

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

Sist oppdatert 11.04.19

Dette dokumentets nettadresse (URL) er:

<https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no/cm4all/uproc.php/0/fotoroman.pdf>

Fotoroman

(_sjanger) En roman som ligner på en fotografi-serie, dvs. med mange fotografier etter hverandre og enten talebobler eller med dialog (og fortelling) skrevet under fotografiene. Romanene har ofte blitt delt opp i føljetonger som har gått i ukeblader.

Opprinnelig etterligner fotoromanen en film, med korte tekster og en atmosfære i historiene som minner om mellomkrigstidens film (Demougin 1985 s. 1403). Sjangeren har blitt kalt “en bastard født av magasin, tegneserie og film” (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 252).

Fotoromanene utviklet seg fra en eldre sjanger, kinoromanen (på fransk “cinéroman”; kinoromanen viser bilder fra en kinofilm og gjenforteller historien kortfattet med ord) (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 17). Fotoromanen derimot, forteller ikke en historie fra en kinofilm, men vanligvis en ny, original historie, om enn med formelpreg (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 212). Sjangerens blomstringstid var fra slutten av 1940-tallet til begynnelsen av 1970-tallet (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 206).

Fotoromaner kan være romantiske historier, krim, skrekk, western, science fiction og annet. Det meste er formellitteratur. Ifølge Baetens og Gonzales er de aller fleste fotoromaner sentimentale historier (1996 s. 16.) Det finnes imidlertid også forholdsvis eksperimentelle fotoromaner, f.eks. franskmannen Alain Bogaerts’ *Rotomago* (1977).

Fotoromanen har vært svært populær i latinske land som Italia og Frankrike. Den første italienske kom ut i 1946, på italiensk kalt en “fotoromanzo” (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 5 og 213). Italienerne Stefano Reda og Damiano Damiani lagde de første fotoromanene i Italia i 1947, og gjorde suksess med dem i Frankrike også fra 1949 av (Demougin 1985 s. 1403). Sjangeren ble introdusert i Frankrike i 1949 av Cino del Duca (Olivier-Martin 1980 s. 252).

“The photo novel is quite a well-known genre in Europe where it appeals chiefly to a female and popular audience, particularly because it usually tells love stories. Its

essential feature is that it is a story in photographs, just as the strip cartoon is a story told in drawings. [...] Its relationship to the cinema is equally important, especially in the case of those publications that lay claim to a certain editorial quality, through its use of techniques designed to make the story more vivid and modern: switching angles, reversing shots, day for night, etc. [...] Since photographs are used rather than drawings, actors must also be involved. [...] Its greater accessibility and less forbidding format as compared with the pure and dense prose of the novel, the brevity of the texts, the help given by the pictures and the “cinematographical” attraction ... everything conspires to take the drama and the ritual out of reading, to attract a public that is disinclined or unused to reading and to make them wish to persevere. [...] In photo novels as in strip cartoons or indeed in novels, quality varies greatly. The biggest danger as regards the photo novel is that of purveying “rose-tinted” stories, stereotyped, conveying dubious values, seeking so much to prettify reality that they end up lying about it. Rather than making the readers dream, this sends their minds to sleep. The characters become stereotypes (rich, handsome hero, submissive, timorous woman – or, conversely, dangerous, treacherous woman, etc.), the stories spread illusions rather than hopes; they stupefy instead of energizing.” (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001821/182121E.pdf>; lesedato 27.01.15)

Den første franske fotoromanen skal være en fra 1949 i bladet *Festival* (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 190). “Hver tredje franskmann leser fotoromaner” estimerte Serge Saint-Michel i 1979 (1979 s. 7). I 1985 hadde fotoromaner over 60 millioner lesere månedlig i Frankrike. Av disse leserne var 20-30 % menn (Demougin 1985 s. 1404). Mange av de franske var oversatt fra italiensk. På 1970-tallet ble franske og italienske fotoromaner solgt (på fransk eller oversatt) i Afrika. Det franskkredigerte bladet *Afrikanerinne* (*Africaine*) inneholdt fotoromaner med fotografier av afrikanere i afrikansk miljø, blant annet lagd i Dakar. Disse fotoromanene tematiserte ofte problemer i afrikanske samfunn, f.eks. en landsby som ikke vil la seg flytte på for et jernbanespor som skal legges, smugling, en muslimsk kvinnes vansker med å akseptere sin manns kone nummer to, ekteskap mellom europeer og afrikaner, og lignende (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 133). Fotoromaner ble også lest mye i Sør-Amerika og Canada (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 166). Fotoromaner har ifølge et fransk litteraturleksikon vært svært populære i Latin-Amerika, Canada, Afrika og Midtøsten (Demougin 1985 s. 1404). Baetens og Gonzales kaller sjangerens suksess i Italia, Spania og Latin-Amerika for spektakulær (1996 s. 42).

