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Parasosial

Parasosial interaksjon er en type subjektiv medietilegnelse (Geimer 2010 s. 126). Personlig “over-involvering” i fiktive virkeligheter utvisker litt av skillet mellom det fiktive og det reelle.

Vanskelighetene med å skille fiksjon og virkelighet, og et enormt emosjonelt engasjement i reelle og fiktive personer fra filmer, TV-programmer, dataspill m.m., fører til at mediepersonene utgjør ens “sosiale omgangskrets”. En synes en kjenner disse fiktive personene bedre, og vil heller “omgås” med dem, enn med sine egne naboer. Figurer i såpeserier blir mer fortrolige for oss enn fjerntboende slektninger (Vollbrecht 2001 s. 153). Og vi tenderer til å tro at roller er ekte eksistenser. For eksempel kan skuespillere som spiller leger i TV-serier, bli spurt om medisinske råd av folk på gata (Vollbrecht 2001 s. 201). Noen seere sender inn penger til operasjon for såpeserie-figurer som er kreftsyke, osv.

“The term *parasocial interaction* describes the psychological connections that some media users establish with celebrities they learn about through the mass media. People who are involved in a parasocial interaction typically enjoy a feeling of bonding with those celebrities. You might know someone who gets so involved with media images of rock or rap stars that they sometimes act as if they know them well. In a few publicized cases, this feeling has gotten out of control, leading individuals to stalk, and even harm, the media figures who were the objects of their adulation. In 1999, for example, actor Brad Pitt found himself with an unwanted visitor when a nineteen-year-old woman broke into his home.” (Turow 2009 s. 21)

“Media provide *parasocial* interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956) to their users, that is, the illusion of knowing and interacting with characters depicted, whether real or fictional. These *media friends* (Meyrowitz, 1985) are especially important for people who are, in their own lives, socially isolated, socially inept, aged and/or invalid, or timid and rejected. Media convergence (e.g., Web sites and “chat” rooms for radio and television programs) undoubtedly intensifies the role of those media in our social world” (Downing m.fl. 2004 s. 206-207).

Gjennom mediebruken “fordobles deres sociale omverden så at si. Man kan tale om den første sociale omverden, som er de sociale relationer til personerne i deres

hverdag, og den anden sociale omverden, som er kontakten til mennesker man møder i det virtuelle univers, dvs. med computerens skærm som medie, men som man ikke møder ansigt-til-ansigt. Det er naturligvis kun en analytisk skelnen, som rummer overgangsformer, men den er egnet til at fastslå, at børn og unge har fået en ny omverden.” (Brandt-Pedersen 1999 s. 67)

Den engelske forfatteren Charles Dickens skrev svært omfangsrige romaner, publisert som føljetonger. “Growing acquaintance with the fictional characters developed at much the same pace as the reader’s growing acquaintance with new people in his or her own personal life: it imitated the hesitant feeling of one’s way towards new friendship. Fictional characters generated in this way became real presences in one’s personal life: people gossiped about them in ways indistinguishable from their discussions about new acquaintances in the real world. As the *National Magazine* remarked in 1837, ‘The characters and scenes of this writer [Dickens] have become, to an extent undreamed of in all previous cases, part of our actual life.’ Laman Blanchard, writing in *Ainsworth’s Magazine* in 1844 made the point even more forcefully. Dickens’s monthly instalments caused ‘a most ridiculous confusion in the brain’ to the extent that it ‘no longer separates the fictitious from the real’: “The literary and the social have become the same. The imagination seizes on some of the favourite characters, and regards them with the same force and entireness of identity with which it recognizes the persons we met at Bloomsbury, or in Buckinghamshire, last spring or autumn.” This smudging of the dividing line between art and life helped to promote a sense of the life-likeness of the fictional world.” (Andrews 2006 s. 15)

“Author events bring writers literally face to face with readers’ various desires, including a desire for intimacy with the person behind the text. Such encounters offer readers an “embodied” version of the para-social relationship that can arise from a reader’s engagement with the author’s books and, perhaps, from following media coverage of their career” (Danielle Fuller og DeNel Rehberg Sedo i Rothbauer, Skjerdingstad m.fl. 2016 s. 139).

