board game.

Kottan: Polizist ärgere dich? (Pause) Ah, Polizist ärger dich NICHT!

Wo is des Tendenzspü her?

Kottan's mother: Hab ich entwickelt! In meiner Freizeit!

Kottan (angry): Des schaut da ähnlich! Loss da pantentieren den Dreck!

Kottan's mother (in a singing voice): Hab ich!

Kottan's wife: Schon längst!

Kottan's mother: Apropos Dreck! Ich hab schon drei Lizenzen verkauft! Bis aus deiner Karriere als Sänger was wird bin ich schon reich und hab nicht einmal einen Schritt aus der Wohnung getan!

Kottan's wife: Willst du mitspielen?

Kottan (angry): Do reagiert doch der Zufoi!

Kottan's wife: Wie bei euch!

Kottan smashes the package of the board game onto the table.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 14. *Genie und Zufall*. Translation in appendix, number 10.

The establishing shot introduces Kottan taking up a package of a board game while the camera follows his hand movements. Then the viewpoint is changed because the camera slightly sways to a setting showing Kottan's wife and his mother playing a board game. They are dressed fairly elegantly, which seems a little absurd in the setting of their own home. The light is directed at the women while Kottan remains in the dark background. It could be reasoned that this visual effect highlights the female personalities.

Additionally, female roles function as major joke-tellers in *Kottan ermittelt*, which equally means that they can be also considered as producers of humour. Women, hence, are not the victims or targets of mockery and jokes but they tend to ridicule others, particularly men.

It is important to notice that women and above all the attitude towards females are significantly altered throughout the television show. Especially the first version of Adolf Kottan that was portrayed by Peter Vogel reacted to female counterparts in a highly harsh and aggressive manner. When Lukas Resetarits took over this part, the image of female characters in *Kottan ermittelt* was completely reversed, especially when Kottan's mother was introduced. Actually, she can be considered as the most self-confident and cleverest character part that conveys the image of a strong, independent woman in this series. Her fondness of crime investigations continually connects her to the murders which are basically the main subject of the films. Due to her cleverness and her positive self-image she appears as a vigorous, self-contained individual.

The same can be said about Kottan's wife who equally turned into a rather confident personality daring to revolt against her husband. This transformation actually begins to take shape when Kottan begins an amorous relationship with the prostitute Elvira. It seems that this breach of confidence empowers Kottan's wife and towards the end of the television series, she even takes the final step and throws her husband out of their apartment. As a consequence of this adultery, the females ally and rebel against Kottan who becomes their target of mockery and jokes. Kottan is the target of their jokes but also his preference for other women and his profession. This is indicated by the game *Polizist ärgere dich nicht* which is a transformation of the traditional board game *Mensch ärgere dich nicht*. It is evident that the female protagonists function as the powerful creators of humour feeling superior to their victim Adolf Kottan. Even

though women form a central role in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as in *Kottan ermittelt*, they are presented in different ways.

It can be argued that the Pythons adopt female characters in order to use them as a humoristic trigger by cross-dressing. In other words, women are not a fundamental part in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (with the exception of Carol Cleveland) but the Pythons use female attributes to apply them to the opposite sex in order to create humour. Cross-dressing does not occur in *Kottan ermittelt* and in contrast to the *Flying Circus*, female roles function as crucial characters and are not mocked or presented in a ridiculous manner.

Furthermore, while in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* women or rather images of women function as instruments to provoke laughter, female characters in *Kottan ermittelt* are rather used as joke-tellers instead of target of jokes. It has to be mentioned that the most significant difference between the humour in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt* is that cross-dressing is a major stylistic device of the Pythonesque style while it is not existent in *Kottan*. Whereas the Pythons somehow use female attributes to ridicule certain gender characteristics, women are rather presented as intelligent, confident and powerful individuals in *Kottan* who are not victims of humorous attacks.

6.11. The fool and the clown

Monty Python has indeed a long list of character fools including the Gumbys, the village idiot, the cardinals from the Spanish inquisition and many more. The following scene introduces the foolish camel spotter.

