

Introduction to Film Studies

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Classic Hollywood (Contd...)

Good Morning. So, we will continue with our reading of Melodrama and Classic Hollywood. As we were talking about at the other day on Melodrama is a highly popular genre. Anywhere in the world and we were talking about, Classic Hollywood and it is one of the major genres in Classic Hollywood. Generally used in a very derisive, very pejorative way and a means to which was generally understood as something a kind of drama that manipulated the audience as emotions. We were also talking about the Indian Melodrama, we were refer to films like even our own Sholay, Mother India and Deewaar and the more recent films like Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham. So, they all fall in the category of Melodrama.

Generally in the film industry the term is used to denote dramas involving passion. We have Crime Melodramas; we have Psychological Melodramas, Family Melodramas things, which we are extremely familiar with women's Films and Romantic Dramas. Think consider a classic love triangle even Devadas is a Classic Romantic Melodrama. Now Melodrama attained a certain status with the interest in the works of people like, Nicholas Ray and I am going to question you, who got interested in these people? You are all ready familiar with Nicholas Ray. Rebel without a cause you are not no stranger to these names anymore Vincent Minnelli, Max Ophuls. Have we done anything by Max Ophuls? Lola Montes.

We were talking about Earrings of Madame De and Otto Preminger; I refer to a movie called Lora. A Film Noir, Douglas Sirk, now Douglas Sirk has been understood as a Key Maker of Melodrama in Hollywood and who were the people who got interested in Melodrama. All these people who are now considered Auteurs today and their images have been built up hyped up by Kayadu Cinema Critics. So, today these film makers are refer to with great respect. Even the Melodrama is referring to with great respect by films call us, because the kind of interest that Kayadu cinema critic should in their works. Molly Haskell, of course

some of you are familiar with the works of Molly Haskell. You have heard of her in 1979 drew attention to women's films with Family Melodrama and raised question about the aesthetic and cultural significance of this kind of cinema.

Now what did she mean, she said that we should not be this dismissive about Melodrama. Generally, we think Melodrama is a Tearjerker, some genre which is use to an exploit emotion. You know use the more tears the audience shed the more tickets, it will sell that is the idea. Molly Haskell said that in spite of this tendency in Melodrama, the thing is that these family where melodramas, Romantic Melodramas. Dramas raise certain questions about cultural period of a particular time in American history. This was the way women were treated in American history at a particular point. Perhaps you would like to drawn from your own understanding of Indian Melodrama. They, we were talking about Deewaar and Mother India do you thing, it raises certain questions about how women were treated in a particular period? Do you agree with me? Albert can you?

Remember expected to make sacrifices for did not had much freedom to work outside the home.

Good. So, Deewaar and Mother India both reflect this that women are supposed to be in certain way. So, that raises certain questions about the status of the women. Therefore the importance of Family Melodrama, when women's pictures. They should not be just dismissed off as yet another weeping movie or v p. They have something to tell us about our own social cultural practices. That is what Molly Haskell decides, could anyone else like to comment on that Shwetha, Karthick?

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Well. Mother is nation you see in both in this is very important to understand, both in Mother India and in Deewaar mother is a metaphor for the nation. There are two warring brothers in both Deewaar and Mother India and who are those two warring brothers? We are talking about the post partition scenario. So, Mother will always go with the more virtual son. That is the idea so, it there is a strong matter for there is subtext. There it is not about just good versus evil mother personifies Mother Indian. The Title of one of the movies tell us that Ram Lakhan, Karan Arjun. Whenever mothers are brutalized or victimized then, there would be a good son. There is another great classic Melodrama directed by exterior actor director Manoj Kumar and he made a classic called Upkaar.

Perhaps you some of you would like to take down the name, it is a Hindi movie highly Melodramatic, but extremely...

