

The Docu-Comedy: Towards a new genre in the expression of social commentary through comic performance, using documentary film techniques and reality television discourse.

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

A 26-minute docu-comedy product of my studies in film and television production, *The Traveling Jewish*, captures improvised moments of social interaction through documentary filming style. Through filming, editing, animation and music, it becomes an entertaining half-hour of television and social commentary. It is with each cut, layer, added graphics, omitted sound or musical accompaniment, that the viewer is guided into the cultural understanding and comedic inclination of the creator of such a piece.

In doing so, I believe we are opening up a new genre of Television, the Docu-Comedy, which aims to explore comedy in site-specific landscapes, through primarily improvised scenes, using the discretion of the director to do otherwise when narrative comprehension is at risk. In this way humor exists in a way not often exploited on television.

As humor serves as a forum to bring to the attention of society activities, beliefs, morals, etc., at the same time challenging their validity or even ethical realities, its mere existence is often seen as a sign of the health of a society. This paper looks at all the technical and theoretical elements of such a proposal.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*“Our capacity to laugh is anything but a peripheral aspect of human life.”  
John Morreall<sup>1</sup>*

In creating *The Travelling Jewish* I aimed to look at how documentary and comedy can come together through the use of Reality Television style and different filming and editing techniques. The 26-minute docu-comedy is a product of my studies in film and television production, *The Travelling Jewish* captures improvised moments of social interaction through the use of a documentary filming style. Through layering different moments of dialogue, scenery, animation and music, the moments become an entertaining half-hour of television and serve on another level as a social commentary. With each cut, layer, added graphics, omitted sound or musical accompaniment, the viewer is guided into the cultural understanding and comedic inclination of the creator of such a piece.

My interest in creating such a project is based in the idea that humour is the greatest measure of society. Additionally, being a non-South African, I thought the best way to discover the humour (and hence the place), would be to approach the landscape with a comedic goal. It was through looking at the different ways of doing this that I decided to use the styles of Documentary Film and Reality Television. I chose documentary because it serves to capture what is real; it is the realness of the South African landscape, both physical and social that I aimed to capture. And I used Reality TV because it is a

flexible, playful medium within which I can explore and have direct interaction with the viewers and participants of this project.

The Travelling Jewish features stand-up comedian Nik Rabinowitz in a brief tour of the Western Cape as he looks for material for his upcoming stand-up show entitled “Anyone Seen My Goat?” The show captures the humour of daily life, incongruous situations, and moments of the absurd with a twist of “gentle” satire. Research for this project includes examining comedy theory, the principles of documentary filmmaking, and a brief look at the proliferation of Reality Television.

Humour theorists have dissected what makes us laugh into many theories and categories. In this paper, I will give a brief outline of three particularly prominent theories, mainly touching on psychological and sociological theories that attempt to explain why we laugh and the role of humour in society. In particular, I will address the role of humour with respect to more serious and sensitive social contexts. Why do we laugh when the President of the United States says that Africa is a *country* and with “a lot of disease?” What is so funny about a white man trying to describe the term used to define a lower subjugated class during the reign of Apartheid?

## **II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Travelling Jewish can be labeled as a Docu-Comedy Reality-Style Television show. For this reason I will briefly touch on a few theories of Humour, Documentary Film and

Reality Television that contributed to the making of and discussion around the interest, importance or relevance of such a Television show.

## **A) THEORIES OF HUMOUR**

One of my goals in making *The Travelling Jewish* was to capture the process of a stand-up comedian in finding his or her jokes. Secondly, I wanted to explore what was found to be funny in a South African context, as I am not South African. In attempting to do this, I found that my research into Humour Theory was clearly at play even in the simplest interactions. I have chosen to focus primarily on three theories of humour which can be used as a theoretical framework for most of what is or is not found humorous in *The Travelling Jewish*. In addition, I will discuss the importance of social and cultural context.

### *Laughter and Humour – clarification of terminology used*

Before continuing into theories of humour, a few words on the terminology used in this paper may be helpful. *Laughter* is the physiological response to *humour*. Many distinctions can be made between humour, comedy, wit, parody, and satire. There are many reasons for these distinctions, mostly relating to the form of the humorous piece (joke, play, music, etc.). Other distinctions are linguistic, a sign of the time in which they were used by the theorist and these terms have since changed in meaning or represent



different aspects of social interaction than, say, 2000 years ago, in Plato's time, or even one hundred years ago, in the time of Soren Kierkegaard.

For the purposes of this paper, I am encapsulating all of the above terms as "humour." I chose to do this because I see the term humour as the umbrella under which these other terms fall, and my argument is to delve deeper into a social phenomenon in a general sense, rather than dissect humour through linguistics. I would like to say, however, that I believe that linguistics determine the forms that humour may take and the interpretations of humour. However, I would argue that one could simplify this area of humour by regarding linguistics as one element of the social/cultural context of humour that I address later in this paper.

**i) Three Primary Theories of Humour: A Brief Overview**

*a) The Superiority Theory*

*"I was laughing AT you not WITH you."  
Unknown*

*"Laughter is nothing but an expression of our sudden glory when we realize that in some way we are superior to someone else."  
Thomas Hobbes<sup>2</sup>*

Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle postulated that laughter was a sign of scorn, and even wit was considered educated insolence. To laugh was to be above something,

recognize it as inferior. In this way, the philosophers of their time felt that to laugh posed a moral dilemma and was something to be avoided. In the *Republic*, Plato explains that a good model for society, for those that would become the ideal guardians of the state, laughter should be avoided (Morreal, 1987:10).

Albert Rapp, in his work, The Origins of Humour, looks at humour from an evolutionary perspective and sees that laughter itself was “the roar of triumph in an ancient jungle dual.” (Morreall, 1983:7) This then evolved into laughter, a sign of aggression and a challenge to the inferior.

Based on these arguments, only the dominant participated in humour in an elitist show of power against the weak. To laugh at someone, meant that you had the power to do so, and whether his was a sign for your inner circle or the public in general, its role was to illustrate power dynamics in society.

b) *The Incongruity Theory*

*“Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck by the difference between what things are and what they ought to be.”*

*William Hazlitt<sup>3</sup>*

In his book, Taking Laughter Seriously, John Morreall explains the incongruity in humour as a “violation of a logical principle in a piece of reasoning that is just illogical enough to sound somewhat plausible” (1983:74). Morreall continues, stating that this theory falls short of a comprehensive theory but rather addresses the cognitive or thinking

side of laughter: “Amusement is an intellectual reaction of something that is unexpected, illogical or inappropriate” (15).