Bokserien *Twilight* (utgitt 2005 og senere) av amerikanske Stephenie Meyer ble en internasjonal bestselger. “I have read the Twilight Saga (all 4 books) more than 20 times ... I feel that I know the characters personally, and they are a part of my life.” (en leser sitert i Rothbauer, Skjerdingstad m.fl. 2016 s. 271)

En ung fransk kvinne uttalte til en forsker, om en amerikansk TV-serie: “Jeg synes noen ganger at jeg kjenner personene i *Friends* bedre enn min egen familie.” (forskeren Jean-Pierre Esquenazi; <http://communication.revues.org/4931>; lesedato 17.11.15) “Pippi og de andre barna til Astrid [Lindgren] var for meg like virkelige som mine lekekamerater da jeg vokste opp. Jeg levde, lekte, tenkte og kjente med dem og leste, leste, leste.” (journalisten Madeleine Cederström sitert fra *Morgenbladet* 10.–15. mai 2015 s. 40) En 39 år gammel ingeniør fra Avignon i Frankrike

sa om personene i filmer som han hadde sett på kino: “man deler deres eventyr, man knytter seg til dem, de blir våre venner.” (sitert fra Ethis 2013 s. 50)

“Nettthatt mot karakteren Skyler White fra [TV-serien] *Breaking Bad* kan kanskje ses som en symbolsk fullendelse av tv-dramaets maskulinisering – det ble så ille at skuespilleren Anna Gunn ble truet på livet.” (Gry Rustad i *Klassekampen* 18. oktober 2014 s. 41)

“[Den] moralske bekymringa for medias potensielle negative påverknadskraft kjem til uttrykk i offentlegheita med jamne mellomrom. Debatten er viktig nok. Men den tek merksemda bort frå dei meir positive og kvardagslege funksjonane media har for dei fleste av oss. For mange menneske er media integrerte og naturlege element i dagleglivet, noko vi tar for gitt at vi bruker og har glede av. Media er også viktige kjelder både til informasjon, underholdning og engasjement. I tillegg er media viktige for opplevinga av fellesskap i eit samfunn, for å styrka den einskilde sin identitet. Dei kan også gi ei kjensle av å “ha selskap” (såkalla parasosial funksjon).” (*Adresseavisen* 25. februar 2003 s. 12)

“The primary characteristic of a parasocial interaction is that an illusion of a face to face relationship is created between the viewer and the person appearing on the screen. The viewer is made to believe that the person on the screen is communicating directly to them, as if they are close friends, conversing both personally and privately.” (<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/nrb0002.doc>; lesedato 24.01.14)

“Parasocial relations are based on vicarious interactions: we live through fictitious character’s lives and experience their interactions and emotions that offer deeply-felt simulations of real-life social experiences [...] It is through such interactions that viewers and readers of fictional narratives feel like they ‘know and understand the personae in the same intimate way that they know and understand their flesh-and-blood friends’ (Ballantine & Martin, 2005, p. 199). The extent and intensity of these parasocial relationships may differ according to socio-demographical and/or cultural characteristics, such as gender, age and attachment lifestyles [...] Nevertheless, such relationships may hold real consequences both for a person’s social world and inner life (Mar, Oatley & Djikic, 2008, Koopman, 2015). Parasocial relationships may foster not only identification (Mar et al., 2011), but can also eventually lead to processes of ‘self-formation’ (Gibson, 2007): that is, people may pick up and incorporate aspects of the personality and the mannerisms of a fictional character in their own life. In this way, fiction is incorporated into the self in ways that may contribute to the formation of an individual’s own persona or personality” (Rosa Schiavone m.fl. i <https://www.participations.org/Volume%2016/Issue%202/7.pdf>; lesedato 07.05.20).

Den britiske sosiologen John B. Thompson “notes that a specific form of social relationship which he calls ‘non-reciprocal intimacy’ has developed in late

modernity. [...] fans can feel close to famous individuals, yet that closeness is not tied to any physical locale. The familiarity exists despite the fact that the fan has never met the star; indeed, the star may never have set foot in the fan's home country. Still, the fan feels he or she knows the celebrity and experiences an emotional intimacy made up of shared knowledge, understandings, taste, and style. The relationship 'grows' despite the fact that only a one-way flow of communication over vast geographic distance has taken place. As Thompson notes: "Since mediated quasi-interaction is stretched across space and time, it makes possible a form of intimacy with others who do not share one's own spatial-temporal locale; in other words, it makes possible what has been aptly described as 'intimacy at a distance'. Second, since mediated quasi-interaction is non-dialogical, the form of intimacy established through it is non-reciprocal in character." (1995: 219)" (Lull 2001 s. 202)

En japansk tegneserie som på engelsk har tittelen *Tomorrow's Joe*, ble skapt av Asao Takamori og Tetsuya Chiba i 1967. "Readers became so attached to the comic that, following the dramatic and unexpected death of Joe's biggest rival, Rikishi, fans organized a funeral for the fictional character; seven hundred people came to participate in the extraordinary event." (Gravett 2011 s. 279)

