

## Soap Operas

Soap operas have been broadcast for many years. Before television there were radio programs similar to the present-day soap operas. Although day-time serials have been on the air a long time, they are still very unrealistic. Three of the most unrealistic aspects of soap operas are the distorted presentation of time, the cosmetic appearance of the characters and their surroundings, and the concentrated misery of the characters.

By distorting the passing of time, soap operas insult their audience's intelligence. For instance, on *All My Children* little Carl Blair, on a Monday afternoon, was playing with a squeeze toy in his playpen. Then, three weeks later, as a four year old he was in the park throwing a football back and forth with a friend. Another example of distorted time took place on *Guiding Light*. Faith Baver, at the age of thirteen, left home to attend a girls' boarding school. She returned home two years later as an eighteen year old graduate. Although soap operas distort time, the rate of progress on the serials is still very slow.

Another unrealistic aspect of the daytime serials is the cosmetic appearance of the characters. For example, in *General Hospital*, Laura Baldwin was raped and hospitalized one evening after work. The next morning when she woke up, her hair appeared freshly groomed and her make-up was perfectly applied. Not only does the lack of realism appear in the characters' cosmetic appearance, but it also appears in their immaculate surroundings. For instance, on *One Life To Live* Samantha Vernon moved into a new apartment without any of the normal disorder and chaos that goes along with moving day. In two days' time, Samantha's apartment was neatly arranged with everything in place. Even her walls were decorated with pictures and wall vases. Although Samantha worked at her job full time during the two moving days, her apartment was picturesque.

Although everyone has to endure some misery, the characters on the daily soap operas endure an overabundance of misery; they have one misfortune after another. An example of this is Laura Baldwin of *General Hospital*. At the age of twelve, Laura discovered she was the illegitimate daughter of Dr. Leslie Weber and not the daughter of Barbara and Jason Vining, who had reared her since birth. Then, she ran away from home to Canada and lived in a commune with some other teenagers. Later, when she returned home, she had an affair with an older man which resulted in her accidentally killing him and being put on probation for a year. Within the same year she had an auto accident that nearly killed her. Later, after taking a job as a waitress at a disco, she was raped by her boss. Laura had endured all of these unpleasant misfortunes before reaching the age of eighteen.

Soap operas have improved a great deal since radio days, but they are still ridiculous and unrealistic. Nevertheless, these serials are loved and enjoyed by millions of viewers every day.