The basic principle here is that contradiction is funny. To tell a story or joke that represents reality in a different way to what we know it to be, yet still retains a particular social or cultural context, will, more often than not, bring laughter. While seriousness consists of the exact conformity of two things together, humour introduces the ludicrous – “to bring about the discrepancy between the conceptions of another and the reality by disarranging the two.” (Schopenhauer, in Morreall 1987:61).

Being able to laugh at the incongruous, the “ludicrous” requires that one recognize and understand the relationships between things, that the place in society of particular objects, ideas, personal relationships, are known. And, that this knowledge is shared by more than three parties. In his book, Humour as a Social Act, J. Harvey (1995) has labeled each of these parties the “initiator”, “subject” and the “audience” (20).

c) *The Relief Theory*

*“Perhaps I know best why man alone laughs: he alone suffers so deeply that he had to invent laughter. The unhappiest and most melancholy animal is, as is fitting, the most cheerful.”*

*Nietzsche<sup>4</sup>*

Freud explains the Relief Theory in the following way: “Joking (like dreaming) serves as a safety valve for forbidden feelings and thoughts, and when we repress what is usually inhibited, the energy or repression is usually released in laughter” (Freud in Morreall

1987:111). “Joking often cuts through great obstacles better and more forcefully than being serious would.” (Francis Hutcheson in Morreall 1987:35)

Marcella Tarozzi Goldsmith (1991:181), in her book Nonrepresentational Forms of the Comic, sees the function of a joke as the release of aggression towards a second party in a socially acceptable way. In this way she is working on the Relief Theory, with an edge of the Superiority Theory, although her main argument is the importance of this release of aggression. J. Harvey (1995:22), in Humour as a Social Act, says “humour from the winner’s circle brings everything down to size.” However he qualifies this when he explains that social dimensions are key in assessing the value of humour.

## ii) **The Importance of Cultural/Social Context in Humour**

*To share humour with someone we need to share a form of life with them.  
John Morreall<sup>5</sup>*

In On Humour, Simon Critchley (2002:88) puts it very simply when he says, “humour is about us”. Critchley explains that jokes return us to our roots, reminding us of our social and cultural practices, while at the same time indicating how those practices might be transformed, presenting an alternative reality.

This reality is based on presuppositions – certain elements of what is said presume certain truths (Morreall, 1983:78). In order for a comedian to succeed with a joke or anecdote, they must be on the same page as the audience. Within the given societal context, the

relationship of the individual with the values of their society is key (Lewis 1989:32).

Critchley (2002:3) describes this context as a “tacit contract”:

Joking is a specific and meaningful practice that the audience and the joke-teller recognize as such. There is a tacit social contract at work here, namely some agreement about the social world in which we find ourselves as the implicit background to the joke...

For Critchley (2002:5), humour is so entrenched in culture that he compares a joke to a rite-of-passage: “Jokes are anti-rites...they mock, parody or deride the ritual practice of a given society.”

Critchley argues that most humour is a comedy of recognition – it reinforces consensus and toys with existing social hierarchies in a charming but benign way. (2002:11)

I have laid out the arguments for humour as a release of tension through the Relief Theory, and Freud’s argument that laughing releases tension. However, many theorists believe that humour has the possibility to act as more than just a pressure valve. In fact, I would argue that humour can also increase social pressure. If to laugh at something is to acknowledge and accept an incongruity, an imbalance, a contradiction, is it also not a form of acknowledging that this imbalance is not normal, and therefore not acceptable? To be laughed with is to acknowledge the incongruity, contradiction, etc., but is to be laughed at not a form of rejection, a pointing out of something abnormal, putting social pressure on the subject to recognize their own incongruity measured by the consensus of the laughing audience.

Chris Powell (1988), in his essay "*A Phenomenological Analysis of Humour in Society*," (Powell et al, 1988) postulates that "normal social relations are rather tenuously balanced" in daily life. And that through humour's checks and balances, these social relations are constantly renegotiating their power relationship.

a) *Control and Resistance*

*What do you call a black man in a business suit?*  
*Defendant.*

*Unknown<sup>6</sup>*

*What do you call 300 white men chasing a black man?*  
*The PGA tour.*

*Unknown<sup>7</sup>*

Plato and other early theorists thought control, in a negative sense, was the basis of humour. Through their analyses of the superiority theory, laughter expressed and communicated social dominance. Racist jokes are probably the most obvious form of joking that exemplifies either an attempt at control of one group over another, or the social reality of this power relationship.

Powell (1988:88) sees the question of control differently. He suggests that reactions to humour, or finding humour in something, are ways of reconstituting control in terms of one's own consciousness about the way things really are. The initiator (joke-teller) and the audience respond to each other based on what each perceive to be a true set of rules with the subject of the humour as a vehicle for this understanding. Reactions to how the

humour is put across and to how it is received indicates one's "insiderness" or "outsiderness" – thereby revealing a social hierarchy.

The ultimate control we have is our view of social reality and our understanding of our own and others' place within it, including the resistance to the actions of others and their beliefs (Powell, 1988:99).

For the most part, I would say that societies do not look at joking "seriously." That is, when directing humour outward, individuals may not necessarily analyze why something is or isn't humorous and what it might say about their inner politics, social structure or understanding of society. However, if a person or a group of people finds themselves the butt of a joke, the subject of a humorous exchange, the joke suddenly becomes serious, and is an indicator of the subject's social status. The subject can then either respond negatively to the joke (walk out of the room, etc.), they can laugh along, or they can give no response.

Powell (1988:89-90) argues that "any response is based on an interpretation of someone else's expression which effectively constitutes a social control..." To ignore a minor social infraction, for example, is a form of control. It shows that the reactor is relatively unthreatened, but also that the actor is undeserving of a more elaborate response. To resist the humour, to not laugh, is also to refuse to let a particular social understanding be fed, approved and strengthened, which is itself a social commentary. I have often heard individuals say "That is not my type of humour..." in such a way as to express a judgment on those enjoying "that type" of humour. In this way one can see that within society myriad social contexts for humour exist.

