COMPOSING BIOGRAPHIES OF FOUR AUSTRALIAN WOMEN: FEMINISM, MOTHERHOOD AND MUSIC

Jillian Graham (BMus, MMus)

Thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2009

Faculty of Music
The University of Melbourne
This thesis is dedicated
with love to my children and to my mother

Olivier and Freya Miller
Pamela Graham
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of gender, feminism and motherhood on the careers of four Australian composers: Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984), Ann Carr-Boyd (b. 1938), Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1957) and Katy Abbott (b. 1971).

Aspects of the biographies of each of these women are explored, and I situate their narratives within the cultural and musical contexts of their eras, in order to achieve heightened understanding of the ideologies and external influences that have contributed to their choices and experiences. Methodologies derived from feminist biography and oral history/ethnography underpin this study. Theorists who inform this work include Marcia Citron, Daphne de Marneffe, Sherna Gluck, Carolyn Heilbrun, Anne Manne, Ann Oakley, Alessandro Portelli, Adrienne Rich and Robert Stake, along with many others.

The demands traditionally placed on women through motherhood and domesticity have led to a lack of time and creative space being available to develop their careers. Thus they have faced significant challenges in gaining public recognition as serious composers. There is a need for biographical analysis of these women’s lives, in order to consider their experiences and the encumbrances they have faced through attempting to combine their creative and mothering roles. Previous scholarship has concentrated more on their compositions than on the women who created them, and the impact of private lives on public lives has not been considered worthy of consideration.

Three broad themes are investigated. First, the ways in which each composer’s family background, upbringing and education have impacted on their decision to enter the traditionally male field of composition are explored. The positive influence from family and other mentors, and opportunities for a sound musical education, are factors particularly necessary for aspiring female composers. I argue that all four women have benefited from upbringings in families where education and artistic endeavour have been valued highly.
The second theme concerns the extent to which the feminist movement has influenced the women’s lives as composers and mothers, and the levels of frustration, and/or satisfaction or pleasure each has felt in blending motherhood with composition. I contend that all four composers have led feminist lives in the sense that they have exercised agency and a sense of entitlement in choices regarding their domestic and work lives. The three living composers have reaped the benefits of second-wave feminism, but have eschewed complete engagement with its agenda, especially its repudiation of motherhood. They can more readily be identified with the currently-evolving third wave of feminism, which advocates women’s freedom to choose how to balance the equally-valued roles of motherhood and the public world of work. I assert that Sutherland was a third-wave prototype, a position that was atypical of her era.

The third and final theme comprises an investigation of the ways in which historical and enduring negative attitudes towards women as musical creators have played out in the musical careers in these composers. It is contested that Sutherland experienced greater challenges than her successors in the areas of dissemination, composition for larger forces, and critical reception, but appears to have been more comfortable in promoting her work. The exploration of their careers demonstrates that all four of these creative mothers are well-respected and recognised composers. They are ‘third-wave’ women who have considerably enriched Australia’s musical landscape.
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

(i) The thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD.

(ii) Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used.

(iii) The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography and appendices.

SIGNATURE__________________________________________________________

NAME IN FULL________________________________________________________

DATE_________________________________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you especially to my two supervisors, Dr Fay Anderson and Dr Linda Kouvaras, for their invaluable insights and assistance, their ability to strike an excellent balance between intellectual rigour and positive reinforcement, and their generosity with time. I am also grateful to Associate Professor Kerry Murphy for her encouragement and advocacy during the initial stages of my postgraduate study.

Meredith Lawn, Music Archivist at the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, was efficient in her assistance with access to and information about the Carr-Boyd papers. Tony Bunney, Margaret Sutherland’s grandson and custodian of her estate, was helpful in providing me with material from Sutherland’s papers. A number of people kindly gave their time to be interviewed about Sutherland: Pamela Bloom, Jane Bunney, Valerie Cohen, Madeline Crump, Helen Gifford, Mary Merewether, Stuart Rosewarne, Margaret Schofield, Elizabeth van Rompaey and Maureen White.

I thank Nancy Calo sincerely for her constant inspiration, and for taking time from her busy life to proof-read the thesis. I am grateful also to those other friends and family who were unstintingly supportive during my candidature.

Finally, my greatest appreciation goes to the Australian composers who are the focus of this thesis. I am grateful to the late Dr Margaret Sutherland, OBE, AO, for her rich legacy of written autobiographical material. I thank Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Dr Katy Abbott, who have freely and willingly bestowed their time to discuss aspects of their lives and experiences with me, and have shown extraordinary patience and promptness in answering my subsequent regular questions. I have the deepest respect and admiration for all four women.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE PAGE</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 The Composers 2
1.3 Central Argument, Focus, and Themes/Questions of Thesis 10
1.4 Relevance and Importance of Thesis 14
1.5 Theoretical Paradigms and Methodologies 15
  1.5.1 Feminist Biography 15
   1.5.1.1 Theoretical Basis 15
   1.5.1.2 Specific Feminist Biographical Methodology Adopted in this Study 19
  1.5.2 Women’s Oral History/Ethnography 20
   1.5.2.1 Theoretical Basis 20
   1.5.2.2 Ethical Considerations 23
   1.5.2.3 Specific Oral History/Ethnographic Methodology Adopted in this Study 24
   1.5.2.4 Interview Method/Structure/Questions 25
1.6 Relevant Secondary Sources 27
  1.6.1 Secondary Sources for Theoretical Paradigms and Methodologies 27
   1.6.1.1 New Musicology/Feminist Musicology 27
   1.6.1.2 Feminist Biography 29
   1.6.1.3 Auto/Biographies of Creative Women 31
   1.6.1.4 Oral History/Ethnography 32
  1.6.2 Secondary Sources Used in this Thesis 35
   1.6.2.1 Cultural History: Feminism and the Family in Australia 35
   1.6.2.2 Commentaries on the Situation of Women Composers in Australia 36
   1.6.2.3 Feminist Perceptions of Motherhood 38
   1.6.2.4 Historical Notions of Women’s Creativity 41
1.7 Chapter Outlines 43
PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER TWO
Case Studies
Early Lives, Education, Expectations

2.1 Introduction 46
2.2 Aspects of the History of Women Composers in Australia 46
2.3 Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984) 48
  2.3.1 Born into an Intellectual Family 48
  2.3.2 Sutherland’s Parents and the Early ‘Gala’ Days in Adelaide 49
  2.3.3 The Creative and Intellectual Influences of Family Life in Melbourne 51
  2.3.4 Education, Wider Influences and the Beginnings of Adversity 54
  2.3.5 Expanding Horizons: To Europe to Study 60
  2.3.6 Return to Australia: An “Uphill Journey” 64
  2.3.7 Summary 66
2.4 Ann Carr Boyd (b. 1938) 67
  2.4.1 The Third Generation of Professional Musicians 67
  2.4.2 Scholarships and Education in Australia 71
  2.4.3 Further Study Overseas 75
  2.4.4 Summary 77
2.5 Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1957) 78
  2.5.1 Daughter Among the Russian Intelligentsia 78
  2.5.2 Education for a Musically-Gifted Child 80
  2.5.3 To Australia and Further Musical Education 83
  2.5.4 German Experiences 86
  2.5.5 Summary 88
2.6 Katy Abbott (b. 1971) 90
  2.6.1 Early Years: The Musical One in the Family 90
  2.6.2 From Secondary School to Music: The Transitional Years 92
  2.6.3 The Emergence of Musical Creativity 93
  2.6.4 Summary 95
2.7 Conclusions 96

PART TWO: FEMINIST POSITIONS

CHAPTER THREE
Feminism and Motherhood: Second Wave and Beyond

3.1 Introduction 98
3.2 Twentieth-Century Ideologies of Motherhood 100
3.3 The First Act: Second-Wave Feminism and Repudiation 104
3.4 The Second Act: Recuperation 108
3.5 The Third Act: Towards Third-Wave Feminism 111
  3.5.1 Creative Mothers: Income, Time and Space 117
3.6 Conceiving Third-Wave Feminism 120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER FOUR</th>
<th></th>
<th>Case Studies</th>
<th>Composing and Mothering: Margaret Sutherland as Third-Wave Precedent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Links with Feminism</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Motherhood and Composition: Choices, Expectations, Realities</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Summary</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER FIVE</th>
<th></th>
<th>Case Studies</th>
<th>Composing and Mothering: A Feminist Choice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Relationships with Feminism</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Ann Carr-Boyd</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Elena-Kats-Chernin</td>
<td>137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Katy Abbott</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Motherhood and Composition: Choices, Expectations, Realities</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 To Be and How to Be a Mother</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2 The Realities of ‘Having it All’</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2.1 Ann Carr-Boyd</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2.2 Elena Kats-Chernin</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2.3 Katy Abbott</td>
<td>152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Summary</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Conclusion: Third-Wave Women</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|PART THREE: MOTHERHOOD AND CREATIVITY|

|CHAPTER SIX| |The Creative Musical Woman in History|
|---|---|---|---|
|6.1 Introduction| 160|
|6.2 Historical Notions of Women’s Creativity| 160|
|6.2.1 Access to Appropriate Education| 170|
|6.2.2 Opportunities for Performance and Publication| 176|
|6.2.3 The Hierarchy of Genre| 179|
|6.2.4 Critical Reception| 180|
|6.3 Creative Motherhood: Barriers and Benefits| 181|

|CHAPTER SEVEN| |Musically Creative Women in The Australian Context|
|---|---|---|---|
|7.1 Introduction| 188|
|7.2 Aspects of Dissemination: Publication and Recordings| 188|
|7.3 The Hierarchy of Genre| 190|
CHAPTER EIGHT
Case Studies
Experiences as Musically-Creative Mothers in Australia

8.1 Introduction 205
8.2 Dissemination 206
  8.2.1 Margaret Sutherland 206
  8.2.2 Ann Carr-Boyd 211
  8.2.3 Elena Kats-Chernin 215
  8.2.4 Katy Abbott 218
  8.2.5 Summary 220
8.3 Genre Choices: “Grand Musical Structures” versus the Intimacy of the Smaller Form 222
  8.3.1 Margaret Sutherland 222
  8.3.2 Ann Carr-Boyd 223
  8.3.3 Elena Kats-Chernin 224
  8.3.4 Katy Abbott 226
  8.3.5 Summary 226
8.4 Gendered Critical Reception 227
8.5 Making a Living 229
  8.5.1 Margaret Sutherland 229
  8.5.2 Ann Carr-Boyd 232
  8.5.3 Elena Kats-Chernin 234
  8.5.4 Katy Abbott 236
  8.5.5 Summary 237
8.6 Creative Motherhood: Mothering in the Music 237
  8.6.1 Margaret Sutherland 237
  8.6.2 Ann Carr-Boyd 239
  8.6.3 Elena Kats-Chernin 240
  8.6.4 Katy Abbott 242
  8.6.5 Summary 244

CHAPTER NINE
Conclusions

9.1 Introduction 246
9.2 Foundations: Family Background, Upbringing and Education 246
9.3 Feminist Positions: the Impact of Feminism 248
9.4 Motherhood and Creativity: Musically Creative Women in Australia 251
9.5 Methodologies in Reflection 254
  10.5.1 Feminist Biography 254
  10.5.2 Oral History 254
9.6 Conclusions 255
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE
Aspects of the Evolution of Feminism in Australia

A1.1 Introduction 284
A1.2 Women in Nineteenth-Century Australia 284
A1.3 The Suffrage Campaign 290
A1.4 Feminism and the Creation of a Maternalist Welfare State in Australia 292
   A1.4.1 Maternity Allowance 293
   A1.4.2 Child Endowment 294
   A1.4.3 Motherhood Endowment 295
   A1.4.4 Equal Pay and Opportunity 297
A1.5 Divorce and Child Custody 1857–Present 304
A1.6 Education for Australian Women: Late Nineteenth Century to the Present 307
A1.7 The World Wars and Women: Impacts and Activism 316
A1.8 Women Composers and the Transplanted Musical Culture of Colonial Australia 318
A1.9 The Founding of Tertiary Music Institutions: 1890–1915 324
A1.10 The ‘Older Generation’ of Australian Women Composers 327
A1.11 The ‘Middle Generation’ of Australian Women Composers 328

APPENDIX TWO
Questions for Initial Interviews with Participants, 2004 330

APPENDIX THREE
Questions for Second Interviews with Participants, 2005 331
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Margaret Sutherland, c. 1937</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ann Carr-Boyd, 2006</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elena Kats-Chernin, 2006</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Katy Abbott, 2007</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Margaret Sutherland, c. 1904 (By Jane Sutherland)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the impact of gender, feminism and motherhood on the careers of four Australian women composers: Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984), Ann Carr-Boyd (b. 1938), Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1957) and Katy Abbott (b. 1971).\(^1\) Ruth Solie neatly encapsulates this focus:

> If there do need to be methodological differences in the writing of men’s and women’s lives, it is not because of essential differences between them or in their works. Rather it is because of the ways in which women’s life experiences have necessarily been radically different from men’s just in order for them to get to the same place: the place in which they look like apt subjects for biographies … These differences are, for the most part, familiar enough: marriage or its absence has been a more significant variable for women than for men, and parenthood a far more determinative condition…\(^2\)

The demands and expectations traditionally placed by society on women through motherhood and domesticity mean that their life experiences have differed from those of their male counterparts, since there has been less time and creative space available to them to develop their careers; hence they have faced significant challenges in becoming publicly recognised as serious composers. Acknowledging that the hurdles women face in successfully combining motherhood and career can effectively be revealed through closer inspection of this female experience, relevant aspects of the biographies of each of these women will be provided. Where appropriate, their individual narratives will be situated within the wider, respectively differing historical, cultural and musical contexts

---

\(^1\) For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘feminism’ refers to the doctrine which advocates social, political, economic and all other rights of women equal to those of men. Andrea O’Reilly notes that in Adrienne Rich’s book *Of Woman Born*, “the term ‘motherhood’ refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood that is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women, while the word ‘mothering’ refers to women’s experiences of mothering that are female-defined and centered and potentially empowering to women”. Andrea O’Reilly, “Introduction”, *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich’s ‘Of Woman Born’*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004) 2. These meanings have not been appropriated when the words ‘motherhood’ or ‘mothering’ are used. In this thesis, the term ‘motherhood’ refers to the state of being a mother, and ‘mothering’ is attributed the traditional role of a verb to denote the act of being a mother.

of their eras, in order to achieve greater understanding of the ideologies and external influences that may have contributed to their choices and experiences. Methodologies derived principally from feminist biography and oral history/ethnography will form the foundations of this study and are detailed in Section 1.5.

1.2 The Composers

The four women featured in this study were selected based on four principal criteria. First, they are all composers for whom composition forms a significant part of their identities, and consequently of their lives. Second, each is a well-respected and recognised composer in the Australian musical world. Third, each is from a different generation, and thus their collective careers span the greater part of the twentieth century and carry forward into the twenty-first. Finally, they are all mothers who were composers before during, and to date, after raising their children. Before embarking on a more complete survey of secondary literature most relevant to the topic, and an explanation of the thesis to follow, a brief introduction to each of the composers will be provided, together with a summary of current literature directly pertaining to each, in order to situate the composers in the Australian musical context. More complete biographies will be provided later in the thesis.

It should be acknowledged that all four women emanate from white, middle to upper-class backgrounds, and can be considered relatively privileged in terms of education and opportunities. Their lives and experiences as explored in this thesis are thus viewed in the light of this particular cultural milieu. It is not within the scope of this study to draw comparisons between them and women from other minority groups. Elena Kats-Chernin’s different ethnicity is noted, however, and where it is appropriate to draw distinctions between her experiences and those of the other subjects of this study, this will be done.
Dr Margaret Sutherland, OBE, AO (b. 1897, d. 1984) is regarded as one of the most innovative and influential Australian composers of the first half of the twentieth century. Although it appears that there has been no actual “school of Sutherland disciples” there is no doubt that her influence has been felt by many Australian women composers who succeed her. Ann Carr-Boyd attests to this:

I remember going to her home in Melbourne in my travels around all the major Australian cities as part of the research for my Masters thesis. I remember she was very gracious. She had a commanding presence and white hair. I came away with the impression that this was a lady who was confident in her powers as a musician. She was no apologetic person, and therefore she gave much status to her position as a composer. I came away full of admiration and some awe. She was definitely a role model to follow.

The predominant role of this composer in this thesis is as provider of a foundation against which to compare the experiences of the three living composers.

The reason Margaret Sutherland is particularly acclaimed as an Australian composer is perhaps best expressed by Roger Covell in his book *Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society* (1967):

But it was a woman composer, Margaret Sutherland of Melbourne, who really naturalised the twentieth century in Australian music. Long before World War II she was writing music which paralleled the neo-classical reaction against Romantic styles in most other European or Europe-derived societies.

---

3 Sutherland was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Music from the University of Melbourne in 1969, Order of the British Empire (OBE) on 13 June 1970, a Queen’s Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, and Order of Australia (AO) on 8 June 1981.
5 Carr-Boyd, email communication, 20 April 2008.
Moreover, James Murdoch highlighted her efforts in promoting other Australian composers and performers and music in general in Melbourne: “Probably no other person in Australia has worked, fought, lobbied and achieved so much for Australian music and the Australian composer”.  

Sutherland was referred to in survey publications about Australian composers as early as 1948; for example Isabelle Moresby describes her as an “original and fearless composer” who “has won distinction for her serious contribution to the musical literature of the world”.  

Laughton Harris echoed Roger Covell’s assessment:

She was one of the first of a generation of Australian composers whose music seemed to break through the inertia of dependence on an outworn nineteenth-century musical tradition, showing a new awareness of the sound world of the post-Debussyan era….For a woman to achieve professional standing as a composer in Australia was of course almost unheard of. Yet this was the goal Margaret Sutherland pursued with sure-footed conviction.  

Helen Coles states that Sutherland transcended “the obstacles with indomitable drive and energy, and a passionate yearning to compose”, and continues on to say: “It’s thanks to her that women composers are taken more seriously in this country…..”.

