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. Det drama “of innocence and villainy” med “polarised villains and heroines” og “climactic encounters and revelations” (Christine Gledhill i Gripsrud 2001 s. 69, 72 og 75). Det er ofte voldsomme lidenskaper hos personene (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 227). Det er svingninger mellom følelsesmessige ytter-punkter, emosjonelle kjempebølger. Sjangeren har blitt kalt “weepy” (Kaufmann 2007 s. 49).

“Melodrama seeks to create a moral universe in a context where moral categories are sliding. Melodramatic fantasy contrasts good and evil, innocence and corruption, the ideal and the real. And it is done in a way that often employs stock characters, violent emotions, grand gestures, inflated language, and moral sententiousness, together with an interest in crime and punishment, remorse and retribution.” (Helge Rønning i Gripsrud 2001 s. 122-123)

Sjangeren utviklet seg ifølge en tysk forsker fra borgerlige sorgespill som f.eks. briten George Lillos Merchant of London (1731), med mye moralistisk sentimentalitet (Gelfert 1995 s. 71).

“A genre of theater that emerged in late eighteenth-century France, melodrama is distinguished by spectacle and sensationalism, intense and extravagant displays of emotion and affect (often through the use of stage tableaux), polarized characters who are hapless victims, dastardly villains, and virtuous heroes, highly schematized plots centered around family secrets, domestic scandals, or calumnious mysteries, and the ultimate revelation and resolution of such affairs when the forces of good
triumph over evildoers. Peter Brooks’s important study (1976, *The Melodramatic Imagination*) points to French playwright François-René Guilbert de Pixerecourt (1773-1844) as the founder of this genre. But the influence of melodrama extends beyond the stage onto the pages of the modern European and Anglo-American novel, exemplified by Honoré de Balzac’s *Le Père Goriot* (1835, *Father Goriot*) and Henry James’s *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). [...] the melodramatic imagination in the modern novel underscores the theatricality and excess of fictional representation.” (Weihsin Gui i https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781444337815.wbeotnm003; lesedato 18.08.22)

“[T]heatrical melodrama comprises a wealth of genres that have the provocation of strong emotion in common. Like the sentimental novel it obeys a convention of sudden ups and downs. Heavy use was made of perplexing spectacular special effects, and acting was based on prescribed movements that were assumed to pass the character’s sentiments on to the audience in a direct fashion.” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 51)

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. Mennesket har ikke kontroll; tilfeldigheter og skjebnen spiller en stor rolle i det som skjer. 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, skyldbetygde handlinger og individets nederlag (Kaufmann 2007 s. 30). Det tematiseres at noe er “for sent”, før sent å gjøre godt igjen, før 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).

“As a form that feeds off conflict and disaster, whether natural or social, melodrama may be conceived as an aesthetic of cultural disorder. At the heart of its conflict lurks the villain, and the disorder he provokes is needed for its drama of polarisation and identification of guilt and innocence.” (Christine Gledhill i Gripsrud 2001 s. 63)

Noen verk innen sjangeren har “sterke og raskt skiftende føelser, en dramatisk handling der både ytre trusler og personlige avsløringer trekker opp temperaturen, og hurtige hopp fra klimaks til klimaks, uten mange dramaturgiske pusterom og rasteplasser.” (Inger Merete Hobbelstad i *Dagbladet* 12. april 2012 s. 68)
“[M]elodrama involves fictionalised accounts of highly polarised struggles between vice and virtue.” (Gill Branston i Gillespie og Toynbee 2006 s. 74) “Melodrama’s morally unambiguous opposition of virtue and villainy, made highly legible by its use of music, tableaux, character asides, and other formal techniques, targeted the institutional forces that ensured social injustices, even if it was nevertheless prone to reinforcing hierarchies of class, gender, and race by denying its “victims” agency and by seeking its solutions in an idealised past social order organised by deference to patriarchal authority.” (Robert Burroughs i https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/victorian-literature-and-culture/article/nautical-melodrama-of-mary-barton/A42A0115BBC5E5F8C6FCFD99624ED027; lesedato 06.10.21)