To refuse to laugh at the joke about the black man in a suit, “defendant”, is to say that the social understanding the joke is attempting make is not universal. This is resistance. To tell the PGA joke in response is to attempt to show that the status quo has changed. Response to this joke will indicate just how much the status quo has changed.

b) *Tragedy and Tension: Now That’s Funny*

*Five black men in dinner jackets and bow ties were found floating under a pier in New Orleans. DNA tests have revealed their identity... – ‘The Drifters’*

*Anonymous*<sup>8</sup>

*We laugh when we shouldn’t but moreso because we know we shouldn’t, and even more when we try to keep from laughing.*

*William Hazlitt*<sup>9</sup>

Freud describes humour as a pressure that builds and releases, acting as repetitive social coping mechanisms for addressing tensions and incongruities. Powell suggests that humour is not a mere process of build-up and release of tension, but becomes the instigator of shifts in social consciousness/understanding. Society evolves through humour.

Mary Douglas explains this in the following way: “A joke releases the tension, says the unsayable...but a true joke, a comedian’s joke, has to do more than release the tension, it has to liberate the will and desire, it has to change the situation” (Douglas in Critchley 2002:9). Powell (1988:101) explains:

“When [the establishment] is challenged, it renders the overall institution’s “ideal” representation of itself as problematic, suggesting that it is comprised of



individuals as fallibly human as exist in society as a whole. The reduction thus is from ‘idealization’ to ‘normalization’ – when normal equals the ‘inevitable’ rather than the ‘conventional’”.

The mere fact that society is exposed to alternate forms of reality plants a seed for these alternate realities to become real. A parallel would be most political struggles by an oppressed group to gain political/social power. There are the very oppressed who do not fight, there are the “moderates” who believe in an ideology that advocates moderate change, and there are the extremists advocating drastic change and the upheaval of the old regime, to be replaced by a new regime with an often radically new ideology. Without the extremists, the moderates wouldn’t stand a chance. The moderates afford a less risky and radical shift in ideology, a more comfortable solution for both the fully oppressed and the opposition, than the extremists. In the same way, a joke offers a radical reality shift, making possible a moderate shift for the audience and often the subject as well, offering a possibility for change.

Freud said that humour is not an appraisal of society: “humour is not resigned; it is rebellious.”

## **B. DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING THEORY: A FEW GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

*“... the choice of the documentary medium is as gravely distinct a choice as the choice of poetry instead of fiction.”*

*John Grierson*

The Travelling Jewish is a docu-comedy; a form of documentary. For this reason I will now look briefly at documentary film theory, in the more formal sense. I have chosen only a few of the many discourses on documentary to keep it simple.

### **i) Direct Cinema**

Direct cinema is a form of documentary film which emerged in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Its origin is often associated with the advent of lightweight cameras and transportable, synchronized sound recording devices (Wikipedia, 2006).

“The advocates of Direct Cinema were always quick to codify exactly what they thought was the ‘right’ way to make a documentary and what was the ‘wrong’ way, drawing up a kind of filmic ten commandments: thou shalt not rehearse; thou shalt not interview; thou shalt not use commentary; thou shalt not use film lights; thou shalt not stage events; thou shalt not dissolve... The assumption of authorial transparency was central to the Direct Cinema mission: the filmmaker must not influence events; the relationship between observer and observed, subject and object, would remain securely separate.” (Dovey as quoted in MacDonald and Cousins, 1996:250:29)

Here I would say that I drastically violated the Principles of Direct Cinema, were it not for the fact that for each rule that I violated in one place, I upheld in another. In this way, I borrowed from elements of Direct Cinema, without adhering to it as law. I discuss in further detail with examples the different set-ups and situations later in this Section.

Dovey goes on to say that diaristic, autobiographical films often have a very spontaneous, exploratory feel, their initial appeal being that they feel “raw” or “natural” (2000:41). In

this regard, *The Travelling Jewish* is very spontaneous with a strong diaristic quality.

The show opens with Nik explaining who he is, and what he is about to do. He reveals a bit of his anxiety and throughout the show he checks in with the camera, the audience, to log a mini-journal of sorts, telling us where he is with respect to his original journaled goal. These moments were filmed both as spontaneous moments and as set-up scenarios; however the content was always based on an actual conversation or event, sometimes needing to recreate it to keep the story clear for the audience.

Dovey (2000) claims that it is the smaller and lighter technology of the day that allows us to capture so easily the spontaneous moments at high quality, and that this "has revived the project of the Direct Cinema pioneers to 'capture' a raw, unmediated reality."

It is true that the technology available to filmmakers and others today allows for much more non-intrusive filming, however, I think it would be naïve to say that one was able to capture reality "unmediated" as the presence of the camera person and camera immediately effect the reality with the mere presence. It is "unnatural" that they are present.

I looked to John Grierson who is considered to be a founding father of British documentary in the late 1920s, 30s, and 40s. I found in Grierson on Documentary (1979) an early definition of documentary, a basic foundation that can describe a wide range of documentary styles from the short journalistic newsreel to the full-length historical documentary.

“1) We believe that the cinema’s capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form... Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story.

2) We believe that the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world. They give cinema a greater fund of material. They give it power over a million and one images. They give it power of interpretation over more complex and astonishing happenings in the real world than the studio or mind can conjure up or the studio mechanician create

3) We believe that the materials and the stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophic sense) than the acted article. Spontaneous gesture has a special value on the screen. (36-37)

For Grierson, all forms of “on the spot” filming can be considered “documentary”, representing different qualities and different intentions of observation, and “of course, very different powers and ambitions at the stage of organizing material.” In general, Grierson dismisses the lower categories (the journalistic newsreel, the magazine) of documentary and focuses on what he calls the “higher” categories, i.e. the historical or observational documentary (1979:35). However, the principles Grierson lays out above can be applied to the lower categories just as easily, and I think it is within these lower categories that *The Travelling Jewish* lies.

One particular type of ‘lower’ category of documentary is what Grierson calls the “tit-bits” manner of observation. Saying it is a “journalistic skill” and that they “avoid on the one hand the consideration of solid material and escape, on the other, the solid consideration of any material. Within these limits they are often brilliantly done. But ten in a row would bore the average human to death. Their reaching out for the flippant or popular touch is so completely far-reaching that it dislocates something. Possibly taste;

possibly common sense. You make take your choice at those little theatres where you are invited to gad around the world in fifty minutes. It takes only that long – in these days of great invention – to see almost everything”. (1979:35) The flippant quality with which Grierson describes this type of documentary is amusing to me, as there is truth in it, and does not fully dismiss the category.