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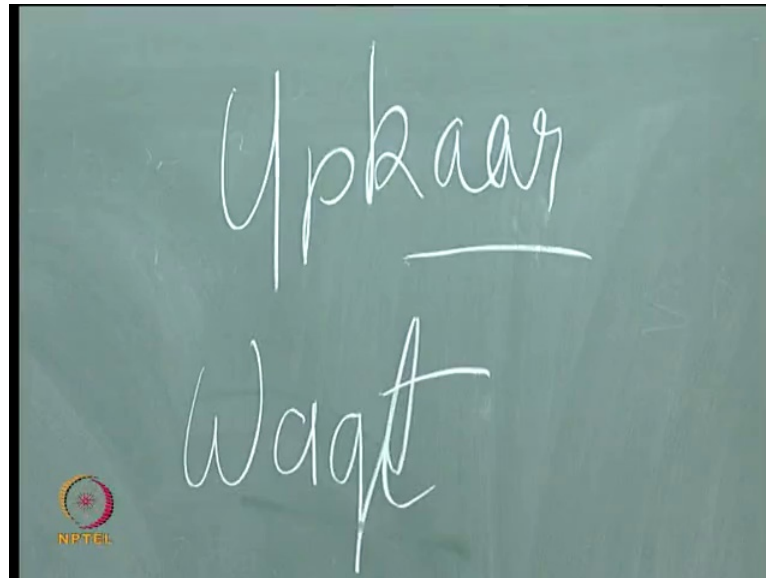


Significant to understand the concept of Patriotism, Motherhood and Nation Upkaar. Again a Classic Story of a Mother Torn between two brothers. One brother has gone abroad and he comes back with all westernized corrupt values. You know his most drinks and is always clubbing, because he has been to London. You see that is the reason and another boy who stays back in India and sings patriotic songs and plods the fields and romances a nice Indian girl. He is the good son and he is even called Bharat understand and then at the end there is a fight between Bharat and the Williams and what happen? That our hero losses both his arms, that is very significant what does it suggest partition of India. But then he never dies you, because Bharat never dies. He exits and the Prodigal Son, the other brother the evil brother returns and he says now I am your hands. You know these two hands, now they belong to you.

So, there was always this wishful thinking, that one especially in post partition seen, that one day we will all come back together. Even the brother, who has left us the erring brothers, he will come back and get together. This is something that was implicitly all these lost and found films. Therefore, we have a title like Amar Akbar Anthony. People of all cost Communities, Region, State coming together and living happily ever after harmonious existence. Again a wishful thinking post partition, but there may be a time, when you will all come a gap history has told us something else. But there was a time in cinema was much

more Utopian Idealistic and Naive Perhaps much more innocent and those films indicated this tendency. You have a mister Yash Chopra recently passed away and you must have any number of articles on his work.

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So, his first major block buster movie was called Waqt made sometime in 1960s. How many of you have scene Waqt? Do watch it is a block buster, it has a mega cast for those times and beautiful colourful movie. Again it is about deception of a family. Hindu joint family and how it gets disrupted and then all everyone losses everyone at the end everyone comes together with good appropriate suitable daughters in law. So, that was a theme so, what was the first movie to deal with the lost and found theme, but it was not just lost and found idea. What was being suggested? One day, we will all come back and live together a happily ever after. So, Melodrama in other words, has a lot to tell us about the social political and cultural significance of a period.

Now, there is another scholar Thomas Elsaesser and who maintained in 1972 that melodrama can be analysed through Complex Mizansen and Ideological Criticism. You do understand, what is an Ideology? To wish that all communities and states in India will live together Ideologies, however utopian is an Ideology of some sort. So, that is Ideology, that I am giving you in a very simplistic terms that this is what Ideology. If you want to look at you know blacks and whites in America, they will live together happily and harmlessly. There would not be any racial raids; there would not be any discrimination. Many movies of that period bit

show, that there would be a time when everyone would coexist extremely happily and we were talking about Seven the film remember.

Where we said that, Morgan Freeman race does not come into the picture at all. So, there Ideology something else in Seven, the Seven have an Ideology or is just a Psychological Crime Drama.

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But is not very in your face Ideology, like Fight Club. Fight Club has a very distinct ideology. Seven may not, but what I am trying to say is that, the hero skin does not matter at all in Seven, but if you watch all movies by spicily, do the right thing then there is an Ideology. So, therefore and it is they are all Melodramatic. Do the right thing is as melodramatic as become racial raid. One fine day in Newyork between two races, Italian Americans and the Black Americans and there is this man solve, who has been living in this black dominated area for a very long time. He runs a pizzeria and at the end the pizzeria is burnt down by a group of black people, because they feel they have been discriminated against by the Whites.

