

Women's Work

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The Western-Holly Company in 1952 marketed a new design in domestic technology, the TV-stove. The oven included a window through which the housewife could watch her chicken roast. Above the oven window was a TV screen that presented an even more spectacular sight. With the aid of this machine the housewife would be able to prepare her meal, but at the same time she could watch TV. Although it was clearly an odd object, the TV-stove was not simply a historical fluke. Rather, its invention should remind us of the concrete social, economic, and ideological conditions that made this contraption possible. Indeed, the TV-stove was a response to the conflation of labor and leisure time at home. If we now find it strange, this has as much to do with the way in which our society has conceptualized work and leisure as it does with the machine's bizarre technological form.¹

Since the nineteenth century, middle-class ideals of domesticity had been predicated on divisions of leisure time and work time. The doctrine of two spheres represented human activity in spatial terms: the public world came to be conceived of as a place of productive labor, while the home was seen as a site of rejuvenation and consumption. By the 1920s, the public world was still a sphere of work, but it was also opened up to a host of commercial pleasures such as movies and amusement parks that were incorporated

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TELEVISION: THE CRITICAL VIEW
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into middle-class life styles. The ideal home, however, remained a place of revitalization and, with the expansion of convenience products that promised to reduce household chores, domesticity was even less associated with production.

As feminists have argued, this separation has justified the exploitation of the housewife whose work at home simply does not count. Along these lines, Nancy Folbre claims that classical economics considers women's work as voluntary labor and therefore outside the realm of exploitation. In addition, she argues, even Marxist critics neglect the issue of domestic exploitation since they assume that the labor theory of value can be applied only to efficiency-oriented production for the market and not to "inefficient" and "idiosyncratic" household chores.²

As feminist critics and historians have shown, however, the home is indeed a site of labor. Not only do women do physical chores, but also the basic relations of our economy and society are reproduced at home, including the literal reproduction of workers through childrearing labor. Once the home is considered a workplace, the divisions between public/work and domestic/leisure become less clear. The way in which work and leisure are connected, however, remains a complex question.

Henri Lefebvre's studies of everyday life offer ways to consider the general interrelations between work, leisure, and family life in modern society. In his foreword to the 1958 edition of *Criquiries de la Vie Quotidienne*, Lefebvre argues:

Leisure . . . cannot be separated from work. It is the same man who, after work, rests or relaxes or does whatever he chooses. Every day, at the same time, the worker leaves the factory, and the employee, the office. Every week, Saturday and Sunday are spent on leisure activities, with the same regularity as that of the weekdays' work. Thus we must think in terms of the unity "work-leisure," because that unity exists, and everyone tries to program his own available time according to what his work is—and what it is not.³

While Lefebvre concentrated on the "working man," the case of the housewife presents an even more pronounced example of the integration of work and leisure in everyday life.

In recent years, media scholars have begun to demonstrate the impact that patterns of domestic leisure and labor have on television spectatorship. British ethnographic research has suggested that men and women tend to use television according to their specific position within the distribution of leisure and labor activities inside and outside the home.⁴ In the American context, two of the most serious examinations come from Tania Modleski (1983) and Nick Browne (1984), who have both theorized the way TV watching fits into a general pattern of everyday life where work and leisure are intertwined. Modleski has suggested that the soap opera might be understood in terms of the "rhythms of reception," or the way women working at home relate to the text within a specific milieu of distraction—cleaning,

cooking, childrearing, and so on.⁵ Browne concentrates not on the individual text, but rather on the entire TV schedule, which he claims is ordered according to the logic of the workday of both men and women. "[T]he position of the programs in the television schedule reflects and is determined by the work-structured order of the real social world. The patterns of position and flow imply the question of who is home, and through complicated social relay and temporal mediations, link television to the modes, processes, and scheduling of production characteristic of the general population."⁶

The fluid interconnection between leisure and labor at home presents a context in which to understand representations of the female audience during the postwar years. Above all, women's leisure time was shown to be coterminous with their work time. Representations of television continually addressed women as housewives and presented them with a notion of spectatorship that was inextricably intertwined with their useful labor at home. Certainly, this model of female spectatorship was based on previous notions about radio listeners, and we can assume that women were able to adapt some of their listening habits to television viewing without much difficulty. However, the added impact of visual images ushered in new dilemmas that were the subject of profound concern, both within the broadcast industry and within the popular culture at large.

The Industry's Ideal Viewer

The idea that female spectators were also workers in the home was, by the postwar period, a truism for broadcasting and advertising executives. For some twenty years, radio programmers had grappled with ways to address a group of spectators whose attention wasn't focused primarily on the medium (as in the cinema), but instead moved constantly between radio entertainment and a host of daily chores. As William Boddy has argued, early broadcasters were particularly reluctant to feature daytime radio shows, fearing that women's household work would be fundamentally incompatible with the medium.⁷ Overcoming its initial reluctance, the industry successfully developed daytime radio in the 1930s, and by the 1940s housewives constituted a faithful audience for soap operas and advice programs.

During the postwar years, advertisers and networks once more viewed the daytime market with skepticism, fearing that their loyal radio audiences would not be able to make the transition to television. The industry assumed that, unlike radio, television might require the housewife's complete attention and thus disrupt her work in the home.⁸ Indeed, while network prime-time schedules were well worked out in 1948, networks and national advertisers were reluctant to feature regular daytime programs. Thus, in the earliest years, morning and afternoon hours were typically left to the discretion of local stations, which filled the time with low budget versions of familiar radio formats and old Hollywood films.

The first network to offer a regular daytime schedule was DuMont, which began operations on its owned and operated station WABD in New

York in November of 1948. As a newly formed network which had severe problems competing with CBS and NBC, DuMont entered the daytime market to offset its economic losses in prime time at a time when even the major networks were losing money on television.⁹ Explaining the economic strategy behind the move into daytime, one DuMont executive claimed, "WABD is starting daytime programming because it is not economically feasible to do otherwise. Night time programming alone could not support radio, nor can it support television."¹⁰ Increasingly in 1949, DuMont offered daytime programming to its affiliate stations. By December, it was transmitting the first commercially sponsored, daytime network show, *Okay, Mother*, to three affiliates and also airing a two-hour afternoon program on a full network basis. DuMont director Commander Mortimer W. Loewi reasoned that the move into daytime would attract small ticket advertisers who wanted to buy "small segments of time at a low, daytime rate."¹¹

DuMont's venture into the daytime market was a thorn in the side of the other networks. While CBS, NBC, and ABC had experimented with individual daytime television programs on their flagship stations, they were reluctant to feature full daytime schedules. With huge investments in daytime radio, they weren't likely to find the prospects of daytime television appealing, especially since they were using their radio profits to offset initial losses in prime-time programming. As *Variety* reported when DuMont began its broadcasts on WABD, the major networks "must protect their AM [radio] investment at all costs—and the infiltration of daytime TV may conceivably cut into daytime radio advertising."¹² In this context, DuMont's competition in the daytime market posed a particularly grave threat to advertising revenues. In response, the other networks gradually began expanding the daytime lineups for their flagship stations.¹³

It was in 1951 that CBS, NBC, and, to a lesser extent, ABC first aggressively attempted to colonize the housewife's workday with regularly scheduled network programs. One of the central reasons for the networks' move into daytime that year was the fact that prime-time hours were fully booked by advertisers and that, by this point, there was more demand for TV advertising in general. As the advertising agency BBDO claimed in a report on daytime TV in the fall of 1950, "To all intents and purposes, the opportunity to purchase good night-time periods of TV is almost a thing of the past and the advertiser hopping to enter television now . . . better start looking at Daytime TV while it is still here to look at."¹⁴ Daytime might have been more risky than prime time, but it had the advantage of being available—and at a cheaper network cost. Confident of its move into daytime, CBS claimed, "We aren't risking our reputation by predicting that daytime television will be some sad advertisers who didn't read the tea leaves right."¹⁵ ABC vice president Alexander Stronach Jr. was just as certain about the daytime market, and having just taken the plunge with the *Francis and the Holyday Don Amadeo Show* (a variety program budgeted at the then steep \$40,000 a week),

Stronach told *Newswatch*, "It's a good thing electric dishwashers and washing machines were invented. The housewives will need them."¹⁶

