Masaryk University  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of English  
and American Studies  
English Language and Literature

Kateřina Jonová

**Making Fun of the Donkey and the Elephant**  
Bachelor’s Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: Jeffrey Alan Smith, M.A., Ph. D.  

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author’s signature
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1 Introduction

In the 1990s the premise of television broadcast scheme changed when politics and entertainment came together to create an entirely new genre – satirical political talk show. As Jeffrey P. Jones writes, people of that time period enjoyed the commonness which was brought on the screen by one of the first satirical show, Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher (7). The show suddenly let people without any specialization in politics talk about the field that touches everybody’s life. All the talk was very light, without harsh and strict statements, creating space for humour, which was welcomed with joy and appreciated by viewers, resulting in high ratings.

People indeed enjoyed the new funny perspective on politicians. Soon the mocking was not focused only in the satirical talk shows, but shows as famous as South Park or The Simpsons appeared, whose episodes often centred on a political topic of the day. Shortly after, most of the major broadcast and cable TV stations had some kind of political programing.

But the greatest success was reserved for shows with hosts identifying themselves with the liberal part of the political spectre, with the most successful talk show called The Daily Show. Although 29% of the US citizens identify themselves as Republican, 31% as Democrats and 40% as Independent (Jones, Jeffrey M.), the conservative comedy have not taken off. What then makes the liberal comedy so appealing even to conservative audience?

In this thesis I investigate the phenomenon of political satire in liberal and conservative talk shows broadcasted on nationwide television stations in the USA. The focal point of this work is the difference between shows based on conservative and on liberal political positions. I argue that the conservative broadcasting has a different approach to humour then their liberal counterparts – more specifically, conservatives
put politics first and humour second, which makes their satire heavier, and according to ratings of Fox News and other conservative TVs, less appealing to the viewers. Though this is true only for TV, as there is a number of successful stand-up comedians, who managed to connect conservative politics and humour. The thesis provides analysis of selected episodes from current satirical TV shows, two liberal ones – The Daily Show and The Colbert Report – and two conservative shows – The Flipside and Red Eye, virtually the most viewed shows from both groups. This analysis shows, how exactly their approaches to humour differ and answers the question why there is no conservative The Daily Show.

2 Theoretical Introduction

2.1 Brief History of Satire

To talk about any topic, it is crucial to set a definition of the spoken term. Satire, as defined by Merriam-Webster online dictionary is “a way of using humor to show that someone or something is foolish, weak, bad, etc. : humor that shows the weaknesses or bad qualities of a person, government, society, etc.” (“Satire”). The words is also used to describe the works of art with the same features. The history of satire is long and quite rich, starting 2400 years ago in the ancient Greece.

As the most common art form in Greece was drama, the satire at first appeared in this form. Aristophanes, universally accepted as the father of comedy, satirized the leaders of Athens for their part in the Peloponnesian war in a play called The Clouds. Soon after the invention of satire in Greece, the Roman Empire reshaped it according to their own rules, creating a model for writing satire. One of the most influential authors was Horace, who published two books called “Satires” (“Satire History”).

Though there are a lot of different types of satire, the most distinctive is the political one presented mostly in the form of cartoons. In the 19th century most of the
people were illiterate, making pictures more understandable to the masses. One of the first famous cartoonist came from France, Honoré Daumier, who was sentenced to six months in prison for depicting the king of France as a giant eating the common people. This style allowed artists to broaden their target audience to the bigger part of the population, which in total, resulted in increased political awareness. Tiwary points out there were magazines with exclusively humorous content printed. Soon most of the newspapers had a section devoted to the satirical cartoons.

It is important to remember, that every culture has its own specific rules for satire. In Britain it is considered normal to mock the royal family, which is off-limits in Netherlands. Similarly in most of the Christian states mocking of the religion is not a big deal, but making fun of the prophet Muhamad in any Muslim country is considered blasphemy. Therefore from now on I focus solely on the art of satire in the USA, where the freedom of speech is protected under the First Amendment.

2.2 Democrats and Republicans

2.2.1 History of Parties in the USA

With the establishment of the democratic government in America with George Washington as the first president, no parties evolved. However, when Washington left the atmosphere changed. Jefferson and Hamilton didn’t agree with each other on the basic problems of leading the country. Jefferson believed in the rural America, supporting local farmers and communities, and Hamilton was more a man of the cities. As both men were politically as well as personally strong, two groups created around them. Hamilton created a focal point of the Federalist Party and Jefferson was a centre of a group called Democrat-Republicans, now known under the name Democrats, which makes the Democratic Party the longest party in existence in the system of the USA.
Though Washington in his Farewell Address\(^1\) warned his fellow politicians of the evil of factions, under which it is nearly impossible to imagine anything else than political parties, they were necessary, as creating coalitions was the only way of achieving the set goal. The electoral system expressed in the name of one of the ABBA’s greatest hits “The winner takes it all,” favours two parties, as shown by Maisel, though the system was not designed to employ only two parties (13).

By 1840s the dynamics of federal politics changed and Federalists almost vanished. As Democratic-Republicans, now known simply as Democrats, were without any competition, the election was more about personalities of the nominees, rather than partisan thinking. The Whig party was able to win the presidency three times with different candidates, but in 1856 the party was virtually non-existent. Until 1854 there was no real threat to the ruling party, until the Republican Party was formed with a sole intention to pull the Democrats into conflict. Their major ideological issue back then was slavery. Democrats had strong roots on the south, they supported slavery, whereas Republicans were abolitionists. The first Republican president was Abraham Lincoln. After his election the Republicans gained popularity and Democrats were connected with the loosing Union. As Maisel points out, contrary the state of things we know today, originally the Republicans were the party of the cities and the Democrats were the party of the rural areas, thus in minority (37). This all changed thanks to the Great Depression in 1929 when people changed their political opinions under the economic pressure.

With president Francis Delano Roosevelt Democrats gained popularity in the cities, which was the final trigger for the ultimate shift of power bases. In the 1960s Barry Goldwater was the first Republican candidate getting support from Democratic

\(^1\) Delivered 1796.
south, followed by Richard Nixon, who campaigned in south “to voters whose loyalty to the Democratic party was based more on tradition than on policy” (Maisel, 55).

Democrats became more a social party, whereas Republicans are often connected with lessening the role of the federacy in lives of citizens. Today the Democrats have support in cities and other urban areas and Republicans’ greatest support comes from rural areas of the USA. The suburban areas is where the political fight of nowadays is happening.

2.2.2 Ideological Differences

As the differences are not the same in each era, it is not easy to keep up with them. Each party issues its national platform before presidential elections. These documents comment on the current state of many affairs of the country and shows why the relevant party is better. To compare the most current issues, I focus on platforms from the most recent presidential election, the year of 2012. To stay as objective as one can be I do not comment on if the parties gained set goals or if their platforms even have sense. The platforms are very different from the ones Czech citizens are used to, counting pages up to 50 and planning the future of the state under their administration only in a small portion of the documents, as most of them is concerned with all the great deeds the parties did in the past.