So, solves pizzeria which has been there as an indicative of racial harmony. A White existing in a majority black area, black dominated area there is burnt down. This was the place that everyone would come together and it is very very interestingly marked by, because he is Italian American. So, solves pizzeria has posters of Alpetrino, Sophia Loren, John Travolta. Who are these people? All Italians, all Whites and Italians. Travolta is white is an Italian emigrant too Alpetrino of course and Sophia Loren. So, the blacks ask him, that why do not you ever put up black actress pictures poster and he just dismisses that off. He says I do not feel any need do that. He has to pay at the end by having it is pizzeria (()).

So, that is what Thomas Elsaesser means when he say that melodrama can be analysed through it is Complex Mizansen. If you look at the wall Alpetrino, Sophia Loren and John Travolta posters on that, it creates a kind of Mizansen. This is what he is in the beginning of the movie; we are not told this at all that there is going to be any kind of racial disharmony in this place. But the Mizansen tells us very clearly, that this is a man who only believes in Italian American. So, all the hidden prejudices come to the four, one fine day and the breakdown of peace. Elsaesser also considers the Family Melodramas of the 1950s as the peak of Hollywood's achievement.

Now many people are there dismissive when very derisive of Melodrama of haze code, but then many scholars today believe that the Golden age period of Hollywood was when haze code was an existence and when Melodramas were at the Peak. So, that is something that needs to be discussed and in Melodrama, you do not find much psychological debating of characters like in Seven like in Fight Club. So, you want that is quite postmodernist. Taxi Driver is an out and out interior movie, much of the action happens inside his mind. There is another scholar Geoffrey Nowell Smith at the moment you can just consider the names and look them up at your Geoffrey Nowell Smith and they are gives that in Melodrama especially in the films of Douglas Sirk. One finds and Interplay of class and sex, general values play a very important part and class and if you watch Douglas Sirk movie today.

How many of you are familiar with any of the films? We will be discussing, but Douglas Sirk, does he mean anything to you. Not really. Vimal, not now. Not so far know. Douglas Sirk was a European left wing Intellectual, started his carrier in Germany and the other day we were talking about several directors during this period migrated to America. Remember Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, William Wyler. Remember these names several great directors from Germany to America. In America, he worked during the repressive atmosphere of the 50s. Why do we call that a repressive atmosphere? Not really. His code is not by itself McCarthy period h u a c. We were talking about Elia Kazan (()) remember. So, h u a c the communist phobia that existed.

So, from one repressive regime to another and then inspite of that, scholars believe that Sirk manage to make films that are critical of the prevailing Ideology. And now there he is not playing handball with the dominant Ideology. He is actually being subversive, if you read between the lines that is what scholars like Geoffrey Nowell Smith believe about Douglas Sirk. Remember, he is talking about criticizing certain Ideological tendency in America and certain tendency about the Interplay of Class and Sex in America.

So, Douglas Sirk's movies are a critic offer in interesting and important critic of those tendencies. In Germany, he was influenced by the works of Bertolt Brecht and Robert Wile Brecht and Wile were Collaborators. Wile was a Producer also Music Director. Brecht of course is the Theatre Director who gave us the theme of theory of Brecht. That is Brecht gives us Alienation, theatre of Alienation. What is the alienation? Breaking the Fourth wall, instead of you remember I told you Shedding Tears from your mind and not from your heart.

For that most of Melodrama focuses on Shedding Tears from your heart, but Brecht believed in Shedding Tears from your mind from your brain.

So, scholars also believed that, because the Douglas Sirk created a strong Mizansen using strong so, these are the features of Mizansen. Strong primary colours contrast of dark and light, exhilarated acting and gestures and settings there by creating a strong Mizansen. That was one element of creating making his Melodramatic Teachers. Emotional access you already understand and then background music which tells not just shows. So, we were the other the day some Shwetha and Tara were talking about the song Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, which recurred so frequently. It makes the movie extremely Saccharin sweet; that is the idea. So, that is the idea to play on emotions to manipulate emotions and all the emotions are basically saccharin sweet.

