

# Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

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Sist oppdatert 31.03.23

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## Poetisk rettferdighet

Engelsk: “Poetic justice”. Det prinsippet at de gode og hjertevarme i en fiksjonstekst eller film oppnår lykken til slutt i historien, og skurkene (de onde) straffes. Moralske og oppofrende mennesker får den lykken de fortjener. Verket avsluttes på en moralsk tilfredsstillende måte. Hver (hoved-)person får den grad av belønning eller straff som de “fortjener”. Noen får en “rettferdig” belønning, andre en “rettferdig” straff.

Kvinner og menn som har gjennomgått store oppofrelser og lidelser – særlig hvis det er for å hjelpe andre – oppnår ofte lykken til slutt. Godhet, barmhjertighet og andre dyder “betaler seg”, og dette gir leseren (eller seeren) moralsk tilfredsstillelse. Historiene avsluttes som “moral ‘uplift’ narratives” (Jonathan Munby). Den fiktive virkelighetens poetiske rettferdighet står ofte i en klar kontrast til det leseren/seeren vet om den reelle virkelighetens *urettferdighet*. Lidelse og oppofrelse betales ikke alltid med en rettferdig “lønn”.

“[T]he wicked and the innocent receive their due [...] which should satisfy the most persecuting of consciences” (Gay 1986 s. 164). “Just deserts are meted out to the various characters according to their real moral natures – virtue rewarded and villainy punished – and part of our satisfaction is derived from responding emotionally in what we regard as a morally sound fashion.” (Plantinga og Smith 1999 s. 224)

Folkeeventyrene har en “naiv” moral, der heltens ønsker går i oppfyllelse, det gode belønnes og det onde straffes. “Marianne Thalmann [...] noting that “the traditional happy ending of the folk fairy tale – the reward of virtue and punishment of evil [...]” [...] at the end, the fairy tale dismisses us with a positive outlook on life, based on the conviction that evil will be punished, and the good will be rewarded.” (Rosen 1985)

“We do not really expect that virtue will be rewarded in our sort of world – not even, these days, in fiction; but it is testimony to what one might call a weak utopian impulse that we still cannot help feeling mildly scandalized when it is not.” (Eagleton 2003 s. 106) “Poetic justice stands in for a social justice that is in grave doubt” (Carolyn Williams sitert fra <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/>)

victorian-literature-and-culture/article/nautical-melodrama-of-mary-barton/; lesedato 06.10.21).

Vi (lesere/seere) kan ha et sterkt psykisk behov for å tro og oppleve at det er en rimelig balanse mellom lykke og ulykke i en persons liv, og at livet er relativt “rettferdig”. Diktning kan oppfylle dette rettferdighetsønsket i sterkere grad enn den reelle verden gjør det. Mange populære romaner på 1800-tallet bærer på drømmen om de svakes hevn over de sterke (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 15).

“While in most nineteenth-century fiction erotic impetuosity proves a source of disaster, the capacity to postpone gratifications, to wish only what a decent and responsible bourgeois should wish for, generally brings lasting happiness. It is striking how many novelists distinguish and reward their heroines for their angelic patience.” (Gay 1986 s. 152)

Den store kjærlighet som helten eller heltinnen opplever til slutt, er også den store Utjevning og Rettferdighet (Marcel Graner i Guise og Neuschäfer 1986 s. 214). Den store kjærligheten til slutt blir en slags revansj eller hevn over skjebnen, en tilbakebetaling som livet, skjebnen eller Gud gir til de rettferdige, gode osv. som har fulgt pliktens vei (s. 216).