Interviewer: Good evening. Tonight we're going to take a hard tough abrasive look at camel spotting. Hello.

Spotter: Hello Peter.

Interviewer: Now tell me, what exactly are you doing?

Spotter: Er well, I'm camel spotting. I'm spotting to see if there are any camels that I can spot, and put them down in my camel spotting book.

Interviewer: Good. And how many camels have you spotted so far?

Spotter: Oh, well so far Peter, up to the present moment, I've spotted nearly, ooh, nearly one.

Interviewer: Nearly one?

Spotter: Call it none.
Interviewer: Fine. And er how long have you been here?
Spotter: Three years.
[...]
Interviewer: Well, now tell me, what do you do when you spot a camel?
Spotter: I take its number.
Interviewer: Camels don't have numbers.
Spotter: Ah, well you've got to know where to look. They're on the side of the engine above the piston box.
Interviewer: What?
Spotter: Of course you've got to make sure it's not a dromedary. Because if it's a dromedary it goes in the dromedary book.
Interviewer: Well how do you tell if it's a dromedary?
Spotter: Ah well, a dromedary has one hump and a camel has a refreshment car, buffet, and ticket collector.
Interviewer: Mr Sopwith, aren't you in fact a train spotter?
Spotter: What?
Interviewer: Don't you in fact spot trains?
Spotter: Oh, you're no fun anymore.⁶¹

The camel spotter is shown in medium-shot in front of a painted setting. As a consequence, the atmosphere has a slightly unreal or fictional connotation. The spotter is dressed in clothes that one would consider typical of a hunter, while the interviewer is dressed in a suit. What follows is a shot/reverse shot while the interviewer asks the camel spotter various questions. With the punchline, the spotter's shock is shown in close-up.

This sketch exemplifies the Pythons' application of stupidity to create humour and its conformity with the humour theory of superiority. *Monty Python* frequently applies character roles that are provided with certain traits such as silliness, clumsiness or simple-mindedness. Characters are presented whose stupidity functions as a trigger of laughter which equally means that the viewer simply laughs at the inferiority of the other.

The camel spotting sketch demonstrates this claim. The first humorous element is presented by the introduction of a so-called camel spotter whose activity of locating exotic animals in a rather rural area strikes as a peculiar fact that does not easily correspond to realism. In short: Spotting camels in the countryside of England appears highly improbable.

⁶¹ *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Series 1. Episode 7. *You're No Fun Anymore*.

The second comedic element is introduced when the camel spotter declares that he has not been successful in his undertaking which means that he has experienced failure. Furthermore, he has invested three years trying to achieve his goal so that his lack of success is even more dramatic. Nevertheless, the stupidity of the protagonist reaches its climax when it is finally dissolved that he completely confused the content of his goal, namely spotting trains instead of animals. This fact is particularly decisive for the humorous characteristics of this sketch because the targets are absolutely diverse objects which means that an animate item is replaced by a mechanic one which does not share any characteristics with its counterpart.

Due to the substantial ambiguity error the stupidity of the protagonist reaches an extreme level which equally provokes laughter. However, not only the high level of fatally confusion can be considered as humorous but also the fact that the protagonist is not aware of his mistake even if the interviewer calls attention to it. In fact, the simple-mindedness of the character is omnipresent throughout the whole sketch and even reaches its climax and proves his character's idiocy as even more dramatic as initially assumed.

The character of the fool is highly important for producing humour in *Kottan ermittelt*. The role of the idiotic clown that provokes laughter among the audience through his clumsy, foolish and inept behaviour is played by several characters such as Heribert Pilch, police officer Schreyvogel or Kottan's colleague, Schrammel.

They offer a vast area for the producers of the television show to introduce a number of humorous effects including wordplay and jokes. These characters are comparable to clowns whose main function is to entertain by revealing their stupidity, which constantly leads to failure. *Kottan ermittelt* also portrays clownish characters, and Schrammel can be considered as the most foolish and clumsy one.