Den tidligste opprinnelsen til fotoromanen skal være stereoskopiske bilder som ble solgt fra midten av 1800-tallet og som viste fiktive hendelser som f.eks. et bryllup under konge Ludvig 15. eller illustrerte kjente sanger (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 13). Franskmannen Henri Tournier lagde midt på 1800-tallet en fotoroman basert på en roman av Louis Desnoyers: *Jean-Paul Chopparts ulykker* (1834). Et av fotografiene viser en scene der Jean-Paul Choppart blir angrepet av en ape (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 13).

En tidlig forløper for fotoromanen er den franske teatermannen og surrealisten Antonin Artauds fortelling *Munken* (publisert som bok i 1931, men basert på en skrekkroman av Matthew Gregory Lewis frå 1796). Artaud har i boka komponert sammen en montasje av fotografier som han har tatt selv, i håp om å lokke en filmregissør til å filme historien (Virmaux og Virmaux 1983 s. 95).

Nært beslektet med fotoromanen er kinoromanen, som ble solgt i store opplag fra tiden etter 1. verdenskrig. I disse romanene var det tatt lange serier av bilder fra kinofilmer og historiene ble så gjenfortalt i bokmediet. De første spanske fotoromanene hadde svart bakgrunn omgitt av små hvite firkanter, en imitasjon av perforeringene i film-celluloiden (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 42).

I fotoromanene brukes det visse knep for å la handlingen foregå vekselvis på f.eks. to steder samtidig, blant annet ved at to personer snakker i telefon med hverandre (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 41).

Noen fotoromaner ble lagd episode for episode etter at leserne fylte ut et lite spørreskjema i bladet der romanen gikk som føljetong. Leserene kunne dermed “få viljen sin” i hvordan historien skulle fortsette fra gang til gang. Det hendte også at disse bladene oppfordret leserne til å sende brev til skuespillerne som var med i fotoromanene (Baetens og Gonzales 1996 s. 38).

Eksempler på skapere av fotoromaner er Henri Mazenc, Mario Padovan og Hubert Serra. Padovan stod bak over 500 fotoromaner, Serra omtrent det dobbelte antall (Saint-Michel 1979 s. 141). Padovan gjorde Victor Hugos roman *De elendige* (1862) om til fotoroman og fortalte i et intervju med avisen *Le Monde* i 1973: “En dag (i Italia) gikk jeg tur i en avsidesliggende fjellegn. Jeg støtte på en gammel gjeter. Vet du hva han gjorde? Han leste min adaptasjon av *De elendige* til fotoroman. Denne gjeteren holdt på å oppdage Victor Hugo!” (gjengitt fra Saint-Michel 1979 s. 163).

Mange filmer som er adaptasjoner av litterære verk, er svært løst eller fritt basert på det opprinnelige verket (f.eks. en roman) eller korter historien drastisk ned. Fotoromaner som går som lange føljetonger, tar ofte med mer av historien når de er adaptasjoner enn det filmer gjør, og kan derfor fortone seg som “å gå tilbake til kilden” sammenlignet med filmversjonene (Virmaux og Virmaux 1983 s. 95).

Det er glidende overganger til andre sjangrer. Den franske forfatteren Hervé Guiberts *Suzanne og Louise* (1980), med undertittelen (*Roman-Photo*), altså med undertittel i parentes, er en håndskrevet fortelling (skjønnskift i stedet for trykte bokstaver) og med mange bilder. Det er likevel ingen fotoroman, for bildene og den verbale teksten henviser ikke så entydig til hverandre som i en fotoroman. De to gamle søstrene som boka handler om, forteller om sitt liv (Guibert 1980; upaginert).

I Federico Fellinis film *Den hvite sjeiken* (1952) har en fotoroman-serie en sentral funksjon i handlingen, en handling som dessuten har et visst preg av en sentimental fotoroman.

Legeromaner har “stått sterkt som fotoromaner i ukebladene. De har gjerne italiensk opphav. Da det første norske fotoromanbladet, *Michelle*, kom på markedet i 1983, var det nettopp en italiensk legeroman som ble presentert.” (Vibe 1984 s. 5)

Ragnar Hovland har gitt ut en kort tekst med tittelen “Eg kunne ikkje late som ingenting heller: Fotoroman”. Under fotografiene har Hovland skrevet korte tekster. Teksten er publisert i *Åleine i Alpane: 20 bøker* (1999).

Fotoromanens kulturelle status er svært lav; sjangeren “is often described in terms of ‘moving yet traumatizing stupidity’ [...] It is said that a photo-novel is so stupid, so poor, and so repetitive that there can be only one possible reaction: ignore it. One may agree that there are good reasons to bypass this medium: it can be quite meager visually (often a mechanic succession of talking heads); it can be very narrow thematically (a set of variations on the romantic and eternal love between two people that fate would keep apart); from an ideological point of view it is often highly suspect, given its unconditional defense of outdated values (such as the inferior position of women); and the medium has not changed since its origins in 1947. However, such a categorisation is unreliable. It is necessary to have a closer look at what the photo-novel really is in order to notice that it raises a lot of fascinating questions which are not possible to examine through the lens of other media such as photography, cinema, or comic strips. The photo-novel is a medium unto itself – not simply a sequence of pictures, a book version of what might have also been a film, or a comic strip with photographs – and as such it has something to teach us.” (Baetens 2012)

“The photo-novel chooses a certain host medium: the weekly magazine, which implies a certain format, a certain kind of paper, a certain kind of publication rhythm (the photo-novel is an example of periodical literature; most photo-novels are not released as complete novels but rather follow the installment format), as well as a certain kind of serialisation. [...] The photo-novel also chooses a specific kind of sign; not only photographs, but photographs made according to a certain aesthetic, based on the eroticism of the face (both male and female) and of the body (mainly female). [...]and the capacity to exploit the seductive nature of glamour photography in original narrative contexts” (Baetens 2012).