Both platforms agree on main topics which are discussion worthy, though they approach the issues in a different manner. To simplify the issues parties discuss I divided them into five categories – economy, health care, environment, human rights and military forces. However, some issues are hard to categorize, so overlap is impossible to avoid.
2.2.2.1 Economy

Democrats as well as Republicans are not ecstatic about the state of the economy. However, both groups blame the other one. The Republican platform talks about the reform of the tax code and the usage of taxes, which should not serve to “[...] redistribute income, fund unnecessary or ineffective programs [...]” (Republican Platform 2). This reform should help small businesses to grow, as they are “the backbone of the US economy” (Republican Platform 2). Small businesses are commented on by the Democrats, too. They “recognize the importance of small business to women, people of color, tribes and rural America” (Democratic Platform8). According to the Grand Old Party, tax reliefs should help economy to grow and create more jobs. Although this point is discussed similarly in the platform of their opponents, tax cuts and job creation, Democrats state directly whose taxes would be cut – the middle class. Middle class is a great topic which the Democrats mention every few pages of their platform. Their program promises “extending of key tax relief” (Democratic Platform 3). Conversely, the GOP does not really comment on such a thing.

As it is expected, both parties discuss federal budget, again, in a different way. The GOP wants to create a Constitutional amendment which would demand a super-majority for any tax increase. This would result in the second party not being able to balance budget with increasing taxes. Their opponents plan to reduce budget deficit “by over 4 trillion over the next decade,” while keeping “investments that benefit the middle class” (Democratic Platform 6).

As middle class growth and well-being is an enormous issue for Democrats, the party comments on job creation more than Republicans. Insourcing, bringing back jobs from China and other cheaper regions, occupies an important position in the platform,
proposing an end to the tax breaks of companies which outsource their production (Democratic Platform 8). This issue is not covered in the Republican platform at all, as well as there is no mention on dealing with poverty. To prevent rising numbers of impoverished citizens, the party believes that “we must raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation,” (Democratic Platform 19) which correspond with their left-wing thinking.

2.2.2.2 Health Care

The most prominent issue of 2012 platforms is healthcare, with debates over the Affordable Care Act, more commonly known as the Obamacare. As expected, Democrats support their President stating that they “believe accessible, affordable, high quality health care is a part of the American promise” (Democratic Platform 3). As a part of their promise the party wants to continue its support of biomedical research, making its new HIV/AIDS combat strategy “guided by science” (Democratic Platform 4).

The Republicans, on the other hand, believe the Affordable Care Act should be repealed, as it was never about affordability of health care, but about power and control over the economy. Obamacare would “tremendously expand Medicaid without significant reform” which would mean another burden for the budget (Republican Platform 32). The Republicans, however, plan their own reform, which should empower free-market based system with a special emphasis on consumer choice (Republican Platform 33).

Both parties agree on saving Medicare and Medicaid programs, though in different forms. The GOP wants to bring Medicare into the 21st century, by reducing its size and reforming the whole project, as today’s life span is longer (Republican Platform 22). The opposing party wants to save Medicare as it is claiming the changes
proposed by Republicans would “turn Medicare into a voucher program” (Democratic Platform 1).

2.2.2.3 Environment

As one of the most important issues of the 21st century is energy and environment, both parties stated their policies and future plans in the platforms. They agree on so-called all-of-the-above energy policy, which takes advantage of all of the natural resources, including geothermal, nuclear or solar sources. They approach is, again, different. The Democrats clearly support clean energy, with emphasis on invention of new technologies (Democratic Platform 7). Their opponents want to support coal-fired energy plants, which would be environmentally responsible, though they also state their support towards monetary effective development of renewable energy (Republican Platform 16).

Environment protection is also mentioned by both of the parties. Republicans state, that “environment is getting cleaner and healthier,” however, they follow these words with emphasis on restoring states’ authorities in environmental protection (Republican Platform 18). Their goal in environmental protection is as little government control in this area as possible, because the “experience has shown that in caring for the land and water private ownership has been our best guarantee of conscientious stewardship” (Republican Platform 18). According to Democrats, it is important for the USA to stay the leading authority on the issue in the world, with stricter regulations of pollutants (Democratic Platform 20).

What is a highly problematic issue is the climate change, on which only Democrats comment. They want to “pursue efforts to combat climate change” and what is more important, they “affirm the science of climate change” (Democratic Platform 20).
2.2.2.4 Human Rights

Education, a highly discussed topic in the USA, appears in the platforms several times. Democrats want to “expand public school options for low-income students” and “keep college within reach for every student,” as education should not automatically mean living a life in debt (Democratic Platform 5). Their opponents want for all students to live up to their potential with a special emphasis on STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and math. However, the platform follows with reinforcing consumer choice in education, which should not necessarily mean lower quality, as students’ choice of school should not be dependent on “address, zip code or economic status” (Republican Platform 36).

Next huge topic in this area which became bigger in the last few years is same-sex marriage and partnership. In the republican platform the party states there should be no “discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, creed, disability or national origin (9). However, Republicans oppose same-sex marriage. Their Defense of Marriage Act, known under the shortcut DOMA, would allow States or federacy “not to recognize same-sex relationships licensed in other jurisdictions” (Republican Platform 10). Conversely, Democrats state, that “gay rights are human rights” (31), oppress DOMA and support Respect for Marriage Act and equal protection of same-sex couples under the law (Democratic Platform 18).

Repeatedly, Republicans address abortions and family planning. Family planning programs should not be included in school curricula, rather they should be replaced with “abstinence until marriage” plans. Additionally, no school clinics should provide information about contraception or abortion (Republican Platform 36). Further, they “oppose using public revenues to promote or perform abortion […] and will not fund or subsidize health care which includes abortion coverage” (Republican Platform...
Democrats, on the other hand, believe in choice for women, stating that “women have a right to control their reproductive choices.” Family planning and contraception should be accessible. Democrats also “support evidence-based and age-appropriate sex education” (Democratic Platform18).

Both platforms shortly address religion, supporting free religion, while at the same time respecting the Judo-Christian legacy of the country.

2.2.2.5 Military Forces

Military, always a great issue of the USA, gets its fair share in the platforms as well, which is not surprising, considering the USA military spending in 2013 counts up to 35% of military expenditure of the whole word combined (Perlo-Freeman, Slomirano 2).

“America’s unrivalled military capabilities represent a second core pillar of our global leadership,” statement in the democratic platform, fully supports the idea of maintaining the strongest military, though they also promote cuts in federal spending, which should include military spending as well (29). The party also believes, that “our troops will face fewer deployments,” which would indicate lower participation in military conflicts around the globe. The last statement agrees with the position of the GOP. The party is against sending troops all over the world to preserve America’s “combat readiness” (Republican Platform 43). However, they are against budget cuts, as they pose threat to national security.