En roman, en film, en TV-serie osv. kan gi en “overarching sense of poetic justice” når en person faller i sin egen grav: “unwittingly transformed into his own form of punishment.” (Brandon Taylor i [http://offscreen.com/view/breaking\\_bad](http://offscreen.com/view/breaking_bad); lesedato 23.06.17)

“Poetic justice is a literary outcome in which bad characters are punished and good characters are rewarded. Think: “What comes around goes around.” In its purest form, poetic justice is when one character plots to undermine another and then ends up caught in his own trap.” (<http://contemporarylit.about.com/cs/literaryterms/g/poeticJustice.htm>; lesedato 07.08.13) Slutten av fortellingen kan ha et ironisk preg hvis en skurk har oppnådd det stikk motsatte av det som han/hun ville oppnå. “What comes around goes around” betyr i denne sammenheng å høste som man sår.

Det råder et system for skyld og straff, og for uskyld og belønning, i det som en forfatter dikter opp. Straff og belønning fordeles slik dikteren ønsker det. Dyder og laster fordeles mellom personene i den fiktive historien, og disse personene utstyres vanligvis innenfor fortellingens premisser med en (relativt) fri vilje til å forbedre seg, holde fast ved det gode, eller motsatt å la seg lokke til synd. Poetisk rettferdighet innebærer at det skjer en slags utjevning skyldfordeling, og utdeling av belønning/premier mot slutten av fortellingen.

“While in Real Life there is rarely a direct and easily traced relation between actions and their subsequent reward or punishment, in fiction the connection is

usually a lot more... direct. Help an old lady across the street? Several chapters later, she'll turn out to be an elite ex-commando who will gladly help you storm the Big Bad's castle. Kick the little dog that's barking at you? The dog will sniff you out and lead the heroes right to your Supervillain Lair. The Golden Rule states Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Therefore, if you mistreat others, karma [= gjengjeldsens lov] will strike you down. Treat others well, and you will be rewarded. The vacuum by this non-direct causality in real life can be daunting to fill [...] but in stories, it doesn't matter how tiny a helpful or harmful act is for it to have a meaningful and unpredictable effect by story's end [...] every little action, good or bad, will be paid back in kind with the accuracy and timeliness of a laser guided missile. Whether its payload is sunshine and puppies or irony depends on the karma." (<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/LaserGuidedKarma?from=Main.PoeticJustice>; lesedato 16.01.14)

“Poetic justice occurs at the conclusion of a novel or play if and when good characters are rewarded and bad characters are punished. Poetic justice is thus somewhat similar to karma, and can be summed up by the phrases “He got what was coming to him,” or “She got what she deserved.” Note that poetic justice takes both positive and negative forms, depending on how a character has acted through the narrative. [...] As stated above, poetic justice has sometimes been named as the reason that literature is important in a society. The genres of fable and parable often contain poetic justice, as a wise and good character is rewarded, and any bad characters are punished. The idea of these stories is to provide a moral foundation for readers. Some examples of self fulfilling prophecy are also examples of poetic justice. If an evil character hears a prophecy and does cruel things in order to stop that prophecy from coming into being, then the villain's ultimate defeat or death is attributed to the poetic justice of getting what he deserved. Historically, it was also important in poetic justice that there was a sense that logic prevailed, and that characters do not suddenly change and warrant different treatment than what they deserve. For example, in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, it is not poetic justice that greedy Ebenezer Scrooge suddenly became good and therefore would warrant good treatment. Of course, not all authors are interested in poetic justice. More modern authors showed good characters receiving bad fortune and bad characters being rewarded. These authors would probably argue that their role in society was not to provide a moral education for readers, but instead to depict situations that are closer to reality.” (<http://www.literarydevices.com/poetic-justice/>; lesedato 31.03.16)

“Poetic justice – the ideal distribution of rewards and punishments. [...] The concept was first used in the Seventeenth Century to express the notion that, in literature, good should be rewarded and evil punished. The term itself was first used by the critic Thomas Rhymer in *Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd* (1678). Dickens brings poetic justice into play in *Great Expectations* when Pip, who has spent much of the novel avoiding his vulgar origins and distancing himself, sometimes cruelly, from his humble past, discovers that his benefactor is an ex-

convict, Magwitch.” (<http://www.enotes.com/literary-terms/poetic-justice>; lesedato 29.05.13)

