

ENTERTAINMENT AS A COMPLEX FORM OF COMMUNICATION

TWO EXAMPLES FROM HEMSÖBORNA

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An increasing interest in popular culture, entertainment, and leisure studies has resulted in a more thorough discussion of entertainment and its function in everyday life. That entertainment needs to be studied on its own terms, and not just in relation to some other area, is important. Instead of viewing entertainment as merely something connected with enjoyment and pleasure, the article looks at how entertainment renegotiates vital questions and topics from everyday life through its performance practice. Entertainment is used as an enhanced awareness, a de-familiarization, illustrating the function of different norms. The article examines two different scenes from two different productions of August Strindberg's novel *The People of Hemsö*. The first analyses the arrival of an outsider, coming from the mainland to the archipelago. The second underlines the seriousness of gender inequality. Both examples stress the importance of studying how entertainment functions as a specific performance style/practice that re-negotiates the content being communicated.

Keywords: entertainment, communication, Strindberg, Hemsöborna

This article examines two different scenes from August Strindberg's *Hemsöborna* (*The People of Hemsö*) and aims at showing how entertainment, seen as a specific performance style or performance practice, can renegotiate the content being communicated. Instead of seeing entertainment as only being about enjoyment and pleasure the article looks at how entertainment can emphasize important questions and topics from everyday life through its performance practice. Rather than dismissing entertainment as a way of escaping our everyday life this article sees it as an enhanced awareness, a process of de-

familiarization, showing the ordinary in a different way.

ENTERTAINMENT

A variety of academic areas, from theatre and film studies to sociology, philosophy and medicine have recently taken an interest in entertainment. Important factors behind the growing interest are areas such as popular culture studies and the growing field of leisure studies. One research area that specifically focuses on entertainment is media and communication. Peter Vorderer, professor of media and communication studies, believes the

reason behind this is that entertainment has become central to society at large. The basis for his description is a society built on communication and information.¹ Entertainment for Vorderer is light-hearted fun, something relaxing; the opposite of a strenuous life at work.² To better understand entertainment, Vorderer proposes a set of sub-questions in relation to how entertainment is described and explained. He is interested in the effects of different kinds of entertainment and why people seek these effects. The relevance of communication studies for performance studies is not in itself given. However, the emphasis on communication offers a relevant and interesting connection to theatre studies. As I see it, performance studies can offer media studies a more nuanced and detailed interpretation of how communication functions, which can enrich the study of entertainment. If one is to believe Richard Dyer, who has written extensively on entertainment, an in-depth discussion of what it is, is lacking. The problem in Dyer's eyes is that entertainment is often regarded as part of something else; he claims that the study of entertainment through other areas causes more problems than it resolves. A common view regarding entertainment is to see it in contrast to or in opposition to something that is not entertainment. The comedy/tragedy distinction is one such example. Another is the dichotomy between leisure and work.³ Dyer argues that research on entertainment needs to focus more on the specific aspects within entertainment instead of using it as a border or contrast to other fields, such as fine art. According to Dyer, in order to be able to study the significance of entertainment and its function we need to direct attention to what it is.⁴

Both Vorderer and Dyer seek some kind of definition of entertainment, which includes its function. They both see communication as a key aspect, but differ as to the main function of entertainment as either enjoyment and/or escapism. A comprehensive effort to create a definition comes from Stephen Bates and Anthony J. Ferri. Their aim is the "development of a more objective definition [which] can help

unify and advance the field of entertainment studies."⁵ They argue that a solid research area should rest on a clear conceptual framework and therefore advocate a scientific definition as opposed to a more causal definition built on ideas of what is entertaining. Their definition rests on an extensive study of academic descriptions. Their starting point in media and communication studies is, however, an important guiding principle for their definition: "entertainment must be defined largely in objective terms /.../[it] involves communication featuring external stimuli; it provides pleasure to some people, though not of course to everyone; and it reaches a generally passive audience."⁶ The central part of the definition is about the function entertainment has for a spectator (pleasure) and how that function is maintained (through communication).

