Das filmische Melodram. Eine Arbeitsbibliographie.


**Themenhefte**

*Five articles studying examples of the melodrama genre in the light of recent work in theory and feminism.*

Movie, 29/30, 1982: Melodrama.

Journal of the University Film and Video Association 35,1, 1983: Melodrama.

Film Criticism 9,2, Winter 1984/1985: Melodrama.

Screen 29,3, Summer 1988, pp. 2115: Melodrama and transgression.  
*Dedicated to the portrayal of heroines in melodramas.*


**Bücher und Artikel**


Aspinall, Sue / Murphy, Robert (eds.): Gainsborough Melodrama. London: British Film Institute 1983.


Examines concepts of gender in melodrama's dealing with psychoanalysis, esp. with the link of madness and motherhood.


Feminist analysis of the lead roles and their comic effect, as well as the issue of motherhood in "Stella Dallas" (1937) and its 1990 remake "Stella".


Reprinted in: Gledhill's Home Is Where the Heart Is.


Discusses a theory of style through a comparison of the 1934 and 1959 versions of "Imitation of Life".

Butler, Judith: Lana's 'Imitation': Melodramatic Repetition and the Gender Performative. In: Genders 9, Fall 1990, pp. 118.


Cargnelli, Christian / Palm, Michael (Hg.): Und immer wieder geht die Sonne auf. Texte zum Melodramatischen im Film. Wien 1994


"Books such as 'The Cinema of Max Ophuls: Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman,' 'Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk,' 'Contesting Tears: The Holywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman' and 'Max Ophuls in the Hollywood Studios' represent the significance of Hollywood melodramas. The genre provides a means for criticism which is important to social formations. These books brings to focus that as long as attention is given to Hollywood films, the genre will remain." [Expanded Academic Index]


'Develops a religiouspolitical framework for the understanding of melodrama and relates it to some contemporary examples of new Hollywood cinema.'


Also in: Home is where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film. Ed. by Christine Gledhill. London: British Film Institute 1987, pp. 4369.


The public image of US stars, esp. female, is contrasted with the reality of their private life; focuses on the example of Lana Turner and her role in "Imitation of life".


Fischer, Lucy: Sirk and the Figure of the Actress: All I Desire. In: Film Criticism, WinterSpring 1999, pp.136ff.
Douglas Sirk's film "All I Desire" portrays the duality of the female character. Situated at the turn of the century, the film follows a woman's desire to become an actress at the price of abandoning her husband and children. Although she is reunited with her family in the end, her absence has created intensified love or hatred in her children and meekness in her husband.


Psychoanalytic analysis of Rebecca and Gaslight as female Oedipal dramas


Consideration of film music as the feminine, examining film music as a process of signification in its own right, and analysing the function of music in classic Hollywood melodramas.


Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy: Imitation(s) of Life: The Black Woman's Double Determination as Troubling 'Other'. In: Literature & Psychology 34,4, 1988, pp. 4457.


Discusses the use of melodrama to reach black audiences in the 1920's, esp. in "The scar of shame", and theorizes on the nature of the black audience (see also separate Oscar Micheaux bibliography)


Studies the similar fears of the newlywed brides in "Gaslight" and "Rebecca".

Gallagher, Tag: Tag Gallagher Responds to Tania Modleski's "Time and Desire in the

Film director Douglas Sirk thought that movies should function for society, playing on the audience's emotions. Good and evil, lightness and darkness were accentuated with music. Motion and light were used to create the necessary melodramatic moments. Two major Sirk themes are characters who impose their will despite pain (white melodrama), and characters who are dominated by their will, giving in to lust (black melodrama).


Gledhill, Christine (ed.): Home is where the heart is: studies in melodrama and the woman's film. London: BFI Publishing 1987.


Explores similarities and differences between the genres, citing British/US examples past and present.


Hollywood reconsidered. In: Jump Cut, 32, April 1986, pp. 1532. On women in the Hollywood film, incl. the representation of fantasy women in "The stepford wives", the simultaneous celebration and reduction of wartime heroines such as "Rosie the riveter" and an analysis of melodrama.


Considers definitions of melodrama and tragedy in relation to the pressure or assertive nature of the heroine in literature and in women's romantic Hollywood films of the 1930's and 1940's.


A postmodernist reading of US melodrama, tracing its shift from cinema, in the films of Douglas Sirk, to its current home, the tv soap opera.


Approaching the genre of melodrama from the perspective of 'trauma theory' highlights gaps in theorising about melodrama, previously articulated through Freudian psychoanalysis.


Kleinhans, Chuck: Notes on melodrama and the family under capitalism. In: Film Reader 3, 1978, pp. 4047. *Discusses the family under capitalism in order to better understand bourgeois domestic melodrama.*


Kuhn, Annette: Women's genres. In: Screen 25,1, JanFeb 1984, pp. 1828. *Developments in film and tv theory relating to critical work on film melodrama and tv soap opera, with particular reference to the audience for these genres, which is traditionally female.* Repr. in: Christine Gledhill (ed.): Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film. London: British Film Institute 1987, pp. 339349.