“The allocation of an ideal form of justice, where virtue is rewarded and infamy punished, as befitting a work of poetry or drama. [...] English literary critic and historian Thomas Rymer coined the phrase poetic justice in his essay *The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered*, 1678. Rymer had strong views on how tragedy should be written and performed and wrote extensively on the subject. Poetic justice or, as Rymer expressed it, poetical justice, demanded that those of good character were rewarded and that the evil were punished. He was also of the view that plots should not be implausible and that dramatic works should have a moral. Rymer wasn't disconcerted by reputation and directed his criticism at no less than William Shakespeare, making some suggestions as to how the Bard could have improved *Othello*. Whilst being somewhat out of favour in some circles for his hardline stance, he did have many supporters. Notably amongst those was the celebrated poet and playwright John Dryden.” (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/poetic-justice.html>; lesedato 11.03.14)

“In literature, poetic justice is an ideal form of justice in which the good characters are rewarded and the bad characters are punished by an ironic twist of their fate. It is a strong literary view that all forms of literature must convey moral lessons. Therefore, writers employ poetic justice to conform to the moral principles. For instance, if a character in a novel is pitiless and malicious in most part of the novel. His state has gone beyond improvement. Then, the principles of morality demand this character to experience a twist in his fate and be punished. Similarly, the one's who have suffer at his hand must be rewarded at the same time. [...] In Shakespeare we see the evil characters, Goneril, Regan, Oswald and Edmund, thrive throughout the play [*King Lear*]. The good characters, Lear, Gloucester, Kent, Cordelia, and Edgar, suffer long and hard. We see the good characters turn to gods but they are rarely answered. Lear in Act 2, Scene 4 calls upon heaven in most pitiful manner: “LEAR [...] O heavens! / If you do love old men, if your sweet sway / Show obedience, if you yourselves are old, / Make it your cause. Send down, and take my part!” Lear loses his kingdom by the conspiracies of his daughters Goneril and Regan supported by Edmund. At Dover, Edmund-led English troops defeats Cordelia-led French troops and Cordelia and Lear are imprisoned. Cordelia is executed in the prison and Lear dies out of the grief of his daughter's death. Despite all the suffering that good undergoes, the evil is punished. Goneril poisons her sister Regan due to jealousy over Edmund. Later, she kills herself when her disloyalty is exposed to Albany. In a climactic scene Edgar kills Edmund in Act 5, Scene 3 and says: “EDGAR [:] My name is Edgar, and thy father's son. / The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us. / The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes.” “the gods are Just” because they punish the evil for their evil actions.” (<http://literary-devices.net/poetic-justice/>; lesedato 12.03.14)

I *King Lear* sier en av kongens menn mens han sitter i gapestokken: “Fortune, good night. Smile once more. Turn thy wheel.” (2. akt, 2. scene). Lykken blir her tiltalt som gudinnen Fortuna, en romersk gudinne for skjebne, lykke og ulykke. På noen illustrasjoner av henne har hun et hjul i hendene, eller styrer et stort hjul. Vi mennesker befinner oss på hjulet. De som er nederst, kan bare gå én vei når hjulet dreier seg: oppover. For menneskene på toppen av hjulet vil enhver bevegelse bety ulykke – dvs. bevegelse nedover. Noens lykke betyr andres ulykke.

