

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

Sist oppdatert 09.12.20

Melodrama

(_sjanger, _drama, _film) Opprinnelig et skuespill der personenes replikker vekslet med musikalske innslag (f.eks. sanger). Melodramaer var opprinnelig, på 1700- og 1800-tallet, ulike teatersjangrer som befant seg mellom ballett, skuespill, konsert og opera (Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 195). Disse skuespillene hadde nesten alltid et moraliserende (didaktisk) preg. Melodramaer kan i dag være romaner, filmer, TV-serier m.m.

Til å begynne med bestod sjangeren av deklamasjon til instrumentalmusikk eller sunget drama (og var dermed nær operaen), men betegnelsen brukes i dag også om skuespill og filmer uten musikk, og om romaner og andre episke fortellinger med et romantisk-sentimentalt preg. Et sentimentalt verk, ofte med voldsomme lidenskaper hos personene (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 227). Også kalt “weeey” (Kaufmann 2007 s. 49).

Melodramaet blir ofte oppfattet som et “alvorlig” kjærlighetsdrama, i motsetning til den lystige romantiske komedien (Kaufmann 2007 s. 29). “[L]ove triumphs over baser passions like the desire for revenge [...] This is not so unusual in nineteenth-century melodrama.” (Worth 1983 s. 7) Men det har også blitt hevdet at grunnholdningen i sjangeren er pessimistisk og hovedpersonene desillusjoneres. Hvis kvinnen og mannen til slutt likevel får hverandre, er det ofte med en følelse av bitterhet, i en slags “false happy end”, og ikke med kjærlighetsfilmens avsluttende totale lykke (Kaufmann 2007 s. 31). Et melodrama forteller om bedrag, skuffelse, forgjeves strev, skyldbetyngte handlinger og individets nederlag (Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). Det tematiseres at noe er “for sent”, for sent å gjøre godt igjen, for sent å begynne på nytt osv. (Liptay og Bauer 2013 s. 275). Verkene appellerer til publikums følelser, ved bruk av “melodramaets sublime skrekk og ekstaser [...] [heltenes] sentimentale vågemot [...] de nobleste heroismer” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 225).

“Melodrama Films are a sub-type of drama films, characterized by a plot to appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience. Melodrama, a combination of drama and melos (music), literally means “play with music.” The themes of dramas, the oldest literary and stage art form, were exaggerated within melodramas, and the liberal use of music often enhanced their emotional plots. Often, film studies criticism used the term ‘melodrama’ pejoratively to connote an unrealistic, pathos-

filled, campy tale of romance or domestic situations with stereotypical characters (often including a central female character) that would directly appeal to feminine audiences. [...] Melodramatic plots with heart-tugging, emotional plots (requiring multiple hankies) usually emphasize sensational situations or crises of human emotion, failed romance or friendship, strained familial situations, tragedy, illness, neuroses, or emotional and physical hardship within everyday life. Victims, couples, virtuous and heroic characters or suffering protagonists (usually heroines) in melodramas are presented with tremendous social pressures, threats, repression, fears, improbable events or difficulties with friends, community, work, lovers, or family. The melodramatic format allows the character(s) to work through their difficulties or surmount the problems with resolute endurance, sacrificial acts, and steadfast bravery. Melodramas were the prime form of dramas until they were overtaken by straight-forward, realistic dramatic forms in the 50s and afterwards, although they continue to occasionally appear into the present.” (Tim Dirks i <http://www.filmsite.org/melodramafilms.html>; lesedato 09.08.13)

“It was a *serious* play written to arouse intense audience emotions through blood curdling events, terrific suspense, and horrifying details centering on unethical situations. Motivation and logic in the plotline were not important. [...] the audience did not just sit passively in performance. The interaction between them and the performer was always apparent and much enjoyed. So in the dramatization of Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* the actor playing Bill Sykes in dragging Nancy across the stage by her hair could readily turn to the galleries for a chorus of boos which he would then incite more with another swift kick to Nancy. Also, it should be noted due to this audience interaction the larger than life acting style of the melodrama was perhaps a necessity due to the cavernous gas lit theaters that the actors had to work in. These huge cathedrals type spaces made the actor hardly visible and barely audible unless he tore that “passion to tatters” with histrionic [= deliberately affected, overly dramatic or emotional] gestures and vocal gymnastics of slow sonorous speeches which would seem comical by today’s standards. Yet, for their day those performers would regard themselves to be realistic and full of emotional truth in their performance style. [...] It supplies the general masses with a cathartic release to purge those wild, unruly and dangerous emotions that seethed in the public’s soul. The same could be said of today’s professional sporting events which mirror the rowdy audience/spectator/fan/publicity environment of the melodrama. Then as the 19th century moved into its twilight the melodrama style saw experimentations with stage technology spectacle as a drawing power way for public attendance. Simulating gigantic natural disasters, massive ship wrecks, horse races and large scale destruction on the stage these jaw dropping sights would have struck a chord with today’s summer movie blockbuster fair.” (<http://soa.ccsdschools.com/>; lesedato 07.11.17)

Verkene er “emosjonaliserende” og “sensasjonalistiske” (Kappelhoff 2004), med “the high-pitched melodramatic style” (Worth 1983 s. 117). De er ifølge Jost Schneider kjennetegnet av blant annet emosjonalisering, personliggjøring av

konflikter, romantisk kjærlighet, erotikk og en lykkelig slutt (2004 s. 344). Men melodramaet rommer også en realisme som f.eks. romantikkens eventyrskuespill ikke har (Mouralis 1975 s. 45). Det er vanlig å fokusere på et offer eller en offerrolle, gjerne en vakker kvinne, og tilskueren/leseren skal identifisere seg med denne personen (Ferro 1993 s. 242). Men egentlig er mange av personene offer – fanget i sine følelser, begjær, lengsler og svakheter (Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). “Idylliska scener växlar med starkt dramatiska, katastrofpräglade inslag men allt har ett lyckligt slut.” (Bertil Nolin i Leffler 1993 s. 111) Melodramaets mål er å gjøre verden (der mennene har langt mer makt enn kvinnene) mer human, liberal og “feminin” (Matthias Bauer i Koebner og Felix 2007, innledningen).

Melodramaet fokuserer ofte på konsekvensene av en kjærlighet på gale veier og på tapet av en kjærlighetsillusjon (Kaufmann 2007 s. 30-31). Temaene er ofte “den evige konflikten mellom lidenskap og plikt, hat og kjærlighet, uskyld og fordervelse” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 158). “Verden er lukket” i melodramaet (Thomas Elsaesser sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). Ofte kan ikke personene uttrykke sine ekte følelser, fordi de lever i et miljø som ikke aksepterer slike reaksjoner. Til gjengjeld kan dramatiske konflikter bli “sublimert” inn i gester, dekor, farger, eventuelt i bildekomposisjonen i en film (Gibbs 2002 s. 71). “Arresting tableaux were a feature of melodrama” (Worth 1983 s. 37). Publikum skal derimot føle intenst. Melodrama rommer “exaggerated pathos and unabashed appeal to the emotions [...] the emotional extremes essential to melodrama. [...] heart-wrenching swings in the plot [...] overwrought emotion.” (Steve Neale i <https://www.scribd.com/document/316663040/Melodrama-and-Tears-Neale>; lesedato 07.11.17)

Melodrama “deal with that which is desired and repressed. Repressed desires are those which can’t be dealt with or expressed in any way, they are those which never completely go away.” (Lisa Morton i http://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol1no3/morton_issue3.html; lesedato 05.01.18)

“A theme that is often found in melodramas is that of forbidden love, where two individuals of different statuses mix worlds. [...] In melodramas, the audience often sees the story unravel through the eyes of the most vulnerable character. [...] Women, fantasy, and excess are characteristic of melodramas. [...] melodrama is “a combination of the intensities of music (melos) and the interaction of human conflicts (drama)” (Corrigan and White 326). [...] [Patricia] White observes that fantasy operates not only in the sense of daydream, but also as a “mise-en-scène of desire” [...] Melodrama prioritizes strong emotional response, often made for women. DeFalco defines melodrama as a “mode commonly defined by its incitement of strong feeling through sensationalism, its power to inspire bittersweet tears of identificatory remorse” (32).” (Mitra Moin i http://offscreen.com/view/_far-from-heaven_-and-_carol_-as-melodramas; lesedato 06.04.17)

Standardsituasjoner i melodrama er knyttet til illegitimitet (f.eks. barn født utenfor ekteskap) og ødelagte familierelasjoner (Johannes Binotto i Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 270). “Melodrama enacts, often with uncanny literalness, the ‘family romance’ described by Freud – that is to say the imaginary scenario played out by children in relation to their paternity, the asking and answering of the questions: whose child am I (or would I like to be)?” (Geoffrey Nowell-Smith sitert fra Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 286)

I et melodrama tar handlingen ofte overraskende vendinger (seeren/leseren forventer det uventete ...). Det kan være voldsomme omslag i handlingen, med katastrofale hendelser (Ferro 1993 s. 242). Det er kraftige lykkeomslag (peripetier) og gjenkjennelser (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 88). Skuespillene, filmene og romanene inneholder ofte en dramatisk gjenkjennelsesscene. Ofte blir en forsvunnet person gjenfunnet på slutten av skuespillet eller i filmen. Handlingen er vanligvis innviklet og sensasjonsmettet. Typiske innslag er jakten på en person som tas til fange, flukt, falsk anklage, den kaldblodige kjeltringen, den mystiske identiteten, de elskendes gjenforening, det avslørte bedrageriet og lignende klisjeer (Bertil Nolin i Leffler 1993 s. 112). “[F]amiliar melodrama mechanism” omfatter “mistaken identities, incriminating inscriptions, secrets of the past” (Worth 1983 s. 155). Det kan være et deus ex machina-preg over slutten (plutselig løses alt til det beste). Verkene har det som har blitt kalt “forbløffelsens estetikk” (Didier 1989 s. 82).

Sigmund Freud “offers that at least three fantasy scenes are very common: ones of sexual desire (the fantasy of seduction), sexual difference (the fantasy of castration), and the origin of the self (the fantasy of the family romance or a return to the origin), which, [...] correlates neatly with three major film genres (pornography, horror, and melodrama).” (Staiger 2005 s. 157) Medieforskeren Linda Williams “identifies three pertinent features shared by body genres (which she defines as porn, horror, and melodrama) [...] there is the spectacle of a body caught in the grips of intense sensation or emotion [...] the spectacle of [...] weeping in melodrama [...] grief or anguish in melodrama [...] over-involvement in sensation and emotion ... viewers feel too directly, too viscerally, manipulated by the text [...] The body of the spectator involuntary mimics “the emotion or sensation of the body onscreen” [...] The spectator cringes, becomes tense, screams, weeps, becomes aroused.” (gjengitt fra Mathijs og Mendik 2008 s. 121)

Betegnelsen brukes i dag om enhver fortellende tekst, film eller historie i et annet medium når historien er kjennetegnet av svulstighet, usannsynlige tilfældigheter, klisjeer og overdrivelser. Patetiske effekter er vanlig. Melodramatiske ansiktsuttrykk og positurer (“melodramatic poses”) viser på overtydelige og dramatiske måter sterke følelser, som sjalusi, mistenksomhet, lykke, forelskelse, hat osv. Det trenger ikke å være musikkinnslag.

Et melodrama både viser sterke følelser hos karakterene, og vekker sterke følelser hos publikum: “the melodrama’s characteristic emphasis on emotional expressiveness” (Buckland 2009 s. 181). “[D]enne serien har store melodramatiske trekk. Vi er ikke redde for å ta konfliktene ut i svingene.” (forfatter og skuespiller Anna Bache-Wiig i *A-magasinet* 27. februar 2015 s. 12) Lidenskapen kan få en demonisk styrke (Koebner og Felix 2007, innledningen). Melodramatiske verk har blitt kalt “hysteriske tekster” (Geoffrey Nowell-Smith), en sjanger for en “mode of excess” (Peter Brooks) og “hyperbolske uttrykks-former” (Thomas Elsaesser).

“I 1973 hevdet James L. Smith at ordet “melodramatisk” nærmest er for skjellord å regne: “Melodrama has in popular use become a blanket term of abuse and contempt. It is probably the dirtiest word a drama critic dare print” (Smith 1973, 7). [...] melodramaets fortryllelse som en dramatisk fremstilling uten hemninger [...] gir også Peter Brooks en karakteristikk av den vanligste oppfatningen av melodrama og ‘melodramatisk’: “The connotations of the word are probably similar for us all. They include: the indulgence in strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, actions of overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripeti” (Brooks 12) [...] Det Brooks hevder, er at melodramaet kom som et svar på behovet for etiske og moralske retningslinjer som oppstod i vakuumet etter den franske revolusjon. [...] I denne modellen svarer melodramaet på akutte behov hos mennesket, noe som skal gi svar eller tilfredsstillende behovet for det Brooks kaller “the moral occult”: “The moral occult is not a metaphysical system; it is rather a repository of the fragmentary and desacralized remnants of sacred myth” (Brooks, 5). Slik gir melodramaet svar, hevder Brooks, på dypføyte behov i tiden; en bekreftelse på at livet er fullt av motgang og prøvelser, men at de onde vil bli straffet, og det gode vil få sin belønning og rettferdigheten vil seire til slutt. Dette overordnede prinsippet er det da som styrer sjangeren, både dens form og dens innhold: “The melodramatic mode in large measure exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult.” (Brooks, 5)” (Hambro 2015).

“As has often been noted, melodramas are marked by chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions, last-minute-rescues and revelations, *deus ex machina* endings. Melodramatic narration involves ‘continual surprises, sensational developments’, constant violations in the established direction of events, ‘breathhtaking peripety’. Inasmuch as there is little causal preparation for the way events unfold, the *generic* verisimilitude of melodrama tends to be marked by the extent to which the succession and course of events is unmotivated (or undermotivated) from a realist point of view, such preparation and motivation as does exist is always ‘insufficient’. There is an *excess* of effect over cause, of the extraordinary over the ordinary. Hence the emergence of terms like Fate, Chance and Destiny. They mark a narrative logic irreducible to the conventional forms of social and psychological motivation associated with the nineteenth century novel and naturalist drama. They also mark a *power* over the

lives of the protagonists.” (Steve Neale i <https://www.scribd.com/document/316663040/Melodrama-and-Tears-Neale>; lesedato 07.11.17)

“Melodrama, emphasizing the sudden, the shocking, the unexpected in events, creates an atmosphere in which it is possible to accept as plausible sudden changes in character as well [...] present us with effects at the expense of causes.” (Wilde 1987 s. 116).

“Melodramas tend to deal in terms of subject matter with desire and its vicissitudes. As a genre marked by emotional hyperbole, by what Peter Brooks has called ‘grandiose emotional states’, melodrama involves extremes of polarised emotion: love and hate, joy and despair, and so on. These extremes mark and are marked by the vicissitudes of desire: its coming into existence, its realisation (brief or lasting) or its failure, and in particular the blockages to its fulfilment. The constantly changing and apparently arbitrary course of events articulates and intensifies these vicissitudes, and, in turn, is motivated by them. Blockages, barriers and bars to the fulfilment of desire are constantly introduced as events change course. These blockages are characterised and motivated in different ways. They may be specified, for instance, in social terms, as the product of family circumstances or the strictures of class and social propriety. As an older and ‘respectable’ widow, Cary Scott feels barred from marrying Ron Kirby in *All That Heaven Allows*, caught between her desire and her social circumstances. As a courtesan, the heroine of *Camille* (directed by George Cukor, 1937) has to renounce her love for the hero. Such blockages may be specified in terms of physical or psychical impairment (as happens to both Cary and Ron at different points in *All That Heaven Allows*). Or they may be specified as the product of Chance, Fate or Destiny. Outside events simply and unexpectedly intervene. War breaks out, or, against all the odds (and the rules of realist motivation), Battling Burrows’ crony [dvs. kamerat] in *Broken Blossoms* just happens to be in Cheng Huan’s shop at the moment when Lucy, unaware of his presence, just happens to knock over an item of crockery, causing him to investigate and discover her whereabouts. In practice, of course, these forms of blockage can, and usually do, overlap.” (Steve Neale i <https://www.scribd.com/document/316663040/Melodrama-and-Tears-Neale>; lesedato 07.11.17)

Hemmeligheter og avsløringer er vanlig. En viktig hendelse i mange melodramaer er gjenkjennelsen – at en sentral person får sin sanne identitet åpenbart eller avslørt og blir gjenkjent av andre (Mouralis 1975 s. 47). Det emosjonelle engasjementet er ofte viktigere enn at handlingen er sannsynlig og “kunne ha hendt”. Men forfatterne (og filmskaperne osv.) har snarere kommersielle hensikter enn kunstneriske.

