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The Issue of Jewishness in Woody Allen's Work

Bachelor Paper

Petra Ritterová

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Předmětem práce bude tvorba amerického režiséra W. Allena, který je mimo jiné znám i svým nekonvenčním a osobitým přístupem k otázkám spojených s židovskou kulturou. V úvodní části proto autorka nastíní vztah W. Allena k židovství a této komunitě. Autorka se zaměří na vybrané snímky a prózu (Zelig, Deconstructing Harry, Take the money and run) s cílem provést analýzu Allenova zobrazování témat týkající se židovství. Důraz bude kladen na zmapování aspektů židovské kultury v těchto materiálech. Zároveň do svých úvah autorka zahrne Allenovo užití parodie a satiry ve spojení s židovstvím. Práci uzavře kapitola shrnující předchozí úvahy a zjištění.

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Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Mgr. Ladislav Vít

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.

děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubiková, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2009

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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Petra Ritterová

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Annotation:

This paper is focused on aspects of Jewishness in Woody Allen's films. The aim of the paper is to introduce Woody Allen who has distinctive approach to religion and describe and analyze his films with regard to Jewish culture. Firstly, there is mentioned Woody Allen's biography with regard to Jewishness and a brief description of postmodernism.

I have analyzed his films from three various points of view: first and the most extensive chapter is called Approach to Jewishness. This chapter is divided according to main Woody Allen's characters relationship to Jewishness, it is either ironic or serious. Next chapter deals with aspects of Jewishness in everyday life and last chapter is devoted to Jewish rituals and traditions in films.

Anotace:

Bakalářská práce je zaměřena na prvky židovství ve filmech Woodyho Allena. Cílem práce je představit Woodyho Allena, který má osobitý přístup k náboženství a popsat a analyzovat jeho filmy s ohledem na židovskou kulturu. Nejprve je zde uvedena biografie Woodyho Allena se zřetelem na židovství a krátký popis postmodernismu.

Jeho filmy jsem analyzovala ze tří různých hledisek: první a nejrozsáhlejší kapitola se jmenuje Přístup k židovství. Tato kapitola je rozdělena podle vztahu hlavních hrdinů Woodyho Allena k židovství, který je buď ironický nebo vážný. Další kapitola se zabývá prvky židovství v běžném životě a poslední kapitola je věnována židovským rituálům a tradicím, které se ve filmech objevily.

Key words: Jewishness, Woody Allen, irony, postmodernism, Jewish identity, rituals and traditions

Klíčová slova: židovství, Woody Allen, ironie, postmodernismus, židovská identita, rituály a tradice

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to introduce American screenwriter and playwright Woody Allen and his films and short stories. Woody Allen makes interesting and scathing films and prose with Jewish aspects. Films and literature have a great impact on people, culture and its development. Robert Sklar wrote that: “everywhere one looked, television raised questions or posed challenges.” (1994, 295) Woody Allen makes use of this opportunity.

Firstly, there is a chapter devoted to postmodernism with regard to Allen’s films. Postmodernism significantly influenced part of Woody Allen’s film-making. There is a description of development of postmodernism and its main thoughts and ideas. The goal is to introduce Lyotard and his attitude to postmodernism.

The bachelor paper continues by brief Woody Allen’s biography. This chapter is mainly focused on his family and relatives who are Austrian and Russian immigrants and on his upbringing and education. Woody Allen’s relationship to any religion is also explained. The next chapter deals with Woody Allen’s approach to Jewishness. I have chosen these five films for my analysis: *Deconstructing Harry*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Take the Money and Run*, *Annie Hall* and *Zelig*. Several short stories from Allen’s books “Without Feathers” and “Side Effects” are also mentioned. Woody Allen uses irony and blasphemy to make comical films and stories but although he makes a good laugh of religion, his films are elaborated, mocking and witty. Woody Allen’s films are intended for sophisticated and insightful spectators. This chapter is divided into two parts, according to Allen’s characters approach to Jewishness. Allen’s characters often joke about their Jewish identity and sometimes they are afraid of anti-Semitism. First part is called Jewishness and irony and second part is called Jewishness and seriousness.

Next chapter is devoted to Jewishness in everyday life. There is a description of how religion expresses in the ordinary life. Woody Allen has a very peculiar and unconventional attitude to questions connected with Jewish culture. Next chapter is focused on Jewish rituals and traditions in

films because Woody Allen is mocking about Jewish traditional holidays. There are a few terms that are used throughout the paper to be clarified. Most of them refer to Jewish culture and they are always explained.

Allen's approach to Jewishness is ironic as well as his relationship to life and death. He treats even serious topics with a good laugh. The work is closed by summarization of all my deliberations and findings.

1. Postmodernism

Postmodernism influenced many of Woody Allen's films. Postmodern features are the most derisive in the film called *Annie Hall*. Editors Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh wrote that the term postmodernism shifted in 1980's. Originally, the term postmodernism involved a range of aesthetic practices such as irony, parody, self-consciousness, fragmentation, playful self-reflexivity and parataxis. In the contemporary version, the term postmodernism encompasses thought and registering a loss of faith in the rationalism and progress of Enlightened modernity. (2001, 325).

Postmodernism is connected with nihilism, rejection of modern aesthetics and effort for more intensive intercultural and interethnic communication. Postmodernists such as Rorty, Baudrillard and Lyotard reached an agreement about knowledge of the world. They claim that experience and knowledge are bound to each other and always culturally situated. (2001, 325).

The fact is that this absolute system of knowledge gives way to ironies and Woody Allen put emphasis on irony and parody. All of his analyzed films are full of mockery and ironic remarks. Woody Allen also stresses pessimism, cynicism and nihilism. Fragmentation and incompleteness are other important formal features of his work. Jan Čulík describes postmodernism: "Derrida very appositely described postmodernism when he said that mental illness of modernism was paranoia and mental illness of postmodernism is schizophrenia."

Woody Allen's main characters are always neurotic and pessimistic figures that have feeling of nostalgia and they use quotations and ironic notes to cope with the real world. All of these characters are raised religiously but they realize that rituals and religious dogma are only cultural and social lies so they adopt an ironic approach to the religion.

For Jean-Francois Lyotard, irony becomes a kind of fundamentalism. As Jean-Francois Lyotard said: "I define postmodernism as a distrust of metanarratives."

Modernity, in whatever age it appears cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the “lack of reality” of reality, together with the invention of other realities.

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for.

(Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 2001, 337)

Postmodernism applies radical plurality of opinions, cultures, social traditions and languages and that causes speech playfulness.

2. Woody Allen's biography

This chapter is focused on the life of an American actor, director, screenwriter and playwright Woody Allen. The aim is to introduce and describe Jewish aspects in his life. I analyze his family, who influenced him the most concerning his religion, his other relatives, his childhood and his marriages.