“1) Melodrama demonstrates a bourgeois, puritan morality by way of a plot that ‘shows’ that crime does not pay and that virtue will finally be rewarded. [...] 2) Characters are constructed from oppositional pairs like bad—good, sinful—innocent, etc. In accordance with this basic feature, the texts are at all levels marked by a thoroughgoing play upon contrasts. [...] 3) The plot normally starts from a moral conflict, and develops as an emotionally engaging tragedy with a happy end. [...] 4) The plot invites identification with the hero or heroine, who is idealised but still has recognisably ‘everyday’ characteristics. [...] 5) The play contains dramatic moments of surprise; and among these an almost obligatory scene with a revelation or recognition that gives the plot a new, surprising direction. [...] 6) The extremely dynamic plot development leads to a violent, decisive settlement of the struggle between hero and crook – good and bad involved in a life-or-death battle – where the heroine is saved and the hero triumphs in the very last moment. [...] 7) The escalation of dramatic tension is now and again broken by situation comedy featuring a clown-like side-figure. [...] 8) The action requires a visually fascinating or astonishing presentation of milieu/mise-en-scène. [...] 9) The play must contain at least one spectacular or sensational sequence, like a fire, an erupting volcano, a snowstorm or an avalanche.” (Helge Rønning i Gripsrud 2001 s. 127-128)

“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)

“The melodramas of today have their origin in European, influenced later by American, nineteenth-century stage traditions, and still share certain continuities: the opposing moral universes of victim and villain; narrative closure in which virtue is vindicated and vice exposed; pathos and tears signalled by music and dramatic lighting, particularly of faces; and the general importance of music (‘melos’ in the original Greek). However, one of the reasons why the continuities between theatrical and modern media modes of melodrama are not recognised more widely is that so many Hollywood films are ‘coded’ in realist ways. But despite their surface realism, genres such as war films or westerns often work as ‘male melodramas’, allowing certain kinds of male suffering to be dramatised, imagined and explored. Many famous gangster and prison movies such as The Shawshank Redemption (USA, dir. Darabont, 1994) or Angels With Dirty Faces (USA, dir. Curtiz, 1938), or war films like Saving Private Ryan (USA, dir. Spielberg, 1998), work with a mix of ‘gritty realism’ of setting, costume, language, etc., and the immensely moving effects of melodramatic narrative shape and use of music. Later, in her original article, [Linda] Williams cites Philadelphia (USA, dir. Demme, 1993), In The Name of the Father (UK, dir. Sheridan, 1993) and Schindler’s List (USA, dir. Spielberg, 1993) as working within the melodramatic mode. She cites two melodramatic moments in particular to illustrate her argument: in Philadelphia, when Tom Hanks bares his torso to the jury to reveal the marks of his skin lesions on his AIDS-stricken body; and towards the end of Schindler’s List, when Schindler breaks down and reveals his profound regret that he did not rescue more Jews. Both moments are full of pathos, revealing the male protagonist’s vulnerability and moral virtue. Both are moments when other people recognise and ‘bear witness’ to a suffering unleashed by a virtue (Williams, 1998, p. 54).” (Gill Branston i Gillespie og Toynbee 2006 s. 73)

“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.ccsd schools.com/; 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)

“The two major strikes against melodrama were [...] the related ‘excesses’ of emotional manipulativeness and association with femininity. [...] women’s attraction-repulsion to the pathos of virtuous suffering. [...] For unlike tragedy, melodrama does not reconcile its audience to an inevitable suffering. Rather than raging against a fate that the audience has learned to accept the female hero often accepts a fate that the audience at least partially questions. [...] the noun melodrama functions as a basic mode of storytelling. The term indicates a form of exciting sensational, and, above all, moving story that can be further differentiated by specifications of setting or milieu (such as society melodrama) or genre (western melodrama). It is this basic sense of melodrama as a modality of narrative with a high quotient of pathos and action to which we need to attend if we are to confront the most fundamental appeal of movies.” (Linda Williams sitert fra Gillespie og Toynbee 2006 s. 68-69 og 71)

“As a modality melodrama has no specific contents, only an aesthetic and ethical orientation, an aesthetic and ethical goal that can be worked through in a range of different materials and formats. [...] melodrama comes to function as a kind of genre machine, producing a diversity of genres specialising in different types of scenarios and effects for different audiences [...] as genre producing machine and cross-generic modality, melodrama cannot be identified with a singular genre, neither can it be identified with a specific social class or gender, national identity or ethnicity.” (Christine Gledhill i Gripsrud 2001 s. 67 og 69)

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)


Sigmund Freud mente “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 tilfeldigheter, klsjeer og overdrivelser. Patetiske effekter er vanlig. Melodramatiske ansikts-uttrykk og posituren (“melodramatic poses”) viser på overtydelige og dramatiske måter sterke følelser, som sjalusi, mistenksomhet, lykke, forelskelse, hat osv.