Barkeeper: No, verhandelt hot er scho, der Benz. Mit zwa Ausländer.

Kottan: Kunden oder Lieferanten?

Barkeeper: Lieferanten, glaub I.

Schrammel: Namen!

Barkeeper: Wort amoi (hesitates) Pablo und Johnny.

Schrammel (angry): Familiennamen!

Barkeeper does not answer.

Schremser: Casals und Walker!

Schrammel: Vos?

Schremser (aroused): Jo, Pablo Casals und Johnny Walker!

Schrammel: Ahso?

Barkeeper: Jo, Sie wissen jo besser Bescheid wie i söber!
The barkeeper is shot by a criminal in the back of the bar.
Barkeeper: So ein Hammel!
Schrammel (delighted): Hammel! Das reimt sich!
The lights go out and Schrammel accidentally breaks Kottan's nose.
Schrammel: Casals und Walker. I kennt doch eigentlich in der spanischen und englischen Botschoft nochfrong!
Schremser: Des hob i a grad vorschlong wollen!⁶²

The setting of the scene is rather dark and only supported by soft lightning. Non-diegetic music can be heard. Again, the shot/reverse shot camera work is used when the barkeeper is investigated. When he is finally shot he is shown in close-up whispering his last words.

Schrammel is the main victim of Kottan's malicious jokes. He presents himself as rather simple-minded and naïve, he constantly blunders and makes silly remarks.

The previous scene ideally exemplifies Schrammel's idiocy. When the barkeeper uses sarcasm by referring to Pablo Casal and Johnny Walker, Schrammel is not aware of the ironic tone and, thus, acts completely inappropriately by suggesting looking for the suspects. However, the audience knows that the barkeeper is being sarcastic. As a consequence, the viewer laughs at Schrammel because he again behaves in a silly way.

Silliness, stupidity and imbecile character parts can frequently be found in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* as well as in *Kottan ermittelt*. In both cases, they are so-called victims or targets that are laughed at because of their ignorance and clumsiness. As already discussed, this method can be connected to the humour theory of superiority. Due to their evident idiocy, these characters can be regarded as inferior to the viewers. We laugh at them because we feel superior and because we can release tension through laughing. Due to the irrational behaviour of the characters (e.g. spotting camels), the audience is aware of the fact that they are supposed to be imbecile. Because of their stupidity they constantly fail (e.g. spotting trains instead of animals) so that the recipient simply laughs at their unsuccessful attempts. Both characters of these sketches the camel spotter and Schrammel present a sort of surface which enables to target jokes at them, to ridicule them and simply embarrass them so that the audience experiences a certain feeling of malicious pleasure and superiority.

⁶² *Kottan ermittelt*. Episode 14. *Genie und Zufall*. Translation in appendix, number 11.

These characters can, thus, equally be compared to clowns who encourage their audience to laugh at them. However, instead of splashy flowers, miniature vehicles or other clownish instruments, they simply use wordplays, jokes, gestures and mimic.

7. Conclusion

After the presentation of humour theories, a detailed description of the history of *Monty Python* and *Kottan ermittelt* and the final scene analysis, I would like to answer the main question of this paper: Does *Kottan ermittelt* use Pythonesque humour?

Due to a thorough description of individual sketches, excerpted from both television formats, the conclusion can be drawn that *Monty Python* had indeed a severe impact on the Austrian television show. One specific device that *Kottan* adopted from *Monty Python* was the employment of running gags. However, the usage of this comical device in *Kottan* is even more profoundly linked to a narrative line since the gags are developed further by continually augmenting the running gag and by introducing continually new features. As a result, the concept of running gags are applied to both television shows. Yet, the producers of *Kottan ermittelt* made more extensive use of it and also employ it as an artistic aspect while the Pythons use running gags rather sporadically.