Both parties agree on reducing the numbers of nuclear weapons all over the world with the USA as the leading authority. The Democrats vow to work with Russia and ratification of new international treaties to get rid of these dangerous weapons (Democratic Platform 23). The Republicans, as mention before, agree with reducing nuclear stockpiles. Though, they follow this statement with critique of the current
administration and their abandonment of missile defence bases in the Czech Republic and Poland, suggesting the party does not believe the rest of the world in this very issue (Republican Platform 41).

To conclude, parties agree on the most important topics which are discussion-worthy, though they treat them with a great difference. The platforms, however, serve also as a reminder, what the current Administration did wrong/right, what was done by the party in the past and how big failure the opposing party is. While reading the documents, the reader is constantly reminded, that it is a part of marketing, rather than stating policies and plans for the future of the country. However, the platforms serve an important role. Through them it is possible to get to know the party. Which is important for further analysis of satire of conservative as well as liberal side of the political spectrum.

2.3 Political Satire Talk Show and TV

Political satire of nowadays is in the form of cartoons and less frequently of literary work. Nevertheless, the biggest section of this genre in the USA is created by the television satire. It gained popularity in the 1990s, though the roots of the genre goes deeper, right into the 1960s.

As Day mentions, in this period a show called That Was the Week That Was, which was eventually inspiration for an American shows, appeared in Britain. This program contained most of the features modern shows do, such as skits, monologues and interviews (46). Despite its immense popularity in the USA, the humour was too offending for the audience of that era, which ultimately caused the end of the show. Satire was revived on Saturday Night Live, in an occurring segment “Weekend Update.” Nonetheless, this form was not the final form, as Day states “real political policy is rarely critiqued in any depth” (51). The main difference between the old satire and the
current one is the aim of it. While the latter urges the viewers to criticize and think critically about the politics, the old satire was not much more than a matter of laugh. Networks had oligopoly on broadcasting, which made it impossible for more edgy satire to even start on television. But this premise changed when competition rose in the form of cable, marking the start of the post-network era (Gray, Jones, Thompson 25).

The most important channel in the area of political satire is undisputedly Comedy Central, by which Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher was brought to the American viewers. Being one of the first connecting politics with audience through unprofessional debate, Politically Incorrect gained success. However, the politically incorrect approach lead to the end of the show, as the host was not sensitive enough to the matters of September 11, 2001. The channel continues with the mockery of politics until today, providing home for both The Daily Show and The Colbert Report.

In the era of the internet, as Jones points out, programming was set free from the television, made available to virtually any individual with the internet connection on demand (12). YouTube and other similar platforms allow people from all around the world to create their own satirical video blogs that sometimes make use of similar tools as the broadcasted ones. Satire of politics has now become intertwined with popular culture (Jones 13).

2.4 Conservative v Liberal Shows

In section 2.2.2 it was made clear, that liberals and conservatives have diverse opinions on many things and one of them might be humour, or satire, to be precise. There is a striking gap between immensely popular liberal satire in the form of The Daily Show and mostly banished conservative shows like Red Eye. However, this rule is applicable only on the television realm. There is number of stand-up comedians with conservative comedy working for them, just like Jeff “Big Daddy” Wayne. There has
been numerous attempts to create “conservative Daily Show,” but all ended as a failure. This problem is a topic of many articles throughout the internet, as well as a few important books.

There is a popular explanation that “liberals are more creative and less cowed at authority,” which would make them more incline towards popular humour (Singal). However, the problem seems to go deeper, as this is the issue, as mentioned above, of television only. This simplistic explanation has been successfully diminished by a 2008 study by Dan Ariely, who presented same jokes to both liberals and conservatives. The jokes ranged from religion to marriage and conservatives’ response was better, meaning they found the jokes more frequently funny, that did liberals.

Another possible explanation is proposed through a humour theory – Benign Violation theory. The theory introduced by a team under the leadership of Dr. Peter McGraw from the University of Colorado explains why thing appear funny to us. According to the theory joke happens only when “(1) a situation is a violation, (2) a situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously” (“Benign Violation Theory”). Therefore jokes presented by conservative hosts of television shows can be perceived as tasteless because they are too violent or not violent enough.

The last explanation, and the most popular one, is the ideology behind both conservative and liberal humour. McElwee says “the first great conservative comedy show will put humor before ideology.” The Week goes further, providing example in Christian Rock. This genre is not popular, while U2, a rock band with Christian members, happens to be extremely popular, as they “put the music first [and] religion as a subtext” (Weber). In connection with this point is also Dagnes’s shows in McElwee’s article “the nature of conservatism does not meet the conditions necessary for political satire to flourish,” as they do not challenge the status quo. Humour does not come from
the ones in power. Indeed, this is supported by the fact, that *The Daily Show* registered the biggest success during the time of George W. Bush’s presidency, and there was a debate, whether it could sustain its edgy approach even after Barack Obama was elected. However, Day reminds that Stewart regained his strong position soon after the election (83). This position is explained by Jones, who spots the mistake in such statement, assuming “that all political speech, even satire and humor, is partisan,” which he supports with Stewart’s own reaction “we’re passionately opposed to bullshit. Is that liberal or conservative?” (111).

Conservative and liberal comedy do certainly differ greatly. Nonetheless, both part of the political spectre have a great number of followers, which would suggest at least equal representation of both in equally favourable broadcast time slots. Yet, the gap exists. To find another possible explanation or support these mentioned above, I conduct my own research and compare both liberal and conservative shows on many levels.

3 Current Satirical TV Shows – Selection and Comparison

3.1 The Daily Show

Starting in 1996 *The Daily Show* is the oldest show included on my list, as it is the only show from the 1990s that lived up until today. Under the first host, Craig Kilborn, the show lasted until 1999, when Jon Stewart replaced him. Under Stewart’s leadership the programme has become famous, as it is until today, though it met some criticism.

3.1.1 Jon Stewart

Similarly as many other hosts Stewart began as a stand-up comedian, which allowed him to form his stage persona. In television he first appeared in 1993 when co-hosting *Short Attention Span Theatre* on Comedy Central. Stewart’s fame grew as he
was considered one of the candidates to replace David Letterman on his show.
However, unknown Conan O’Brien landed the job. In 1993 Stewart hosted *The Jon Stewart Show* on MTV, which was at first very popular, but the ratings went down as the show moved to an inconvenient time slot.

In 1999 Stewart joined *The Daily Show* which resulted in an instant rise in popularity of the show. He can be considered creator of the parodic fake news genre as we know it today. On February 10, 2015, Stewart announced he will be leaving the show later this year.