I agree that entertainment can be about communication. I object, however, to the view of the audience as being primarily passive. In this article, I want to illustrate how entertainment works towards stimulating, confronting, and activating the spectator. This is done through the combination of pleasure and a distancing effect where fun and laughter can direct attention to important cultural and political topics. I aim at showing the relevance of the way something is communicated and how entertainment is not only about a stage transmitting joy to a passive audience.⁷

THE PEOPLE OF HEMSÖ

August Strindberg visited the island Kymmendö, in the southern part of the Stockholm archipelago, for the first time in 1871 and was mesmerized by the beautiful surroundings and friendly people. He called it a paradise on earth and spent a number of summers writing and relaxing there. The island and its inhabitants would, several years later, be used as a model for the fictive island, Hemsö. The use of the countryside and its local inhabitants is a common feature in many popular Swedish novels and plays from the years around the start of the twentieth century. These *folklustspel* (roughly translated as comic folk play) were very popular among a large

part of the population. A typical *folklustspel* depicts strong characters in farce-like situations, where the plot revolves around everyday chores, love, lust, and money issues among farmers or the working classes. It was mainly the financial aspect that compelled Strindberg to write *The People of Hemsö (Hemsöborna)* in 1887 during his exile in Lindau, Switzerland. He later described the novel, however, as a disgrace and 'pure' rubbish. Meanwhile, the critics and the Swedish people loved the novel and it is still very popular today – primarily due to the 1966 TV-version and several theatre productions. The story is a tragicomedy on lust, love and death, revolving around a farmhand who comes to a small island with the purpose of bringing order to a run-down farm. The humorous portrayal of the main characters is often seen as a key feature of its immediate success. Two years after the novel was published, Strindberg wrote a play in four acts based on the same plot, where he added more characters. The play was not received in the same positive way as the novel, therefore when *Hemsöborna* is staged today it is usually a dramatization of the novel and not the play, which is performed.⁸

Discussing entertainment without discussing humour is problematic since laughter, and what triggers laughter, is a key part of entertainment – which is clearly indicated above by the recurring stress on the joyous aspects of entertainment. I do not see humour and entertainment as the same thing. I see humour studies as an overlapping discipline to entertainment studies; an area from which certain ways of analysing and discussing entertainment can be developed, especially ideas about the function of entertainment. In this article, I focus on the pleasurable, fun aspects of entertainment even though lots of different things can be seen as entertaining.⁹ The role humour plays in Strindberg's novel is also of great importance for an interpretation since a large part of its success was the combination of tragedy and comedy. Simon Critchley is interested in the function of humour and compares it to a lens through which light is refracted. A joke can open up the ordinary to scrutiny by tearing a gap or a rift in the perception of the ordinary, creating a

new way of perceiving 'everyday life'. Humour, according to Critchley, works by creating an asymmetry that allows us to look at the ordinary in a different way.¹⁰ A joke lets us see the familiar in a new light, turns the ordinary into something extraordinary, and makes the real surreal.¹¹ Humour should, according to Critchley, not be seen as a way to escape from reality, but rather as something that inexorably brings us back to our own world. "The extraordinary thing about humour is that it returns us to common sense; by distancing us from it, humour familiarizes us with a common world through its miniature strategies of de-familiarization."¹² This kind of distancing effect is both important for the function of entertainment as well as humour in general, and is something I will address in my performance analysis. Noël Carroll has a similar approach to Critchley's. He argues that a joke allows people to take a step back and look at the different categories used in society and how they work. The space introduced by humour functions as an opportunity to re-examine and change the categories that influence and govern human lives.¹³ The study of entertainment offers us the possibility to examine how the fine-tuning of norms is negotiated within different cultures and subcultures.