Jane Weiner LePage refers to Sutherland as the “undisputed first lady of Australian music as well as one of the earliest and most respected composers in the country”. In his book The Music of Margaret Sutherland (1997), David Symons acknowledges that she is “now generally recognised as one of Australia’s most important composers of the early and middle years of the twentieth century”.

A small number of authors have written about Margaret Sutherland from a feminist perspective, most notably since they explore the impact of private on public life. In this context, the term ‘written from a feminist perspective’ refers to writings which address those issues particular to women which (may) have resulted from their existence in a patriarchal society.

---

13 In this context, the term ‘written from a feminist perspective’ refers to writings which address those issues particular to women which (may) have resulted from their existence in a patriarchal society.
background, in a chapter she wrote for *Double Time: Women in Victoria—150 Years*, entitled “Margaret Sutherland: Composer” (1985), as does Helen Gifford in “Recalling a Lost Voice: Margaret Sutherland’s Sonata for Violin and Piano (1925)” (1995). Susanna De Vries considers some of Sutherland’s story in her chapter on Jane and Margaret Sutherland in the book *Strength of Purpose* (1998). Overall, however, there has been greater value attributed to and hence concentration on product, in this case her compositions, than to the woman behind them, her voice and the voices of those who knew her.

Ann Carr-Boyd (b. 1938) is a successful, widely-published and commissioned composer, who has been mentioned in several survey publications about Australian

---


women composers. Thérèse Radic refers to Carr-Boyd as “an authority on the subject of Australian music history”, since the latter completed her Masters thesis in 1963 on “The First Hundred Years of European Music in Australia, 1788–1888”, which has formed the basis for much subsequent research in the history of Australian music.\(^\text{17}\)

Carr-Boyd is considered by Jane Weiner LePage as

… one of the most active supporters of contemporary Australian music … a distinguished Australian who has helped pave the way as a composer, performer, writer, lecturer and broadcaster for the acceptance of twentieth-century Australian music. Her work has brought about change in the country and she and her colleagues should be proud of her accomplishments. She has the talent, the capacity and absolute devotion so necessary to make music a living art.\(^\text{18}\)

Sally Macarthur writes that Carr-Boyd has “participated fully in a gradual, yet sometimes painful burgeoning of a now thriving and vigorous art-music culture in Australia”.\(^\text{19}\) In another short article entitled “Three Australian Women Composers in Profile”, Macarthur touches fleetingly on whether or not gender has been an issue for this composer.\(^\text{20}\) Finally, Jenny Walker, in *Highlife* (2004), claims that Carr-Boyd is “one of Australia’s foremost composers”.\(^\text{21}\)

The inclusion of Carr-Boyd in these survey publications performs the important function of giving her a place on the list of Australia’s noteworthy composers. With the exception of a few short publications about Sutherland noted earlier, none of these publications are written from a feminist perspective, in that they do not address in any depth the domestic experiences and challenges she may have faced as a woman composer who has also been a mother.

Elena Kats-Chernin was born in 1957 in Uzbekistan, and emigrated to Australia in 1975 at the age of 18. Having spent her formative years in the Soviet Union, it must be acknowledged that her experiences differ in some ways from the other subjects in this study, who all grew up in Australia. Such contrasts are manifest predominantly in the


\(^{18}\) Weiner LePage 67.


areas of Kats-Chernin’s primary and secondary education, and the impact on her attitudes towards feminism of the different role played by women in the Soviet Union. Thus it will be necessary to explore these different contexts where relevant.

Kats-Chernin is acknowledged by Stephen Lalor as “one of the most commissioned and performed composers in Australia”.

In an interview conducted with Kats-Chernin, Patricia Shaw refers to her as an “extremely inventive composer”, and continues on to say

Already well established in Europe, especially as a composer for theatre and dance, Kats-Chernin is a prolific composer who now has a burgeoning career and reputation in Australia. … Kats-Chernin has forged a unique style, quite different from that of her teachers, and her music is notable for its energy and exuberance, accounting for at least some of the composer’s popular appeal.

Sally Macarthur considers Kats-Chernin to be one of “two exceptionally talented Australian women composers [who] have made Germany and The Netherlands their home”. Jane Stanley studies the employment by Kats-Chernin of the tool that she calls *bricolage* in her Masters thesis and in an article entitled “*Bricolage* in the Music of Elena Kats-Chernin”. Kats-Chernin is also featured briefly in Brenton Broadstock’s *Sound Ideas* in the section “Why Composers Compose”, and her music is the subject of a Masters (Musicology) thesis completed by Emily Wilbourne at the University of

---

24 Macarthur, “Women Composers Have Got Australia Covered”, 182–183. The other composer referred to in this article alongside Kats-Chernin is Barbara Woof (b. 1958). The reader is reminded here that although Kats-Chernin is referred to as Australian, she was born in Uzbekistan, and emigrated to Australia in 1975 at the age of 18.
Melbourne in 2003. Wilbourne claims that the thesis is “midway between theoretical manifesto and close analysis of specific works” which “elaborates a reading of opera in general and Elena Kats-Chernin’s two operas in particular.”

Kats-Chernin’s talent, charisma and compelling life story contribute to her having been selected as the subject of three ABC radio and television productions. She may also be perceived as exotic since she was born in Uzbekistan, which possibly increases her media appeal. In a production produced by Film Australia in association with ABC Television originally broadcast on ABC Television’s *Artzone* programme in 1997, she talks about the composition and performance of the work *Velvet Revolution*. Kats-Chernin is also featured in Volume 6 of *Dots on the Landscape*, an oral history conducted by Australian composer Andrew Ford of notated music in Australia from the time of European settlement to the present day, and recorded from programmes broadcast on ABC Classic FM in 2001. Finally, Kats-Chernin was the subject of an ABC Television programme entitled “Obsessions: Worries on an ‘A’ String” televised in February 2004, which explores the dilemma she faces through the need to feed, house and educate her three sons, while maintaining a busy creative/compositional career.

Although Wilbourne’s thesis adopts a feminist stance, none of the above references examines the experience of combining marriage/partnership and motherhood with a creative career. “Obsessions: Worries on an ‘A’ String” touches on this issue, but it was not within the scope of this half-hour television programme to address it in any depth.

---

28 Don Featherstone, Director, Wendy Martin, Producer and Emma Hay, Editor, “Elena Kats-Chernin: Composer” (video recording) (Sydney: ABC Programme Sales, c. 1999).
29 Andrew Ford, *Dots on the Landscape*, (off-air audio recording from ABC Classic FM, 2001), (Sydney: ABC Programme Sales, 2001).
Despite the fact that Dr Katy Abbott (b. 1971) first started composing at the age of 26, her music has already been performed around Australia as well as in the USA, Canada, and several European and Asian countries. Since she is in the relatively early stages of her career, there is to date little secondary source material, but a sample of reviews suggests a promising future as a composer. In a review in *The Age* (2000), Joel Crotty said of Abbott’s opera *Milushka* that she “has written a score that shows a great deal of craft, both in the vocal department and the way she has incorporated the drama into the five instrumental voices”. 

Michael Easton in *The Herald Sun* (2000) stated:

*Milushka*, by Katy Abbott, inhabits a sound world akin to Martinu with orchestral colours in the same league as Karen Tanaka … The outstanding success of this work owed much to the exquisite, soaring lines that were written by a person who knows what singers can do. 

Of Abbott’s work *Vertical Horizon*, Katherine Williams said in *In Aeternum* that it was “…beautiful and energetic, pulsing and soaring; it first engages and then surprises the listener”. Abbott’s music was included in a review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (2005) of *Trans-Tasman Waves* held at Government House on 1 February 2000. Peter McCallum said of Abbott’s song cycle, *Words of Wisdom*, that she “had a good ear for close-harmony voicings using jazz-inspired chords in a homophonic and wittily direct style”. About Halcyon’s performance of *It is Just the Heart* in Sydney’s Verbruggen Hall in August 2006, McCallum said it “revealed an original voice, setting texts that capture a child's perspective in a museum and, metaphorically, humanness in an imposing universe”. 

---

Abbott has enjoyed other media attention, including a programme on ABC Classic FM radio in March 2001 introduced by Simon Healy, which was dedicated to her opera *Milushka*, and an introductory talk delivered by Christopher Lawrence about the opera at the Port Fairy Spring Festival in 2000. However, there is much scope for further exploration into Abbott’s work, and certainly for her existence as a composing wife and mother.

All the composers have biographies and listings of works and recordings on the website of the Australian Music Centre. Surprisingly, only Margaret Sutherland and Ann Carr-Boyd have biographies published in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Music*, though they and Elena Kats-Chernin are listed briefly in a variety of other dictionaries of Australian composers.  

Sutherland and Kats-Chernin are the only two composers to be commercial enough to be considered worthy of inclusion in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, while they, together with Carr-Boyd, have entries in the *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*.

1.3 Central Argument, Focus and Themes/Questions of Thesis

In her study of the patterns of feminist biography, *Writing a Woman’s Life* (1988), Carolyn Heilbrun reminds us that in the past narratives of women’s lives were shaped according to one predominant plot. This was the conventional “marriage or erotic plot”, which assumed that the ultimate destination for a woman was the safety and closure of marriage, in which a man, his career and their children became the centre of her life. Women could not be seen to strive overtly towards their non-domestic ambitions, or to assume power over their lives. It was more acceptable for men actively to seek careers, which were then uninterrupted, and to lead adventurous lives.  

This was certainly the cultural and ideological environment in existence when Margaret Sutherland was young in the early years of the twentieth century. The available

---

narratives for women have broadened throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, but there are still particular challenges faced by women who wish to build a career as well as raise children. Neither the marriage-and-motherhood nor the career-plot alone is entirely suited to a biography of any of the four women in this study. In contemplating their lives, the question arises as to what sort of ‘plot’ or ‘plots’ could be articulated which adequately represent/s their particular experiences as composers who are mothers. Each of the women in this study has to some extent chosen the predominant female vocation of motherhood, but they have also actively sought what is still a relatively unusual vocation for a woman. In her article examining three autobiographies by women, Sarah Gilead defines "the conflicted subject", a woman who … dramatises not only universal problems of identity, the desiring self forced by the exigencies of civilisation to relinquish or rechannel desires, but the particular problems of women who in patriarchal societies are cast into the contradictory roles of culture-preserver and culture-threat. [There are] conflicting desires to escape the burden of traditional limits on self-concept and ways of living, yet to retain links to traditional culture and its capacity to lend historical and social significance to the self.39

Sources relating to Margaret Sutherland’s years of marriage and child-rearing suggest she lived this conflict, as have, to varying degrees, all the composers in this study. As musical creators ambitious for a career, each is unconventional “culture threat”; as mother each acts as conventional “culture preserver”. They tried/try to play a dual role, to succeed in both the public and private spheres, and each has experienced some “pain of any ‘normal’ woman attempting to live a life beyond the boundaries of the script”.40 This thesis will explore the development and manifestations of these “polar concepts” in the lives of these women.41 In the case of the three living composers, space has been made for them to explore and articulate their personal narratives, with a particular focus on the balance of motherhood and creative career.

These explorations will be situated within the relevant contextual elements of the eras in which the women lived/live. Such contexts include the evolution of feminism and family structure in Australia, changing societal expectations of mothering, historical

40 Solie 61.
41 Gilead 43.
attitudes of women as creators of music, and the status of women composers in Australia. When furnishing contextual background in this thesis, it is not my intention to interrogate existing feminist theories or historical notions about creativity in women. Rather it is to extract and present aspects of this material that were/are relevant to the lives of the subjects of this study, and which therefore provide a framework against which their experiences as composers and mothers can be examined.

Although complete feminist biographies of these four composers are not within the scope of this study, the intention is to address some issues of their biographies, with material drawn from a range of primary sources which have not yet been sufficiently tapped. In the case of Margaret Sutherland, these comprise her written autobiographical reflections, which are mostly unpublished. These include “Three Universities in One”, “1920 and So On”, a typescript dated 1943, an undated, untitled autobiographical typescript, a personal diary she called “These Things I Must Remember” dated 1951–1952, another autobiographical note dated November 1960, an undated note entitled “How to Live in a Room-and-a-Bit (and Still Keep Your Reason—and Your Piano)” and two published articles: “Accent on Music-Making” (1943) and “Young Days in Music” (1968).42

The obvious differences between these ‘written’ primary sources and the ‘spoken’ words of the three living composers should be acknowledged. When writing, there is time for reflection and for the careful selection of material to be recorded. This contrasts with the immediacy and potential for generating new thoughts and ideas involved in the interactive environment of a live interview. In writing this thesis, I am aware of this disparity in sources, but recognise that since Sutherland is dead, such ‘fixed’ written reminiscences are the best primary material available. It should also be

noted that these sources are mostly ‘conversational’ in nature, and have been of great value in constructing a picture of aspects of Sutherland’s experiences and personality.

Whilst it has, of course, not been possible to interview Sutherland herself, I have been fortunate to be able to conduct interviews with relatives and friends of Sutherland, and to access interviews conducted by others. The latter include an interview by James Murdoch in 1968, another by Mel Pratt in 1972 for the Oral History Programme being carried out at the National Library of Australia, and a long, unpublished typescript dating from 1978, which was written by Stuart Rosewarne following a series of interviews he undertook with Sutherland with a view to preparing a biography of the Sutherland family.43 Such interviews have acted as the best possible substitute for the live interviews conducted with the living subjects.

Interviews with friends and relatives of Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott have not been conducted, since it has been possible to use their own words. These are considered to be the most valuable primary sources for them in the context of this thesis. None of them has kept an autobiographical journal, and there are no other primary sources such as letters or memoirs available for study.44 Other sources detailed below will be drawn on to provide the theoretical paradigms adopted in, and context of, this study.45

There are three themes in this thesis, each of which corresponds with one of three central questions posed. They are as follows: First, in what ways did each composer’s family background, upbringing and education impact on her decision to enter the traditionally male field of composition?; second, to what extent did the feminist movement influence each of their lives as composers and mothers, and what were the levels of frustration and/or satisfaction or pleasure each woman has felt in blending motherhood with composition?; and third, in what ways did historical and enduring

43 James Murdoch, transcript of taped interview with Margaret Sutherland, 3 April 1968, James Murdoch Papers, AMSC, NLA, MS 8372; Mel Pratt, transcript of taped interview with Margaret Sutherland, 5 April 1972, Oral History Section, NLA, TRC 121/31; Stuart Rosewarne, “The Sutherland Family”, unpublished typescript, 14 November 1978, private collection of Tony Bunney.
44 Kats-Chernin plans to write a book in conjunction with her sister about their childhood, and will compose pieces that resonate with the various chapters. Kats-Chernin, email communication, 13 January 2009.
45 More detail on the approaches adopted will be provided in the following section: “Theoretical Paradigms and Methodologies”.
negative attitudes towards women as musical creators play out in their musical careers in Australia?

1.4 Relevance and Importance of Thesis

It is clear from an overall assessment of the current literature on these composers, that there is a need for more biographical analysis of aspects of these women’s lives, in order to consider their different experiences and challenges faced as a result of leading lives in which they have attempted, or are attempting, successfully to combine their roles as creative women with those of motherhood.

With regard to Margaret Sutherland, Symons pointed out the need to explore the feminist slant on her life and work, stressing that it was not his intention in his book to adopt a feminist approach, but that “future studies may adopt other approaches including the pursuit of the gender issue at much greater depth”. In general, where scholarship has been undertaken, there has been a greater concentration on their compositions and not so much on the women behind them, their own voices, or in the case of Margaret Sutherland, the voices of those who knew her. Although there is a body of scholarship which addresses the experiences of writing mothers, and also a few publications about mothers involved in the visual and performing arts, there are very few scholarly biographical publications produced about composing mothers. The impact of private, domestic lives on the public domain and events has not traditionally been thought worthy of consideration in the sphere of academic or historical inquiry. This thesis will fill a gap in this field, in the belief that the articulation of mothering women’s different experience as composers is both a valuable and necessary addition to current scholarship.

In summary, the current study is important for three major reasons. First, it adds a new dimension to the scholarship currently available on significant Australian composers. Second, it takes the view of current scholarship in feminist biography that it is important to consider not only creative product, but the life of the person behind the product. Third, it foregrounds some specific experiences of musically creative mothers.

46 Symons, The Music of Margaret Sutherland, ix.
47 Some important sources on this topic will be noted later in this chapter, and quoted in Chapters Three and Six.
1.5  Theoretical Paradigms and Methodologies

The methodologies adopted in this study derive principally from two theoretical paradigms. The first emanates from feminist biographical theory, and the second from theories of (particularly women’s) oral history and ethnography.

1.5.1  Feminist Biography

1.5.1.1  Theoretical Basis

Perhaps ‘contemporary biographical theory’ is a more all-encompassing term than ‘feminist biography’, because it can encompass the fact that, though methods of writing biography have broadened to reflect women’s experience, many biographies of men now also exhibit this broader approach, and consider male gender issues. Modern biography in the English-speaking world began in 1791 with James Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson. At this time the subjects were prominent, usually white, in some way heroic, middle- or upper-class men. They were treated mostly in isolation from their social and cultural context, the narrative tended to be chronological and linear, the tone often hagiographic, and the emphasis laid on product and the external, public and historical events of a life. As Rachel Power eloquently states:

For so long the myth of the Great Artist, the powerful and obsessive male genius, has been lauded in the public imagination. It is far more romantic, more enticing, for the artist to occupy a space one step removed from the rest of us down here in the real world.  

Nineteenth-century women were writing biographies which highlighted their subjects’ personalities, motivations and inner lives, but critics were sceptical and reviews mixed, if indeed the works were considered worthy of review, or noticed at all.  