“We see role of poetic justice in the character of the cruel “Mr. Bumble” in Charles Dickens’ “Oliver Twist”. He was a “beadle” in the town where “Oliver” was born in charge of the orphanage and other charitable institutions in the town. He is a sadist and enjoys excessive torturing of the poor orphans. He marries “Mrs. Corney” for money and become master of her workhouse. Here his fate takes a twist as he lost his post as a beadle and his new wife does not allow him to become a master of her workhouse. She beats him and humiliates him as he himself had done to the poor orphans. Right at the end of the novel, we come to know that both Mr. and Mrs. Bumble end up being so poor that they live in the same workhouse that they once owned. [...] A classic example of poetic justice is found in a Greek tragedy “Oedipus Rex” by Sophocles. He committed a crime of defying gods by trying to escape his fate. Therefore he left the kingdom he lived in and went to new kingdom “Thebes”. He killed the king of the city after a quarrel and married the queen. Later, we learn that the prophecy turned out true as the man he killed was his father and the queen his own mother. The Greek believed their destinies were predetermining shaped by the gods and goddesses. Whosoever tried to defy them committed a sin and deserved punishment.” (<http://literarydevices.net/poetic-justice/>; lesedato 12.03.14)

“Generally, the purpose of poetic justice in literature is to adhere by the universal code of morality i.e. the virtue triumphs vice. The idea of justice in literary texts manifests the moral principle that virtue deserves a reward and vices earn punishment. In addition, the readers often identify themselves with the good characters. They feel emotionally attached to them and feel for them when they suffer at the hands of the wicked characters. Naturally, the readers desire for a compensation for the good characters and equally wish the bad characters be penalized for their evilness. Thus, poetic justice offers contentment to them.” (<http://literarydevices.net/poetic-justice/>; lesedato 02.05.14)

Den engelske 1700-tallsforfatteren Henry Fieldings romaner “end with poetic justice, but they do so with an ironic air, signaling that it is now only in fiction that the wicked will get their come-uppance and the good their marriage partners. In real life, so Fielding intimates in the mischievous gap between artistic form and empirical content, the villains would probably end up as archbishops. The more fiction celebrates poetic justice, the more subversively it draws attention to the lack of it outside the text. When the sorrowing Renzio of Manzoni’s *The Betrothed* muses that ‘There’s justice in this world in the long run’, his more disenchanting

narrator adds, out of his earshot so to speak: ‘How true it is that a man overwhelmed by grief no longer knows what he is saying!’ (ch. 3). [...] Virtue is at once the best recipe for happiness, and as Fielding recognizes a way of making ourselves vulnerable in an unprincipled world. This is why it is admirable and ludicrous at the same time, like the word ‘virtue’ itself.” (Eagleton 2003 s. 142)

I den engelske forfatteren Samuel Richardsons roman *Clarissa* (1748) gjennomfører en mann en lidelsesfull forfølgelse av den kvinnelige hovedpersonen. “Richardson, usually a reader-friendly author remarkably adept at public relations, was deaf to the pleas of those outraged readers who wanted his heroine to live. He saw that poetic justice would suggest that her kind of virtue wins its reward in this world, thus freeing the social order which hounded her of its responsibility.” (Eagleton 2003 s. 202)

“In real life, sometimes people get away with evil or immoral deeds, and sometimes innocent people suffer through no fault of their own. In literary works, good generally wins over evil, and people get what they deserve in the end – often in an ironic way. This concept is called poetic justice. The original meaning contained a strong moral element, where justice might be doled out by God rather than through human actions. In modern times, the morality aspect is not the main focus in literature, but there is a balance that must be restored at the end of the story. [...] Each and every book by Jane Austen has poetic justice – that is one of the reasons why she’s one of my favorite authors! [...] *Pride and Prejudice* [av Austen] is one of my favorite books! I love happy endings where everyone gets what they deserve.” (Carol Benedict m.fl. i <http://thewritingplace.wordpress.com/2010/06/18/what-does-it-mean-poetic-justice/>; lesedato 29.05.13)

Den engelske forfatteren Jane Austens roman *Emma* (1815) “is a social comedy of manners set amongst the upper middle class families of Provincial England [...] Emma’s repeated failure in matchmaking and her erroneous decisions with regard to judgement of character paves the way for the final shattering of her misplaced confidence on her non-existent matchmaking acumen and her final redemption occurs in her Romance and Marriage to Mr. Knightly. As is the general pattern with Jane Austen Novels, “Emma” ends at a note of poetic justice – the characters are paired into marriage with each other, according to their personal qualities and destinies, and, under the benign influence of Mr. Knightly, Emma is cured of her matchmaking errors.” (<http://www.shvoong.com/books/classic-literature/133957-emma/>; lesedato 14.03.14) Austen lar den falske og umoralske Willoughby i romanen *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) ende i et ulykkelig ekteskap, og det samme gjelder skurken Wickham i *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

