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UNIVERSITET

Forum för Afrikastudier

Friday Seminar in Africa Studies

# Kenyan comedy – Unbounding Stereotypes

with

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House 3, room 2028, Engelska Parken  
Thunsbergsvägen 3H, Uppsala

*Kenyan comedy, besides reproducing and playing on the everyday, is heavily invested with stereotypes that reflect the Kenyan milieu as it intersects with the global. This comedy is open to multiple interpretations and contestations of meaning that are not always even transparent to the comedians or their audiences. This is due to the asymmetry that accrues between the production and consumption ends of comedy's spectrum. Oftentimes, Kenyan comedy is seen by its critics as harmful to Kenyan society. Contrary to this prevalent perception, my research demonstrates that Kenyan comedy, as a form of entertainment and critique of society, does not seek to fix Kenyan identities. Instead, it frees such identities from constricting stereotypes by disrupting and unsettling the hierarchical structure of hegemonic ideology. To this end, the comedy form offers Kenyans escape into a comedic utopia, through which they address pertinent issues affecting them, even as they endeavor to fashion a 'Kenyanness' of aesthetic escapism that is celebratory of the country's rich socio-cultural diversity. The study considers the Churchill Show (a stand-up comedy show), Auntie Boss (a sitcom), The Wicked Edition (a comedic news commentary), The Trend (an issue-based comedy show) that airs on Kenya's National Television (NTV), and The Real HouseHelps of Kawangware, a ducosoap hosted on Kenya Television Network (KTN).*

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