Grierson (1979:101-103) discusses the “modern technology” of the 1940s, and I think he would be shocked at the technology of today, and probably not too impressed with *The Travelling Jewish*, as it certainly “reach[es] out for the flippant or popular touch.” However, referring back to Grierson’s “First Principle” - there is clearly some documentary value in the “tit bits”.

For Grierson, documentary was in its simplest most natural place when couched in realism. Both for the filming and for the finances. Real is better.

“The economics of production in the early days were more cheaply served by the natural exterior. Till we learned to create our own sunlight, the heavenly variety was cheaper; until we mastered the art of miniature and dunning and back projection, it was cheaper to take the story to a natural location than the other way round. And the effect was to give not only naturalism to the setting but naturalism to the theme.” (Grierson, 1979:71) I will discuss the idea of financial resources pushing the “real” and “natural” further in the next section on Reality Television and its proliferation in the 1990s and early 21st century.

## ii) Cinéma Vérité

*Cinéma Vérité* would be European version of direct cinema, with its own European twist. In his essay “The Present State of Documentary”, James Arnold says “the fundamental power of the medium... is its ability to take you there, some place where you might not ordinarily go, or even want to go, to witness something that ‘really happened’” (In Jacobs, 1979:483)

Jacobs carries on in discussing the new technology that allows for portable equipment, smaller crews, able to operate “with little fear of disturbing the “truth” of reality by the presence of their crews” and endless equipment. The new style that emerged with access to new, lighter and smaller equipment was termed “*Cinéma Vérité*”, or ‘true film’ and dominated the world of documentary at the time James Arnold wrote his article, in the 1970s.

*Cinéma Vérité*, according to Arnold (Jacobs, 1979:483), allowed for the subject matter to be “more bizarre and a great deal more personal”. This, Arnold explains, can now lead to more ethical questions. As the camera is no longer obstructive in its size and portability, what and how things can be captured becomes almost endless, thereby putting the filmmaker in a place of greater responsibility. With *Cinéma Vérité* came the ability to expose the more vulgar, private lives of individuals and groups, using the camera to provoke and reveal, leaving the filmmaker with ethical questions of how intrusive he was willing to go, and how deeply he could expose his subjects.

Recent documentary style is grounded in personal identity and message and is more overtly subjective than historical documentary filmmaking or observational documentary. Filmmaker Michael Moore, for example, makes films regarded by the public to be documentaries, however, he himself “considers his films to be “nonfiction personal essays,” and places a high value on entertaining his audiences.” However his films have a clear political message and are considered by some to be left-wing propaganda. The more subjective and reflexive style of recent documentary filmmaking is addressed in the following section in a discussion that includes Reality Television.

### **C. REALITY TELEVISION/DOCUDRAMA**

*“To be against the popular is to be elitist, traditionalist, paternalistic. To be for the popular is to be contemporary, value free, democratic – it is possible in these recurrent polarities to see a pattern that characterizes some important features of 1990s media culture... “*

*“TV stinks to heaven... if you have to study it, hold your nose and take a bath later on.”*

*“Next to the H-Bomb, no force on earth is as dangerous as television.”  
Andrew Ross (In Grindstaff: 4)*

#### **i) First Person Media**

Beginning in the early 1990s through to today, Reality Television has proliferated. By Reality Television I am referring to what Dovey calls “subjective and confessional” styles of television that exposes the “real”. This can be seen in such shows as “Big Brother”, “Survivor”, “Couch Trip” or “the Real World”. I argue that The Travelling

Jewish falls into this category, however instead of being a show about a competition for money, a revelation about one's private sex-life, or an action-packed hunt for tragedy, it follows the search for humour. It follows the real-life events of Nik Rabinowitz as he searches for stand-up material and his alter-ego, Hapi Xolaki's, goat. This is real, slightly absurd, but real. The interactions are real; the scenes were all shot unrehearsed.

Everyone Nik meets and interacts with is a real, non-actor person, whom we filmed by chance. In this sense *The Travelling Jewish* is a form of Reality TV.

The political-economic conditions of the Television situation in the United States in the 1980s produced Reality TV. A less expensive model for Television was needed due to disagreements with acting and crew unions. (Murray, 2004:1). By soliciting contestants to participate in a reality show where they could win fame and maybe fortune, the production houses avoided the cost of casts, and minimized set design and construction. Shows like "The Real World" were shot all in one large apartment or house with cameras monitoring them 24-hours a day. Most of the expenditure went into post-production.

## **ii) Individual Identity**

Further looking into Reality Television's origins I found much to be learned from John Dovey, in *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (2000). Dovey explains that the phenomenon of Reality Television comes from a need to express individual identity. Not discounting the political-economic force creating the genre, Dovey describes the proliferation of this new genre of media across print journalism, literature,



factual TV programming and digital media (p. 1), referring to an “intimate revelation” of the participant that has become a key part of the creation of identity through public performance. He sees Reality Television as a “genre that foregrounds the performance of individual identities”, with the “real” identities of the characters replacing the fictionalized characters previously written for television.

“Rather than viewing television as the inevitable production of the forces of economics and culture I want to re-establish the idea of television as a material process in which real people make real decisions within particular and precise contexts”. (2000:2)

Dovey attempts to address culture questions with a concern towards the “public”. He sees Television as a public space and therefore the content becomes a social commentary, with “collective identities and common symbolic pattern emerging from a public speech increasingly rooted in local and particular speaking subjects.”

The economics of Reality TV open it up to public access more so than other types of media such as film or drama television, allowing individuals a new medium for the expression of social identity, “performing the ordinariness of their own subjectivity”. (2000:2).

Andrejevic in Reality TV : The Work of Being Watched (2003), calls Reality TV a “hot programming trend of the new millennium”, but adds that being watched can be life-enhancing and fun. That it is not an escape from reality but rather a road into reality. (8).

In looking at the blurry line between documentary and factual TV, Dovey (2000:14) states that Documentary and Factual TV now exist in a space that is neither wholly

fictional nor wholly factual, both yet neither.” He goes on to talk about the created, set up or dramatised aspect of factual TV, and poses the question of whether one can really exist without the other.