History claims that the form was modernised by British biographer Lytton Strachey, with his Eminent Victorians (1918) and Queen Victoria (1921). He appeared to be the first to illuminate his subjects’ personalities—to show them as flawed human beings. In the 1920s a trend towards psychoanalytic biography based on Freud’s theories attracted

---
more women writers, but although there was more emphasis on subjects’ inner lives, the narratives were still constructed according to male models of achievement.\(^{50}\) They remained plots of adventure, dependent on public, historical events, rather than investigating and validating the domestic and private elements of subjects’ lives.\(^{51}\)

With the rise of contemporary feminism in the 1960s, more biographies of women were written, and there was increasing acknowledgment that women’s lives were different from men’s, and that this difference needed to be visible. This led to stories being told in a greater variety of ways. Nancy Milford’s biography of Zelda Sayre, wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, is generally credited with being the model for contemporary women’s biography.\(^{52}\) Milford reassessed her subject’s life. Using primary sources such as unpublished correspondence and manuscripts, and transcribed interviews between Scott and Zelda and with Zelda’s therapist, Milford placed Zelda at the centre of the narrative, rather than treating her as she had been previously, as an event in her husband’s life, the wife of a famous person.\(^{53}\) Although Milford investigated the impact of family history, childhood and adolescence, husband and other family members and friends played subordinate roles in the narrative.\(^{54}\)

As Sharon O’Brien has pointed out, the conventional idea about biography has been the assumption that the author, remaining objective, can uncover the one ‘truth’ or ‘core self’ of a subject, that a subject can be considered a unified whole capable of expression through the written word. Cultural critiques developed under postmodernism and poststructuralism must be acknowledged. In denying well-defined categories such as author, reader, subject, and (most relevant to this thesis), woman, the idea of a ‘core self’ has been questioned, influencing the ways we think about biography. Poststructuralism and Lacanian analysis particularly interrogated the notion of the ‘core self’, considering ‘self’ to be de-centred, multiple and unknowable. This clearly presents a challenge to the conventional idea that biography can crystallise the truth.

\(^{51}\) Wagner-Martin 1–2.
\(^{53}\) Milford was interesting in her own right. She wrote magazine articles, short stories and novels. She was apparently dubbed ‘the first flapper’ by her husband, and in her late twenties became obsessed with the idea of becoming a ballet dancer.
\(^{54}\) Wagner-Martin 3, 135–137.
about a subject, or the essential ‘self’; in fact, it presents a challenge in general to biography as a genre.\textsuperscript{55}

In an attempt to address this issue, postmodern biographers have canvassed different approaches. A good example of this is David Nye’s radical new form of biography, referred to as ‘anti-biography’, which draws on semiotics and structuralism and abandons linearity and chronology. In the process however, his sources are not synthesised, and the pleasures of narration are denied. It is interesting for two reasons that feminist biographers have not generally taken up the ‘anti-biography’ form. First, the traditional linear, chronological form is considered patriarchal because it appears to mirror the common male career trajectory. Second, postmodern deconstructionists claim that speaking from the socially-constructed ‘category woman’, as it would seem a feminist biographer does, upholds the so-called patriarchal ideology of the individual.\textsuperscript{56}

In this thesis I take the view of Sharon O’Brien, who is opposed to deconstruction’s dismantling of the concept of a universalised self. She believes that finding a female self aside from male definitions has been empowering for women, and that there is a need to narrate female lives.\textsuperscript{57} The biographical medium is still a powerful means of reinscribing women into history, and it should not be abandoned. Ruth Solie also advocates this approach, maintaining that the problem of women’s biography has more to do with the categories of ‘standard’ and ‘other’ than it does with ‘male’ and ‘female’. If women’s biography needs a different approach, it is not because of ‘essential’ differences between men and women or their works, but because their experiences have been radically different. These differences are quite familiar, the most obvious being that “marriage or its absence has been a more significant variable for women than for men, and parenthood a far more determinative condition’’.\textsuperscript{58} The masculine viewpoint has been normative, but we now realise that it is not universal. Therefore their female sex is always, in some way, integral to a fuller understanding of women’s lives.

\textsuperscript{56} O’Brien 126.
\textsuperscript{57} O’Brien 128; Heilbrun, \textit{Writing A Woman’s Life}.
\textsuperscript{58} Solie, “Changing the Subject”, 62–63.
Central to this idea that women’s gender has influenced their life experiences, and that it is necessary to maintain the ‘category woman’, scholars now acknowledge that complete objectivity is difficult to attain, and that to a greater or lesser extent any biography is a narrative with a point of view. This is not to say that the biographer overtly inserts their self into the text so that an autobiographical element is hard to ignore, but rather that the biographer has unavoidably provided a particular view of the subject. As Liz Stanley emphasises, the act of biography is temporally located. The foundation upon which a biographer writes is the personal, intellectual and social climate at the time of writing, understood from his/her own consciousness. There can be several plausible interpretations of one life, and readers are encouraged to make their own judgments as to the degree to which any one version is plausible.

O’Brien suggests that there are ways in which feminism and deconstruction can combine so as not to suggest a “falsely unified self”, while at the same time not denying the importance of gender to female experience. O’Brien provides four possible models for this, which involve taking a less linear, chronological approach. Suggestions include the double-voiced biography, in which the subject responds to the author; the interruption of the narrative with diaries, letters or photographs which are not interpreted; the incorporation into the text of the different interpretations of the subject’s ‘self’ that an author has during the often long drawn-out process of writing a biography; and the publication of a new preface in subsequent re-prints of a previously-published biography in order to incorporate later ‘selves’.

Besides these suggested alterations in structure to disrupt both the linear, chronological approach and the idea of the universalised ‘self’, there are other distinguishing characteristics of a so-called feminist biography. First, biographers might aim to provide a view of the whole person, presenting negative and positive personality traits and life events. This acknowledges that these elements contribute to or motivate the

61 Examples of women who are the subjects of biographies are of course Virginia Woolf, who has been the focus of around 38 biographical studies published between 1940 and 2000. Closer to home is Dame Nellie Melba, who has had about 25 studies devoted to her between the 1930s and the 1990s.
subject’s achievements. Second, they are mindful of the significant connections between private and public lives. Therefore the impact of family relationships, domestic and family commitments and supportive friendships is considered, and internal change is taken into account along with external.\textsuperscript{63} Third, they acknowledge, as Liz Stanley emphasises, that a subject does not exist in heroic isolation, but is a social product located within a social milieu. An attempt should be made to investigate this social context and weave it into the narrative.\textsuperscript{64} The question should be asked: what was the environment in which the subject developed something other than a traditional life? Finally, the emphasis should not only be on when and what their subjects achieved, but how they achieved it.

In adopting a particular approach (in this case feminist) to the writing of biography, or the construction of part or all of a life, it is clear that there are processes involved which have previously been considered more central to fiction, but which have become recognised as relevant also to biography.\textsuperscript{65} Most notable are the creative use of language in the shaping of the narrative, the way in which the facts are ordered, and the careful selection of the material that best builds a believable picture (or a version of it) of the whole subject. As early as 1927, Virginia Woolf observed that it is when these skills of language, ordering and selectivity are creatively employed that the biography ceases to be a chronicle and moves closer to becoming a work of art.\textsuperscript{66} It is the intention that this thesis will be closer to the latter in style than to the former.

\subsection*{1.5.1.2 Specific Feminist Biographical Methodology Adopted in this Study}

Drawing upon the ideas derived from feminist biographical theory outlined above, this thesis will concentrate on the portrayal of the ‘selves’ of each of the composers, including the impact of their private, family, domestic and inner lives on their public careers, to show how rather than what they achieve/d. Their narratives will be placed within the context of the social and cultural expectations and the ideological

environment at play during their lifetimes. Although a chronological approach has been adopted in Chapter Two in order to enhance a fuller comprehension of their life choices and narratives, the thesis is also thematically based.

### 1.5.2 Women’s Oral History/Ethnography

#### 1.5.2.1 Theoretical Basis

‘Oral history’ can be defined as “interviewing people for the purpose of recording their personal and historical memories”. This thesis takes the view that it is an “unparalleled tool for reaching below the surface and uncovering hidden stories and points of view”. The term ethnography refers to the descriptive work produced from a study of human cultures, and the ‘new ethnography’ can be described as a “story based on the represented, or evoked, experiences of a self, with others, within a context”. Lived experience is “the starting point for all ethnography”, and a concept which suggests a “breakdown of traditional views of culture as a tight logical system, and people as passive bearers of that culture”. Instead, “people are reinstated as active agents in the reproduction as well as the transformation of culture”.

The primary focus in this study is the lived experiences as narrated by these four composers of the multiple roles they have played/play in life, and the inherent acknowledgment of the necessity and importance of creating greater public awareness of aspects of their individual and previously untold life narratives.

The privileging of lived experience has been highly contested. Criticisms have been raised as to the possible lack of credibility inherent in oral accounts based on such an unreliable phenomenon as memory. The one speaking today is not the same person who experienced or took part in past events now being related. A subject’s altered personal subjective consciousness, social standing or economic condition may well cause modifications in the way past events are judged. Indeed oral testimony is highly

---

68 Armitage, Hart and Weathermon, xi.
69 H.L. Goodall, Jr, *Writing the New Ethnography* (Walnut Creek, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2000) 83.
unlikely to be the same twice. However, Alessandro Portelli points out that oral history sources are narrative sources which attribute value to the meaning of the events in people’s lives as well as the events themselves: the emphasis is on process as much as product. Portelli continues on to say that

the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure is the speaker’s subjectivity … They tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did.

The credibility of oral sources is therefore of a different nature, and it is this alternative credibility that is embraced in this study. Even if memory is sometimes unreliable, and statements possibly untrue, they “are still ‘psychologically true’, and errors sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts”. According to Clandinin and Connelly: “In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories” rather than as “exemplars of a form—of an idea, a theory, a social category”. Oral history is a means of documenting “particular aspects of historical experience which tend to be missing from other sources, such as personal relations, domestic work or family life, and they have resonated with the subjective or personal meanings of lived experience”.

Other critics question the extent to which oral history interviewees can be thought to be statistically representative of the population at large. As Ronald Grele argues, these critics raise a false issue, because “interviewees are selected not because they present some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify historical processes”. Paul Thompson argues that oral history serves an “essential social purpose” and is a source “perfectly compatible with scholarly standards” which can transform “both the content

---

72 Although the autobiographical sources for Margaret Sutherland were not gleaned via a ‘live’ oral history process, in this thesis her written narratives of memories and impressions are understood in the same way as transcripts of oral history interviews.
73 Portelli 99–100.
74 Portelli 100.
75 D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000) 43.
and the purpose of history”, giving “back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place”.  

The views expressed above on the benefits of an oral historical/ethnographic approach are ideally suited to feminist research. By the 1970s, feminist scholars had become extremely wary of the previously dominant positivist approach to scholarship, which neglected the lives of women and what was important to them. These feminist writers were “rejecting the separations between subject and object, thought and feeling, knower and known, and political and personal”, and were validating a more “integrative, transdisciplinary approach to knowledge, one that would ground theory contextually in the concrete realm of women’s everyday lives”. The appeal of oral history to feminists is not difficult to understand, since the approach is compatible with the principle of feminist research as being by, about and for women, with a view to understanding those aspects of documenting women’s culture and history that had previously been ignored. It was noted that in the past women’s unique experiences had often been muted, especially where those experiences were at variance with those of men, for example, in their reflections of the dominant ideologies of women’s worlds: domesticity and motherhood. The difference between women’s oral history, then, as opposed to the material gleaned from any other oral interview with a woman, is the opportunity for autonomy and self-definition afforded them through the process of articulating their own experiences, as opposed to those of their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. This is a concept entirely compatible with feminism.

---

1.5.2.2 Ethical Considerations

In spite of the obvious benefits to be derived from conducting women’s oral histories, feminist scholars have questioned the ethical implications of the interview process, and an awareness of these is important. Ann Oakley, Nicole Beaudry, Katherine Borland, Judith Stacey and Joan Sangster touch on the potential for an unequal, exploitative, power relationship between interviewer and subject.84 This can occur despite the best intentions to aim for a fully collaborative approach, since the interviewer, as privileged researcher, naturally has more control over the finished product, the “written document structured primarily by a researcher’s purposes, offering a researcher’s interpretations, registered in a researcher’s voice”.85

Oakley discusses the difficulties confronted when she interviewed women for a major project concerned with the intensely personal experience of women’s transition to motherhood. During this process, she encountered “practical difficulties that led [her] to take a new look at the textbook paradigm”, a masculine paradigm which in her opinion treated the interview as an objective, mechanical instrument of data collection, and a situation in which one person asks the questions and a passive other gives the answers.86 It became clear to Oakley that

…in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship.87

Beaudry highlights the “ambiguous status” of the relationship between researcher and subject. It is likely that a strong friendship could develop, which raises the ethical question of the use of close relationships to gain, from a position of relative power, sometimes sensitive information for university-oriented research purposes.88 She concludes that there is no real solution to this dilemma, other than to acknowledge that a level of friendship is necessary in order to ensure the “depth and truth of our

84 Sangster 92–93.
85 Stacey 114.
87 Oakley, “Interviewing Women”, 41.
understanding”. At the same time, a constant awareness must exist of the “need to be able to detach ourselves from these same friends for the sake of observation”.

Borland concentrates on the inherent lack of objectivity in the interview process, stressing the potential for the researcher’s written interpretation of the oral testimony to be other than that intended by the narrator. She acknowledges that the interviewer’s “consciousness has been formed within a different social and historical reality”, and suggests the need to discuss ideas with the narrator before committing them to writing.

Sangster again concludes that there is no easy solution to the problem. It is perhaps more important “not to definitely answer, but rather to be ever aware of these questions”, to continually “examine the context of the interview, especially inherent power imbalances”, and always to “evaluate our own ethical obligations as feminists”.

Similarly, Stacey resolves to leave the dialogue open, while stressing the need to “monitor and then to mitigate some of the dangers to which ethnographers expose their informants”. She ends her discussion on a positive note, saying that

…this uneasy fusion of feminist and critical ethnographic consciousness may allow us to construct cultural accounts that, however partial and idiosyncratic, can achieve the contextuality, depth, and nuance I consider to be unattainable through less dangerous but more remote research methods.

1.5.2.3 Specific Oral History/Ethnographic Methodology Adopted in this Study

The oral history/ethnographic methodology used in this study can be summarised as follows. Given the value attributed in this study to allowing women to speak for themselves about their female experience, no claims are made that the results can be extrapolated beyond the four composers involved. Nevertheless, in-depth interviews using open-ended questions have provided a richness of material pertaining to the lives and beliefs of these composing mothers. Such depth might not have been obtained in a larger, more statistically-oriented survey. The approach adopted is closer to the case

89 Beaudry 82.
90 Beaudry 82.
91 Katherine Borland, “That’s Not What I Said: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research”, Women’s Words, 70, 73.
92 Sangster 94.
93 Stacey 117.
94 Stacey 118.
study of qualitative inquiry, than to the survey approach applicable to the extraction of quantitative data. Robert Stake describes the *intrinsic case study* as one “undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case….because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest”. He goes on to define an *instrumental case study* as one in which a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation, and a *collective case study* as an instrumental study extended to several cases.95 This thesis can be considered a collection of intrinsic case studies, interesting in themselves, but with elements of the collective case study, since it is hoped to be able to draw some comparisons between the four composers and also to deduce some patterns about the situations of composing mothers in Australia during the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

Robert Miller identifies three approaches to researching life stories: realist, neopostrivist and narrative. It is clear that the latter is most descriptive of the methodological approach of this study:

> The narrative approach bases itself fundamentally upon the ongoing development of the respondent’s viewpoint during the telling of a life or family ‘story’. Understanding the individual’s unique and changing perspective as it is mediated by context takes precedence over questions of fact.96

### 1.5.2.4 Interview Method/Structure/Questions

While interviewing the subjects involved in this study, serious attempts were made to ensure a collaborative process, while remaining mindful of the ethical implications discussed above of the researcher/subject relationship. Sherna Gluck suggests that “cultural likeness can greatly promote trust and openness, whereas dissimilarity reinforces cultural and social distance”.97 I believe the collaborative process has been enhanced by certain commonalities that I have with the composers participating in this study. I share not only a training and background in music, and in particular within the

Australian context, but also an understanding of the challenges and issues raised by leading several lives simultaneously and attempting to do justice to each, given that I am a mother who also performs the roles of researcher/writer and wage earner.

There are other issues which were borne in mind. First, Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack stress the importance, if seeking to know how women feel about their lives, of allowing them to “talk about their feelings as well as their activities”. They also speak of the need to refine listening skills so as to develop an awareness of the nuance of speech. In this way it is possible “to hear what women implied, suggested, and started to say but didn’t …to interpret their pauses, and, when it happens, their unwillingness or inability to respond”.  

Armitage echoes this advice, stressing the need to try to transfer the emotional engagement perceptible in the spoken word to the written word, which is difficult to achieve, but something about which there must be a constant awareness. She highlights the necessity to avoid interruption if possible, because it “prevents the narrator from giving her own shape to the account of her life”. Second, as Sangster points out, “women often remember the past in different ways in comparison with men”, and it is important to be aware of the potential for understatements, avoidance of the first person, rare mention of personal accomplishments and disguised statements of personal power”.

Taking into account the ethical considerations discussed above, and in order to facilitate the collaborative process further, a strong endeavour has been made to ensure fidelity to the composers’ narratives. My interpretations of the meaning of their words were at times discussed with them during the process, and they were given the opportunity to read, respond to, comment on and suggest alterations to written drafts of relevant parts of this thesis.

Where possible the interviews were conducted in the composers’ homes, in the belief that they would feel able to speak more openly in an environment in which they felt comfortable. The questions have been a necessary combination of direct questions to

---

100 Sangster 89.
elicit the requisite background information and open-ended questions that encourage each woman to articulate her unique experience.  

1.6 Relevant Secondary Sources

The secondary sources most useful for this study fall into two groups. The first comprises texts that have indirectly or directly informed the theoretical paradigms and methodologies adopted. These include writings on the ‘new musicology’ and feminist musicology, feminist biography, auto/biographies of creative women, and oral history/ethnographic sources. The second group consists of texts that provided material applied in this thesis. These include scholarship in the areas of the history of feminism and the family in Australia, the historical and current situation of women composers in Australia, feminist perceptions of motherhood, and historical notions of women’s artistic, literary and, most importantly, musical creativity. These will be addressed in turn.