The fact that he is Jew does not mean anything for him but it affected his films. Although he claims that there are no autobiographical aspects in his films, some films he made are slightly autobiographical with regard to Jewish culture. Woody Allen regards himself as atheist. John Baxter writes: "However much he played on his Jewishness for humour later in his career, his primary concern at the beginning was to be thought Gentile."¹ (1999, 38) Allan Stewart Konigsberg was born on 1 December 1935, in the Bronx. John Baxter describes how Allen's father met Allen's mother:

Allen's father, Martin Konigsberg, met his mother, Nettea Cherrie, in 1930 in the butter-and-egg market on Greenwich Street in Brooklyn. [...] Nettie was stuck with the job of book-keeper for the family business, a luncheonette. It was a role often allocated to the smarter younger daughters of Jewish families. [...] Konigsbergs were 100 per cent Jewish.
(1999, 7 - 12)

Eric Lax describes Woody Allen's mother, father and his other relatives and their relationship to Jewishness. Woody Allen's maternal grandparents were even more religious than paternal grandparents were:

Even though both mother, Nettie Cherry, and his father, Martin Konigsberg, were both born and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City, the lives they lived as children and as adults were dominated by the shtetl² their parents fled but whose ways they continued to embrace.

Sarah and Leon Cherry spoke Yiddish and German and those were the first languages of Nettie, who was born November 6, 1908. [...] Leon had a seat at the synagogue he attended every Saturday, and

¹ It is a person of a non-Jewish origin, especially a Christian.

² It is a small Jewish town or village in Eastern Europe.

both he and Sarah were very religious. At home, every Jewish holiday was observed, every Seder³ was made.

Isaac and Sarah Konigsberg were also religious but not as faithfully as the Cherrys. As with them, however, Yiddish was the primary language at home. Still, Isaac was more of the modern world than any of Allan Konigsberg's other grandparents. He was the first Jewish salesman for a coffee company and often sailed to Europe on business. [...] Then, in the stockmarket crash of 1929, Isaac lost everything. [...] To Jewish families, and especially to immigrants who clung to Old World ways, the person of culture and learning was whom they respected: the doctor, the teacher, the rabbi, the lawyer, the violin player; people involved with serious work and not, as Isaac or Nettie would say, someone who wastes time with foolishness.

(2000, 12 - 13)

John Baxter also writes about Allen's childhood and vanishing of his religion and about languages that Woody Allen used to speak. John Baxter describes Woody Allen's childhood when he used to live with his relatives who had fled Hitler. Woody Allen and his relatives spoke German at home and English was rarity. Most of the Konigsbergs and Cherrys spoke Yiddish for at least part of the time. Yiddish is the lingua franca of European Jewry and it was created when eastern Jews who spoke only Hebrew were forced to adopt German methods of writing, so that Yiddish contains many German and French words. Waves of immigrants had brought Yiddish to America by the early twentieth century. The language flourished there because it was a suitable secret language that was rich in terms of irony and scepticism and as such central to Jewish humour. (1999, 10) Woody Allen's film production is slightly influenced by his childhood memories:

Many Flatbush⁴ residents are Hasidic⁵ Jews, a community which in Allen's childhood had only recently begun migrating from the Lower East Side, and which congregated in the Brooklyn suburb of Brownsville. [...] Jewish culture has blurred so completely into the

³ Seder is a name for Jewish holidays It relives the enslavement and subsequent Exodus of the people of Israel from Ancient Egypt.

⁴ Flatbush is a community of the Borough of Brooklyn, a part of New York City, consisting of several neighborhoods. The Flatbush community had already been diverse, with many Italians, African-Americans and Jews.

⁵ Hasidism is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that promotes spirituality and joy through the popularization of Jewish mysticism as the fundamental aspects of the Jewish faith. The majority of Hasidic Jews are ultra-orthodox.

American-Anglo tradition that it can be difficult to visualise its original alienness.

(1999, 9 - 11)

Eric Lax describes Woody Allen's childhood with his grandparents who were also Orthodox Jews. His grandfather Leon was very religious and his grandmother Nettie wanted Allen to be like Leon, to have the same values. Nettie wanted to transmit Leon's faith and devotion to Judaism on Allen so that Allen had to learn Hebrew, says prayers, attend Hebrew school and go to synagogue with his grandfather Leon. (2000, 40) Nettie's effort was needless:

Allan had an ecumenical view of religion. That is, he found all organized faiths equally useless.

For all his questioning and agonizing, Woody Alien is a reluctant (he hopes there is a God) but pessimistic (he doubts there is) agnostic who wishes he had been born with religious faith (not to be confused with sectarian belief) and who believes that even if God is absent, it is important to lead an honest and responsible life. His observations and jokes about God and religion make him a favorite of theologians. Yet Allan Konigsberg was, he says, "amoral and impervious". He attributes his attitude to his father, for it turns out he was not impervious to influence. Religious faith and tradition may not have rubbed off on him but the rough hand-to-mouth world Martin inhabited did.

(2000, 40 - 41)

Eric Lax shortly describes Woody Allen's situation at school where almost all the student were of Jewish origin but the teachers were predominantly Gentile, often Irish and also often anti-Semitic. While Gentile boys were dismissed at the end of the day, Jewish boys were kept behind, the teachers intentionally made them late for Hebrew school. (2000, 31 - 32) Lax writes about an important Jewish ceremony: "Until he was bar mitzvah⁶ at thirteen, he was forced to attend Hebrew school after classes were dismissed at public school." (2000, 33)

Finally, Baxter illustrates Allen's approach to Jewishness:

The Konigsbergs were Orthodox, which meant that Allen prayed each morning with phylacteries⁷ bound to his arm and forehead,

⁶ It is a ceremony that is held in a synagogue. Thirteen-year old boys gain rights and duties of a man and the ceremony is connected with a great family party.

⁷ Phylacteries are leather boxes worn on the arm and head during certain Jewish services.

attended temple in a *yarmulke*⁸, fasted on high holidays and spent part of every Saturday for eight years in Hebrew school. All these merely accentuated his resentment of religion. He was bar mitzvahed in 1948, but mainly he remembers, he says, the movie he saw on the day before - *Canon City*, the story of a Colorado jailbreak. At the party afterwards, he blacked his face and did an imitation of Al Jolson - hardly the act of a devout religionist.
(1999, 27 - 28)

⁸ It is a close-fitting hat that Jews wear as a tribute to God.

3. Approach to Jewishness

One of the crucial topics in this work deals with depicting of approach to Jewishness. Woody Allen in his films and prose often uses profanity to create funny and ironic scenes. Allen's characters often joke about their Jewish identity and sometimes they are also afraid of anti-Semitism. The relationship of individual characters to religion differs one from each other.

Although Woody Allen belongs among second-generation Jews in America, he regards himself as atheist. Allen's films depicting Jewish culture are sophisticated, funny and scathing, they make people laugh and think deeply about problems depicted. Allen's books are full of irony and sarcasm.

3.1 Jewishness and Irony

The first part of this chapter is devoted to the film called *Deconstructing Harry*. Harry Block is an older author from New York, he writes novels and short stories that are based on his own experiences. He is inspired by people around him including his ex-wives, lovers, mistresses and members of his family. He gradually loses their favour because they recognize themselves in his stories and it complicates their lives as he reveals their secrets and problems. Harry is obsessed with sex, he is neurotic, cowardly and his life is aggravated by the relations with his ex-wives. He is addicted to pills, drinks hard, visits a psychoanalyst regularly and sleeps with prostitutes.

The entire film is focused on an upcoming ceremony and fact that Harry has a writer's crisis - as his surname suggests. The university where he studied, and was almost expelled from, wants to honour him and he is afraid that no one will share joy from this ceremony with him. Harry wants his son Hilliard to go with him but his ex-wife Joan will not let their son go with him and his ex-girlfriend Fay is marrying his best friend Larry. Therefore, he kidnaps his son and they are accompanied by his friend

Richard, who initially did not want to go to this ceremony as he did not have any spare time and Cookie Williams who is a prostitute and Harry pays her to go with him. They visit his stepsister Dolores and her husband Brut. Harry finally ends in jail because of the kidnapping. Fay and Larry who have just got married get him out of the jail and later his own made-up characters comfort him. Finally, he overcomes his writer's crisis.