### iii) Social Identity

*“On one hand it is possible to see this as just another manifestation of the relentless commodification of every sphere of cultural production and consumption that characterizes **neo-liberalism**.” ... but this falls short... in terms of representation and ideology we have to turn to a more detailed analysis of the content of the new factual TV in order to discover what such programmes might tell us about ourselves and our common culture.” (Dovey:21)*

In the United Kingdom, in particular, there is a decrease in Documentary and Factual TV viewing and an increase in “entertainment-based formats”, i.e. Reality TV (2000:21).

Reality TV being different from Documentary and Factual TV in that Reality TV is created and set up for the camera rather than Documentary or Factual TV that observe/capture an actual situation.

According to [www.reality-TV-guide.com](http://www.reality-TV-guide.com), over 70 Reality TV shows have been produced to-date in the United States, touching nearly every television network in the country.

“Reality TV shows have affected society in many different ways. Some audiences get hooked on these shows because they help them escape their own real lives”

([www.reality-tv-guide.com](http://www.reality-tv-guide.com), 2006).

The cultural atmosphere is one of the “subjective-equals-authentic”. That an address to the audience via the camera lens is more real than a fictionalised conversation between two fictional characters (Dovey, 2000:24). “Changes in TV form toward the subjective rather than the objective, toward reflexivity rather than transparency, and toward a “theatre of intimacy,” reflect not only the political economy of global mass media but also important developments in the relationship between identity and culture” (25).

The criteria that makes this believable is often as simple as the quality of shooting. A hand-held look in natural light gives the appearance of spontaneity, whereas a tripod perfect shot give a more studio-like approach. Additionally, sound can be added to give a real quality to a situation. Nik’s stand-up routines, for example, were filmed in a set up situation, but the ambient track from a bar, and a laugh track from one of his comedy shows give the appearance of authenticity.

This relationship between identity and culture is expressed in Reality TV through the recurrent iteration of “‘raw’, intimate human experience” which creates a balance to the overwhelming complexity in our lives and the continuous inundation of media-imposing value systems upon us. Reality TV provides an alternative to “a world in which the grand narratives are exhausted”, using “the politics of the self to keep us ideologically warm” (2000:26).

To this end, the importance of identity and the use of first person factual programming became popular with a documentary style called Reflexive Documentary. Reflexive films

are texts which refer to their own process in the final product –” they take on board the problematics of filmmaking itself as part of the process of making meaning... As such they are films that are often as much about film itself as they are about a work’s nominal subject” (Dovey 2000:27).

Intersect reflexive documentary and first person media, and Dovey finds “a range of new modes of reflexivity... all characterized by their construction of autobiographical frameworks as a guarantee of meaningfulness.”

In this sense is the creation of a framework for media that seeks to give legitimacy to subjectivity, create and safeguard identity and guarantee meaningfulness, not a social commentary? Most certainly. It is the commentary of an identity crisis. In *The Travelling Jewish*, Nik is clear and honest about his identity, his search and his insecurity. In this way he gives meaning to the show, and is “reaching out”. He is a real person, and a South African; an individual and a member of society.

Documentary films by such filmmakers as Michael Moore, Ross McElwee, Alan Berliner and Nick Broomfield “display a range of strategies for dealing with the (apparently) personal, subjective filmmakers’ vision within the structure of the documentary itself.” (2002:28) Here, Dovey is arguing that in these films “we are witnessing the dominant tradition of documentary filmmaking responding to shifts in the private and public domains of life.” (2002:28)

Dovey writes that now there are entire strains of documentary filmmaking, and media in general, that pay specific attention to and are focused around “subjectivity”.

Although this argument is quite nice, the taking back of power from the media, there is already a backlash, in that the newer, more subjective media now becomes the imposing popular media guiding social, economic and cultural trends based merely on the fact that its audience is vast and influential to media forms.

In contrast to Dovey’s more positive look at the proliferation of Reality TV as self-expression, others are much quicker to criticize Reality TV as a form of mind control. Laura Grindstaff in her article “*Trashy or Transgressive: Reality TV and the Politics of Social Control*”, links the “increase of reality TV with the spreading sense of powerlessness of the general public.” (2002:2) She says that the idea of Reality TV is to make real-life incidents as dramatic and entertaining as possible, pandering to the lower and dirtier aspects of media. Quoting Stephen Stark, a commentator for National Public Radio in the United States, “Reality TV plays on our voyeuristic desires as well as our newest basic instinct: wanting to appear on TV....self-exhibition is a validation of existence.” The power of existence is validated by the camcorder.

While proponents of Reality TV say that the naturalism and realism of the shows give them social and cultural value, Grindstaff says that Reality TV has no genuine content, that it is mimetic and manipulates people by colonizing their minds leaving “...no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience.” (2002:3)

The Apprentice, for example, sets up a series of tests for contestants that have been selected and grouped together based on their potential dramatic interactions, bears little relation to a realistic work environment. This competitive framework within a constructed reality – a contest of a series of tests that one would never encounter, nor ever win a million dollars having once succeeded, however un-real, leave little to the imagination.

Andrew Ross in his book, says that there is a “danger in simulation of reality, rather than merely represent it, and the inability of the viewer to know the difference.” Hence, what is marketed as real could very well not be, thereby creating standards and ideals of reality within social and cultural context that do not exist yet become the standard by which society measures itself. The fabrication is not just in the set up of the scene, but in the following manipulation of editing, grading, and use of sound. Grindstaff (1995:6) puts it succinctly when she says that a false consciousness is created. All television for that matter is created, says Grindstaff, no matter how live they might be. The camera angle, choice of location, character, light, it is all a construct.