So, Emotional accesses and telling background music hallmark of Douglas Sirk Melodramas and his one major film is Written on the Wind 1956 and Kayadu Cinema Critics were extremely interested in this film, because of the way he uses Mizansen. And it is generally believed that his ironic Mizansen operated on 1950s middle class America. I am taking you go back to the original ideas that they offered his film offered a critic of the prevailing Ideologies in America and also the Interplay between class and general. All that heaven allows Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson directed by Douglas Sirk. Consider the Mizansen, I give you one minute, consider the Mizansen. It is one of those impossible love stories and older women and younger man. Women situation is much more complicated, because she is also a widow with grown up children. She falls in love with this protagonist, who is also her Gardener.

Now we were talking about Mizansen and Ideological considerations. Can you give me some indications, some ideas of what this Mizansen tells you all about? Do you find deep focus here? We have been talking about deep focus, which the focus is not just on what is foregrounded, but also on thing which are in the background. You understand the way he uses colours the core and also cinematographic, which exploits the background details as well. Now tell me? What do you find?

Background

Ok

Stars

Yes

And the interior scene crocin

Interiors are crocin, but it is know it is cold it is crocin, that is her condition. She is dressed always in very subdued colours. Whereas, his couch is warm it is you know it suggest something which is bright and happy, but then of course she cannot. What is the significance of that a little font? Return to happiness perhaps, return to more Idyllic, and more Idealized form of life. But then at the end she is denied happiness and this is the way the movie be and look at the primary colours. When you see colours like this definitely you know you are not watching at David Fincher movie. The how film makers you make use of colours to tell you that look, this is a romantic pictures. This is a woman's pictures. So, what colours do you find here?

Bright

Bright, Pestles, Oranges all these things and nicely the title also is Pretty Melodramatic, all that heaven allows. So, play of class and sex is carried out in the Iconographic of the film, but let me first talk to you about all that haven allows and how does it end. So, because the Women is the well the widow and the man is lover, is a poor gardener and she is much older to him. So, therefore they cannot be united at the end after all it is 1956. So, what happens at the end, her grown up children ask the man to leave the place. Also think of a movie like Lady Chatterley's Lover, because is the same idea repeated, but in much more settle and you know platonic terms.

So, the hero is at the end asked by the children to leave the house and he lives and the women knows that he is living to they cannot even say their final good bye to each other and then the women son very suggestively gifts his mother with a television. That this is your life, you know you are a widow well that you do not have to worry about anything in the world about materialistic aspect of life, just sit at home comfortably. We are there to look after you watch television. Now what does it tell you about class and sex, best the wait ends. She sits and she switches on the television set and the movie and son. What? Any comments on the class? If only the man belong to the same social status perhaps, her children would not have at that much of an objection, but mother fall in for a gardener, that is one thing.

So, class sex of course you know a women of a certain age is not supposed to have these tendency the romantic notions. She is supposed to accept, that she had a husband once. She

lost her husband, when she was pretty young. She raised her children such a woman has no rights to expect love or a man's affection at her age. She not extremely old, you know just like perhaps in her late 30s or early 40s, but she is the anyway regarded as a relic and you are supposed to sit at home and watch television. So, lot of commentary on the class and gender, situations of the time. Another movie *Written on the Wind*, now look at Mizansen again, here the prism of conspicuous consumption and decor costume and how spaces are utilized in the film.

There is a woman, the heroine as played by Lauren Bacall. Lauren Bacall perhaps some of you have watched her, the big sleep to have or have not. So, that the great Lauren Bacall who was once married to Humphrey Bogart and her husband who is the play boy an extremely wealthy play boy and then Rock Hudson arise on the scene, who falls in love with the lady of the house. It is a loveless marriage, husband is an alcoholic play boy, there are lots of problem in this marriage. The marriage is already on the wodge of collapse and then, this nice young man rise on the scene and you see his reflection in the mirror Mizansen and Decors. Tell me comment on the Decor and Mizansen? *Written on the Wind* is Douglas Sirk's most popular movie.

Kayadu Cinema Critics have just gone by Sirk praising it to the skies, because of it is strong Melodrama. So, not such there is a genre, but something that have to be understood and to be analysed. What do you see Vimal?