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 vakuuet etter den franske revolusjon. [...] I denne modellen svarer melodramaet på akutte behov hos mennesket, noe som skal gi svar eller tilfredsstille 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 dypfølte behov og det gode vil få sin belønnning 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). Til slutt “justice is done in the face of a paralyzing moral conflict” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 59).

Brooks skriver at sjangeren er preget av “excess”, der personenes egenskaper er overdrevne, enten entydig gode eller onde, uten psykologisk dybde. Personene brukes til å framheve moralske egenskaper og absolutte etiske målestokker. Melodramaet foregår alltså i et sterkt moralsk farget univers, der det er mye dramatikk rundt “cosmical ethical forces”. Synd og dyd kjemper om overtaket, og dyden, godheten og kjærligheten seirer til slutt. En høyverdig handling som vi skal beundre for dens godhet, er f.eks. når en person offerer livet for andre.

“According to Brooks, the melodrama is fundamentally characterized by the fact that meaning, continuity, and cohesion emerge from the apparent chaos and meaninglessness in life. This underlying melodramatic tone strengthens the potential “fascination factor” of novels because it conveys the legitimacy of the protagonists’ quests.” (Cecilie Naper i Rothbauer, Skjerdingstad m.fl. 2016 s. 318)

“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, ‘breathtaking 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”. Forfatterne (og filmaskerne osv.) har snarere kommercielle 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 til slutt 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 administerering 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).

Filmen *Ingeborg Holm*, regissert i 1913 av svenske Victor Sjöström, handler om en kvinne som blir fratatt sine barn etter at mannen hennes dør. Ingeborg blir sinssyk og ender på et galehus.

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


“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, prostituerede etc.); de rike er onde. […] Som dramatisk sjanger er føljetongen nær melodramaet […] nedverdigede 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 omskapte og som nesten allmektige oppretter de rettferdighet.” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 61) Heltinnens uskyldssrene ønsker går i oppfyllelse og onskapen lider nederlag (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 248).


“Were melodrama only a matter of pity – of witnessing horrible things happen to people – it might strike us as a particularly sadistic genre. It does not, I think, because typically the misfortunes in melodramas also provide the occasion for characters to exhibit noble virtues amid adversity, encouraging the spectator to leaven pity with admiration. A film of suffering unrelieved by virtue would be more likely an exercise in avant-garde realism than a melodrama. Melodramas are not all dark from the perspective of our emotional responses. Triumph is blended with tribulation som that pity comes in tandem with admiration.” (Noël Carroll i Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 35-36)

Bjørg Halvorsens *Singing Traditional Muslim Narratives in Modern Egypt: Art, Folklore, and Popular Culture* (1992) er basert på forsknings-/ innsamlingsarbeid i Egypt i 1990-91. Hun knytter an til Cawelti: “ “It is traditionally said of a melodramatic incident that it calls on us to overreact – to feel happiness, sorrow, fear, or anger to a greater degree than the actual situation would seem to merit.” (Cawelti: 1976, pp. 263/264). The storyteller’s performance is well designed to do this. Evoking metaphors of abandonment and loss in his mawwāl [en improvisert sang], the sheikh [sangeren] moves his audience to a heightened sense of these states through the aesthetic experience. In the same way he makes them happy at the end, celebrating the victory of the hero or heroin with a joyful tune that makes the audience dance and clap their hands. In the words of Peter Brooks, “Melodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue. It plays out the force of that anxiety with the apparent triumph of villainy, and it dissipates it with the eventual victory of virtue.” (Brooks:1976, p. 20). We could
hardly ask for better description of the storyteller-sheikhs’ narratives. [...] In a story told by a munshid [en muslimsk sanger] where the pious parents both die in poverty and leave their two young sons without protectors, the sons are accidentally found and adopted by other pious people. As adults they both attain high social standing, one as qādi (judge) and one as amīr (prince), and their children marry (marriage between first cousins is traditionally the preferred pattern for marriage). The reason for this happy outcome is given by the munshid in the form of a saying: “It-taqwa bitinfaɛ iz-zuriyya” (piety benefits one’s offspring).” (Halvorsen 1992 s. 64-65)


“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)


“[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)

