

Hardie, Melissa, University of Sydney, Australia

No More Drama: *Guiding Light*'s *Al Fresco* Queer

A unique example of concerted commitment to narrative flow, the radio and television serial *Guiding Light* came to an end in 2009 after seventy-two years worth of broadcasting. The last years of *Guiding Light* saw the New York-based soap explore new modes of production, including a shift to digital in 2008 and a new production style that featured handheld camera, and significant outdoor filming done in the town of Peapack, New Jersey. The last years also saw the introduction of a blossoming, significant and sustained lesbian relationship between two erstwhile romantic rivals, Natalia Rivera and Olivia Spencer. This pairing, dubbed "Otalía" by its fanbase, coincided with the new production values in ways that I will argue augured less the demise of soap opera as a genre than the possibility of radical experiment within the most institutional of forms, an experimentalism that could only briefly flourish but which made the "death" of soap opera radically lively. My paper will consider the relationship between genre-driven convention and the documentarian, experimental aesthetic of the last days of *Guiding Light* to think about the *al fresco* setting and its formal relation to the kinds of unstable interiorities posited by an "epistemology of the closet," after Sedgwick.