“[A] basic melodramatic idea is conveyed: the sense that life is marked by eternal contradictions, by unsolvable emotional and moral conflicts, by the ultimate impossibility, as it were, of reconciling desire and reality. As Laura Mulvey has put it: “The melodrama recognizes this gap by raising problems, known and recognizable: a chance to work through inescapable frustrations by positing an

alternative ideal never seen as more than a momentary illusion.” ” (Ang 1996 s. 90). Familien spiller en viktig rolle i melodramaer, særlig de intense følelsene innad i familien (Schroer 2007 s. 90). Familieverdier og en konvensjonell, borgerlig moral står sentralt (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 91 og 97): kjærlighet, barn, huslig hygge er store mål i livet. Menneskelige kvaliteter vinner over pengehensyn og kyniske betraktninger.

“Essentially, melodrama combines four elements, the serious and the comic, the pantomimic and the spectacular. (Rosador 94) [...] Another crucial generic component of melodrama is the manichean structure of its moral code. There is a clear opposition of moral absolutes, of unadulterated virtue and vice, which is invariably resolved through the administering of poetic justice at the end of the play. (Schmidt 115) [...] One of the most significant characteristics of melodrama is its episodic structure. This clearly non-Aristotelian situational dramaturgy relies on the effect of scenic units, not on that of an overarching, logically developed and resolved linear plot. As Rosador has put it, ‘the structure of melodrama consists of scenic and emotional climaxes.’ (99) [...] the paramount interference of chance and fate (Schmidt, 273), which determines the encounters between characters and the abrupt and often inexplicable ups and downs in the careers of individual figures. What, in aesthetic terms – in terms of dramatic construction – appear to be implausible contrivances, may be read as an element of mystification, necessary for holding the interest of the spectator [...] In melodrama, gambling and speculation frequently serve as paradigms of such sudden reversals of fortune. [...] Melodramatic plots typically focus on the hero’s or the heroine’s loss of identity – usually as a consequence of the evil machinations of the villain or villains – which is regained at the end of the play, where poetic justice is administered. The protagonists are either deprived of their identity because they are falsely accused of a crime, because false documents are produced or sometimes because hero or heroine, in a moment of weakness, yield to temptation.” (Rudolf Weiss i <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2007/weiss.html>; lesedato 25.11.15)

“The nineteenth-century French theatre had been preoccupied with the ‘woman question’, from Scribe through Dumas fils to Sardou, and had worked out an elaborate and popular formula for dealing with it, the so-called ‘well-made’ play (this was really the old melodrama in a more refined, semi-naturalistic, middle-class form, minus the music which had played a vital part in more primitive melodramas like the English *Maria Marten* or *Lost in London*). [...] an interesting list of the topics handled by Dumas fils, a creator of the convention. Among them were: ‘the unworthy brides who must be denounced, the prenuptial children who must be adopted, the natural sons who must be avenged, the wavering ladies who must be saved, the credulous fiancés who must be enlightened, the profligate wives who must be shot ...’.” (Worth 1983 s. 15) I melodramaer er det vanlig med “falne kvinner” (Liptay og Bauer 2013 s. 273).

“Melodrama is full of characters who wish to be loved, who are worthy of love, and whom the spectator therefore wishes to be loved: Lisa in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Donnelly in *The Reckless Moment* (Max Ophuls, 1949), Charlotte Vale in *Now, Voyager* (directed by Irving Rapper, 1942), Mary Lane in *Only Yesterday*, Lucy in *Broken Blossoms*, Ginny in *Some Came Running* (directed by Vincente Minnelli, 1958).” (Steve Neale i <https://www.scribd.com/document/316663040/Melodrama-and-Tears-Neale>; lesedato 07.11.17)

Det Elsaesser kaller “familiemelodrama” foregår i et borgerlig hjem med en klaustrofobisk atmosfære og/eller i en småby, slik at personene virker “innesperret” (gjengitt etter Kaufmann 2007 s. 57). Tilværelsen virker statisk, inntil en person utenfra kommer inn i miljøet (eventuelt vender tilbake etter langt fravær).

Filmen *Experiment in Terror* (1944; regissert av Jacques Tourneur) har blitt kalt et “paranoia-melodrama” og et “gothic-melodrama” (Keazor, Liptay og Marschall 2011 s. 225 og 226). Filmen handler om en ektemann som dreper sin mor, manipulerer sin kone til å tro at hun er mentalt syk, og er villig til å myrde sin egen sønn.

“After the publication of Peter Brooks’ *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1985), the concept of melodrama has to some extent acquired new status and new content.” (Naper 1999 s. 136) Ifølge denne amerikanske litteraturforskeren er kjernen i melodramaet som sjanger et oppgjør med de litterære personenes moralske status. “Kjernen i melodramaet er ifølge Elsaesser og Brooks at sjangeren inneholder et underliggende budskap om at det finnes mening, sammenheng og kontinuitet både i det enkelte menneskeliv og i tilværelsen som helhet. Peter Brooks oppfatter melodramaet som en type humanistisk basert svar på den verdirelativismen som vokste seg stadig sterkere i perioden fra renessansen til den franske revolusjon. Melodramaets popularitet, skriver Brooks, henger sammen med et økende behov for absolutte moralske og ideologiske verdier i en verden som blir stadig mer sekularisert.” (Naper 2007 s. 72)

Melodramaet har en innebygd polarisering eller “manikeisme” (Roubine 1971 s. 75, Couty 2000 s. 510) og kan virke “overspent”, med klare kontraster mellom det gode og det onde, lys og mørke osv. “Manikeismen er grunnlaget for handlingen: ofrene er gode, de er de fattige, utnyttede, ydmykede (barnemartyrer, prostituerte etc.); de rike er onde. [...] Som dramatisk sjanger er føljetongen nær melodramaet [...] nedverdige barn, forlatte personer, hemmelige selskap, skjeletter, gift, stormer [...] Ut av disse helveter kommer uskyldige straff-fanger, folk man trodde var døde, de dukker opp helt omskapt og som nesten allmektige oppretter de rettferdighet.” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 61) Heltinnens uskyldsrene ønsker går i oppfyllelse og ondskapen lider nederlag (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 248).

Skurkene kan være rene inkarnasjoner av ondskap, “transcendent personifications of evil” (Van Dover 1984 s. 170). Men disse megaskurkene klarer ikke permanent å

ødelegge et samfunn bygd på godhet og dydighet (Couty 2000 s. 511). Lysets krefter står mot mørkets krefter. “Melodrama presents the struggle of right and wrong; tragedy – on one famous view of it – the struggle of right and right” (Eric Bentley i Lerner 1989 s. 258). Vanlige skikkelser i melodramaer er den ondskapsfulle forræderen, den forfulgte uskyldige (som lider under ondskaperen), helten (som bekjemper forræderen) og den enfoldige (vanligvis heltens trofaste venn, og dennes motsetning): fire representanter for henholdsvis ondskap, godhet/uskyld, mot og naivitet (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 88). “Alle tekstene innen sjangeren er basert på dette skjemaet.” (s. 88) Melodramaets fiktive verden har blitt kalt et “infantilt” univers (A. Ubersfeld gjengitt fra Couty 2000 s. 511).

“Melodrama baseres først og fremst på *polarisering*, det vil si kontraster som virker mot hverandre. Kontrastene er gjerne strukturert som moralske motsetninger. Derfor utspiller handlingen seg gjerne som en kamp mellom det vonde og det gode.” (Sylvi Penne i www.nb.no/content/download/11199/72650/.../Bjornsoniklasserommet.pdf; lesedato 15.09.11) For hver forfølger eller forfører dukker det opp en ny ridder eller mulig elsker – en forskjøvet konstellasjon leder alltid videre til en ny parallellitet (Bock og Lenssen 1991 s. 38-39). Melodramaet viser uforskyldte ulykker, og de rammer personer som er edle og gode, men dyden er aldri uten belønning, og ondskaperen aldri uten straff (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 90). Strukturen er vanligvis tredelt: krise, lidelse og frelse (eller harmoni som brytes – økende disharmoni – harmoni oppnås).

Amerikaneren John Cawelti skriver i sin bok *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976) om “det bestselgende sosiale melodrama”, som bruker “komplekse og stadig foranderlige sett av formularer. Enkelte elementer har forblitt uforandret, mens andre over tid har forandret seg merkbart. [...] arketypiske melodramatiske trekk kombineres med en gjennomført og detaljert sosial setting som utnytter melodramaets emosjonelle fornøyelser og interessen ved en realistisk, intimt og detaljert analyse av en stor sosial eller historisk begivenhet. De strukturelle karakteristika ved denne formularen benytter en sammensmelting av melodramets regler med en relativt aktuell begivenhet eller en sosial institusjon, hvor resultatet blir en kompleks tosidig effekt. De sympatiske til sammen med de onde må gjennomgå en lang rekke testing og vanskeligheter, men reddes til slutt. De onde kan være høyt oppe, men må i det siste se seg slått av hovedkarakterene. (Cawelti 1976 s. 260-261) [...] “realistiske” sosiale eller historiske settinger. Appellen bak denne syntesen kombinerer melodramaets eskapistiske kvaliteter, den moralske fantasien, med den fornøyelse av å i tillegg lære noe sentralt om virkeligheten. Forfattere innen genren kan i flere tilfeller ha en fordel av å bidra med noe som tilfører fortellingen inntrykk av dyp sosial verdi eller sannhet. Hvis handlingen er lagt til nåtiden vil forfatteren typisk sett strukturere historien rundt en kikk på “innsiden” av store moderne institusjoner (Flyplassen i *Haileys Airport*) eller en begivenhet (som i Wallaces *The Prize* eller *The Chapman Report*). Synet på virkeligheten som de sosiale melodramatikerne tilbyr er en

spesiell innsikt i det indre liv og institusjoner, personer eller begivenheters motiver. Det handler om å se under det som overflaten skjuler; skitten under teppet, de hemmelige kreftene. Sosiale melodrama avslører korrupte motiver bak scenen for å forsikre oss om historiens sannhet, men samtidig avslutningsvis det melodramatiske prinsippet om at alt er som det skal være. (Cawelti 1976 s. 261-262)” (Roger Nybroen i http://masterbloggen.no/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/roger_hovedoppg.pdf; lesedato 06.12.16)

“Melodramaet er en av de opprinnelige arketyperne for den moralske fantasien. Dens sentrale organiserende prinsipp er den klare etableringen av skjebnens ironi i form av en gledelig eller moralsk tilfredsstillende avslutning. Melodramaets essensielle fasong er fremvisningen av hinderne og motstanden som de gode utsettes for av de slemme, sammen med det godes endelige triumf og det ondes straff. Melodramaet flytter seg fra en oppfatning av urettferdighet og uorden til en bekreftelse på en vennligsinnet moralsk orden i universet. Formen er populær grunnet bekreftelsen omkring den konvensjonelle moral eller et filosofisk prinsipp som den åpenbare basis for kosmisk orden, gjennom å illustrere dette prinsippet i praksis i livene til de gode og de onde karakterene. (Cawelti 1976 s. 262)” (Roger Nybroen i http://masterbloggen.no/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/roger_hovedoppg.pdf; lesedato 06.12.16)

“As clearly demonstrated by Peter Brooks in his seminal study, the melodrama is less a genre than a ‘mode’ and its different forms are definitely cross- or trans-medial (although issues of mediality do play a key role in the construction and the development of the genre); its core themes are ‘innocence persecuted’ and also ‘virtue made visible’. A melodrama is the translation of previous reflections on good and evil in psychological terms (good and evil are no longer absolute categories, they only exist as feelings experienced by good and evil characters) and the aim of the melodramatic plot is to make these feelings – more specifically, the difference between the honesty of the virtuous hero or heroine and the wickedness of the villain – literally visible, first on stage and then in the many other variations on the same basic theme in other media.” (Baetens 2012)

“The most important characteristic of melodrama was the strict observance of poetic justice in conformance with the morals of the day: good was always rewarded and evil always punished [...]. The world of melodrama is one in which deeds and characters are separated by clear-cut distinctions. [...] There are stock characters (hero, heroine, comic character & villain) who do not change psychologically or morally, which means the interest lies in the manipulation of the plot in which fate, Providence and justice play important parts. The action arises out of the evil machinations of the cold-blooded villain operating on a falsely accused hero, a captive maiden, long suffering elders or some variation or combination of the above. [...] The structure reduces tragedy to its least common denominator, “enlivening” it with romantic situations, comic effects, spectacle, all relieved with a happy ending. Jean Anouilh has the Chorus in his *Antigone* say,

“Death in a melodrama is really horrible because it is never inevitable. The dear old father might so easily have been saved, the honest young man might so easily have brought in the police five minutes earlier.” Melodrama, then, employs rather crude colors, violent contrasts, a plethora of exciting events. The emotional appeals are very basic: “arousal of pity and indignation at the wrongful oppression of good people and intense dislike for wicked oppressors.” This sounds very like the reason so many television magazine shows remain on the air.” (teaterhistorikeren Wayne S. Turney i <http://www.wayneturney.20m.com/melodrama.htm>; lesedato 04.10.11)

Den norske medieforskeren Jostein Gripsrud har pekt på at “den melodramatiske sjangeren har utviklet seg fra å være et stilisert moraldrama til å utspille seg innenfor et stilisert psykisk univers. I den norske kioskromanen opptrer slike psykiske størrelser i form av den onde og den gode mor, den uskyldsrene heltinne, den høviske elsker og den upålitelige rival, alle inkarnert i ensidig framstilte og flate karakterer.” (Gripsrud, gjengitt fra Naper 2007 s. 82). Persongalleriet er spent mellom to ytterpoler som utgjøres av henholdsvis de uskyldige ofrene og forbryteren/forræderen (Soler 2001 s. 274). Noen menn er som inkarnasjoner av romantisk mannlighet, andre fungerer som symbol for ulike laster/synder (grådighet, vellyst osv.) (Bock og Lenssen 1991 s. 39-40).

“Melodrama depends on the external projection of internal states, often through costume design, art direction, or lighting choices.” (Henry Jenkins sitert fra Rauscher 2012 s. 77) “Hyperbolen er den emblematiske figuren for melodrama: gest, ansikt, tale er preget av overdrivelse. Melodramaet kjenner spesialeffekter og spesielle persontyper, det er et teater med hellige monstre. Komplotter og deres vendepunkt, forkledninger, bortføringer, dueller [...]” (Soler 2001 s. 274). Publikum skal bli rørt og gråte (Couty 2000 s. 511). Melodrama har blitt kalt “det hete blodets sjanger” på grunn av de sterke følelsene: intens kjærlighet, altoppslukende hat, uendelig lengsel osv. Følelser uttrykkes eksplisitt: “Å, så lykkelig jeg er!”, “Gode Gud, går det an å være mer ulykkelig?”, “Jeg hater denne onde kjeltringen” osv. (Couty 2000 s. 511). Personers egenskaper settes ord på: “Jeg har funnet igjen min kjære far og min elskede mor, og de onde kan ikke lenger plage meg eller ødelegge min uutsigelige lykke!” Også tilskuernes/lesernes følelser skal vekkes: lidelse, tårer, glede, forakt osv. Melodramaet har blitt karakterisert som et drama om “følelsen av lidelse” med masochisme som resultat (Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). Ofte skyldes lidelsen en “umulig kjærlighet” (Henzler og Pauleit 2009 s. 175-176), og hos en kvinne kan lidelsen være så stor at hun kan kalles “den kvinnelige martyr” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 248).