1.6.1 Secondary Sources for Theoretical Paradigms and Methodologies

1.6.1.1 New Musicology/Feminist Musicology

The current acceptability within musicology of a study of this type is due in no small part to a shift in attitude in the field that has been pinpointed by Marcia Citron to 1985. In this year, Joseph Kerman’s text *Contemplating Music* was published. He outlined a so-called ‘new musicology’, intended to replace a previously fundamentally positivist discipline with one that increasingly recognised the need to situate music within a larger cultural context. Previously ignored categories such as gender were permitted to gain significance. Two publications, fundamental to this study, develop Kerman’s ideas further. Susan McClary’s book, entitled *Feminine Endings*, created controversy when first published in 1991, since it presented ideas of feminist criticism and cultural interpretation still considered radical in the field of musicology, but which

---

101 Lists of questions asked are attached as Appendices Two and Three; suffice to say that the content of this thesis has resulted from a blend of my initial research questions and additional issues which evolved during the interview process.
had long since become standard fare in most other areas of the humanities. As McClary claims of its introductory chapter, “A Material Girl in Bluebeard’s Castle”, “this extended polemic justifying feminist music criticism seemed entirely necessary”. This book further cemented the broadening out of musicology from a positivist discipline into one which now values cultural interpretations of music and acknowledges “musical procedures and philosophies as articulations of social ideologies”. Also significant is Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s article “Toward a Deconstruction of Structural Listening” (1996). She likewise seeks more than formalist analysis when interpreting or accounting for music. Suzanne Cusick’s article “Gender, Musicology and Feminism” (1999) is useful in tracing the genesis of the questioning of women’s historical role in music further back to the 1970s, “sparked by the women’s movement that has since come to be called the ‘second wave’ of feminism”. Her article also explores the history of the exclusion of women (particularly from the American Musicological Society in the 1930s) in an attempt to position music as a masculine, scientific discipline rather than as social and artistic practice.

The sub-discipline of feminist musicology was born with this realisation that it is essential to consider the issue of gender, because it affects women’s cultural position, and therefore their contribution to musical composition. As Jill Halstead neatly summarises in her book The Woman Composer, women’s private lives have impacted on their public, musical careers:

> Traditional research has most often omitted social commentary as being irrelevant to musical (and even biographical) matters. This omission renders invisible the important and influential social and domestic experiences of women composers and the consequences for their work. However, many of the problems directly

---


105 McClary xi.


108 Citron, “Gender and the Field of Musicology”, 69.
affecting women’s participation in musical creativity are revealed only when common aspects of the female experience are exposed.\textsuperscript{109}

This examination of women’s cultural position with regard to music has sparked debate among feminist musicologists of the previously held notion of musical creativity as the province of the masculine. It is necessary to comprehend certain terms as the foundation for understanding how masculine and feminine creativity have been historically defined. The aforementioned text by Susan McClary is invaluable in this regard.\textsuperscript{110} Other feminist musicological sources are quoted in this thesis, and will be noted in Sections 1.6.2.2 and 1.6.2.4 below.

1.6.1.2 Feminist Biography

There are a number of publications (mostly already cited above) founded on feminist theory as it relates to biographical/autobiographical approaches and/or to musicology which are integral to this study, and from which the feminist biographical methodology adopted has been formulated. Three publications focus on approaches to writing about women. These are \textit{Writing a Woman’s Life} (1988), by Carolyn G. Heilbrun, which reformulates narratives of women’s lives, \textit{The Last Gift of Time: Live Beyond Sixty}, by the same author, where she reflects on her life and forefronts issues faced by women over 60 years of age, and Sarah Gilead’s “Emigrant Selves, Narrative Strategies in Three Women’s Autobiographies” (1988).\textsuperscript{111} The principal focus of the latter is \textit{autobiography}, but it is still highly applicable, albeit in varying degrees, to the respective situations of each of the composers in this study. It focuses on a subgenre termed “emigrant or pioneer autobiography” in which metaphors of enclosed and open spaces are used to articulate conflicting plots of movement away from and towards social conventions.\textsuperscript{112}

Another useful model, though it was written in 1927, is Virginia Woolf’s “The New Biography” for its discussion of the fictive and artful aspects of biography. Liz

\textsuperscript{110} McClary, \textit{Feminine Endings}.
\textsuperscript{112} Gilead 43–44.
Stanley’s two publications, “Biography as Microscope or Kaleidoscope?” (1987) and *The Auto/Biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography* (1992) stress the significance of considering the social context of both writer and biographical subject. The implications of postmodernism for the writing of biography is particularly well addressed in Sharon O’Brien’s article “Feminist Theory and Literary Biography”, in *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism* (1991). Diane Wood Middlebrook’s article “Postmodernism and the Biographer” in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography and Gender* (1990), is also helpful.\(^{113}\)

*The Challenge of Feminist Biography* (1992), edited by Sara Alpern et al, is inspiring for its essays by American women biographers about the process of writing women’s biography. Linda Wagner-Martin’s *Telling Women’s Lives: The New Biography* (1994) provides a clear analysis of the male-focused history of biography and the way in which women’s less public contributions have previously been devalued. Three highly relevant sources draw on these, but focus specifically on the need for the discipline of musicology to address the nature of women’s contributions to music. They include Ruth Solie’s “Changing the Subject” (1993), and the aforementioned text by Jill Halstead. The third is by Kay Dreyfus who, in her article “In Search of New Waters…” (1995), emphasises that taking a product-centred approach alone to a woman like Sutherland is inadequate, since “clearly she was obliged to make decisions and sacrifices as a composer on the basis of personal needs and duties as a woman”, and “such critical intersections of biography and creativity need to be addressed”.\(^{114}\) Again, these assertions can be applied to varying degrees to each of the composers in this study.


1.6.1.3 Auto/Biographies of Creative Women

It has also been useful and informative to observe how other authors have approached their female subjects in the writing of biography, or themselves in the case of autobiography. Several biographies of creative women are pertinent to this study. First, Sutherland’s cousin Stella Bowen’s *Drawn from Life: A Memoir* (1941), is fascinating for its insights into the extended family, life in Adelaide in the late nineteenth-century, and the psyche of the creative woman. Australian composer Miriam Hyde’s autobiography *Complete Accord* provides an interesting comparison, and is notable for Hyde’s thoughts on her marriage situation. Drusilla Modjeska’s *Stravinsky’s Lunch* (1999) is particularly relevant because its subjects are creative Australian women of Sutherland’s era (artists Stella Bowen and Grace Cossington-Smith). Pauline Petrus’s PhD thesis on Esther Rofe (1995), Faye Patton’s on Florence Ewart (1999), and Barbara Falk’s book *D.J.: Dorothy Jean Ross (1891–1982)* (2000), are also relevant. Elizabeth Lutyens’s autobiography *A Goldfish Bowl* (1972), Meirion and Susie Harries’s *A Pilgrim Soul* about the life of Elizabeth Lutyens (1989), Judith Tick’s *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer’s Search for American Music* (1997), and Adrienne Fried Block’s *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian* (1998), provide useful comparisons, since their experiences in some way correlate with those of the composers in the current study.\(^\text{115}\)

Several essays published in the Australian collection *The Half-Open Door* (1982) edited by Patricia Grimshaw and Lynn Strahan are interesting for their commentaries on experiences of balancing professional/creative lives with motherhood. Most useful are the essays by Joyce Nicholson, Alison Patrick, Norma Grieve, Thérèse Radic, Lynne Strahan, and Judith Lumley. *Strong Hearts, Inspired Minds* (1996) by Anne Mavor is a valuable source for its exposé of the experiences of 21 American artists who are mothers, though no composers are included. Halstead’s book is also significant in this

regard, since the author has focused on the family and creative lives of nine British female composers. For those seven who were/are mothers, the tensions between motherhood and composition are revealed: Avril Coleridge-Taylor (b. 1903), Elizabeth Maconchy (b. 1907), Minna Keal (b. 1909), Ruth Gipps (b. 1921), Antoinette Kirkwood (b. 1930), Enid Luff (b. 1935), and Bryony Jagger (b. 1948). The book *A Better Woman* (1999), written by Australian author, now resident in London, Susan Johnson (b. 1956), is a highly personal memoir. She emphasises the tensions between the need to write and the commitment to be a good mother to her small children. *Double Lives: Writing and Motherhood* (2008), edited by Shannon Cowan et al, illuminates similar experiences of a number of Canadian writers. In a similar vein to Mavor’s book about American artist-mothers is a recently-published book by Rachel Power, entitled *The Divided Heart* (2008), based on a series of interviews with Australian artists, writers, musicians and one composer—Elena Kats-Chernin—about the challenges of the simultaneous callings of creativity and motherhood.116

1.6.1.4 Oral History/Ethnography

Given that much of the primary source material is gleaned from interviews with the four living subjects, certain scholarly publications in oral history and ethnography have been useful guides in formulating the oral history/ethnographic methodology in this study.117 Alessandro Portelli’s article “The Peculiarities of Oral History” (1981) provides a useful foundation for an understanding of the value of such an approach. He discusses objectivity, compares oral with written sources, and suggests a different integrity inherent in oral history, in that it “tells us less about events as such than about their meaning”. In “Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms” (1981), Ann Oakley critiques the previous textbook masculine paradigm for the interviewer/interviewee interaction. She defends a non-hierarchical approach in which the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (1984), edited by David Dunaway and Willa Baum has two


117 These have already been cited above.
pertinent contributions. “History and the Community” by Paul Thompson examines the social purpose of oral history, and Sherna Gluck’s chapter “What’s So Special about Women?: Women’s Oral History”, is valuable for its provision of a basic rationale for women’s oral history, and the benefits of cultural likeness between interviewer and interviewee.\textsuperscript{118}

*Women’s Words* (1991), edited by Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai contains several thought-provoking essays. The Introduction emphasises the usefulness of oral narratives in understanding and documenting women’s culture and history, but posits that traditional oral history methodology does not serve women’s interests well, since it fails to “address the basic insights that grew out of the women’s liberation movement, including the notion that the personal is political and the conviction that women’s experiences were inherently valuable and needed to be recorded”.\textsuperscript{119}

In “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses”, Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack suggest that women should not feel bound by publicly acceptable and conventional means of expression, and there is a need to encourage women to express their thoughts and feelings as well as activities. Katherine Borland in “‘That’s Not What I Said’: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research”, discusses the possibility that a second-level narrative based upon a transcript can misinterpret the intention of the interviewee, and suggests ways to avoid this. “Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story”, by Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, considers a narrative approach which makes it possible to go beyond the surface information normally collected through survey research. Finally in this collection, Judith Stacey’s, “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?”, addresses the pitfalls and potential ethical problems of ethnographic research, discusses a postmodern ethnographic approach, and suggests that there is a depth and nuance in the method which is unattainable through more remote research methods.\textsuperscript{120}


Janet McCalman’s article “The Historian and the Good Listener” (1995), is invaluable, because it suggests an overall approach to history that is highly relevant to this study. McCalman considers personal history as an easy way to understand what we do when we make histories, and suggests that we study history to make sense of life just as we try to make sense of our own inner histories. In A Passage to Anthropology (1995), Kirsten Hastrup examines in depth the notion of lived experience as the starting point for ethnography. Nicole Beaudry highlights the potential for a close friendship to develop between the more powerful university researcher and her subject, and the attendant possibility of exploitation of the relationship on the part of the former in order to gain sensitive information.121

The Oral History Reader, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, is another useful collection. The Introduction asserts that interviews can document particular aspects of historical experience that tend to be missing from other sources, such as personal relations, domestic work or family life. It is also suggested that interviews can resonate with subjective meanings of lived experience. In “Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History”, Ronald Grele examines the nature of oral history sources, and comments on whether or not interviews are representative of the population at large. In “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History”, Joan Sangster covers several important issues, including the nature of women’s memory, and ethical and theoretical dilemmas.122

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly’s book Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research (2000) engages with the differences between formalist inquiry, where people, if identified at all, are viewed as exemplars of a form, and narrative inquiry, where they are viewed as embodiments of lived stories. Robert Stake’s contribution to Denzin and Lincoln’s Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000), entitled “Case Studies” has been useful in articulating a selective interviewing approach

(as in this study), as opposed to a survey approach. Bud Goodall’s book *Writing the New Ethnography* (2000) is worthy of mention for its provision of the definition of the new ethnography. Robert L. Miller’s book *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories* (2000) is also noteworthy for its explanation of sociology-based methodologies of interviewing, including realist, neo-positivist and narrative approaches.\(^{123}\)


1.6.2 Secondary Sources Used in Thesis

1.6.2.1 Cultural History: Feminism and the Family in Australia

There are several publications that provide relevant Australian contextual background with regard to social history, and in particular feminist and family history.\(^{125}\) They all address in some way the roles played by and the treatment of women in Australia from settlement to the present day, and respond to the previous gap in literature on the particular experiences of women in Australian life. The most pertinent of these are Anne Summers’s *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975) and *The End of Equality* (2003); *Gentle Invaders* by Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon (1975); Drusilla Modjeska’s

---


\(^{125}\) These have been particularly useful in preparing Appendix One of this thesis.

1.6.2.2 Commentaries on the Situation of Women Composers in Australia

There are some writings published by Australian scholars that contain opinion and commentary on the particular challenges faced by women composers in Australia from


There are several historical surveys not dedicated to recording the history of women composers in particular that are nevertheless useful references about Australian composition in general. These include Roger Covell’s book *Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society* (1967), *Australia’s Contemporary Composers* (1972) by James Murdoch and David Tunley’s introductory article “Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century: A Background” (1978).  

1.6.2.3 Feminist Perceptions of Motherhood

The ‘second wave’ of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s engendered a large number of publications in which motherhood and domesticity were portrayed as central to women’s oppression and inequality with men. These polemics have been most useful sources to draw upon in order to express in Chapter Three the nature of feminist attitudes towards mothering that were dominant during these years. Chief among these is Simone de Beauvoir’s ground-breaking book *The Second Sex* (originally published in French in 1949). Following on from her work are *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970), *Sexual Politics*, by Kate Millett, *The Dialectic of Sex* (1972) by Shulamith Firestone and Ann Oakley’s

There are three landmark books that represent the beginnings of a re-evaluation or recuperation of the significance of mothering. Adrienne Rich’s Of Woman Born (1976) is invaluable for its exposé of the differences between motherhood as ‘institution’ and motherhood as ‘lived experience’, and Nancy Chodorow’s much-cited book The Reproduction of Mothering (1978, 1999) is illuminating for its scrutiny of the reasons why generations of women continue to desire to become mothers. In her book Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace (1989) Sara Ruddick considerably advances the argument in the direction of a recognition for the need to hold in greater esteem the thinking and processes involved in mothering.

Certain texts that interrogate received notions of what constitutes ‘the good mother’ have also been valuable in describing the ideals, standards and expectations placed on mothers over the period covered in this study. In “Writing and Motherhood” (1979), Susan Rubin Suleiman surveys important historical antecedents of continuing ideologies. Other writings which address this issue in the Australian context have been useful. The first is the Introduction written by Patricia Grimshaw for the collection of personal narratives she edited, entitled The Half-Open Door: Sixteen Modern Australian Women Look at Professional Life and Achievement (1982). Worth her Salt contains three essays relevant in this context: “The Flappers and the Feminists—A Study of Women’s Emancipation in the 1920s” by Barbara Cameron, Anthea Hyslop’s “Agents and Objects—Women and Social Reform in Melbourne 1900 to 1914, and “Women’s Labour Redefined: Child-bearing and Rearing Advice in Australia, 1880–1930s”, by

---


Kerrein Reiger. Finally, Betsy Wearing’s Australian empirical research in this area is presented in her book *The Ideology of Motherhood* (1984).  