A scenario is generally set up where the realities of the ‘real characters’, i.e. race, religion, socio-economic status, do not matter. A fantasy is created “as an expression of what our culture lacks and therefore desires. A world in which race, gender, and sexual orientation don’t matter... or more significantly... where the desire to connect with other

human beings at whatever level generates an elaborate, mythical, electronic space in which no detail is too small to reproduce, no story too personal to tell.” (Wired. 1994:48)

In addition to invading privacy is the manipulation that can happen in Reality TV scenarios, both on camera and in post-production. “Some Reality TV shows are edited to be dramatic and some quotes may actually be manufactured. Clashes and ugly feuds between the reality stars may be constructed and some parts of the shows may also be completely edited and cut out so they don't make the final show that people see on TV. Some critics actually charge that Reality TV is not so real and that these shows may be far more manipulative than we think.” ([www.reality-tv-guide.com](http://www.reality-tv-guide.com). 2006)

In conclusion for the theoretical aspects of my research, I found that I borrow from the factual and “real” filming techniques of Documentary Filmmaking, Direct Cinema and *Cinéma Vérité* to give my project a natural quality so that the viewer will believe/know that the road trip did happen, with a comedian and that these are real people, not actors, with whom he is interacting. The elements then of Reality TV allow for a more playful approach through Nik’s reflexive interaction with the camera and the audience, as well as give me the editor a flexible means by which I can put together the project, tell the story, using several “constructed” scenarios. More about my technical approach to this project will be explained in Section III.

### **III. Methodology**

*“What is essentially laughable is what is done automatically.”<sup>10</sup>*

The elements of Documentary Film in *The Travelling Jewish* are primarily the shooting style, the loose script based on locations and general “wish lists” for scenes based on types of unscripted conversations that would be nice to have. With the few exceptions discussed below, *The Travelling Jewish* is an improvised project. What is interesting is that the premise of the project is based on the fact that Nick Rabinowitz created a title for a stand-up comedy show for which he did not have material. The title of the show, “Anyone Seen My Goat?” for him was rather arbitrary; “It sounded funny to me at the time,” said Nik. At the same time, I asked Nik, whom I had worked with on other projects, if he was interested in going on a road trip to ‘find funny’ with me and a camera. Seeing as he needed material for a show and I was looking to capture a comedian’s process in finding material, we set out on a journey that resulted in *The Travelling Jewish*.

#### **i) Why Find Funny?**

In looking at different theories around, and discussions of, Reality TV, the focus is generally on negative aspects of society that are a dramatic hook for today’s audiences. Chasing police and other emergency vehicles into disastrous situations, competing viper-like characters on *Survivor*-type shows, all in competition for loads of cash. Frustrated by the focus on tragedy and competition that occupy every channel of the small little boxes (i.e. TV) that dictate how society sees our world, I set out to create a Reality show



that searches for humour. The vehicle was a local comedian. The terrain: local characters residing in the landscape of South Africa.

Not being South African, I was challenged while searching for humour in a South African context. Although there is much humour that crosses national barriers, humour is an agreement to what is acceptable or not acceptable within one's social and cultural context. Being aware of this and having spent the last year studying theories of humour, going to comedy shows and living in a South African context, I have a general sense of the myriad contexts within South Africa.

Equally important to understanding the intricate nuances of humour in South Africa, was that the host of the show was familiar with the multiple contexts that we might encounter. In this regard, Nik was perfect. As a comedian, he is able to improvise in most situations and he also speaks Afrikaans and Xhosa, and therefore able to communicate with nearly all of the characters we might encounter on the trip.

Not unlike early Reality TV shows, my style for the show was dictated by finance. With a minimal budget, studio space, a nice rental car and a paid cast were out of the question. A short road trip crewed by friends and hosted by Nik pro-bono was the plan.

Myself as director, producer, and sometime camerawoman, two crew members and Nik left Cape Town for a four-day road trip, with Prince Albert our destination, content

unknown. I was keen to plan as little as possible, to allow the reality to unfold, the spontaneity of each situation a potential catalyst for humour.

Although I originally thought I would want the crew to appear in the show. I eventually felt like it detracted from the project. Instead, I went for a more reflexive style with Nik giving commentary “to camera”. The camera style and interaction with Nik from behind the camera was intentionally a reflexive documentary style, foregrounding the identity of Nik the comedian.

## **ii) Access**

The simplicity of digital media allowed for us to capture all the footage in a short period of time, to be less intrusive with the camera (as it is fairly small compared to previous models) and to be exceedingly spontaneous. We had 16 hours of battery time and 15 hours of tape to record over 4 days, with our only major limitation being the capturing of clear sound. This, however, was more due to the nature of our “sets” – shooting next to the highway; on a farm; in restaurants... which are all much noisier than one would imagine if not recording sound.

While our access to lighter-weight, easier and less expensive equipment enabled us to film quickly and for the most part not-so-intrusively, we were also very aware of the fact that cultural context dictated when and where our filming was appropriate and therefore what we were able to capture and later project. The cultural context must also be open to

the style that this equipment makes possible. I feel that because South Africa is at place of reflexive inquisition – “How far have we come since.... Where are we going?... What are acceptable values?... Is this politically correct?... Which barriers are still up?... Am I a doos?... What is my role in this society, now that anything is possible?” – the presence of the camera was welcome.

In this respect, Nik is an excellent host/commentator/protagonist, in that he is by nature a reflexive person, both personally and socially. His multilingual talents help him cross the cultural divides of the past to look at the present.

How much did Nik’s access to people have to do with his race, his language skills, and his charm? How much of it was the “authority” of the camera and microphone? There is something about a camera that makes people submit. The majority of people we encountered assumed we were authorities of some sort. A television crew has power. We can make you famous.

### **iii) Different Approaches with Examples**

#### *a) Fact in fiction and fiction in fact*

I am sure there are audience members who will think that much of The Travelling Jewish was staged. Or if not much, then a part of it. And while I stand by the fact that I consider this project to be an improvised story, this is not untrue. Often we would come across the possibility of a particular scene, and after talking to the person who could make this scene

possible, ran the scene once only, improvised, but with the objective stated before rolling the camera. Whether I, as the director, or Nik, as the primary interactive character, gave a clear or vague explanation of our objective depended upon the authenticity we hoped to get from a character.

*b) The Fully Improvised Scene*

Fairview was fully improvised. It was our first day of shooting and we just really went for the goat theme. Nik was always Nik and all the conversations documented were one-time conversations. This is the same for chapters 2, 3 and 5.

*c) The Partial Set-Up*

A fully-improvised scene, with partial manipulation in Nik's identity with no discussion of who we were or what we were doing before the camera were chapters 2 and 3. To discuss chapter 3 specifically, the Juskei scene, who could make this stuff up? The manipulation was in Nik pretending to be a reporter from Barcelona, with his Spanish crew, without ever revealing otherwise. This manipulation allowed for an explanation of the game to someone who was learning about it for the first time. We got so much more from the interaction. The scene soon became a description of "the brown people" and an unintentional social commentary of race and a reflection of how some in Woester<sup>23</sup> attempt to describe racial difference. Here, none of us expected Nik to suddenly put on a Spanish accent. He took us all by surprise and we played along. In fact, I initially thought that he was using the same Lithuanian character he used in Mr. Price, and in

conversations with other members of the Jukskei Club, I must have surely confused them, as they thought we all worked for Lithuanian Television.