“[H]jälten/hjältinnan rör sig från en lägre social position till en högre. Detta utövade utan tvivel en stark attraktion på teaterpubliken och förklarar en del av melodramats popularitet.” (Bertil Nolin i Leffler 1993 s. 130)

Den russiske formalisten Sergei Balukhatyi skrev om sjangeren melodrama. “I artikkelen “Russian Formalist Theories of Drama” presenterer den amerikanske

dramateoretikeren Daniel Gerould i 1978 et sammendrag av Balukhatyis essay “Poetics of Melodrama” skrevet i 1926. Sergei Balukhatyi var først og fremst Chekov-ekspert, og han var, ved siden av Tomashevsky og Piotrovsky, den mest fremtredende dramateoretikeren blant formalistene. Hans essay “Poetics of Melodrama” kom ut i 1927 i tredje bind av Leningrad-formalistenes tidsskrift, *Poetika*. [...] ‘lavere’ sjangre kan være premissleverandører for det som ble ansett for de ‘høyere’ [...] formalistenes fokus på “mekanismer”, altså den dramatiske konstruksjonen og grunnleggende teknikk. [...] en fordomsfri tilnærming til melodramasjangeren; de vurderer den på dens egne premisser, og har samtidig blikk for at den utvikler seg og avlegger spor i andre “higher types” ” (Hambro 2015).

“Aller først presenterer Balukhatyi to helt fundamentale prinsipper for melodrama generelt. Det første er det han kaller “the emotional teleology”, følelsesmessig hensikt, kan det oversettes som. Med det vil han få frem at alt i melodramaet er underlagt det siktemål å oppnå sterkest mulig følelsesmessig uttrykk: Alt i melodramaet er underlagt hensikten “baring the passions”, blottstilling av lidenskapene (155). Passion eller lidenskap er det som driver og forklarer personenes handlinger. Balukhatyi ramser opp en rekke underpunkter her, blant annet det han omtaler som “plot themes”. Disse er garantert å vekke sterke følelser. Som eksempler nevner han falske tyveri- eller mordanklager mot en som er uskyldig, skjebnen til en ung og forsvarsløs pike, eller en person som er offer for sine egne lidenskaper. [...] Noe som ytterligere styrker publikums følelsesmessige reaksjoner, er plutselige vendinger i handlingen, slående ‘denouements’ der alt blir snudd på hodet og får helt uventede konsekvenser. Hvordan karakterene fremstår og hvilken relasjon de har til hverandre, er også med på å vekke følelser. Slike forhold kan så bli truet på diverse vis; for eksempel tapet av et barn, eller en far satt i fengsel. [...] Følelsene som vekkes, må være allmenngyldige skal de ha effekt: “Melodrama expresses feelings which are comprehensible to all, universal and primitive, frequently voiced by a mother.” Karakterene er også i seg selv egnet til å fremkalle følelser, som et uskyldig barn, en forsvarsløs ung pike eller et ungt, forelsket par (156). Ytterligere et punkt i dette avsnittet om følelsesmessig målrettethet eller hensikt er verdt å merke seg: “ ‘impassioned speech’ is peculiar to the characters who are always ready to make speeches about their feelings” (156). Til slutt i avsnittet om ‘emotional teleology’ påpekes det at “Actions and deeds in melodrama are justified, not by detailed investigation of ‘feeling’ or by its ‘psychology’, but ‘solely by the very nature and force of the emotion itself.’ ” (Gerould,156)” (Hambro 2015).

“Det andre overordnede hovedprinsippet i Balukhatyis system er det han kaller “Moral teleology”, den moralske hensikt [...] påpeker Balukhatyi at “manipulation of emotional themes” ikke er nok. Melodramaet må være gjennomført og dypt moralsk i sin hensikt: “Melodrama teaches, consoles, punishes, and rewards; it submits the phenomena of life and human conduct to the immutable laws of justice and offers reflections upon men’s actions and feelings.” (Gerould, 156) [...]

menneskers handlemåte er underlagt noen uforanderlige lover for rettferdighet, og det tilbyr refleksjoner over menneskers handlinger og følelser. Dette er helt i overensstemmelse med det Brooks omtaler som “the moral occult”. [...] Etter Balukhatyis hovedavsnitt om henholdsvis den følelsesmessige og den moralske hensikt eller målsetting, går han så over til beskrive det han kaller “technical principles”. [...] En rekke elementer blir listet opp, så som “principle of relief”; det at handling og karakterer er tydelig markerte og at dialogene tar opp enkeltstående temaer i et enhetlig stilleie. Et annet er prinsippet om kontrast, der sammenfletningen av ulike skjebner ofte blir fremstilt med karakterer som befinner seg på motsatte sider av den sosiale rangstigen; fattig og greve, for eksempel. Han nevner også elementer av det uventede eller uforutsigbare, samt det at det ofte er en hemmelighet skjult i plottet. Denne hemmeligheten kan være skjult for både dramatis personer og publikum helt til siste slutt der man får løsningen presentert, eller den kan være kjent for publikum men ikke for personene selv. [...] I melodramaet er som kjent personene endimensjonale typer mer enn psykologisk motiverte personer. De kan i noen grad minne om masker, og det er et begrenset antall av dem; den edle karakteren, bærer av positive egenskaper som mot, ære og uselvvisk kjærlighet, satt opp mot den onde skurken, hvis oppgave er å sette helten på prøve.” (Hambro 2015)

“Videre nevner Balukhatyi også det han kaller “strikingly effective situations” (Gerould, 156). Vanligst brukt er da “falsk” død eller uløst gjenkjennelse. [...] Handlingen i melodrama er ikke underlagt krav om realistisk motivert hendelsesforløp; her kan det uventede skje når som helst og uten at det blir særlig godt motivert. [...] Det siste punktet i avsnittet om konstruksjonen, er bruken av en gjenstand, “The Thing”, kaller Balukhatyi det. Her er det snakk om særlig betydningsmettede eller symbolske gjenstander som kommer til å spille en vesentlig rolle i dramaets “løsning”. “By means of a ‘thing’, the true identities and relationships of the characters may come to light” sier Balukhatyi (Gerould, 161). [...] I et kort avsnitt for seg, tar Balukhatyi opp scenebildet i melodrama, “Composition for the Stage” (Gerould, 162). [...] svært spektakulære iscenesettelser som skal skape spenning og vekke sterke reaksjoner hos tilskueren. Balukhatyi sier imidlertid noe om lydmessige aspekter i melodramaet som har en viss relevans: “In its search for auditory reinforcement of its expressive themes, melodrama has recourse to musical ‘accompaniment,’ especially for significant, intense or pathetic moments” (Gerould, 162). Dette kjenner vi jo til fra melodramaets tidligste dager, der musikken nettopp var det som ga sjangeren navn” (Hambro 2015).

“Helt til slutt i essayet sitt påpeker Balukhatyi at melodramaet ikke er noen statisk form, men at den stadig har utviklet seg siden den oppstod på slutten av 1700-tallet. Interessant i denne sammenhengen er at Balukhatyi gjør det klart at melodrama også kan finnes i andre dramatyper, “in which its ‘pure, primordial’ principles are masked, weakened and complicated by other aspects, such as realistic portrayal, psychological motivation.” (Gerould, 162) Og sett fra motsatt vinkel: “it is possible for a melodramatic skeleton to become covered with solid flesh of realistic material

and concealed beneath an elegant layer of psychology and ethical, social, or philosophical content. We thereby lose the feeling of melodramatic style and accept the play as a “higher” genre.” (Gerould, 163)” (Hambro 2015).

Sjangeren melodrama skal ha oppstått med den franske forfatteren og filosofen Jean-Jacques Rousseaus *Pygmalion* (1762, med musikk av Horace Coignet) (Didier 1989 s. 80). Billedhuggeren Pygmalion forelsker seg i en kvinneskulptur han selv har lagd. Rousseau definerte sjangeren slik: “En dramatisk sjanger der ordene og musikken i stedet for å marsjere sammen, veksler etter tur, og der det talte ord på et vis blir introdusert og forberedt av musikken.” (sitert fra Didier 1989 s. 80-81). Allerede i Rousseaus levetid minket musikkinnslagene (Didier 1989 s. 81). Det ble vanlig at melodramaer var adaptert fra romaner.

Den franske forfatteren François Guillaume Ducray-Duminil skrev på slutten av 1700-tallet en rekke melodramatiske romaner. De fleste ble senere av Guilbert de Pixérécourt adaptert til melodramatiske skuespill. Melodramaets oppsving på franske scener har antakelig sammenheng med at det adelige publikumet forsvant etter den franske revolusjonen, og at dramatikere, regissører og teatereiere måtte finne et nytt publikum, nemlig vanlige folk (Mouralis 1975 s. 45). “Jeg skriver for dem som ikke kan lese” sa Pixérécourt (sitert fra Didier 1989 s. 81). Ducray-Duminil gjorde populært motivet med det foreldreløse barn (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 248). Hans roman *Coelina eller det gåtefulle barn* ble dessuten i Frankrike solgt i over en million eksemplarer (Darmon 1972 s. 177). Til sammen 23 melodramaer av Pixérécourt er adaptert fra franske eller utenlandske romaner (Abensour, Delon m.fl. 1984 s. 88). Hans skuespill *Coelina eller det gåtefulle barnet* (1800) ble i perioden fram til 1825 spilt nesten fire hundre ganger i Paris og nesten to tusen ganger andre steder i Frankrike (Couty 2000 s. 510).

Christine Gledhill hevder i boka *Home is Where the Heart is* (1987) at i England ble melodramaet et fristed for “generic transmutation and ‘intertextuality’ [...] Literary and dramatic classics – including Shakespearean tragedies, popular fiction, Romantic poetry and operatic libretti, newspapers and topical events, police journals and penny dreadfuls, paintings and etchings, popular songs and street ballads all provided material for melodrama.” (her sitert fra Hambro 2015)

Den franske 1800-tallsdramatikeren og -skuespilleren Frédérick Lemaître skrev melodramatiske skuespill som ble store suksesser. Noen melodramaer hadde grøsserelementer, f.eks. i franskmannen Loasel de Tréogates *Den farefulle skogen* (1797). På scenen kunne det være fascinerende dekor med ruiner, skog osv. Et annet stykke fra perioden var Jean-Guillaume-Antoine Cuveliers *Djevelen eller kvinnen fra Bohemia* (1797).

Aristokratiet kunne i melodramaene lese ut noen verdier de selv verdsatte (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 91): Alle har sin plass i samfunnshierarkiet, og noen har mer makt enn andre for å påta seg mer ansvar for hvordan samfunnet styres.

Skrekken og eksessene under den franske revolusjon fikk en slags parallell i skrekken på scenen (Didier 1989 s. 82). Det var store emosjonelle bølger begge steder: “Man kan ikke skille estetikk og politikk i denne perioden” (Didier 1989 s. 82). Til syvende og sist belønnes de gode og straffes de onde – det var en slags revolusjonsmoral ifølge Charles Nodier (sitert fra Didier 1989 s. 83). Mange skrekkromaner ble på 1790-tallet og begynnelsen av 1800-tallet adaptert til skuespill, f.eks. melodramaer (Abensour, Delon m.fl. 1984 s. 89).

Melodramaet utgjorde en moralsk rettesnor for den franske befolkningen som opplevde revolusjonen i 1789, og det har blitt hevdet at sjangeren oppstod med disse samfunnsomveltningene, dvs. en revolusjonær tid som krevde en slags pedagogisk “utdanning” av befolkningen (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 90-91). Stykkene fungerte slik at de disiplinerte og skapte kontroll: I de melodramatiske teaterstykkene kunne folk se hvordan deres egne lidelser ville ende i lykke hvis de ble gjennomlevd med godhet og dyd (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 91).

I Tyskland ble det på 1700-tallet skrevet melodramaer som August Wilhelm Ifflands *Jegerne* (1785), et stykke som viser en stor kontrast mellom by- og landliv, og August von Kotzebues *Menneskehat og anger* (1788), et stykke der tittelen røper mye om det sentimentale innholdet. Sjangeren var også populær på 1800-tallet.

Franskmannen Félix Pyats skuespill *Fillesamleren fra Paris* (1847) ble spilt i over hundre forestillinger på samme teater i Paris (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 93). Stykket ble mye spilt og hadde stor suksess helt til begynnelsen av 1900-tallet. Det ble spilt i Brasil ca. 1850, og ble en suksess der også (s. 93).

Også i Storbritannia hadde melodramaer stort gjennomslag på scenen på 1800-tallet. Dion Boucicaults *The Streets of London* (1864) og Watts Phillips' treakter *Lost in London* (1867) er eksempler. En av scenene i *Lost in London*, et skuespill med sanger, foregår nede i en gruve. “ ‘I am the villain of the piece’, followed by a roll of drums and purple lights, one of the conventions of exposition in Victorian melodrama, is of exactly the same nature as the narrative introduction in morality plays [dvs. fra middelalderen av].” (Tennant 1965 s. 89)

“Melodrama began as music theatre: the stage directions of the earlier, more primitive melodramas called for more or less continuous music – ‘villain’s music’, ‘wild gypsy music’, ‘tremolo fiddles’ – as an accompaniment to the acting. The actors in melodrama continually fall into operatic groupings of choruses, duets, arias. *Lost in London* has a scene in a coal mine when the miners sing in chorus as if strayed from *Il Trovatore*. The ‘well-made’ society melodrama dropped the music but kept the highly accepted style which had gone with it.” (Worth 1983 s. 21-22)

I Phillips' *Lost in London* "Nelly Armroyd, wife of the elderly miner Job, is lured to London by young and rich Gilbert Featherstone's promises of a life of luxury and pleasure. Even before she actually runs away she is not quite herself, she does not trust her moral strength; in a soliloquy she implores the absent Job to save her from herself. The moment she leaves her home she begins to regret her decision, once in London she cannot enjoy what she has been dreaming of. Nelly's heart is literally breaking, she is dying from sin. Nelly has given up her identity, most particularly her moral identity, which she cannot regain in this world. Only at the end of the play, when she passes away in the arms of her forgiving husband, is she allowed to rejoin her self, in a scene of pseudo-transfiguration. Here we also find the typical nostalgic construction of an idyllic past in the country, where she was surrounded by people she knew, by honest people who respected her, and whose moral self is still intact. When she meets her Lancashire friend Tiddy she fondly recalls the 'old bright days, that never, never can return' (239), while during her illness the view of London reminds her of her sin and her disillusionment. It also serves as a foreboding of her death: 'London! ... The shining city of my dreams – my dreams! Its spires are bathed in light. ... But the darkness is creeping down, and a shadow rises between me and the fading light.' (259-60) Bob Brierly, the protagonist of Tom Taylor's *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, is another Lancashire character who is lost in London; two weeks of revelling in the metropolis have left him sleepless, shaky, and feverish. He is haunted by dreams of a blissful past at home, here also associated with the innocence of childhood [...] Bob Brierly is altogether a prototypical character in terms of urban experiences in melodrama. He is unable to read the big city and he cannot interpret the behaviour of people correctly. This confusion and bewilderment also brings about the loss of his identity. He is deceived by criminals, falsely accused of a crime, convicted and imprisoned. After his release he is, literally, in search of his character, i.e. his true identity, that of an honest man. Only at the very end, when he manages to capture the real perpetrator, Bob Brierly regains his character." (Rudolf Weiss i <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2007/weiss.html>; lesedato 25.11.15)

"*The Bells* [is] the melodrama which Henry Irving had been regularly reviving in London since 1871. [...] Dion Boucicault, Irish king of melodrama" skapte bl.a. stykket *The Shaughraun* (Worth 1983 s. 31). "In 1856 Boucicault agitated for new legislation to protect the rights of American dramatists, then settled down to a steady dramatic output: *The Poor of New York* (1857), *Dot* and *The Octoroon* (1859), and the highly-successful *Colleen Bawn*. [...] *The Corsican Brothers* (1852) had already established Boucicault as the master of stage spectacle and construction of melodrama [...] In *The Shaughraun* (1875), perhaps in imitation of fellow Anglo-Irish writer Charles Lever in *Barrington*, Boucicault invited "the audience ... to take sides with the impoverished but noble-minded Irish aristocracy and their devil-may-care peasantry against an unprincipled squireen who dares to aspire to a lady's hand" (Davies, p. 261). As late as 1884, six years before his death, Boucicault was still demonstrating his mastery of the comic and sensational

elements of melodrama in *Robert Emmet*, but his reputation thereafter dwindled as a consequence of changing fin de siècle tastes. However, his *London Assurance* (1841) has been revived a number of times (1913, 1932), most recently at the Aldwych in 1970” (Philip V. Allingham i <http://www.victorianweb.org/mt/boucicault/pva230.html>; lesedato 19.11.15).