TVen kann fungere som et parasosialt kontaktledd med kjendiser eller med fiktive figurer. Filmregissøren Ole Giæver har sagt om TV-serien *Six Feet Under* (2001) at "Familien Fisher blir etter hvert som dine egne familiemedlemmer og du lever med dem i livets opp- og nedturen." (i *Morgenbladet* 8.–14. februar 2008 s. 40)

Musikalske guttegrupper som Nsync og Westlife har fans som prøver å minske avstanden mellom seg selv og sine idoler, og "medleve og medlide" idolenes eksistens (Vollbrecht 2002 s. 74-75). Det å møte i virkeligheten en "stjerne" som en beundrer, kan sette i fare det byggverket av sympati som en har skapt på avstand fra personen, og som har vært en stabil referanse i ens eget liv (Ethis 2013 s. 114). Helten svarer ikke alltid til forventningene "in real life".

De to forskerne Donald Horton og Richard Wohl undersøkte på 1950-tallet "the kind of vicarious or simulated relationship which members of the media audience establish with individual stars or personalities in the media, whether with a pop singer, a newsreader or a character in a soap opera. What characterizes such relationships is "intimacy at a distance". This actually gives rise to some difficult analytical problems [...] but we should resist the still prevalent tendency to see para-social relationships as automatically deficient. For many people the kind of regular interaction they provide makes the media companions of their everyday lives into a 'screen community' that operates as 'an extended kin grouping, whereby the viewer comes into contact with the wider society beyond his [sic] immediate family' " (Deacon m.fl. 1999 s. 285; det siste sitatet er fra G. Noble, 1975).

“The concept of parasocial interaction has become well established in the media and communication literature since the term first appeared in an article by Horton and Wohl (1956). Parasocial interaction was originally defined as the apparent face-to-face interaction that can occur between media characters and their audience. While audience members consist of users of mass media, media characters can include several types of media figures (or personae) such as presenters, actors, or celebrities. [...] Conceptually, parasocial relationships can be thought of as being similar to an interpersonal social interaction or relationship, although they typically consist of a much weaker bond. [...] For example, parasocial interaction is one of many important outcomes that audience members may seek when they select television shows to view. Moreover, parasocial interaction has also been established as an important determinant of media use, and an important concept to be investigated from a uses and gratifications perspective [...] Although parasocial relationships are based on simulated interaction, they can continue beyond the viewing period when viewers experience characters as close friends they would like to meet (e.g., Skumanich and Kintsfather 1998).” (http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v32/acr_vol32_83.pdf; lesedato 07.08.13)

“[P]arasocial relationships complement social relationships, and are better understood as part of a viewer’s social life. It is perhaps not surprising that evidence has been gathering in support of the similarity between parasocial and social relationships. For example, viewers will judge media characters using many of the same criteria as those they use to judge other people they meet (Perse and Rubin 1989), and there are similar patterns in the development of social and parasocial relationships (Rubin and McHugh 1987). Overall, parasocial relationships resemble social relationships, and although they may often be less salient and intense than close social relationships, for many television viewers, relationships with television characters and other celebrities are a constant, large, and in many instances important part of their social world (Skumanich and Kintsfather 1998).” (http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v32/acr_vol32_83.pdf; lesedato 07.08.13)

“Television personalities encourage parasocial involvement with viewers by using conversational style and gestures within informal face-to-face settings that mirror interpersonal communication and invite interactive responses. The relationship is magnified by production techniques, such as close-up shots and camera zooms, which promote a sense of intimacy. The parasocial relationship, then, is fostered by a combination of factors: degree of reality approximation of the persona and the media, frequency and consistency of appearance by the persona, stylized behavior and conversational manner of the persona, and effective use of the formal features of television [...]. These factors work together to make the persona a predictable, nonthreatening, and, hence, perfect role partner for the viewer.” (http://www.researchgate.net/Rubin_Perse_Powell_1985.pdf; lesedato 07.08.13)

“Richard Schickel (1985) argues that fans today are led astray; mass media provide so much information about the real lives of stars that people believe they know them. He calls this a phenomenon of the “intimate stranger.” ” (Staiger 2005 s. 118).