3.1.2 The Framework of the Show

Apart from the host persona, there is another important feature of the satiric news is the framework through which the message is presented. The first impression is, of course, created by the intro. The introductory passage of *The Daily Show* could possibly pass for any serious news on air. The date makes it easy for viewers to orient in the week and the host has no longer the need to communicate the date himself. The globe is an occurring theme in the intros of serious news, conveying the message of the world, or bringing the world to the screens, which is reinforced twice in the intro and later in the studio. Again, the message of worldwide news is highlighted with names of world capitals, such as Hong Kong or London. However, the second globe’s equator is lined with capital cities of the states in the union, showing the interest in local news. The whole introduction is underlined with an announcer saying the date of the broadcasting following with “from Comedy Central’s world news headquarters in New York,” which is another aspect adding to the illusion of real news. The host is shown in a very typical environment for such a program. Dressed in a suit and placed in a classy news room Stewart even scribbles into his notepad.
However, the moment the shows starts, it is crystal clear it is different from the regular news. The shows starts every time with a monologue of Stewart, ranting on one of the major issue of the day, juxtaposing his claims with videos from real news, which supports his claim. This one issue is usually titled in a funny way with the situation merged into a movie title or another popular culture name. To give an example, on November 19th Stewart discusses possible pig crates ban in New Jersey with title *Rise of the Planet of the Pigs* (November, 20). This segment of the show can take up to two thirds of the time, although it is usually shorter. Next is a report from field or an interview on a current topic with other reporters than Stewart. The third part of the show is taken by an interview with a star promoting a new movie or an author promoting his or her book. This interview usually does not cover any political issue, although there are exceptions. The whole show ends with The Moment of Zen – a short clip from the news, which is funny even without further interpretation.

Jon Stewart’s approach toward news is a critical one, which is common among the show’s viewers, thus it is appreciated. He is able to lead a debate with people, who are not in the same room with him, using the media of nowadays as a weapon against his opponents. Stewart is able to incorporate popular puns into his speech very well, making it fun to watch and easy to understand. For me, personally, this is the reason Stewart is an amazing host of the show, making it last so long. And of course, his fascinating sense of reason and his skills of debating issues from all the possible areas of life.

### 3.2 The Colbert Report

The widely popular satirical show *The Colbert Report* was created in 2005 as a spin off to *The Daily Show*, where the host, Stephen Colbert, started as a fake on-location reporter. The show stayed at the same network station as *The Daily Show*,
Comedy Central. On December 18, 2014 the show ended, as Stephen Colbert is going to be a new host of a late night talk show.

3.2.1 Stephen Colbert

Stephen Colbert is nowadays an inherent part of the television culture of the USA. His big break came in 2006, when he was featured as an entertainer at the White House Correspondents’ Association Dinner. There, at the presence of celebrities, journalists and politicians, including then-president George W. Bush, Colbert staged a piece, where he managed to praise the president in a way he actually criticized him. This was later cut out from the nationwide news, which made certain sectors of public, especially the Democratic public, angry.

As mentioned several times, the figure of host is essential to the show, as the success revolves around his personality or his acting and rhetoric talent. For “The Colbert Report”, as well as some of the other shows, it’s twice as true, as the name of the host is written in the title of the programme. However, Colbert together with Stewart created a persona, in which he presented the show – Dr. Stephen T. Colbert, D. F. A., a right-wing pundit, whose main purpose is the mockery of similar personas in right-wing broadcasting. Many of Colbert’s public appearances the entertainer spends in the character.

Although Dr. Stephen T. Colbert, D. F. A. gained popularity, Stephen Colbert announced it is not his intention to carry this character to the Letterman show, where he will be the new host.

3.2.2 The Framework of the Show

As mentioned before, intro has an important impact on the viewer, as it sets the mood of the show. *The Colbert Report*’s introductory section foreshadows to the audience the whole tone of the show. Colbert, depicted as a superhero, stretches his
hand towards camera, in a gesture of inviting into his world, which nicely corresponds with the title of his book *I am America (and so Can You)*. Flying with the USA flag he pierces through falsely motivating and inspiring words, so often seen in political clips. However, these titles give themselves away, as they include lines as “Hi, mom!” or “all-beef”. Colbert proceeds and lands in the superpower pose with the flag in his hand. The whole spectacle is wrapped up by the CGI \(^2\) bald eagle – the national animal of the USA. 

Just like *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* opens with a monologue of the host. This segment of the show is centred on one issue of the day or possibly week and rarely it includes a professional in the field or a person with insight. This rant is again interspersed with witty commentary made in Colbert’s persona. 

In contrast to Stewart, Colbert has a wider repertoire of program segments, which differ in each show. Highly popular is a segment called “The Wørd”, in which Colbert’s invented word “truthiness” \(^3\) was first presented, where Colbert’s monologue is juxtaposed with bullet points turning his statements around. In a special episode with unique name “Mr. Colbert goes to Washington, D. C., ya later legislator, partisan is such sweet sorrow, a Colbert victory lap ‘014” this segment gets a minor makeover, as it is presented by president Obama as “The Decree.” In the very same special episode another frequent segment is included – “Better Known a District”, in this case “Better Know a America”, in which a representative from a district is interviewed. Other segments include for example “Though for Food” which handles food from all over the globe. 

The last part of the show is usually reserved for a guest. These are important figures from show business promoting their work or significant politicians. What is

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\(^2\) Computer Generated Imagery. A popular method of creating scenes or adding special effects to films or television.  
\(^3\) The quality of stating concepts one wishes or believes to be true, rather than the facts (“Truthiness”).
peculiar about Colbert’s handling of the interview is the beginning of this segment. Instead of showing off the guest, Colbert is the one who changes place and runs into the interviewing area as do guests in other shows, making it look like the audience is cheering for him.

The Colbert Report is a unique show, if only because of its host, who is able to make a point against the conservative part of the political spectrum while seemingly agreeing with them. This peculiarity earned the show as well as Stephen Colbert special place in the broadcasting.

3.3 The Flipside with Michael Loftus

The youngest show on the list (started on 2014) is now available mainly online, but it’s broadcasted on cable, with list of providers on the website of the show.

3.3.1 Michael Loftus

Just as Colbert and Stewart Loftus started as a stand-up comedian. Later he became a successful screenwriter for Anger Management, a Charlie Sheen television series. His huge break as a comedian came in 2009, when his one hour long stand-up You’ve changed on surviving marriage went on air on Comedy Central. This year Loftus launched his own satirical TV talk show, which could be seen as a right-wing opposition to The Daily Show and other popular liberal satires.

For many conservatives Loftus presents much needed fresh air in the conservative comedy. As Moran explains, he could be the one finally bringing sustainable conservative comedy to television screens.

3.3.2 The Framework of the Show

Unlike liberal shows, “The Flipside with Michael Loftus” is opened with an introduction which tells the common viewer nothing about the show. However, under closer inspection, it is possible to interpret the sharp yellow arrows searching their way
through the maze as people in general, who could also be characterized as “sheeple”, as they follow the only direction known to them. But there is a blue arrow, boldly going against the stream, which symbolizes the show, the bravery with which it goes against the known, inveterate state of televised satire.

What is unique about this show is the set. In contrast with other TV satires this one does not remind a classic newsroom, it looks more like a barn turned to a man-cave. Loftus uses space differently. He moves around the studio a lot. Contrary to liberal shows his aim seems not to be to look like any other news on television, but rather introduce a talk on current issues with a common man, who lives in a rural part of the USA, as he represents conservative wing of politics, which, as mentioned before, has, in this century, major support in rural areas of the country.