“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 føler. 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 unvendte konsekvenser. Hvordan karakterene fremstår og hvilken relasjon de har til hverandre, er også med på å vekke føler. 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 allmenn og av aktuelle personer, som et uskyldig barn, en forsvarsløs ung pike eller et ungt, forelsket par (156). Ytterligere et punkt i dette avsnittet om følelsesmessig målrettet hensikt er det at "actions and deeds in melodrama are justified, not by detailed investigation of ‘feeling’ or by its ‘psychology’, but just by its ‘agitation’, by its ‘emotion itself’. It is not the case that ‘emotional teleology’ is peculiar 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 målrettet 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 [...] “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 handlinge 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
prinsippet om kontrast, der sammen-fletningen av ulike skjebner ofte blir
fremstilt med karakterer som befinner seg på motsatte sider av den sosiale
rangstigen; fattiglus 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 personae og publikum helt
til siste slutt der man får løsningen presentert, eller det 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 uselvisk 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).


Franskmannen Victor Hugos roman De elendige (1862) “har flere trekk til felles med melodramaet og såpeoperaen: Skikkelsene er psykologisk enkle, tilfeldighetene som fører dem sammen eller fra hverandre tallrike, historien går fra det ene følelsesmessige klimaks til det andre. Men romanen er også et ambisiøst portrett av et land og en by, ofte tendensiøst.” (Inger Merete Hobbeldstad i Dagbladet 15. januar 2013 s. 48)

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)

Mange skrekkromaner ble på 1790-tallet og begynnelsen av 1800-tallet adaptert til skuespill, f.eks. melodramaer (Abensour, Delon m.fl. 1984 s. 89). Noen
melodramaer hadde grøssereelementer, f.eks. i franskmannen Loasels de Tréogates
_Den farefylle 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 kvinne fra Bohemia_ (1797). Den franske 1800-
tallsdramatikeren og -skuespilleren Frédérick Lemaître skrev melodramaitiske
skuespill som ble store suksesser.

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 – dette var en slags
revolusjonsmoral ifølge Charles Nordier (sitert fra Didier 1989 s. 83).

Melodramaet utgjorde en moralsk rettesnor for den franske befolkningen som
opplevede 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 teaterstykke 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,
opt. August von Kotzbues _Menneskehat og anger_ (1788), et stykke der tittelen rører
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 et teater i Paris (Montes, Talviste og Lepsoo 2007 s. 93).
Det ble spilt i Brasil ca. 1850, og ble en suksess der (s. 93). Stykket ble mye
framført og hadde stor suksess helt til begynnelsen av 1900-tallet.

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. i middelalderen].” (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 stray’d 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 reveling 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 behavior 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 Shaughran* (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)

“[I]mprobable plot contrivances […] fortuitously recovered mitigating evidence (as is the case in [Douglas Jerrolds] *Black Ey’d Susan* [1829]), last-minute arrivals, and legal technicalities. Previously regarded as flimsy plotting, these moments have more recently been said to expose the precarious legal and social standing of the sailor, and by extension that of other vulnerable social groups, and to test the audience’s belief in the likelihood of just outcomes despite and indeed because of the enforcement of the law […] Above all, the sailor’s fair-dealing and honest pleas distinguish him from the lawyer. The sailor and the lawyer are nemeses in nautical melodrama. […] “Poetic justice stands in for a social justice that is in grave doubt,” writes Carolyn Williams (206).” (Robert Burroughs i https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/victorian-literature-and-culture/article/nautical-melodrama-of-mary-barton/; lesedato 06.10.21)
“Trial scenes were popular in early nineteenth-century melodramatic fiction because the courtroom is “the most theatrical arena of the law,” in which exaggeration and overblown gestures both carry out legal process and also highlight injustice (Ledger, *Dickens* 42)” (Robert Burroughs i https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/victorian-literature-and-culture/article/nautical-melodrama-of-mary-barton/; lesedato 06.10.21).

I John Baldwin Buckstones *Luke the Labourer; or, The Lost Son: A Domestic Melodrama in Two Acts* (1826), “as in subsequent nautical melodramas, the sailor returns to oppose corruption in the form of the wealthy villain’s sexual predation upon an innocent maid. Often, the maid is the sailor’s own sweetheart” (Robert Burroughs i https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/victorian-literature-and-culture/article/nautical-melodrama-of-mary-barton/; lesedato 06.10.21).