The difficulties involved for mothers who think they can ‘have it all’ by doing equal justice to work and family have been well-documented in a number of books written since the late 1990s. Such accounts also illuminate a society in which the unpaid, caring duties of mothering are greatly under-valued in comparison with waged or salaried work. They suggest the necessity for a significant re-appraisal of values within the workplace and in broader society in general, and point towards a ‘third-wave’ feminism with the underlying value of greater freedom of choice for women rather than basic equality with men. Most influential in this regard for the purposes of this thesis are three texts, two of which are by Australian author Anne Manne. They are *Motherhood: How Should We Care for Our Children* (2005) and her Quarterly Essay “Love & Money: The Family and the Free Market” (2008). Daphne de Marneffe’s book *Maternal Desire: On Children, Love and the Inner Life* (2004) has been an essential resource. Other important Australian books include Susan Maushart’s *The Mask of Motherhood: How Mothering Changes Everything and Why We Pretend It Doesn’t* (1997), Leslie Cannold’s *What, No Baby?: Why Women are Losing the Freedom to Mother, and How They Can Get It Back* (2005), and *Wonder Woman: The Myth of ‘Having It All’* (2005) by Virginia Haussegger.  


the Quest for Motherhood (2002) and Do Men Mother (2006) by Andrea Doucet. 133
Several essays contained in the Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering’s edition entitled “Mothering and Feminism” (2006) have also been useful. These include “A 21st-Century Feminist Agenda for Valuing Care-Work” by Marty Grace, D. Lynn Hallstein’s “Conceiving Intensive Mothering”, “Motherhood to Mothering and Beyond: Maternity in Recent Feminist Thought” by Emily Jeremiah, and A. Joan Saab’s “Creating a Life or Opting Out: Antifeminism and the Popular Media”. 134

1.6.2.4 Historical Notions of Women’s Creativity

There are many publications that address the issue of historical notions of women’s creativity, several of which are most germane to Chapter Six. Marcia Citron’s explorations into the issue of women’s creativity, as composers in particular, have been indispensable to the current study. Her ideas are expressed in three texts. The articles “Women and the Lied, 1775–1850” (1987) and “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon” (1990) provide an overview of the cultural climate which has served to undermine women’s creative achievements. Citron addresses these issues in much more detail in her watershed book Gender and the Musical Canon (1993). Equally essential has been Jill Halstead’s book The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition (1997). 135

Two sourcebooks have also been especially useful. The first of these is Rosemary Agonito’s collection History of Ideas on Woman (1977), in particular the entries from Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud. The second is Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present (1982), edited by Carol Neuls-Bates. British composer Ethel Smyth’s essay

---


“Female Pipings in Eden” extracted therein is pertinent. Other useful excerpts are those from the writings of George Upton, Carl E. Seashore, Amy Fay and Mabel Daniels.\textsuperscript{136}

A number of other essays and books have been illuminating on this topic. They include Catherine Stimpson’s “Power, Presentations and the Presentable” (1980); “The Blank Page’ and the Issues of Female Creativity” by Susan Gubar (1981); Jamie Kassler’s “The ‘Woman Question’ in Music” (1988/1989); \textit{Gender and Genius} (1989) by Christine Battersby; “Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor” by Susan Stanford Friedman (1989); Nancy Reich’s “Women as Musicians: A Question of Class” (1993); “Rethinking Essentialism and 'A Women’s Aesthetic’” by Sheila Guymer; Eugene Gates’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Composers? (1994); and “A Distinguishing Virility: Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music” (1994) by Catherine Parsons Smith. Ruth Lee Martin’s PhD dissertation is also applicable in this context.\textsuperscript{137}

Two publications are significant for their commentaries on the challenges mothers face in finding time and space for creativity. These are Virginia Woolf’s now celebrated essay \textit{A Room of One’s Own} (1929) and Drusilla Modjeska’s biography of two Australian women painters, \textit{Stravinsky’s Lunch} (1999).\textsuperscript{138}


Several women authors have written of the historical restrictions on ‘writing motherhood’ into their prose or poetry, and of the need to re-think the pressure to separate entirely their mothering and creative activities. Chief among these are Tillie Olsen’s *Silences* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) and Mara Faulkner’s, “Motherhood as Source and Silencer of Creativity” (1995). *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* (2001) is a useful collection of such writings, and those of Ursula Le Guin, Susan Rubin Suleiman and Alicia Ostriker are most pertinent to this thesis. Two essays addressing the experiences of Adrienne Rich are relevant. They are D’Arcy Randall’s “Adrienne Rich’s ‘Clearing in the Imagination’: Of Woman Born as Literary Criticism” (2004), and “A ‘Sense of Drift’: Adrienne Rich’s Emergence from Mother to Poet” (2004) by Jennette Riley.\(^{139}\)

Finally, whilst it is mainly women authors who have been explored regarding this issue, two such texts about women artists are applicable in this context. These are Linda Nochlin’s article “Why Are There No Great Women Artists” (1971), and *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (1979) by Germaine Greer.\(^{140}\)

### 1.7 Chapter Outlines

This Introduction has acquainted the reader with the current study, its focus, the participants, its importance and intentions. The theoretical paradigms and methodologies underpinning the thesis, together with a presentation of relevant and useful scholarly literature, have also been provided. The body of the thesis which follows is divided into three parts, and the concluding Chapter Nine completes the


study. Each part is dedicated to one of the three broad themes of the thesis. Respectively these parts aim to illuminate particular aspects of the experience of these four composing mothers. The material in Parts Two and Three tends to move from the general to the particular. The chapters here fall into two categories, the first of which contain historical and cultural background, and the second, case studies. Those within the first category furnish the necessary theory and context against which particular experiences of the four participating women, or ‘case studies’ can be placed.

Part One, “Foundations”, ‘sets the scene’ for the remainder of the thesis. It consists of one chapter, which focuses on the early lives and education of the four subjects of this thesis. Part Two, “Feminist Positions”, considers the impacts of feminism on the public ‘career’ and private ‘mothering’ aspects of the lives of these four composers. Chapter Three examines second-wave feminist attitudes towards mothering, the legacies left by such attitudes, and an evolving ‘third-wave’ feminist approach. Chapters Four and Five concentrate on the composers themselves, and in particular their relationship with feminism, and how this movement has played out in their lives. Because the career and family life of Margaret Sutherland evolved prior to second-wave feminism, Chapter Four is devoted to her alone. The three living composers are considered in Chapter Five.

Part Three, “Motherhood and Creativity” discusses the experiences in general of women as creative mothers, and of the four Australian composers in this study in particular. Chapter Six illuminates notions throughout history of women’s creative, and more specifically compositional abilities, and the ways in which these have, or have not, altered over the years. Chapter Seven addresses the ways in which these attitudes have affected women composers in general within the Australian context. In Chapter Eight, the extent to which composers Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott conform to the ‘normative’ Australian situation are brought to light. Chapter Nine serves as a summary of conclusions relating to the thesis as a whole. It also includes some reflections on the principal methodologies of feminist biography and oral history as they have applied during the process of constructing the thesis.

---

141 Refer Section 1.4 above.
Appendix One contains information about the situation of women in Australia from settlement until the present. Topics included are the evolution of first and second-wave feminism, divorce and child custody, education, and the impacts of the two world wars. Material about early musical life in Australia, including the early and middle generations of Australian women composers, is also offered here. These matters are not central to the main themes of the thesis. However, together they form potentially interesting and useful background knowledge on the history of women in Australia, the country in which Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd and Katy Abbott grew up, and that to which Elena Kats-Chernin migrated at a formative stage of her composing/mothering life, and now calls home. Appendices Two and Three list the questions asked in the first and second face-to-face interviews with the three living composers in this study.
PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER TWO

CASE STUDIES

EARLY LIVES, EDUCATION, EXPECTATIONS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has three principal aims. The first is to introduce more thoroughly the four composers who are the subjects of this project. The second is to outline the environments in which each of these women grew up. Family background, musical education, expectations of parents and teachers, and significant role models will be explored. This will serve to map the paths of these women until the point that they made their respective decisions to focus on composition as a career, a vocation which to this day is still more commonly taken up by men than women. Finally, the chapter will provide a foundation for later feminist analysis of the composers’ experiences as musically creative mothers. Before proceeding to discuss Margaret Sutherland, followed by the three living composers, the musical climate in Australia prior to her era will briefly be outlined.1

2.2 Aspects of the History of Women Composers in Australia

In the early days of Australia’s musical life, the urge to maintain and reinforce links with the traditions of Europe and England was strong, and composers were generally content to imitate the trends of what was perceived as an artistically superior culture.2 The notion that women’s creative and compositional abilities were inherently inferior to those of men was also inherited from British and European culture.3 Male and female

---

1 A more complete survey of Australia’s musical history can be found in Appendix One.
2 Geitenbeek 32, Crisp 48.
3 Selleck 156; Thorold Waters, “Women in the Creation of Music: An Australian Legislator Starts Something”, The Australian Musical News, 1 July 1938, 3–4. Refer also to William Sutherland, “Education of Women”, undated newspaper article contained in scrapbook volume (1904), AMSC, NLA, MS 2967, Box 1; quoted in Watters-Cowan 378. The history of these notions will be explored in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis.
Australian composers suffered a certain amount of neglect, but women faced particular challenges.⁴ There is now good evidence that women were composing music, particularly from the late nineteenth century onwards.⁵ However, women tended to be recognised more for the interpretation of music rather than its creation. They certainly played an important role as accompanists in parlour music-making, and as teachers.⁶

The establishment of three tertiary music institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enabled new opportunities for professional musical training and provided facilities designed for the propagation of music.⁷ Previously, the education needed to bring musical talent to fruition was difficult to procure, and there was an exodus overseas of young artists such as Nellie Melba and Alfred Hill.⁸

The late nineteenth century also produced what Thérèse Radic refers to as “the older generation of women composers, the inheritors of the colonial piano players”.⁹ Only in the 1970s did the music of such early Australian composers begin to come to light. Two composers in particular achieved a measure of fame. Mona McBurney (1862–1932) and Florence Ewart (1864–1949) composed operas, orchestral and choral works along with songs and ensemble works consistently over almost four decades, and “contributed actively throughout their careers to musical and literary societies as composers and performers”.¹⁰

A number of the so-called middle generation of women born before 1930, including Margaret Sutherland, benefited from the still relatively new university culture, but it was not until nearly the mid-twentieth century that women gained positions of authority in the music world.¹¹ Linda Phillips (1899–2002), Esther Rofe (1904–2000), Peggy-Glanville Hicks (1912–1990), and Phyllis Batchelor (b. 1915) “were shielded from the prejudices [against women composers] by coming under the wing of Fritz Hart at the

⁵ Refer Appendix One, Section A1.8 for further discussion of this issue.
⁶ Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 103. A more broad and detailed account of early musical life in Australia is provided in Appendix One, Section A1.8 of this thesis.
⁷ These were the University of Melbourne Conservatorium (1890), the Albert Street Conservatorium (1895—later the Melba Memorial Conservatorium) and the Elder Conservatorium at the University of Adelaide (1897). The New South Wales State Conservatorium in Sydney was created in 1915. Tunley 2. Selleck 24.
⁸ Selleck 24.
¹⁰ Patton 10–11.
¹¹ Crisp 50; Geitenbeek 31.
Albert Street Conservatorium”.\textsuperscript{12} Miriam Hyde (1913–2005) studied at the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide, and the work of Mirrie Hill (1889–1986) was supported by Henri Verbrugghen at the NSW State Conservatorium, where she and later Dulcie Holland (1913–2000) studied with Alfred Hill (whom Mirrie married in 1921).\textsuperscript{13}

It can be argued that women composers were not very active in contemporary music until the 1960s, but a few composers of this middle generation were pioneers in developing “a musical language able to express the unique nature of the Australian landscape and the newly independent society”.\textsuperscript{14} They were tireless in their efforts to strengthen the voice of Australian women composers, and their influence on subsequent generations cannot be underestimated.\textsuperscript{15} Innovations in the music of Mirrie Hill and Margaret Sutherland in particular are credited with exposing the adherence of Australian composers “to the stale Romanticism”.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Roger Covell, it was Margaret Sutherland “who really naturalised the twentieth century in Australian music. Long before World War II she was writing music which paralleled the neo-classical reaction against Romantic styles in most other European or Europe-derived societies.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{2.3 Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984)}

\textbf{2.3.1 Born into an Intellectual Family}

Margaret Sutherland grew up in a bourgeois family in which creative and intellectual endeavours were a part of daily life. Her principal, early role models were musical, artistic, single aunts, and her intellectual father and uncles. She was surrounded by lively discussion on such subjects as the evolutionist theories of Darwin and Huxley, and benefited from a specialised musical education which started at an early age. Sutherland inherited from her family their “down-to-earth idealism” and appreciated the

\textsuperscript{12} Crotty 1.
\textsuperscript{13} Pearce 31.
\textsuperscript{14} Crisp 48, 50.
\textsuperscript{15} More detail on Sutherland’s role as champion of subsequent generations of composers will be provided in Chapter Four.
\textsuperscript{16} Crisp 50.
\textsuperscript{17} Covell 152.
“ideals and principles” that came to her “through the opportunity that was mine to hear much lively discussion and see life lived in the fullest sense”. 18

### 2.3.2 Sutherland’s Parents, and the Early “Gala Days” in Adelaide

Sutherland’s father, George Sutherland, was born in Scotland in 1855. He completed a Master of Arts at the University of Melbourne (1879), and along with his brothers and father, taught at Melbourne’s Carlton College. 19 The school was founded by his older brother Alexander (1852–1902) in 1876, and incorporated the religious and philosophical ideals of the Australian Church. 20 George was an historian, journalist and inventor with interests in music, art and photography, and together with Alexander, wrote scholarly books. 21 He also produced some historical tales for children, aimed at instilling in young people the sense of Australia as a land of opportunity. 22

George Sutherland was living in Adelaide when he met his future wife, Ada Bowen, at a Bach Society meeting. Her family was prominent in the cultural life of the city, and she and George shared interests in music and painting. They married in 1882 when George was 26 years old and Ada only 18. Their first child Ruth was born in 1884, followed two years later by Alfred, then Douglas in 1888, and Dorothy in 1889. Sutherland was the youngest by nearly eight years, born in 1897 in Adelaide.

The special symbolic position of the piano as signifier of respectability in colonial Australia still existed in the early twentieth century when Sutherland was growing up, and the family conformed to the social requirement at this time for a young lady to add to her education by learning the piano or singing. Accomplished young women were

---

18 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24–25.
19 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24.
20 Symons 2.
21 These include the History of Australia (1606–1876) (1879); History of Australia and New Zealand (1606–1890) (1901); History of Australia and New Zealand (1606–1911) (1913); other books included Tales of the Goldfields (1880); Australia, Or England in the South (1886), about the social and cultural development of Australia; a history of The South Australian Company (1898); and Twentieth Century Inventions—a Forecast (1901). See Suzanne G. Mellor, “Sutherland, George (1855–1905)”, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 6: 1851–1890, ed. Geoffrey Serle and Russel Ward (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976) 223.
22 One such book was Sixteen Stories of Australian Exploration and Settlement (c. 1880), which includes stories with titles such as “Captain Cook’s Landing place”, “Captain Sturt’s Black Friend”, “The Burke and Wills Expedition”, “The Roof of Australia” and “A Story of Queensland”, among others.
encouraged to pursue such interpretative rather than creative areas of music.\(^{23}\) Ruth and Dorothy Sutherland started early to learn the piano, and Sutherland would try when she was very young to imitate their playing.\(^{24}\) She refers to piano-playing being “a routine affair of mine, as indeed for all our family”.\(^{25}\) There was “always a piano, there might be other things but always a piano … I was allowed to play the piano, strum and that kind of thing, almost from the minute I first breathed, so I never remember anything different, you see”.\(^{26}\)

In spite of George Sutherland’s many other interests and activities, he spent time with his children, because his work as a journalist allowed him to work in the evenings rather than during the day. The youngest by several years, Sutherland benefited from this, having her father to herself in the mornings when her older siblings were at school.\(^{27}\) At this time, the post-industrial age nuclear family, with its clearly-defined roles for mother as ever-present caregiver and father as absent breadwinner, had become well-entrenched, so the paternal input and attention received by Sutherland was unusual.\(^{28}\)

Sutherland’s accounts of her early years indicate that she recollected a contented early childhood, which she described as “placid enough”.\(^{29}\) She respected her father, whom she was with “a great deal of the morning” before he went to work at midday. He would sometimes “play to me—short movements from some of the early Beethoven sonatas. Those were gala days.”.\(^{30}\)

Less information is available about Sutherland’s mother Ada. She is seldom written about by Sutherland, though never disparagingly, but appears to have conformed to the expectations of the time to remain within the private sphere of domesticity and family. Ada was young when she married, and “had no training to fall back on”,\(^{31}\) so was

\(^{23}\) Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 103. See Appendix One, Section A1.8 for a fuller discussion on this subject.
\(^{24}\) Rosewarne 5–7.
\(^{25}\) Sutherland, unpublished, undated autobiographical typescript, Murdoch Papers, 1.
\(^{26}\) Mel Pratt, interview with Margaret Sutherland, 5 April 1972, 2.
\(^{27}\) Sutherland, “Young Days”, 23.
\(^{28}\) Refer Appendix One, Section A1.2 for a more comprehensive historical survey of the development of these roles.
\(^{29}\) Sutherland, “Young Days”, 23.
\(^{30}\) Sutherland, “Young Days”, 23.
\(^{31}\) Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 5.
destined for a life of domesticity, and was apparently prone to bouts of depression.\textsuperscript{32} Sutherland’s observations regarding the impact on her mother’s life caused by the lack of alternative choices for married women of the era is likely to have contributed to her resolve to seek broader fulfilment.

In the late 1880s and 1890s, women were actively seeking the vote. George and Ada Sutherland were broad-minded enough to support the concept of women’s suffrage, but were less approving of the puritanism encouraged by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).\textsuperscript{33} Oddly enough, the first election in which women voted, in 1896, was also the beginning of an era of conservatism in South Australia. Rosewarne suggests that this, along with family reasons, could have contributed to George’s desire to return to live in Melbourne, which the family did in 1901. George took a position on the editorial staff of one of Melbourne’s leading daily newspapers, \textit{The Age}.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{2.3.3 The Creative and Intellectual Influences of Family Life in Melbourne}

Sutherland described the move to Melbourne as “the first memorable jolt in my young life”, but it was in Melbourne that she experienced the positive influences of her father’s side of the family.\textsuperscript{35} After arrival, the family divided into smaller groups to stay with relatives until a family home was found. Sutherland went with her parents to stay in Stawell St, Kew where her father’s siblings lived. They included unmarried aunts, Jane (1855–1928), Julia (1861–1929) and Jessie (1869–1936), and two uncles, William (1859–1911) and James (1863–1916). Dorothy and Sutherland felt welcome there, and were encouraged by their relations to share and develop interests.\textsuperscript{36}

Jane Sutherland was considered the leading woman artist in the group of Melbourne painters known as the Heidelberg School, whose members sketched and painted directly

\textsuperscript{32} Helen Gifford, interview with the author, 16 September 1999.
\textsuperscript{33} The suffrage campaign in Australia is described in more detail in Appendix One, Section A1.3. Rosewarne 9.
\textsuperscript{34} Rosewarne 8–10.
\textsuperscript{35} Sutherland, “Young Days”, 23.
\textsuperscript{36} Rosewarne 11.
from nature, breaking with the nineteenth-century tradition of painting in the studio.\textsuperscript{37} Sutherland recalled modelling for Jane and appears to have greatly respected her aunt:

I also well remember the number of times I sat as a model for Aunt Jane … She often captured an atmosphere of the utmost serenity … I remember so clearly how she never failed to light up and grow animated when she talked of her active painting days. The feeling of painting in a group seemed to have a particular significance, for there was so much discussion, comparing-of-notes, and tireless experiment.\textsuperscript{38}

![Fig. 5](image)

\textbf{Margaret Sutherland, c. 1904 (By Jane Sutherland)}

Julia, Dorothy and Sutherland’s first piano teacher, was an accomplished pianist who had studied with Louis Pabst, a pupil of Anton Rubinstein (who also taught Grainger). Sutherland described her lessons as follows:

Aunt Julie had an unusual way of teaching. As I love the songs of Schubert and Schumann, she taught me to read quite quickly by letting me play the singing part on top of the accompaniment. It sounded so grown-up, and egged me on—I remember too some Bach Chorales and small Bach pieces which I loved.\textsuperscript{39}

Jessie Sutherland was a trained singer who specialised in lieder, and William had a Master of Arts degree from the University of Melbourne, a Bachelor of Science from London, and had established an international reputation as a physicist. He wrote newspaper articles on a variety of subjects, including some containing his opinions on women’s place in society at the time. In “Education of Women”, he wrote that there


\textsuperscript{38} Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24.