The show is divided into segments. These segments can be included or not, depending on the concrete episodes. What is scheduled every time is an introductory monologue of Loftus, picking on one of the topics of his concern, not necessarily in connection to the issues of the week. The talk is often light and packed with jokes. It has an introductory function, though sometimes it is not connected to the rest of the show. In the opposition to Stewart and Colbert, Loftus’s initial monologue is not always connected to the issues of the week. However, as the show proceeds, Loftus gets more and more to the news, mentioning, even if indirectly, racial disturbances after Ferguson and New York killings of African American men⁴.

The Flipside is truly a highly different piece of television satire, as it does not exactly fall in the category of fake news. It is a fresh take on already known

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⁴ Unrests in Ferguson, Missouri were due to killing of Michael Brown by a policeman on August 9, 2014. Riots continued in November after grand jury decided not to indict the policeman who shot Michael Brown. New York African American community reacted wildly after grand jury in case of chokehold of Eric Garner (died July 17, 2014) did not indicted policemen who held Garner in chokehold. This technique is banned by NYPD (Lewis).
phenomenon of the political satire and explores the unknown possibilities for the conservative comedy.

### 3.4 Red Eye

Another conservative satirical TV talk show is brought to the audience in a very inconvenient time slot of 3 am, 11 pm or 2 am, depending on the day of the week, making it difficult for a common man to follow the show. At first *Red Eye* was presented at 2 am with good ratings. Nonetheless, the show was moved to its current slot resulting in a drop in ratings. However, ratings went up in 2009, hitting its peak in 2011. The show started in 2007 and it is broadcasted on the Fox News Channel.

#### 3.4.1 Greg Gutfeld

In contrast with the rest of the presenters, Gutfeld’s roots lay in journalism, as he started his career as a staff writer for *Prevention* magazine. He later followed this path at *Men’s Health*, where he functioned as editor-in-chief, as well as in *Maxim’s* UK division. To television he got through his posts published in *The Huffington Post*. Greg Gutterson then became a host of *Red Eye*, originally named *Wasteland*. On February 28, 2015 Gutfeld on the program announced he has left the show to host his own weekend show on Fox News Channel.

#### 3.4.2 The Framework of the Show

The show does not include introduction passage in the traditional “always-the-same” mean of the word. Instead, *Red Eye* begins with the host saying variations on “Tonight, on *Red Eye*”. When the host shown is Greg Gutterson, his eyes are digitally painted red and his voice is turned “devil”, again with the help of computers. This is followed by short clips “Coming up on *Red Eye*”. These clips are presented as news, which should be covered on the show. However, they are silly to the point of absurdity, making the first-time viewer confused. These news include panda bear sending message
to ISIS, Bruce Lee being alive and training for his epic comeback or president Obama’s plan to get a pony. But right after showing these news, the viewer is assured he will not see anything like this today. The tool of fake news is used as a way to show, how unimportant news the public gets everyday on other shows, are strengthening the role of Red Eye as an informative channel.

This program is, however, significantly distinct from all three listed shows, as it is not based on one person and one opinion. Instead the host is joined by four other panellists, two of them are usually Joanne Nosuchinsky, beauty pageant winner, and Andy Levy, co-author of the show. Other guests are journalists, authors, actors or comedians whose political ideology corresponds with the conservative ideology. In addition, its length goes up to 45 minutes, whereas other shows’ running time is only around 20 minutes. This length negatively impacts viewers’ attention.

Another thing distinctly different from the other shows is the opening monologue, which is missing. The show just starts with introduction of the panellists and then goes straight to the “A block. The Lead. That’s the first story.” announcement of the first issue the panel is about to discuss. The issues differ greatly from deep political problems to funny ones like “a town in Poland wants to ban Winnie the Pooh, as he does not wear any trousers,” (“Consumer Group”) which is similar to all the other listed shows. Nonetheless, Red Eye approaches the issues differently, which is given by the format of more people and the length. More issues are covered, with E block being the last issue discussed in an episode. Right after announcing “E block. The last story. That’s the last story,” which corresponds with the A block announcement, coloured serpentines appear, accompanied with the sound of party blowouts. This everyday representation of “we made it” statement of the panel could be interpreted as a lack of confidence the creators give into the show.
In spite of early morning slot of broadcasting, the show gained significant audience in the most important 25-to-54-year-old demographic. It’s magic is in the impossibility to guess which way the discussion will go on, as all the guests who contribute to the discussion express their own opinion, which is sometimes formed right on the spot on reaction to another panellist. More than high political debate it reminds debate of five friends watching television with a glass of beer in their hands. This makes the show immediate and close to their viewers.

3.5 Debated Issues

To fully understand the difference in approaches of these four shows, I provide analysis of three issues debated on the shows, each of them of a different kind. Although all issues are not always discussed on all of the shows, at least two of them mention it, these two being from different groups. To every issue a basic factual background is provided.

3.5.1 International Issue – Sony Pictures Entertainment Hack

On November 24, 2014 Sony Pictures Entertainment got hacked by an activist group, who called themselves #GOP – Guardians of Peace. They got down the email system of SPE and downloaded then unreleased movies, including scripts in various stages of production. Sensitive information of employees, like social security numbers or addresses, got to the group, as well as personal e-mail correspondence of leaders of the company, some of them offending the president or actors e.g. Angelina Jolie. On December 15, 2014 SPE issued request for all the media to stop coverage of the leak, as the company does not agree with media’s possession of the material. Later in the cause, on December 16, 2014, the group pinned this message on the web
“We will clearly show it to you at the very time and places ‘The Interview’ be shown, including the premiere, how bitter fate those who seek fun in terror should be doomed to. Soon all the world will see what an awful movie Sony Pictures Entertainment has made. The world will be full of fear. Remember the 11th of September 2001. We recommend you to keep yourself distant from the places at that time. (If your house is nearby, you’d better leave.)

Whatever comes in the coming days is called by the greed of Sony Pictures Entertainment. All the world will denounce the SONY” (Katrenakes).

With this message they addressed the movie The Interview for the first time. The next day the movie was pulled from schedules of cinemas from all around the world.

Sony hacking is the only issue discussed vigorously on all of the shows with different standpoints. However, the first wave of the cyberattack was mentioned by the panellists of Red Eye, being the only one, who focused on medical records of the employees leak. Gutfeld points out uneven media coverage of the hack, as focus was more on the celebrity gossip, rather than on the bigger problem of leaked medical reports. Sonnie Johnson, a guest, comments on American mentality of gossip loving, which is ultimately a reason for similar attacks. The panel further discuss the possibility of identity theft based on information gained from the leak (“Study: Men”). Thanks to being on air every day, Red Eye panel had chance to discuss different sides of the topic as the situation unravelled.