"He arrived like a snow-squall one April evening, with an earthenware bottle on a leather strap round his neck."¹⁴ The novel's opening sentence is one of the most famous in Swedish literature. Through its opening several themes discussed throughout the novel are established. It is about someone arriving in a new place. The arrival is not calm, but described as a squall.¹⁵ Perhaps the wind referred to is the wind of change and something new and life altering is about to happen. The "he" arriving is Carlsson, a farmhand coming from the mainland. He has been summoned to Hemsö by Madame Flod to help with the farm. The earthenware bottle (*höganäskrus* in Swedish) hanging round his neck point to the group of people the reader will meet; a farming community on a small island. Close to the body, protected from any dangers and under constant control is the jug filled with alcohol.¹⁶

The inhabitants of the small farm are three women and three men. The head of the farm is the widow Madame Flod. She lives at the farm together with her son Gusten and two female helpers; Clara and Lotten. Two male farmhands also help out with the chores; Rundqvist, the elder of the two, and Norman, Gusten's confidant. Gusten, who is only interested in hunting and fishing, has not taken on the duties of running the small farm, thus leaving it in a run-down state. The novel depicts three years around 1880, and revolves around the chores on the farm. The clash between the newcomer Carlsson and the inhabitants of the small island is an important feature in Strindberg's text, heightened by fun and laughter where Strindberg uses humour to underline the differences among the people from the archipelago versus the mainland. The best way to describe how Carlsson is treated by the inhabitants of Hemsö is with suspicion. He is told by Madame Flod to act as if he is better than the others and to take charge of the people working at the farm including her son, however Gusten does not trust Carlsson even though Carlsson makes the farm profitable again. Madame Flod takes an interest in Carlsson early on while he is only interested in the young female farm helpers. Finally, Carlsson accepts Madame Flod's proposal to marry even though he continues to flirt with the younger girls. Madame Flod gets the final proof of his infidelity on a cold December night that causes her death a couple of days later. Gusten and Carlsson decide, despite a growing storm, to travel across the ice with the remains of the deceased. The trip ends in distress and Carlsson dies on the ice. But life on Hemsö continues as Gusten becomes its new master.

The following analysis looks at how entertainment communicates by changing the content being performed and stimulates the spectator to reflect on what is going on. The appreciation of humour and entertainment is highly individual and there are no guarantees that two individuals within the same culture share the same ideas on entertainment. Therefore, I stress that I do not see my work as a definitive description of what entertainment is or should be. I find inspiration



Hemsöborna 1966, Sif Ruud and Allan Edwall, SVT FOTO. Photographer: Bertil S-Son Åberg.

from Toril Moi who emphasizes the study of individual examples rather than the quest for a more general theory.¹⁷ According to Moi, research based on examples invites the reader to consider and reflect on the chosen examples, and to discuss and examine their own thoughts or experiences through the researcher's text.¹⁸ In this article I wish to test and explore one view on entertainment: as a complex kind of communication.

TV PRODUCTION 1966 – THE MAINLAND VERSUS THE ARCHIPELAGO

The TV production of *Hemsöborna* from 1966 is a classic production in many ways. It can be seen as general knowledge to a large part of the Swedish population and the last re-run on television was in 2012. It was directed by Bengt Lagerkvist, with a script by Herbert Grevenius, and is regarded as the first television-drama-series in Sweden. A large part of the immediate success was the three actors portraying the main characters; Sif Ruud (Madame Flod), an acclaimed actress from the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Allan Edwall (Carlsson) also a distinguished and popular actor, and the young Sven Wollter (Gusten). The 1966

production did not only focus on the comical side, however. The producers also aimed at making a more nuanced interpretation combining comedy and tragedy.¹⁹ One such example stresses the cultural encounter between Carlsson, firmly rooted in the Swedish soil, being from Värmland, and the inhabitants of Hemsö. The tension is between different regional groups, primarily about the mainland versus the archipelago, but also the countryside versus the city.²⁰

A common feature of entertainment and humour is its positive value. Both Critchley and Carroll see humour as something fundamentally positive through its relation to laughter and fun. A researcher who does not accept humour as only positive is Michael Billig who questions the notion that humour is necessarily good. To laugh at and belittle others through ridicule is according to Billig a central part of how society maintains and incorporates standards and rules.²¹ He, just like Carroll, emphasizes the powerful aspect of humour, but instead of arguing that humour is mainly a positive force, Billig treats it as highly problematic. Whether something enjoyable is also harmful is determined by the context, according to Billig. There is nothing essentially funny; instead it is negotiated on the basis of conventions operating in the social and cultural world.²² The opening scene of the novel and TV production where Lotten and Clara are sent to fetch Carlsson to Hemsö, highlights the connection between entertainment, laughter, and ridicule. Carlsson, keen to impress the girls and show himself as a man of the world, is talking and trying to act confidently. It is, however, immediately clear that sailing is not his forte because as soon as he gets in the boat he shouts to hoist the sails (specifically the jib), even though that specific boat does not have a sail like that. The people on land laugh and make fun of Carlsson and the two girls order him to sit down so they can get out of there as soon as possible without any more embarrassing incidents. With this brief scene, I want to discuss how cultural boundaries are negotiated through entertainment. Portrayed is the treatment of an outsider, someone not familiar with the habits, customs,