“[T]he photo-novel selects a certain kind of story to link to: the melodrama. [...] 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)

"A medium does not change because this or that aspect of its automatism is put under pressure but rather because the whole automatism is being redefined. One change has to do with a medium's content. In the case of the photo-novel this change has been manifest since the mid-1950s, when the medium actually absorbed or assimilated the structures of the film-novel. The presentation of the film-novel shifted radically to that of the photo-novel, whose host medium and visual language it began to obey. The influence of the dominating structure of the photo-novel was so strong that the content of the film in question was even undergoing changes aimed at bringing it closer to the photo-novel's basic mode of the melodrama. In exchange, the photo-novel used the sub-type of the film-novel to find an answer to the rapidly growing critiques of its own artificial and anachronistic content (this was the conceit of *The White Sheik*: the alienation of the female reader, brainwashed by the exotic dream world of the first photo-novels). More and more photo-novels tended to be 'photo-novelised' versions of the former film-novel." (Baetens 2012)

"The new photo-novel that appears from the 1980s onwards elaborates new content and new forms by taking as its starting point the book form and/or the art gallery exhibit. What matters here is not the fact that it is now real artists that are making photo-novels (Duane Michals, Marie-Françoise Plissart, James Coleman, Soll LeWitt) but that this shift in host medium goes along with a much more visible change in content matter (the new photo-novel forsakes the melodrama) and visual style (it foregrounds photography)." (Baetens 2012)

"Targeting a semi-literate and extremely poor audience photo-novels were, at least in the beginning, publications read collectively. They were shared by many readers (which was a way for consumers to cut costs) and they were commented on by groups of readers in places and at moments that fostered public debate (hence the cliché of the photo-novel as typical reading material in places of gossip such as barber shops or laundromats). However, it was not only the reading of the photo-novel that had strong collective and interactive aspects – the construction of the medium itself obeyed similar laws. How did readers actually participate in the storytelling? Two mechanisms should be stressed here. First, the industry was inviting the public to feed the scriptwriters and authors with ideas and comments; in certain cases this feedback was 'hidden', for instance when the content of the readers' letters section was 'recycled' in the storylines. In other cases it was direct

and blatant, for instance when readers were encouraged to write their own stories or to help resolve the decision-making during the unfolding of an installment. Many magazines not only ended their weekly installments with cliffhangers, they also asked their readers how they would solve the big or small enigma raised at the end of the episode. For example, does A (the man) save B (the woman) from drowning because: 1) he is interested in her money; 2) he is a good man; 3) he takes her for somebody else; 4) he is already falling in love with her, etc. The extremely flexible ways of producing a photo-novel, which allowed for the creation of new storylines almost overnight, were a strong incentive for reader participation.” (Baetens 2012)

“In addition (and probably the strongest form of interaction), both male and female readers were also urged to send in their picture so that they could become a star in the next photo-novel. Most photo-novels were shot in environments that were very familiar to the readership. Moreover, most photo-novels used men and women that had been recruited not through modeling agencies but through beauty contests that were organised in everyday locales. The step from zero to hero was not just a myth – for some young people it was a dream that could really come true (most magazines also featured stories on their actors and actresses and in all cases the proximity of reader and star was strongly emphasised). All of these procedures and mechanisms may seem to be deceptive forms of interactivity (after all, it is the scriptwriter who decides how the story will conclude and it is the producer or the owner of the magazine who picks the next star). A film like *The White Sheik* is certainly right to criticise the illusions of those who can no longer tell the difference between fiction and real life. However, such a conclusion is suspect; it bears many traces of elite and anti-feminist criticism that is as questionable as the stereotypes it claims to denounce. Other readings of the photo-novel are possible, which foreground, on the contrary, the liberating effects of this medium and its importance for a better understanding of what it means to tell stories not just in general and abstract ways but as cultural practices involving real people in real historical circumstances.” (Baetens 2012)

“Melvin van Peebles’ *Confessions of a Ex-Doofus-Itchyfooted Mutha* (NY: Akashic, 2009) is part graphic novel and part photo novel, based on his 2008 film of the same name. There is a long history of publishing photo novels that essentially retell the story of a feature film or television program using production stills, both as a way of extending the product line and enlarging the fan base. What is so interesting about the book version of *Confessions* is that it blends traditional hand-drawn imagery of the graphic novel with film stills.” (<https://sebald.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/3-photographic-novels/>; lesedato 22.01.15)

Alle artiklene og litteraturlista til hele leksikonet er tilgjengelig på <https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no>