Next day’s panellist John Tierney, New York Times columnist, sides with Sony stating “I think we are basically service publicists for terrorists,” finding moral ground on publishing e-mails and medical records (“Report: Rolling Stone”). Further the coverage went on, on another panel, finally getting to the North Korea question.
According to Joanne Nosuchinsky, the idea of cancelation of the movie is not good, because “it kinda does make us look weak,” but on the other hand risking terrorist attack is not an option. Actor Nick Searcy blames Rogen and Franco, the movie creators, who “don’t know what communist dictators are like,” and are being naïve (“Governor Bans”). The whole discussion is more on a serious level, rather than resembling comedy, though Gutfeld injects the conversation with occasional joke or two, mostly about his private life and medical records or makes an internal joke, not understandable for short time viewers.

Stephen Colbert covers the story only once with his main aim being North Korea’s possible source of the attack. As he put it “it has to be North Korea, the only other person with that capability is a 12-year old with Bittorrent,” sharing his persuasion of North Korea not being active in this hack, because of leaked scripts. However, Colbert then proceeds with praise of the country as he does not want to be another target of the group (“December, 15”). His delivery is witty and catchier, than the one of Red Eye, as Colbert inserts a lot of jokes and remarks into his speech, often crossing heavy situation with a light weighted pop cultural reference, making the viewer more interested and attentive.

*The Flipside* covers the hack only once in Loftus’s introductory monologue. Loftus offers his opinion on the source of the hack

“(…) they’re not sure if it’s North Korea, but it was, it was North Korea (…) it might have been some disgruntled employee of Sony, right, but yeah, it was North Korea, could’ve been some bored kids in Phoenix, but it was North Korea.”

However, Loftus also comments on the absurdity of hacking into Sony, when the North Koreans could have hacked into military systems, Wall Street systems or
communication canals. He then goes on about private e-mails going public, to which he adds his grandmother’s advice “Never ever put something in writing you don’t want the entire world to read” (“Episode 13”). In this peace Loftus greatly combines humour with difficult situation and his pop culture knowledge of Spiderman movies. Also, he uses his talents for impressions very well to create the desired effect of North Korean dialogue.

Jon Stewart addresses Sony hack under the name *The Silence of the Film* (parody of *The Silence of the Lamb*). E-mail publication did not stop the studio from “their villainous plot to release a comedy,” which lead to threat of 9/11 style of attack, which is a reminder of how “we never give up.” Stewart’s words are instantly disproved by a reporter saying Sony “will not be releasing the film.” Stewart does not give up and give all his hope to video on demand release, labelling it “democratic medium,” to which another reporter responds with “no video on demand. It’s as if *The Interview* never existed.” Stewart than uses his access to older footage to prove North Korean threats ineffective and empty and proceeds with comparison of North Korea to Hollywood, as they both tell you how you are great, your face is everywhere “and no one eats” (“December, 18”).

This issue was extensively discussed in both conservative and liberal satirical shows, as it influenced approach of the US citizens towards North Korea, SPE and many individuals. Both sides did argue same points – the source of attack, celebrity gossip and possible terrorist attack on theatres – with various outcomes and any of the hosts came with a solution of this issue.

3.5.2 Domestic Issue – Senate Intelligence Committee Report on CIA Torture

525-page summary of 6000-page Senate Intelligence Committee Report on CIA Torture was released on December 9, 2014 and shocked the country. The summary
shows torture committed by the CIA agents under the head of the agency. Some of the harsh treatment of prisoners includes waterboarding, sleep deprivation, prolonged standing and forced rectal feeding. Some officials reacted wildly to the summary, as it can be interpreted in other ways as well, some, like Dick Cheney, justified advanced interrogative techniques as described in the summary.

The first one addressing this issue was Jon Stewart in The Daily Show. He covered it in three episodes, as this problem was much discussed in the course of the week. The first episode reports the story under the title “Doc of Rages.” At first, he comments on “Christmas release” of the report, which in Hollywood signalizes huge revenues, comparing the report with Frozen. Comical line is added, when Stewart changes lyrics of a popular Disney song “Let it go” to “Let me go, let me go, don’t hold me back anymore,” which is accompanied by graphics showing Olaf, a character from Frozen, being tortured with starting cables. Further on Stewart shows a clip from former president Bush’s press conference, where he clearly states “This government does not torture people.” Senator Dianne Feinstein on a footage from C-SPAN2 continues with listing torture methods used by the CIA.

The list leaves Stewart breathless, and after pronouncing “Can I have a reaction shot of how I’m feeling right now” a footage of projectile vomiting man is shown. He compares the actions of the CIA with his recently released film Rosewater, but claims their differences as the main character of the movie was innocent. This is juxtaposed with Senator Dianne Feinstein saying “[…] the committee found that at least 26 were wrongfully held,” which makes Stewart show more footage of the vomiting man. Later it is revealed, that the CIA withheld information from senators as well as the president, until 2006, which would explain Bush’s claim that the USA does not torture. However,
that statement was made in 2007. Under current administration the state of things did not get much better (“December, 9”).

Next episode’s coverage, “America’s Got Torture,” shows, how reluctant Stewart is to cover the story again, as he can choose from CIA report or the royal couple’s visit in New York. Nonetheless, he reports the report anyway, showing clips from news, where high officers, including Dick Cheney, say, “Legally, it was not torture,” and if, it’s the old news. Stewart compares CIA to WWII Gestapo, as they used the same methods and later were sued as war criminals. Other news clips show people throughout the broadcasting defending the program, as it brought desired results, making use of the proverb “end justifies the means”. When Stewart is out of words, he uses John McCain’s speech in senate, saying

“The truth’s sometimes a hard pill to swallow, but the American people are entitled to it. We need only to remember, when facing cruelty, suffering and loss, that we are always Americans, different, stronger better, than those who would destroy us.”

This speech leads Stewart to applaud McCain, while holding puppet resembling McCain (“December, 9”).

The last episode reports on the aftermath and is specifically targeted on Dick Cheney, whose definition of torture is 9/11, as he repeats several times during his interview on Meet the Press. Stewart acts like he gets his point of view by saying that “we always have been a nation that has followed the vigilante’s code, I'm sorry, rule of law.” In this case, wrongfully upheld prisoners should be a problem for Cheney, who is “[...] more concerned with bad guys who got out and released than I am with the few that, in fact, were innocent.” Stewart ends “at the note of gratitude” towards former president George W. Bush “[...] thank you for not dying while you were in the office.”
Stewart showed again his skilful use of monologue interlaced with news clips. He expressed the disgust which an average reader of the report feels while reading the report, while pointing out questions surrounding it. He is able to praise a conservative politician, though his personal view is different, but McCain was one of the few politicians admitting the public should know about the torture.

Red Eye covered the issue, as well as the hack, in multiple episodes. The first one was hosted by Tom Shillue, who said the report release had not been supported by the republican minority of the committee, as it could endanger position of the USA as well as lives of the American citizens. The report and the CIA, according to Shillue, disagree on possible revelation of crucial info that lead to taking down Osama bin Ladin.