I Charlotte Brontës roman *Jane Eyre* (1847) bruker forfatteren “her sense of poetic justice to right the wrongs of society: the Reeds suffer in the end, and Brocklehurst (as well as Rivers) is discredited, whereas the advocates of freedom (spearheaded by Miss Temple) are in the end victorious. (Note that Miss Temple publicly clears

J, in front of the entire school; even if we have to assume that Brock is not present, it remains very clear that he is entirely disavowed by such a public action.) Thus, although it is Brocklehurst who is the Law, and who enforces its constraints, it is the same man who seems to have total freedom to do so. Miss Temple seems to be forced to comply with his demands and even whims, thus seems to enjoy no freedom, yet all of Brocklehursts' actions backfire on him, and Miss Temple is free to undo, in systematic fashion, what he has done." (<http://www.angellier.biblio.univ-lille3.fr/>; lesedato 30.05.13) Selvfølgelig er også Janes ekteskapelige lykke som realiseres til slutt i historien et utslag av poetisk rettferdighet. Hun har hele sitt liv vært både selvstendig, utholdende, flittig og godhjertet.

En av de sentrale personene i Dickens' roman *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44) er Tom Pinch, en svært godhjertet mann som blir lurt av den kyniske Mr. Pecksniff. Tom skulle egentlig blitt arkitekt og en fin gentleman, men Pecksniff snyter Tom for hans arv. Denne urettferdigheten er ikke Tom i stand til å innse, men etter å ha ankommet London går det bedre for Tom økonomisk:

"Dickens is so often unrelenting in his destruction of his kindest and best characters that I was certain Tom's time in London would be short, brutal, and result in his and/or his sister's tragic demise. But no! Before he even manages to write an advert for himself, Tom is offered a well-paying job organizing an incredibly large personal library. Tom is not simply not made to suffer very long for his blindness about Pecksniff, he's actually rewarded for it by being offered a job that simply couldn't suit him better. He spends his days organizing, cataloging, and repairing the thousands (!!!) of books his mysterious employer has left for him to handle [...]. It seems that Tom, simply for being incredibly good, gets to make a living doing the very thing he adores most; in recompense for having his greatest illusion stripped ruthlessly away, he gets to be entirely and perfectly himself, all the livelong day. It's the ultimate fictional fantasy that we all crave, but which most experience only when reading. Tom, it seems, is the ultimate fantasy of good being rewarded for being good – and up to this point, the fantastic is the dominant mode; never has Dickens seemed less allied with the realism of his French counterparts than in his construction of *this* character's life!" (den anonyme bloggeren Bookphilia i <http://www.bookphilia.com/2011/05/there-is-much-higher-justice-than.html>; lesedato 02.12.14)

Tom Pinch i *Martin Chuzzlewit* "has no illusions about his chances of winning the heart of the woman he loves, and how he acknowledges this hopelessness to his devoted sister is telling: 'You think of me, Ruth,' said Tom, 'and it is very natural that you should, as if I were a character in a book; and you make it a sort of poetical justice that I should, by some impossible means or other, come, at last, to marry the person I love. But there is a much higher justice than poetical justice, my dear, and it does not order events upon the same principle. Accordingly, people who read about heroes in books, and choose to make heroes of themselves out of books, consider it a very fine thing to be discontented and gloomy, and misanthropical,

and perhaps a little blasphemous, because they cannot have everything ordered for their individual accommodation. Would you like me to become one of that sort of people?” (p. 700) Tom is dreamy and naive, but among the other character in this novel he also has the most unrelentingly realistic view of himself. [...] Tom knows the difference between books, dreams, and reality most of the time.” (<http://www.bookphilia.com/2011/05/there-is-much-higher-justice-than.html>; lesedato 27.11.14)