Mediene bryter opp grensene mellom det fjerne og det nære, det offentlige og det private, det sosiale og det intime (Bougnoux 2001 s. 95). Brukeren glemmer sin egen anonymitet overfor f.eks. mediestjerner og “kommuniserer” med dem. Både de profesjonelle medieaktørene og brukerne (lesere, seere, spillere) oppfører seg som om de stod i et direkte sosialt forhold til hverandre. Brukernes forventninger og behov påvirker de profesjonelle medieprodusentene, mens brukerne inngår i en “kvasi-dialog“ med produsentene (Fromme m.fl. 1999 s. 132).

“One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media – radio, television, and the movies – is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer. The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group. The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one’s peers; the same is true of a character in a story who comes to life in these media in an especially vivid and arresting way. We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a para-social relationship. In television, especially, the image which is presented makes available nuances of appearance and gesture to which ordinary social perception is attentive and to which interaction is cued. Sometimes the ‘actor’ – whether he is playing himself or performing in a fictional role – is seen engaged with others; but often he faces the spectator, uses the mode of direct address, talks as if he were conversing personally and privately. The audience, for its part, responds with something more than mere running observation; it is, as it were, subtly insinuated into the program’s action and internal social relationships and, by dint of this kind of staging, is ambiguously transformed into a group which observes and participates in the show by turns. The more the performer seems to adjust his performance to the supposed response of the audience, the more the audience tends to make the response anticipated. This simulacrum of conversational give and take may be called para-social interaction.” (Horton og Wohl i http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%201/3_01_hortonwohl.htm; lesedato 22.01.14)

“Para-social relations may be governed by little or no sense of obligation, effort, or responsibility on the part of the spectator. He is free to withdraw at any moment. If he remains involved, these para-social relations provide a framework within which much may be added by fantasy. But these are differences of degree, not of kind, from what may be termed the ortho-social. The crucial difference in experience obviously lies in the lack of effective reciprocity, and this the audience cannot normally conceal from itself. To be sure, the audience is free to choose among the relationships offered, but it cannot create new ones. The interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development. There are, of course, ways in which the

spectators can make their feelings known to the performers and the technicians who design the programs, but these lie outside the para-social interaction itself.” (Horton og Wohl i http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%201/3_01_hortonwohl.htm; lesedato 22.01.14)

“For the great majority of the audience, the para-social is complementary to normal social life. It provides a social milieu in which the everyday assumptions and understandings of primary group interaction and sociability are demonstrated and reaffirmed. The “personality” program, however, is peculiarly favorable to the formation of compensatory attachments by the socially isolated, the socially inept, the aged and invalid, the timid and rejected. The persona himself is readily available as an object of love – especially when he succeeds in cultivating the recommended quality of “heart.” Nothing could be more reasonable or natural than that people who are isolated and lonely should seek sociability and love wherever they think they can find it. It is only when the para-social relationship becomes a substitute for autonomous social participation, when it proceeds in absolute defiance of objective reality, that it can be regarded as pathological. The existence of a marginal segment of the lonely in American society has been recognized by the mass media themselves, and from time to time specially designed offerings have been addressed to this minority. In these programs, the maximum illusion of a personal, intimate relationship has been attempted. They represent the extreme development of the para-social, appealing to the most isolated, and illustrate, in an exaggerated way, the principles we believe to apply through the whole range of “personality” programs. The programs which fall in this extreme category promise not only escape from an unsatisfactory and drab reality, but try to prop up the sagging self-esteem of their unhappy audience by the most blatant reassurances.” (Horton og Wohl i http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%201/3_01_hortonwohl.htm; lesedato 22.01.14)

“Horton and Wohl refer to television personalities as *personae*, who achieve intimacy with the viewers from their regular appearances on camera. [...] They suggest that a Bond of Intimacy is created by the persona and the production company in order to create the illusion of interaction. The persona uses small talk, casualness and will often speak to members of his ‘cast’ using their first names or even nicknames. Graham Norton often does this, acting as if he has known the guest for a long time. Researchers look for stories of the guest’s past so that Graham can bring them up casually and fondly to imply a sense of closeness and intimacy. The production team and Graham Norton work out all the cues so that Graham knows when to turn his head [...] to what camera to make his ‘private jokes’ with the home audience. Horton and Wohl note how the persona will step into the audience and converse with them and send people into the street converting the outside world into the extension of his stage, eradicating the line that separates persona and spectator (Horton & Wohl 1956, 218). Graham Norton does this on almost every show; it allows the television viewer to see that there are other people who like them are spectators but who have active involvement and vulnerability;

this identification of spectator to spectator compels the home audience to feel more involved. The involvement of a spectator, someone who is real and unprepared, allows for a greater identification, and the persona's direct conversation with a member of the audience creates a very personal feel, which can be felt by the television viewer. It is not uncommon for people to feel embarrassed for someone else and these shared feelings can be felt for a complete stranger on the television. Norman Fairclough, whose research is more modern, refers to the personal relationship between a spoken or written text and an audience as *synthetic personalisation*." ([http:// www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/nrb0002.doc](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/nrb0002.doc); lesedato 24.01.14)