and correct ways of behaviour. Carlsson's conduct evokes laughter with undertones of mocking, but also elicits compassion and sympathy since he is being laughed at. As spectator I see three different groups of characters reacting or behaving in three different ways. First, there is Carlsson, being out of his comfort zone trying to impress the two young girls by pretending to know more than he actually knows. He acts with certainty as if he knows best. The second group is the two girls who initially are a bit impressed by Carlsson and his *savoir vivre*, not at all similar to the men at the farm. They are, however, embarrassed when Carlsson tries too much and all the people laugh at them. The final group is the islanders watching as Carlsson and the girls leave for Hemsö. They find it entertaining and amusing to see someone from the mainland not knowing what type of boat he is in. The scene can be read in three different but overlapping ways; as reassuring, enjoyable, or disturbing.

If you know the right way to behave, like the islanders, you laugh at the other person and you are amused by the fact that he or she does not know. This is reassuring because it strengthens your belief that you are right together with a feeling of superiority. The laughter shows that you are a member of the group, sharing values and ways of conduct. This could however be read as a negative laughter based on ridicule, a standpoint proposed by Michael Billig. As mentioned above Billig is critical to the idea that humour is only something positive. To challenge the theoretical assumptions about the inherent good qualities of humour and at the same time be able to underline a critical potential, Billig connects humour to ridicule and embarrassment.²³ Mocking someone for not knowing the right way to behave can be a powerful way to assert superiority. To be ridiculed for not understanding or behaving in accordance with cultural norms has a restrictive and repressive effect. Knowledge about humour is essential in order to understand how to interact and relate to other human beings and to avoid being ridiculed.²⁴

Another way of reading the scene is to look at

the situation as a whole. By acknowledging the situation and seeing the odd behaviour from Carlsson, as well as the mockery from the onlookers and the embarrassment from the girls, I can laugh at the fact that we all make mistakes. This would be a more positive heart-warming interpretation, lacking the critical aspects proposed by Billig, but recognizing that we all make blunders. I simultaneously laugh at myself and the person depicted. Finally, the laughter and the entertaining aspects can work as a distancing factor through which I am confronted with my own culture and the way I treat, or react to someone who does not know the correct way to behave. This would be more disturbing since I cannot simply continue to laugh without reflecting on the reason for my laughter. The actor playing Carlsson, Allan Edwall, has a crucial part in emphasizing the third option. I see him slightly as a clown-like character from the very start; with his head lifted and his nose pointing upwards as if he is a very important person. He

only looks forward and does not seem to learn from his mistakes, tackling each new situation head on without thinking or evaluating what is going on. The overacting from Edwall functions as a strategy of de-familiarization. It makes the normal/common way to behave seem strange, almost forcing me to read the scene in the third and slightly disturbing way. His ignorance about what is happening, performed in an elaborate and entertaining way, forces me to reflect on what is going on. He is both funny and not funny. As a spectator I am confronted with the cultural encounter and made aware of the different ways of reacting to it. Carlsson's reaction – or lack thereof – becomes an anomaly that highlights the powerful aspects of the encounter. By using entertainment, the seriousness of Carlsson's first encounter with the archipelago is put under scrutiny and, on a more general level, of someone meeting a new culture for the first time. By showing the cultural encounter through light-hearted entertainment, it reaches further than simply being about them or us, or about alienation.

