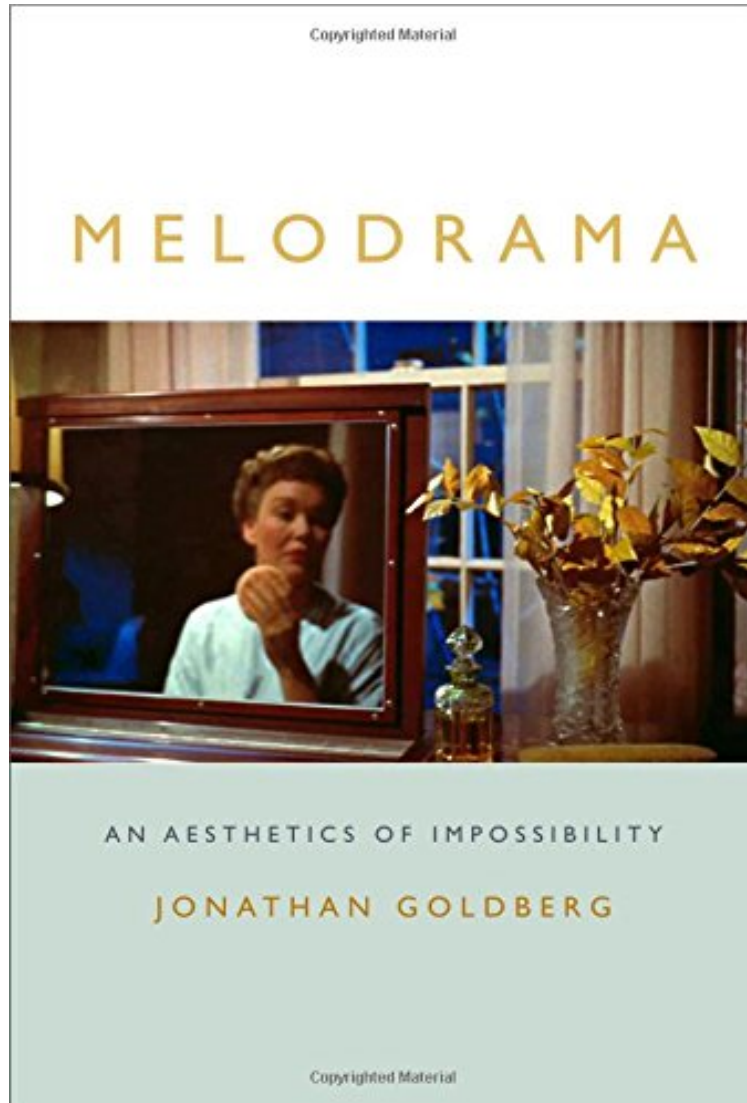


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## Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility (Theory Q)

*Jonathan Goldberg*

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**Jonathan Goldberg : Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility (Theory Q)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility (Theory Q):

Offering a new queer theorization of melodrama, Jonathan Goldberg explores the ways melodramatic film and literature provide an aesthetics of impossibility. Focused on the notion of what Douglas Sirk termed the "impossible situation" in melodrama, such as impasses in sexual relations that are not simply reflections of social taboo and

prohibitions, Goldberg pursues films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Todd Haynes that respond to Sirk's prompt. His analysis hones in on melodrama's original definition--a form combining music and drama--as he explores the use of melodrama in Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, films by Alfred Hitchcock, and fiction by Willa Cather and Patricia Highsmith, including her Ripley novels. Goldberg illuminates how music and sound provide queer ways to promote identifications that exceed the bounds of the identity categories meant to regulate social life. The interaction of musical, dramatic, and visual elements gives melodrama its indeterminacy, making it resistant to normative forms of value and a powerful tool for creating new potentials.

"Melodrama is a major work that offers a superbly original way of thinking queerness, impossibility, and melodrama together. Exploring the insistence of nonidentity in the melodramatic mode, Jonathan Goldberg reads texts by Beethoven, Sirk, Fassbinder, Haynes, Hitchcock, Highsmith, Cather, and Davies to show how melodrama, by confronting limitation, reveals that nothing is only what it seems: other readings are always available; other potentialities always inhere. Beautifully elaborated, theoretically pointed, and intellectually provocative, *Melodrama* gives thought in constant motion a chance to take center stage."