The networks' confidence carried through to advertisers who began to test the waters of the daytime schedule. In September of 1951, the trade journal *Television* reported that "forty-seven big advertisers have used daytime network television during the past season or are starting this fall."¹⁷ Included were such well-known companies as American Home Products, Best Foods, Procter and Gamble, General Foods, Hazel Bishop Lipsticks, Minute Maid, Hormel, and the woman's magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*.¹⁸

Despite these inroads, the early daytime market remained highly unstable, and at least until 1955 the competition for sponsors was fierce.¹⁹ Indeed, even while the aggregate size of the daytime audience rose in the early fifties, sponsors and broadcasters were uncertain about the extent to which housewives actually paid attention to the programs and advertisements. In response to such concerns, the industry aggressively tailored programs to fit the daily habits of the female audience. When it began operations in 1948, DuMont's WABD planned shows that could "be appreciated just as much from listening to them as from watching them."²⁰ Following this trend in 1950, Detroit's WXXX aired *Pat 'n' Johnny*, a program that solved the housework-TV conflict in less than subtle ways. At the beginning of the three-hour show, host Johnny Slagle instructed housewives, "Don't stop whatever you're doing. When we think we have something interesting I'll blow this whistle or Pat will ring her bell."²¹

The major networks were also intent upon designing programs to suit the content and organization of the housewife's day. The format that has received the most critical attention is the soap opera, which first came to network television in December of 1950. As Robert Allen has demonstrated, early soap opera producers like Ina Phillips of *Guiding Light* were skeptical of moving their shows from radio to TV. However, by 1954 the Nielsen Company reported that soaps had a substantial following. *Search For Tomorrow* was the second most popular daytime show while *Guiding Light* was in fourth place. The early soaps, with their minimum of action and visual interest, allowed housewives to listen to dialogue while working in another room. Moreover, their segmented storylines (usually two a day), as well as their repetition and constant explanation of previous plots, allowed women to divide their attention between viewing and household work.²²

Another popular solution to the daytime dilemma was the segmented variety show that allowed women to enter and exit the text according to its discrete narrative units. One of DuMont's first programs, for example, was a shopping show (alternatively called *At Your Service* and *Shoppers Martine*) that consisted of twenty-one entertainment segments, all of which revolved around different types of "women's issues."²³ For instance, the "Bite Shop" presented fashion tips while "Kitchen Fare" gave culinary advice. Interspersed with these segments were twelve one-minute "score bulletins" (news and service announcements) that could be replaced at individual stations by

local commercials.²² While DuMont's program was short-lived, the basic principles survived in the daytime shows at the major networks. Programs like *The Garry Moore Show* (CBS), *The Kate Smith Show* (NBC), and *The Arthur Godfrey Show* (CBS) catered to housewife audiences with their segmented variety of entertainment and advice.²³

Indeed, the networks put enormous amounts of money and effort into variety shows when they first began to compose daytime program schedules. Daytime ratings continually confirmed the importance of the variety format, with hosts like Smith and Godfrey drawing big audiences. Since daytime stars were often taken from nighttime radio shows, the variety programs were immediately marked as being different from and more spectacular than daytime radio. *Variety* reported in October of 1951:

The daytime television picture represents a radical departure from radio. The application of "nighttime thinking" into daytime TV in regards to big-league variety-styled programs and projection of personalities becomes more and more important. If the housewife has a craving for visual soap operas, it is neither reflected in the present day Nielsen nor in the ambitious programming formulas being blueprinted by the video entrepreneurs. . . . The housewife with her multiple chores, it would seem, wants her TV distractions on a "catch as catch can" basis, and the single-minded concentration on sight-and-sound weepers doesn't jibe with her household schedule. . . . [Variety shows] are all geared to the "take it awhile leave it awhile" school of entertainment projection and practically all are reaping a bonanza for the networks.²⁴

Television thus introduced itself to the housewife not only by repeating tried and true daytime radio formulas, but also by creating a distinct product tailored to what the industry assumed were the television audience's specific needs and desires.

Initially uncertain about the degree to which daytime programs from an audio medium would suit the housewife's routine, many television broadcasters turned their attention to the visual medium of the popular press. Variety shows often modeled themselves on print conventions, particularly borrowing narrative techniques from women's magazines and the women's pages. Much as housewives might flip through the pages of a magazine as they went about their daily chores, they could tune in and out of the magazine program without the kind of disorientation that they might experience when disrupted from a continuous drama. To ensure coherence, such programs included "women's editors" or "fencees" who provided a narrative thread for a series of "departments" on gardening, homemaking, fashion, and the like. These shows often went to extreme lengths to make the connection between print media and television programming foremost in the viewer's mind. *Women's Magazine of the Air*, a local program aired in Chicago on WGN, presented a "poppouri theme with magazine pages being turned to indicate new sections."²⁵ On its locally owned station, the *Saturday Post* presented *Women's Pages*, starring *Post* book and music editor Suzanne Martin. The networks also used the popular press as a model for daytime

programs. As early as 1948, CBS's New York station aired *Vanity Fair*, a segmented format that was tied together by "managing editor" Dorothy Dean, an experienced newspaper reporter. By the end of 1949, *Vanity Fair* was boasting a large list of sponsors, and in the fifties it continued to be part of the daytime schedule. Nevertheless, despite its success with *Vanity Fair*, CBS still tended to rely more heavily on well-known radio stars and formats, adapting these to the television medium. Instead, it was NBC that developed the print media model most aggressively in the early fifties.

Faced with daytime ratings that were consistently behind those of CBS and troubled by severe sponsorship problems, NBC saw the variety/magazine format as a particularly apt vehicle for small ticket advertisers who could purchase brief participation spots between program segments for relatively low cost.²⁶ Under the direction of programming vice president Sylvester "Pat" Weaver (who became NBC president in 1953), the network developed its "magazine concept" of advertising. Unlike the single sponsor series, which was usually produced through the advertising agency, the magazine concept allowed the network to retain control and ownership of programs. Although this form of multiple sponsor participation had become a common daytime practice by the early 1950s, Weaver's scheme differed from other participation plans because it allowed sponsors to purchase segments on a one-shot basis, with no ongoing commitment to the series. Even if this meant greater financial risks at the outset, in the long run a successful program based on spot sales would garner large amounts of revenue for the network.²⁷

Weaver applied the magazine concept to two of the most highly successful daytime programs, *Today* and *Home*. Aired between 7:00 and 9:00 A.M., *Today* was NBC's self-proclaimed "television newspaper, covering not only the latest news, weather and time signals, but special features on everything from fashions to the hydrogen bomb."²⁸ On its premier episode in January 1952, *Today* made the print media connections firm in viewers' minds by showing telephoto machines grinding out pictures and front page facsimiles of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.²⁹ Aimed at a family audience, the program attempted to lure men, women, and children with discrete program segments that addressed their different interests and meshed with their separate schedules. One NBC confidential report stated that, on the one hand, men rushing off to take a train would not be likely to watch fashion segments. On the other hand, it suggested, "men might be willing to catch the next train" if they included an "almost sexy gal as part of the show."³⁰ This, the report concluded, would be like "subtle, early morning sex."

Although it was aimed at the entire family, the lion's share of the audience was female. (In 1954, for example, the network calculated that the audience was composed of 52 percent women, 26 percent men, and 22 percent children.)³¹ *Today* appealed to housewives with "women's pages" news stories such as Hollywood gossip segments, fashion shows, and humanistic features. In August 1952, NBC's New York outlet inserted "Today's Woman" into the program, a special women's magazine feature that was

produced in cooperation with *Look* and *Quick* magazines.³² Enthused with *Today's* success, NBC developed *Home* with similar premises in mind, but this time aimed the program specifically at women. First aired in 1954 during the 11:00 A.M. to noon time slot, *Home* borrowed its narrative techniques from women's magazines, featuring segments on topics like gardening, child psychology, food, fashion, health, and interior decor. As *Newsweek* wrote, "The program is planned to do for women on the screen what the women's magazines have long done in print."³³

In fashioning daytime shows on familiar models of the popular press, television executives and advertisers were guided by the implicit assumption that the female audience had much in common with the typical magazine reader. When promoting *Today* and *Home*, NBC used magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Collier's* (which also had a large female readership) as major venues. When *Home* first appeared it even offered women copies of its own monthly magazine, *How To Do It*.³⁴ Magazine publishers also must have seen the potential profits in the cross-over audience; the first sponsor for *Today* was Kiplinger's magazine *Changing Times*, and *Life* and *Curtis* magazines were soon to follow.³⁵

The fluid transactions between magazine publishers and daytime producers were based on widely held notions about the demographic composition of the female audience. In 1954, the same year that *Home* premiered, NBC hired W. R. Simmons and Associates to conduct the first nationwide qualitative survey of daytime viewers. In a promotional report based on the survey, Dr. Tom Coffin, manager of NBC research, told advertisers and manufacturers, "In analyzing the findings, we have felt a growing sense of excitement at the qualitative picture emerging: an audience with the *size* of a mass medium but the *quality* of a class medium." When compared to nonviewers, daytime viewers were at the "age of acquisition," with many in the twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-old category, their families were larger with more children under eighteen, they had higher incomes, and they lived in larger and "better" market areas. In addition, Coffin characterized the average viewer as a "modern active woman" with a kitchen full of "labor-saving devices," an interest in her house, clothes, and "the way she looks." She is "the kind of woman most advertisers are most interested in; she's a good customer."³⁶ Coffin's focus on the "class versus mass" audience bears striking resemblance to the readership statistics of middle-class women's magazines. Like the magazine reader, "Mrs. Daytime Consumer" was an upscale, if only moderately affluent, housewife whose daily life consisted not only of chores, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, shopping for her family.