Additionally, the comparative analysis revealed that surreal comedy and ridiculing tabooed subjects are used in *Monty Python* and *Kottan*. Especially the surreal elements are truly typical of Pythonesque humour. The fact that *Kottan ermittelt* equally introduced surreal elements was the decisive factor that it was compared to *Monty Python*. The sketch analysis illustrated that the quality as well as the quantity concerning the use of surreal humour are evidently higher in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. *Kottan ermittelt* indeed copied Pythonesque style by using surreal gags but not to such an extreme extent as its predecessor.

Furthermore, it is obvious that both television shows play with taboos, sick jokes and dark humour, but also in this case, there is a significant difference between the comedy shows. It can be argued that *Monty Python* was even more daring and provocative than *Kottan* since it presented highly tabooed subjects such as death, cannibalism or violence and ridiculed them in a highly provoking way while *Kottan* did not use a lot of provocative material. The reason for this evident difference is that

Monty Python's Flying Circus was granted creative freedom from the BBC, which means that the Pythons obviously had the opportunity to do whatever they wanted to do. In contrast to the Pythons, the producers of *Kottan ermittelt* were more observed by the ORF (or rather FS 1 at that time), especially because a great number of outraged viewers belaboured the channel with insults and severe criticism. The conclusion in this regard is that the Pythons were more courageous and they did not care about any consequences.

The most evident similarity between *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Kottan ermittelt* is the manner to play with the viewers' expectation, which means that a great number of scenes and gags proceed differently than one might expect. Both television shows interfere with the traditional use of comedy and present gags and sketch in a new, innovative way: for instance, *Monty Python's* lack of punchlines or the transformation of a coffee vending machine into a humanoid object in *Kottan*. This use of comedy can be connected to the theory of incongruity since the shows present content, which is not compatible to the viewer's expectation.

Even though some theorists criticise the theory of superiority, it still can be linked to the humour in both television shows since in a number of sketches the viewers simply laugh at the silliness and the failure of others. They simply feel superior and are amused about the inferiority of certain fictional characters. This fact is mostly evident in *Kottan ermittelt*, which presented a number of unlikeable characters whose main function was to entertain the audience with their failure.

This leads to the assumption that *Monty Python* and *Kottan* also introduced a traditional role of comedy, namely the clown or the fool whose main goal is to entertain the audience by presenting his foolish and clumsy behaviour. This clownish acting is mostly expressed by slapstick comedy, which is again a traditional instrument of film comedy.

Also grotesque elements are visible in both shows. *Monty Python* and *Kottan ermittelt* mix the fearful with humour, tabooed subjects with comedy (the undertaker sketch) and uncanny atmosphere with humorous dialogues (the murderer and his victim) which are all basic elements of grotesque comedy.

As conclusion, it can be said that it is true that *Kottan ermittelt* was influenced by Pythonesque humour. Both shows use traditional elements of comedy, both provoke laughter by using the same triggers, and in both cases, the viewers are amused because they feel relieved, relaxed and in some cases also superior.

However, the most obvious difference is that *Kottan* did not go to its limits and did not present such a provocative humour as in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. But even though the humour in *Kottan ermittelt* can be considered as much milder, it still caused outraged and extremely scandalized criticism. It, thus, can finally be concluded that *Kottan ermittelt* used certain elements of Pythonesque humour but the Austrian audience was not entirely ready and susceptible for such a kind of humour.

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undertakers_sketch>

9. Appendix

The following texts are my translations.

1)

Heribert Pichl, disguised as Santa Clause, approaches the coffee vending machine. He quickly inserts a coin, presses a button, and takes the cup of coffee.

Pilch: You just have to find a way.

A yodelling resonates from the coffee vending machine, a small door opens behind Pilch, and an artificial foot appears.

Vending machine: Please step to the right, Mister President!

Pilch smiles and steps to the right.

Vending machine: Thank you.

Pilch sighs and drinks his coffee, when all of a sudden the foot kicks him through a door.

Pilch (yelling): And I still have the upper hand!

Cut.

Heribert Pilch, dressed in his normal clothes, drives a tractor with the coffee vending machine stored at the back. Jolly music from the off.

He stops at a junkyard.

Pilch (waving his hand): Up, up, darling!