There is also obvious Allen's sardonic approach to the big questions - for him these are sex, religion and afterlife. The main character Harry Block considers himself to be an atheist, although he grew up in a Jewish family and his father is very religious. His stepsister Dolores considers him to be a Jew - we found that out when he was visiting Dolores. She married an orthodox Jew called Brut and Harry despises both of them for their religion. When Harry comes by Dolores and Brut he talks with his sister about their religion:

Dolores: Well, I know what you think of me...

Harry: Oh, please, Dolores, don't start...

Dolores: What? Am I wrong? It is all over your book!

Jewish, too Jewish, professionally Jewish! [...]

Dolores: You know what? Burt is right about you, you are a self-hating Jew.

Harry: Hey, I may hate myself but not because I'm Jewish. [...]

Dolores: It has always enraged you that I returned to my roots.

Harry: What roots? You were wonderful sweet kid! You got me through my childhood and then you go to Fort Lauderdale and you meet this fanatic desolate and he fulfils you with superstition.

Dolores: It's tradition!

Harry: Tradition is the illusion of permanence.

(1997, 54:17 - 54:26, 54:47 - 55:10, 55:57 - 56:05)

This dialogue definitely shows that Harry is an atheist and he even does not recognize any traditions, he has no values. Harry is very dissatisfied with his life but not because of his religion. His sister Dolores realizes that he hates her and even her husband Brut for her religion but she stands up for Harry when she talks with her husband. When Harry is talking to Helen, he calls Brut "right-wing hog" and thinks that it would be better if he had never met his sister Dolores.

Harry also despises his second ex-wife, Joan, who is a psychiatrist. Harry described her as Helen, one of his made-up figures, who works as a psychiatrist that married her own patient Epstein. In this novel Harry connects religious qualities of his sister Dolores and whole personality of his second ex-wife Joan in the main woman character Helen. Helen was great until she gave birth: “from that moment on as if she had experienced the divine revelation and she became what Epstein referred to as Jewish with a vengeance”. (1997, 26:54 - 27:11)

Harry depicts Helen with contempt and he caricatures her religious dedication. His sister recognized herself in that novel and so did his ex-wife Joan and they both reproached him that he depicts Helen as a harridan. Harry used details from Dolores’ life and Joan’s personality in this novel.

Judah has quite similar approach to Jewishness as Harry in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* at first. It is evident when one evening Ben and Judah are discussing Judah’s affair again. And rabbi Ben asks him a question:

Rabbi Ben: It is a human life. You don’t think God sees?

Judah: God is a luxury I can’t afford.

Rabbi Ben: Now you are talking like your brother Jack.

Judah: Jack lives in the real world. You live in the kingdom of heaven.

(1989, 42:18 - 42:32)

This dialogue shows that Judah’s approach to Jewishness is quite sardonic and he starts to be callous and more inconsiderate of Ben’s advice. Ben again suggests Judah to behave responsibly that he should confess to his wife because she would understand and their marriage could be even better. However, Judah attaches no importance to Ben’s piece of advice and tends to his brother’s thought. After this conversation, he telephones his brother Jack to order a murderer.

Later Judah visits a house where he and his family used to live and he is allowed to go inside. When Judah enters a lot of members of his Jewish family are sitting around the table in the kitchen and they are talking about guilt and punishment. The main speaker rabbi Sol is often interrupted by his sister May who is apparently the only Gentile at the table:

May: If you don’t obey God will punish you?

Sol: Not me, he punishes the wicked.
May: Like Hitler?
Sol: We are having a Seder! (...)
Judah: And if a man commits a crime? If he kills?
Sol: In some way he will be punished.
Rabbi: If he is caught, Sol.
Sol: What originates from a black deed will blossom in a foul manner.
Rabbi: You are relying a little too heavily on the Bible.
Sol: Whether it is the Old Testament or Shakespeare, murder will out.
May: And I say if he can do it and get away with it and chooses not to be bothered by the ethics, then he is home free. Remember, history is written by winners.
Rabbi: And if all your faith is wrong.. I mean just what if? If?
Sol: Then I will still have a better life than doubters.
May: Wait a minute! Are you telling me you prefer God to the truth?
Sol: If necessary, I will always choose God over the truth.
(1989, 1:10:48 - 1:10:55, 1:12:21 - 1:13:31)

May has a sardonic approach to Jewishness as she thinks God is unfair, she relies on logic and science like Judah. Her brother Sol is outraged by her approach and in the last part of this dialogue it is obvious how religious he is. He prefers God to truth, he believes that God sees everything and punishes the wicked. Rabbi opposes him although he is also a strong believer; he prays in Hebrew and celebrates Seder. Rabbi is more realistic than Sol and agrees with May that if a man commits a crime and he is able to live with it there is no risk of being caught.

Annie Hall was a breakthrough for Allen in 1977. This comedy won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director. It is a story of Alvy Singer, successful comedian, who meets Annie Hall, who sings professionally. He feels insecure because he already experienced two divorces. Like every Allen's hero, he suffers from neurosis, grew up in Brooklyn and visits often his psychoanalyst.

Alvy and Annie fall in love and move in together. After some time he tries to change her thinking because he does not think she is smart enough for him. Therefore, she enrolls to educational courses for adults and also for psychoanalysis. Later she becomes an independent person and Alvy starts to be jealous. After a long dispute, they break up and she moves out.

Then they get back together and he takes her on a trip to Hollywood. Annie meets Tony Lacey, who owns a record company and admires her singing. When Annie and Alvy return home, they break up again and Annie goes back to Hollywood. Later they meet in New York and they have still strong friendly relationship. A strong influence of postmodernism is obvious in this film. Alvy often turns to camera to talk to spectators.

Alvy was raised in Brooklyn in an orthodox Jewish family while Annie's members of the family are atheists except for her grandmother who is anti-Semite. Alvy finds that out when he visits Annie's family and compares it with his own family. There is a fundamental difference between the families. In the beginning of the film, Alvy and his best friend Rob are walking down some Manhattan street and Alvy is unloading his troubles to Rob:

Alvy: I distinctly heard it. He muttered under his breath "Jew".

Rob: You are crazy!

Alvy: No, I'm not! We were walking off the tennis court, and you know, he was there and me and his wife, and he looked at her and then they both looked at me, and under his breath he said, "Jew."

Rob: Alvy, you're a total paranoid.

Alvy: What? How am I a paranoid? Well, I pick up on those kind of things. You know, I was having lunch with some guys from NBC, so I said ... uh, "Did you eat yet or what?" and Tom Christie said, "No, didchoo?" Not, did you, didchoo eat? Jew? No, not did you eat, but Jew eat? Jew. You get it? Jew eat? (...)

Rob: Max, you see conspiracies in everything.

(1977, 5:57 - 6:34)

This dialogue shows that Alvy is not only paranoid and suspicious but he is also ashamed for being born in a Jewish family. As in others Allen's films, Alvy considers himself to be an atheist. Another scene from this film takes place in a tennis club. Rob tries to persuade Alvy to move together to California:

Alvy: Right, right, so get back to what we were discussing, the failure of the country to get behind New York City is anti-Semitism.