STAGED OUTDOOR PRODUCTION, 2007 – A CRITIQUE OF GENDER ROLES

The second example is an adaptation by the outdoor theatre called Vallarnas Friluftsteater in Falkenberg, a city on the west coast of Sweden. This adaptation, similar to a farce, was written by Krister Classon, and according to him roughly seventy percent of the material was from Strindberg and the rest his own. In this production Madame Flod was portrayed by Siw Carlsson, a renowned comedienne and the leading lady at Vallarna since its start in 1996. Portraying Carlsson was Jojje Jönsson famous for his comical characters. A major role in the production was Rundqvist, played by Claes Månsson, a well-known Swedish actor and comedian. This is not a TV production but a version filmed onstage in front of a live audience. The performance goes even further in addressing and using entertainment and laughter than the 1966 version. The scene analysed is from the end of the novel when Madame Flod follows Carlsson and receives



Poster for Hemsöborna at Vallarna. Photographer: Bo Håkansson.

the final proof of his infidelity. In the Vallarna version, all the characters on stage realize the danger of Flod going out in the cold in order to surprise Carlsson. They all play along to heighten this danger when Flod suddenly and in a forceful manner declares: “- - Carlsson may be a good person in his own way, but he is not going to fool me into going out in this weather and catch a cold. Strindberg can say what he wants. These are different times.”²⁵ Even though Madame Flod does not explicitly address me as a spectator, she uses the acting techniques common to light entertainment and farce, whereby hinting at, or acknowledging the audience, in order to make a relevant point. The result is laughter. I interpret this as an indication that the audience fully understands and perhaps appreciates the twist and turn away from the original script, where Flod dies from her excursion in the winter night. Behind the laughter is a serious and important question not addressed in Strindberg’s original. Should a woman be sacrificed for a man? Should a wife really live at the mercy of her husband? Of course not! That we still live in an unequal society is a relevant fact that the production illustrates in a very poignant way. Yet again, it is through laughter and entertainment that the point is made. It is through the acting style, by acknowledging the fourth wall and indirectly addressing the audience, that the message reaches its most powerful potential. It is not the characters surrounding Madame Flod in the kitchen that need to understand the implication of an unequal society. That is a question for me as part of the audience. The short comment by Madame Flod is part of a large scene culminating with the refusal to go out in the snow and the new ending of the play. It all starts when Carlsson is on his way to the barn to meet Clara. Lotten confronts Carlsson and asks if he is not aware of how fortunate he is having Madame Flod as a wife, and if he is really prepared to jeopardize all he has. Lotten describes the situation as if Carlsson has a chance to alter history, do something else, to change what is in the text and eventually cheat death. Carlsson is unaffected and leaves for the barn. When Rundqvist, who has been listening in, says that

Lotten’s words were beautiful, but that he did not understand them or what she was talking about, it becomes obvious that the male characters are unaware of what is about to happen and that they are acting within the framework of the play. It is only Lotten and Madame Flod who, in their way of acting, show that they know they are part of a play based on a written manuscript. As spectator, I am confronted with two different ways of looking at the scene. I can look at it through the eyes of the male characters or through the female characters. With the help of laughter, the Vallarna production inspires me to look at the scene from the perspective of the female characters. It is only by choosing the female perspective that I am offered the possibility to laugh. Madame Flod’s sudden turn about from the original creates an incongruity that is funny and laughable without reducing the subject matter. The problematic and out-dated view on women is underlined by the entertaining way the scene is performed. All of this requires that I know the plot. However, since *Hemsöborna* is a popular and well known piece in Sweden, I think it is fair to assume that a large part of the audience does know what is about to happen (according to the original novel).²⁶

The way this scene is performed by highlighting what is about to happen and making the male characters unaware, makes the message being told become more palpable and puts me, as an audience member, in a superior position. I interpret the use of laughter as a way to influence the audience to take the female side and criticize the inherent gender inequality in the original. In this case I do not laugh at someone, instead the laughter directs attention to a difference in gender norms between Strindberg’s time and contemporary society. Madame Flod’s words work in a threefold way. Partly as a reminder that today’s society is far from equal, partly as a call to the spectator to reflect on this, and finally as something entertaining. The laughter and the entertaining manner in which the subject matter is discussed does not reduce the serious aspects of what is said and done. Rather, it augments what happens. The way the content is performed underlines, by directing the audience’s attention to

it through laughter, the seriousness of the message: men and women should be equals.