\textsuperscript{39} Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 4.
were few women composers because of females’ passive natures. These views might nowadays be perceived as misogynistic, but reflected the culture of his time. There is no mention by Sutherland of an awareness of William’s views, or whether he tried to discourage her from her musical goals because of her gender. It appears that Sutherland and her siblings were close to him, since she thought that “he appeared to be pretty well the same age as we, and always on for an adventure. We felt no awe—only spontaneous comradeship.”

James Sutherland had a Master of Arts, also from the University of Melbourne, and was a science teacher at Camberwell Grammar, but in Sutherland’s opinion “had no talent for children, and rather crept into his shell”. The youngest brother, John (1867–1914), was married and had two sons. The family lived in St Kilda, and Sutherland sometimes stayed there during holidays. John too had a Masters degree from the University of Melbourne, and was fond of music. He had a photographic memory, which fascinated Sutherland. She “was in great awe of him because of it”.

Immediately after the family moved to Melbourne, Dorothy and Sutherland were sent to stay briefly at their Uncle Alexander’s residence (now known as University House at the University of Melbourne). Alexander was a man of diverse talents, who had since September, 1901 been Registrar of the University and Acting Professor of English. The eldest of the family, he was born in Scotland in 1852, and became one of Australia’s better-known scholars.

Sutherland found the surroundings at University House quite daunting initially, but derived comfort from the presence of her older sister, Dorothy, the sibling to whom she was closest. She recalled an occasion, when, after a “grown-up” dinner party, Dorothy and Sutherland were summoned so Dorothy could perform a difficult Impromptu for piano by Schubert. Sutherland then performed her own version of another Impromptu by Schubert, which she had learned by ear. In later years she

---

40 See also Appendix One, Section A1.8. Titles of other articles written by him include “The Engaged Girl”, “Chewing of Food”, “Should Women Smoke”, “Fads”, “Morality”, “Woman”, “Women Preachers”, “Trashy Reading”, and others. See Watters-Cowan, 378.
41 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 25.
43 Sutherland, typescript, Murdoch Papers, 5.
44 Sutherland, “Three Universities in One”.

53
wondered at her “effrontery” and mourned the loss of “youthful courage” and “brazenness” as she grew older.\textsuperscript{45}

Shortly after her stay at the University in 1901, Sutherland’s Uncle Alexander became the first of his brothers to die of a heart attack (1902). By 1916, all the brothers would be dead as a result of cardiac illness, and all at around the age of 50. George died in 1905, William in 1911, John in 1914 and James in 1916. Alexander’s family vacated the house at the University, and “Heronwood” was disposed of. Though only five years old, Sutherland seems to have sensed the tragedy, saying that “it seemed impossible to imagine it. The family moved out of the house at the University—lovely Heronwood was sold. And everything had a tragic lull about it. At five one could not imagine how changed things were.”\textsuperscript{46}

The “unusually strong bond” that existed between the brothers and sisters of the Sutherland family led George and Ada to seek a home in Kew near Stawell Street where her five single aunts and uncles lived. This meant that Sutherland spent a great deal of time with them, particularly before she started school, often inviting herself to visit them with her father in the mornings.\textsuperscript{47}

2.3.4 Education, Wider Influences and the Beginnings of Adversity

Sutherland’s schooling began in 1904 when she was seven, at a small, private school for girls in Denmark Street in Kew called “Baldur”. Baldur was, like PLC (Presbyterian Ladies College, then in East Melbourne), one of the first schools for girls where intellectual pursuits were encouraged, and where they could be prepared for subsequent university studies. In spite of this, the school is likely to have reflected the attitudes of the times in schools, that women graduates would eventually become wives and mothers, albeit better-educated ones.\textsuperscript{48} The self-proclaimed aim of the school was to “educate in the true sense, and instruct without cramming”, and a thorough grounding

\textsuperscript{45} Sutherland, “Three Universities”.
\textsuperscript{46} Sutherland, typescript, Murdoch Papers, 4.
\textsuperscript{47} Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24.
\textsuperscript{48} A more extensive review of the history of women’s education in Australia is provided in Appendix One, Section A1.6.
was provided in a wide range of subjects. Sutherland remembers a discussion about whether she should go to a state school, but it was decided she should attend Baldur, primarily because Mona McBurney was music teacher there. McBurney taught Sutherland piano, harmony, counterpoint and composition. Her compositional style does not appear to have influenced Sutherland’s directly, but they became lifelong friends. As a notable woman composer, McBurney also provided a role model for Sutherland. Sutherland described her as “a beautiful woman, erudite, charming though shy and retiring, a wonderful linguist possessed of a driving enthusiasm that inspired her students”, and said she looked back “with gratitude and affection to her friendship and interest which lasted until her death”.

Her father’s death in 1905 when Sutherland was eight years old understandably made a big impact on her and her family. She describes the time immediately afterwards as “a nightmare period during which I was allowed only on to the fringe. I was frightened, and lonely, mostly at the grief of my mother, for she was stricken, and tragically bereft. She was quite unlike what I had known before—a person I scarcely recognised.” The remaining uncles William, James and John provided all the support they could, and the influence of female role models, both within and outside the extended family, continued.

Two years later in 1907, Sutherland’s sister Ruth and her aunt Jane were among the many painters who exhibited at the First Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work held in Melbourne during October and November of that year. Women broke new ground through the exhibition. The musical contribution of three thousand female musicians challenged the stereotypical image of the female musician as amateur rather than serious, and stretched the boundaries of what had been considered suitable musical activity for women. Women obtained the vote for the State legislature in 1909, and

---

50 Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 5. Refer Appendix One, Section A1.10.
52 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 25.
53 It should be noted that the nature of mourning was different in this era than it is now. The process was more restrained and private, and it was felt that children were too young to understand death, and should be protected from knowledge of its details.
54 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24.
55 Wilson 441.
the Exhibition could have played a part in this. Sutherland would almost certainly have been aware of the Exhibition and its aims, given the involvement of her sister, aunt, cousins and music teacher, Mona McBurney.

During her years at Baldur, Sutherland’s love for music increased. When she was ready to leave school at the end of 1913 at the age of 16, the headmistress was surprised that Sutherland wished to pursue a musical career, and said she should become a doctor. Sutherland commented that the headmistress “was horrified—then she asked me what I thought of doing; I said ‘Music’. She simply could not believe it.”

Aunt Julia had advised Sutherland not to submit herself “to an institution just to be turned out as one of the standardised products”, and this attitude may well have contributed to the firm views Sutherland developed about education at all levels. Despite the understanding and advice of her aunts, Sutherland felt they had led secluded lives, and that she would need to “strike out somehow”.

At the end of 1913, when a scholarship was offered to study piano at the Marshall-Hall Conservatorium in Albert Street with the Czech pianist Edward Goll (1884–1949), McBurney and Aunt Julia encouraged Sutherland to apply. Aunt Julia felt that the University Conservatorium was not the place to study music seriously, because it was staffed by second-rate teachers from Britain who were more concerned with exams than musical development. Not only did Sutherland win the scholarship, but was awarded another to study composition with Fritz Hart, who was at that time running Albert St in G.W.L. Marshall-Hall’s absence overseas. Her “youthful Sonata for Piano” obviously

56 Rosewarne 17–19.  
57 Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 7.  
58 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 25.  
60 Sutherland, “Three Universities in One”. Marshall-Hall had appointed Eduard Scharf as Acting Director in his absence, and Hart was to give his lectures. Scharf subsequently took a position at the University Conservatorium, leaving Hart in charge. Hart took full control in 1914 when he thought Marshall-Hall intended to close the institution. Peter Tregear, “Fritz Bennicke Hart: An Introduction to his Life and Music”, 28.
made an impression when she played it as part of her audition. Sutherland found her lessons with Goll and Hart stimulating, but the former was denounced by the Albert Street Con., as it was known then, as an enemy alien at the end of 1914. She thought the attitude at Albert Street towards Goll was “outrageous nonsense”, and at 17 it made her “stonily defiant”. In 1915, Goll was offered an appointment at the University of Melbourne. When he accepted, Sutherland moved with him, and undertook single subjects in the years 1914–1919.

Sutherland attended university in the early years of the twentieth century, when it was still far from the norm for women to further their education past high school level. Like most female students of her time, Sutherland had attended a non-government school, and came from a family which encouraged her to become educated, though its financial situation meant that she would not have been able to attend university unless she had obtained a scholarship. The University that Sutherland entered in 1915 remained largely a male domain, and there were more restricted career expectations for female than male graduates, with many women becoming schoolteachers. Most women who studied music at the University of Melbourne did single subjects only, as Sutherland did, but entered the more traditionally-female arenas of teaching, and sometimes performing, rather than composition. Sutherland was both norm and exception in this regard, for she did her share of teaching, but to compose was her real desire.

Sutherland describes the atmosphere in Melbourne upon declaration of World War I as “thick with anxiety and horror”. Her two brothers enlisted, and her cousin Dallas (Alexander’s son) was killed in action. The absence of men during this war created further opportunities for women to undertake paid work, but there was no lasting significant increase in women’s exodus from the domestic realm, since they were

61 Sutherland, “Three Universities”.
62 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 25.
63 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 25. Unfortunately, University of Melbourne archival student records do not reveal any information about scholarships or grades achieved by Sutherland during her time at the University.
64 For a more comprehensive discussion on the history of higher education for women in Australia, see Appendix One, Section A1.6.
66 Sutherland’s teaching activities are discussed further later in the current chapter, and in Chapter Eight, Section 8.5.1.
67 Sutherland, “Three Universities”.

57
encouraged back into the home after the war. Overall it was men’s status that was more enhanced by this war. It is possible that Sutherland’s recognition as a creative woman was greater because of the war, yet it seems unlikely to have had a significant impact.

Isolation from Europe during World War I and the enmity towards anyone of European origin meant that Hart was successful in his aim to introduce the work of contemporary British composers to his students. Edward Goll, too, through his recitals, was introducing much new music to students and music-lovers who had previously been accustomed to conservative programmes. The Musical Society of Victoria’s traditional annual concert of Australian compositions received the unanimous approval of critics from 1914 on, and the scope was widened to include consideration of compositions by non-members. This change in attitude towards contemporary music brought about by the war could well have strengthened Sutherland’s resolve for a musical career.

Sutherland was delighted when Marshall-Hall returned to the University of Melbourne in 1915 to re-assume the position of Ormond Professor. Her esteem for him and her acknowledgment of his influence is revealed in her recollections:

All Marshall-Hall’s very great gifts as a lecturer, his infectious enthusiasms, his wide knowledge, his catholicity of taste, his special talent for real communication of the sort that is all too rare, had been denied the students at the [University] Conservatorium for 16 years.

Marshall-Hall died in June of that year of an appendiceal abscess, which left “an aching void” for Sutherland, and caused her to seek advice about her future. She thought the course at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium became outmoded following

---

68 Ryan and Conlon 78; Grimshaw et al, 215, 218; Summers 380. Refer Appendix One, Section A1.7 for a discussion of the impact on women of the two world wars.
69 The Musical Association of Victoria, formed in 1861, and The Musical Artists and Organists Society of Victoria, formed in 1877, amalgamated in 1892 under the name of “The Musical Society of Victoria”. One of the primary objects of the Society since its inception was to encourage original compositions by its members. Margaret Sutherland and other composers such as Alfred Hill, Percy Grainger, Louis Lavater, Linda Phillips and Dorian Le Gallienne had works performed there. Stella Nemet, History of The Musical Society of Victoria 1861-1981 (Melbourne: The Musical Society of Victoria, 1981) 7, 27.
70 Marshall-Hall had been dismissed in 1900 for writing and publishing a seemingly provocative book of verses called Hymns Ancient and Modern, and in the interim had founded the Albert Street Conservatorium. Peter Tregear, “Fritz Bennicke Hart: An Introduction to his Life and Music”, MMus thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993, 28. Sutherland referred to “the quite maniacal jealousy of another member of the university staff who had schemed” to bring about his downfall. Sutherland, “Three Universities”.
71 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
72 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
Marshall-Hall’s death. Sutherland felt that this curriculum, which consisted of first and second practical studies, harmony, counterpoint, history, aesthetics, form and analysis, had been proved in Europe to “dry up any spark of genuine creativity because of rigidity and lack of spontaneity.” She acknowledged that her own background, where she had been surrounded by music from an early age, made this method of study particularly irrelevant:

One naturally seeks out information if one has lived in an atmosphere of music, reads on these lines, goes to important rehearsals, listens with experience in one’s ears. The pieces of the puzzle seem to come together by means of a kind of magnetic attraction, rather than their having to be put into place laboriously. Whereas the student who has to start from scratch (even if fairly musical) and who has not had an opportunity to hear much music is at a distant disadvantage, and requires much instruction to make up for a late start.

While at university, Sutherland’s private teaching practice began to grow. She did not have time to undertake a full course, so studied only those subjects that would fulfil her needs, a decision encouraged by Edward Goll. In 1916, Belgian-born violinist and conductor Henri Verbruggen arrived in Sydney to take up a position at the State Conservatorium, bringing with him his string quartet. Like his counterparts in Melbourne, Marshall-Hall and Fritz Hart, Verbruggen was supportive of female as well as male composers. Sutherland said that “at once, all sorts of things began to happen”. Verbruggen was frequently in Melbourne, staying and playing music with Edward Goll, and Sutherland had many opportunities to listen. She was invited to play Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 with his orchestra in Sydney, which must have inspired her confidence. She felt that Verbruggen provided an “enormously stimulating force” to music, even in Melbourne, and was “inconsolable” when he reluctantly departed for Minneapolis in 1921.

With all her uncles dead, Sutherland needed to earn money. In 1918, while still a student at the University of Melbourne, she was appointed to the music staff of PLC.

---

73 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
74 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
75 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
77 Sutherland’s first public performance was in 1914, and she continued giving performances until her departure overseas in 1923. Watters-Cowan 242.
78 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26–27.
under the directorship of Edward Goll. This was not well-paid and she found the job relentless and trying, particularly since every student was expected to learn, but not all had aptitude. Sutherland was concurrently working as understudy at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium when Goll was on tour, and gave piano recitals. However, she had always been conscious that piano-playing and teaching, with its constant repetition, could never satisfy her. Sutherland became more determined to compose:

… to pluck music from the air, and fashion it according to one’s own whim, is quite another thing. That was what made my heart beat faster. And that was what I longed passionately to have time and opportunity to do. But the means were lacking.

2.3.5 Expanding Horizons: To Europe to Study

Sutherland dreamed of studying overseas, as her sister Ruth had wanted to do, though the latter had been thwarted in her attempts, as she became ill with peritonitis while painting a picture to compete for a travelling scholarship. Their cousin Stella Bowen travelled to England and Europe, leaving Australia in 1914 and never returning, finding her artistic home in Paris. Sutherland’s ambitions were boosted when Goll decided to spend 1923 abroad, and she took over his teaching at the Conservatorium on full fees. She maintained her own teaching and went on country tours for the Conservatorium. On one of these tours she met her future husband, Dr Norman Albiston (b. 21 September 1894, d. 17 July, 1979). He had met her at the station at Port Fairy and, following the concert, drove her to her next venue in Warrnambool. He was greatly interested in music, and his first wife, also a doctor, had recently left him.

In the same year Dorothy, the sibling to whom Sutherland was closest, and whom she greatly admired, suffered what appears to have been a depressive illness. While nursing Dorothy in September 1923, Sutherland’s mother Ada died of Bright’s Disease.

Sutherland, “Young Days”, 26.
Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
Sutherland, “Young Days”, 24.
Stella was placed by her trustees in the charge of a family travelling as far as Marseilles, and initial accommodation was arranged for her to stay as a paying guest with the secretary of the Mothers’ Union in Pimlico. Bowen 27.
Sutherland, “1920 and So On”; Sutherland note, November 1960.
Gifford interview.
having, selflessly, never previously mentioned her illness to the family. For Sutherland, “the feeling of desolation was crippling”, but she had already booked a passage abroad, and the family encouraged her to cement her plans, though she herself was apathetic about it.

No doubt Sutherland’s opinions about the state of music in Australia provided an added incentive to travel. She felt that “creative music in Australia at that time had never developed beyond being a pale reflection of the merest fringe of music abroad”, and the impact of enormous changes in Europe was not reaching Australia. This opinion may in part be due to more widespread perceptions in Australia at the time of colonial inferiority, and also to the longstanding relative neglect of Australian composers. Helen Gifford suggests that Melburnians were more enlightened about contemporary developments in Europe in the 1880s and 1890s than in the 1920s, since more of them had been born in Europe and had recent experience there. Also, with the economy worsening following World War I and unemployment increasing, there was little money available to support the creative arts, and people were otherwise preoccupied.

Having saved enough money, Sutherland departed for England in December 1923. England was a natural choice, because of the possibility to study composition with well-known teachers and discover European musical developments. It was the dream of many middle-class women (and men) at that time to travel “Home”. In Stella Bowen’s words:

    Going to England was called “going home”, even by people who had never been there and whose fathers had never been. We all talked with varying degrees of Australian accent, of which we were ashamed when we became aware of it. We regarded a real English accent with positive reverence.