Bind 10, med undertittelen *En falsk velgjører*, av franskmannen Eugène Sue sin føljetongroman *Den evige jøde* kom i norsk oversettelse i 1922 (på Alb. Cammermeyers forlag; oversatt av A. Fog). På s. 32 i dette romanheftet står det: “Rodin hadde talt med en blanding av noblesse, energi og følelse som det er vanskelig at kunne gjengi. Det er ofte tilfældet med mennesker av et mer end almindeligt og frastøtende utvortes, at hvis de kan faa deres omgivelser til at glemmе deres utseende, da blir denne naturfeil netop en bevæggrund til interesse og medynk: man tænker ved sig selv: hvor det er skade at en saadan aand skal bo i et saa uheldig legeme; man føler sig rørt over denne kontrast.”

Den franske forfatteren Ponson du Terrails røverromaner om Rocambole ble oversatt til norsk på begynnelsen av 1900-tallet av Aksel Borge og publisert som uinnbundne hefter. Hefte nr. 33 i serien, *Rajahens diamanter*, inneheldt en oversikt over de tidligere utgitt heftene:

1. *Den hemmelighetsfulle arv* 17. *Paa Ruslands stepper*
2. *Mademoiselle Baccarat* 18. *Galehuset*
4. *Hjerterknegtklubbens hemmeligheter* 20. *Vasilikas hevn*
5. *Turkisen, den broedefulde* 21. *Flodrøverne*
6. *Grev Artoff* 22. *I Whitechapel*
8. *Grevinden* 24. *Spøkelset*
9. *De fortaptes død* 25. *Myladys sønn*
10. *Baccarats triumf* 26. *Bortførelsen*
11. *Galeislaven nr. 117* 27. *Zigøinerskens millioner*
13. *De forældreløses skat* 29. *Den skjønne gartnerske*
15. *Flugten fra fængslet* 31. *Et drama i Indien*
Rune Waldekranz har delt melodramaet på 1800-tallet inn i tre undersjangrer: historisk eventyrmelodrama, borgerlig samtidsmelodrama og eksotisk eventyrmelodrama (i Leffler 1993 s. 112).

Det finnes blant annet “crime melodrama, romantic melodrama, family melodrama, western melodrama […] domestic melodrama, gothic melodrama, blood-and-thunder melodrama, military melodrama” (Christine Gledhill i Gripsrud 2001 s. 64 og 66).


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)


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.

Fugitive Anne: A Romance of the Unexplored Bush (1902) av australsk-britiske Rosa Praed handler blant annet om Annes “flight from a brutal husband […] Anne of the title married a melodramatic ruffian. Her method of running away from her tyrant was to throw herself out of a window port of the steamer in which they were making their way down the Australian coast. This we learn in the opening pages of the book. All the rest is description of Anne’s adventures among the blacks. None of the familiar features of adventurous melodrama is wanting. Anne, though she does not know it, is a baroness in her own right and a woman of fortune. There is a
fair-haired lover, and the wicked husband is made away with at precisely the right moment. The long arm of coincidence is made to stretch across continents and seas whenever the exigencies of the story demand a miracle, and wedding bells ring the curtain down.” (Hall 2008 s. 55-56)

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 [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 [http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/; lesedato 03.09.13]

“Melodramas often seem to suggest that female suffering is virtuous, noble and inevitable. The suffering heroines of melodrama appear to have greater moral authority than the other characters. (This is certainly the case with tragic heroine Annie in Sirk’s Imitation of Life.) During the 1980s there was a lively feminist debate about the status and ideological effects of melodrama on female viewers. Some feminist critics argued that melodramas, and the tears and sadness that they induce in female viewers, serve to reinforce female oppression and collude with patriarchal domination.” (Gill Branston i Gillespie og Toynbee 2006 s. 72)
“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)

“[M]elodrama, according to Williams, is not so much a genre as a cultural mode that cuts across numerous genres. It is the fundamental form of classic Hollywood films – the popular American cultural form par excellence concerned with the ‘retrieval and staging of innocence’. It is primarily concerned with the moral and emotional struggles of individuals who are constrained by the forces of fate, chance and circumstance. Williams claims that it is a ‘peculiarly democratic and American form’. This implies that, in depicting and bringing to public awareness the everyday struggles of ordinary people, and encouraging empathy and sympathy with their plight, melodrama serves democratic purposes.” (Gill Branston i Gillespie og Toynbee 2006 s. 72)

“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)

“The Hollywood movie, it has been observed by many, is thoroughly melodramatic in a wider sense, in that it is theatrical, excessive, and aims at enlarging emotion.” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 51)


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)

“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 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/slektseromana/the-black-candle-catherine-cookson/produkt.do?produktId=13070951; lesedato 07.05.19).

