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MASTERS OF ARTS RESEARCH REPORT
Supervisor: Pervaiz Khan
Date:30-09-2019

Title: Wonders and Miracles: A study of how Mockumentaries interrogate sociopolitical issues in South Africa

Declaration:

This research report is my original work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. This work has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

…….

Obett Hlonolo Motaung

Signed at ……

On the……..Day of……2019

Dedication

For my late grandmother Olga Kedibone Motaung

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Introduction

The aim of this research is to examine the extent to which mockumentaries are able to interrogate the socio-political issue of how of the public are being taken advantage of by powerful public figures, such as pastors and politicians. For this research I will be focusing on the mockumentary devices of stereotyping and alienation. I will be looking at these two devices as a means of interrogating the social political issue of how a corrupt 'pastor' and fraudulent 'politician' abuse the people they serve. The research will use *Wonder Boy for President (*2016) to illustrate the success and limitations of mockumentary to interrogate the socio-political issue of how people are being abused by political leaders. Following the findings from the case study, this research will, create its own mockumentary that is focused on the thematic concern of how people placed in authority in particular pastor abuse their powers and negate the aspirations of the society they purport to represent. My film will examine how fraudsters use Christianity as a means to exploit people and enrich themselves. Therefore, in investigating how mockumentaries as a film form, are able to deal with this thematic concern through the use of *Wonder Boy for President* (2016) and creating my own mockumentary as a case study, I will be able to analyze the effectiveness of mockumentaries in interrogating the social political issue.

Even though this sociopolitical issue takes place across the world, for the scope of this study is limited to South Africa**.** South Africa is a developing country that is faced with various social-political and economic issues that stem from the effects of apartheid, which created an economically unequal society. This highly economically unequal society has created a situation where most South Africans are not only desperate for solutions to their socio-economic challenges but also vulnerable to fraudsters who claim they can solve their challenges.

The difference between Documentaries and Mockumentaries

Winston (2018*)* defines documentary as organising actuality in a dramatic form in a manner where it offers access into a world. According to Druick and William (2014*)* for documentary to achieve its objective of understanding one's own environment it needs to represent reality. "For documentary, it is about the documentary film makers ability to ethically truthfully and skillfully capture and record a version of actuality on screen and use that to construct a narrative screen-based reality" (Kerrigan& Mclntyre,2010:pg117). Documentary relies on epistemology which position one on the very possibility of knowledge and its dissemination through discourse. Furthermore it relies on evidence that is in a visual form. Through this evidence a trust is built between the filmmaker and viewer on what they view as 'truth'. Documentary aims to be giving an objective account of the world while disavowing the subjectivity of the filmmaker (Winston, 2018). In addition documentary filmmaking emphasize the representational character of the filmic medium. In contrast mockumentary styles often engages in the earlier presentational mode where the object of the film is allegedly presented directly to the audience. Documentary claims that it presents actuality which legitimizes its claims as truth (Winston, 2018). Documentary creates a representation of world, while mockumentary ask one to be critical of that representation of the world (Winston, 2018).

In terms of mockumentary, Wintson (2018) argues that mockumentary not only pushes the boundary on the concept of life as narrative but it also mocks the issues of ethics and authenticity in documentary. Mockumentaries are closely referenced to the development of a broader fact-fiction continuum that encompasses documentary, television, news, and current affairs together with more explicitly hybrid forms. They are not only reflexive in nature, but they also expose how easily documentaries can be faked. Furthermore Wintson (2018) states how mockumentaries discourse deliberately engages in particular with documentary's rhetorical address to its audience, transforming the documentary call to action to a call to play. According to Rhodes& Springer (2006) mockumentaries functions are more clearly intertextual and they appropriate documentary aesthetics to create a fictional world. Futhermore, mockumentaries take, as their object of mocking both documentary and culture, social and political icons. The form is also inherently reflexive and through the use of satire

critiques the documentary form. Mockumentaries make the production side of filming visible thereby creating in their viewers a conscious awareness that they are indeed watching a film, thus it is able to alienate and question notions of truth. Mockumentary challenges documentary allegiance to transparency and truthfulness (Kerrigan& Mclntyre, 2010)

Mockumentaries

Mockumentaries draw both from fictional and factual elements in filmmaking (Jauregul, 2004). "Their use of the term mockumentary refers to fiction masquerading as documentaries that are satirical or ironic in nature'' (Roscoe & Hight, 2001:2). Furthermore, they use concepts such as representation, semiotics and stereotyping to portray a world that is propelling specific ideologies. Mockumentaries function as a genre that mobilises satire, either in the parody of the form of documentary, in the satirical treatment or critique of an issue (Campbell, 2007). They enable a satiric possibility in order to critique any societal structures generally and any aspect of popular culture. Campbell (2007) states "Satire has long served a pedagogical role and shapes our expectations that some sort of "truth" will be uncovered when we are in its midst" meaning that satire functions as a pedagogical tool to teach and critique.

Mockumentaries parody the documentary genre and challenge the fundamental notions of truth that documentary claims. The parody in mockumentaries relies on audiences and the filmmaker not only recognizing but also understanding the conventions of documentaries in order to have a playful treatment on the conventions of documentaries. Schockmel (2007) argues that there are two types of mockumentaries. The first is a Critique Mockumentary; in this type of mockumentary tension is created between the factual codes presented in the film and the acceptance of those factual codes in public perception. The second is the Deconstruction Mockumentary; this type of mockumentary seeks to question the 'notion of truth' that documentary is claiming. This study is focused on the deconstruction mockumentary.