With this picture of the housewife in mind, the media producer had one primary job—teaching her how to buy products. Again, the magazine format was perfect for this because each discrete narrative segment could portray an integrated sales message. Hollywood gossip columns gave way to motion picture endorsements; cooking segments sold sleek new ranges; fashion shows promoted Macy's finest evening wear. By integrating sales messages with advice on housekeeping and luxury lifestyles, the magazine

format skillfully suggested to housewives that their time spent viewing television was indeed part of their work time. In other words, the programs promised viewers not just entertainment, but also lessons on how to make consumer choices for their families. One production handbook claimed: "Women's daytime programs have tended toward the practical—providing shopping information, marketing tips, cooking, sewing, interior decoration, etc., with a dash of fashion and beauty hints. . . . The theory is that the housewife will be more likely to take time from her household duties if she feels that her television viewing will make her housekeeping more efficient and help her provide more gracious living for her family."³⁷ In the case of *Home*, this implicit integration of housework, consumerism, and TV entertainment materialized in the form of a circular stage that the network promoted as a "machine for selling."³⁸ The stage was equipped with a complete kitchen, a workshop area, and a small garden—all of which functioned as settings for different program segments and, of course, the different sponsor products that accompanied them. Thus, *Home's* magazine format provided a unique arena for the presentation of a series of fagimented consumer fantasies that women might tune into and out of, according to the logic of their daily schedules.

Even if the structure of this narrative format was the ideal vehicle for "Mrs. Daytime Consumer," the content of the consumer fantasies still had to be carefully planned. Like the woman's magazine before it, the magazine show needed to maintain the subtle balance of its "class address." In order to appeal to the average middle-class housewife, it had to make its consumer fantasies fit with the more practical concerns of female viewers. The degree to which network executives attempted to strike this balance is well illustrated in the case of *Home*. After the program's first airing, NBC executive Charles Barry was particularly concerned about the amount of "polish" that it contained. Using "polish" as a euphemism for highbrow tastes, Barry went on to observe the problems with *Home's* class address: "I hope you will keep in mind that the average gal looking at the show is either living in a small suburban house or in an apartment and is not very likely to have heard of Paul McCobb; she is more likely to be at a Macy's buying traditionally." After observing other episodes, Barry had similar complaints: the precocious stage children weren't "average" enough, the furniture segment featured impractical items, and the cooking segment showcased high-class foods such as vichyssoise and pot-de-creme. "Maybe you can improve tastes," Barry conceded, "but gosh would somebody please tell me how to cook corned beef and cabbage without her means, but only through producer could educate the housewife beyond her means, but only through mixing upperclass fantasy with tropes of averageness."

The figure of the female hostess was also fashioned to strike this delicate balance. In order to appeal to the typical housewife, the hostess would ideally speak on her level. As one producer argued, "Those who give an impression of superiority or 'talking down' to the audience, who treasure the manner of speaking over naturalness and meaningful communica-

tion . . . or who are overly formal in attire and manners, do not survive in the broadcasting industry. . . . The personality should fit right into your living room. The super-sophisticate or the squealing life of the party might be all right on occasion, but a daily association with this girl is apt to get a little tiresome."⁴⁰ In addition, the ideal hostess was decidedly not a glamour girl, but rather a pleasingly attractive, middle-aged woman—Hollywood's answer to the home economics teacher. When first planning *Home*, one NBC executive considered using the celebrity couple Van and Evie Johnson for hosts, claiming that Evie was "a sensible woman, not a glamor-struck movie star's wife, but a wholesome girl from a wholesome background. . . . She works hard at being a housewife and Mother who runs a not elaborate household in Beverly Hills with *no swimming pool*." Although Evie didn't get the part, her competitor, Alene Francis, was clearly cut from the same cloth. In a 1957 fanzine, Francis highlighted her ordinariness when she admitted, "My nose is too long and I'm too skinny, but maybe that won't make any difference if I'm fun to be with."⁴¹ Francis was also a calm, mother figure who appealed to children. In a fan letter, one mother wrote that her little boy took a magazine to bed with him that had Alene's picture on the cover.⁴² Unlike the "almost sexy" fantasy woman on the *Today* show who was perfect for "morning sex," *Home*'s fence appealed to less exotic instincts. Francis and other daytime hostesses were designed to provide a role model for ordinary housewives, educating them on the "good life," while still appearing down to earth.

In assuming the role of "consumer educator," the networks went beyond just teaching housewives how to buy advertisers' products. Much more crucially in this early period, the networks attempted to teach women and their families how to consume television itself. Indeed, the whole system pivoted on the singular problem of how to make the daytime audience watch more programming. Since it adapted itself to the family's daily routine, the magazine show was particularly suited for this purpose. When describing the habits of *Today*'s morning audience, Weaver acknowledged that the "show, of course, does not hold the same audience throughout the time period, but actually is a service fitting with the family's own habit pattern in the morning."⁴³ Importantly, however, NBC continually tried to channel the movements of the audience. Not merely content to fit its programming into the viewer's rhythms of reception, the network aggressively sought to change those rhythms by making the activity of television viewing into a new daily habit. One NBC report made this point quite explicit, suggesting that producers "establish definite show patterns at regular times; do everything you can to capitalize on the great habit of habit listening."⁴⁴ Proud of his accomplishments on this front, Weaver bragged about fan mail that demonstrated how *Today* changed viewers' daily routines. According to Weaver, one woman claimed, "My husband said I should put casters on the TV set so I can roll it around and see it from the kitchen." Another admitted, "I used to get all the dishes washed by 8:30—now I don't do a

thing until 10 o'clock." Still another confessed, "My husband now dresses in the living room." Weaver boastfully promised, "We will change the habits of millions."⁴⁵

The concept of habitual viewing also governed NBC's scheduling techniques. The network devised promotional strategies designed to maintain systems of flow, as each program ideally would form a "lead in" for the next, tailored to punctuate intervals of the family's daily routine. In 1954, for example, an NBC report on daytime stated that *Today* was perfect for the early morning time slot because it "has a family audience . . . and reaches them just before they go out to shop." With shopping done, mothers might return home to find *Ding Dong School*, "a nursery school on television" that allowed them to do homework while educator Frances Horwich helped raise the pre-schoolers. Daytime dramas were scheduled throughout the day, each lasting only fifteen minutes, probably because the network assumed that drama would require more of the housewife's attention than the segmented variety formats like *Home*. At 5 p.m., when mothers were likely to be preparing dinner, *The Pinky Lee Show* presented a mixed bag of musical acts, dance routines, parlor games, and talk aimed both at women and their children who were now home from school.⁴⁶

NBC aggressively promoted this kind of routinized viewership, buying space in major market newspapers and national periodicals for advertisements that instructed women how to watch television while doing household chores. In 1955, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping* carried advertisements for NBC's daytime lineup that suggested that not only the programs, but also the scheduling of the programs, would suit the housewife's daily routine. The ads evoked a sense of fragmented leisure time and suggested that television viewing could be conducted in a state of distraction. This was not the kind of critical contemplative distraction that Walter Benjamin suggested in his seminal essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."⁴⁷ Rather, the ads implied that the housewife could accomplish her chores in a state of "utopian forgetfulness" as she worked freely between her work and the act of watching television.

