**Rooting for the Degenerate:**

**The trickster ethos in John Safran’s Race Relations**

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In this presentation, I approach transgression as a means of persuasion from a thematic of the trickster archetype. The cultural archetype of the trickster is a transgressor *par excellence,* and its iterations often enjoy a complex and ambiguous folk-hero status. Trickster narratives and myths are abundant in folklore, as well as popular culture. The trickster bends, breaks and bypasses rules and taboos to satisfy its own insatiable hunger, and in the process it performs important cultural functions. In any act of transgression, there is a strong rhetorical potential. When someone wittingly, purposefully and publicly breaks rules and social taboos, it brings those often quotidian or implicative norms into view, threatening or displacing their privileged status. But for transgression to be employed as a successful rhetorical strategy it has to be performed in such a way that its audience may allow themselves to identify with the agent and the purpose of the act, rather than to focus on the transgressive form.

In a case study of the Australian television series *John Safran’s Race Relations,* I analyze how the host of the show carefully constructs an ambiguous - and downright vile - trickster persona in order to provide his audience equipment for living in a multicultural society. I argue that the show manages to construct a coherent social satire between and through such acts as performing “Fiddler on the roof” to Hamas officials, Self-crucifixion, stalking, and blatant displays of mysophilia. With a special focus on ethos, argument from character, I discuss how this may be a fruitful rhetorical strategy in approaching such loaded topics as ethnic identity and sexuality.