The mockumentary genre draws from the idea of film as a critique of society and propels it further by using satire. Satire has moved-evolved from being used in Roman literature to its use in newspapers, television and film in present day society (Le Boeuf, 2007). According to Le Boeuf (2007:1) "Satire is a powerful art form which has the ability to point out the deficiencies in certain human behaviors and the social issues which result from them in such a way that they become absurd, even hilarious, which is therefore entertaining and reaches a wide audience". Furthermore Le Boeuf (2007) adds that satire could be a powerful tool used for dissenters in oppressive political and social

times. In times where criticism needs to be raised against oppressive systems, satire becomes an important tool. Through satire criticism is not overtly stated but rather, hidden behind the humour. This means mockumentaries are able to mask heavy critique behind humour and allow laughter at other people's expense in order to critically engage with society. Hight (2005) challenges the notion that most mockumentaries are a parasitic form of documentary. He argues that both mockumentaries and documentaries engage audiences in different ways. Therefore documentaries engage the audience with what he refers to as a 'call to action nature' while, mockumentaries engage audiences with what he phrases as a 'call to play nature'. This has allowed for the genre to develop an audience beyond cinema to the medium of television, by how it engages with popular culture in a way where it uses humour and intertextuality (Hight, 2005). Through this, one has seen the emergence of various hit television series such as *The Tom Green Show(2000), The Office(2005) and Summer Heights(2007)* and in South Africa the *Pure Monate Show(2003)* produced by John Barker *and Late Nite News* with Loyiso Gola a South African late-night satirical news television series that airs weekly on e.tv and eNCA .The show featuring a variety of local stand-up comedians was created by comedians Loyiso Gola and Kagiso Lediga Loyiso and Producer Tamsin Andersson and launched in 2010.

Arguably *Land without Bread(1993)* by Luis Buñuel was one of the first mockumentary films to be produced due how it mocks the documentary genre and served as a strong precursor to another impactful mockumentary such as *A Hard Day's Night(1964) by* Richard Lester and *Spinal Tap(1984)* by Rob Reiner. Since then, many more mockumentaries have been produced. However few have gained critical acclaim with exceptions such as *Borat* (2006) and *Brüno* (2009) by the filmmaker Sacha Baron Cohen. Most of the genre's success has been in television with hit series such *The Office* a hilarious documentary-styled sitcom that looks into the humorous and sometimes poignant foolishness that plagues the world of 9-to-5, which has spawned many other international television series that use the format of mockumentaries.

Even though South Africa has one of the oldest film industries, it has not made great strides in terms of the production of mockumentaries. One could argue that this is because not much effort has been put in place to introduce South African audiences to the genre. In addition there has not been a developed market for the financing and

distribution of mockumentaries. These are the reason why there is a limited range of mockumentaries films from South African such as *Blu Cheez by* John Baker (2003), *Bunny Chow by* John Baker (2006), *Stone Cold Jane Austine* by John Savage (2015) *and Wonder Boy for President* by John Baker(2006).

Historical Background

According to Campbell (2007) mockumentaries are heavily depended on the parody and satire of the documentary genre. I would argue that for one to understand the history of mockumentaries, one would need to understand the history of documentary. Grierson (1996; pg13), who is seen as the father of documentary, defines documentary as a 'creative treatment of actuality'. Nichols (2010) views documentaries as offering oral and visual likenesses or representations of some part of the historical world.

I would argue that it is the British documentaries of the early 1950s that led to the emergence of mockumentaries as a film form by how these documentaries were not only depicting the lives of the working class of Britain during the Industrial Revolution but also demonstrating how film could be used as a social critique of society (Eitzen, 1995). These documentaries led to the emergence of one of first mockumentaries films to be widely popularized titled *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), which was based on the lives of the popular British band the Beatles and directed by Richard Lester. This film highlights how mockumentaries take fiction and masquerade it as documentary by taking the real-life *Beatle Mania* phenomena and combining it with fictional elements.

These films led to a broader discourse around combining codes from fiction and documentary, thus enabled a platform for films to operate within a fact-fiction hybrid (Hight, 2005). Hight (2005) challenges the notion that most mockumentaries are a parasitic form of documentary. He argues that documentaries and mockumentaries both engage audiences in different ways. As mentioned earlier he states that documentaries engage audiences with what he refers to as a 'call to action nature' while, mockumentaries hook audiences with what he phrases as a 'call to play nature'. Furthermore, he brings to light the notion that mockumentaries engage an audience in a reflective manner, where in this way it engages an audience differently from the social and political approach in which documentaries ordinarily attracts audiences. In the reflective manner the audience is forced to critically engage with what they are viewing (Hight, 2005). Therefore, mockumentaries have the ability to enforce a critical consciousness to its audience. It is through this form of critical engagement of the audience the mockumentary form is not only able to critically engage, but also to

interrogate social political issues. Furthermore Miller (2012) states “One of the primary tasks of the mockumentary genre is to comment on society’s sacred cows, cherished statuses, assumptions and icons undermine the notions that fuel our identities and shared truth”.

The introduction of apartheid South Africa in 1948 resulted in strict censorship laws, which prohibited the production films that addressed socio-political issues (Tomaselli, 1989). I would argue that the legislative framework was not favourable to have the emergence of mockumentaries due to fact that arguably one needs to firstly have documentaries that were not only reflecting the lives of working class people of South Africa and secondly a film form working as a social critique of society.

Furthermore, the apartheid state was configured to the likeness of or something similar to similar to a colonial state, therefore the films produced in the apartheid state had a particular agenda similar to the films produced in a colonial state (Tomaselli, 1989). As Tomaselli (1989) points out, in a South African apartheid context cinema was used similarly by colonial nations to maintain their influence economically and politically. During the apartheid-era, Black South Africans were excluded from a significant part of the film making process as their roles were limited to acting in submissive roles and doing minor technical jobs (Tomaselli, 1989). Furthermore, Tomaselli (1989) points out that “although more than 200 films have been made in black vernaculars by white producers, they all fall within the confines of the dominant ideology and are largely controlled by white capital” (Tomaselli, 1989). This means that Black South Africans were not accorded any agency over how they were represented. In addition, they were not given a voice to tell their own stories using the medium of film. These conditions made it not viable for mockumentaries to be produced because of how the film industry operated and how censorship worked. As previously stated, the emergence of mockumentaries was arguably made possible through documentaries working as social criticism and reflecting the realities faced by people. In apartheid-South Africa this was not possible and thus made it difficult for mockumentaries to emerge in these conditions.

Apartheid restriction on freedom of speech made it difficult for filmmakers to truly express themselves. Although this type of policing made it difficult to openly criticize

the state, satirical works were still being produced to criticize the state. I would argue that satire could have been the perfect tool used during the apartheid era to critique the state as one could hide the criticisms behind the humor. In theatre, satirical works were created to critique the state such as *Woza Albert* 1983 by Barney Simon, Percy Mtwa and Mbogeni Ngema. These satirical works became the vehicle through which the oppressed black majority was able to express their hardship under the apartheid system (Both, 2012). However, during the apartheid-era as previously discussed Black South Africans were excluded from a significant part of the filmmaking process (Tomaselli, 1989). This meant that the film industry was systematically designed to prevent the black majority from using it as a tool for their own agency. The black majority who mostly needed to use the tool of satire to critique the state was disempowered to use it effectively from the mediums of theatre to cinema and television. The only people who could use satire in films were white filmmakers such as Leon Schuster and Jamie Uys. However, their use of satire was limited and not effective in the sense of it being used as a tool to critique the state or reflect the injustices of apartheid in a humorous manner.