CONCLUSION

The *People of Hemsö* began with a “wind of change” as Carlsson came to Hemsö. By transforming and crossing the border between different genres the novel adapted into film, TV and farce continues to explore these whirlwind aspects of Carlsson’s arrival. In both examples, a change is introduced to the novel and how it is retold. As spectator, I am confronted with several different perspectives where some of them are emphasised through entertainment. I am not only amused by some pompous man from the countryside coming to an island, nor am I amused by the silliness of inequality. Instead, the entertaining aspects of the performance offer me an opportunity to see something new in the ordinary and the familiar. This is especially prominent in the Vallarna production where Madame Flod’s action and rebellion against the text provide change to an otherwise classical male dominated narrative. You could object to this since the adaptation is, too, written by a man, but the interesting thing is the turn away from Strindberg’s original that changes the female characters into the plays protagonists, who object to an old-fashioned way of looking at women.²⁷ It is also worth noting that Carlsson may have been the “wind of change” in the original, but in the Vallarna production it is a woman who changes and rewrites the story.

To only focus on the joyous and relaxing aspects of entertainment can be problematic since it involves an idea that there is something serious and real in opposition to the fun and relaxed. The opposite is perhaps even more problematic – that something fun is not as real or as important as something serious. Instead of treating entertainment as something enjoyed at specific times and places it needs to be treated as a vital force permeating everyday life. This opens for a more nuanced description where entertainment is not only about fun and relaxation but also connected to power, norms and ideologies similar to what Noël Carroll argues for in his

interpretation of humour.

Entertainment is usually associated with an immediate response of happiness, joy, and laughter. A common view is that a joke has lost its purpose if you need to think and interpret it before you understand or appreciate it. A closer look at the word entertainment can, however, alter the importance of and relationship between the joyous and the immediate. The word entertainment comes from the Latin *inter tenere*, which means to maintain. From this, the idea of holding a person's attention in a pleasant joyful manner has evolved. The German word *Unterhaltung* and the Swedish *underhållning* are close to the English word. Out of many possible interpretations I emphasize the significance of capturing, maintaining or holding someone’s attention. A common idea is that the allure of entertainment is about enjoyment, but I am more interested in the combination of fun with criticism and contemplation. This means that a critical reflection can be combined with entertainment in an ambivalent way, without losing its potency. I argue that the immediate response of laughter may function as a question-mark stimulating contemplation without reducing the enjoyment. This is similar to what Michael Critchley claims when he sees humour as a way of distancing us from the ordinary, everyday world. For Critchley, humour functions as a strategy of de-familiarization, showing what we know and take for granted in a new way. Both examples discussed do just that. The way the actors perform works as strategies of de-familiarization creating a distance that shows something familiar and habitual from a new perspective, while at the same time attracting my attention by being funny or entertaining. The subjects discussed are differences between: cultural areas, men and women, and how these differences are upheld. This underlines the importance of treating entertainment as an interdisciplinary phenomenon, a focal point for economic, social, and political factors. When Edwall overacts Carlsson’s pompous qualities creating a clown-like character, I can see the way a newcomer is treated when entering a new cultural group or society. I

laugh at him at the same time as I reflect on the norms behind the laughter. Siw Carlsson's Madame Flod acknowledges the audience without breaking the fourth wall to tell them something important about gender inequality. Both scenes encourage the spectator to think about the message being delivered. The laughter puts an emphasis on the 'here and now' while introducing a noticeable interval through the mirth. Neither of the examples offers an escape or a way of leaving the ordinary, everyday life behind, nor can it be read as an area outside reality where only playful rules apply. On the contrary, the interval or gap forces me, as spectator, to remain in my ordinary life and confront prejudicial behaviour or ideas.