It was extremely unusual for women to travel overseas unchaperoned, as Sutherland did. It was far more common to be accompanied by their mothers (as Peggy

---

86 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
87 See Appendix One, Sections A1.8 and A1.10
88 Gifford, “Recalling a Lost Voice”, 110.
89 Grimshaw et al, Creating a Nation, 219
90 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
91 Bowen 6.
92 Fitzpatrick 179.
Glanville-Hicks was in 1932). Sutherland’s cousin Stella also travelled overseas alone, but unlike Sutherland, could not have thought of the freedom of travel until her mother was dead. There is no indication that Ada would not have encouraged her daughter to study overseas, but Stella’s mother intensely disapproved of her daughter’s wish to do so. As her mother’s health failed, Stella felt it was “not possible to suggest leaving her”. The fact that Sutherland was apathetic about leaving Australia so soon after her mother’s death, and the impossibility for Stella even to contemplate leaving until her mother had died, reflects the prevailing attitude that for women, the duty to family came first. The adventurous lives and uninterrupted careers that men could expect could not be the destiny of women unless such duties were in some way obviated.

Shortly before her departure, Sutherland had received a letter from Albiston informing her that he had abandoned his medical practice and was coming to Melbourne to discuss plans to travel to England to pursue his own musical interests. He followed Sutherland on a later ship, working as ship’s doctor to pay for his passage, and they spent time together during Sutherland’s two-year stay in Europe.

It is not surprising that Sutherland had no urge to study composition formally, considering her strong personality, her opinions on institutional learning, and the five years she had already spent in tertiary institutions. She believed private lessons were more worthwhile: “I didn’t really go to any institution, because by this time I realised that it was not the right thing”. This attitude was unusual given the prevailing view that formal study overseas was necessary for a musician of serious intent. A number of Sutherland’s successors had periods of study at the Royal College of Music in London in the early 1930s.

Hart had given Sutherland letters of introduction to John Ireland and Vaughan Williams, and she approached Gustav Holst, with whose music Hart had made her familiar.

---

94 Bowen 19.
95 Bowen 26.
96 Heilbrun, Writing a Woman’s Life, 17, 20, 22–23, 48.
97 Sutherland, “1920 and So On”.
98 Pratt interview, 6.
99 See Appendix One, Section A1.11 for further details.
Sutherland was unimpressed by Ireland, believing his approach to be too mechanical, but managed to have some orchestration lessons with “an interesting woman composer”, possibly Dorothy Howell, who became Professor in Harmony and Composition at the Royal Academy of Music in 1924. Most English music of this period did not interest Sutherland, but she had “heard a great deal of music by Arnold Bax, and “more and more I wanted lessons from him”. In 1925, Sutherland decided to approach him. Although he had no official students, considering himself to be “hopeless as a teacher”, a few students did ask him for lessons, including Australian Arthur Benjamin. He agreed to take Sutherland on, and she found his input helpful and stimulating:

I tried to go to several people but I didn’t find this was worthwhile, because they always had some prop to give you, and then at last I found the one that I really wanted to go to and it made all the difference. Just to be able to talk with somebody who thought in the same way and didn’t pontificate in the usual way, you know.

Perhaps the attitude evident at the Royal College of Music at this time influenced Sutherland’s decision not to study there. Composing women were allowed access to the College, but were largely segregated from their male colleagues, since their motivations and aspirations were thought to be different, and they were not considered to be men’s direct competitors. The Society of Women Musicians must have provided much-needed support. It was founded in 1911 by the musicologist and critic Marion M. Scott, with Gertrude Eaton and others, to represent the interests of women in music and to give concerts, especially of works by women. It was at the Society that Sutherland’s Sonata for Violin and Piano, written in 1925 during her stay in London, received its first performance with Leila Doubleday on violin and Sutherland at the piano.

---

100 Sutherland, “1920 and So On”; Celia Mike, “Howell, Dorothy”, *The New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, ed. Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994) 231. There is no clear evidence that Dorothy Howell was the “interesting woman composer” to whom Sutherland referred, but Gifford suggests it was likely to have been her. Gifford, “Recalling a Lost Voice”, 114.
101 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27; Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 10.
103 Sutherland typescript, Murdoch Papers, 10.
104 Pratt interview, 6.
107 Leila Doubleday (1894–c. 1988) was an Australian violinist who had studied at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium prior to Sutherland. She travelled to Vienna to study, and with her husband, Max Pirani, toured with the Pirani Trio from 1923–1940 in Australia, South Africa, Canada, India, the
Sutherland attended a conference organised by the Society attended by many distinguished women musicians, and this would have been a strengthening experience.\footnote{109}

Besides studying composition, Sutherland aimed to hear as much music performed as possible. She travelled to Austria and France, and was exposed for the first time to the music of major European composers of the early twentieth century, including Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartók, the Viennese School and the French “Six”.\footnote{110}

As Symons discovered, there is nearly a complete absence of identifiable works from this period of Sutherland’s life.\footnote{111} This makes the sophistication of her Sonata for Violin and Piano more of an achievement, and shows how much Sutherland’s composition advanced during her two years overseas, where she had the time and space to develop in the musical environment of Europe. Bax was impressed with the work, saying it was “full of remarkable ideas”, and “the best work by a woman I know”.\footnote{112} It was certainly a turning point in her career. She had already felt sure of her composing ability before her departure from Australia, and was determined to follow it through, but this work must have made her feel justified in the knowledge of her own potential.

\subsection*{2.3.6 Return to Australia: An “Uphill Journey”}

By November 1925, the money that Sutherland had saved to support her while overseas was running out and she was ready to return to Australia, which had “haunted” her during her absence.\footnote{113} The source of intellectual and creative stimulus for her father, uncles and aunts had been Australia, and so it was for her. She wanted to see Australian music develop a national idiom, rather than a continued reliance on a musical tradition transplanted from Britain and Europe, and by this time she felt equipped to contribute to USA and throughout Europe. Bruce Bohle, ed., “Leila Doubleday”, The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, 11th ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1985) 591.
\footnote{108}
Gifford, “Recalling a Lost Voice”, 114. This must have been one of the rare occasions when Sutherland performed, since it was not one of the aims of her sojourn abroad to play in public. See Pratt interview, 7.
\footnote{108}
Rosewarne 40.
\footnote{109}
Symons 14.
\footnote{110}
Symons 34.
\footnote{111}
Sutherland, “1920 and So On”; Foreman 220. This comment is interesting in the light of later scholarship addressing the types of language used in reviewing women’s music. This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis.
\footnote{112}
Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
Composition now “mattered above everything” to her. Sutherland’s chief ambition on her return was to concentrate on writing music. Having been so steeped in composition while she was away, she was initially shocked by “the barrenness, the absolute vacuum at home”, which she said “hit me and hurt me”. It was still virtually impossible for a composer in Australia, male or female, to make a living solely by composing so-called ‘art’ music. Composers had to make compromises in order to support themselves, and earned money by performing, teaching, arranging, and/or being prepared to write commercial music. Sutherland’s ideals would not have allowed her to write such music. Her views on this are well exemplified in her comments on Peter Sculthorpe, about whom she initially had a high opinion, “but then I thought he was just out for commercial gain. He’s only written really one thing because it’s over and over and over and over, all the time.” Sutherland had to compromise by continuing public performances and teaching, which she found increasingly incompatible with composing.

Soon after her return to Australia, a recital of Sutherland’s works at the Assembly Hall in Melbourne on 12 March 1926 was organised by friends, including Louise Hanson-Dyer. Her songs were performed by Sutherland herself and the singer Violet Somerset, and the Sonata for Violin and Piano was performed by Bernard Heinze, newly-appointed Ormond Professor at the University Conservatorium, with Edward Goll accompanying. Sutherland’s disappointment at the initial reaction by some to her Sonata is understandable, considering her commitment to building her career in

---

114 Refer Appendix One, Section A1.8 for elaboration on this issue; Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
115 Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
116 It is useful to compare Sutherland with some of her contemporaries and close successors in this regard. For example, Esther Rofe went to England in 1932, and supported herself there by copying and arranging until her return to Australia in 1940. In Australia she taught composition at the Melba Conservatorium in 1941, then worked at the ABC as a balance officer. In 1943 she accepted a position as an arranger for the Colgate Palmolive Radio Unit in Sydney (1943–1948), which meant a departure from classical music into a semi-popular idiom. Petrus 85, 88, 90. Rofe was more able than Sutherland to undertake full-time jobs, since she was single and without children. Sutherland, single or married, would not have been prepared to work with the “semi-popular idiom” that Rofe did for Colgate Palmolive. Phyllis Batchelor (1915–1999) taught, performed and in the 1940s worked as a programme coordinator for the ABC. Monique Geitenbeek, “Composer-Pianist Phyllis Batchelor: An Introduction”, *Sounds Australian* 41 (Autumn 1994): 33. Moneta Eagles and Dulcie Holland taught and worked as composers of film music for the Department of the Interior Film Unit in Sydney, and were AMEB examiners. Geitenbeek, “Reaching a Public”, 30–31, 33. Miriam Hyde (1913–2005) performed, taught, and was an examiner for the AMEB. Rita Crews, “Hyde, Miriam Beatrice”, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Music*, ed. Warren Bebington (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997) 287–288; and Geitenbeek, “Reaching a Public”, 33.
117 Pratt interview, 17–18.
118 Rosewarne 45.
Australia. Sutherland recalled that the recital was well attended, “but no-one appeared to know what I was driving at”. An apparently frequent comment was that her music was “straight from the sub-conscious you know” and she began to feel she was “some sort of Freudian freak”. She realised then that it would be a “desperately heart-breaking uphill journey”, and she felt “cold and dismayed”.\(^{119}\)

These reactions reported by Sutherland were not echoed in the review in the *Australian Musical News* of the March concert; she would at least have been happy with the perception of her originality expressed in the review:

> Miss Sutherland came back well equipped for the evening of original works she gave in the Assembly Hall. The most imposing of these was her *Sonata for Violin and Piano* … The whole Sonata may be taken not only as a token of cleverness on Miss Sutherland’s part in handling extremely difficult tonal mediums, but even more gratefully as an evidence that Australian musicians are determined to quit the easiest roads.\(^{120}\)

### 2.3.7 Summary

Sutherland’s important position in Australia’s musical life at the time is validated by these words. Cherie Watters-Cowan has argued that it was on her return from overseas that Sutherland’s public image became that of a composer, whereas prior to her time abroad, many articles had concentrated on her role as a performer.\(^{121}\) In subsequent assessments of her compositional career, she is regarded as the “undisputed first lady of Australian music as well as one of the earliest and most respected composers in the country”, who broke much ground for her followers, both male and female.\(^{122}\)

The era presented her with few composer role models, male or female, but her obvious compositional ambitions can be viewed as a natural consequence of growing up with a family background which provided her with intellectual, idealistic, musical and creative stimuli of unusually high intensity. This encouraged Sutherland’s awareness of alternative life choices and the development of her individual potential. It was also an

\(^{119}\) Sutherland, “Young Days”, 27.
\(^{120}\) “Margaret Sutherland’s Works”, review in *Australian Musical News*, 1 April 1926, 25.
\(^{121}\) Watters-Cowan 371.
\(^{122}\) Weiner LePage, “Margaret Sutherland”, 250.
environment in which she was free to develop her strong personality, and use it to her advantage. Even before she left Baldur, her determination to pursue a creative vocation was clear.

No-one in Sutherland’s immediate circle appeared to require that she, and her talent, should follow a conventional plot, leading only to marriage and domesticity. As the youngest in the family by eight years, she was surrounded by high-achieving relatives significantly older than she, who took her seriously, and included her in most activities. Her aunts, sisters and Mona McBurney encouraged her, and acted as role models of single women with creative vocations. Her father died when she was quite young, but provided a strong male influence in her life that her uncles continued after his death. They were fine examples of men who actively pursued intellectual careers and interests, but more importantly, were present in her early life, and did not attempt to stultify her musical and creative development because of her gender. This scenario was unusual at a time when the absent, silent father was the abiding image.

The illness of her sisters and early deaths of her father, uncles and mother before her mid-twenties made her familiar with the concept of a woman needing to earn her own living, and contributed to the development of a maturity beyond her years. At this stage, a difficult yet promising creative future lay ahead for Sutherland.

In 1927 she married Norman Albiston, and by 1931, had two children. Issues relating to her private and public lives following marriage and childbirth will be explored in later chapters.

### 2.4 Ann Carr-Boyd (b. 1938)

#### 2.4.1 The Third Generation of Professional Musicians

Ann Carr-Boyd was born in Sydney into a “privileged, but artistic and poor” family, and became one of the family’s third generation of professional musicians.\(^{123}\) The family

---

\(^{123}\) Carr-Boyd’s daughters Xanthe (viola) and Katrina (violin), and niece Alexandra Wentzel (violin) form the fourth generation. All perform in public and currently earn money as musicians. Carr-Boyd, interview with the author, 23 April 2004; email 15 January 2009.
“didn’t have debts, just not very much money”. Her grandfather Albert Wentzel, who
died in 1933 five years before Carr-Boyd was born, came from Bohemia, a province of
Czechoslovakia. He arrived in Australia as a violinist with the orchestra brought out by
Sir Frederick Cowan in 1888 to play at the International Centennial Exhibition in
Melbourne. The orchestra was augmented to about 100 players, and according to Ann:

   did amazing things, such as playing all the Beethoven symphonies for the first
time, lots of Wagner and Verdi, and a bit of Liszt. That was in the days before the
CD player, and those composers hadn’t necessarily been heard a lot in Australia,
so it was very exciting for everybody. The surprising thing is that there was a lot
of Australian music being written too.

Albert and his Scottish wife Annie (née Waldie) decided to live in Sydney after
performing there with the orchestra, and settled in Northwood. He helped form what
was probably the first regular-performing string quartet in Sydney, and played the violin
in it, as well as in some of the earliest orchestral ensembles. Albert also composed a
little, and taught music both privately and at two Catholic boys’ schools—St Joseph’s
College, Hunters Hill and St Ignatius (Riverview), in Lane Cove. Albert, Annie and
their sons were founding members of the Longueville Presbyterian Church. Carr-Boyd
thinks that Annie, who died when Carr-Boyd was around five years old, “acted a bit like
the lady of the district, taking soup around to people in need”. Carr-Boyd did not
meet her grandparents, but knew that Annie wrote poetry and kept a detailed diary, all
of which is preserved in the Lane Cove Library:

   I gave a lecture at the Lane Cove Library, where there is a room called the
Wentzel Room, because we donated all the early photographs to them. People in
that audience had met my grandparents, and I never had. Apparently people
putting on concerts in the period surrounding World War I were not able to
include music by German composers, such was the extent of negative feeling at
the time—an interesting fact that emerged when I gave this lecture. I also
discovered that Albert was ostensibly a bit of a gambler, and quite a property
owner—he owned a whole row of houses in Randwick.

126 M.F. Lenehan, unpublished typescript, c1987, Ann Carr-Boyd Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library
   of New South Wales.
Carr-Boyd only learned much later that because of World War 1, her grandfather was interned at Byron Bay because of his name, though it was Czechoslovakian rather than German.

Albert and Annie Wentzel had two sons, Charles (1899–1966: Carr-Boyd’s uncle) and Norbert (1891–1959: Ann’s father). They were “little child prodigies”, playing piano, violin and viola under the tutelage of their father. Both became members of the (then semi-professional) Sydney Symphony Orchestra during their mid-teens, and remained there for over 20 years. They established an instrumental ensemble in Lane Cove, and continued in their father’s footsteps by teaching music at St Joseph’s College and Riverview for many years. Between the three, “they notched up more than 75 years of teaching there” and Carr-Boyd believes “they were held in great respect, but also considered slightly eccentric and old-fashioned”. The two brothers taught privately as well: Charles violin and Norbert piano. Norbert was active as a composer and produced vocal, chamber and solo piano music, as well as larger works which were performed by a number of orchestras in Australia. His works for orchestra include *Rhapsody* and the *Darwin Overture*, and some were conducted by Joseph Post, a well-known Australian conductor and the first Director of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Carr-Boyd partially attributes her desire to write music to the influence of her father, since she “was exposed to this tradition”.

Norbert married Nyora Chrissen, and moved from the family home to nearby Bridge St, Lane Cove. They had two children: Carr-Boyd in 1938 and her brother Peter, seven years her senior. Nyora’s parents, Peter and Agnes Chrissen, lived in Toowoomba, Queensland, and were well-educated. Peter Chrissen was a watchmaker and jewellery designer of Danish descent, and Agnes was Scottish. Nyora was mainly brought up with her cousins in Dalby, near Toowoomba, in a home where “they used to hold readings of works every night by writers such as Shakespeare”. She was a painter, who Carr-Boyd said “would have been a brilliant artist, but once my brother and I were

---

130 One of Charles’s pupils, Kenneth King, was leader of the London Symphony Orchestra for many years.
131 Lenehan, unpublished typescript.
born, she more or less brought us up, as it was in those days”. Nyora had taught at the Glennie School in Toowoomba, but was offered a job at Queenwood School for Girls in Mosman, Sydney, where she taught geography, mathematics and art, until Peter was born in 1931, though she occasionally worked there as a relieving teacher after she had her children. She spent quite some time teaching her daughter to draw and paint, but for Carr-Boyd, “music seemed to overpower most other things”.

Carr-Boyd was a child during World War II, too young for her career opportunities to be affected by the absence of men. However, she has other memories of the War, and feels that it “directly affected us all and has probably influenced me for the rest of my life”. Her father and uncle were too old to enlist, but became wardens, which required them to attend local meetings to discuss issues of defence readiness. Carr-Boyd has clear memories of being issued with survival packs and gas masks. In the hallway of her house there was a reinforced wooden frame where they could huddle in the event of an attack, and blackout paper on the windows. Basic necessities such as butter, flour, sugar, tea, petrol and clothes were in short supply and thus rationed.

