

On the dynamics of humour: the relationship between Deconstructive Media and the *Monty Python's* legacy

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Abstract

This Project analyses the cinema and television production by British comedy group *Monty Python*, pointing out the influence of Jacques Derrida's Deconstructive philosophy on the interpretation of humorous sketches and possible contribution on the creation of the *Pythonesque* style. Assuming Deconstruction as a legitimate humour technique, this work studies its application and contribution to create a legacy of a deconstructive style in popular media.

Key words: *Monty Python*, *Deconstruction*, *Humour*.

Introduction

For long the narrative forms use comedy techniques to establish the tension level between their characters and, most importantly, determine the necessary distance from the spectators, in order that they can distinguish ludic from tragic.

Acknowledging the presence of the spectator and the existence of a medium in-between characterizes as a Deconstructive reading and it is a well-defined trademark of the *Monty Python* group, considered the creator of a well-distinguished and recognized style.

It was essential for this project to spot where Deconstruction made part of *Monty Python's* legacy and examine the *Pythonesque* as a legitimate style amongst narrative techniques to produce humour in TV and film.

Results and Discussion

Clarifying the references in Andrew Horton's book, *Comedy / Cinema / Theory* (1991), it was possible to prove that Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction can be understood as a humorous technique: it defines comedy as an intensified version of language and behavior, such as an play attitude, which exposes how a text determines the philosophy it asserts.

Inheriting much from what its members absorbed from its trajectory until the formation of the group by the end of the 60s, *Monty Python's* humour occupies a solid place in the development of the British satire boom.

The works of George Perry (1994) and Roger Wilmot (1980) show direct relationship between the *Pythonesque* and Deconstruction: At a reference level, the *Pythons* have declared their influence from Buster Keaton's reflexivity; Their codes of articulation are based on the "subversive spirit", the same that many authors point to as a support to understand Derrida's work; Consistent with the *Python's* legacy, every medium can be

subverted and conducted to a self-referential place that can be shared by author and spectator.

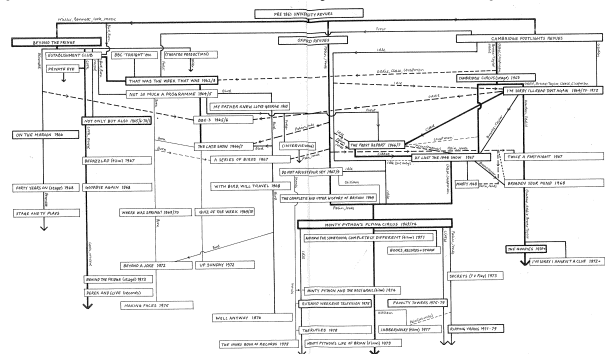


Image 1. Revues and shows, preliminar and contemporary *Monty Python* production. Scheme taken from Wilmot (1980).

Conclusions

Beyond acknowledging the presence of the viewer and pointing out the medium that the spectator is consuming, the *Pythonesque* puts the medium itself in a common-place in the repertoire of both author and audience. Similarly, it establishes an imaginary signifier (METZ, 1981 apud STAM, 1985) that determines exactly the necessary distance to the viewer to allow the breaking of expectations concerning the medium, violating (in a ludic manner) the conventional limits of expression and creating a place even more appropriate for satire.

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