"Oprah's Book Club" var "a book-discussion group that aired as part of the Oprah Winfrey Show from 1996 through 2002. Approximately once a month, Winfrey announced a new book club selection, and then the following month she and the author, along with a few carefully chosen viewers, joined together, sometimes over dinner, to discuss the book. [...] Viewers are drawn in, not just by the cozy sets, the overstuffed chairs, and the warm lighting, but also by the shared narratives. "Intimacy," in Oprah's case, involves closeness, companionship of a strange sort, intimacy once removed, if you will, not intimacy as it is typically experienced as close acquaintance, association, or familiarity. Television scholars refer to this imagined or *constructed* intimacy as a "para-social" relationship between a viewer and a television personality or character because although it is not actually interpersonal interaction, for many people, so the thinking goes, watching a favorite television personality functions as a replacement for actual social relationships. The notion of "para-social interaction," from the 1956 study of the talk show and its host by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl suggests that talk television is potentially harmful to viewers because, conditioned by intimacy associated with family and friends, spectators may be fooled into believing that the closeness they feel with a television personality is, in fact, real, unmediated. The television talk show, then, may be experienced by viewers as more "real" than, say, a dramatic show (213). But as Wayne Munson points out in *All Talk: The Talkshow in Media Culture*, Horton and Wohl's conception of the illusion of intimacy has gone largely unexamined. According to Munson, one problem with Horton and Wohl's argument is that it posits a passive viewer who can't tell the difference between the interpersonal conventions of television and "real" social relationships. "The privileging of 'real' interpersonal communication at the expense of the talkshow's 'simulation' of it has continued as a dominant strain in the empirical research into the talkshow," Munson notes (117). Munson finds troubling the very distinction between "real" and "imagined" relations between viewers and television personalities, and argues that "[Horton and Wohl] would like to separate out and define that which has actually become inseparable. They atavistically long for a clear 'fourth wall,' a reestablishment of the defining either-or aesthetic boundaries between performer and text and spectator, a renewal of the clear distinction between public and private" (117)." (R. Mark Hall i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3594275.pdf>; lesedato 21.03.23)

“One way that Winfrey establishes her authority as a literacy sponsor is first to construct the appearance of intimacy with her viewers. She does this, in part, by sharing the personal details of her life, including her literacy narrative of progress. Sharing the details of her life transforms Winfrey into a trusted friend. Just as Winfrey carefully selects the books for “Oprah’s Book Club,” so she carefully chooses which details of her life to share, details that illustrate how she has overcome obstacles in her life. Winfrey’s goal is to use her narrative, not only to promote herself, but also to show her audience by example how they too can overcome difficulties. Winfrey’s audience, like anyone in search of a good book, then reads what this trusted friend recommends. Winfrey also uses her influence as a prominent celebrity to persuade participants to take up the books she selects. [...] A 1986 *Woman’s Day* article quotes Winfrey as saying, “ ‘People out there think I’m their girlfriend; they treat me like that. It’s really amazing’ ” (Tornabene 50).” (R. Mark Hall i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3594275.pdf>; lesedato 21.03.23)

“I år 2000 slapp Eminem singelen “Stan”, der han forteller historien om en ung fan som tar sin heltedyrkelse av rapperen til et ekstremt og destruktivt nivå. Låten ble en internasjonal hit, og halvannet tiår senere dukket begrepet ‘stan’ opp i sosiale medier som en generell betegnelse på grenseoverskridende fanmentalitet. I 2018 ble ordet innlemmet i Oxford English Dictionary, og i dag er det internetts foretrukne substantiv og verb (man kan både være en stan og stan-enoen) for å beskrive usunn parasosial tilknytning til berømte personer. ” (Aksel Kielland i *Morgenbladet* 17.–23. mars 2023 s. 39)

På tysk finnes disse bøkene om fenomenet: T. Fabian: *Fjernsyn og ensomhet i alderdommen: En empirisk undersøkelse om parasosial interaksjon* (1993); U. Gleich: *Parasosial interaksjon: Forholdet mellom TV-seere og mediepersoner* (1995); P. Vorderer (red.): *Fjernsyn som relasjonskasse: Parasosiale relasjoner og interaksjoner med TV-personer* (1996).

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