The coffee vending machine is lifted by a claw and thrown into a scrap metal press where it is immediately pressed flat. The coffee vending machine screams while Pilch watches smiling.

Vending machine (crying): Ouch mummy!

Pilch pokes his tongue out at the machine. The last image of this scene shows the destroyed vending machine, pressed into the form of a cube.

2)

Adolf Kottan parks his car next to an open sewer cover. He steps out and falls into the hole, screaming. A girl also steps out of the car and yells into the hole.

Girl: Detective!

The scene is cut. Another setting. Mrs. Kottan sits in the living room and watches an episode of Kottan (Wien Mitte) on television. Adolf Kottan enters the room, dressed in a trench coat.

Kottan: And you are still awake?

His wife: Yes.

Kottan: Is he supposed to be the detective?

His wife: Yes

Kottan: How sloppily dressed he is!

He opens his coat and relieves a smoking underneath. His wife jumps from her seat.

His wife: What do you look like?

Kottan: As I always look on duty.

The wife falls back into her seat, a hand in front of her mouth and a short look at the television, where Kottan is still singing.

Kottan (looking at the television): They undermine our work!

His wife: It's just a film, Dolfer! A film!

Kottan: I don't care. I am going to complain to the television station.

He dials and takes the phone to his ear.

Kottan: Yes, the film that is currently aired on television is a scandal. An absolute scandal, do you understand?

He hangs up and looks at his wife. She shows him the OK symbol. He smiles and looks directly into the camera.

3)

Kottan and his wife are eating soup while watching a television commercial. A hunter appears on the screen.

Hunter: Halali, mushroom hunting soup by the house of Sterz. *(Pause)*.

What is a tired huntsman looking forward to? A freshening, stimulating mushroom soup by Sterz. *He begins to spoon.*

Hunter: Halali fresh mushroom soup. Wholesome. *(Pause)*. Refreshing. *He eats another spoon of soup.*

Hunter: Stimulating. *(Coughing)*. Also for a hard palate!

Hunter (wiping his forehead): Composed by local experts of mushrooms. Growing domestic harvest of moss.

He is obviously in a bad condition.

Hunter: Even a house-wife knows, what Halali promises!

He stands up, gasping.

Hunter: Halali, brings the forest into your house. Halali

He can barely stand upright.

Hunter: Fresh mushroom soup.

He falls into the plate of soup, looks into the camera.

Hunter: Food to die for. Halali, hello, halleluja.

He sighs and collapses dead, his face placed in the plate of soup.

4)

Schreyvogel enters a shop.

Schreyvogel: Good day!

Vendor: Thank god that you came, detective. The baby, the baby...

At the back of the scene a diver leaves the store, Schreyvogel looks startled.

Vendor: The baby was forgotten and it is crying the whole time.

The baby is screaming.

Schreyvogel *(steps up to the baby)*: So what shall I do?

Vendor: The police is said to know what to do.

Schreyvogel (speaking a high pitched voice): Well, what's up with the little baby? *(Pause)*. He is certainly hungry.

Schreyvogel (looking at the breasts of the vendor): I am the wrong person for that. *The vendor is upset and disappears.*

Schreyvogel: So what shall we do with you? Well, first of all, you have to calm down and then you'll get some yum-yum!

He takes a baby-rattle and approaches the pram. He is suddenly dragged into the pram from head onwards, accompanied by munching noises, until he is completely sucked in. The baby stops screaming. The vendor reenters the scene.

Vendor: He knew what to do after all, this sandbagger.

The baby burps and Schreyvogel's police cap is ejected from the pram. The vendor is scandalised and flees.

5)

The murderer: Are you also interested in workmanship?

Woman: Well, I don't know.

The murderer (guiding the woman to a lounge): Come on, come on!

You are going to die here, lying on the back.

Woman (*bemused*): Yes!

Woman lies down on the lounge.