The Jamie Uys film *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980), I would argue to a limited degree could be seen as one of the first South African mockumentaries. This is believed to be true because of how it is arguably documentary like in form due how it use archival footage with the combination of fictional in content. The film follows tribal people in a remote African desert who live a happy life, but it is all torn to pieces when a Coca-Cola bottle falls from a plane. With the villagers fighting over the strange foreign object, tribal leader Xi (N!xau) decides to take the bottle back to the gods to restore peace. His journey to the "end of the world" eventually has him crossing paths with a bumbling scientist (Marius Weyers) and a band of guerrillas who take a schoolteacher (Sandra Prinsloo) and her class hostage. Although this film aims to be a critique of urban society versus romanticised rural simple society of the Bushmen, but due to its problematic representation of blackness, it fails to achieve its aim. Therefore, the film becomes a piece of propaganda promoting an Afrikaans nationalist agenda (Lee, 1985).

Gray Hofmeyr and Leon Schuster have used satire in filmic form to produce slapstick comedies. Even though, these films were highly successful, they were also very

problematic in how they represented black people and blackness within these films (Botha, 2012). According to Mamatu (2006) the black characters in these films were portrayed as negative stereotypes in order to ridicule them. Therefore, producing what Mamatu (2006) terms as "colonial laughter" which is a process where the satire produced comes from the humor of how the black characters where being negatively depicted as stereotypes to ridicule their black bodies and blackness. Thus defining black people negatively through laughter in order to maintain the view that black people should remain in the margins as they are uncivilized and also taming the black subject by curtailing the potential threat it could pose to a white society (Mamatu, 2006). The domino effect of these properties is the affirmation of white supremacist's belief that whites are superior to black people, an idea that Schuster strives to execute in his films. Although the satirical work was being produced during and post-apartheid regime, it still maintains apartheid ideology of white supremacy as opposed to challenging these oppressive systems of power, which satire is commonly used for.

Now in a post-apartheid South Africa, it possible for one to tell their own stories that reflect the realities of South Africa and that deal with social political issues that are indicative of the challenges of the country (Ngwenya, 2014). However, the challenge in terms of the production of mockumentaries remains with the distribution aspect. According to Grunenwald (2013) major players in distribution such as Ster-Kinekor and Nu Metro do not have an interest in giving South African films enough prints over a longer period to help increase box offices sales. This is due to how they view South African films as risky because of their poor performance at the Box Office. The distribution system in the country is set up in a manner where the interests of Hollywood are propagated over the development of the local film industry (Grunenwald, 2013). There is a lack of participation by the public and private sector in coming together to reconfigure how South Africa distributes its films locally and internationally. This creates a situation where a local audience is not developed, but also creates a situation where an audience has a limited variety in taste as it is only exposed to limited genres that are proven to sell.

Mockumentaries and social political issues

Campbell (2007) describes the hyperbolic function of mockumentaries as a means by which they interrogate socio-political issues. In his writing, he also unpacks how mockumentaries function as a genre that mobilizes irony, either in the parody form of the documentary or in its satirical treatment, to critique an issue. Furthermore, Campbell (2007) analyses how mockumentaries invite viewers to ridicule the 'real life' behavior of the individuals represented in the film. Campbell (2007) argues that the characters in mockumentaries are essentially tools or mechanisms that are used in order to reach a certain goal, meaning that they encourage the audience to lower their guard on what they are viewing in order to expose their own prejudices.

Campbell (2007) writes that mockumentary functions as a hyperbole in how mockumentaries contain satire and how that satire has a pedagogical function. Furthermore, she argues that mockumentaries use irony, to be a vehicle for a closing-down of reflection, rather than tools through which viewers note disjuncture between their assumptions and what is presented to them. Therefore, one could argue that the function of mockumentaries as a hyperbolic tool operates within these expectations of "closing -down of reflection". Most importantly, this specific function provides a critique and a more subversive outlook than just a petty objection to a particular issue. If a critique has already been made, our interpretive capacities are not necessary. Mockumentaries confirm what we already know both explicitly and subliminally. The audience laughs along as they relearn or recognize the obvious and are stroked as they get the joke"; this shows us that moments of illumination are put indefinitely on hold. One key mockumentary that displays the various ways that mockumentaries interrogate social-political issues is *Borat* (2006) a British-American mockumentary comedy film, written and produced by British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, who also plays the title character, Borat Sagdiyev. Borat is a fictitious Kazakstanian journalist travelling through the United States and recording real-life interactions with Americans. This film could be viewed as a case study to discuss how mockumentary as genre mobilizes irony, either in the parody of the form of the documentary, or in the satirical treatment or in the critique of an issue. Borat invites viewers to expose themselves to ridicule 'real life' behavior of the individuals who are involved in the film. The film also shows how mockumentaries can operate as a hyperbolic tool. Campbell (2007) writes about satire as pedagogy, meaning that satire has long served a pedagogical role and shapes our expectations that some sort

of ‘truth’ will be uncovered when we are in its midst. *Bora (2006)* operates within these expectations, but what it teaches us is that a critique is more subversive than our objections to it. In addition, this captures what Cohen has argued that he sees the character of Borat essentially as a tool or mechanism to use in order to reach a certain goal: letting people lower their guard and expose their own prejudice.

Blouke (2015) problematizes the mockumentary form by using *Borat* (2006) as a case study. Through it he highlights how the rhetorical device of humour is used to neutralise problematic representations that violates certain norms of decency and decorum. Therefore, it allows the filmmaker to perpetuate the very same problematic statements and representation that they are trying to challenge without being held accountable. Furthermore, the problematic utterance in the film not only crosses the border as hate speech but they also have the potential to become ‘performative utterance’ (Austin, 1962). Austin (1962) describes ‘performative utterance’ as utterance that induces an action meaning that is possible to transcend into problematic action. An example of this is captured in the scene when Borat say he’s looking for a car to run over Jews; this statement is a problematic utterance that has potential to become a performative utterance on how the statement induces an action of killing Jews. Therefore, the statement does not exist in isolation, but it exists with action attached to it. Even if it was not the filmmaker’s intention to be problematic, the work could be still read as problematic due to the inherent gap between the intention and reception.