Rob: Max, the city is terribly worried.

Alvy: But I'm not discussing politics or economics. This is foreskin.

Rob: No, no, no, Max, that's a very convenient out. Every time some group disagrees with you it's because of anti-Semitism.

Alvy: Don't you see? The rest of the country looks upon New York like we're left-wing Communist, Jewish, homosexual, pornographers. I think of us that way, sometimes, and I live here. (1977, 23:53 - 24:18)

It is obvious from this dialogue that Alvy does not like Jews and Rob does not care. He compared Jewishness to homosexuality, communism and pornographers in his last sentence; all these things are very negative and generally bad. Alvy is very suspicious and he thinks that people do not get along with him because he was born in a Jewish family.

Take the Money and Run was Allen's first film. It is a slightly documentary comedy co-written by Woody Allen and Mickey Rose in 1969. It is a story of Virgil Starkwell who is an unsuccessful thief. He starts his career of a thief very early because he was bullied as a child. He is a loser and is always caught and punished. His first prison sentence comes when he is eighteen but he manages to escape. Later he falls in love with Louise and she gives birth to their son, but Virgil continues in committing crimes and he is sent to prison again. Finally, Virgil is sentenced for 800 years for 52 robberies and he is planning an escape again.

The film is documentary so it is interspersed with voiceover that narrates his life and interviews with his parents, members of police, his teachers and neighbours. While Virgil's parents have a very serious approach to Jewishness, their son Virgil does not care about religion at all. There are several interviews with his parent but they are so ashamed of him that they disguise themselves with false Groucho nose-glasses⁹. His father is talking about his son Virgil and his attitude to religion with an interviewer: Virgil's father: He was an atheist. I tried to beat God into him but it was too tough. (1969, 10:15 - 10:20)

Both of his parents are the faithful, most probably not orthodox believers but they rather abandon their son than their religion.

In jail, Virgil submits as a volunteer for an experiment. Doctors need to test a new vaccine and because it has never been tested on a human being

⁹ Groucho nose-glasses was a disguise invented by one of Jewish Marx Brother who were comedic stars.

they do not know side effects. As a reward, he is given a parole. When a doctor inoculates him, Virgil turns into a rabbi. He is sitting in his cell, wearing a rabbinic vestment, a hat and a beard. He is talking about reasons why Jews celebrate Pesach holidays by eating matzos.

Virgil falls in love with Louise. As a child, Louise was adopted from an orphanage by a cruel military man and his wife. A voice-over is speaking about Louise's childhood and about her mother and her strange attitude to religion:

Voice-over narration: Her mother, an alcoholic, turns to religion for comfort and quickly becomes a fanatic. She responds to Louise's need for love by beating the child and claims to have conversations with God in which they discussed salvation and interior decorating. (1969, 25:13 - 25:25)

Allen's sardonic approach to any religion is obvious, especially from the last sentence of this citation. There are many believers in this film but none of them is even close to the religious paragon. It is also strange announcement that her mother turns to faith and quickly becomes fanatic. As if it was connected somehow. Religion should help and support people, it should not make them crazy.

In *Annie Hall* there is a scene where Alvy goes to a concert with some girl and they are talking about their religion. She tells him that she is a Rosicrucian and he answers that he cannot get with any religion that advertises in Popular Mechanics. He makes fun of religion. There is also a scene when he is preparing for his performance and he is talking with Allison. She tells him that she is writing her thesis about political commitments in literature and he reacts by these words:

Alvy: You are like a New York Jewish left-wing liberal, Central Park West, Brandeis University, social summer camps and your father collects Ben Shahn drawings, you are really straight oriented. Stop me before I make a complete imbecile of myself.
Allison: No, that was wonderful. I love being reduced to a cultural stereotype.
(1977, 15:20 - 15:30)

Allison is being ironic in spite of the fact that most of what he said is probably true. Similarly as in previous film *Take the Money and Run*, Jewishness is considered as virtue.

Main character, Leonard, in *Zelig* comes from a Jewish family like the other Allen's main character in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Annie Hall*, *Take the Money and Run* and *Deconstructing Harry*. Leonard does not express about religion. It is said in the beginning of the film that:

Voice-over: All that was known of him was that he was the son of a Yiddish actor named Morris Zelig whose performance as Puck in the orthodox version of a *Midsummer Night's Dream* was coolly received.
(1983, 7:56 - 8:01)

Allen makes fun of religion again by the orthodox version of Shakespeare's play. There are several men at the stage and a woman and all men are wearing costumes but they are also wearing a beard and a hat that are typical for a rabbi.

Another scenes concerning Jewishness occur during the film. Allen uses mockery to make these scenes funny: "Voice-over: To the Ku Klux Klan, Zelig a Jew who was able to transform himself into a Negro or Indian, was a triple threat." (1983, 16:35 - 16:38) Another use of mockery: "Voice-over: His transformation into a rabbi is so realistic that certain Frenchman suggests he be sent to Devil's Island." (1983, 22:40 - 22:45)

He participates an exhibition in Hollywood and he is surrounded by rabbis and suddenly he becomes one of them. He has a long beard and a hat and he is talking with other rabbis and audience is surprised. There is another example of profanity:

Leonard: I'm twelve years old. I run into a synagogue. I ask the rabbi the meaning of life. He tells me the meaning of life but he tells it to me in Hebrew. I don't understand Hebrew. Then he wants to charge me \$600 for Hebrew lessons.
(1983, 40:30 - 40:50)

People go to churches and synagogues to get answers and comfort. Leonard does not get any answer and moreover the rabbi wants some money. Religion is mentioned in the beginning of the film *Zelig*: "Voice-over: As a

boy, Leonard is frequently bullied by anti-Semites. His parents, who never takes his part and blame him for everything side with the anti-Semites.“ (1983, 7:20 - 7:30) This is obviously irony but it is hard to recognize because the voice-over is very serious all the time.

Allen discusses about God and religion in his books of short stories and he is never serious about this topic. The main character of the short story “Selections from the Allen notebooks” from “Without feathers” thinks about God. He ruminates on God’s existence:

And how can I believe in God when my tongue got stuck in electric typewriter last week? I am distressed by doubts. What if everything is just an illusion and nothing exists? In that case I paid too much for my carpet. If only God gave me some sign! For example, he could deposit a huge amount of money on my account in Switzerland’s bank.
(1991, 5)

Main character treats God’s existence with humour. Because he does not believe in God, no punishment can afflict him. In other story called “No Kaddish for Weinstein” main character Weinstein suffers because of his religion:

He was very lonely and isolated because of his high intelligence. And he was also chased because of his religion, mainly by his parents. The fact is, that his father goes to synagogue and so does his mother, but they could not withstand that their son is a Jew. “How could that happen?” His father did not understand. I have Semitic features, repeated Weinstein every day while shaving.
(1991, 54)

Although Weinstein deals with it quite peacefully, religion is not a good reason to hate others. Allen uses irony again and the most surprising is the moment when we find out that he is chased by his parents who are also Jews. Another story is from the book called “Side Effects” and it is called “Ceremonial Speech”. The narrator thinks about big questions, for example how the world was created? He answers to himself: “If God created this world could not he start two weeks earlier and use warmer weather?” (1991, 107) Allen is not worried to make comical scene of anything. And narrator continues in his speech. He says that religion disappointed us because many years ago people believed that God takes care of everything but now we

have to care. So that people have no mental peace and are in the middle of crisis of faith. If you are a believer, you can rely on Providence and it liberates you from responsibility. If you are an atheist, it makes you responsible for every thing and action that you do in the real world. It is easy and comfortable to blame God for anything bad that happens. Only atheists have to deal with that themselves.