Landy, Marcia: Melodrama and Femininity in Second World War British Cinema. In: The
Filmmakers Max Ophuls and Douglas Sirk depict the gradual decay of the family unit in their films. Both focus on the rise of youth culture during the 1950s, coupled with the open floor plans of that era. Boundaries are therefore transgressed physically, mentally and emotionally, leading family members to seek means of escape and make irrational decisions.


Lehman, Peter: Crying over the Melodramatic Penis: Melodrama and Male Nudity in Films of the '90s. In: Masculinity: bodies, movies, culture. Edited by Peter Lehman. New York: Routledge 2001 (AFI film readers.).


An intertextual analysis of Douglas Sirk's 1955 film 'All That Heaven Allows,' an adaptation of Edna and Harry Lee's 'woman's novel,' helps understand the influence of auteurism on melodrama studies. Sirk's portrayal of American culture of the 1950s reflects his ability as a modernist creator of social critique. The archaeology of film studies criticism is significant to the understanding of film text interpretation.


The article compares Sirk's Imitation of Life (1959) to David O. Selznick and William Wellman's A Star is Born (1937) to explore a characteristically Sirkian narrative strategy: the latter film does not amuse itself at its predecessor's expense so much as it inverts the message. A Star is Born conveys to its audience the idea that envying the glamorous life of the Hollywood star is inappropriate, inasmuch as the glamour has been fully paid for in suffering: arguably, what is lost is more valuable than the beauty, wealthy, fame, and indeed audience envy that is won. Imitation of Life, in contrast, suggests that envying the glamorous life of the Broadway star is inappropriate. Sirk's protagonist cannot trade suffering for glamour because she is not sufficiently real to suffer; literally, then, there is nothing to envy. Like other domestic melodramas of the day, Imitation of Life explores the possibilities of female rebellion and escape, variously offering its audience validation, socialization, and emotional release through tears but it accomplishes this task in a way that criticizes female aspirations and audience gullibility considerably less that it criticizes theatricality in general.


Neale, Steve: Melodrama and tears. In: Screen 27,6, Nov-Dec 1986, pp. 622. Reappraisal of the genre in terms of a series of relationships or tensions, exploring the genre as a processing of spectatorial pleasure, and explaining why we cry when we watch melodramas.

Neale, Steve: Melo talk: on the meaning and use of the term 'melodrama' in the American trade press. In: The Velvet Light Trap, 32, Fall 1993, pp. 6689. On the use of the term 'melodrama' to describe Hollywood films of the period 1938-60. Concludes that contrary to popular belief the term was not derogatory, and was used more frequently to describe male-oriented action films than for films aimed at women.

Neumann, David: Melodrama as a compositional resource in early Hollywood sound cinema. In: Current Musicology, 57, Jan. 1995, pp. 61-95. "Studio producers, directors, composers and sound technicians evolved the basic practices of film music in the late 1920s and early 1930s when cinema changed from silent movies to talkies. Max Steiner, Alfred Newman and Herbert Stothart were the pioneers in this field. Steiner drew from Wagner and Viennese melodrama while underscoring dialogue in a terse synchronized manner. The main contribution of the 1930s was the integration of the melodramatic with the operatic style. This is one of the preferred techniques even in the 1990s." [Expanded Academic Index]


Oroz, Silvia: Melodrama: o cinema de lagrimas da America Latina / Silvia Oroz. Rio de

Orr, Christopher: Written on the Wind and the Ideology of Adaptation. In: Film Criticism 10,3, Spring 2985, pp. 18.


Seiter, Ellen: Men, money and sex in recent family melodrama. In: Journal of the University Film and Video Association 35,1, 1983, pp. 1727.


Douglas Sirk's "Imitation of life" redefined in connection with film melodrama, via feminist and Marxist perspectives.


Reappraisal of the US melodramatic film serials, pointing out the central position given to the heroine.

Singer, Ben: Melodrama and modernity: early sensational cinema and its contexts. New York: Columbia University Press 2001 (Film and Culture.).


The rhetoric of King Vidor's Stella Dallas, the premiere example of 1930s melodrama, is dominated by a welfare ethic of redistribution that pacifies the more radical implications of the movie's class and gender politics. Released in 1937, at the beginning of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's second term in office, the movie focuses on a woman who embodies the use of consumer culture to affirm an identity that does not adhere to any single class politics. As such, she provides a third alternative to both market sensibility and the New Deal's consumer ethics throughout most of the movie.

Director John Stahl's 1934 film 'Imitation of Life' offers images and characters for black female spectatorship. The film, an adaptation of Fannie Hurst's novel of the same title, contains cinematic elements such as black feminism that create pleasure in African American women viewers. This unique interplay of feminist film theory and black female spectatorship is effectively exploited in the strained relationship between the film's black mother and her lightskinned daughter.


Waldman, Diane: At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!: Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romantic Film of the 1940s. In: Cinema Journal 23,2. 1984, pp. 2940.


This article asks what is different about a classic narrative film in which the primary "look" motivating the narrative is between mother and daughter e.g., when the typical look of desire articulates a visual economy of motherdaughter possession and dispossession and when the significant viewer of this drama is herself a woman. King Vidor's "Stella Dallas" is thus used as an interesting test case for many important concepts of recent feminist film theory as well as for feminist thinking about the formation of the female subject.


Williams, Linda.: Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess. In: Film Quarterly 44,4, Summer 1991, pp. 213.