Bates & Ferri, Vorderer, and Dyer all argue that entertainment is about communication with the aim of bringing joy or pleasure to an audience. Billig directs attention to the content of humour and the problematic connection to embarrassment and ridicule. Therefore, instead of defining entertainment as enjoyable communication for a passive group, I propose an

alternative standpoint where what is being communicated is combined with the way it is being communicated as well as how these transmissions are shown to activate the spectators. By critically discussing how the communication takes place, more specifically how the content is reshaped during a performance, a more complex description can be achieved where the enjoyment of entertainment is intertwined with the communicative process and its content. An actor's body, voice, and way of acting are just as important for the outcome of what is being performed. This means that specific circumstances surrounding entertainment, such as when, where and by whom the play is performed becomes relevant for the communicative process. As a theatre scholar, I hereby hope to add to the proposed definition of entertainment as communication by underlining the importance of including how a theme, or a topic is communicated during a performance. Thus, changing the purpose of entertainment into something more than just providing pleasure to a more or less passive audience.



The outdoor theatre in Falkenberg. Photographer: Bo Håkansson.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The extremely popular *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart/Trevor Noah* is one such example where entertaining but fictive news is appreciated and sometimes seen as real.
2. Peter Vorderer, "It's All Entertainment—Sure. But What Exactly is Entertainment? Communication Research, Media Psychology, and the Explanation of Entertainment Experiences" in *Poetics*, 2001, vol. 29, iss. 4, p. 247-248.
3. The binary art/entertainment as well as the ideological pairing of work/leisure has been discussed by, for example, Theodor Adorno. See Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture*, Routledge, London 2003. For a philosophical overview and a critical perspective see Richard Shusterman, "Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics", in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2003, vol. 43, iss. 3.
4. Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, 2 ed, Routledge, London 2002, p. 1.
5. Stephen Bates & Anthony J. Ferri, "What's Entertainment? Notes Toward a Definition" in *Studies in Popular Culture*, Fall 2010, 33.1, p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
7. This article explores what happens onstage. Whether the spectator accepts the communicated message and feels activated is a different matter that would require another kind of investigation built around a more extensive audience survey.
8. Both examples analysed in the article are from adaptations of the novel.
9. Lots of things that are not primarily amusing can be connected to entertainment. For example, horror movies and so on. The connection between humour and entertainment, which I use in this article, emphasises the amusing aspects of entertainment.
10. Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 1.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
13. Noël Carroll, *Humour. A very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014, p. 69.
14. August Strindberg, *The People of Hemsö*, transl. Elspeth Harley Schubert, Bonnier, Stockholm 1959, p. 23. The Swedish original is "Han kom som ett yrväder en aprilafton och hade ett höganäskrus i en svångrem om halsen."
15. In the Swedish original, there is no snow and the wind is more of a whirlwind or storm.
16. Alcohol was a daily staple for the lower classes, consumed on a variety of occasions and for an infinite number of purposes. It was used in the morning, before, during, or after meals, at parties or celebrations, and with or without coffee.
17. Moi's article is about the problem with theory and the quest for generality. Moi argues for a focus on examples instead of trying to find general principles. Toril Moi "Thinking Through Examples: What Ordinary Language Philosophy Can Do for Feminist Theory" in *New Literary History*, 2015, Vol. 46, Iss. 2.
18. "To think through examples is to appeal to the reader's experience." *Ibid.*, p. 195.
19. Earlier film adaptations, for example, have focused on either one aspect or the other.
20. The city is represented by the professor renting a house for the summer and his cook Ida.
21. Billig is not the first to discuss humour and embarrassment or ridicule. Erving Goffman did this in his "Embarrassment and Social Organization" from 1956.
22. A consequence of this is that humour cannot be dismissed as only entertainment or some sort of superfluous detail.
23. Michael Billig, "Comic Racism and Violence", *Beyond a Joke. The Limits of Humour*, ed. Lockyer & Pickering, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2005, pp. 28, 32-33.
24. Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule. Towards a Social Critique of Humour*, SAGE, London 2005, p. 2. Michael Billig, "Humour and Embarrassment. Limits of 'Nice-Guy' Theories of Social Life", in *Theory, Culture & Society*, October 2001, vol. 18 no. 5, p. 32.
25. Author's translation.
26. Even if they do not know the specifics they certainly know that Strindberg was not famous for his feminist ideas.
27. They usually have a more passive role being the object of desire, looked at, or touched by the men. In the novel, the young girls function as objects without the opportunity to respond to what they are exposed to.

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