Another way that Blouke (2015) problematises the mockumentary form is by using the film *Borat* (2006) as a case study to raise ethical challenges, which tend to be limitations of the mockumentary genre as a whole. In *Borat* (2006*),* Romanian villagers appearing in the film’s opening sequence (as citizens of Borat’s hometown), were told that the film was to be a documentary of their hardship, despite misinformation made available by the filmmaker to some of the participants. Speaking little or no English, they had no idea that Borat was giving them titles such as the village ‘mechanic and abortionist’, or the ‘town rapist’. This highlights the ethical problems one can run into when misinforming participants in order to represent them in specific ways.

Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola

Roscoe & Hight (2001) in *Faking – Mock-documentary and the subversion of factuality,* looks into the position of the audience and how explicit mock-documentaries are in their own functionality, but generally do so in order to ask their audience to reflect on the validity of cultural or political positioning of their subjects. In the case of *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola*, the mockumentary television show is modelled on *The Daily Show,* an American show that offers a satirical take on contemporary politics. The show is a mockumentary that takes the appearance of news programme in order to "mock" not only the notions of truth but also "mock" the ridiculous nature of contemporary politics. By doing this it goes beyond just being a satirical show that is made to make audiences laugh to becoming a show that critically engages with contemporary politics. Furthermore, the show*(Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola*) at times interviews real life politicians and asks them the most ridiculous question such as "which is the best envelope to use to put a kick back in". This positions the show as a text that goes beyond the role of mocking South African politics. *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* is created by the very same producers of *Wonder Boy for President* (2016). The show is a fictionalized news bulletin that offers political satire on South African current affairs.

In one particular episode of *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* that focuses on corruption the news anchor Loyiso Gola reports on a story where the Free State government has spent R40million on creating its website which actually cost R400. *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* breaks this story by having Gola give a performance as an actual news broadcaster highlighting how corruption is embedded in apartheid government, and then cuts to archival footage from the actual news story that was broadcasted on television. Then it cuts back into the studio where Gola interviews somebody who is supposedly from the Free State government to account on why so much money was spent. However, the character from the government is a fictional character and provides ridiculous answers as to why so much money was spent. Through the use of satire and performance, they parody the interview convention in order to interrogate the ridiculous nature of corruption. By not only combing the factious with the fictional but by also masquerading the fictitious *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* presents news as being real and this shows how mockumentaries are able to interrogate the real issues of political corruption in the public sector.

Mockumentaries are playful in their appeal and the genre poignantly brings to the forefront, long standing issues in documentary practices like the authenticity of the portrayed events. For example, in *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* the makers used real footage from a news broadcast about the corruption in the Free State government and combined this with the fictional interview with a government official. Therefore, tension arises between the recording of real-life events from the found footage of the actual corruption story and the creative treatment of the actual events. The tension lies in the textual difference in terms of the grading between real life footage and creative treatment of actual events.

According to Plantinga (1997), the role of mockumentary is to subvert the authoritative and didactic, omniscient, formal voice that is characteristic of the expository documentary or the assertions of objectivity and transparency typical of fly on the wall observational cinema. This means that the principal modes of realistic depiction employed in a documentary are still an essential feature of mockumentary.

Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola uses styles and techniques that are conventionally associated with the documentary, for example voice-over commentary and interview segments, in order to assert that events and people actually are existing as such in the world portrayed (Mast, 2009). Loyiso Gola interviews Megabyte Sibiya, the Free State government official, about the R40 million website corruption scandal. This is done not so much to anchor the argument in the real world or to propel claims to truth, but rather to offer critical commentary on the nature of corruption. This episode of the (forty million rand Free State website is an example of mockumentaries' ability to use imitation and appropriation and strategies of reflexivity playfully or critically in order to provide a satirical or ironic examination of a fictionalised subject.

Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola has provided a way of reflecting on the meaning of citizenship in South Africa (Wasserman & Garman, 2012) by using satire as a prime vehicle for the construction of this kind of citizenship. Therefore, the spoofs and parodies have become part of the mediated political landscape and provide a resource for political identities and civic understanding (Hartley, 2010). As Kannemeyer (2010) points out, blunt political satire plays off many uncomfortable resonances between South Africa's past present.

Political Corruption: How people in power abuse those they serve

This study is focused on how mockumentaries can serve to expose this kind of abuse of power and encourage critical attitudes and thinking. According to Lodge (1998:158), "Political corruption can be described as a method of exploitation by which a constituent part of the public order sphere is exploited as if it were part of the market sphere". According to Beresford (2015) political corruption within South Africa does not only stem from institutionalized corruption caused by the lack of transparency and accountability in the government. I argue that institutionalized corruption is the result of the bureaucratic system of apartheid that was governed by secrecies and a lack of transparency. Arguably these conditions made fertile corruption to become institutionalised as there were no systems of accountability (Lodge, 1998). Therefore, this inherit issues with institutionalised corruption translated within the democratic dispensation of South African where there are numerous cases of political leaders looting the state for their own benefit. Beresford (2015) further elaborates other causes of corruption particular within the African National Congress (ANC). One of the first reasons that Beresford (2015) outlines as causes of corruption is how the inclusion of criminal networks within the ANC to fight against apartheid, led to an environment where a culture of criminal activity was deeply entrenched within the ANC, even in the democratic dispensation.

Beresford (2015) states another reason for political corruption is the transition of the ANC from a liberation movement to a governing party. Meaning that the ANC was presented with new challenges such as having access to state resources which they were deeply deprived from. Which therefore led to the phenomenon of the ANC being seen as a steppingstone for self-enrichment as evident in the State Capture debacle in South Africa. According to Suth (2015:2)

"State capture can be defined as the actions of individuals or groups both in the public and private sectors, influencing the formation of laws, regulations, decrees and other government policies to their own personal advantage"

The success and limitation of Wonder Boy for President (2016) in interrogating how people in power abuse those they claim to serve.