Another short story is called “Big Boss”. It is a story of a young woman who hires Kaiser Lupowitz, young detective, to help her find God. He agrees and goes to his friend who is a rabbi. Rabbi explains to him that he has never seen God but he pays to him a lot of money to be safe. As Kaiser does not have his answer, he goes to his friend, who is a bank robber and an atheist, Chicago Phil. Phil explains to him that God does not exist and the only boss is the Pope. Therefore, Kaiser goes to the Pope and they have an interesting conversation:

Kaiser: I am looking for God.

Pope: You have the right address.

Kaiser: Does God exist?

Pope: Of course, that God exists but I am the only one who can talk to Him. God talks via me.

Kaiser: Why you?

Pope: Because I wear a red dress. I wake up, put on a red suit and I am a big boss. It is all about that dress. I wouldn't be famous if I wore jeans!

Kaiser: So it is a cheat! God doesn't exist!

Pope: I don't know. But who cares? I have a lot of money.

(1991, 42)

It is a traditional prejudice that Jews are rich and mean. Jews helped to establish modern banking in effect and they can manage their money.

Finally, a dead body is found and the police discover that it is God. Kaiser finds out that the young woman who hired him is a murderer. Allen is not afraid of anything - even killing God.

3.2 Jewishness and Seriousness

Brut, husband of Dolores in *Deconstructing Harry*, hates Harry who does not behave as a Jew at all and Harry hates him for marrying Dolores. It is obvious from the scene where Helen, one of his made-up figures, enters real life and talks with Harry on his way to university.

Helen shows him the scene where Brut says to Dolores about Harry: “The man is not a Jewish man. He’s not a Jewish man, that’s all! The man is incapable of an act of faith.” (1997, 1:10:35 - 1:10:40) And Brut is an Orthodox Jew who does not like any Gentiles. And Dolores regrets Harry for being unable to believe.

Another part of this chapter is devoted to the film called *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. This film was made in 1989 and scored three Academy Award nominations. Jewish aspects occur here much more than in other Allen’s films. The main character Judah Rosenthal who is a successful ophthalmologist has an affair with Dolores although he is married. After several years of their relationship, she starts to threaten him with exposing of this affair and his financial manipulations, which would destroy not only his marriage but also his career. Judah asks for help his brother Jack who hires a man to kill Dolores. Judah realizes he committed a serious crime and he wants to go to the police and pleads guilty of it but his brother Jack is strictly against it.

Therefore, rabbi called Ben appears, who is a brother of Wendy and Lester but sometimes he does not actually appear, sometimes Ben exists only in the mind of Judah. Ben helps Judah with his difficult decisions. Finally, he stays unpunished. There also develops another story, Cliff who is an abortive documentary filmmaker falls in love with Halley, but she does not requite these feelings. Cliff has a non-functional marriage with his wife Wendy who asks her brother Lester, a successful filmmaker and millionaire, to find a work for Cliff. So Cliff has to make a film about Lester and he hates that, so he makes it in his own way and is dismissed.

Allen combines comedy and drama in this film. Allen’s point with Judah’s story is that there is probably no God because Judah is not punished

for his crime, and morality is only up to the individual. The second point is that having good intentions means nothing, because Cliff frankly loves Halley and warns her about Lester who is a philanderer and reckless person but Halley does not follow his advice.

The main character Judah in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* considers himself to be an atheist like main character in *Deconstructing Harry*. He also grew up in a Jewish family and he was raised religiously but he is a sceptic man, man of science. Nevertheless, as the film continues his approach to religion gradually changes. Judah has his first conversation about his adultery with rabbi Ben in his consulting room. He confesses everything and the rabbi tries to comfort him. They have a different view of life and religion as shows this dialogue:

Rabbi Ben: It's a fundamental difference in the way we view the world. You see it as harsh, empty of values and pitiless. And I couldn't go on living if I didn't feel a moral structure with real meaning and forgiveness and some kind of higher power. Otherwise there is no basis to know how to live. And I know you well enough to know a spark of that notion is inside you somewhere too.

Judah: You are talking to me like your congregation.

Rabbi Ben: True. We went from a small infidelity to the meaning of existence.

(1989, 17:18 - 18:03)

While Ben is talking seriously, Judah is being ironic about Ben's religion. Ben is full of optimism and enthusiasm as if he was not able to see the real world. His faith gives him power and hope to imagine perfect world. Ben even believes that Judah is partly like him. On the contrary Judah realizes that world is not perfect and that he made a mistake when he started this affair. But he does not want to confess to his wife. He is dishonest and coward. When Judah is visiting a crime scene, he recalls his religious father who once said:

Judah's father: "I will say it once again. The eyes of God see all. Listen to me, Judah. There is absolutely nothing that escapes his sight. He sees the righteous and the wicked. And righteous will be awarded but the wicked will be punished for eternity".

(1989, 58:37 - 58:59)

His father told him so when Judah was a young boy. Judah remembers his childhood, he was raised religiously, he prayed every day and went to synagogue but it does not prevent him from collecting things that could prove his guilt and leaving the crime scene. Stig Björkman interviewed Woody Allen about Ben's faith:

I think that Ben is blind even before he loses his sight. He is blind because he does not see the real world. But he has the most important thing we can have - faith. His faith is real, he really believes to everything he says, so he can manage even the worst violence. Ben and Judah's father are both happy and love everyone and the world because they are naive.
(1996, 94)

Another scene from this film takes place in a restaurant. Miriam says that Judah behaves differently recently and he answers: "I believe in God, Miriam. I know it. Because without God, the world is a cesspool." (1989, 1:22:06)

Here Judah's faith in God although he had rejected it for many years. He abandoned the religion because it seemed useless for Judah who was wealthy, married and satisfied. He changed his approach to Jewishness only because of a murder he committed. He needs God to live with it. The film ends with a marriage of two young people where Judah has a conversation with Cliff. Judah knows Cliff is a filmmaker and confesses to him his crime as a theme for a film:

Judah: And after the awful deed is done, he finds that he is plagued by deep-rooted guilt. Little sparks of his religious background which he had rejected are suddenly stirred up. He hears his father's voice. He imagines that God is watching his every move. Suddenly it's not an empty universe but just a moral one and he's violated it. Now he is panic stricken. He is on the verge of mental collapse. An inch away from confessing the whole thing to the police. And then, one morning he awakens and the sun is shining and his family is around him. Mysteriously the crisis is lifted. And as the months pass he finds he is not punished. In fact, he prospers. (...) Now he is scot-free. His life is completely back to normal. Back to his protected world of wealth and privilege.

Cliff: Yes, but can he ever really go back?

Judah: Well, people carry sins around with them. Maybe once in a while he has a bad moment but it passes. And with time it all fades.

Cliff: But then his worst beliefs are realized. I think it would be tough for somebody to live with that. Very few guys could actually live with something like that.

Judah: People carry awful deeds with them. What should he do? Turn himself in? I mean, this is reality. In reality, we rationalize, we deny or we couldn't go on living.

Cliff: I would have him turn himself in because then your story assumes tragic proportions. Because in the absence of a God he is forced to assume that responsibility. Then you have tragedy.