One advertisement, which is particularly striking in this regard, includes a sketch of a housewife and her little daughter at the top of the page. Below this, the graphic layout is divided into eight boxes composed of television screens, each representing a different program in NBC's daytime lineup. The caption functions as the housewife's testimony to her distracted state. She asks, "Where Did the Morning Go? The house is tidy . . . but it hasn't seemed like a terribly tiring morning. . . . I think I started ironing while I watched the *Sheriff Graham Show*." The housewife goes on to register each detail of the programs, but she cannot with certainty account for her productive activities in the home. Furthermore, as the ad's layout suggests, the woman's daily activities are literally fragmented according to the pattern of the daytime television schedule, to the extent that her everyday experiences become imbricated in a kind of serial narrative. Significantly, her child

pictured at the top of the advertisement appears within the contours of a television screen so that the labor of childrearing is itself made part of the narrative pleasures offered by the network's daytime lineup.⁴⁸

Negotiating with the Industry's Ideal Viewer

The program types, schedules, and promotional materials devised at the networks were based upon ideal images of female viewers and, consequently, they were rooted in abstract conceptions about women's lives. These ideals weren't always commensurate with the heterogeneous experiences and situations of real women and, for this reason, industrial strategies didn't always form a perfect fit with the audience's needs and desires. Although it is impossible to reconstruct fully the actual activities of female viewers at home, we can better understand their concerns and practices by examining the ways in which their viewing experiences were explained to them at the time. Popular media, particularly women's magazines, presented women with opportunities to negotiate with the modes of spectatorship that the television industry tried to construct. It is in these texts that we see the gaps and inconsistencies—the unexpected twists and turns—that were not foreseen by networks and advertisers. Indeed, it is in the magazines, rather than in the high-rise buildings of NBC, CBS, and ABC, where female audiences were given the chance to enter into a popular dialogue about their own relations to the medium.

While the networks were busy attempting to tailor daytime programming to the patterns of domestic labor, popular media often completely rejected the idea that television could be compatible with women's work and showed instead how it would threaten the efficient functioning of the household. The TV-addict housewife became a stock character during the period, particularly in texts aimed at a general audience where the mode of address was characterized by an implicit male narrator who clearly blamed women—not television—for the untidy house. In 1950, for example, *The New Yorker* ran a cartoon that showed a slovenly-looking woman ironing a shirt while blankly staring at the television screen. Unfortunately, in her state of distraction, the woman burned a hole in the garment.⁴⁹ Women's magazines also deliberated upon television's thoroughly negative effect on household chores, but rather than poking fun at the housewife, they offered sympathetic advice, usually suggesting that a careful management of domestic space might solve the problem. In 1950, *Home Beautiful* warned of television: "It delivers about five times as much wallop as radio and requires in return five times as much attention. . . . It's impossible to get anything accomplished in the same room while it's on." The magazine offered a spatial solution, telling women "to get the darn thing out of the living room, and into the TV room, cellar, library, "or as a last resort stick it in the dining room."⁵⁰

In *The Homewomen*, a working-class situation comedy, television's obstruction of household work was related to marital strife. The first episode

of the series, "TV or Not TV" (1955), revolves around the purchase of a television set and begins with an establishing shot of the sparsely-decorated Kramerden kitchen where a clothes basket filled with wet wash sits on the table. Entering from the bedroom in her hausfrau garb, Alice Kramerden approaches the kitchen sink and puts a plunger over the drain, apparently attempting to unclog it. As pictured in this opening scene, Alice is, to say the least, a victim of household drudgery. Not surprisingly, Alice begs Ralph for a television set, hoping that it will make her life more pleasant.

In a later scene, after the Kramerdens purchase their TV set, this situation changes, but not for the better. Ralph returns home from work while Alice sits before her television set. Here is the exchange between the couple:

Ralph: Would you mind telling me where my supper is?

Alice: I didn't make it yet. . . . I sat down to watch the four o'clock movie and I got so interested I . . . uh what time is it anyway?

Ralph: I knew this would happen Alice. We've had that set three days now, and I haven't had a hot meal since we got it.

Thus, television is the source of a dispute between the couple, a dispute that arises from the housewife's inability to perform her productive function while enjoying an afternoon program.

A 1955 ad for Drano provided a solution to television's obstruction of household chores. Here the housewife is shown watching her afternoon soap opera, but this unproductive activity is sanctioned only insofar as her servant does the housework. As the maid exclaims, "Shucks, I'll never know if she gets her man 'cause this is the day of the week I put Drano in all the drains!" The Drano Company thus attempted to sell its product by giving women a glamorous vision of themselves enjoying an afternoon of television. But it could do so only by splitting the functions of relaxation and work across two representational figures—the lady of leisure and the domestic servant.⁵¹

If the domestic servant was a fantasy solution to the conflict between work and television, the women's magazines suggested more practical ways to manage the problem. *Better Homes and Gardens* advised in 1949 that the television set should be placed in an area where it could be viewed, "while you're doing things up in the kitchen." Similarly in 1954, *American Home* told readers to put the TV set in the kitchen so that "Mama sees her pet programs. . . ." Via such spatial remedies, labor would not be affected by the leisure of viewing nor would viewing be denied by household chores.⁵² In fact, household labor and television were continually condensed into one space designed to accommodate both activities. In a 1955 issue of *American Home*, this labor-leisure viewing condensation provided the terms of a joke. A cartoon showed a housewife tediously hanging her laundry on the outdoor clothesline. The drudgery of this work is miraculously solved as the housewife brings her laundry into her home and sits before her television set while letting the laundry dry on the television antenna.⁵³

The spatial condensation of labor and viewing was part of a well entrenched functionalist discourse. The home had to provide rooms that

would allow for a practical orchestration of "modern living activities" that now included watching television. Functionalism was particularly useful for advertisers, who used it to promote not just one household item but an entire product line. In 1952, for example, the Crane Company displayed its kitchen appliance ensemble, complete with ironing, laundering, and cooking facilities. Here the housewife could do multiple tasks at once because all the fixtures were "matched together as a complete chore unit." One particularly attractive component of this "chore unit" was a television set built into the wall above the washer/dryer.⁵⁴

While spatial condensations of labor and leisure helped to soothe tensions about television's obstruction of household chores, other problems still existed. The magazines suggested that television would cause increasing work loads. Considering the cleanliness of the living room, *House Beautiful* told its readers in 1948: "Then the men move in for boxing, wrestling, basketball, hockey. They get excited. Ashes on the floor. Pretzel crumbs. Beer stains." The remedy was again spatial: "Lots of sets after a few months have been moved into dens and recreation rooms."⁵⁵ In a slight twist of terms, the activity of eating was said to be moving out of the dining area and into the television-sitting area. Food stains soiling upholstery, floors, and other surfaces meant extra work for women. Vinyl upholstery, linoleum floors, tiling, and other spill-proof surfaces were recommended. Advertisers for all kinds of cleaning products found television especially useful in their sales pitches. In 1953, the Bissell Carpet Sweeper Company asked housewives, "What do you do when the TV crowd leaves popcorn and crumbs on your rug? You could leave the mess till morning—or drag out the vacuum. But if you're on the beam, you slick it up with a handy Bissell Sweeper."⁵⁶ In addition to the mess generated by television, the set itself called for maintenance. In 1955, *House Beautiful* asked if a "misty haze dims your TV screen" and recommended the use of "wipe-on liquids and impregnated wiping cloths to remedy the problem." The Drackett Company, producer of Windex Spray, quickly saw the advantage that television held for its product: in 1948 it advertised the cleaner as a perfect solution for a dirty screen.⁵⁷

Besides the extra cleaning, television also kept housewives busy in the kitchen. The magazines showed women how to be gracious hostesses, always prepared to serve family and friends special TV treats. These snacktime chores created a lucrative market for manufacturers. For example, in 1952 *American Home* presented a special china collection for "Early Tea and Late TV," while other companies promoted TV snack trays and TV tables.⁵⁸ The most exaggerated manifestation appeared in 1954. The TV dinner was the perfect remedy for the extra work entailed by television, and it also allowed children to eat their toss-away meals while watching *Hopalong Cassidy*.

