



Living Screens: Melodrama and Plasticity in Contemporary Film and Television (Disruptions)

Monique Rooney

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Through original analysis of three contemporary, auteur-directed melodramas (Matthew Weiner's *Mad Men*, Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* and Todd Haynes's *Mildred Pierce*), *Living Screens* reconceives and renovates the terms in which melodrama has been understood. Returning to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's foundational, Enlightenment-era melodrama *Pygmalion* with its revival of an old story about sculpted objects that spring to life, it contends that this early production prefigures the structure of contemporary melodramas and serves as a model for the way we interact with media today. Melodrama is conceptualized as a "plastic" form with the capacity to mould and be moulded and that speaks to fundamental processes of mediation.

Living Screens evokes the thrills, anxieties, and uncertainties accompanying our attachment to technologies that are close-at-hand yet have far-reaching effects. In doing so, it explores the plasticity of our current situation, in which we live with screens that melodramatically touch our lives.

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