“Boucicault was 21 when he wrote *London Assurance*, and only a year older when he tried to capitalize on the play’s success by writing the very similar *A Lover by Proxy* (1842). It didn’t repeat the success of *London Assurance*, and it was only with *The Corsican Brothers* (1852) that he managed to secure his public for decades to come. It is a sensational play that requires identical twins, a ghost and a heroine with four doomed love affairs to get the creaking plot moving, a throwback to the sort of melodrama rendered seemingly obsolete by *London Assurance*. Boucicault stuck to the new, old formula for the rest of his life. As late as 1884, the eponymous hero of *Robert Emmet* gets away with lines like these:

SARAH: [...] Thank heaven!

ROBERT: Do so, with all your heart on which I have come to rest! for mine is well nigh sped! I have none for further struggle! I have slighted your love for a wanton infatuation! My other love has betrayed and deserted me; I come to you for forgiveness, for comfort, and for peace!

Leaden prose cluttered with exclamation marks was what the audience wanted, and Boucicault gave it to them.” (http://www.anglo-iren.de/london/london_p.htm; lesedato 23.11.15)

Rune Waldekranz har delat melodramaet på 1800-tallet inn i tre undersjangrer: historisk eventyrmelodrama, borgerlig samtidsmelodrama og eksotisk eventyrmelodrama (i Leffler 1993 s. 112).

“August Blanches *Läkaren* kan sägas falla inom kategorin borgerligt samtidsmelodrama. Stycket hade sin urpremiär på Kungliga teatern den 12 mars 1845 och fick ett mycket positivt mottagande av kritik och publik. Det har en för genren mycket typisk uppläggnings. Påtagligt idylliska scenere växlar med dramatiska och spektakulära.” (Bertil Nolin i Leffler 1993 s. 115)

Et annet eksempel på et svensk samfunnskritisk samtidsmelodrama er Johan Jolins *Barnhusbarnen eller Världens dom* (1849): “Stycket bygger till sin grundstruktur på ett antal dolda identiteter som under spelets gång successivt avslöjas. Det gäller främst de unga förälskade, ett obligatoriskt rollpar inte bara i melodramat. Det är dessa två som är barnhusbarnen, dvs. de har lämnats in på barnhus för att – åtminstone i det ena fallet – dölja en oönskad graviditet. Detta tillhör givetvis styckets förhistoria. När pjäsen börjar är de två hunsade fostersyskon hos ett äkta par som driver ett värdshus i Stockholm. Dit kommer emellertid en *mystisk främling*, en kapten från Amerika. Han visar sig i själva verket vara en svensk

adelsman, en löjtnant von Wult och far till den unge mannen. Modern har emellertid gift sig med en överste Melcher som i sin tur visar sig vara far till den unga flickan, vars mor är en fransk skådespelerska som avlidit under ett besök i Stockholm. Dessförinnan har hon lämnat ifrån sig dottern. Hon har varit gift med fadern – översten – vars aktuella äktenskap således är ogiltigt på grund av bigami. Jag ersäktar gärna den läsare som har tappat bort intrigtråden vid det här laget, men Jolin hanterar den med stor skicklighet.” (Bertil Nolin i Leffler 1993 s. 124-125).

Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons historiske dikt “Bergljot” ble av Edvard Grieg gjort om til et deklamasjonsstykke med musikk i 1871. Mange “syngespill” og lignende stykker kan kalles melodramaer, f.eks. Ivar Aasens *Ervingen* (1855). I Aasens drama kommer en norsk bondegutt og amerikafarer tilbake for å ta den norske farsgården igjen på odel. Eieren av gården er nå en bymann. Etter en del forviklinger gifter odelsgutten Aamund seg med datteren til eieren av gården, og får dermed gården igjen via henne.

Bjørnsons bondefortelling/roman *Synnøve Solbakken* (1857) “er et klassisk melodrama. Melodramatiske trekk var typisk for litteraturen på 1800-tallet. I dag er melodrama forkastet som litterært uttrykk. - Men melodramaet er egentlig bare en fortelling med tydelige motsetninger, fortellinger om en veldig sterk kjærlighet, uten den ambivalensen som vi omgås med i dag, sier Penne. Hun mener at melodramaet fungerer veldig godt for utrente lesere på ungdomsskoletrinnet.” (professor Sylvi Penne på <http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2010/oktober/267175>; lesedato 26.08.11)

Christine Hamm har publisert boka *Medlidenhet og melodrama: Amalie Skrams romaner om ekteskap* (2006), basert på hennes doktorgradsavhandling. “Skram mener å framkalle leserens medlidenhet med kvinnene. Hun betraktet evnen til å vekke medlidenhet som en avgjørende kvalitet ved litteraturen [...] Hun forsøker å vise hvordan posisjonen de er satt i tvinger fram overdrivelsen og teatraliteten hos kvinnene. De lever i ekteskap og i et samfunn der de ikke blir sett og forstått. Å ta i bruk teaterets virkemidler og iscenesette seg selv, blir en måte å overleve på. Til sin analyse henter Hamm inspirasjon fra den amerikanske Stanley Cavells filosofi om det han kaller den ukjente kvinnens melodrama. Cavell viser hvordan Hollywoodfilmer fra 40-tallet som har fått stempelet tåreperser egentlig er arvtagere etter Ibsens *Et dukkehjem*. Som Nora føler kvinnene i filmmelodramaene at deres ekteskap ikke er et ordentlig ekteskap. Ektefellene snakker ikke sammen, og kvinnene må få en bekreftelse på sin eksistens uavhengig av sine ektemenn. Hovedpersonene i filmene oppdager at de mangler en stemme og ikke blir hørt, at de er ukjente. Derfor begynner de å tvile på sin egen eksistens. For å bekrefte at de faktisk finnes og for å gjøre seg kjent for sin ektemann, må kvinnene ty til en melodramatisk iscenesettelse av seg selv. [...] Constances tanker når hun oppdager at også mann nummer to bedrar henne er et godt eksempel: “Hun vilde ha hevn, hevn, om hun så skulde kjøpe den med sitt blod. Det sved og brente i hjertet, det stakk og suget for brystet –. Hvor det vilde svale og kjøle å føle sig hevnet –. Svale,

svale, svale gjentok hun utallige ganger.” (Amalie Skram, *Constance Ring*) – Constance dør også en operaaktig død, der hun tenker gjennom sitt liv så å si med dolken i seg, forteller Hamm.” (<http://kjonnsforskning.no/nb/2007/02/tarevatt-oppror>; lesedato 25.05.18)

Den irske forfatteren Oscar Wildes skuespill har melodramatiske trekk. I Wildes *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) opplever publikum “that a subterranean life of emotion runs underneath the dialogue; in the melodramatic passages it breaks through to the surface” (Worth 1983 s. 100). Melodrama-sjangeren kan ligge tett opp til farse-sjangeren (Worth 1983 s. 143), og dette gjelder noen av Wildes skuespill.

Den britiske forfatteren Marjorie Bowen (pseudonym for Margaret Gabrielle Vere Long) skrev melodramer, bl.a. romanen *The Viper of Milan* (1906) og skuespillet *The Shadow on Mockways* (1932). “[S]he wrote more than 150 volumes under half a dozen pseudonyms, and tackled larger-than-life subjects in historical dramas, supernatural tales and mournful gothic romances. Critics have long considered her storytelling to be clear-eyed and efficient, her detail and description masterful, her understanding of human nature filled with compassion and sorrow. [...] Bowen illuminated a wide variety of passionate subjects by tackling them in novel form, and was widely admired by other authors, including Graham Greene.” (Christopher Fowler i <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/forgotten-author-no22-marjorie-bowen-1546021.html>; lesedato 26.03.18)

“The framework of American life radically changed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The tension over social issues, such as slavery, before the Civil War, and the restructuring of the American cultural landscape after the war left Americans with nostalgic desire for what they perceived as the virtuous American past. Melodrama not only provided a medium through which Americans could examine their social framework; it also provided a shelter for traditional values that were threatened by war and industrialization: “... melodrama exalted the traditional values to which people clung in the face of fundamental change, audiences credited melodrama with being more real than reality, a higher truth that transcended everyday experience. An ideal statement of the way life ought to be, melodrama made evil and corruption easy to identify and solutions easy to find; it made heroes of common, simple people; and it made virtue and the virtuous triumph.” - Robert Toll, *On with the Show! The first century of Show Business in America* (147)” (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug02/kirk/levy/melodrama.html>; lesedato 21.11.12)

Ben Singer hevder i boka *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (2001): “Melodrama flourished in Europe and North America when events occurred that were not immediately subject to easily comprehended rational explanation or where explanations of phenomena were numerous and contradictory and the comforting presence of divine justice was absent. In place of the absent gods (or God) melodrama offered an explanatory narrative that attributed

public disaster and private tribulation to the malign operation of evil seeking to overcome goodness. On stage and in early film, evil was represented through the character and actions of the villain, and unwelcome events occurred because the villain, motivated by greed, avarice, lust, jealousy, and other antisocial impulses, intentionally brought misfortune to good people, consequently forcing them out of their previously tranquil existences. [...] the villain is often equated with the dangers of modernity (perilous machinery, rising prices, unemployment, urbanisation, etc.), but sometimes these potential dangers are used by the hero and heroine to effect their own rescues. Because melodrama was a pervasive mode of thought and expression for more than 160 years, it was necessarily written, performed, and understood very differently in different segments of multi-layered western societies. For some it was patriotic, conservative, hostile to alien cultures (and immigrants); for others it was a voice of protest, rebellion, and radical politics. Moreover, it substantially changed style, structure, and subject matter in response to various pressures and events, such as rising immigration, the closing of the American frontier, the financial crashes and subsequent depressions of 1873 and 1895, labor struggles, and the unexpected “calamity” of winning the Spanish-American War, which resulted in the inadvertent acquisition of a large number of dark-skinned Roman Catholic citizens.” (David Mayer i <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/summary/v009/9.2mayer.html>; lesedato 04.09.13).

“[A]ny attempt to define the melodrama is more likely to find a critical chameleon than a coherent Hollywood genre” (Laura Mulvey sitert fra Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). “ “Melodrama” is a slippery term, easy to use, but much harder to understand. Film scholars have debated what the defining constituents of melodrama are for years, without really coming to any definite conclusions. [...] I propose to use the following three characteristics as the defining markers of the melodramatic mode: an ideal of noble suffering, usually undergone by a victim-hero; an understanding of the fragility of time as seen in moments of coincidence, ‘just-in-time,’ and ‘too-late;’ and a reliance on the gap between the knowledge of the characters and the audience. These three elements then work together to produce moments of excess and/or pathos, and to therefore provoke deep emotion and often tears. A sharply drawn moral vision underlies all of these elements and motivates the *need* for the provocation of emotion. Any film which incorporates these features, no matter the genre or style, can be considered as operating at least in part under a melodramatic modality. [...] Melodrama focuses on victim-heroes and on recognizing their virtue. [...] for the moral vision to emerge, pathos must be evoked, and suffering must be present for that evocation to occur. Moreover, the one who suffers must present some hope of overcoming the suffering (though not necessarily succeed at doing so) by means of heroic virtue.” (Airen Hall i <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/>; lesedato 03.09.13)

“Steve Neale observes that melodrama depends on “chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions, last-minute rescues and revelations, *deus ex machina* endings.” He insists that timing is crucial to the

production of tears in melodrama, or rather that *delays* are crucial – that there must always be the possibility of an important event happening too late. [Linda] Williams also discusses timing in her definition of melodrama, saying that “a give and take of ‘too late’ and ‘in the nick of time’” creates a dialectic between pathos and action. Success is only moving because it entails the possibility of failure; the triumph over suffering can only be a victory if the suffering might have *not* been overcome. And moments of chance, when free will and choice are suspended by the workings of a powerful Destiny, are equally moving, because such moments are equally fragile. Furthermore, failure must also be seen as precarious – it must not be inevitable, but rather open to the possibility of success. As Neale says, failure and suffering must exist in a state of “if-only,” wherein the audience can see in those moments of anguish the fleeting opportunity for joy.” (Airen Hall i <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/>; lesedato 03.09.13)

“For the audience to feel the pricks and pains of the afflictions of victim-heroes, to sense the vulnerability of success and failure, they must be privileged in their knowledge – privileged above and beyond the characters within a text, that is. Neale sees this “production of discrepancies between the knowledge and point of view of the spectator and the knowledge and point of view of the characters” as an essential component of melodrama. The audience must know things the characters cannot know, see things they cannot see. Coincidences of timing can only become evident and have emotional effect if the audience can see both possibilities of success and failure – but the characters cannot. The noble suffering of a victim-hero, the fragile nature of time, and the gap between audience and character knowledge come together for the purpose of moving an audience – moving that audience in the direction of a certain moral vision.” (Airen Hall i <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/>; lesedato 03.09.13)

“Part of what caused melodrama to be so endearing was its popular formula. These stories of virtue could be placed in any time with any setting and any character. They could also have any of a range of endings – from happy to sad. Their great flexibility made them very adaptable to any type of audience, and allowed actors to take advantage of a great range of materials and talents. Virtue stood at the center of the successful melodramatic formula. Social issues of the day could be played out between the virtuous hero or heroine and the evil villain. The moral leanings of the characters were always either good, bad, or foolish – their simplistic moral leanings allowed the audience to focus on the moral presentation of the play itself. Audiences took it to be fantasy, and the use of archaic language aided in this interpretation. Even with its fantastic composition, however, melodrama provided an outlet for the emotions of the audience in a world where the consequences of expressing such emotions was precarious at best. The attraction of the faith and morals each hero and heroine possessed in light of extreme evil and danger was enhanced by the growing cynicism of the developing modern age that Americans saw in the industrial, commodified world around them.” (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug02/kirk/levy/melodrama.html>; lesedato 21.11.12)

