



# 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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