*d) The set-up, yet improvised scene*

In Chapter 7, Gay, the woman running the dairy in Prince Albert for example, was a set-up. It was the evening before when the idea came to us as we were talking with her husband, Clive about our trip and our mission of traveling with Nik and his alter ego, Hepi Xolaki, a white sangoma. Nik was explaining that for 3 days we had been looking for Hepi's goat. And now, here we were at our destination, and we weren't sure where to go from here. It was at this point that Clive, the husband, said, "We've got heaps of goats. Take one of ours!" In a further discussion of who we might have on camera with Nik to negotiate the sale of the goat, we learned that Gay spoke Xhosa. Finally! Nik could use his Xhosa. The fact that it would be with a white woman, well that's surely a surprise! Incongruous theory in practice.

It was perfect. Had Gay not spoken Xhosa, and Clive not suggested we take one of his goats, the episode may have ended very differently.

*e) The Fully Set up Scenes: The Interview*

Both the brief interview with Nik at the beginning of the show was a re-enactment of a conversation Nik and I had two months prior which solidified the idea to go on a road trip. I wanted to capture this defining moment to provide the context for the search for humour in rural South Africa, to explain who Hepi Xolaki is and what the goat is about.

*f) Stand-Up*

The stand up was written by Nik and performed over a 3-week period at the Obz Cafe approximately 6 weeks after we returned from the road trip. Although I recorded his show several times, the jokes were not as concise as I needed them to be for The Travelling Jewish. There were often tangential jokes that were not relevant to what I was putting together. Therefore, I filmed the parts of the stand up act relevant to the show in a studio setting in the wings on the stage of The Little Theatre. The ambience and laughter were taken from the previous shows at the Obz Cafe, with footage of the crowd taken a year earlier at the Obz café.

I would definitely call this “cheating”, however, not fabricating, as these scenes are all based on true experience.

**iv) Techniques used in Filming, Editing, Animation and Sound**

*a) Filming*

The Travelling Jewish had a crew of two cameramen, and me serving as director, sound person and alternate cameraman. Because I wanted most scenes to be improvised and spontaneous, we mostly used a handheld camera technique. This allowed us to follow Nik almost anywhere and for the cameramen to take my direction for quick changes. It also gave me the look I wanted of “on the scene”. With the exception of staged scenes

mentioned above, all filming was on location, with natural light and environment, typical of observational documentary techniques.

All but the stand-up shot in The Little Theatre, was also shot in a natural environment. In the Little Theatre I used false light.

Drive-by car shots and the interview with Nik on the top of the Swartberg Pass were filmed with a tripod as these shots were meant to give a more stable feel to the whole of the show; transition and context being key for the show to come together.

Additionally we were quite generous with the footage captured, often just running the tape for every interaction Nik had, as we didn't know which interactions would produce the most comical results. At the end of our 4-day shoot, we had 12 hours of tape for 26 minutes of final project.

#### *b) Editing*

I edited the show in a chronological way to make simpler the changes in clothing, hair, and other scene props, etc. I edited for humour and for creating a round image of our experience, with a view to properly representing the communities we passed through.

I cut in images of goats and overlaid goat sounds to heighten the absurdity of Nik's quest for a goat and to emphasize that this was indeed his quest.

In searching for the more humorous aspects of our footage, I found moments that were absurd, incongruous, or manifested elements of superiority or inferiority humour theory I had previously researched. Although these moments were not clear at the time of filming, in editing, I isolated specific moments using both angles of the camera to focus on them when possible. I cut through the longer chatter moments, going straight for the point, often highlighting the point by doing so. An example of this is in the opening chapter at Fairview Farm. Individual interviews that in reality lasted from 3 to 8 minutes, were edited down to 5-15 seconds, taking the strongest moments, while the context was already laid out in the voice-over of one of these conversations over the images of Nik's arrival at Fairview. This emphasis made clearer to me how the different theories apply to humorous moments that I had originally only recognized instinctively.

The Reality Television style comes in as we, the camera people, waited for Nik to create "drama/comedy" in front of the camera, knowing that that would be the strength of the filming. For this reason we filmed everything Nik did, despite the high ratio of tape to product that this meant.

c) *Animation*

The animated goat that announces the chapters and the commercial breaks was created to add an element of play to the show. As a teenager I was greatly influenced by Monty Python, and there is something about the appearance of a goat in animated form that reminds me of them. The goat coupled with the banner and the Book and Chapter headings were meant to be reminiscent of Monty Python's "The Holy Grail". The text of



the Chapter headings is a bit ridiculous but is also meant to guide the audience with the narrative of the show as a whole.

*d) Music and Sound Effects*

The music was selected to match the Jewish theme of the show, and because of its Travelling, high energy feel. At the end of each section, the music comes in the middle of the song, indicating that we are in the process of something. Also, specific moments, like the flashes to the goats in Chapter i, heighten an absurdity. In general the music brings the viewer to see the piece as a whole. It is unifying while it's style reinforces the title, The Travelling Jewish.

Other pieces used in The Travelling Jewish were recorded in my kitchen by local accordion player Ingrid Salzmann. She picks up the tune Nik sings at Ronnie's Sex Shop/The Road Kill Café and then leaving the shepherd, thereby tying in the goat theme with the Jewish theme.

Over all I wanted the music's rhythm and tempo to move the show forward and set a humorous tone. I also happen to love the accordion.

Additional sounds, such as the goat hooves, the whistle-bomb in the Jukskei scene and the audience applause at the top of the Swartberg Pass were all included to heighten absurdity ; make the real a little unreal.

**v) Choice of Title: The Travelling Jewish**

The title for this project aims to cover a greater story than the search for a goat. I wanted to create a larger context for Nik to travel on other humour searches in a series of shows capturing the humour, color and landscape of South Africa. And although Nik is Jewish, he makes few comments on his being Jewish throughout Book 1 of *The Travelling Jewish*. The title is not meant to limit him in any way. The grammatical incorrectness of the title is intentional on my part, and it references two things. Firstly, it references the joke “you don’t look Jewish” which is a part of Nik’s show and a piece of that routine accompanies his name in the title sequence of the show. Secondly, it is an incomplete phrase, leaving an opening for possibilities.