“Melodrama, it should be emphasized, flourished during the silent film era. As Thomas Elsaesser has explained in his extensive discussion of cinema’s impulse toward melodrama [i artikkelen “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama”, 1991], silent films inherently tended toward the melodramatic due to the medium’s complete lack of live dialogue and repeated use of piano accompaniment for dramatic emphasis. The term melodrama, in fact, originally signified a drama accompanied by music; hence, the piano accompaniment of silent films often generated a distinctly melodramatic aesthetic, a sensibility replete with overwrought emotion and heart wrenching narrative turns. Silent filmmakers – from D.W. Griffith to Evgenii Bauer to Vsevolod Pudovkin – would develop melodramatic styles and plots to offset the inherent muteness of the medium, whereby silent melodramatic epics, with their distinct moral clarity and unabashed elicitation of its audience’s indignation toward injustice, emerged as one of the most prevalent genres in film industries as diverse as Hollywood and Soviet Russia.” (Tim Harte i http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=russian_pubs; lesedato 03.11.17)

“Bransjeblader fra 1910- og 20-tallet omtaler faktisk de fleste filmer som melodramaer. Det var det romantiske melodramaet, det hjemlige melodramaet, det landlige melodramaet, western-melodramaet, sosiologiske melodrama, kriminelle melodramaer, mystiske melodrama og rene melodrama. Dersom historien eller situasjonen ikke hadde sine røtter i melodramaet, ville i det minste skuespillet eller iscenesettelsen være det. Slik måtte det være for å kommunisere ideer og følelser uten dialog. Til tross for at det filmatiske melodramaet med suksess navigerte seg fra stumfilm til talefilm på slutten av 1920-tallet, representerte den stumme varianten de reneste og mest kraftfulle melodramatiske impulsene. (Belton 1994 s. 117-118) Om melodramaet skriver Linda Williams i boken *Refiguring American Film Genres – History and Theory* (1998, Nick Browne Ed.) følgende: “[...] melodrama is a peculiarly democratic and American form that seeks dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths through a dialectic of pathos and action. It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie.” (Williams 1998 s. 42) I sitt essay bemerker hun at western, krigsfilm og filmer om Holocaust, ikke mindre enn kvinnefilmen, familie-melodramaer og biografiske filmer, sammen med hvilket som helst drama hvis utfall er gjenkjennelsen av sømmelighet, tar del i den melodramatiske arten av amerikansk film. Hun påstår blant annet at de første to Rambo-filmene (1982 og 1985), som raskt ble assimilert i den spesifikke Vietnamkrigsgenren, helt åpenbart er mannlige action-melodramaer. (Williams 1998 s. 60-62) Melodramaet må ses ikke som eksess eller et avvik, men ofte som den mest typiske form for populær amerikansk fortellings-strategi i både litteratur, teater, film og fjernsyn. Det er fremfor noe eksempelet på den amerikanske kulturens (ofte hypotetiske) syn på seg selv som selve symbolet på ærbarhet og uskyld. Hun skriver også at dersom melodramaet er misklassifisert som en sentimental genre for kvinner, skyldes dette at andre melodramatiske genre som western og gangsterfilm, tidlige anerkjente genre innen filmstudier, allerede var

konstruert i relasjon til maskuline kulturelle verdier. (Williams 1998 s. 50)” (Roger Nybroen i http://masterbloggen.no/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/roger_hovedopp.pdf; lesedato 06.12.16)

“Although many melodramas abstractly addressed the social issues of their day, few addressed them as blatantly as *Ten Nights in a Barroom* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. [...] *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a play concerning slavery based on a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, became one of the most performed plays in the history of nineteenth century American theater. Even surpassing the temperance play, *Ten Nights in a Barroom*, Stowe’s story created an excellent battleground for not only the slavery debate, but also the debate over the position of Black Americans within the American landscape. Accepted as part of America’s shared cultural material, actors and producers of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* took many liberties in their interpretation and presentation of the play as they toured the country. Altering the play to suit the desires and tastes of the audience proved not only beneficial to the audience’s satisfaction, but also beneficial to the financial success of the play. As “Tommers” and “Tom Shows,” as the touring versions of the play were named, moved across the country their popularity grew as the play became an integral part of American popular theater.” (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug02/kirk/levy/melodrama.html>; lesedato 21.11.12)

Den amerikanske forfatteren Harriet Beecher Stowes bestselgerroman *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852) ble adaptert til skuespill. “In the United States, dramatizations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became a staple of American melodrama well into the twentieth century.” (Michael Winship i <http://www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-03/winship/>; lesedato 19.06.13)

I 1956 ga den amerikanske forfatteren Grace Metalious ut romanen *Peyton Place*, en fortelling om skitne hemmeligheter bak de anstendige fasadene i en fiktiv småby i New England. Boka ble raskt en suksess, og allerede etter ti dager var det solgt 60.000 eksemplarer. I løpet av noen år steg salget slik at boka passerte Margaret Mitchells *Gone With the Wind* i antall solgte eksemplarer. Metalious’ roman solgte mer enn ti millioner fram til midten av 1960-tallet. *Peyton Place* ble til både enkeltfilmer og en TV-serie på 514 episoder (Johannes Binotto i Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 271). Boka var kontroversiell, og ble ikke innkjøpt til alle bibliotek, fordi den tok opp temaer som utroskap, barn utenfor ekteskap, konemishandling, abort, homoseksualitet og incest. “Peyton Place” ble et fast amerikansk uttrykk for dobbeltmoralen og hykleriet i en typisk småby (Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 272). Samme år som førsteutgaven ble utgitt, lagde 20th Century Fox en filmversjon, regissert av Mark Robson og med Lana Turner i en av hovedrollene. Handlingen i filmen er ganske forskjellig fra boka, men også filmen ble en kommersiell suksess, og Turner fikk en Oscar-nominasjon for sin rolle. Etter den store tilstrømningen til amerikanske kinoer for å se filmen, skrev Metalious en oppfølgerroman, *Return to Peyton Place* (1959). Etter hvert kom TV-seriene *Peyton Place* (1964-69), *Murder in Peyton Place* (1977) og *Peyton Place: The Next Generation* (1985). Den

førstnevnte var en av de første såpeseriene på amerikansk TV (Ritzer og Schulze 2016 s. 273).

I romanen *Peyton Place* blir personen Selena Cross stadig hjemløst av traumatiske minner fra sin oppvekst. Hun ble voldtatt av sin stefar, og tok senere en abort utført av småbyens lege. Hun drepte stefaren for å beskytte seg mot hans overgrep. Dette blir kjent i byen, og hun må stå for retten og fortelle offentlig det som har skjedd mellom stefaren og henne. Opprinnelig hadde Metalious tenkt seg Selenas ekte far som overgriperen, men etter råd fra forleggeren ble dette endret til hennes stefar. Dette incest-temaet ble ytterligere dempet i filmversjonen, der det ikke foretas noen abort, men Selena mister barnet etter et fall. Men i alle versjonene av historien er det noe skandaløst. Selenas familie er fattig, mens middelklassens kvinner blir representert av Constance MacKenzie og hennes datter Allison. Constance fikk datteren etter å ha hatt et forhold til en gift mann, men lot som om hun var enke da hun flyttet tilbake til hjembyen. Hun har en sterk frykt for at sannheten skal komme ut i det lille samfunnet. Allison har fått høre mye ros av sin døde far og tenker på han som et ideal ...

Den britiske forfatteren Catherine Cooksons historiske roman *The Black Candle* (1989) foregår i Yorkshire på 1880-tallet. En av de sentrale personene er den tvers igjennom egoistiske og ondskapsfulle adelsmannen Lionel Filmore. Han er både konemishandler og morder. Handlingen er slik: “At nineteen years old, Bridget Dean Mordaunt inherits her father’s candle and blacking factories. Determined to restore the businesses to their former glory, by the time she turns twenty-three she is running them as confidently as any man. But despite her success, trouble is looming. When the devious Lionel Filmore enters Bridget’s family life, hoping to marry into her hard-earned wealth, she has to use all of her strength and ingenuity to keep her family together. Then, when young Lily Whitmore comes to her after her husband – an overseer in one of Bridget’s factories – has wrongly been tried for his brother’s murder, Bridget has no choice but to help. If Lily’s husband didn’t kill his brother, who did? The decisions Bridget makes will shape the lives of generations to come. Can her family overcome the darkness of the past to find new happiness? [...] A classic family drama and a tale of triumph over adversity by the 100-million copy bestselling Catherine Cookson” (<https://www.bokklubben.no/slektsromaner/the-black-candle-catherine-cookson/produkt.do?produktId=13070951>; lesedato 07.05.19).

I den afghansk-amerikansk forfatter og lege Khaled Hosseinis roman *Og fjellene ga gjenlyd* (på norsk 2013) “har han skrevet seg opp fra melodramaet og de nokså lettkjøpte menneskeskildringene i “Drageløperen” (2003) og “Tusen strålende soler” (2007) [...] Tematisk har han et slags gjennomgangstema: Familiebånd, som er langt sterkere og mer definerende i Østen enn Vesten. I “Drageløperen” er det far og sønn. I “Tusen strålende soler” er det mor og datter. I denne boka er det altså søskenkjærlighet.” (Cathrine Krøger i *Dagbladet* 19. august 2013 s. 46)

Herbjørg Wassmos romaner har blitt kritisert for å være melodramatiske, men også likt av samme grunn: “Wassmos romaner nærmest overstrømmes av ødeleggende branner, drap, galskap, brusende hav, utroskap, svik og kjærlighetserklæringer – ja, kort sagt av det sjangerlitterære standardrepertoaret [...] har irritert anmeldere og begeistret lesere i snart førti år.” (Bernhard Ellefsen i *Morgenbladet* 22.–28. september 2017 s. 52)

Filmen *The Immigrant* (2013; regissert av James Gray) er et “1920s melodrama [...] Gray’s tale of the immigrant experience has a spectral beauty and is unafraid of big emotions” (<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/may/16/the-immigrant-review-marion-cotillard-james-gray>; lesedato 04.03.20). Gray “has gained a reputation for melodramas (*The Yards*, *We Own the Night*, the TV series *The Red Road*) about Americans whose criminal and family lives intertwine. It’s a peculiar new millennial fascination, peculiarly apolitical in Gray’s refusal to face the social ramifications of crime. Instead, he romanticizes corruption, as when he turns Ewa’s dilemma into a frustrated love triangle with Bruno and his magician cousin Emil [i *The Immigrant*].” (Armond White i <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/04/monotonous-melodrama-james-gray-armond-white/>; lesedato 04.03.20)

Filmen *Hva vil folk si* (2017; regissert av Iram Haq) foregår i et norsk innvandrer-miljø. “En mer uforsonlig oppvekstskildring skal man likevel lete lenge etter. Gjennom hele filmen durer en høy motorlyd av indignasjon, som litt for ofte truer med å overdøve de mer nyanserte diskanttonene. [...] hovedpersonen Nishas forsøk på å skli friksjonsløst mellom ulike normsystemer, en kulturell mobilitet som skal vise seg mer og mer fatal for 16-åringen etter hvert som alle trygge rammer rakner rundt henne. [...] Tåken ligger over vinter-Oslo, og Nisha er sårbar i krysspress mellom vennegjengen og foreldre som har innvandret fra Pakistan. Da faren finner en gutt på Nishas rom etter litt uskyldig klining, er volden først umiddelbar og slagtung, deretter sakte og strukturell – en systematisk undertrykkelse der hele den utvidede familien er engasjert, og Nisha til slutt ender hos slektninger i Pakistan. I stedet for en eskalering, fremstår behandlingen som en konstant og brutal berøvelse av individuelle rettigheter og kroppslig autonomi, hvor hele reaksjonsmønsteret avkles i sin absurditet og fullstendige utilgivelighet. [...] Til tross for håndholdt realisme rundt i trange interiører og grumsete forstadsgater, står filmen tydelig i en melodramatradisjon, med sine voldsomme emosjonelle gester og en tematikk som er Douglas Sirk verdig. Skildringen av et pakistansk utvandremiljø med sterk sosial kontroll og utfrysningsteknikker gjenkaller både 1950-tallsfilmer som Douglas Sirks *All That Heaven Allows* og Todd Haynes’ senere oppdateringer *Far from Heaven* og *Carol*, hvor sosialkonservative normer kolliderer med individualismens kjærlighetsbegrep og kroppens begjærsimpulser. Tidvis har Haqs film noe av melodramamesteren Sirks atmosfæriske ladning og symbolisme, men desto mindre av hans koreografi av blikkstrukturer og kropper i avslørende maktforhold. *Hva vil folk si* er stort sett mer beskjefteget med å isolere sin hovedkarakter i en kultur der alle er undertrykkere, og virker på mange måter

fanget i tenåringens subjektivitet, hvor ryggmargsrefleksen gjerne er å fordømme uten å forstå. Kun tidvis åpner døren seg til noe mer finstilt og nyansert, ikke minst filmens avslutningsscene, hvor den monstrøse farsskikkelsen endelig tildeles en underhud av menneskelighet vi hadde trengt langt tidligere.” (Maria Moseng i *Morgenbladet* 6.–12. oktober 2017 s. 44)

John Mercer og Martin Shinglers bok *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility* (2004) “identifies three distinct but connected concepts through which it is possible to make sense of melodrama; either as a genre, originating in European theatre of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as a specific cinematic style, epitomised by the work of Douglas Sirk or as a sensibility that emerges in the context of specific texts, speaking to and reflecting the desires, concerns and anxieties of audiences. Films discussed include *All That Heaven Allows*, *Safe*, *Fear Eats the Soul*, *Black Narcissus*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Rebel Without a Cause*” (<http://cdon.no/>; lesedato 06.06.13). Sirks filmer blir studert fra ulike perspektiver i Barbara Klingers bok *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (1994).

“By 1920, however, melodrama’s successful formula was incorporated into the emerging motion picture industry and many of the producers, actors and others involved left the increasingly elitist stage for the popularity of film. Ironically, the modern industrial elements that such melodramas provided an escape from and were presented in opposition against ended up incorporating them into its popular framework.” (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug02/kirk/levy/melodrama.html>; lesedato 21.11.12)

“Peter Brooks’s important study of theatrical and literary melodrama, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) [...] argues that melodrama is a rhetorical strategy that articulates the struggle between moral forces in the modern world. For Gledhill and Williams, as for Brooks, melodrama is primarily concerned with morality and uses a heightened emotional, visual, and stylistic language to convey and articulate moral dilemmas. Both Gledhill (in *Reinventing Film Studies*, 2000) and Williams argue that it is necessary to look beyond generic boundaries to discuss melodrama and suggest that it is more useful to think about melodrama as a “modality” or an “expressive code.” Melodrama is thus more than a genre and is not confined to the established categories of the “woman’s film” or the family melodrama, but is a narrative and stylistic register that appears across a wide range of cinematic texts. Williams (1998) goes even further by claiming that melodrama is not merely one of a range of rhetorical devices, but is in fact the dominant mode of American filmmaking.” (<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Melodrama-RECENT-DEVELOPMENTS-IN-FILM-THEORY.html>; lesedato 24.10.17)

Amerikaneren David W. Griffith lar i sin film *Way Down East* (1920) snøen symbolisere den sosiale kulden i et puritansk samfunn. Men Griffith lar også de hjerteskjærende og dramatiske scenene veksle med scener som gir “comic relief”.

“In Hitchcock’s silent melodrama *The Manxman* (1929), lowly fisherman Pete leaves his village to make his fortune at sea, hoping to return and marry Kate. While he is away, however, rumours spread that he has been killed, and meanwhile Kate falls in love with Pete's best friend Philip. Pete returns unharmed to a joyous welcome from friends, and is keen to see his best friend and his soon-to-be bride. But Philip and Kate are torn by feelings of guilt and shame. The way Hitchcock shows the looks the three exchange – and avoid – says more about their complex relationships than dialogue ever could.” (<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tours/hitch/tour7.html>; lesedato 09.08.13)

Filmene *Rebecca* (1940; regissert av Alfred Hitchcock) og *Undercurrent* (1946; regissert av Vincente Minnelli) har blitt kalt “persecuted wife”-melodramaer (Andrew Britton i https://offscreen.com/view/blockbuster_ideology_part_1; lesedato 30.03.19).