(1989, 1:36: 11 - 1:38:55)

It assumes that Judah feels guilty at the very beginning. He deals with the role of God in his life and with his own feelings but later, he simply denies it all and continues in living his life that is even better than before. Judah does not even feel responsible for the murder and he counts the guilt to the murderer he hired. It is impossible to live with deed like this one.

At the end of the film *Take the Money and Run*, the detective Daniel Miller is talking about Virgil. He describes Virgil by these words: "Daniel Miller: Obviously an atheist and a pinto and a time general to disturb our society." (1969, 1:18:30 - 1:18:35) It is surprising how important religion is. As if the Virgil could not be a good man only because he is an atheist. Also this detective is most probably a believer because first word that came to his mind when he was describing Virgil was an atheist.

Alvy, the main character of *Annie Hall*, goes to Annie's place for the first time. And she says: "you are what Grammy Hall would call "a real Jew"." (1977, 31:10) He is definitely not pleased, he clears his throat, pauses, thanks her for that and then he rather changes their subject of conversation.

Alvy visits her family and has a lunch with them. He clearly does not merge with Annie's family members and although they all do not display any hostility to him, their Grammy is staring at him with obvious antipathy towards him. Annie has told him before that her Grammy does not like Jews because according to her they only make money. Alvy does not feel comfortably at all and when Grammy looks at him she sees a rabbi - with a beard, wearing a hat and a rabbinic vestment. When he compliments her on a lunch she cooked she just glowers at him and even does not answer.

Another film is called *Zelig*. It is a documentary comedy about Leonard Zelig who becomes a celebrity in 1920's. He is famous because he is able to change his appearance and look like people around him. The film starts at a party where Leonard changes his mind according to people he is talking to. Later he is a player of baseball and he is thrown away and placed to a psychiatric hospital. His doctor is Eudora Fletcher and by observing her he becomes a perfect psychiatrist. She experiments on him and his doctors are not able to define his diagnosis.

Leonard changes his appearance because he wants to fit in, he wants to be like other people and he wants to be loved. It started when they ask him whether he read *Moby Dick* and he lies that he did. Then doctors start to use dangerous drugs on him so his step-sister with her lover takes him to their house. He becomes a tourist attraction and various things with his pictures are sold. Later an accident happens and his sister and her lover are killed. Leonard is missing and then he appears during the visit of the Pope Pius XI. He is sent back to the hospital and doctor Fletcher takes him to her house and she cures him successfully so he cannot change anymore. They fall in love and want to get married but it emerges that Leonard is already married with two other women that he married as somebody else. He is under pressure and starts to change again and finally disappears. Later he is found in Germany that is full of Nazis and he is one of the Hitler's consultants. Doctor Fletcher finds him there and they use plane to fled Nazis and his ability to change save their lives because Fletcher loses consciousness and he turns into a pilot. They get married in New York. There is a certain similarity in symbolism with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Zelig is always changing his existence in order to search meaning of life. Zelig is chasing after assimilation and main character Achab of *Moby Dick* is chasing after the white whale called *Moby Dick*.

One of the characters in the film, Irving Howe, author of *World of Our Fathers*, said about Leonard:

Irving Howe: When I think about it, it seems to me that his story reflected a lot of the Jewish experience in America. The great urge to

push in and to find one's place and then to assimilate into the culture. He wanted to assimilate like crazy.
(1983, 45:15 - 45:28)

Minorities usually try to assimilate but it is somewhat different with Jews. Although they were a minority in America, they observed their holidays and they would not give up their religion.

As Eric Lax illustrates: "The greater Midwood neighborhood was almost entirely Jewish, especially as it fanned out toward the larger, single-family homes where the doctors, lawyers, and other professionals lived. For the most part, the only differences among people there were whether they were Sephardic or Ashkenazi Jews. But as the homes became smaller and the workers nonprofessional... there was some ethnic mix...The family in the house on the other side were both Russian Jews and Communists. They shocked the neighborhood by flagrantly not observing the Jewish high holy days."
(Lax, 2000, 31-32)

Main character of short story called "The Most Superficial Man" from "Side Effects" Iskowitz becomes a believer on his deathbed. He starts to believe that God exists because he sees the Sun and stars. He believes that God has some good final plan.

The most important word is believe. There are no rational reasons, so that religious people can never know, they can only believe.

4. Jewishness in Everyday Life

Allen's approach to Jewishness is ironic as well as his relationship to life, sex and death. He treats even serious topics with a good laugh. There is a short scene in *Deconstructing Harry* when Death comes for its victim. The victim is a young boy who is frightened and tries to save his life by telling the truth and Death answers: "Don't give me that bullshit!" (1997, 15:35 - 15:40) It is a very atypical answer from Death. Allen achieves humorous effect by using irony in serious scenes.

There is a dialogue when made-up figures Epstein and Helen are talking about their son and about Helen's faith:

Helen: I still regret that day when I listened to you and I didn't have him circumcised. [...]

Epstein: No, he is too old! [...] Oh my God! You are like a born-again Christian except you're a Jew!

Helen: I see my father's face in Hillel¹⁰.

Epstein: Hilliard, his name is Hilliard. We didn't name him Hillel, we didn't name him after some rabbi.

Helen: I'm sick of your cynicism. There is value in tradition. I know I never thought it would mean anything but now that I'm a mother it does. I see not only a meaning in Judaism but true beauty.

Epstein: Helen, you're a scientist.

Helen: Einstein was a scientist. And he was a Jew. And he was religious.

(1997, 27:05 - 27:51)

Epstein and Helen are only invented figures by Harry Block but they have the same qualities as their real models. Epstein represents Harry and Helen represents Joan. Harry does not like any religion because he does not need it. Although Harry was raised quite religiously, it did not leave its marks on him. The fact is that Helen is nice, optimistic and sympathetic, especially towards Harry's feelings. However, after giving a birth, she discovers religion and she becomes an Orthodox Jew. Suddenly her whole personality changes - she is pessimistic, serious and inconsiderate and it is caused by

¹⁰ Hillel (30 BC - 10 AD), was a Pharisee, expert on Torah, one of the most important rabbis. He preferred traditions to sacrificial rituals.

her religion. It is quite reasonable to follow the faith if you are raised religiously but there is no point in becoming a believer later.

Finally, marriage of Helen and Harry is over because she meets an Orthodox Jew from Tel Aviv and she marries him. Reality is somewhat different. Harry starts to sleep with one of Joan's patient. Harry wants to depict Joan as a bad person and he shows his resentment to Jewishness. Allen does not resent any religion in reality. He simply does not care and found all organized faiths equally useless. As Eric Lax illustrates:

"It just didn't mean a thing to me. I was not ashamed of it nor was I proud of it. It was a nonfactor to me. I didn't care about it. It just wasn't my field of interest. I cared about baseball, I cared about movies. To be a Jew was not something that I felt 'Oh, God, I'm so lucky.' Or 'Gee, I wish I were something else.' I certainly had no interest in being Catholic or in any of the other Gentile religions." The notion brings forth a laugh from him when he says it. "I thought those kids in Catholic school who couldn't see movies because the Legion of Decency wouldn't permit them, or who said their catechism¹¹, were silly beyond belief. I thought, 'What a waste of time.' And I felt the same thing in Hebrew school, my mind drifting out the window, not learning anything, just counting the minutes until it was over."