While magazines presented readers with a host of television-related tasks, they also suggested ways for housewives to ration their labor. Time-motion studies, which were integral to the discourses of feminism and domestic science since the Progressive era, were rigorously applied to the problem of

increasing work loads. All unnecessary human movement that the television set might demand had to be minimized. Again, this called for a careful management of space. The magazines suggested that chairs and sofas be placed so that they need not be moved for watching television. Alternatively, furniture could be made mobile. By placing wheels on a couch, it was possible to exert minimal energy while converting a sitting space into a viewing space. Similarly, casters and lazy Susans could be placed on television sets so that housewives might easily move the screen to face the direction of the viewers.⁵⁹ More radically, space between rooms could be made continuous. In 1952, *House Beautiful* suggested a "continuity" of living, dining, and television areas wherein "a curved sofa and a folding screen mark off [the] television corner from the living and dining room." Via this carefully managed spatial continuum, "it takes no more than an extra ten steps or so to serve the TV fans."⁶⁰

Continuous space was also a response to the more general problem of television and family relationships. Women's household work presented a dilemma for the twin ideals of family unity and social divisions, since housewives were ideally meant to perform their distinctive productive functions but, at the same time, take part in the family's leisure-time pursuits. This conflict between female isolation from and integration into the family group was rooted in Victorian domestic ideology with its elaborate social and spatial hierarchies; it became even more pronounced as twentieth-century lifestyles and housing contexts changed in ways that could no longer contain the formalized spatial distinctions of the Victorian ideal.

The problems became particularly significant in the early decades of the century when middle-class women found themselves increasingly isolated in their kitchens due to a radical reduction in the number of domestic servants. As Gwendolyn Wright has observed, women were now cut off from the family group as they worked in kitchens designed to resemble scientific laboratories, far removed from the family activities in the central areas of the home. Architects did little to respond to the problem of isolation, but continued instead to build kitchens fully separated from communal living spaces, suggesting that labor-saving kitchen appliances would solve the servant shortage.⁶¹ In the postwar era when the continuous spaces of ranch-style architecture became a cultural ideal, the small suburban home placed a greater emphasis on interaction between family members. The "open plan" eliminated some of the walls between dining room, living room, and kitchen. However, even in the continuous ranch-style homes, the woman's work area was "zoned off" from the activity area, and the woman's role as homemaker still worked to separate her from the leisure activities of her family.

Women's magazines suggested intricately balanced spatial arrangements that would mediate the tensions between female integration and isolation. Television viewing became a special topic of consideration. In 1951, *House Beautiful* placed a television set in its remodeled kitchen, which combined "such varied functions as cooking, storage, laundry, flower arranging, dining and TV viewing." In this case, as elsewhere, the call for functionalism

was related to the woman's ability to work among a group engaged in leisure activities. A graphic showed a television placed in a "special area" devoted to "chatting" and "relaxing" which was "not shut off by a partition." In continuous space, "the worker . . . is always part of the group, can share in the conversation and fun while work is in progress."⁶²

While this example presents a harmonious solution, often the ideals of integration and isolation resulted in highly contradictory representations of domestic life. Typically, illustrations that depicted continuous spaces showed the housewife to be oddly disconnected from the general flow of activities. In 1951, for example, *American Home* showed a woman in a continuous dining-living area who supposedly is allowed to accomplish her homework among a group of television viewers. However, rather than being integrated into the group, the woman is actually isolated from the television crowd as she sets the dining room table. The TV viewers are depicted in the background while the housewife stands to the extreme front-right border of the composition, far away from her family and friends. In fact, she is literally positioned off-frame, straddling between the photograph and the negative (or unused) space of the layout.⁶³

The family circle motif was also riddled with contradictions of this sort. In particular, Sentinel's advertising campaign showed women who were spatially distanced from their families. In 1952, one ad depicted a housewife holding a tray of beverages and standing off to the side of her family, who were clustered around the television set. The following year, another ad showed a housewife cradling her baby in her arms and standing at a window far away from the rest of her family, who were gathered around the Sentinel console.⁶⁴ In a 1948 ad for Magnavox Television, the housewife's chores separated her from her circle of friends. The ad was organized around a U-shaped sofa that provided a quite literal manifestation of the semiotic visual cliché. A group of adult couples sat on the sofa watching the new Magnavox set, but the hostess stood at the kitchen door, holding a tray of snacks. Spatially removed from the television viewers, the housewife appeared to be sneaking a look at the set as she went about her hostess chores.⁶⁵

This problem of female spatial isolation gave way to what can be called a "corrective cycle of commodity purchases." A 1949 article in *American Home* about the joys of the electric dishwasher is typical here. A picture of a family gathered around the living room console included the caption, "No martyr banished to kitchen, she never misses television programs. Lunch, dinner dishes are in an electric dishwasher." In 1950, an advertisement for Hotpoint dishwashers used the same discursive strategy. The illustration showed a wall of dishes that separated a housewife in the kitchen from her family, who sat huddled around the television set in the living room. The caption read, "Please . . . Let Your Wife Come Out Into the Livingroom! Don't let dirty dishes make your wife a kitchen exile! She loses the most precious hours of her life shut off from pleasures of the family circle by the never-ending chore of old-fashioned dishwashing."⁶⁶

This ideal version of female integration in a unified family space was contested by the competing discourse on divided spaces. Distinctions between work and leisure space remained an important principle of household efficiency. Here, room dividers presented a perfect balance of integration and isolation. In 1952, *Better Homes and Gardens* displayed a room divider that separated a kitchen work area from its dining area. The cutoff point was a television set built into the wall just to the right of the room divider. Thus, the room divider separated the woman's work space from the television space, but as a partial wall that still allowed for continuous space, it reached the perfect compromise between the housewife's isolation from and integration into the family. It was in the sense of this compromise that *American Home's* "discrete" room divider separated a wife's work space from her husband's television space in a house that, nevertheless, was designed for "family living." As the magazine reported in 1954, "Mr. Peterson . . . retired behind his newspaper in the TV end of the living kitchen. Mrs. P. quietly made a great stack of sandwiches for us behind the discrete screen of greens in the efficient kitchen end of the same room."⁶⁷

This bifurcation of sexual roles, of male (leisure) and female (productive) activities, served as an occasion for a full consideration of power dynamics among men and women in the home. Typically, the magazines extended their categories of feminine and masculine viewing practices into representations of the body. For men, television viewing was most often represented in terms of a posture of repose. Men were usually shown to be sprawled out on easy chairs as they watched the set. Remote controls allowed the father to watch in undisturbed passive comfort. In many ways, this representation of the male body was based on Victorian notions of rejuvenation for the working man. Relaxation was condoned for men because it served a revitalizing function, preparing them for the struggles for the workaday world. For women, the passive calm of television viewing was never so simple. As we have seen, even when women were shown watching television, they often appeared as productive workers.

Sometimes, representations of married couples became excessively literal about the gendered patterns of television leisure. In 1954, when the Cleavelander Company advertised its new "T-Vue" chair, it told consumers, "Once you sink into the softness of Cleavelander's cloud-like contours, cares seem to float away." Thus, not only the body, but also the spirit would be revitalized by the TV chair. But while the chair allowed Father "to stretch out with his feet on the ottoman," Mother's TV leisure was nevertheless productive. As the caption states, "Mother likes to gently rock as she sews."⁶⁸ Similarly, a 1952 advertisement for Airfoam furniture cushions showed a husband dozing in his foam rubber cushioned chair as he sits before a television set. Meanwhile, his wife clears away his TV snack. The text reads, "Man's pleasure is the body-coddling comfort" of the cushioned chair while "Woman's pleasure is a home lovely to look at, easy to keep perfectly tidy and neat" with cushioning that "never needs fluffing."⁶⁹ In such cases, the

man's pleasure in television is associated with passive relaxation. The woman's pleasure, however, is derived from the aesthetics of a well-kept home and labor-saving devices that promise to minimize the extra household work that television brings to domestic space. In addition, the Airfoam ad is typical as it depicts a female body that finds no viewing pleasures of its own but instead functions to assist with the viewing comforts of others.