Mange av dagens såpeserier (“soap operas”) på tv kan kalles melodramaer. “Soap opera is related to the *melodrama*, with which it shares such features as moral polarization, strong emotions, female orientation, unlikely coincidences, and excess.” (Zdrengeha 2007) I artikkelen “Soap opera” skriver Anna McCarthy om “melodrama, soap opera’s filmic relative” (<http://premington.bravehost.com/Pdfs/RTVF306L5-1.pdf>; lesedato 29.08.11). En grundigere sammenligning finnes i Christine Gledhills artikkel “Speculations on the Relationship between Soap Opera and Melodrama” (1992). Såpeseriene har blitt kalt “enormous machineries of desire” (Colin MacCabe sitert fra Brunson og Spigel 2008 s. 250).

“Elements of melodramatic cinema:

1. Melodrama begins, and wants to end, in a space of innocence.
2. Melodrama focuses on victim-heroes and the recognition of their virtue.
3. Melodrama appears modern by borrowing from realism, but realism serves the melodramatic passion and action.
4. Melodrama involves a dialectic of pathos and action – a give and take of “too late” and “in the nick of time.”
5. Melodrama presents characters who embody primary psychic roles organized in Manichaeian conflicts between good and evil. (monopathy) (Williams, “Melodrama Revised,” 64ff.)” (<http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/Melodrama.htm>; lesedato 13.06.13)

Regissørene Tina Wakerell og Derek Martinus’ TV-serie *Penmarric* (1979) er basert på en romanserie av den engelske forfatteren Susan Howatch. Historien er melodramatisk. “Powerful and compelling, *Penmarric* is a sweeping, historic tale of unexpressed passion and rampant ambition, desire and destruction, spanning

three generations from Victorian England to the Second World War. Set on the stormy coasts of Cornwall, Mark Castallack is the Master of Penmarric, a lost soul who finds love in the arms of Janna, an older woman and daughter of a local fisherman. The impact of their marriage on the family and community – and the dark secrets that surround it – sets off a chain of events that threatens all who cross the threshold of the grand house. The course is set towards a tragedy that will echo across time pitting husband against wife, father against son and brother against brother.” (<http://www.bbcshop.com/drama+arts/penmarric-30th-anniversary-edition-dvd/inv/av9695>; lesedato 11.10.13)

Medieprofessor Linda Williams’ artikkel “Melodrama Revised” (i boka *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, redigert av Nick Browne i 1998) foretar “a reevaluation of film melodrama and, by extension, of classical Hollywood film [...] Williams [...] asserts that “[m]elodrama should be viewed ... not as an excess or an aberration but in many ways as the typical form of American popular narrative in literature, stage, film, and television” ” (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/film_and_history/summary/v039/39.2.mckee.html; lesedato 07.06.13) “In “Melodrama Revised” Linda Williams takes another look at this genre, which to many seems a relic from the Victorian Age. She points out that moral values are an integral part of our social fabric. They come to us through the melodrama’s emotional appeal. Rights and wrongs are weighed. Sympathy usually goes to the victim, hopefully, justice prevails. Glaring cultural problems – racial conflict, class struggle, gender inequality and ethnic confrontations – cannot always be dealt with rationally. But when we are emotionally involved, we are more inclined to find solutions. Anna’s problems in *Way Down East* [D. W. Griffiths film fra 1920] could not be tackled head on. She had to experience a sham marriage, desertion, death of her illegitimate baby, social ostracism, poverty and the prospects of a loveless and bleak future. But this tragedy was not of her own making. When her former lover is a dinner guest in her employer’s home and castigates her as a fallen woman, it forces a denouncement. The problem of the double standard is brought into focus. When justice wins out, albeit in the nick of time, good moral values are solidified. However, the double standard is not corrected in this film. The viewer must deal with the problem.” (<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/>; lesedato 13.06.13)

“[M]elodrama is a peculiarly democratic and American form that seeks dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths through a dialectic of pathos and action. It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie. (Williams, “Melodrama Revised,” 42). [...] Out of this institutional context [i.e., 19th c. melodramatic theater], aesthetic, cultural, and ideological features coalesce into a modality which organizes the disparate sensory phenomena, experiences, and contradictions of a newly emerging secular and atomising society in visceral, affective and morally explanatory terms [...] If comedy, tragedy, and romance are among the oldest and most widespread of modalities, tragedy has, in Peter Brooks’s (1976) argument, largely been displaced by melodrama, while romance has radically shifted its purview from chivalric adventure to women’s mass fiction (Radford, 1986).

Because of its wider socio-cultural embrace, the melodramatic mode not only generates a wide diversity of genres but also draws other modes into its processes of articulation. Thus melodrama thrives on comic counterpoint, can site its fateful encounters in romance, and keeps pace with the most recent of modes, realism, which first worked in cooperation with melodrama and then disowned it.” (<http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/Melodrama.htm>; lesedato 13.06.13)

“Unlike film critics who have seen melodrama as an anachronism to be overcome or subverted, [Peter] Brooks takes it seriously as a quintessentially modern (though not modernist) form arising out of a particular historical conjuncture: the postrevolutionary, post-Enlightenment, postsacred world where traditional imperatives of truth and morality had been violently questioned and yet in which there was still a need to forge some semblance of truth and morality. Brooks’s central thesis is that, in the absence of a moral and social order linked to the sacred, and in the presence of a reduced private and domestic sphere that has increasingly become the entire realm of personal significance, a theatrical form of sensation developed that earned the burden of expressing what Brooks calls the “moral occult; the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality”. This quest for a hidden moral legibility is crucial to all melodrama.” (<http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/Melodrama.htm>; lesedato 13.06.13)

“[T]he basic vernacular of American moving pictures consists of a story that generates sympathy for a hero who is also a victim and that leads to a climax that permits the audience, and usually other characters, to recognize that character's moral value. This climax revealing the moral good of the victim can tend in one of two directions: either it can consist of a paroxysm of pathos (as in the woman's film or family melodrama variants) or it can take that paroxysm and channel it into the more virile and action-centered variants of rescue, chase, and fight (as in the western and all the action genres). (Williams, “Melodrama Revised,” 58) To study the relation between pathos and action is to see that there is no pure isolation of pathos in woman’s films nor of action in the male action genres. If, as Peter Brooks argues, melodrama is most centrally about moral legibility and the assigning of guilt and innocence in a postsacred, post-Enlightenment world where moral and religious certainties have been erased, then pathos and action are the two most important means to the achievement of moral legibility.” (<http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/Melodrama.htm>; lesedato 13.06.13)

“Scorned and disdained, this suffering victim has been the object of much derision, particularly in its latest incarnation in popular American mass culture. Vulgar, naïve, sensational, feminine, sentimental, excessive, overly emotional – these are but a few of the disparaging descriptions that have robbed melodrama of its ‘virtue.’ [...] any good melodrama [is] worth its weight in tear-soaked hankies [...] 1. “Melodrama begins, and wants to end,” according to Williams, “in a space of innocence” (1998: 65), usually represented by the iconic image of the home. [...] 2.

“Melodrama focuses on victim-heroes and the recognition of their virtue” (1998: 66). [...] 3. “Melodrama appears modern by borrowing from realism, but realism serves the melodramatic passion and action” (1998: 67). [...] 4. “Melodrama involves a dialectic of pathos and action – a give and take of ‘too late’ and ‘in the nick of time’” (1998: 69). Williams makes a key insight into the melodramatic mode when she connects pathos to action, permitting the most seemingly *un*-melodramatic of films to be viewed in a new light. In its elucidation of a character’s virtue in the climax, melodrama tends to end in one of two ways: “either it can consist of a paroxysm of pathos... or it can take that paroxysm and channel it into the more virile and action-centered variants of rescue, chase, and fight (as in the western and all the action genres)” (1998: 58). [...] 5. “Melodrama presents characters who embody primary psychic roles organized in Manichaeian conflicts between good and evil” (1998: 77). The most derided characteristic of melodrama, the lack of complex psychological depth common to melodrama is an objectionable quality, but there is no denying its prevalence in mass culture. Vilifying perceived evil is frequent and widespread” (Andrew DeWaard i <http://cinophile.ca/archives/volume-4-post-genre/>; lesedato 07.06.13).

“As indicated in its literal meaning, “drama accompanied by music,” melodrama is fundamentally tied to its use of music to emphasize and underscore its pivotal moments. [...] As its historical emergence among the poor in the French Revolution indicates, “melodrama sides with the powerless” (Vicinus 130). [...] Furthermore, as Laura Mulvey states, “the strength of the melodramatic form lies in the amount of dust the story raises along the road, a cloud of over-determined irreconcilables which put up a resistance to being neatly settled in the last five minutes” (76).” (Andrew DeWaard i <http://cinophile.ca/archives/volume-4-post-genre/>; lesedato 07.06.13)

Den amerikanske feministiske filmkritikeren Molly Haskell “found that, on the one hand, its [the “woman’s film’s”] primary thematic gesture is toward the containment of female desire through “sacrifice, affliction, choice, and competition,” resulting, by the films’ ends, in the female heroine’s death or marriage. On the other hand, Haskell pointed to the threat posed to these plots by the luminous presence of the stars’ images: ‘Whatever the endings that were forced on Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Katharine Hepburn, Margaret Sullavan, or Rosalind Russell, the images we retain of them are not those of subjugation or humiliation; rather, we remember their intermediate victories, we retain images of intelligence and personal style and forcefulness. [...] This contradiction has both fascinated and repelled feminist critics, in a manner that evokes the double bind of the films themselves.” (http://www.ieas.unideb.hu/admin/file_429.pdf; lesedato 12.06.13) “The woman’s film” blir analysert i Mary Ann Doanes bok *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s* (1987).

Melodrama er kjennetegnet av “Stylistic and Emotional Excess [...] Thomas Elsaesser: “[W]hen in ordinary language we call something melodramatic, what we

mean is an exaggerated rise-and-fall pattern in human actions and emotional responses, a from-the-sublime-to-the-ridiculous movement, a foreshortening of lived time in favor of intensity – all of which produces a graph of much greater fluctuation, a quick swing from one extreme to the other than is considered natural, realistic or in conformity with literary standards of verisimilitude.” (Thomas Elsaesser, “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Drama.” [...]”(http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/canada/melodrama.html; lesedato 13.06.13)

Det finnes ifølge Laura Mulvey “two different initial standpoints for melodrama. One is coloured by a female protagonist’s dominating point of view which acts as a source of identification. The other examines the tensions in the family, and between sex and generations; here, although women play a central part, their point of view is not analysed and does not initiate the drama. (Laura Mulvey. “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama.” *Home is Where the Heart Is*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: British Film Institute, 1987: 76.)” (http://www.eng.fju.edu.tw/canada/melodrama.html; lesedato 12.06.13) “Christine Gledhill’s forensic introduction to her 1987 edited collection of essays on melodrama, *Home is Where the Heart Is*, outlined the range of debate on the subject until that point and began to open up the possibility for a reconsideration of film melodrama. Primarily, Gledhill discussed the feminist intervention in the debate and pointed to the largely unsuccessful attempts to reconnect film theory with the historical roots of theatrical melodrama. She noted that film studies’ notion of melodrama, which is concerned primarily with the domestic and the feminine, has little in common with the theatrical genre of melodrama, which is focused on action, incident, and jeopardy.” (http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Melodrama-RECENT-DEVELOPMENTS-IN-FILM-THEORY.html; lesedato 24.10.17)

En 20 år gammel amerikansk kvinne fortalte i 1930: “The first picture that I ever cried at was *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, with Marguerite Clarke playing the part of the little Eva. I didn’t want to cry and tried my best to fight against my emotions, but it was of no use, the tears rolled down just the same. I read the story of *Wings* and in spite of myself I cried over it. When I saw the movie [Lucien Hubbards stumfilm *Wings*, 1927] I tried to tell myself that I wouldn’t cry as I had already read the book and could have myself steeled against any display of sorrow. It all went well until one of the last scenes and I found myself crying. Most any picture with a touch of pathos to it has me using my handkerchief a great deal.” (siteret fra Lowery og DeFleur 1995 s. 38)

Den amerikanske presidenten Ronald Reagan “assimilated the generic codes and worldview of the Hollywood western, war film, melodrama, and other genres which dichotomized the universe into the forces of Good vs. Evil, which presented “us” as Good and “them” as Evil, and which thus repressed any negative, aggressive, and evil inclinations in one’s own country and psyche.” (Kellner 1991) Dette belyses i Michael Rogins bok *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (1987).

I en typisk såpe-TV-serie “all those extreme story lines such as kidnappings, bribery, extramarital affairs, obscure illnesses, and so on, which succeed each other at such a breathtaking pace, are not treated in a sensational manner, but are taken entirely seriously. The parameters of melodrama require that such clichés be regarded and assessed not for their literal, referential value – i.e. their realism – but as meaningful in so far as they solicit a highly charged, emotional impact. Their role is metaphorical, and their appeal stems from the enlarged emotional impact they evoke: it is the feelings being mobilized here that matter. An excess of events and intensity of emotions are inextricably intertwined in the melodramatic imagination.” (Ang 1996 s. 89)

Medieforskeren Tania Modleski fant ut at mange såpeserier hadde en “implisitt seer”, en slags ideell tilskuer med bestemte holdninger. Denne seeren er en klok mor med sympati nok til å skjønne alle som i serien er i konflikt med hverandre. Hun identifiserer seg med dem alle og har knapt noen krav på egne vegne. Denne gode, forståelsesfulle mor kan altså sympatisere med både syndere og ofre. Andre medieforskere har påpekt av såpeseriene ses av mange forskjellige kvinner som ikke ligner en slik ideell mor. Kvinnelige seere fra arbeiderklassen misliker ofte trekk ved kvinnene i såpeserier (gjengitt etter Ang 1996 s. 112-113).

“En gang tidlig i dette årtuset ble melodramaet den foretrukne formen for filmer med en tydelig politisk agenda. Filmer som *Crash* (Paul Haggis, 2004) og *Babel* (Alejandro González Inárritu, 2006) tok over for thrilleren og satiren som hadde dominert siden 60-tallet. Fra nå av handlet det ikke om å avsløre makten, finne skjulte strukturer, eller flire av betydningsfulle og selvrettferdige mennesker. Med melodramaet som form hadde politikken blitt personlig og moralsk, i stedet for strukturell og teatralisk. Som hos Charles Dickens var det mer tilfældigheter, uflaks og etisk tvilsom adferd som satte hovedpersonene i vanskeligheter, enn samfunnet disse menneskene tilhørte.” (*Morgenbladet* 29. april–5. mai 2011 s. 28) Dickens’ romaner har av mange blitt oppfattet som melodramatiske.