*Wonder Boy for President (*2016) is a film directed by John Barker and is a political satire that delves into political dynamics and challenges that arise in contemporary South African politics. It tells the story of Wonder Boy, a young charismatic and authoritative young man from the Eastern Cape, who is coerced into running for national president by two dubious and corrupt African National Congress (ANC) cadres. Their aim is to mould him into a great politician and manufacture his downfall. However, the young man's promising political career suffers a serious challenge when he develops affection for the leader of the opposition.

One example of how the satire within the film is visible is in how the film uses tools such as irony and parody. The irony is displayed in the film when *Wonder Boy* falls in love with the leader of the opposition party. Through the love affair of the two oppositional leaders, one is able to understand how the film makes a critique on how politicians pretend to be enemies in the public space while in their private spaces they are in "bed with each other". The parody in the film operates through the character of Wonder Boy by an allegory of the rise and fall of Jacob Zuma, the former President of the Republic of South Africa.

The film appropriates the aesthetics of documentary by using the conventions of the screen presenter, archival footage, and interview to tell the story. The film is complex in that it masquerades as a piece of factuality while also flagging out its own functionality. (Miller, 2012).

On a contextual level, the film applies a rational and a sober perspective on an absurd situation. This allows the production of satire, which is typical of mockumentaries (Jauregul, 2004). I will analyse how film uses the satire function, hyperbolic tool and pedagogical role of satire. I intend to analyse, the use of the theoretical concepts of performance coined by Taylor (2016) and performativity by Nichols (2016).

The film analyses the relationship between the film and the viewer's positioning to receive the satire and the effects of the reflexive nature of mockumentary. "The connection to satire lies in the engagement in reflection and critique that is implied" (Nilsson, 2013) meaning that satire in the film allows for one to critically engage with what they are viewing.

Analysis of stereotyping in 'Wonder boy for President' (2016)

In this section I will discuss the use of stereotypical corrupt politicians to interrogate the mockumentary film *Wonder Boy for President.* Hall (1997) suggests that stereotyping is always ambivalent and involves a level of both fear and envy or desire of the other. He suggests that what is visually produced in a stereotypical representation is not necessarily explicit. There is always an underlying 'deep structure'-the unconscious or suppressed level of meaning that cannot be shown. He notes that stereotypes refer as much to what is imagined in fantasy as to what is perceived as 'real'.

Without the use of types, it is difficult to make sense of the world. One constantly puts people, things, and ideas into the classificatory schemes to understand the world around them (Hall, 1997). Typing is essential to the production of meaning. It differs from stereotyping by how stereotypes get hold of the few simple vivid, memorable easily grasped and widely recognized characteristics about a person and reduces everything about the person to those traits (Hall, 1997). Issues are exaggerated and fixed when stereotyping (Hall, 1997). Stereotyping classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as 'other' (Hall, 1997). Stereotyping divides the acceptable, from the abnormal and unacceptable. It excludes and rejects everything that is different. It bonds together or separates out 'Us' from 'them' reinforcing difference and separation.

The effects of stereotyping lead to essentialising, reductionist and naturalising. Essentialising is defining people in terms of a few essential and oversimplified characteristics. For example, servitude, loyalty and laziness (Hall, 1997). Reductionist is reducing people to a few signifiers of physical difference: thick lips, fuzzy hair (Hall, 1997). Naturalizing something, makes it as Hall (1997) states, "beyond history" by presenting it as natural, fixed, given and permanent. These features and characteristics are presented as and believed to be fixed in nature. This also involves a process of repetition –where the same stereotypes are repeated in regimes of representation.

The film *Wonder Boy for President (2016)* uses the techniques of stereotypes to interrogate the socio- political issue of corruption. It is through the mockumentary technique of stereotypes that satire is produced so that the viewer is able to critically

interrogate the socio- political issues presented in the film. The socio- political issue of corruption is interrogated within the film by how the film is constructed to represent the idea of the corrupt politician. The film uses the characters of Shakes and Julius, the secretary and treasurer of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), to construct the stereotype of the corrupt political figure. It is a stereotype that constructs them as not genuinely committed to the values of the African National Congress (ANC) of uniting all the people of South Africa, Africans in particular, for the complete liberation of the country from all forms of discrimination and national oppression.

One firstly sees them in the film as two overweight black males who are standing over the office printer and not being productive. They banter about how a woman's role is to serve a man and how they are going to have intercourse with one of their fellow female colleagues. In another scene, their self-serving antics are displayed when they embezzle the organisations funds and negate the notion of transparency. Furthermore, they are depicted as not being genuine to the cause of serving people by how, in another scene they display a sense of self-entitlement by ordering food at a café and refuse to pay for it as they are 'leadership'. The stereotype of the corrupt black politicians that loot state resources is cemented in a scene where Brutas and Julius receive a kickback from a white man who fraudulently awarded a tender.

The mockumentary form allows the performances to be stereotypes and exaggerated as possible in order to be as humorous and ridiculous while also feeling believable. The form achieves this effect of making the most ridiculous scene feel genuine by using the documentary technique of the direct address, carrying the effect of the speaker being genuine and speaking directly to the viewer by breaking the forth wall. This creates the psychological effect that the person addressing you on the screen is genuine; hence this technique is used by news readers, actualities, reality television and documentary, especially when an expert is presenting facts.

Another stereotype that is present in the film is the one of the saviour of the people, the leader that will save the people from corruption and lead them into a fair and just society where corruption can be tolerated. This is embodied through the character of Wonder Boy who one can argue is the stereotype modelled around Nelson Mandela the former President of South Africa due to how both Wonder Boy and Nelson Mandela carry the ideas of a good leader from the Eastern Cape who truly is loved by the people. The myth

of the character Wonder Boy is constructed around the film using Vox Pops of the people attesting what a great leader he is. In this process of people declaring their love for him, he becomes elevated to larger than life figure that embodies a leader who represents the progressive ideals of the ruling party and nation. This mythology around the Wonder Boy figure is further cemented by how one first sees Wonder Boy in the film naked emerging from the sea and at the end of film how he rises from the dead. The mockumentary genre takes this use the stereotypical representation of savior and makes it feel genuine and 'real' by using conventions such as the voice of God presenting a real life encounter of a real life character. Wonder Boy is represented as a wholesome leader who has the interest of the populace by how he is depicted as consultative leader who firstly consulted his community in the Eastern Cape on whether he should go to Johannesburg with Julius and Shakes to go lead the ANC Youth League. Furthermore, in another scene his good character as an honest leader is displayed by how he disapproves of Julius and Shakes getting a "kick back" in a tender corruption scandal.