As numerous feminist film theorists have demonstrated, spectatorship and the pleasures entailed by it are culturally organized according to categories of sexual difference. In her groundbreaking article on the subject of Hollywood film, Laura Mulvey showed how narrative cinema (her examples were Von Sternberg and Hitchcock) is organized around voyeuristic and fetishistic scenarios in which women are the "to-be-looked-at" object of male desire.⁷⁰ In such a scheme, it becomes difficult to pinpoint how women can have subjective experiences in a cinema that systematically objectifies them. In the case of television, it seems clear that women's visual pleasure was associated with interior decor and not with viewing programs. In 1948, *House Beautiful* made this explicit when it claimed, "Most men want only an adequate screen. But women alone with the thing in the house all day have to eye it as a piece of furniture."⁷¹ In addition, while these discussions of television were addressed to female readers, the woman's spectatorial pleasure was less associated with her enjoyment of the medium than it was with her own objectification, her desire to be looked at by the gaze of another.

On one level here, television was depicted as a threat to the visual appeal of the female body in domestic space. Specifically, there was something visually unpleasurable about the sight of a woman operating the technology of the receiver. In 1955, Sparton Television proclaimed that "the sight of a woman tuning a TV set with dials near the floor" was "most unattractive."⁷² The Sparton TV, with its tuning knob located at the top of the set, promised to maintain the visual appeal of the woman.⁷³ Beyond this specific case, there was a distinct set of aesthetic conventions formed in these years for male and female viewing postures. A 1953 advertisement for CBS-Columbia Television illustrates this well. Three alternative viewing postures are taken up by family members. A little boy stretches out on the floor, a father slumps in his easy chair, and the lower portion of a mother's outstretched body is gracefully lifted in a sleek modern chair with a seat that tilts upward. Here as elsewhere, masculine viewing is characterized by slovenly body posture. Conversely, feminine viewing posture takes on a certain visual appeal even as the female body passively reclines.⁷⁴

As this advertisement indicates, the graphic representation of the female body viewing television had to be carefully controlled. It had to be made appealing to the eye of the observer, for in a fundamental sense, there was something taboo about the sight of a woman watching television. In fact, the housewife was almost never shown watching television by herself. Instead, she typically lounged on a chair (perhaps reading a book) while the television set remained turned off in the room. In 1952, *Better Homes and Gardens* stated one quite practical reason for the taboo. The article gave suggestions

for methods of covering windows that would keep neighbors from peering into the home. It related this interest in privacy to women's work and television: "You should be able to have big, big windows to let in light and view, windows that let you watch the stars on a summer night without feeling exposed and naked. In good conscience, you should be able to leave the dinner dishes on the table while you catch a favorite TV or radio program, without sensing derogatory comments on your housekeeping."⁷⁵ Thus, for the housewife, being caught in the act of enjoying a broadcast is ultimately degrading because it threatens to reveal the signs of her slovenly behavior to the observer. More generally, we might say that the magazines showed women that their subjective pleasure in watching television was at odds with their own status as efficient and visually attractive housewives.

Although these representations are compatible with traditional gender roles, subtle reversals of power ran through the magazines as a whole. Even if there was a certain degree of privilege attached to the man's position of total relaxation—his right to rule from the easy chair throne—his power was in no way absolute, nor was it stable. Although such representations held to the standard conception of women as visually pleasing spectacles—as passive objects of male desire—these representations also contradicted such notions by presenting women as active producers in control of domestic affairs. For this reason, it seems that the most striking thing about this gendered representation of the body is that it inverted—or at least complicated—normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Whereas Western society associates activity with maleness, representations of television often attributed this trait to the woman. Conversely, the notion of feminine passivity was typically transferred over to the man of the house.⁷⁶ It could well be concluded that the cultural ideals that demanded women be shown as productive workers in the home also had the peculiar side effect of "feminizing" the father.

Perhaps for this reason, popular media presented tongue-in-cheek versions of the situation, showing how television had turned men into passive homebodies. In the last scene of *The Homecomingers'* episode "TV or Not TV," for example, the marital dispute between Alice and Ralph is inverted, with Alice apparently the "woman on top."⁷⁷ After Ralph scolds Alice about her delinquent housekeeping, Alice's TV addiction is transferred over to her husband and his friend Ed Norton, who quickly become passive viewers. Ralph sits before the television set with a smorgasbord of snacks, which he deliberately places within his reach so that he needn't move a muscle while watching his program. Norton's regressive state becomes the center of the comedic situation as he is turned into a child viewer addicted to a science-fiction serial. Wearing a club-member space helmet, Norton tunes into his favorite television hour, Captain Video, and recites the space scout pledge. After arguing over program preferences, Ralph and Norton finally settle down for the *Late, Late Show* and, exhausted, fall asleep in front of the set. Alice then enters the room and, with a look of motherly condescension, covers Ralph and Norton with a blanket, tucking them in for the night.

Men's magazines such as *Esquire* and *Popular Science* also presented witty commentary on male viewers. In 1951, for example, *Esquire* showed the stereotypical husband relaxing with his shoes off and a beer in his hand, smiling idly while seated before a television set. Two years later, the same magazine referred to television fans as "televisors."⁷⁷ Nonetheless, while these magazines provided a humorous look at the man of leisure, they also presented men with alternatives. In very much the same way that Catharine Beecher attempted to elevate the woman by making her the center of domestic affairs, the men's magazines suggested that fathers could regain authority through increased participation in family life.

Indeed, the "masculine domesticity" that Margaret Marsh sees as central to Progressive era lifestyles also pervaded the popular advice disseminated to men in the 1950s. According to Marsh, masculine domesticity has historically provided men with a way to assert their dominance at home. Faced with their shrinking authority in the new corporate world of white-collar desk jobs, the middle-class men of the early 1900s turned inward to the home where their increased participation in and control over the family served to compensate for feelings of powerlessness in the public sphere. Moreover, Marsh argues that masculine domesticity actually undermined women's growing desire for equal rights because it combined that desire within the safe sphere of the home. In other words, while masculine domesticity presented a more "compassionate" model of marriage where men supposedly shared domestic responsibilities with women, it did nothing to encourage women's equal participation in the public sphere.⁷⁸

Given such historical precedents, it is not surprising that the postwar advice to men on this account took on explicitly misogynistic tones. As early as 1940, Sydnie Greenbie called for the reinstitution of manhood in his book, *Leisure For Living*. Greenbie reasoned that the popular figure of the male "boob" could be counteracted if the father cultivated his mechanical skills. As he wrote, "At last man has found something more in keeping with his nature, the workshop, with its lathe and mechanical saws, something he has kept as yet his own against the pedacious female. . . . And [it becomes] more natural . . . for the man to be a homemaker as well as the woman."⁷⁹

After the war the reintegration of the father became a popular ideal. As *Esquire* told its male readers, "Your place, Mister, is in the home, too, and if you'll make a few thoughtful improvements to it, you'll build yourself a happier, more comfortable, less back breaking world. . . ." ⁸⁰ From this perspective, the men's magazines suggested ways for fathers to take an active and productive attitude in relation to television. Even if men were passive spectators, when not watching they could learn to repair the set or else produce television carts, built-ins, and stylish cabinets. ⁸¹ Articles with step-by-step instructions circulated in *Popular Science*, and the *Home Craftsman* even had a special "TV: Improve Your Home Show" column featuring a husband and wife, Thelma and Vince, and their adventures in home repairs. *Popular Science* suggested hobbies through which men could use television in an active, productive way. The magazine ran several articles on a new fad—TV photography. Men were shown how to take still pictures off their

television sets, and in 1950 the magazine even conducted a readership contest for prize winning photos that were published in the December issue. ⁸²

The gendered division of domestic labor and the complex relations of power entailed by it were thus shown to organize the experience of watching television. These popular representations begin to disclose the social construction of television as it was rooted in a mode of thought based on categories of sexual difference. Indeed, sexual difference, and the corresponding dynamics of domestic labor and leisure, framed television's introduction to the public in significant ways. The television industry struggled to produce programming forms that might appeal to what they assumed to be the typical housewife, and in so doing they drew an abstract portrait of "Mrs. Daytime Consumer." By tailoring programs to suit the content and organization of her day, the industry hoped to capture her divided attention. Through developing schedules that mimicked the pattern of her daily activities, network executives aspired to make television a routine habit. This "ideal" female spectator was thus the very foundation of the daytime programs the industry produced. But like all texts, these programs didn't simply turn viewers into ideal spectators; they didn't simply "affect" women. Instead, they were used and interpreted within the context of everyday life at home. It is this everyday context that women's magazines addressed, providing a cultural space through which housewives might negotiate their peculiar relationship to a new media form.