Den amerikanske regissør-pioneren David Wark Griffith lagde mange melodramaer, f.eks. *Orphans of the Storm* (1921). Den amerikanske regissøren James Kirkwoods film *Rags* (1915) er et tidlig eksempel på et filmmelodrama (Labarrère 2002 s. 469). “The relationship between a plucky daughter and her brutish father is dissected in this classic Mary Pickford drama set in a mining community. Pickford plays “Rags,” a pretty but wild girl who defends her alcoholic father (J. Farrell MacDonald), a disgraced bank cashier, no matter how he mistreats her. Enter a handsome engineer (Marshall Neilan), whose family had once fired Rag's father for theft. Rags falls in love but realizes that marriage is a hopeless proposition considering her lowly place in society. But when she learns that her father plans to rob the newcomer, Rags betrays him to the sheriff, and he is shot in the ensuing battle. Before he expires, however, the old man writes to his former employer to take care of Rags. She journeys East, becomes a proper lady, and can

soon plan a future with the handsome engineer.” (<http://www.answers.com/topic/rags-film>; lesedato 09.08.12)

“Filmen *Grand Hotel* (Goulding, 1932) regnes som et klassisk melodramatisk mesterverk med sin handling lagt til Berlins luksuriøse art-deco Grand Hotel. [...] Det er historien om fem gjester hvis veier krysses for en kort periode på hotellet. En aldrende, ensom og suicidal russisk ballerina. Den elegante og noble Baronen, som egentlig er en personlig konkurs juveltyv. En ambisiøs, ung og vakker stenograf som ønsker å bli en filmstjerne og leve det gode liv, samt den syke fabrikk-regnskapsføreren som ønsker å se hvordan de rike lever før han dør, og den kyniske og kaldhjertede industrimagnaten. Alle de involverte får forandret sine liv i løpet av det korte oppholdet. Avslutningsreplikkene til doktoren som ikke kjenner til de mange personlige dramaene som har utspilt seg på hotellet og livene som er blitt forandret, er velkjent: “- The Grand Hotel. Always the same. People come. People go... nothing ever happens.” [...] Og underveis vil det oppstå situasjoner hvor karakterene kommer til en innsikt om seg selv og eget virke.” (Roger Nybroen i http://masterbloggen.no/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/roger_hovedopp.pdf; lesedato 06.12.16)

Amerikaneren John M. Stahl spesialiserte seg på melodramaer, med filmer som *Back Street* (1932).

Den dansk-tyske regissøren Douglas Sirk lagde mange film-melodramaer, bl.a. *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956) og *Imitation of Life* (1959). “*Imitation of Life* (1959), which Sirk said he would have made “if only for the title,” repeats one of his central themes: characters discard true human connections, including with themselves, for material goods and the sake of appearances. African-American live-in maid Annie (Juanita Moore) watches as her light-skinned daughter Sarah Jane (Susan Kohner) chooses to pass as white; in the process Sarah Jane also rejects her mother. Near the end, after flying across the country to see her daughter “one last time,” Annie asks the girl, now living uncomfortably close to prostitution, if she’s getting what she really wants. Of course she’s not – a fact reinforced by an interposed mirror shot that reveals Sarah Jane’s alienation from herself. Yet unusual, deeply moving close-ups in that scene bring the two together, as the daughter inaudibly mouths the words “I love you, mama.” After Annie dies, there’s a long take that might be the most devastating in all cinema, a high crane shot showing a late-arriving Sarah Jane trying to break through the crowd to her mother’s hearse [begravelsesvogn]. The camera moves in closer and closer until it arrives at a mockery of the classic two-shot: Sarah Jane faces not her mother but a coffin, grasping at the flowers on top while she wails “I didn’t mean it” and “I did love you!” Surface triumphs over substance in the funeral procession that follows, seen from the vantage point of one baroquely detailed setting after another, until authenticity is decisively entombed. Sirk never made another commercial film, moving back to Europe and returning to an earlier

love, theater directing.” (Fred Camper i <http://www.fredcamper.com/Film/Sirk.html>; lesedato 16.10.13)

“In *All That Heaven Allows*, the relationship that Carey pursues with her gardener, Ron, can unproblematically be seen as setting her apart from the community and ideology of Stoningham, the town in which she lives. The couple are treated as outsiders at social gatherings (shown most clearly in the Mona party scene) and Carey is eventually forced to make a clear choice between her bourgeois life as a social entity and the Transcendentalist lifestyle practised by Ron. Accordingly, Sirk uses film language to illustrate this division of lifestyles, and clearly shows cinematically that the freedom offered by the escape from the social set of Stoningham is more pleasurable than the repression that is necessary in order to remain within it. The interior of Carey’s comfortable middle class home, for example, is continually shot in cold colours and shrouded in shadow, her own children’s faces often hidden in darkness – whereas her moments of release from constrictive bourgeois life through Ron’s lifestyle, are filmed always in warm, vibrant colours. Set pieces such as the comparable party scenes (in which small, gossiping clusters of judgemental and sexually aggressive people typify the Stoningham crowd, compared with the happy, communal interaction between guests in Mick and Rick’s cabin), and sets (small, dark, angular spaces in Carey’s house as opposed to large, open, large-windowed rooms in Rick’s and Ron’s houses) also illustrate this distinction. The opinion – if you like – of Sirk is clear: the ideology of the society life Carey was living is restrictive, suffocating and joyless, and the ideology of life with Ron (that she in fact chooses for herself at the film’s close), is free, exhilarating and joyous. As Laura Mulvey says in “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama”: “Ideological contradiction is the overt mainspring and specific content of melodrama, not a hidden unconscious thread to be picked up only by special critical processes... Carey’s world is divided into the cold, hard light (blues and yellows) of loneliness, repression and oppression and the warmer, softer light (red/orange) of hope, freedom and sexual satisfaction. ... It illustrates the basic division that the film is actually about.” (Mulvey, 1977/78, 54)” (James MacDowell i https://offscreen.com/view/beneath_surface; lesedato 08.11.18)

Den amerikanske filmregissøren Vincente Minnelli lagde en rekke melodramaer på film. “The series of powerful and often subversive melodramas produced in Hollywood after the second World War have often been read as a direct response to the radically changing landscape of the late 1940s and 1950s, offering a subtle critique that pointed to the deep problems festering beneath the glossy surface of the nation’s newfound prosperity and power. [...] The key to Minnelli’s melodramas is their deep compassion for the misfit: men who long to be sensitive and gentle, women who yearn for autonomy, artists who refuse to conform. [...] Minnelli’s melodramas rank with those of two other Hollywood directors now celebrated for their stinging critiques of American postwar society: Douglas Sirk and Nicholas Ray.” (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2008septoct/minnelli.html>; lesedato 03.06.15)

Minnellis *Home From the Hill* (1960) er en historie om “sexuality in small-town America, in this case William Humphrey’s Faulknerian saga about an overbearing Texas rancher’s efforts to induct his introverted son into “the company of men.” Robert Mitchum stars as the macho, philandering patriarch who battles frigid wife Eleanor Parker for the loyalty of their soft-spoken offspring Theron (George Hamilton). Another of Minnelli’s sensitive young men – after John Kerr’s characters in *The Cobweb* and *Tea and Sympathy* – Theron is an adolescent torn between a bullying father and a disappointed, smothering mother. His character naturally looks for help from Rafe (Peppard), a friendly ranch hand of his own age. Ultimately, Theron’s dilemma proves a dead end, and the narrative shifts to Rafe – the only one able to negotiate the impasse within the family, an impasse freighted with all the weight of the war between the sexes and within the genders. The height of hyperbolic male melodrama, *Home from the Hill* supports its critique of masculinity through daringly baroque mise-en-scène, with Minnelli using camera movement, costume and décor incisively to illuminate and critique.” (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2008sept/oct/minnelli.html>; lesedato 03.06.15)

Minnelli “made a series of dramas that many critics have seen as typifying Hollywood melodrama, including the sensationally lurid *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952). *Two Weeks in Another Town* (1962) is an overheated depiction of the Hollywood film industry, while *The Cobweb* (1955) is set in a mental institution and stars Richard Widmark, Gloria Grahame, and Lauren Bacall in a complex love triangle. Others include the family melodrama *Home From the Hill* (1960); *Some Came Running* (1958), with Frank Sinatra as a disillusioned writer returning to his hometown following the war; and the notorious *Tea and Sympathy* (1956), a tellingly repressed and neurotic depiction of homosexual confusion in a boys’ school. [...] his melodramas demonstrate repressed ideological conflicts and tensions that erupt at moments of high drama through music and mise-en-scène.” (<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Melodrama-RECENT-DEVELOPMENTS-IN-FILM-THEORY.html>; lesedato 24.10.17)

De amerikanske filmmelodramaene fra 1930-tallet og framover ble lagd med et kvinnelig publikum som målgruppe, og med kvinner i sentrum av handlingen, fordi de fleste kinotilskuerne var kvinner (Labarrère 2002 s. 481).

A Place to Call Home (2013 og senere; skapt av Bevan Lee m.fl.) er en australsk TV-serie. “Bevan Lee says of *A Place to Call Home*[:] [...] “I want to fight the rise of melodrama being viewed as a somehow lesser form. To me a good melodrama is a big plum pudding of a show, full of fruit, flavour and the odd surprise threepence.” Sirk’s lavish and sumptuous pictures were largely disdained at the time as pathos-filled, campy tales of ardour or fraught domestic situations with cliché-ridden characters, dismissed by the cognoscenti as “women’s weepies” or “three-hanky movies”. But concealed beneath the flawless aesthetics was a cutting

indictment of American bourgeois values. The German-born Sirk, a peer of Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill, revelled in the irony of privileged people trapped in the excess of their dissolute lifestyles. “Time, if nothing else, will vindicate Douglas Sirk,” the American critic Andrew Sarris predicted, and these days his immaculate craft and style are celebrated. As was Lee’s series, a narrative-dense romantic period melodrama. Set in 1950s rural Australia, it followed the lives of the Blighs, a wealthy and complicated pastoralist family in NSW [dvs. delstaten New South Wales]. It was a stylishly visual realisation of cultural history and dramatic action converging in a dense Sirkian form we had not seen in our TV drama before. [...] employing the mechanics of melodrama to explore people too fearful, selfish, deluded or self-loathing to appreciate what should be melodrama’s ultimate reward: the love given them. Happiness is just out of reach.” (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/a-place-to-call-home-passionate-melodrama-is-a-winner/news-story/f35044af9442e3b8ef509789c6b62211>; lesedato 27.10.17)

I *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (1992) undersøker E. Ann Kaplan “melodramatiske representasjoner av morsrollen i film og litteratur fra det 20. århundre, i lys av psykoanalytiske og historiske diskurser. I en studie av morsskikkelsene i filmene *Now Voyager* og *Marnie* tar Kaplan for seg de kulturelle diskursene som ligger til grunn for representasjonen av moderskap i disse filmene (1992, 107-123). Begge kvinneskikkelsene blir beskrevet som representasjoner av paradigmet om en “fallisk” mor, og Kaplan benytter Melanie Klein og Karen Horneyes psykoanalytiske arbeider for å undersøke dette paradigmet.” (Svensson 2014 s. 45)

“Notably, the question of law or legitimacy, so central to tragedy, has turned inward from ‘Has this man a right to rule (over us)?’ to ‘Has this man a right to rule a family (like ours)?’ This inward-turning motivates a more directly psychological reading of situations, particularly in the Hollywood melodrama of the 50s. [...] Important for the melodrama, though, is that it more often than not [...] records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu. The world is closed, and the characters are acted upon. Melodrama confers on them a negative identity through suffering, and the progressive self-immolation and disillusionment generally ends in resignation: they emerge as lesser human beings for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world. [...] Melodramas tend to concentrate on the point of view of the victim. [...] [T]he melodrama, at its most accomplished, seems capable of reproducing more directly than other genres the patterns of domination and exploitation existing in a given society, especially the relation between psychology, morality and class-consciousness, by emphasising so clearly an emotional dynamic whose social correlative is a network of external forces directed oppressingly inward and with which the characters themselves unwittingly collude to become their agents. [...] In Hollywood melodramas of the 50s, alienation is recognized as the basic human condition. Fate becomes a state of being in the prison of social conformity and psychological neurosis. The linear

progression of self-fulfillment so crucial to American ideology is twisted into the downward spiral of self-destructive impulse.” (http://www.univeisites.harvard.edu/.../S._Melodrama_and_Cinema.do...; lesedato 20.06.13)

Stanley Cavells bok *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (1996) “sketch the outlines of another genre, the ‘Melodramas of the Unknown Woman’, comprising such classics of the woman’s film (or ‘weepie’) as Max Ophuls’ *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, King Vidor’s *Stella Dallas*, George Cukor’s *Gaslight*, and Irving Rapper’s *Now Voyager*. Elsewhere, he has added Michael Curtiz’ *Mildred Pierce*, Mervyn LeRoy’s *Random Harvest*, Joseph von Sternber’s *Blonde Venus* to the list, as well as Heinrich von Kleist’s novella *Die Marquise von O.* – made into a film by Eric Rohmer, and Henrik Ibsen’s *Nora*, adapted for the screen by Joseph Losey.” (Thomas Elsaesser i <http://home.hum.uva.nl/oz/elsaesser/essay-CavellCinema.pdf>; lesedato 06.08.12)

Kamilla Aslaksen hevder i artikkelen “Ibsen and Melodrama: Observations on an Uneasy Relationship” (1997) at den “vanlige holdningen er at “aesthetically speaking, the melodramatic features in Ibsen must be seen as anomalies or essentially regressive elements” [...] Ett av poengene hennes er at melodramaet historisk har vært dypt forankret i et kvinnelig univers der familie og kjærlighet alltid har spilt en helt sentral rolle; “in the field of gender and genre, melodrama has frequently been identified as a woman’s genre” (37). Dette, vil mange hevde, er en viktig årsak til at sjangeren ikke er blitt tatt helt på alvor; “melodramatisk” er så godt som utelukkende blitt assosiert med det som er sterkt følelsesladet, på grensen til det sentimentale og noen ganger hysteriske. [...] Aslaksen overbeviser i artikkelen sin om at det slett ikke trenger være noen motsetning mellom realisme og melodrama. [...] Aslaksen bygger i stor grad på Brooks’ ide om “excess”, følelsemessig overflod eller overskudd” (Hambro 2015).