“[W]hen Tom Pinch is contemplating the ruins of all his amatory hopes he comforts himself and his sister with the following conclusion: “You think of me ... and it is very natural that you should, as if I were a character in a book; and you make it a sort of poetical justice that I should, by some impossible means or other, come, at last, to marry the person I love. But there is a much higher justice than the poetical justice ...” Here Dickens seems to be suggesting the limitations of precisely the kind of novel he had been inclined to write” (Ackroyd 1991 s. 425).

“Reading Dickens reaffirms my hope in the human race. That even the worst of us, like Ebenezer Scrooge, can change for the better. That even the worst of times, such as Oliver Twist experienced, eventually pass to a new day, and long-suffering, good people in the end find happiness and fulfillment.” (den anonyme bloggeren Steve i <http://sblazak.wordpress.com/2012/02/07/happy-birthday-charles-dickens/>; lesedato 19.11.14)

“Den amerikanske ordboka Meriam-Webster definerer poetic justice som en fortjent straff eller skade etter at de har behandlet noen andre dårlig først. Det er altså noe som slår tilbake på en selv. Jeg spritete opp en norsktime for noen uker siden ved å vise filmen *The Day After Tomorrow* [den tysk-amerikanske regissøren Roland Emmerichs katastrofefilm fra 2004]. Det er en scene i den filmen som en trygt kan kalle poetisk rettferdighet. I filmen forandret været seg mye raskere enn klimaforskerne trodde var mulig, og verden gikk inn i en ny istid. Forskerne rådet den amerikanske presidenten til å evakuere alle i Sørstatene til Mexico, mens de lenger nord måtte greie seg selv (de tvilte på om det var noen i live der). Presset mot grensa ble så stort at meksikanske myndigheter stengte grensa, nesten motsatt av dagens situasjon. Det er i dag mange som risikerer livene sine, enten ved å gå gjennom ørkenen til f.eks. Arizona eller å svømme over en av elvene langs grensa. En av dem er *The New River* som går gjennom byen Calexico i California. Det som gjør det spesielt sprøtt å hoppe i akkurat denne elva er at det meste av vannet i elva stammer fra forurensing. Den blir nemlig brukt til å kvitte seg med kommunal kloakk, tilsig fra gårder og industrielt avfall. Fattige mexicanere er så desperate. USA kjemper i dag en like desperat kamp for å holde disse ulovlige innvandrerne ute, selv om de egentlig er avhengig av denne innvandringen. I filmen var altså rollene byttet om. Mexico var det forjettede land som fløt over av melk og honning.” (John Olav Ytreland i <http://johnolavsskriveloft.wordpress.com/2012/11/29/poetisk-rettferdighet/>; lesedato 10.04.14)



“Poetisk rettferdighet, kalles det når det gode seirer gjennom nederlag.” (Liv Riiser i *Vårt Land* 14. januar 2013 s. 14) Forskeren Scott Forschler oppfatter poetisk rettferdighet som at “a wrongdoer is harmed by his own crimes [...] the wrongdoer’s contempt for human suffering, promises to teach a moral lesson, and can borrow some moral justification from the Golden Rule.” ([https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/philosophy\\_and\\_literature/v036/36.1.forschler.pdf](https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/philosophy_and_literature/v036/36.1.forschler.pdf); lesedato 30.04.14)

“The self-made man [is] a central myth within the history of the United States. Extending backward from Lee Iacocca to Benjamin Franklin, the most well-known and stereotypical endorsements of the myth remain the late nineteenth-century’s broad, middle-class stories of masculine self-making known as the Horatio Alger tales: morally uplifting stories that enact a successful struggle to overcome less than spectacular origins and reap justly deserved economic and personal rewards.” (James Catano sitert fra Mullen 2013 s. 154)

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