Cookson’s books “formidlar kor viktige kvinnene er som det moralske midtpunktet som held familien saman, og legg vekt på hardt arbeid, nøysemd, hjelpsemd og det å setje andre først. Desse verdiane appellerer til kvinner som ønskjer å kjenne at deira rolle i familien er viktig, særleg når ho ikkje vert sedd og verdsett av omverda, og husarbeid er ubetalta og arbeidet kvinner gjer er usynleg. [...] Bøkene har ofte ei heltinne frå arbeidarklassen som gjennom slit og strèv oppnår ei kjenslse av mestrin og likevekt, om ikkje realisering.” (Riel, Fowler og Downes 2011 s. 114-115) Bøkene er ofte slektsromaner. “Den engelske termen er family eller period sagas, som i Storbritannia er og har vore ein stor og populær sjanger. [...] Heltinnene i slektsromanane arbeider ofte utanfor heimen, slik mange arbeidarklasskvinne gjerde, men det var ikkje på nokon måte snakk om nokon slags karriere. [...] I tillegg skiller ho sjølv sagt den romantiske draumen om den sjenerte og klossete som får prinsen til slutt.” (s. 114-115)

Den engelske forfatteren Josephine Cox’ roman Vagabonds (1992) har handling fra 1800-tallet. “Twenty-two years ago Emma Grady was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to transportation to Australia where she bore and lost her baby daughter – conceived during a passionate affair with Marlow Tanner. It is now 1885, and Emma has returned to Blackburn. Reunited with Marlow, she has a loving family, yet she is still haunted by the past, unable to forget how her uncle Caleb Crowther ignored her desperate plea to save herself and her tragic first-born. Crowther curses his niece’s return and also hounds Molly, Emma’s estranged daughter. Molly and her children run away and, contending with hunger, exhaustion and the unwelcome attentions of the men who are drawn to Molly’s dark beauty, their life at times is almost unbearable. But Molly has inherited Emma’s indomitable spirit…” (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18894254-vagabonds; lesedato 06.10.21)

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 femti år.” (Bernhard Ellefsen i Morgenbladet 22.–28. september 2017 s. 52)

“Løkkeskriftromanene er melodramatisk litteratur som spiller på sterke følelser.” (Cecilie Naper i Bok og bibliotek nr. 3 i 2015 s. 13) “De såkalte “løkkeskriftromanene” følger ofte en etablert, men ganske ny formel både hva gjelder innhold og utforming. De er mer utadvendte enn sine forgjengere seriromanene. […] underholdningsromanenes heltinner er endret av feminismen: De er mer aktive enn sine passive bestemødre, og kjemper for et sett av verdier og politiske rettigheter like mye som for kjærligheten og familien. På en måte rommer de bortvendte omslagene noe av denne utviklingen: Der de klassiske underholdningsromanene viser den kvinnelige hovedpersonen forfra, med et ansiktsuttrykk fullt av følelser og som regel i selskap med en mann, ser hun nå utover det eksotiske og romantiske landskapet hun må forsere.” (Inger Merete Hobbelstad i https://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/floslashyelsinvasjonen/60179793; lesedato 18.12.20)

“In the social melodrama novel, two different storytelling traditions are juxtaposed: on the one hand, the classic melodrama with its inclination to utilize strong effects and convenient coincidents; and on the other, a more realistic and problem-oriented storytelling that aims to create an “illusion of reality.” ” (Cecilie Naper i Rothbauer, Skjerdingstad m.fl. 2016 s. 327)

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 millenial 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 innvandrermiljø. “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

“Sirk’s delineation of the manners and ‘morality’ of bourgeois middle America is devastating, and the precision with which he dissects the repressions, jealousies and joys that permeate a family has never been rivalled. […] Sirks’ film is in fact a seathing attack on all those facets of the American Dream widely held dear. Wealth produces snobbery and intolerance; family togetherness creates xenophobia and the cult of the dead; cosy kindness can be stultifying patronising; and materialism results in alienation from natural feelings.” (John Pym m.fl. sitert fra i Gripsrud 2001 s. 123)
“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." (Zdrenghea 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 Brunsdon 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 Manichaean 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 unsuppressed 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/invt/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 \textit{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)

“\textit{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, \textit{“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 unmelodramatic 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 Manichaean 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://cinephile.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://cinephile.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).

 “[T]he woman’s sacrifice in melodrama has likewise been interpreted as an exhibition of courage, stressing the capacity to determine her fate and live with the impossibility of her desires.” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 60)

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
“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.”