(Lax, 2000, 40 - 41)

There is a short scene that perfectly expresses Allen's relationship to any religion. Harry is sitting with his friend in a hospital and he is trying to comfort him before he has a medical examination: "Between air conditioning and Pope, I'll take air conditioning." (29:34 - 29:36) There is another depicting of Allen's approach to God at the end of the film. Harry's girlfriend Fay gives him as a birthday present - a baseball ball signed by all players of his favourite team and he says: "When he hit that homerun that was the only hint that there may be God." (52:30 - 52:32)

Harry does not visit Doris because of her faith and she does not like him from the same reason. When Harry visits Doris, they are having a conversation:

Doris: I am a Jew. I was born a Jew. Will you hate me because of that?

¹¹ Catechism is a summary or exposition of doctrine, traditionally used in Christian religious teaching from New Testament times to the present.

Harry: And if your parents converted to Catholicism, then once we would be born we would be Catholics and that's end of it. There are clubs. They are exclusionary. They force the concept of "the others" and you know clearly whom you should hate. Let me ask you a question, if a Jew is massacred, does that bother you more than if the Gentile gets hurt or Black or a Bosnian?

Doris: Yes, yes, yes, it does. I can't help it. It's my people.

Harry: They are all your people!

(54:20 - 55:11)

Harry does not approve any religion, he is even slightly afraid of any faith. Religion may be very dangerous. Many people were killed in the past because of their faith. Nobody can be forced to accept faith they do not approve. Harry wrote a story of Jewish couple where he ridiculed his and Doris' parents, Doris cannot forgive him, and Brut says:

Brut: The first of a number of anti-semitic pieces of work.

Harry: There he is. Direct from the Wailing Wall.

Brut: Disrespectful, shameful. Jews haven't suffered enough? Now they are depicted as cannibals. [...]

Doris: No spiritual centre. When he gets cancer he will be the first one in synagogue sitting in front row.

Brut: Don't you care about Holocaust? Or do you think it never happened? [...] You create offensive Jewish stereotypes!

Harry: Wouldn't it be a better world if not every group thought they're direct line to God.

Brut: He thinks I'm all Jewish paranoid.

(1997, 56:10 - 56:50)

Brut and Doris do not want to accept his point of view and Harry only wants to get along with them. The married couple expels him from their house because he ridicules their faith. They need the religion to survive in the real world but Harry is able to deal with reality without the crutch that the religion represents.

Woody Allen has an obviously mocking approach to Jewishness because in *Zelig*, the main character Zelig, who is a Jew, is wearing a SS uniform and he destroys Hitler's speech.

Woody Allen also makes fun of ethnic minority Romanies in *Take the Money and Run*. It is a scene where Virgil tries to rob a bank but a big Romany family is living in a safe.

An interesting word connected with Jewish culture occurs in *Take the Money and Run* when Virgil's neighbour Kay Lewis is speaking about him: "Kay Lewis: Everyone believes he was such a schlemiel¹² and he was a criminal!" (1969, 58:22 – 58:23)

Another interesting word connected to religion appears in *Annie Hall* when Alvy is scolding Annie and he says: "And now you're a Bathsheba!¹³" Alvy wants to indicate that Annie is unfaithful to him. Later there is another reference to Jewish culture. It is a scene when Alvy is talking to Rob:

You know, I was in a record store. Listen to this -so I know there's this big tall blond crew-cutted guy and he's lookin' at me in a funny way and smiling and he's saying, "Yes, we have a sale this week on Wagner." Wagner, Max, Wagner, so I know what he's really tryin' to tell me very significantly Wagner.
(1977, 6: 40 - 6:50)

Wilhelm Richard Wagner was a composer. His anti-Semitism appeared in his *Jewishness in music* for the first time. Wagner complains that art is destroyed by Jewishness. Alvy is paranoid and ashamed of his religion and he is afraid of anti-Semites.

Alvy is very sceptical about religion. He never says anything good or neutral about religion, it is always something inconvenient or bad. Alvy is talking with Rob about California: "Alvy: There's no economic crime, you know, but there's-there's ritual, religious cult murders, you know, there's wheat-germ killers out here." (1977, 1:12:30 - 1:12:33)

Judah, the main character of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, does not believe any more but when he feels miserable, he needs the faith and he wants to confess:

Judah: I need to talk to someone. I've known you for years. You are religious man. I'm not. We've differed on many points but I do respect you. May I confide in you?
Ben: Of course, go ahead. Everything is confidential.
(1989, 14:45 - 15:00)

¹² Schlemiel is a clumsy and unlucky person.

¹³ Batsheba is a figure from the Bible, wife of Uriah, mother of king Solomon. King David seduced her and she became pregnant and then king David had her husband Uriah killed.

Although Judah was raised religiously, he cheats, lies, steals and orders a murder. Judah even dares to say: “God has mercy on us.” when his brother Jack called him to announce that Judah’s mistress Dolores is dead and everything went well. (1989, 55: 44 - 55:47)

And a certain thing repeats. Almost all religious people in Woody Allen’s films are bad characters except for rabbi Ben. And a professor Louis Levy occurs who is an intellect and a thinker. Alvy is interviewing him about life, religion, love and other topics. Although that the professor is an Orthodox Jew, finally he commits a suicide.

Religious people tend to see our world better than it is. When Sol has a speech about God in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, his sister says: “This is the twentieth century. Don’t fill their heads with superstition. Might make rights.” Sol thinks she is cynical and nihilist but she is right. (1989, 1:13:35 - 1:13:40)

It is understandable that people used to need God because they needed to explain natural disasters and things they were not able to explain but now religion is a crutch. It should help people and make their lives better. Some believers even do not know why they practice certain rituals because it is only a habit.

5. Jewish Rituals and Traditions

Judaism influenced more than two and a half billion of people all over the world because Christianity and Islam are based on Judaism. There is many ordinary things that originated from Jewish culture, for example week has seven days. Church and mosque copy a synagogue. There are also many words in Jewish liturgy as for example amen, hallelujah and kosher, that are used by people all over the world and they originate from Jewishness. Main Jewish rituals and traditions are Seder, Pesach, Chanuka, Sabbath, Bar mitzvah and circumcision.

There is several examples of Jewish culture in the film called *Deconstructing Harry*. Harry's wife Joan in *Deconstructing Harry* continues in her religious enthusiasm:

“Voice-over narration by Harry Block: Helen had taken on the application of daily prayers. Jews, of course, fear a constant revenge of God give prayers and thanks for everything.”
(1997, 27:53 – 27 : 59)

Allen obviously despises Jewishness but according to previous dialogue, he despises every religion. Almost all Allen's characters that are religious are not nice people, their faith changes them on worse people. Rabbi Ben in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is the only exception from this rule, but he is also naive and blind to bad acts that occur around him.

Harry shows on his made-up figure Helen how Joan becomes more and more foolish and crazy about Jewishness. Helen does not allow him to drink until she says a prayer in Hebrew. She also says prayers before eating any food and even before sex. She starts to dress and comb as a Jew and she observes every Jewish holidays.

Another scene takes place in hell because Harry writes a story about a man who goes to hell to save his kidnapped woman and Harry portrays the main character. Some devil leads chained Harry's father through the hell. Harry's father is dressed as a Jew and has a yarmulke and he is upset. He ended in hell because he was not able to forgive Harry that Harry's mother died while giving birth to him. When Harry pleases the devil to let his father

go to heaven: “Harry’s father says: I’m a Jew. We don’t believe in heaven. I wanna go to Chinese restaurant.”

