Nixon, Agnes (1927-) Encyclopedia Article

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Nixon, Agnes (1927—)

Agnes Nixon is the most influential writer in daytime television, introducing social issues and moral seriousness to the soap opera. She served an apprenticeship with the creator of the genre, Irna Phillips, developing dialogue for the radio serial *Woman in White.* After writing anthology dramas and working on inaugural story lines for *Search for Tomorrow,* she worked again with Phillips on *As the World Turns.* During the early sixties she became head writer of another Phillips's creation, *The Guiding Light*, where she had the heroine, Bert Bauer, undergo treatment for uterine cancer. In 1968 she created her first series, *One Life to Live*, conceiving a multicultural community of many ethnic groups, a major departure from the traditional WASP universe of the soaps. In 1970 she created her most personal series, *All My Children*, in which she tackled the Vietnam War, abortion, and drug addiction. For *All My Children* she crystallized one of the genre's most enduring archetypes, the bitch goddess, as embodied in Susan Lucci's Erica Kane. Erica was not only a soap icon, but, like all of Nixon's characters, a three-dimensional individual who grew over time. In the early 1980s Nixon created the prime-time miniseries *The Manions of America* and the serial *Loving* with Douglas Marland. Nixon was the first woman and writer to receive the prestigious Trustee's Award from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

Further Reading:

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