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).

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.” (sitert fra Lowery og DeFleur 1995 s. 38) “We like melodrama because it makes us cry.” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 266)

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 såpeserie på TV “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)


“En gang tidlig i dette årtusenet 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 flere av betydningsfulle og selvfølgelige mennesker. Med melodramaet som form hadde politikken blitt personlig og moralsk, i stedet for strukturell og teatralisk. Som hos Charles Dickens var det mer tilfeldigheter, ufiks 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. “[I]n the melodrama of the period, the good were passive and the bad essentially thrusting and aggressive; all the experiences of Dickens’s own life would lead him to trust that sense of life, and in his novels the good characters would follow the same pattern of helpless passivity and gentleness.” (Ackroyd 1991 s. 240)

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 ett 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. […]

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

Den tysk-amerikanske 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
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/2008septoct/minnelli.html; lesedato 03.06.15)

Minnelli “made a series of dramas that many critics have seen as typifying Hollywood melodrama, including the sensational ly lurid The Bad and the Beautiful (1952). Two Weeks in Another Town (1962) is an overheated depiction of 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)

I An Affair to Remember (1957; regissert av Leo McCarey) “the female protagonist, Terry (Deborah Kerr), is struck down by a car on her way to a long-awaited rendezvous with her lover Nicky (Cary Grant). Their meeting, atop the Empire State Building, is supposed to symbolize their commitment to each other. Terry fails to make the appointment because of her accident. Terry’s old boyfriend (Richard Denning) wants to tell Nicky what has happened, but Terry won’t allow him. She feels that if Nicky learns that she has become disabled, his reaction will be pity, not love. Her silence is, in other words, principled. She does not want to take advantage of Nicky’s sense of obligation. We may feel that Terry’s course of action is ill-advised. But we admire her for her principles at the same time we pity her. Meanwhile, Nicky is becoming more and more embittered. Perhaps the most emotionally wrought scene in the film comes at the end. Nicky still does not realize that Terry is disabled. He visits her apartment to deliver a shawl to her that his grandmother has bequeathed to Terry. He is still very hurt and angry. But just as he is about to leave, he realizes that Terry is disabled, that that’s the reason why she missed their rendezvous, and, we presume, he also realizes that she didn’t inform him because of a self-sacrificing desire to “protect him.” None of this is said. The audience infers that this is what is going on in Nicky’s mind. Compactly, in a few
seconds of screen time, this device encourages the audience to review the whole saga of Terry’s adversity and nobility, jerking tears from man and woman alike. [...] Once this pro attitude is in place, misfortune strikes, encouraging us to pity them, especially Terry, while at the same time providing a dramatic forum for Terry to exhibit her self-sacrificing nobility (finally to be joined by Nicky’s when his recognition of that nobility leads him to love her all the more).” (Noël Carroll i Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 37-38)

I What’s Eating Gilbert Grape? (1993; regissert av Lasse Hallström) “the “viking funeral” of Gilbert’s mother stands as a commemoration to her ultimate maternal integrity, despite all her other limitations. As in the case of An Affair to Remember, recognition/acknowledgment scenes like these serve to remind the audience not only of the bad things that have befallen the protagonists, but of their virtues as well. Pity attaches to the misfortunes, while admiration attaches to the virtues. Even the ending of Letter from an Unknown Woman [1948; regissert av Max Ophüls] concludes on a note of admiration. Once the pianist learns of the self-sacrificing love of the unknown woman, he no longer acts the cad; he rides off to a doomed duel, shedding his selfishness and recognizing that, since the best thing in his life has just passed away, the only appropriate action is to join her in death. We pity their demise, but admire their willingness to die for their love.” (Noël Carroll i Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 37)

Letter from an Unknown Woman “is on the face of it a film that falls well within the conventions of the “woman’s picture.” Lisa (Joan Fontaine), the unknown woman of the title, loves Stefan (Louis Jourdan) from a distance and is enamored of his musical prowess, the sense of culture and mystery that he brings to her cramped bourgeois life, when she first encounters him at puberty. Yet she talks to him only a handful of times and goes to bed with him only once, from which she conceives a son. For the sake of that son, she marries an honorable man, whom she respects but does not love, but throws it all away when she meets Stefan years later. Yet Stefan does not recognize her, and she leaves his apartment distraught, apparently having finally seen through his superficial charm and having grasped the fact that she was no more than another conquest to him. Yet the film is structured around the letter she writes to him while she is dying, a letter that reveals her still-hopeless infatuation with him, a letter that avers the great good that could have come out of their love – if only he could have recognized her, if only he could have come of their love – if only he could have remembered her, if only he could have recognized that she was his true muse, the woman who could have lent meaning to his life. Stefan, reading the letter, apparently accepts his responsibility and his failure, goes off to fight a duel with Lisa’s husband, and thus departs to his certain death. On the face of it, the film is a paradigm melodrama, a picture that intends not so much to jerk tears as to ladle them out in bucketfuls.” (Berys Gaut i Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 214)