Mostly, I think my use of the Jewish theme has something to do with my appreciation for Jewish humour. I grew up in New York and I always felt an affinity with Jewish comedians and jokesters. Although my appreciation for Jewish humour is derived from a completely different context from that of South Africa, I feel like the title, *The Travelling Jewish*, with the Klezmer music as a comedic element, is only an incongruous one: the show is called *The Traveling Jewish*, but little of it has anything to do with being Jewish.

**vi) The Travelling Jewish: A Social Commentary**

Nik makes several asides throughout the project and his stand-up is a social commentary of the experiences we had on the road. The stand up serves, in most instances, to point

out the absurdity of specific interactions or the humorous associations he has with particular people and settings. Ronnie's and Jukskei are two distinct scenes in this respect. Nik extends his "You don't look Jewish" routine into the Jukskei scene's white/brown conversation when he tells the Afrikaans man "You don't look brown!" Here, the audience saw the Jukskei interaction and knows that Nik took the piss out of this Afrikaans man when he had him try and explain what a "coloured" person is. Nik never said "you don't look brown" however, it was clearly on his mind throughout the scene, and in his stand up he can point and laugh at the absurdity of a very tan Afrikaans man calling someone else "brown." I suppose this is a form of covert filming (Dovey, 2002:59), which brings in ethical questions about invading someone's privacy under false pretenses.

Dovey describes the set up we used in the Jukskei scene in the following way:

"journalistic set-ups and scams are shown to reveal an essential 'truth' about some otherwise hidden aspect of society. The combination of voyeurism and public service righteousness that they elicit has so far proved an unassailable de facto argument for the continued development of such shows" (59).

The explanation Nik received from the Afrikaans man was found by the crew and filmmaker to be very amusing, as it represented a social view no longer "appropriate" – and in fact, unexplainable – it became absurd. My motivation as the director and editor for filming it, and keeping it, certainly comes from a place of "public service righteousness" – as does Nik's commentary after his interaction with the Jukskei club.

a) *Subjectivity and Identity*

Nik's "freakishness" comes through immediately in his address to the camera/viewer of the fact that he has recently created a new show and he doesn't know how it is going to pan out. He expresses his fears and the secret that he doesn't know where he is going. This happens several times with the characters that he meets on his trip, expressing to them that he is looking for his goat, while at the same time – this is a cue to the viewers that he is also looking for interesting interactions and conversation, since they are in on the secret that he is also a stand-up comedian, looking for material.

In Chapter 6, the sequence of Nik on top of the Swartberg Pass, he addresses the viewers directly again, giving a kind of report card on how his search for material is going. I have edited this section with several jump cuts to show Nik's thoughts jumping from one to the next, searching for something funny. This is meant to get into his intensely reflective state, with a touch of discomfort for the viewer, as Nik is clearly uncomfortable and feeling forced to be funny. These reflective moments in the show are improvised, only receiving direction from me about what topic, mood or general content that served only as inspiration or a guide for the scene.

Stand-up itself is distinctly reflective as it is the comedian's thoughts on a particular subject..., although the content is refined, researched and rehearsed. Each interaction that is presented in the show inspired a reflective moment in Nik, where he saw or experienced irony, contradiction, incongruity or became aware of comparisons.

The Travelling Jewish addresses South African Identity, not only through Nik's encounters with different characters, but through his expressions of his own identity. His use of language, clothing, his conversations, serve as an engaging factor for the expression of identity and as a reflector of identity.

b) *Avoiding lowest common denominator humour*

Although the title of the show "Anyone Seen My Goat?" and the search for the goat in the first episode of The Travelling Jewish have led many people, audiences and simply people with whom we interacted, even Nik himself, to blue humour. BokNei (goat-screwing) was in many conversations during our trip. However, it was my intention from the beginning to keep these jokes to a minimum. In the end, the closest thing to a BokNei joke is the song sung by Nik both in his scene at the Road Kill Café and after his interaction with the shepherd "a little lady/goat is coming to sleep with me tonight/ she can just lie there, cause I am a loose rag/floozy." I really challenged Nik to think outside of the box on his goat motives, and to look for a deeper humour than BokNei. Although there was some tension around this as I, the director, had not yet really constrained his comedic choices, in the end, I found his humour much richer and the final product much more inviting.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Through the exploration of humour with Nik Rabinowitz as a guide, using the techniques of Documentary Film and Reality Television, The Travelling Jewish was created. In

doing so, I believe we are opening up a new genre of Television, the Docu-Comedy, which aims to explore comedy in site-specific landscapes, through primarily improvised scenes, using the discretion of the director to do otherwise when narrative comprehension is at risk. In this way humour exists in a way that I think is not often exploited on television.

Humour serves as a forum to bring to the attention of society activities, beliefs, morals, etc., while at the same time challenging their validity or even ethical realities. However, its mere existence is often seen as a sign of the health of a society.

In contrast to Docu-Drama, which points out, heightens and even glorifies the negativity of society, Docu-Comedy serves to bring awareness to the lighter side of society, with humour as a common denominator. It seeks to comment on society through a common understanding of what is incongruous or absurd, through maintaining the context of such understandings through the use of documentary film techniques, making accessible this exploration through various editing techniques and the medium of Reality Television.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Morreal, Taking Laughter Seriously, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983) Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes, in John Morreal, The Philosophy of Laughter and Humour, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) 19.

<sup>3</sup> William Hazlitt, in Morreall 1987, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Neitzche, in Simon Critchley, On Humour, (London: Routledge, 2002) 90.

<sup>5</sup> Morreall 1983, 61.

<sup>6</sup> [www.racist-jokes.com](http://www.racist-jokes.com)

<sup>7</sup> [www.yourjokes.net](http://www.yourjokes.net). When looking for racist humour, there was a plethora of joke about all but whites. I was finally able to find a few jokes directed at whites, however, the majority of these were redneck jokes from the US.

<sup>8</sup> This was sent to my by SMS in September 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Morreall 1987, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Henri Bergson (1980: p155) in Stott, A., 2005. Comedy. NY, NY: Routledge.

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