Jews do not believe in heaven they believe in life after death and resurrection. This is a very delicate topic but Woody Allen is openly presents his attitude to religion.

Doris, one of the characters in *Deconstructing Harry*, reminds him a book he wrote where he ridiculed her religion and her parents. It is a story of Max and Dolly Pincus who celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of their wedding. A small boy is bar mitzvahed at the same time and Star Wars theme is everywhere around. Many people have a helmet like Star Wars soldiers, they have swords of Jedis knights and their costumes. Almost every man wears a yarmulke. Dolly finds out that her husband Max has a dark secret and she wants to know that. One of her old friends tells her that her husband Max killed four people and than ate them, to hide bodies. Max does not feel guilty and Dolly is very superficial and cares only about rumours. Harry depicted his parents in this story.

Eric Lax illustrates:

"I was unmoved by the synagogue, I was not interested in the Seder, I was not interested in the Hebrew school, I was not interested in being Jewish," Woody says.

Woody Allen obviously did not enjoy Jewish rituals and traditions, he considered them as a wasting of time.

Another film where Jewish traditions occur is *Annie Hall*. There is a situation when Alvy goes to Annie’s place for the first time and he is introduced to her family. He compares his own Jewish boisterous family with Annie’s calm WASP¹⁴ family. Alvy describes his own family as: “oil and water”. Annie’s family is a model of American family and they are discussing pictures and a boat:

The screen splits in half and on the right there is Alvy’s family that is eating at the crowded kitchen table. They eat quickly and interrupt one another

¹⁴ WASP stands for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. First letter W can also mean wealthy. WASP meant religious and racial difference of ruling stratum.

loudly. On the left the Halls in their dining room. Both dialogues overlap and families are talking to each other:

Annie's mum: How do you plan to spend the holidays, Mrs. Singer?

Alvy's mum: We fast.

Annie's dad: Fast?

Alvy's dad: Yeah, no food. You know, we have to atone our sins.

Annie's mum: What sins? I don't understand.

Alvy's dad: Tell you the truth, neither do we.

(1977, 50:25 – 50:55)

Alvy's family is explaining that to Annie's family with no interest as if they were not concerned. They observe the holidays but it is merely a habit, it seems that it has no meaning for them.

Virgil, the main character of *Take the Money and Run*, is planning an escape from this jail so he meets other prisoners in the chapel. When he comes, he makes large sign of the cross by his shaking hand before the altar, then kneels in a church bench and pretends to pray. While praying he moves forward and backwards which is a typical movement for Jews while praying. Judah's father did the same special movement while he was praying in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.

Resumé

Práce se zabývá hledáním židovských aspektů ve filmech a v próze Woodyho Allena *Annie Hall*, *Deconstructing Harry*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Take the Money and Run* a *Zelig* a “The Complete Prose of Woody Allen: Without Feathers, Getting Even, Side Effects“. Zaměřuje se především na přístup hlavních hrdinů k židovství, na aspekty židovství ve všedním životě a rituály a tradice spojené s židovskou kulturou. Hlavní hrdinové jsou obvykle muži, kteří byli vychováni v židovských rodinách, ale nyní se považují za ateisty. Hlavní hrdina filmu *Annie Hall* se za svůj židovský původ dokonce stydí. Jediný, kdo se na chvíli obrátí k víře, je Judah Rosenthal ve filmu *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, a to poté, co nechal zavraždit svoji milenkou. Když však problémy a výčitky svědomí zmizí, víru už nepotřebuje.

Vybrané filmy jsou o obyčejných lidech a jejich honem za štěstím, ať už ho chtějí dosáhnout pomocí lásky, víry, sexu nebo jiným způsobem. Vybrané povídky jsou odvážnější - Woody Allen napsal dokonce povídku, kdy je zabit Bůh. Zatímco filmy odrážejí reálný život, povídky obsahují prvky fantasy. Jeho filmy i povídky jsou nabitě dialogy, obsahují spoustu gagů, vtipů a ironických narážek. Woody Allen je rozený vypravěč a filmy prokládá svými osobními zážitky. Woody Allen má postmoderní přístup k psaní i filmování a často používá parodii a ironii, aby dosáhl komického efektu.

Woody Allen svými filmy nabádá ke slušnému chování, podporuje smysl pro spravedlnost a morálku. Obdivuje věřící, protože náboženskou víru považuje za to jediné, co nám dává možnost v životě vítězit, a pokud nemáte silnou duchovní víru, je těžké se prodírat životem. Zároveň věřící odsuzuje, protože zavírají oči před skutečnými problémy, jejichž řešení je složité, což je pro věřící komunitu charakteristické. Woody Allen vyrůstal v ortodoxní židovské rodině, ale sám se považuje za ateistu. Některé židovské skupiny ho napadaly, že píše příliš černě a Židy očerňuje, ale Allen jen popisuje realitu tak, jak ji zná z vlastních zkušeností.

Židé jsou kulturní, náboženská a sociální komunita lidí, kteří sdílí jazyk - Jidiš, historii, stejnou filozofii, a soubor náboženských praktik a etických zásad. Jazyk Jidiš vymysleli evropští židé, když byli nuceni používat německý jazyk místo hebrejštiny. Na začátku dvacátého století proniknul Jidiš díky židovským imigrantům do Ameriky, kde se dál rozvíjel. Základ judaismu se stal pilířem pro další náboženství, křesťanství a islám a ovlivnil přes dvě a půl miliardy lidí.

Židé si vytrpěli mnohá příkoří, jako byly pogromy, holocaust, křížové výpravy, vyhnání z Egypta, Španělska, Anglie, byli nuceni žít v ghettech a platit zvláštní poplatky jen za to, že směli žít v určité zemi a krajním příkladem antisemitismu byla otevřeně nepřátelská nacistická ideologie Adolfa Hitlera, která vedla až ke genocidě evropských židů. Přestože mají neradostnou minulost, mají rádi humor, hlavně ironii a paradox. Woody Allen zakládá svůj humor na ironii a parodii, čímž se jeho vtipy stávají lépe zapamatovatelnějšími a účinnějšími. Allen zesměšňuje i židy samé.

Tvorba Woodyho Allena je velice odlišná a unikátní. Woody Allen řeší hlavně náboženství, ale i partnerské vztahy, sex, smrt a posmrtný život. Postava Smrtky se objevuje v jeho filmech i povídkách hned několikrát, a nikdy nejedná vážně. Allenovy hlavní postavy jsou většinou smutné, melancholické, pesimistické a často trpí neurózou. Alen přišel na to, že smích lze vyvolat i pomocí smutných hrdinů, a že v komedii má své místo i zoufalství. Přestože místy postavy jen mluví a mluví a nic se neděje, Allenovy filmy jsou bohaté na konverzaci, která je plná napětí, což diváky jednoduše přiměje vydržet dvě hodiny v kině. Filmy Woodyho Allena jsou dramatické a zároveň komické.

K židům jsou často přisuzovány nelichotivé obrazy, židi jsou zobrazováni jako nečestní obchodníci, nevzhlední a lakomí lidé. Tyto předsudky už by měly vymizet. Židé jsou tolerantní a intelektuální lidé se smyslem pro humor a jejich komunita se vyznačuje pospolitostí a solidaritou.

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