The murderer: At first there will be signs of paralysis in your back muscles. You will be able to still move your legs and arms for hours. It relaxes the muscles and facilitates my work. Just like green turtles struggling to death on their backs, making their meat particularly tender. (*Woman giggles*) But don't be afraid, the cannibalistic is foreign to me. From time to time there are some vertebras in the soup, but that is what you have especially praised it for.

Woman: Yes, it was really good!

The murderer: Do you feel the longing?

Woman (*sighing*): Yes!

The murderer: I promise you just the best work, even afterwards! It will be just two little cuts. The blood has to come out before it thickens. You can have it in advance. I deliver anonymously free to the door of banked human blood and the department of plasma.

The murderer and the woman are giggling.

6)

Newsreader: Ladies and Gentlemen, now, a word concerning our evening broadcast.

(Invisible cut, newsreader wears thick lenses of spectacles) In the last episode of our health magazine we talked about the appropriate spectacles. (*Kottan's mother also looks through thick lenses*) Today at a quarter past eight (*newsreader has a bandage on the head*) Praxis deals with head injuries and their prevention. (*Kottan drinks and looks staggered*) By special order of family Kottan (*she winks*) in Vienna Brigittenau (*Kottan is startled*) we now broadcast *The police officer of Saint Tropez*.

Kottan: Who ordered this?

Wife: I did.

Kottan: Those are the lousiest films that make fun at the expense of the police.

7)

Kottan enters a room which is illuminated.

Kottan: Good day! What are you doing?

The white: I can't get the tune out of my head. But it doesn't come to my mind.

He shakes hands with Kottan: Harry Lime Junior!

Kottan: Is this your apartment?

The white: Always. From my father. I don't know anything else.

Kotta: May I?

He sits down at the organ and starts to play. On top of the organ are two white rats.

The white (delighted): That's it!

Both stand up and start to dance while the organ keeps playing by itself.

8)

Kottan: I have got the million! Seriously! (*Close-up of the lottery ticket, stunned views*)

Kottan walks away, towards the camera.

Lemmie Caution: Before we begin, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you all, thank you, thank you!

Music starts to play.

Kottan: I'm not a bad person, (*I know*) I don't drink, I don't kill.

I got no evil habits, and a problem never win,

I don't sing like Elvis Presley, I can't dance like Fred Astaire,

But there's one thing in my favour, (*laughing*) I'm a millionaire.

Lemmie: That's beautiful.

Chorus: And I got more money than a horse has hairs

Cause when my rich old uncle died, I entered all my prayers

But having all this money is gonna bring me down,

If you ain't with me honey,

You help me spend it around.

Kottan seems to be distracted by something off the screen.

Kottan (*addressing the lottery ticket seller*): What's up? Don't worry, you'll get your share, you lucky duck.

Lottery ticket seller: That's a mistake. The lottery ticket has the number one million. You won 20 Schillings.

9)

Voice-over: The temporary success is celebrated, as promised by the president, with singing and a modest feast. *Music starts to play.*
A man dressed in an Obelix costume dispenses meals, two policemen are shown sitting at a large table, they are eating. Pilch hangs, bound hand and foot, on a tree. Persons are dressed up as Celts, including a version of Miraculix, Kottan impersonates Asterix. He plays the guitar and sings a Spanish song via playback, looking into the camera.

10)

Kottan taking the package of a board game.

Kottan: Police officer, be vexed? (Pause) Ah, police officer, DON'T be vexed!⁶³Where did you get this game?

Kottan's mother: I designed it! In my spare time!

Kottan (angry): That's just like you! Take out a patent for this rubbish!

Kottan's mother (in a singing voice): I have done that!

Kottan's wife: Already!

Kottan's mother: Apropos rubbish! I have already sold three licences! Until your career as a singer finally gets started, I 'll be already rich and I didn't even step out of the appartement!

Kottan's wife: Do you want to join in?

Kottan (angry): Coincidence rules this game!

Kottan's wife: As with you!

Kottan smashes the package of the board game onto the table.

11)

Barkeeper: Well, he did deal, this Benz. With two foreigners.

Kottan: Customers or suppliers?