Women's magazines engaged their readers in a dialogue about the concrete problems that television posed for productive labor in the home. They depicted the subtle interplay between labor and leisure at home, and they offered women ways to deal with—or else resist—television in their daily lives. If our culture has systematically relegated domestic leisure to the realm of nonproduction, these discourses remind us of the tenuousness of such notions. Indeed, at least for the housewife, television was not represented as a passive activity; rather, it was incorporated into a pattern of everyday life where work is never done.

Notes

1. This stove was mentioned in *Sponsor*, 4 June 1951, p. 19. It was also illustrated and discussed in *Popular Science*, May 1952, p. 132. The *Popular Science* reference is interesting because this men's magazine did not discuss the TV component of the stove as a vehicle for leisure, but rather showed how "a housewife can follow telecast cooking instructions step-by-step on the TV set built into this electric oven." Perhaps in this way, the magazine allayed men's fears that their wives would use the new technology for diversion as opposed to useful labor.
2. Nancy Folbre, "Exploitation Comes Home: A Critique of the Marxist Theory of Family Labor," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 6 (1982), pp. 317-29.
3. Henri Lefebvre, foreword, *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne* (Paris, L'Arche, 1958), reprinted in *Communication and Class Struggle*, ed. Armond Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, trans. Mary C. Axmann (New York: International General, 1979), p. 136.
4. See David Morley, *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*

- (London: Corgedi, 1986); and Ann Gray, "Behind Closed Doors: Video Recorders in the Home," *Boxed In: Women and Television*, ed. H. Bachr and G. Dyer (New York: Pandora, 1987), pp. 38-54.
5. Tania Modleski, "The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime Television and Women's Work," *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1983), pp. 67-75. See also the fourth chapter in Modleski, *Looking With a Woman's Eye: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women* (New York: Methuen, 1984).
6. Nick Browne, "The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9 (3) (Summer 1984), p. 176.
7. William Boddy, "The Rhetoric and Economic Roots of the American Broadcasting Industry," *Criticism* 6 (2) (Spring 1979), pp. 37-54.
8. William Boddy, "The Shining Centre of the Home: Ontologies of Television in the 'Golden Age,'" *Television in Transition*, ed. Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson (London: British Film Institute, 1985), pp. 125-33.
9. For a detailed analysis of the rise and fall of the DuMont Network, see Gary Newton Hess, *An Historical Study of the DuMonts Television Network* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).
10. Cited in "DuMont Expansion Continues," *Radio Daily*, 12 April 1949, p. 23. See also "DuMont Skeds 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.," *Variety*, 22 September 1948, p. 34; "Daytime Tale As Profit Maker," *Variety*, 27 October 1948, pp. 25, 33; "Round-Clock Schedule Here to Stay As DuMont Programming Makes Good," *Variety*, 10 November 1948, pp. 29, 38.
11. Cited in "Daytime Video: DuMont Plans Afternoon Programming," *Broadcasting-Teletesting*, 28 November 1949, p. 3. See also "WTGG Gives Washington Regular Daytime Video with New Program Scrup," *Variety*, 19 January 1949, p. 30; "Video Schedule on Coax Time," *Variety*, 12 January 1949, p. 27; "DuMont's 'Mother' Goes Network in Daytime Spread," *Variety*, 27 November 1949, p. 27.
12. "ABC, CBS, NBC Cold to Full Daytime Schedule; DuMont to Go It Alone," *Variety*, 6 October 1948, p. 27.
13. "CBS All-Day TV Programming," *Variety*, 26 January 1949, p. 34; "Video Schedule on Co-Ax Time," *Variety*, 12 January 1949, p. 27; "WNBT, N.Y., Switching into Line as Daytime Video Aiming Gains Momentum," *Variety*, 19 January 1949, p. 24; Bob Stahl, "WNBT Daytime Preem Has Hausfrau Pull but Is Otherwise Below Par," *Variety*, 9 February 1949, p. 34; "Full CBS Aiming Soon," *Variety*, 2 March 1949, p. 29; "Kathi Norris Switch to WNBT Cues Daytime Expansion for Flagship," *Variety*, 1 March 1950, p. 31.
14. Cited in "Daytime TV," *Broadcasting-Teletesting*, 11 December 1950, p. 74.
15. *Sponsor*, 4 June 1951, p. 19.
16. *Newsweek*, 24 September 1951, p. 56.
17. *Teletest*, September 1951, p. 20.
18. In the early 1950s, many of the shows were sustaining vehicles—that is, programs that were aired in order to attract and maintain audiences, but that had no sponsors.
19. "DuMont Skeds 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.," *Variety*, 22 September 1948, p. 25.
20. "Pat 'N' Johnny," *Variety*, 1 March 1950, p. 35. This example bears interesting connections to Rick Altman's more general theoretical arguments about the aesthetics of sound on television. Altman argues that television uses sound to signal moments of interest, claiming that, "the sound track serves better than the image

- itself the parts of the image that are sufficiently spectacular to merit closer attention on the part of the intermittent viewer." See Altman, "Television/Sound," *Signs in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 47.
21. Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
22. See "Daytime Video: DuMont Plans Afternoon Program" and "DuMont Daytime 'Shoppers' Series Starts," *Broadcasting-Teletesting*, 12 December 1949, p. 5.
23. Some variety programs included fifteen minute sitcoms and soap operas.
24. "TV's Stars in the Afternoon," *Variety*, 3 October 1951, p. 29.
25. "Women's Magazine of the Air," *Variety*, 9 March 1949, p. 33; "Women's Page," *Variety*, 1 June 1949, p. 34.
26. NBC had particular problems securing sponsors and, especially during 1951 and 1952, many of its shows were sustaining programs. So critical had this problem become that in fall of 1952 NBC temporarily cut back its schedule, giving afternoon hours back to affiliates. Affiliates, however, complained that this put them at a competitive disadvantage with CBS affiliates. See "NBC-TV's 'What's the Use?' Start May Give Daytime Back to Affiliates," *Variety*, 3 September 1952, p. 20; "Daytime TV—No. 1 Dilemma," *Variety*, 24 September 1952, pp. 1, 56; "NBC-TV to Focus Prime Attention on Daytime Schedule," *Variety*, 24 December 1952, p. 22; "NBC-TV Affiliates in Flareup," *Variety*, 6 May 1953, p. 23.
27. Weaver's concept was adopted by CBS executives who in 1952 instituted the "12 plan" that gave sponsors a discount for buying twelve participations during the daytime schedule. "Day TV Impact," *Broadcasting*, 3 November 1952, p. 73; Bob Stahl, "CBS-TV Answer to 'Today,'" *Variety*, 12 November 1952, pp. 23, 58.
28. John H. Porter, memo to TV network salesmen, 11 June 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.
29. George Rosen, "Garroway 'Today' Off to Boff Starr As Revolutionary News Concept," *Variety*, 16 January 1952, p. 29.
30. Joe Meyers and Bob Graff, cited in William R. McAndrew, confidential memo to John K. Herbert, 23 March 1953, NBC Records, Box 370; Folder 22, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.
31. *Daytime Analysis: Program Descriptions and Estimates*, 1 June 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.
32. "Early Morning Inserts Get WNBT Dress-Up," *Variety*, 13 August 1952, p. 26.
33. "For the Girls at Home," *Newsweek*, 15 March 1954, p. 92. NBC's advertising campaign for *Homes* was unprecedented for daytime programming promotion, costing \$976,029.00 in print, on-air promotion, outdoor advertising, and novelty gimmicks. See Jacob A. Evans, letter to Charles Barry, 28 January 1954, NBC Records, Box 369; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.
34. Jacob A. Evans, letter to Charles Barry, 28 January 1954, NBC Records, Box 369; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.
35. In a promotional report, NBC boasted that on *Today's* first broadcast, Kiplinger received 20,000 requests for a free copy of the magazine. Matthew J. Cul-

ligan, sales letter, 27 January 1953, NBC Records, Box 378; Folder 9, Wisconsin Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

36. The report cited here was commentary for a slide presentation given by Coffin to about fifty researchers from ad agencies and manufacturing companies in the New York area. *Commentary for Television's Daytime Profile: Buying Habits and Characteristics of the Audience*, 10 June 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison. For the actual survey, see W. R. Simmons and Associates Research, Inc., *Television's Daytime Profile: Buying Habits and Characteristics of the Audience*, 15 September 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 8, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison. A short booklet reviewing the findings was sent to all prospective advertisers. *Television's Daytime Profile: An Initialist Portrait of the Ideal Market for Most Advertisers*, 1 September 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison. For NBC's exploitation of the survey, see also Ed Vane, letter to Mr. Edward A. Antonilli, 7 December 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison; Hugh M. Bellville, Jr., letter to Robert Samoff, 27 July 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison; Thomas Coffin, letter to H. M. Bellville, Jr., 21 July 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison. The survey also made headlines in numerous trade journals, newspapers, and magazines. For press coverage, see NBC's *clipping file*, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

37. Edward Stashoff, *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction, and Production* (New York: A. A. Wyn, 1951), p. 47.