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So, you see centrally image is that of that man who is going to her lover soon. Husband is relegated to the side lines already and the woman is strong, bold, confident, smart and then you see science and tropes of conspicuous consumption. So, we are being told, this is wealthy family. The way they look the way the body language the decor of the house everything is extremely suggestive. Now here look at this particular scene, the lady is walking and with the husband of course, still here. There is still married to each other and then she is followed by this would be lover in the background and there is a something in the background, very conspicuous, cupid and cupid comes between the wife and the potential lover. This is the way attention to the detail was given.

So, Douglas Sirk Melodrama, and if you watch our movie, the extremely high on creation of Melodrama through Mizansen, Think? Can you think of certain I mean the other day you

gave examples from Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham? So, it is full of symbols and signs, all kinds of tropes are there. What is foregrounded? What is there in the background? What are we supposed to understand use of background music? Written on the wind and here the lady is looking at the portrait I mean, which is that Iconography? What is that in the background is her father's portrait. A late father's portrait and now she is occupying his seat, she has inherited on the well and she is with the same image of a same model. They are in the construction business as her late father use to.

So, what does they suggest, she has taken over the mental of her father. So, Sirk important films by Douglas Sirk and all extremely, important to understand the notion of Melodrama in the 50s. All that heaven allows we have been talking Vimal, quite frequently about a movie called far from heaven; it is a reinterpretation of this. All are desire magnificent obsession Written on the Wind; there is always tomorrow a Time to Love and a Time to Die and Imitation of Life. If you consider the titles, they allowance sound like Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham. Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna that kind. So, extremely melodramatic and extremely in your face.

So, we are still talking about Classic Hollywood and melodrama as an integral feature of it. So, 50s and it was also the period with witness the emergency on so, called Antihero and one of the major actors of this generation was Marlon Brando. We have already been talking about method acting so, this period witness the emergence of method acting, which by 70s came into it is own Petrosino, Hackmans and De Niro Nicholson, but 50s saw consciousness about different kind of acting. Which was not the true cinematic acting I mean, if you watch a movie like magnificent obsession, all these Douglas Sirk classics, Written on the Wind, all that heaven allows you will understand. It was a very exhilarated kind of acting method, acting change the face of acting by the 50s.

So, Paul Newman, Marlon Brando and James Dean the exponents of Method Acting and what did they play? They were not the romantic hero's of the 40s and the 50s. They were no Gregory peck or highly principle heroes. What did they specialize in they would play parts of hero's who were flawed more (()) anti establishment, Gold Digger. So, we were talking about a place in the sun Monty Clift and Elizabeth Taylor. Monty Clift is an unabashed Gold Digger. He Ditches, his pregnant girl friend and falls for Elizabeth Taylor. Who is much prettier and definitely much wealthier place in the sun directed by George Steven and based on the novel by Theodore Dreiser and American Tragedy?

Classic Hollywood screenplay and the other day we were talking about Cecil B Demille and how screenplays were written. So, Classic Hollywood is still in that Classic Three Act Structure the beginning, the middle and the end. It was also a time, when producers dictated terms and interfered with the process of writing screenplays and Vimal when did these procedure this process end producer interfering with the process of writing?

New Hollywood

New Hollywood. We have been talking about Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda as easy, rider that was the movie that changed the face of Hollywood. Before that there was Bonnie and Clyde and even before that there was a Hard Day's Night. So, those are the film that you should be watching soon and then you will understand that those movies completely jettison the idea of Classic Three Act Structure. There is no beginning, no middle, no end and no closer in Bonnie and Clyde they die, but in easy rider again. It is quite open ended and a Hard Day's Night is definitely more much more experimental than many films made that time. During the Classical Hollywood period screen writers were mainly Journalist and Novelist. So, they still drew on material from Literature and Journalistic sources.

So, people like Faulkner and Tennessee Williams and even a great writer like (()). He tried his hand at screenplay writing and much of his experience in the Hollywood is seen in the last tycoon directed by Elia Kazan that you were you have been talking about that also. Then bestselling authors James Kent and Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and if you want to understand more about the art of Classic Screenplay. Then I would refer I would suggest that you read sit fields screen writers work book. Have you done work on Robert Towne? This some homework, tell me about Robert Towne listen to this Vimal?