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 cliche-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)


“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; lesedato 20.06.13)

“Whereas the characters of romantic or screwball comedies scoff at social decorum and propriety, in melodrama they are at the mercy of social conventions; whereas the comedies integrated the anarchic lovers into a self-sufficient marital unit distinct from their social milieu, the melodrama traces the ultimate resignation of the principals to the strictures of social and familial tradition.” (Thomas Schatz sitert fra Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 50)

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)

Ibsens *Et dukkehjem* deler mange kjennetegn med melodramaer senere i historien: “Borrowing from Raymond Williams’ description in *Drama form Ibsen to Brecht*: the innocent, childlike woman, involved in a desperate deception; the heavy, insensitive husband; the faithful friend; the evil villain who is reformed by love. The main situations are also similar to those found in melodramatic intrigues: the guilty secret, sealed lips, a fatal letter that will reveal it all, and the appearance of the villain against a background of idyllic happiness. Maybe the secret of the play is that both the plot conventions and the stock figures from melodrama carry over into serious psychological topical drama. It is about mythical figures and real people at the same time.” (Helge Rønning i Gripsrud 2001 s. 125)

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”, følesemessig 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 amerikanneren 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 Dallas var først en roman skrevet av amerikanske Olive Higgins Prouty, utgitt i 1923. “The classic story of the disastrous marriage of Stephen and Stella Dallas and the “ultimate sacrifice” Stella makes for their daughter, Laurel. Filled with anguish, retribution, and suffering, Stella Dallas describes how Stella’s lower-class habits and flirtations repel her more cultured husband and force him to leave her. Eventually realizing that Stephen can give Laurel a better life, Stella releases him to marry again. She then marries a man she despises to ensure that Laurel will leave and go to her father.” (Ramsdell 1999 s. 67)

“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://thedissolve.com/reviews/449-stella-dallas/; lesedato 20.01.16)

“[P]ity is the relevant tear-producing state that comes into play in the vast majority of melodramas. [...] the protagonists must feel the pain of their circumstances. Indeed, part of their misfortune is the pain that they feel as a result of their circumstances. Moreover, this misfortune – including the pain that, in part, comprises it – should not be seen as a matter of just desserts. We do not usually feel pity for villains who deserve to be annihilated. Melodramatic pity involves bad things happening to good people, or, at least, disproportionately bad things happening to people of mixed character. [...] One important, recurring motif here is that the victim of melodramatic misfortune often accepts her suffering in order to benefit another, often at the expense of satisfying her own personal desires and interests. Sometimes, in fact, the character’s misfortune is a result of the sacrifices she has made on behalf of others. For example, Stella Dallas’s (Barbara Stanwyck) misfortune is the loss of her daughter, though she, in fact, has herself engineered this state of affairs on the basis of her belief that this will guarantee her daughter the best possible life. Thus, we do not merely pity Stella Dallas. We admire her as well. The emotion that wells up in us as she watches her daughter’s wedding from afar is not merely a result of pity, but is compounded of admiration as well. Often such emotions are called bittersweet. Perhaps the part that is pity is bitter (or dysphoric), but the part that we feel in response to Stella’s noble self-sacrifice is sweet (or euphoric). To attempt to reduce our emotional states in cases like this to pity alone ignores the euphoric component in the response. We don’t just feel bad about Stella, we feel good about her, too. That is because the dominating emotional response to the typical melodrama involves admiration – often motivated by a display of self-sacrifice – in addition to pity.” (Noël Carroll i Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 35-36)

“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.”

(Preise & 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 farskjærlighet*, *Håp for et forlatt barn* (alle på tysk). To av forfatterne bak heftene var Myra Myrenburg og Gisela Reutling.

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 svikefull 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 hendelsenevikler 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)

“[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 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
“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)

“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)

“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/american studies/sites/default/files/u10/AnkerVilliansJOC.pdf; lesedato 26.02.13)

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 tilskuerens 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)


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