38. Consumer spectacles were further achieved through rear-screen projection, an "aerial" camera that captured action with a "telescoping arm," and mechanical devices such as a weather machine that adorned products in a mist of rain, fog, sleet, or hail. *Daytime Asatlahistler: Program Descriptions and Cost Estimates*, 1 June 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

39. Charles C. Barry, memo to Richard Pinkham, 2 March 1954, 3 March 1954, and 4 March 1954, NBC Records, Box 369; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

40. Franklin Sisson, *Thirty Television Talks* (New York, n.p., 1955), p. 144. Cited in Giraud Chester and Garnet R. Garrison, *Television and Radio* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), p. 414.

41. Caroline Burke, memo to Ted Mills, 20 November 1953, NBC Records, Box 377; Folder 6, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison; Aylene Francis, cited in Earl Wilson, *The NBC Book of Stars* (New York: Pocket Books, 1957), p. 92.

42. Cited in Wilson, *The NBC Book*, p. 94.

43. Sylvester L. Weaver, memo to Harry Bannister, 10 October 1952, NBC Records, Box 378; Folder 9, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

44. Joe Meyers, cited in William R. McAndrew, confidential memo to John K. Herbert, 23 March 1953, NBC Records, Box 370; Folder 22, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

45. A. A. Schechter, "Today: As An Experiment-Bodes-Encouraging Main- and," *Variety*, 16 July 1952, p. 46. NBC also advertised *Today* by claiming that "people are actually changing their living habits to watch 'Today.'" See Sponser, 25 February 1952, pp. 44-45.

46. *Daytime Asatlahistler: Program Descriptions and Cost Estimates*, 1 June 1954, NBC Records, Box 183; Folder 5, Wisconsin Center Historical Archives, State Historical Society, Madison.

47. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 217-51.

48. *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1955, p. 130. See also *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1955, p. 95; *Good Housekeeping*, July 1955, p. 135.

49. *The New Yorker*, 3 June 1950, p. 22.

50. Crosby, "What's Television Going to Do to Your Life?" *House Beautiful*, February 1950, p. 125.

51. *American Home*, October 1955, p. 14.

52. Walter Adams and E. A. Hungerford, Jr., "Television: Buying and Installing It Is Fun; These Ideas Will Help," *Better Homes and Gardens*, September 1949, p. 38; *American Home*, December 1954, p. 39.

53. *American Home*, May 1955, p. 138. The cartoon was part of an advertisement for the *Yellow Pages*.

54. *House Beautiful*, June 1952, p. 59.

55. W. W. Ward, "Is It Time To Buy Television?" *House Beautiful*, October 1948, p. 220.

56. *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1953, p. 148.

57. "The Wonderful Ant-Statco," *House Beautiful*, January 1955, p. 89; *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1948, p. 90.

58. Gertrude Brassard, "For Early Tea and Late TV," *American Home*, July 1952, p. 88.

59. In August 1949, for example, *House Beautiful* suggested that a swiveling cabinet would allow women to "move the screen, not the audience" (p. 69). Although portable sets were not heavily marketed in the early 1950s, they were sometimes presented as the ideal solution to the problem of moving the heavy console set.

60. *House Beautiful*, May 1952, p. 138.

61. Wright, *Building the Dream*, p. 172.

62. *House Beautiful*, June 1951, p. 121.

63. Vivian Gidgby Bender, "Please a Dining Room!" *American Home*, September 1951, p. 27.

64. *Better Homes and Gardens*, December 1952, p. 144; *Better Homes and Gardens*, February 1953, p. 169; see also *American Home*, September 1953, p. 102.

65. *House Beautiful*, November 1948, p. 5.

66. Edith Ramsey, "How to Stretch a Day," *American Home*, September 1949, p. 65; *House Beautiful*, December 1950, p. 77.

67. *American Home*, February 1954, p. 32.

68. *House Beautiful*, November 1954, p. 158. For additional examples, see *American Home*, November 1953, p. 60; *Better Homes and Gardens*, December 1951, p. 7; *TV Guide*, 18 December 1953, p. 18.

69. *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1952, p. 177.

70. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (3) (1975), pp. 6-18. Since the publication of Mulvey's article, numerous feminists—including Mulvey—have theorized ways that women might find subjective pleasures in classical cinema, and feminists have also challenged the idea that pleasure in the cinema is organized entirely around spectatorship of "male" desire. For a bibliography on this literature and a forum on contemporary views on female spectatorship in the cinema, see *Cinema's Obscure* 20-21 (May-September 1989).

71. W. W. Ward, "Is It Time to Buy Television?" *House Beautiful*, October 1948, p. 172.

72. *House Beautiful*, May 1955, p. 131.

73. *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1953, p. 151. There is one exception to this rule of male body posture, which I have found in the fashionable men's magazine *Equire*. While *Equire* depicted the slovenly male viewer, it also showed men how to watch television in fashion by wearing clothes tailored specifically for TV viewing. In these cases, the male body was relaxed, and the men still smoked and drank liquor, but they were posed in more aesthetically appealing ways. See "Town-Talk Tables and Television," *Equire*, January 1951, pp. 92-93; and "Easy Does It Leisure Wear," *Equire*, November 1953, p. 74. The figure of the fashionable male television viewer was taken up by at least one male clothing company, The Rose Brothers, who advertised their men's wear by showing well-dressed men watching television and by promising, "You Can Tele-Wise Man by His Surewill Suit." See *Callers*, 1 October 1949, p. 54.

74. Robert M. Jones, "Privacy Is Worth All That It Costs," *Better Homes and Gardens*, March 1952, p. 57.

75. This is not to say that television was the only domestic machine to disrupt representations of gender. Roland Marchand, for example, has argued that advertisements for radio sets and phonographs reversed traditional pictorial conventions for the depiction of men and women. Family-circle ads typically showed husbands seated while their wives were perched on the arm of the chair or sofa. In most of the ads for radios and phonographs in his sample, the opposite is true. Marchand argues that "in the presence of culturally uplifting music, the woman more often gained the right of reposed concentration while the (more technologically inclined) man stood prepared to change the records or adjust the radio dials." See *Advertising the American Dream*, pp. 252-53. When applied to television, Marchand's analysis of radio does not seem to adhere since men were often shown seated and blatantly unable to control the technology.

76. I am borrowing Natalie Zemon Davis's phrase with which she describes how women in preindustrial France were able to invert gender hierarchies during carnival festivities and even, at times, in everyday life. See "Women On Top," *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 124-51.

77. *Popular Science*, May 1954, p. 177; *Equire*, March 1951, p. 10; Jack O'Brien, "Offhides in Sports," *Equire*, November 1953, p. 24.

78. Marsh, *Suburban Lives*, p. 82.

79. Greenbie, *Leisure for Living*, p. 210. Greenbie, in fact, presented a quite contradictory account of mechanization in the home, at times seeing it as the man's ally, at other times claiming that modern machines actually took away male authority.

80. "Home Is for Husbands Too," *Equire*, June 1951, p. 88.

81. In addition, companies that produced home-improvement products and workshop tools continually used television sets in their illustrations of remodeled

rooms. Typically here, the Masonic Corporation promoted its do-it-yourself painting in an advertisement that displayed a television set in a "male room" just for Dad. See *Better Homes and Gardens*, August 1951, p. 110. For similar ads, see *American Home*, June 1955, p. 3; *Better Homes and Gardens*, February 1953, p. 195; *American Home*, November 1952, p. 105. It should be noted that some of these ads also showed women doing the remodeling work.

82. "From Readers' Albums of Television Photos," *Popular Science*, December 1950, p. 166. See also "TV's Images Can Be Photographed," *Popular Science*, August 1950, pp. 184-85; R. P. Stevenson, "How You Can Photograph the Flights Via Television," *Popular Science*, February 1951, pp. 214-216.

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