I know that he is writer of (())

Credited or Uncredited

I do not know that Mam.

Robert Towne is the uncredited writer of Robert for a Bonnie and Clyde and he remain uncredited for majority of his films that is very interesting, but he got rich by remaining uncredited. He would just take money, he was like today, we cause the set of people script doctors. So, he majorly the script doctoring for people could have been who knows that every possibility, but then he became, so prominent, so influential and so magnificently wealthy. I

mean if you read works on Robert Towne, you will understand he was much wealthier than many of his peers who were successful Hollywood directors. So, that is the power of Robert Towne a very interesting personality.

So, you must read upon him on the water front again, we were talking about the other day while discussing Elia Kazan follows the same structure. Elia Kazan for all his affection for social realism and all happens to be quite a traditional kind of a film maker follows the tradition quite faithfully. You have watched east of Eden so, you know and that is also a material based on Novel by John Steinbeck. So, these were the Great Movies, The Hustler by Paul Starring, Paul Newman faithfully, following the Classic Screenplay Structure. A Place in the Sun, the movie I was just referring to starring Elizabeth Taylor, Monty Clift and George Steven is the director and he comments he would like now. Let us talk about Robert Towne, what was the question again?

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New Hollywood. He is not Classic remember, Bonnie and Clyde is the water shed film which came and heralded the age of New Hollywood. So, Robert Towne marks the New Hollywood not Classic Hollywood. Bonnie and Clyde onwards, we saw a complete change in the waste trips were written, easy rider Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda who wrote this screenplay. Dennis Hopper always took the credit and Peter Fonda said he never wrote a word. There was there have been lot, but then Dennis Hopper was violent and aggressive and always carrier done with him. So, Peter Fonda said I have to give him the credit, because I would never know what would happen. If I do not Dennis Hopper always care famously carried a gun.

So, that was the thing and the only man who could put him in his place was the great John Wayne, who one day brought a bigger gun to the sets and he said come out Dennis Hopper. Wherever you are hidden up, after that Dennis Hopper maintain peace with John Wayne easy rider is the movie that change the way screenplays were written, because there was no screenplay they would come on the sets and improvise. But the story idea was definitely Peter Fonda's so, that is the story, but screenplay the Classic Three X. They were no longer observe that was the, but Robert Towne of course was the very discipline writer and he contributed China Town is a very disciplined screenplay.

So, Robert Towne contribution is there, but then he also marks change in the way scripts were written in Hollywood. That we will be seeing, when we look at new Hollywood in much

more detail any other question, the other day someone was asking about. So, where is Hitchcock in all this so, Hitchcock is at the peak in Classic Hollywood period and you have films that now. Are you known without a doubt, undoubted Classics even I confess with Monty Clift, which is not widely seen movie it. If you watch it you find that there are so many redeeming features and it is one of his less known movies, but very very interesting Film. Rope I am sure most of your familiar all of you have watched. You must strangers on a train, his Classic Notorious north by north, west with Carrie Grant.

So, Carrie Grant in James Tuttle were his favourite actors. He also worked with (()) in spell bound with Ingrid Bergman, Salvador Dali worked on the dream sequences in spell bound. Rebecca based on the Daphne Du Mauriers novel and he also did another Daphne Du Mauriers short story the buds and now Hitchcock is very interesting director and there are two recent movies on him. So, these are the books that I would suggest very strongly. There is a book called Screening the Past, Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema. The Oxford guide to film studies by Capelin and Capelin Pam cooks screening the past and Capelins. The Oxford guide to film studies, just take down the titles Thomas Elsaesser. I was just talking to with reference to Melodrama.

So, there his paper is tales of Sound and Fury observation on the Family Melodrama. George Novelist Smiths Minnelli and Melodrama, which Minnelli are we talking about Vincent who was is famous daughter Liza Minnelli. Liza Minnelli's mother is the famous Judy Garland Wizard of Ouse Actress and a star is born. Any questions here on Classic Age or Golden Age of Hollywood from on next class onwards. We will start talking about the New Hollywood Period and he comments or observations about this. So, that was Melodrama and still a very popular genre at least in our country. Then we will continue. Thank you.