The panellists lead a lively discussion between themselves, trying to cover all possible issues that accompany the report release. Buck Sexton, a former CIA officer, shares his opinion, saying “the report is 90% crap,” because the agency would do all these thing without any outcome. He adds the program was under tight oversee, as there is an enormous paper trial. However, he admits, the agency may have crossed the line, as “they’re fighting a war, it’s an intelligence war.” Sexton’s main point is “if Democrats were serious” they should have abolished the CIA, which turns this report into the battle of politics and could result in political gain for Democrats. His expertise in the area is apparent, when he corrects Shillue, and everybody else watching, that even black sites have to keep records, though they are secret. Shillue compares his idea of reality to the idea of Homeland television series. Andy Levy follows with the credibility of General Michael Hayden, former CIA director, who lied to congress several times and now claims the techniques worked, which makes his side shaky. Courtney Friel
sums up her position in “Why can’t be Guantanamo as Las Vegas? What happens there, stays there (“Senate Report”).”

The report was covered on the next episode with different panellists, who largely supported Sexton’s opinion, playing the post-9/11 scare card. According to Lou Dobby, Dick Cheney “did a lot of right” and Dobby supports him in this cause too, stating “he’ll sort it out.” P. J. O’Rourke supports Cheney as well with statement “He may be Darth Vader, but he is our Darth Vader.” Aside from Cheney the panel again discusses the reason for releasing the report. As Joanne Nosuchinsky points out, the report did not help the country at all, the techniques are not done anymore, nobody was indicted, so the report does not help the USA, it can only hurt the people of the country. In response, Gutfeld asked a crucial question “Who was [the report] intended for?” with all the panellists agree on the first target being press, though Andy Levy sees the intention in informing the citizens of the USA, stating the citizens should not be angry about the release of the report, rather than the actions did by the country. He points out, that 9/11 cannot serve as an excuse for unacceptable behaviour with exaggerated “If we had nuked Saudi Arabia, would that have been ok?” (“Harvard Prof.”).

The CIA torture report gets covered in two more episodes, though the points are usually the same as mentioned above. Red Eye panels were full of interesting remarks, sometimes the panellists used pop cultural references and the program made use of a real former CIA agent, who cleared up the procedure of leading secret programs.

The Colbert Report, with its specific type of humour, announces the committee report as a “turd of information [which the senate Democrats] dropped into the national punchbowl of bliss.” According to Colbert the report reveals sensitive secrets and “reads like 50 shades of legal grey areas.” To the list of interrogative techniques used, delivered through news clips, Colbert reacts with “tragedy cancelling headphones”
singing Taylor Swift’s song “Shake it off.” As response to Colbert’s claim that nobody is contempt with described techniques, a clip is rolled, where Eric Bolling from *The Five* of Fox News Channel admits he is in favour of “torture, I’m sorry, the advanced interrogation techniques, I think they serve their purpose.” In spite of all the cruelty in the report, George W. Bush comes well out of it, as he did not want to know the location of the secret facilities, because he could “accidentally disclose the information.” To justify the torture, Brian Kilmeade, another Fox News reporter, used George Washington as an example of another person, who used torture, to which Colbert responded “Washington tortured the British so hard, they’re still talking funny.” In a moment he adds, that in fact Washington did not torture the British nor anybody else (“December, 10”).

On episode aired 2 days later Colbert again discusses this topic in a recurring segment “Formidable opponent,” where an illusion is made, that two Stephen Colberts are on the set, one of them takes more liberal approach towards the matter, while the other keeps the original ultra-conservative position. Conservative Colbert launches the discussion with ripping the report apart, while Liberal Colbert is still disturbed with the report. To the question which part of the report is disturbing he answers “The words!” Conservative Colbert uses the 9/11 attack, just like the other conservatives, as an excuse for changing into torture nation, which Liberal Colbert compares to the Incredible Hulk. But now, when in the form of Bruce Banner, they “can’t be held accountable for the […] interrogation methods.” According to O’Reilly the decisions to torture were made in the “fog of war.” Conservative Colbert transfers this metaphor into the real life, pretending not to hear Liberal Colbert over fog, though the fog is created by a fog machine he holds, making this a clear statement of Colbert’s persuasion that conservatives created this “fog of war.” However, Conservative Colbert points out, the
USA now looks bad, only because people know about these affairs, while the idea of America would never torture (“December, 15”).

Colbert made use of the juxtaposition of news clips with his own monologue, just like Stewart, but with adding the uniqueness of his politically double winged expressions. However, he is as disturbed by the document as he is with the journalists’ reception of it.

All three shows discussed the topic in their own way, several times, as this domestic issue really matters. The political division is clearly seen on the depiction of former vice president Dick Cheney, who is supported by the conservative show Red Eye, while criticized harshly by liberal The Daily Show. To close this extremely disturbing issue, The Daily Show and The Colbert Report used one quote by Andrea Tantaros, which is, in my opinion, one of the worst piece of journalism I’ve ever seen

“The United States of America is awesome, we are awesome, but we’ve had this discussion, we’ve closed the book on it and we’ve stopped doing it, and the reason they wanna have this discussion is not to show how awesome we are, this administration wants to have this discussion to show us, how we’re not awesome” (“Fox News”).

3.5.3 Popular Culture Issue - Chris Hemsworth – The Sexiest Man Alive 2014

In spite of being on air almost every day, the three main shows did fail to agree on any of the popular or trivial issues. However, The Colbert Report and Red Eye shared two of these light and smile inducing topics, one of which is discussed below.

Every year since 1985 People announces the sexiest man alive. This award went to Mel Gibson, Brad Pitt or Pierce Brosnan. The winner of 2014 was Chris Hemsworth, an Australian actor most known for his role of Thor, the God of thunder in Marvel movies.
Colbert does not agree with the choice, as Chris Hemsworth “is not even the sexiest Hemsworth alive,” supported with the picture of Liam Hemsworth, brother of the star. From Hemsworth’s win Colbert calculates a threat (as this is a part of a segment “Threat Down”) “America’s declining standards of sexiness.” Showing off his knowledge of the sexiest men of all the previous years, Colbert picks his winner, Mathew McConaughey, and supports his claims with clips of McConaughey’s films (“November, 20”).

As a part of the E block Red Eye debates Chris Hemsworth’s win with a palette of opinions. Kennedy, The Independent co-host, agrees with the choice initially, admitting she sometimes “pretend[s] to be Natalie Portman’s character,” and seeing the film multiple times. She explains, that the idea of a man with a hammer, which is the depiction of Thor, is sexy for women, and she accompanies this statement with a sexual gesture. The second woman of the panel, Joanne Nosuchinsky, admits “he’s a little too masculine,” adding her personal opinion on the measurement of sexiness being money, resulting in her pick of Warren Buffett. Andy Levy, a fan of the superheroes movies, is alright with Hemsworth being awarded the title, though, as he puts it, “Captain America is better,” to which Kennedy applauds “Yes, Steve Rogers!” The whole discussion is ended when Gutfeld resolutely states “I have some real things to do,” deeming the discussion as unworthy his time and celebrity gossip a gutter topic (“US Drops”).