Mockumentary and alienation.

Mockumentary is ability to interrogate social political issues lies in how it uses the alienation technique. The theory of alienation stem s from the theatre works of Brecht (1978). The core theoretical proposal is that theatre (or film, for that matter) should not create an illusion of the real but should make its own constructedness clear to the audience. It aims to distance the audience from what they are viewing so that they can critically engage with it. This theory prevents an emotional identification with the characters and story and encourages a more critical and analytical approach. This technique invites a level a critical thinking since one is not submerged within the world of the film but rather placed at a position where they are able to view the film from a critical distance (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1987). This means that, instead of being emotionally invested within the film, they are rather invested in objectively watching the film. In this technique the audience is not drawn inside the world of the film in such a manner that they are meant to identify with the characters in the film. As a result, the audience does not only relate to them but six issues from their own point of view thus also allowing themselves to feel empathy. Mockumentary alienate the audience by making the audience aware of the presence of the camera. In doing so, they are able to challenge notions of truth, which is a necessary process to get one thinking about the ways they interrogate the socio-political issues.

Wonder Boy for President (2016) uses elements from fiction and actuality in order to alienate the audience so that they are placed at a distance from what they are viewing. This allows the audience to critically engage with what they are viewing. It is through this critical engagement between audience and the film that a space emerges for the socio- political issues that are addressed in the film to be interrogated.

In the first scene of the film one sees a black man in a suite narrating the history of the ANC and the past ANC presidents in chronological order. Accompanying his narration is archival footage. In this sequence one sees the use of archival footage and the narration operating in a manner where it makes the audience aware that what they are watching, i.e. it is a film that is constructed in a specific manner. Once the viewer understands that the film they are watching is a construction using the process of alienation, they are also able to deduce how the issues of corruption presented within the film are also socially constructed and could be challenged.

Other scenes in *Wonder Boy for President* (2016) exemplify how the alienation operates, is in the where they parody the Julius Malema incident where he swore and kicked out a journalist who asked him question on a corruption scandal he was implicated in. The scene, constructed to look like a press conference, shows a journalist asking Wonder *Boy a* controversial question. This scene relies on the mocking of the Julius Malema scene by how Kagiso Lediga the actor who plays Wonder Boy is exaggerating his performance of Wonder Boy by really portraying his anger towards the journalist to the point where it becomes ridiculous. Another scene is where Brutus is being interviewed about how Wonder Boy left the ANC after realizing it was manifested with corruption. The reason why I argue that these scenes exemplify the alienation technique is through the behind the scene elements such as the broadcasting equipment, which makes one aware of the constructive nature of things.

Mockumentary and its limitations

As much as this study shows the success of mockumentaries in interrogating socio-political issues, there are also limitations in using the mockumentary genre. One of the limitations of mockumentaries is that it relies on using satire as a pedagogical tool. The problem that comes with the use of satire is that the humor produced in satire becomes a distraction from the objective of the pedagogical role that satire is supposed to achieve. In *Wonder Boy for President* (2016) the stereotype of the corrupt politician that is supposed to function in a manner that creates a platform for the audience to begin to interrogate the socio-political issues of corruption, is limited due to how the humor derived from the performance of the stereotype which overpowers the main function of what the stereotype was supposed to achieve. In the film, the actors who act as Julius and Shakes are able to deliver a comic performance due to how they do not look like the stereotype of the corrupt politician that they are playing. The humor produced works against the alienation effect that film was trying to achieve.

The reliance of the genre using satire is a limitation in itself due to the fact that satire depends on humor and humor is highly subjective and culturally specific. One could argue that W*onder Boy for President* (2016) is not heavily humorous and that its ability to satirise and 'mock' is heavily compromised. This is mainly because comedy is not as universal as drama in the film industry. Therefore, creating a film with the intention to make one laugh becomes a difficult challenge that, if it not achieved, the premise of mockumentary to mock becomes unattainable.

The limitation with mockumentaries is how most of them use stereotypes. Stereotypes usually are heavily encoded with problematic negatives ideas that serve white Eurocentric heteronormative ideas (Hall, 1997). The stereotype of the corrupt politician relies on the problematic idea of how black people are incapable of governing themselves without white supervision. In addition, it takes the stereotype further depicting the corrupt politician as not only black male whose sole purpose in life is to enrich themselves at the expense of the people they serve, but also depict them as patriarchal figures. On numerous occasions, the actors Shakes and Julius, who are also participating in a very dangerous act in entrenching these problematic values that are encompassed by

those very same stereotypes they propelling in the film. In a way, the film operates in the very same manner of the problematical satirical films of Schuster during the apartheid regime.

The film also reproduces very problematic stereotypes in its mission to create satire. An example, of this is the scene when Julius and Shakes are in the Eastern Cape and are trying to convince Wonder Boy to come with them to Johannesburg to lead the ANC Youth League. In that scene Julius and Shakes give Wonder Boy a pair of glasses and chocolate to entice him, which carries the same problematic ideologies of how the native people of South Africa were given mirrors in exchange of their land. Furthermore, in another scene that draws upon the problematic ideas around race is, the one where Shakes and Julius are receiving a bribe from the white businessman, in brown envelopes. What is important to note from this scene, is structured to look similar, carry the very same ideology of the 'white master' giving wages to his black worker at the construction compound. In the scene, Shakes and Julius carry on as 'happy natives' for doing a good job for their 'white master' who give them peanuts in exchange for making him rich.

Lastly one of the limitations with the mockumentary genre is that not only is it a fairly new genre compared to others but there have been limited explorations with the genre specifically in South Africa, that make it difficult for filmmaker to deploy the genre to interrogate social political issues.

