

Levine, Elana, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "Seeing the *Light*: Transitioning daytime serials from radio to television"

On June 30, 1952, listeners of CBS Radio's daytime serial, *The Guiding Light*, had their first chance to see the characters they had long envisioned when the program began to air on CBS Television. The process of televising *The Guiding Light* and a number of other serials presented a unique test to their writers, producers, and performers, many of whom continued the radio versions of their shows while forging into the new medium. As a radio genre that inspired an intense relationship between program and listener, the daytime serial had much to lose in its reconfiguration as a visual as well as an aural storyteller.

This paper examines the transition of radio serials to television in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and grapples with the challenges the creators of these programs faced as they began to translate the aural into the audio-visual. In the early attempts at TV serials, creators had to negotiate matters of narrative, performance, mise-en-scene, and shot selection, finding a way to make visual features assist the storytelling previously accomplished solely through aural means. At the same time, they had to face the ways in which a television broadcast might endanger the secure place of serials in the lives of their audience, given the potential disruption to housewives' work that television posed. Drawing on archival documentation in the collections of serial creator Irna Phillips and producer Procter & Gamble, as well as analyzing a few surviving broadcasts, I argue that the process of bringing daytime serials to television demonstrates the challenges faced by an industry and a culture seeking to displace one medium with another and exposes the particular tensions around gender and domesticity that helped to make this such a fraught transition.

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