Barkeeper: Suppliers, I guess.

Schrammel: Names!

Barkeeper: Wait (hesitates), Pablo and Johnny.

Schrammel (angry): Surnames!

Barkeeper does not answer.

Schremser: Casals and Walker!

Schrammel: What?

Schremser (aroused): Yeah, Pablo Casals and Johnny Walker!

Schrammel: Really?

Barkeeper: Yeah, you even know more than !!

The barkeeper is shot by a criminal in the back of the bar.

Barkeeper: Such a mutton! (German: Hammel)

Schrammel (delighted): Mutton! (German: Hammel) That rhymes!

The lights go out and Schrammel accidentally breaks Kottan's nose.

Later that sketch.

⁶³ The game is a reference to ludo.

Schrammel: Casals and Walker. I could enquire at the Spanish and English embassies!
Schremser: I was about to suggest that.

10. Zusammenfassung

Der Hauptfokus dieser Arbeit liegt auf der vergleichenden Analyse der Fernsehserien *Monty Python's Flying Circus* und *Kottan ermittelt*. Es wurde oftmals argumentiert, dass die österreichische Kriminalserie von Pythonesken Humor geprägt und beeinflusst wurde. Vor allem die hohe Qualität an surrealen und absurden Witzen in *Kottan ermittelt* wurde größtenteils dem Einfluss von *Monty Python* zugeschrieben. Diese Arbeit untersucht diese These und versucht dabei eine Similarität zwischen den beiden Fernsehformaten zu detektieren. Zuvor werden die wichtigsten Humorthorien dargestellt, um mit deren Hilfe eine Hypothese zu entwickeln, weshalb die Zuschauer von *Monty Python* und *Kottan* lachen oder vielleicht auch nicht lachen. Da beide Fernsehserien mit den Erwartungen ihres Publikums spielen, kann man daraus resultieren, dass die Theorie der Inkongruenz am hilfreichsten für die Analyse des Humors beider Formate ist. Das bedeutet, dass beide Comedyserien dazu tendieren, Inhalte, Witze und Sketche auf eine andere, surreale und absurde Weise zu präsentieren, die der Zuschauer in dem Maße nicht erwarten würde.

Neben diesem Spiel von Erwartungen sind weitere vergleichbare Methoden zu erkennen. Dazu gehören auch der vermehrte Gebrauch von Running Gags, der bereits in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* häufig zu erkennen war und in *Kottan ermittelt* sogar noch verstärkt wurde. Generell, ist der Einsatz von Running Gags das elementarste Instrument in *Kottan ermittelt*, um Humor zu kreieren. Als weitere Analogien in beiden Fernsehformaten ist die Verwendung von schwarzem Humor, Parodien, musikalischen Einlagen, spezifischen Charakterrollen wie der Clown, Slapstick oder auch Surrealismus zu nennen.

Der offensichtlichste Unterschied zwischen *Monty Python's Flying Circus* und *Kottan ermittelt* zeigt sich vor allem in der Präsenz von Frauen in den jeweiligen Fernsehserien wieder. Während Frauenrollen in *Monty Python* nur wenig Beachtung finden oder gänzlich von den männlichen Protagonisten übernommen werden, so zeigt sich in *Kottan ermittelt* ein starkes Frauenbild, dass das weibliche Geschlecht als unabhängiges und sich gegen patriarchalische Gesetze auflehndes Individuum darstellt. Ein weiterer bedeutender Unterschied zwischen beiden Fernsehformaten ist, dass der Pythoneske Humor deutlich mutiger, aggressiver und Tabubrechende ist als das österreichische Äquivalent. Doch obwohl *Kottan ermittelt* die Tendenz von

Monty Python nicht übernommen hat, gewisse Tabus zu brechen, wurde die österreichische Fernsehserie dennoch heftig von Zuschauern kritisiert. Als möglicher Grund für diese Diskrepanz könnte genannt werden, dass das österreichische Publikum für den stark Pythonesk- geprägten Humor noch nicht bereit war.

11. Curriculum Vitae

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