Social economic issue of fraudulent pastors

South Africa is a developing country that is faced with various socio-political issues stemming from the effects of apartheid(Nattrass,1991). This has led to our country being crippled by crime, unemployment and poverty. All these socio-political issues have led to the majority of South Africans feeling desperate and invisible and being desperate for solutions. The "solution" to this desperation and perceived abandonment desperation for solutions has subsequently led to a rise of con artist taking advantage of the situation by claiming that they can provide people with miracle solutions to their problems. A majority of these con-artists take on role of a pastor/prophet that can perform all sorts of miracles, to bring the much-needed break-through/solution in the lives of their followers. Over the recent years, one has seen an alarming increase of these fraudster pastors and prophets who have abused and manipulated religion with the objective of lured followers to scam them. This phenomenon is not only being researched, but it also provides an interesting opportunity to see how in filmic form, this issue could be interrogated (Nattrass, 1991)

For this research report, I will be specifically focusing on Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa refer to churches that have crossed denominational boundaries. These churches idolise the miraculous, healing, deliverance and enactment of bizarre church performances often performed by charismatic and highly influential spiritual leaders (Kgatle, 2017). In order to critically understand the abuse of religion, I will be engaging the scholarship around four aspect around Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa which are: the commodification of worship, media technologies and the church, practices of the church and the performance of the pastor(Kgatle,2017).

The research report will use the writings of scholars such as Nwosu & Marchie (2015) who unpacked the concept of how worship and sacred practice of worshiping in Neo-Pentecostal churches has commoditised. Meaning that certain religious leaders have developed a commercial value into the practice of religious worship. Therefore, removing the church from its social value into becoming a business, where it is about a moneymaking scheme. In addition, it looks into how the church has been used in various ways by certain religious leaders a means to make money from people under that name of religion.

Media technologies have become an integral part of the church. From how media

technologies have been ascribed magical qualities for example the use of television to transmit healing, to how media technologies have been used in specific ways by religious leaders to manipulate followers to believe in their supernatural abilities (De Witte, 2012).

According to Kgatle (2017) in some of these Neo-Pentecostal churches there are some unusual practices that take place religious leaders. Under the disguise of religion, the leaders make their congregants eat grass, snakes, rats and drink petrol and get sprayed with Doom, an insecticide, as means to test their faith. These practices have not only caused a frenzy in the media to the degree that the religious leaders of these practices earn celebrity status, but they also sparked controversy with boards such as the South African Churches Council on how followers of these churches should be protected from being taken advantage of. Even though these unusual practices of church also take place across the world. Kgatle (2017) in addition goes on to give an account on what could be the causes of these unusual practices and states how social and economic conditions in South Africa provide a breeding ground for these practices to flourish.

The pastors in these Neo-Pentecostal churches could be viewed as a performer instead of being viewed as a man of God. This section will go into the construction of this pastor character that operates within the broader scheme of luring followers to be victims of his malicious intentions. Shipley (2009) argues that, the fear of the fake pastor, creates a local theory of moral performance that sets the conditions of possibility for the legitimacy of the pastor as a public figure. Furthermore, he states how the spectacle of the fake pastor provides a symbolic nexus for the transformation of spiritual power, moral sincerity and economic potency

Reflection on making my own mockumentary

Suffering and Smiling (2019) is a short mockumentary film that takes the form of an investigative journalist expose. In the show, one sees the host Tumi covering a story on the Infamous Father God Prophet Pastor Angel The Son of Jesus, a fraudulent pastor who masquerades as a holy man in order to enrich himself. In the interview, one gets to hear of his dubious acts of making his congregants fund his lavish lifestyle. One hears of the various ways he spends the church money to purchase lavish cars and clothes without any justification. In his last actions, his trying to get his congregants to pay for him to purchase a state of the art private jet. In the film one gets to see how he tries to justify his despicable acts.

Mockumentaries question documentary claims to 'truth' and how it does that it is by how it weaves in elements of actuality within the fictional form in a manner were the viewer struggles to identify what is actually fact and faction. In the mockumentary *Shooting Bokkie* (1999) the film masterfully weaves elements of actuality within the fictional form to the degree where the audience cannot tell what is fact or fiction This is why in mockumentary, I include elements of actuality that are archival footage from real life where fraudulent pastors are doing despicable acts to their congregants, to display how they abuse them (the bad quality downloaded overlay in the beginning of the film). The downloaded overlay is in monochrome and it has a raw unpolished look in order to represent actuality material taken from CCTV footage and a hidden phone that was taken in the moment and was not constructed. This was to help make my film believable, as a piece of actuality coming from a real life 'investigative journalism' programme. The reason my film take place in form of an investigative journalism programme, is to play on notion of how these programs that could been seen as a form of documentary that are supposed to represent the custodians of truth but that are also contrasted and fictionalised.

Mockumentaries rely on taking the absurdity of fiction and making it feel like a work of non-fiction. It achieves this by using the documentary technique of having the people within the

diegetic world of the film aware of the presence of the camera. One sees this conventional use in *Wonder Boy for President (2016) as* the performers directly address the camera in their performance. This is the convention, I decided to use to make my own film as it carries the ability to allow one to question 'notions of truth' to the degree where they are able to question social issues presented within the film as a social construct which can be challenged and interrogated. In my film this convention is used when Tumi asked the Father God Prophet Pastor Angel Son of Man a controversial question, and he requests the camera to be switched off and blocks the camera lens and tries to leave. However, Tumi tries to negotiate with God Prophet Pastor Angel Son of Man to carry on with the interview, she succeeds, then looks directly at camera and confirms to the camera that they are good to proceed with interview. Within this scene one begins to understand how, mockumentaries take on a satirical treatment on this convention of "being watched". The challenge with this technique is how, in the act of being watched, the performers must give a believable performance of the ridiculous given the circumstances. In this way the audience is not only alienated and is not made to realise that it is watching a mockumentary. This realisation in the production of my film highlighted the reason why there is a glaring paucity of mockumentaries in comparison to other genres.