Gutfeld’s ending statement can tell the viewer a lot about the show. With this simple statement Gutfeld shows he is uninterested in popular, even funny issues, though his show is often referred to as a comedy. Colbert, on the other hand, gets to the core of the issue as he would do with any other serious topic, introducing and supporting his argument.

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6 Natalie Portman is staring as Jane Foster, a love interest of Thor in the Marvel Movies.  
7 Warren Buffett is a businessman, who’s estimated net worth as for April 14, 2015 is $70.2 billion (“Warren Buffett”).
3.6 Comparison

Comparing TV shows, which are fundamentally different is nothing easy, as there are many aspects and varieties to bear in mind. Many of them are already described in parts 3.1 to 3.4, as they are part of the descriptions of the shows. However, it is important to contrast the show with each other and ultimately, with their humorous potential. As humour is a very subjective area, I depend on a theory of humour mentioned in 2.4, personal feelings and number of articles.

As Day mentions, The Daily Show, which is a feature shared with The Colbert Report, are often referred to as “fake news,” partly because of the settings of the show, partly because of the personas hosting the shows (1). These two shows and Red Eye, make use of a studio which look is not distant from the regular news, having a huge table to sit behind. Colbert and Stewart took it a step further, as they are the only one sitting at that table, except during interviews, and dressed in suits make them look even more like the news. This illusion of straight reporters is strengthened by their, as Day puts it “predominantly serious, well-measured tone,” something not common for humor or satire, turning this event into violation, referring to the Benign Violation Theory (58). This violation is not that strong when watching Red Eye, as the panellists wear usually something more casual and act more casual, incorporating sexual jokes right into introduction, stating the difference of the show from the regular news.

From this should be clear, that The Flipside is another story. The presenter wears sport clothes in the middle of a slightly redecorated barn. Again, these features stress the difference from regular news and, most importantly, from all the other shows being broadcasted. The Flipside developers learned from mistakes of its predecessors, who wanted to make “a conservative The Daily Show” and created a show, which premise is the same, while it differs greatly.
Another different feature of *The Flipside* is Michael Loftus, the host, as he presents himself as one of the crowd right from the start, not mask this fact behind his speech or the studio. Gutfeld’s position in comparison of the hosts is weakened, because of all the other panellists attending and contributing to the discussion. He is obviously the leader, keeping the talk focused and the panellists included, but this position can be assigned to anybody of the panel, as the leader can be changed. On the other side are Stewart and Colbert, who, as I already said, like to give the impression of respectable men, which is usually broken the second they start speaking. However, this, being another form of violation, is one of the reasons for which people love these shows.

The last point to go through is a crucial one, the attitude towards politics and how it affects the humour presented. When watching a conservative show, the viewer is almost constantly reminded of the politics of the show, either by a host or interviewee or with another method. In *Red Eye* Gutfeld often uses special graphics to end especially ridiculous topics reading Only in Obama’s America. Colbert, acting as a conservative, makes use of a similar statement, Thank you, Obama, popular social network status or hashtag, sharing people’s doubts about current president, though he uses it to the extreme, exploring its satirical value.

Summed up, the differences between the shows are clear. What is also clear, is the difference between conservative and liberal satire. The latter being evolved enough to be free from partisan-oriented humour, whereas conservative shows are still looking for the correct approaches, which would make people laugh. Conservative shows do not differ only from the liberal shows, but between themselves, which only supports the theory.
4 Conclusion

The satire on television proved to be a vital part of political satire culture of nowadays. It is not a uniform genre, as it depends on political views of the authors, dividing it into two camps – conservative and liberal. Yet, the research proved, the conservative comedy is much more diverse, than the liberal comedy, as it searches its way to the correct path.

The most critical part of the research was analysis of the shows based on their dealing with concrete issues. However, to process this information correctly and into depth it was necessary to know policies of both sides of the barricade, history of satire in general and current theories surrounding this discussion, which makes the theoretical introduction a valid and crucial part of the thesis.

In the third chapter I provide extensive examples on which theoretical reasons behind the gap between the two satires are built throughout the chapter. All three issues discussed both on the shows and in the thesis represent one of the key type of issues discussed on the shows, providing enough support for claims I make in the chapter.

Unfortunately, The Flipside, as a relatively new show and a weekly, does not aired enough episodes up to the date of The Colbert Report’s end, which made it difficult to find a common ground and common topic discussed. Yet, it provided good example enough of the landscape of conservative comedy.

Findings, best summed up in comparison, were able to support theories listed in chapter 2.4, mainly working with the balance of politics and humour and the failure on this field made by the conservative comedy. Possible solution for this striking gap might be hidden in The Flipside. This show approaches the viewer in a different manner, minding the rural background of the conservatives. Even Loftus’s appearance brings
him closer to the audience of this sort. *The Flipside* might be very well a pioneering show focusing on conservative comedy.

In my opinion, the difference is important to study, as currently there is no balance on television. Most of the time reserved for satire is reserved for liberal satire, with conservatives being banished to bad time slots. And balance is important. The same balance which the conservatives fail to enter to their shows.
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**Summary**

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the striking difference of the conservative and liberal comedy. The thesis deals with four different television shows and on three topics the shows discuss explains the differences of their approach.

The theoretical part of the thesis provides an important background knowledge of satire and the political ideology behind the political satire, to provide a reader with a sufficient amount of data necessary for understanding further examination of the topic. It serves as a reminder that both satire and the political parties went through a serious development.

The analysis of the issues discussed in the highest possible number of the shows provides a solid basis for comparison of these shows. Selection of the shows reflects popularity and keeps the satire within the same genre of satirical talk show. Comments from selected episodes are used to support the claim of different approach towards humour and partisanship included in the humour. Conclusion reveals author’s personal suggestions to solve this problem.

**Resumé**

Cílem této práce je docílení porozumění výrazného rozdílu mezi konzervativní a liberální komedii. Práce pracuje se čtyřmi rozdílnými televizními pořady, a na třech tématech ukazuje, jak pořady daná tématy probírají, čímž upozorňuje na rozdíl v jejich přístupu.

Teoretická část práce poskytuje důležité informace z historie satiry a politických ideologii, stojících za zmíněnými pořady. Tím čtenáři nabízí dostatek dat k bližšemu porozumění dalšího výzkumu. Slouží také jako připomínka dlouhého vývoje jak satiry, tak politických stran.
Analýza diskutovaných témat, které se objevily v nejvyšším možném počtu pořadů, nabízí pevnou základnu pro porovnání těchto programů. Selekce pořadů reflektuje popularitu a zároveň udržuje satiru v daném žánru talk show. Komentáře z vybraných epizod jsou použity jako ukázka odlišných přístupů k humoru a stranickému myšlení, které je v humoru už obsaženo. V závěru jsou uvedeny autorovy osobní návrhy na řešení tohoto problému.