En film-undersjanger av melodrama er “maternal melodrama”, der en vanligvis psykisk ustabil og utilfreds kvinne lider og må gi avkall på det hun ønsker (Suber, Schäfer og Prinz 2011 s. 162). Et eksempel er *Stella Dallas* (1937; regissert av amerikaneren King Vidor). “Vidor’s *Stella Dallas* is the gold standard – or maybe the proper term is fool’s-gold standard – of the “women’s picture” or “weepie,” those disreputable melodramas that flourished in the 1930s and 1940s. They were dismissed then and now as sentimental, manipulative tear-jerkers, centered around women who were bent on self-sacrifice, some distance from the sophisticates who populated the great romantic comedies of the period. And yet *Stella Dallas* itself – sentimental without question, building to an act of heartbreaking selflessness – earns the copious tears it jerks, embodying the “weepie” in every respect, yet more complicated and more flush with genuine emotion than a mere soap opera. As played by Barbara Stanwyck, the eponymous character is a near-deranged status-seeker who also happens to have a strong maternal instinct, and the film’s genius comes from putting those separate impulses into conflict.” (Scott Tobias i <https://thedissolve.com/reviews/449-stella-dallas/>; lesedato 20.01.16)

“Stella is a great schemer, and like a smart investor, she recognizes the potential in Stephen Dallas (John Boles), a once-wealthy man who lost his place in high society after his father committed suicide, leaving him penniless. Now an executive at the mill where her father works, Stephen seeks to regain his status and marry his former fiancée Helen (Barbara O’Neil), but Stella catches him at the right time and they get married instead. The two eventually separate, but they have a daughter, Laurel (played as a young woman by Anne Shirley), who unexpectedly commands Stella’s full attention. The wrenching irony at the center of *Stella Dallas* is that Stella never loses her obsession with status, but merely shifts it over to her desire to give Laurel a better life. Yet it isn’t enough to say that Stella sacrifices her own dreams to serve her daughter’s advancement. She’s also pathological in thinking the road to happiness leads through high society, and that Laurel would be better off with rich people than with a mother she loves dearly – and who dearly loves her in return. The last half-hour of *Stella Dallas* will drench the hankies of all but the most stone-hearted, but behind Stella’s action lingers the thought that maybe she’s doing the wrong thing, and maybe she’s making herself the unnecessary victim of her own myopia. There’s a point where self-sacrifice looks a little like self-immolation. [...] There’s an extraordinary scene where Stella, mother to mother, gives Helen a window into her selflessness, but that’s a window Stella is forced to close to get what she wants. As a viewer, it feels like a privilege to know her as nobody in her world truly can, and appreciate what she decides to do, however questionable or downright deluded her actions are.” (Scott Tobias i <https://the-dissolve.com/reviews/449-stella-dallas/>; lesedato 20.01.16)

“I have analyzed audience’s comments on *Stella Dallas* found at Amazon customer’s review. [...] [to seer-reaksjoner :] “This movie had me crying for almost a half hour afterwards, I was so moved. The story was so touching and heart-rending that I forgot that I was watching a movie.” [...] “*Stella Dallas* is by far one of the greatest tear-jerkers of all time.” ” (Anis Pervez i <http://offscreen.com/view/stella-dallas>; lesedato 09.02.17)

“The ‘Melodramas of the Unknown Woman’ are structurally related to the ‘Comedies of Remarriage’ insofar as they involve a woman establishing her right to existence across a number of impossibilities, chief among which is ‘man’ or (in Emerson’s phrase, ‘nonchalant boys who are sure of a dinner’). The tragedy of these women, or indeed of ‘the woman’ is that she needs ‘man’ to be ‘created’, but man is a creature who is himself in all relevant respects incomplete, unformed, with an irresponsibility that spans from the ‘nonchalant’ to the ‘villainous’. The woman’s right to existence, then, takes the form of a metamorphosis in both the genres Cavell has fashioned, but in melodrama it entails a traumatic use of language (the eloquent muteness of the unknown woman inverting symmetrically the love of dialogue and the ‘high embattled wit’ of the couples in the comedies of remarriage.” (Thomas Elsaesser i <http://home.hum.uva.nl/oz/elsaesser/essay-CavellCinema.pdf> ; lesedato 06.08.12)

“Film theorist Thomas Elsaesser describes melodrama as a filmic means to deal with internal contradictions, fears and anxieties about woman’s place and power(lessness) in society. Narratives reveal women’s desire for independence and control over their sexuality, but eventually these narratives require a recognition of a need for sacrifice and conformity on the part of the rebellious woman, resulting in a return to the status quo. The family is central to these films as the site of socialisation, and therefore the place where female power is negotiated. [...] narrative structures of melodrama often focus on archetypally opposite characterisations. Typically these oppositions are defined in relation to their sexuality. The stereotype of the domestic woman is one which is depicted as being fully socialised, but to the point of being de-sexualised within the narrative, her position is confined to the domestic realm of house and family, under the control of her husband or father.” (Lisa Morton i http://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol1no3/morton_issue3.html; lesedato 05.01.18)

Melodrama “knows the temporality of ‘too late’ and the temporality of ‘if only’ – both conditions of repetition, but both marking crucially the gaps that open up between an event and its return in the constitution of the subject. Melodrama knows and speaks about this repetition, but from the vantage point of a barrier, a limit. What exactly this limit is – the blockage to exchange, to ‘conversation’ in Cavell’s terms – is what feminists and Cavell might agree to disagree. ‘Female subjectivity’, ‘the woman’s insistence on unknownness’: I tend to hope that Cavell is right, because in his version, paradoxical as it may sound, the default value is dialogue, communication, not the withdrawal into radical otherness, essential difference, the blackness of the screen, the tain of the mirror.” (Thomas Elsaesser i <http://home.hum.uva.nl/oz/elsaesser/essay-CavellCinema.pdf> ; lesedato 06.08.12)

“In the case of the photo-novel, which continues the abandoned melodramatic tradition that passed from the boulevard theater (where it was to be discarded by the return of the text theater) to the so-called primitive cinema (where it was to be abandoned in favor of the more realist acting style that accompanied the narrative turn of the film industry), the reuse of melodrama seems to be both naive and unabashed, often on the verge of crude plagiarism. This can be seen, for instance, in the oriental variant of the early photo-novel in which the influence of Rudolph Valentino’s star power is still very much present. At the same time however, the medium sets the melodrama in a contemporary and usually urban setting. Under the influence of postwar neorealism the photo-novel will abandon this exoticism, as is demonstrated by Federico Fellini’s *The White Sheik* (1952), a film that takes the photo-novel craze in Italy as its theme while also parodying the exotic and escapist tendencies of some of its early attempts.” (Baetens 2012)

“Elements of melodrama can be found in TV dramas, soaps and other sub-genres, where a focus is placed on topical issues, events and action. These elements are, essentially, that after journeys, trials, dangers, fights, love scenes and

misunderstandings, good triumphs over evil and the hero and heroine are united.” (<http://www.rhinegold.co.uk/>; lesedato 26.02.13)

På 1990-tallet gikk den tyske, tidsskriftlignende bokserien *Mami* i millionopplag (*Presse & Buch: News im Bahnhof* nr. 3 i 1995 s. 19). Historiene i de korte bøkene/heftene handlet om kjærligheten mellom mor og barn, ulykkelige barnehjemsbarn som lengter etter et hjem, trusselen fra en for streng forelder m.m. Noen *Mami*-titler: *Kevin, hvor er du?*; *Da pappa kom hjem*; *Au pair-jenta Julia*; *Som om du var min lillesøster: Det Daniel og Isabell ikke vet*; *Han kalte det farskjærighet*; *Håp for et forlatt barn* (alle på tysk). To av forfatterne bak heftene var Myra Myrenburg og Gisela Reutling.

“[T]he Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) makes use of the melodramatic mode in creating short and feature length films for both insider and outsider consumption. The argument is made that the melodramatic mode gives the LDS Church a particularly meaningful tool for accomplishing three key goals: to encourage conversion or re-conversion by provoking tears and pathos, to work out social issues, and to create and maintain a certain identity for the Church as victim-hero. As such, the melodramatic mode is a means for identity formation and community building, significant in a religious context outside the confines of traditional scholarly discourse on Hollywood melodrama. [...] the use of popular actor Jimmy Stewart in *Mr. Krueger's Christmas* – because the Church intended that film to be shown on broadcast television, and they wanted to reach a wide audience with a recognizable non-LDS (but LDS-friendly) presence, they sought out the well-known and well-liked Stewart to play the title role. [...] Some films, like *Mr. Krueger's Christmas* and *The Mailbox* (David K. Jacobs, 1977), are entirely fictional. Many of the Church films, though, are at least based on true stories or actual events – for example, *The Mountain of the Lord* (Peter N. Johnson, 1993) or *Pioneers in Petticoats* (Judge Whitaker, 1969).” (Airen Hall i <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/>; lesedato 03.09.13)

“Melodrama is not merely a type of film or literary genre, but a pervasive cultural mode that structures the presentation of political discourse and national identity in contemporary America. [...] The September 11 news coverage illustrates how the United States became signified as a morally powerful victim ensnared in a position that required it to transform victimization into heroic retributive action. [...] Melodrama is a mode of popular culture narrative that employs emotionality to provide an unambiguous distinction between good and evil through clear designations of victimization, heroism, and villainy. Yet I contend that melodrama is not merely a type of film or literary genre, but a pervasive cultural mode that structures the presentation of political discourse and national identity in contemporary America. The media presentation of September 11 is a specific example of this identity production; it offers a morally legible national identity by positioning the U.S. as a victim engaged in a battle against evil.” (Elisabeth Anker i

<http://departments.columbian.gwu.edu/americanstudies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf>; lesedato 26.02.13)

“Melodrama is traditionally defined as a dramatic storyline of villainy, victimization, and retribution, in which characters’ emotional states are hyperbolized and externalized through grandiose facial expression, vivid bodily gestures, and stirring musical accompaniment; music is the “melos” of melodrama (Brooks, 1995; Elsaesser, 1972; Singer, 2000). In recent scholarship, melodrama has been defined more specifically as a mode of popular culture that presents images and characters through hyperbolic, binary moralistic positions and arranges them within a plotline that restages the eternal battle between good and evil (Brooks, 1995; Elsaesser, 1972; Gledhill, 1987; Singer, 2000; Williams, 1998). Melodrama, then, is a discursive practice that makes truth and justice legible by demarcating a clear boundary between right and wrong. The originary moment in melodrama is often a state of ambiguity, which calls for Manicheism to eradicate vagueness through polarization and tight resolution. Here, any state of being is an extreme state of being, with little space rendered for shadow, doubt, indistinction, or complexity. Its narrative expunges ethical ambiguity by segregating the camps of good and evil into Manicheistic absolutes, and individual actions and situations become metaphoric in their reenactment of this battle. In reshaping every encounter into a primary conflict between good and evil, melodrama moralizes all problems and relationships. .” (Elisabeth Anker i <http://departments.columbian.gwu.edu/americanstudies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf>; lesedato 26.02.13)

“Although melodrama is fluid and expansive enough to encompass international cultural products from Balzac’s *Lost Illusions* to telenovelas to *Titanic*, I want to propose that the cultural mode of melodrama can be defined by five primary qualities: (a) a locus of moral virtue that is signified throughout the narrative by pathos and suffering and can be increased through heroic action; (b) the three characters of a ruthless villain, a suffering victim, and a heroic savior who can redeem the victim’s virtue through an act of retribution (though the latter two characters can be inhabited in the same person: the virtuous victim/hero); (c) dramatic polarizations of good and evil, which echo in the depictions of individuals and events; (d) a cyclical interaction of emotion and action meant to create suspense and resolve conflict; and (e) the use of images, sounds, gestures, and nonverbal communication to illuminate moral legibility as well as to encourage empathy for the victim and anger toward the villain. The polarities emblematic of melodrama inspire its tools and presentation, as gestures and characterizations embody and reenact the central dilemma: the struggle between good and evil. In order to create and enhance the moral legibility so crucial to its discursive aim, the melodramatic narrative employs the plot devices of grandiose events, unprovoked actions, hyperbolic language, and spectacles of suffering. These practices of melodramatic composition demonstrate good and evil through nonspoken forms, and thus use dramatic gestures, ambient music, thematic repetition, and associative montage to convey moral truth through affect rather than speech. The transparency

and spectacle of these imagistic, aural, and narrative practices serve to enhance melodrama's fundamental Manicheistic underpinnings." (Elisabeth Anker i <http://departments.columbian.gwu.edu/americanstudies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf>; lesedato 26.02.13)

"I want to suggest that the scope of melodrama is not limited to popular culture but rather extends into political discourse and political action, providing the structuring framework for a specific contemporary American national identity that establishes its own moral virtue through victimization and heroic restitution. In this particular identity, America is fashioned as an imagined community unadulterated by immorality or evil. The country is designated as both unified and virtuous, and any state action taken at this time is predicated by the justification of moral righteousness. Clear demarcations and culturally identifiable patriotic significations denote America's resounding goodness. Through the melodramatic narrative, "the American people" become a united entity whose shared values and social solidarity create a homogeneous body. The American people's virtue extends naturally from their practice of democratic freedom; decency and righteousness are intertwined with the designation "freedom loving people." American ideals of freedom, free markets, and democracy serve to reinforce the ideal of an honorable and politically unified nation of virtuous common folk. Melodrama constructs characters and a plotline out of this identity. America is characterized as an abstract yet cohesive collective body, signified by the qualities of virtue and goodness implied in the ideals of freedom and democracy; the collective body is under attack from an evil "other," a villain, and this condition necessitates a retaliatory act of heroism. This melodramatic identity becomes a contemporary national self-definition. Essentially, the melodramatic character of the virtuous victim/hero signifies America. Cultural, ethnic, gender, and economic differences are irrelevant within this national identity; the collective body is an abstract, homogenous unit defined solely by adherence to American ideals and the virtues they connote, either victimized or engaged in heroic action. Through melodrama, the substance of national identity contains only the most general American ideals of "freedom" and "democracy," the victimizations they incur, and the heroic acts of redemption they necessitate. The villain is a shifting category populated most often by a foreign invader or a domestic subversive seemingly intent on destroying either American ideals or American territory, who becomes personified, demonized, and codified as the embodiment of pure evil." (Elisabeth Anker i <http://departments.columbian.gwu.edu/americanstudies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf>; lesedato 26.02.13)

"Media coverage of the September 11 terrorist attack illustrated the role of melodrama in generating a compelling national identity. Melodrama defined America as a heroic redeemer with a mandate to act because of an injury committed by a hostile villain. Through the melodramatic narrative, Americans were depicted as a unified and moral nation. America's virtue was validated by the resolution to undertake retributive action in response to its victimization. During this hour,

numerous politicians incorporated melodramatic narratives in their speeches and discussions in an attempt to make sense of the attack. Cameramen, editors, and news producers also employed melodramatic practices to structure what was being shown on television. As a cultural mode of understanding, many pieces of this news-hour puzzle produced and were produced by the melodramatic narrative. Already in news coverage just a few hours after the events on 9/11, political concerns were sealed by moral deliberations over good and evil. There was a blockage of discussion over the complicated and vague causes, effects, and understandings of the attack, and how it should be connected to national life. The attack was immediately subsumed under the Manicheism of the melodramatic narrative.” (Elisabeth Anker i <http://departments.columbian.gwu.edu/americanstudies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf>; lesedato 26.02.13)

Den engelske regissøren Mark Hermans film *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008) har blitt kalt et melodrama (Vidal 2012 s. 69). Filmen er basert på en roman med samme tittel av den irske forfatteren John Boyne. “The ending is melodramatic and tragic in the extreme. It is appalling, and it is disturbing, and it will give young children nightmares. However, in this instance, I am reminded of something the ever-thoughtful Roger Ebert once said when reviewing the immigration drama *El Norte*: “I’ve read reviews criticizing the film for its melodrama, but it occurred to me that the lives of poorer people are melodrama from birth to death. It takes a lot of money to insulate yourself in a less eventful, more controllable, life.” Isn’t the entire concept of the Holocaust absurdly melodramatic in and of itself?” (Clark Douglas i <http://www.dvdverdict.com/reviews/boyinthestripedpjs.php>; lesedato 05.11.14)

Gaute Heivolls roman *De skyldfrie* (2016) ble kalt et melodrama av litteraturkritikeren Fredrik Wandrup: “Vi befinner oss i en ødslig bygd på Sørlandet i mellomkrigstida. Vi møter to søstre og deres mor. En nyutdannet lærer blir ansatt som skolestyrer. [...] onkelen er en svikeyfull jævel, som ikke bare lurer læreren, men voldtar den yngste søsteren og gjør henne gravid før han skygger banen. [...] I bakgrunnen for det hele lyder sangen fra stedets bedehus, som søstrene har et sterkt forhold til fra barnsbein av. Disse dramatiske hendelsene vikler hovedpersonene inn i et destruktivt nett av løgner som stadig truer med å bli avslørt, med fatale konsekvenser. [...] Personenes vei fra tittelens “skyldfrihet” til tung skyld skjer skritt for skritt, gjennom ubetenkte, dels desperate handlinger. [...] Dette er en sympatisk fortelling om kompliserte, mellommenneskelige forhold. En tragedie, utformet i det som i beste forstand må kunne kalles et melodrama.” (*Dagbladet* 12. november 2016 s. 64)

I realityprogrammer på TV opptrer personer som seg selv (ikke som skuespillere), ofte i situasjoner som skal gi spesielle utfordringer for å teste deres utholdenhet osv. Slik programmer appellerer sterkt til tilskuernes identifikasjon med personene og deres følelser. “Bondebjerg (1996, 37) and Dovey (forthcoming) characterize

one of the distinctive aspects of reality programming as its use of “melodramatic reality.” ” (Hill 2000)

Alle artiklene og litteraturlista til hele leksikonet er tilgjengelig på <https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no>