The socio-political issue of how people in powerful positions such as political and religious leaders abuse those they serve, is a dynamic issue that is forever changing in its complexities. This poses a challenge for mockumentaries to fully interrogate the socio-political issues in a sophisticated manner with all the nuances of the socio-political issue. My film focused on interrogating the social political of fraudulent pastor. However, by the time the film comes out there are more absurd stories on fraudulent pastors that my film did not cover, because as I am making the film, the socio-political issues evolve at the same time. In this regards it has the potential to make the humor and satire film outdated, as there are more hilarious and stories of fraudulent pastor that took place since the film was made. For example, in my film the despicable acts that Father God Prophet Pastor Angel Son of Man committed, was based on real life story of fraudulent pastor doing and saying the most despicable things but by the time the film was complete those despicable acts where outdated as more despicable acts have come to the surface. This demonstrates that the socio-political is evolving and presents the mockumentary with the challenge of addressing issues that are current. In making my mockumentary I realised how the form relies on type casting in terms of the characters. I would argue that this is due to how the form uses stereotypes. In addition, I discovered that

the success of my mockumentary is depended on the performances feeling as a realistic and naturalistic as possible. I would argue that non-professional actors would be ideally suitable for being cast. This is due to how non- professional actors have been synonymous with having the ability to offer the most realistic and naturalistic performances. Hence film forms such as Italian neorealism most of the actors where non-actors due to this very same reason, (Shiel, 2006).

What I attempted to achieve was to have my film carry a roughness and unpolished style that some mockumentaries are arguably accustom to. This style is drawn from the documentary convention of using ungraded archival footage, to give it a raw look and feel unlike the polished cinematic look that is usually associated with fiction film making. I did this in order to make my film as believable as possible.

Through making the film making, I experienced the challenges of how making sure that your work reads as a piece of satire. Furthermore, I got to understand the complex role that satire plays in the making of mockumentary as without it the mockumentary is unable to achieve its reflexive aims. Hence, Nilsson (2013) argues that the connection to satire lies in the engagement in reflection and critique that that is implied.

The challenge with making mockumentaries is the ability of the filmmaker to master the fact-fiction hybrid structure of the form. In making my own mockumentary, I learnt that one needs to have the correct proportions of factual and fictional elements in order for it to fully function as an independent hybrid genre instead of being a genre that falls within the genre of documentary or fiction. The factual elements of documentary need to fully work with the fictional element within a mockumentary so that it works as a signal unit independent from documentary or fiction. In my mockumentary, I edited the archival footage, of pastors performing outrageous acts within my film in way that blends without looking at the audience or feeling like it does not belong there.

My film, utilizes the audience's assumptions on documentary and truth to undermine, critique and satirise our attitudes towards exploitative anthropological documentaries. In doing so, it helps us understand how mockumentaries use the formal codes convention of documentary-especially the implication of presenting the most accurate and truthful portrayal of socio-historical world and subverts those conventions by representing a fictional subject and

critiquing its content. This will enable an audience to understand how mockumentaries in their construction are able to develop a satiric possibility of the form in order to critique an aspect of socio-political issues.

However, the challenge with this as presented within my film is that when mockumentary aims to mock an aspect of socio-political issues that is already satirical in nature, is that arguably stop to mock and rather becomes a critical representation of an aspect of socio-political issues. Futheremore, my film fails as mockumentary based on the grounds that it unable to critically challenge documentary 'claims of truth' like the film *Shooting Bokkie(1999)* which is a successful mockumentary as it also question the ethic practices in documentary.

Conclusion

Jacobs (2000) argues, that mockumentaries reframe the existing frames in fiction and non-fiction films by creating another level of understanding, meaning that "the actual life" is the referent frame that refers and creates other frames. In addition, Jacobs (2000) uses key as a term to define existing frames that are already defined in the social context and open to interpretation to other meanings for society. The mockumentary allows one to tackle this social issue beyond what documentary and fiction could do due to the hyperbolic nature of it and also because of how it positions the audience to read it. The form fundamentally, makes the audience realise how gullible they are. It also allows the audience to be governed by the social political issues and to believe in the validity that the socio-political issues cannot be challenged.

Furthermore, what makes the form more potent is that it allows for critical thinking to carry on beyond the screen. Mockumentaries represent a critical stance, towards factual discourse, which induce a level of critical thinking around the socio-political issues present in the film. Interestingly, they are able to provide entertainment value while maintaining a reflexive characteristic. In doing so, mockumentary places the audience in a position where their expectation is disavowing and also provoking thought. Through making the film, I was able analyse the relationship between the film and the viewer's positioning to receive the satire and effects of the reflexive nature of mockumentary even if the film did not succeed. The form has the ability to become a part of contemporary popular culture, since it has the capacity to be in dialogue with the social political challenges prevalent in the society.

Both *Wonder Boy* (2016) and *Suffering Smiling* (2019) appropriate the cinematic convention of documentary. This is evident/demonstrated in each film's use of conventions of screen presenter (used particular types of documentaries), archival footage and interviews to tell the story. They both do a complex thing of masquerading as piece of factuality, while also flagging out its own functionality. They also operate on an aesthetic level where verisimilitude is not produced. On a contextual level, the films apply a rational and a sober perspective on absurd situations, thus allowing the production of satire which is typical of mockumentary (Jauregul, 2004). By using both these films and other example such as *Borat(2006*) and *Late Nite News with Loyiso Gola* I have shown the effectiveness of the mockumentary genre in interrogating socio-political issues by how it is able to use

techniques such as alienation, stereotypes function not only as hyperbolic tool, but also as a pedagogical tool.

Mockumentaries provide a gateway for us to begin to think about the ways one can use it to tackle the socio-political issues present within South African film industry which is staffed by the lack of support in terms of audience, finances and distribution, which does not create an enabling environment for filmmaker to begin to experiment with the film form especially hybrid genres such as mockumentaries. The research argued that mockumentaries are indeed a powerful tool to interrogate socio-political issues. It would provide South African filmmakers with a wider arsenal of tools at their disposal to narrate their stories. I argue, for post-apartheid filmmaking to reach its full potential, that there is a need for more scholarship and equality in the various forms which epitomise the film industry

As a country we are living in a very exciting time, where there is a desire for South African content and more opportunities to tell them than before. South Africa has experienced a growing demand for South Africans to narrate their own stories. I argue that not only for the growth of the South African film industry, but also for South Africa to have a distinct film form that is iconic. But that could also act as our ambassador to the rest of the world much like how Soviet Cinema is distinctive of Russia and represents its ideals of Russia at the time during the Soviet Union.

This research showed various ways in which mockumentaries can interrogate socio-political issues in terms of how they use stereotypes, alienation, questioning truths and hyperbolic function. Although, to a large extent they are effective in how they interrogate the socio-political, however they are limited due to how they use problematic representations based on negative stereotypes, mockumentaries also have the ability to divert attention from the progressive work the form attempts to achieve.

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