Ann’s mother was 40 years old when Carr-Boyd was born, and her father 48. Norbert had a serious heart attack when Carr-Boyd was ten, rendering him a semi-invalid, and he died in 1959 when Carr-Boyd was 21. Uncle Charles, who never married, outlived his brother by seven years, dying in 1966, one year before Carr-Boyd’s return to Australia after four years in Europe. Charles was very present in her life. He was a keen bushwalker as was Carr-Boyd’s immediate family, and they often walked in bushland in Lane Cove and the Blue Mountains. Charles played violin or viola with a number of early twentieth-century opera companies, including the Melba Opera Company, with which he travelled in a special ‘opera’ train across the Nullarbor in 1928. He also played with the Pavlova Dance Company.

Charles was close to his brother Norbert, and they played sonatas together, the former playing piano, and the latter violin.

---

137 The pictures Charles took of this historic trip are now stored in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.
so there was music around me all the time … I grew up in a household where we were bathed in everything from Bach to Debussy. They were heard daily in my home. There were pupils in the house for lessons, or my father and uncle were going off to rehearsals … I grew up with student concerts, and the brothers always ended the concert by playing something together—a Beethoven sonata or similar, and so I just totally grew up with this music.  

Carr-Boyd recalls Charles’s frequent visits to the house:

Over the dinner table he talked passionately about many things, usually out-talking everybody else! His favourite composer was Wagner, and his favourite author was Dickens, and he knew everything about them. He had taught himself to speak German, and read texts in the original German language. He was a real Bohemian, sometimes dressing in trousers that were held up with string! But when he played at concerts he always looked very elegant. He lived in the old family home in Northwood, with many cats. This house was eventually demolished, and my husband Peter and I built our house on the land.

2.4.2 Scholarships and Education in Australia

Carr-Boyd’s schooling began at the age of five in a small school called Woodley, which was situated in an old house in lovely grounds in Lane Cove. The school was run by a “terrifying character for any five-year-old”, called Miss Watson, but Carr-Boyd recalls with affection her first teacher, a woman by the name of Miss Monk, who “drew wonderful fairy pictures on the walls. She loved the drawings I did, and encouraged my piano-playing”.  

Carr-Boyd considers it fortunate that she managed to get several scholarships to assist her to gain a good education, especially useful since her family was not wealthy. The first of these was to the prestigious Queenwood School for Girls in Mosman, to which she transferred when she was 10. She was eligible for this scholarship because her mother had previously taught there. The school appears to have aimed to provide girls with a strong academic education, at the time when girls were mostly still being

---

140 Some time after Carr-Boyd left Woodley School, it was taken over by another group and became a ‘progressive’ school. Carr-Boyd email, 7 March 2008. Carr-Boyd thinks there were probably not many scholarships granted. Carr-Boyd email, 17 January 2009.
groomed to be good wives and mothers. However, music did not have a high priority in the curriculum, and though “this situation has greatly improved nowadays, the school did not appreciate musical talent then”, placing more intellectual value on the sciences. She says she is not “madly intellectual”, and thinks that some of the teachers did not rate her academic ability very highly, despite the fact that she was good at art and music.

One of the best moments of my entire life was when I achieved the best pass so far in the school’s history in what was then the Leaving Certificate (now the Higher School Certificate). I remember that the Ancient History teacher was quite ecstatic, because I think she’d always believed that I was reasonably intelligent—and that was a very sweet moment for me.

The piano was still considered a most appropriate instrument for a young girl to learn, but Carr-Boyd’s choice to play piano does not appear to have been based solely on this perception. Piano-playing was a tradition in her family, and she received her first tuition from her father:

I can’t tell you why I wanted to learn the piano, I just did. My brother played piano, and still does. I had to arrange a lesson time on a Sunday morning after church, as it was the only free time, and that’s how I started piano. It worked fine learning from my father, because he was very gentle. I did learn the violin from my uncle for a year, and later switched to viola, because I just felt I should learn another instrument. My brother is seven years older than me, and we were like two single children really, except that we had to fight for practice time on the piano. We only had a small house, so my brother would be practising out on the back veranda, and my father would be teaching in the other room, there’d be a child doing a theory paper at the table and my mother would be cooking dinner in the kitchen. We had two pianos, obviously.

As a schoolgirl, Carr-Boyd was not considering a career as a professional musician. People tended to think she would become an artist, because she had a talent for it, and won a number of art prizes. She kept her options open, cramming many things into her life: “Sport didn’t lose out to the arts”. Carr-Boyd praises her parents for not putting pressure on her to follow a particular path, always letting her “have her head” and “follow her nose”. She acknowledges that this attitude was relatively uncommon in

---

142 Refer Appendix One, Section A1.6.
145 Refer Appendix One, Section A1.8.
those days, but it can also be attributed to her sex, as her brother was not quite so fortunate in that regard. He wanted to be a musician, but because Norbert had been through the Great Depression”, he thought Peter should have a profession that would provide a secure income, so he became a school teacher. However, he also studied piano at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music, and his teacher felt he had the ability to become a concert pianist.

When Carr-Boyd finished her secondary schooling, she considered studying art at a technical institute, but had won a Commonwealth Scholarship to university, and decided to take that up:

Everybody was at uni then, because the Government was handing out many such scholarships. It was the late 1950s, post war, when the Government was eager to build the country up. There were lots of migrants coming to the country, and lots of women at university by then too. Because our family income was so low, I was given an extra allowance for uni. Most of my friends were much wealthier than me, so none of them had this allowance.\textsuperscript{148}

Carr-Boyd does not claim to have had much self direction at this time, but rather that people encouraged her to pursue her talents, saying: “Well, next you should do this”. She embarked on an arts degree at the University of Sydney, but was asked to switch to a music degree. It was not possible to study performance at the University, and those who wished to do so attended the Conservatorium, where Carr-Boyd took piano lessons for many years. She received her training in composition at the University of Sydney from a young lecturer from England named Simon Harris. The University’s music department had only been operating for 10 years (since 1948), and Donald Peart, originally from Oxford University, was its professor. According to Carr-Boyd, Peart used the BMus degree course at Oxford as a model for the course at the University of Sydney, but it was quickly modified:

I became his sort of ‘protégé’. Prof Peart was friends with people like Ralph Vaughan Williams, so much so that his son is called Ralph. There were eight exams then in the fourth (and final) year of the course. In one three-hour exam, we had to write a four-part fugue, and in another a complete song, and then there was orchestration, harmony, counterpoint, history, and score-reading at the keyboard. And for extra fun, we had to write an orchestral work, which replaced the written thesis.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{148} Carr-Boyd interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{149} Carr-Boyd interview, 2004.
Carr-Boyd is quick to attribute her attainment of scholarships to luck, but there is no doubt she displayed considerable musical talent, or it is unlikely that Peart would have suggested that she continue on and do a Masters degree:

One day I was ‘hanging out’ with the Prof in the Quadrangle, and I remember we were sitting looking at a man re-doing one of the griffins up on the roof, and he said: “No-one’s written a history of music in Australia—I think you should do it”. With his pale blue eyes he never quite looked at you, and he had pale grey curly eyebrows, and the hair was pale grey and wild. So this was how I obtained my next scholarship, which was a postgraduate scholarship for three years full-time to earn a Master of Arts degree. In addition to a grant, paid to me every six months, I was given fares and accommodation to visit every state in Australia in order to visit and interview musicians and spend time in the archives of the main libraries for the purposes of my subject “The First Hundred Years of European Music in Australia, 1788–1888”. I met Margaret Sutherland during my visit to Melbourne—an unforgettable experience. This scholarship occupied me from 1960 through to the beginning of 1963.  

Carr-Boyd confesses she “didn’t have a clue how to do it”. She “forged away there—I needed to consult primary sources such as contemporary newspapers, because very little research had been done in this area”. She says she would not ever have thought of taking on this topic if Peart had not suggested it. However, she is glad that he saw her potential, which she obviously lived up to. She found the research process exciting: “Nobody thought there was anything there, but I kept discovering amazing things. For example, the fabulous singers that came to Australia”.

---

2.4.3 Further Study Overseas

When Carr-Boyd had finished her Masters project, Peart suggested she apply for the Sydney Moss scholarship to study overseas. Her application was successful, and she was the first person to be awarded this scholarship in the field of composition. The choice of where to study was left to Carr-Boyd, and after considering possible teachers, she applied and was accepted to study composition with Peter Racine Fricker at the Royal College of Music in London. ‘Swinging London’ was an optimistic and exciting place to be in the 1960s, with its emphasis on tradition and also its ability to encourage new and modern culture, and this would have been an added incentive to choose this destination. Carr-Boyd was the first in her generation of the family to travel to the other side of the world, and is grateful that despite being the only daughter, her parents allowed her to go:

My mother never put any barrier to my going, though it was a big thing to let me go. I went on my own, but that was not uncommon by my era. In my time, you did something after finishing school, and then you went overseas. There was a sense of going ‘Home’ travelling to Europe, and in those days you went on the boat. My beloved Aunt Alma came from Queensland to see me off, and I think she knew then that she was going to die. She had visited often, and I adored her. She never married and had children. So I had two much-loved relatives—my uncle Charles and aunt Alma. Sadly Aunt Alma died a few months later, when I was in London, and my uncle also died while I was living there.

The week before she left Australia for England, Carr-Boyd became engaged to Peter Carr-Boyd, whom she had known for some time. He had just returned from four years away in Sweden and England, but followed her back to Europe, where he was able to return to his previous employment as an electrical engineer for the Central Electricity Generating Board. They married on December 7, 1963, not long after Carr-Boyd’s arrival in London in June of that year. Her family was not able to attend the wedding, but Carr-Boyd claims they bore no resentment. After arrival in London and prior to her wedding, Carr-Boyd met up with two Australian female friends, also musicians. They went to the Salzburg Festival, and to Bayreuth where they saw Wagner’s *The Ring Cycle* and *The Meistersingers*.

---

In 1964 Carr-Boyd was sent as Australian representative to the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) Festival, held in Copenhagen that year, and attended another festival in Darmstadt during the same year. She notes that

The ‘myth of the great male artist’ still prevailed when I studied in England, and I found it also at the music festivals and summer schools I attended. Certain of the composers appeared (to those on lower ground) to be an élite group of priests—an illusion which I think they were happy to promote. (There were no women amongst these.)

Despite this, Carr-Boyd relished her time overseas. It was a busy time, and extremely social, with both musical friends and her husband’s business acquaintances. Carr-Boyd managed to write some music while studying composition with Fricker, and also studied piano with Dr Thornton Lofthouse, but felt an outsider at the College, because she was not a full-time student, only going there for her lessons. In her second year, Carr-Boyd changed piano teachers, studying privately with Stanislav Heller. In the same year, Fricker moved to America, and recommended that Alexander (Sandy) Goehr become her new teacher. Colin Brumby from Australia and Edwin Carr from New Zealand were also Goehr’s students around that time, and Carr-Boyd notes that there was a growing awareness of Australia, since the Sydney Symphony Orchestra made its first visit to London at that time, performing, among other things, *Sun Music*, by Peter Sculthorpe. She remembers her lessons with Goehr with affection:

Sandy made you feel you were special to him, and most moments and remarks were spiced with humour, backed up by the expression on his elfish face. He was irreverent about everything, and terribly European, with a broad knowledge of life and music and culture. The name of his son by his second wife was taken from Shakespeare: Orlando! His father was the famous conductor, Walter Goehr. Sandy and I still correspond, and I was lucky enough to attend his 70th birthday concert in London in 2002. London was a colourful place when I was there in the ‘60s; it was really coming to life. The Beatles were emerging, and Sandy’s children had been to one of their concerts. He and his crowd were right in the thick of things, so I felt I’d made the right choice. The gang included Peter Maxwell-Davies, Harrison Birtwhistle and many others, and as an Australian composer and a woman, I was a novelty in this group. They were the brave young composers then. I liked their approach to things rather than the actual music, but we were all trying to be avant-garde. It was the 12-tone period, which only lasted about five minutes.

---

155 Refer Chapter One, Section 1.5.1.1, Footnote 48. Carr-Boyd email, 20 January 2009.
Carr-Boyd was pregnant during her second year in London, and oldest daughter Xanthe was born there in 1965. Goehr “thought it was rather intriguing not only to have a colonial, but a female, pregnant one” and he was amused by her accent. She also recalls that although he acknowledged that women were well able to write music, he added that “no woman has ever written an instantly-recognisable theme”. Carr-Boyd feels gratified to have proved him wrong, most obviously with her work Fandango (1982) for mandolins, mandolas, guitars and bass, which has become extremely well-known and popular. Goehr’s seemingly patronising attitude was still common in the 1960s, and Carr-Boyd was not offended.

After Carr-Boyd’s two-year scholarship expired, she and Peter spent two more years living in London. They returned to Australia in 1967.

2.4.4 Summary

In the early 1960s, when Carr-Boyd was moving towards a serious career as a composer, this was still an unusual vocational choice for a woman. Feminist groups were preparing the ground for the eventual decision by the Arbitration Commission in 1969 to award women equal pay for equal work. It was only after this, during the 1970s, that feminists began in earnest to seek entry into previously male-dominated occupations. Carr-Boyd’s path to composition was smoothed for her by the significant male role models from within her family, and by the encouragement and freedom of career choice provided by her parents. The musical, artistic and intellectual environment in which she was raised could not help but influence her, meaning she had no need to question the desire to develop her musical and compositional talents.

---

158 Fandango was included in ABC Classic FM’s 2008 survey of favourite chamber music works. Refer Chapter Eight, Footnote 46.
159 The suffrage campaign and ‘Woman Movement’ of the late nineteenth century had focused on the situation of married women, the burden of mothers and the sexual degradation of women, but the primary role of women as guardians of the home was not questioned. By the 1930s, the emphasis in feminist thinking had moved away from women’s ‘difference’ towards their fundamental right to an independent existence, incorporating the push for equal opportunity and stronger identification with men. This move gathered strength during subsequent decades. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, equal pay and opportunity were the major feminist issues. (Summers 349; Grimshaw et al, 130, 252; Lake 19, 99, 107, 109, 202, 206, 211–212.) Refer Appendix One, Sections A1.3 and A1.4, where the evolution of feminist issues and activism in Australia is traced more thoroughly.
The influence of her grandfather, and the immersion and early teaching in music she gained from her father and uncle, meant that continued development of her musical abilities was a natural choice, rather than the anomaly it would otherwise have been at the time. Like Sutherland, Carr-Boyd enjoyed a more regular fatherly presence than was the norm. This male input was continued by Professor Donald Peart, who displayed confidence in Carr-Boyd’s abilities and pointed her in the right direction. Carr-Boyd respected the artistic ability of her mother, though clearly did not emulate her virtual abandonment of artistic creativity following the birth of her children. She also esteemed her maiden aunt from Queensland who worked all her adult life to support herself. Along with the role modelling by men, this must have contributed to a sense of entitlement still unusual for a woman of her generation.

Carr-Boyd does not take these fortunate circumstances for granted, often suggesting how fortunate she was that other people recognised and fostered her talents. She paints an almost implausibly ‘rosy’ picture of her early life, education, career trajectory and motherhood. This calls to mind the adoption in this thesis of the ‘alternative credibility’ of oral sources. Carr-Boyd appears to choose to withhold the more negative life experiences that she has no doubt encountered, and instead to project a positive image. It is also indicative of a preference not to be seen as a victim, which can be interpreted as a feature of her generally bright outlook on life. This selective narration is certainly ‘psychologically true’ for her, and thus is considered to have satisfactory validity, and is honoured.

### 2.5 Elena Kats-Chernin (b. 1957)

#### 2.5.1 Daughter Among the Russian Intelligentsia

Elena Kats-Chernin was born in Tashkent—the capital of Uzbekistan in (then) Soviet Central Asia—the second daughter of a “typical Russian couple from the intelligentsia”. When she was four years old, her parents were sent by the Government to work in the small town of Yaroslavl, where Kats-Chernin remained until

---

160 Refer Chapter One, Section 1.5.2.1.
161 Elena Kats-Chernin, interview with the author, 23 June 2004. Kats-Chernin uses the term ‘intelligentsia’ in its broader sense to refer to people with higher education.
she went to Moscow to study at the Gnessin Academy at the age of 14. Her family did not emigrate to Australia until April 1975 when she was 17, and therefore her childhood and schooling were conducted in a different environment to the other subjects, who grew up in Australia. Kats-Chernin arrived here when second-wave feminist battles to create opportunities for women within previously male-dominated professions were at their height. The occupational combination of her parents—her father was an engineer and her mother a doctor—was common in the Soviet Union, though not in Australia. Most of Kats-Chernin’s classmates had parents in those same or similar occupations.

Kats-Chernin’s parents did not choose to be professional musicians, but were both musical, as was her paternal grandfather. The latter sang in an amateur theatre group in Tashkent, and had perfect pitch. Her father played violin when he was young, but ceased as it was considered unsightly for a boy to play violin, and the polio from which he had suffered seemed to aggravate the situation. Kats-Chernin’s father’s sister, who emigrated to Australia before Kats-Chernin’s family, became a concert pianist. Her mother was also a pianist, and studied at a music academy parallel to her medical studies. According to Kats-Chernin, her mother did not consider herself musically talented, but was a fine doctor. She says that her mother “always loved music, and dragged me to the opera. Every time somebody like Richter came to our little town, she would get tickets, and make us all go, but I loved it—it was fantastic.” Many of Kats-Chernin’s cousins are musical, as is her sister, who has taught piano at a school, sings in a choir, and sent her own children to piano lessons.

---

162 It was customary for university graduates to be allocated towns to live and work in by the Government. Kats-Chernin recalls that Yaroslavl was about four days away by train from Tashkent. Kats-Chernin’s period of study in Moscow will be examined in more detail in Section 2.5.2 of the current chapter.

163 In the Soviet Union, the profession of medical doctor was more the province of women than men. In 1970, 75% of doctors were women. There was no private health system, which meant that doctors were poorly paid, and also overworked. Women’s entry into the workforce evolved differently in the Soviet Union during the Soviet era (1917–1991). This contrast with the Australian context will be described briefly in the context of Kats-Chernin’s relationship with feminism in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2. See also Jen Pickard, “Women in the Soviet Union”, 1988, reproduced in http://newyouth.com/womenandmarxism.asp, accessed 9 January 2009.

Kats-Chernin’s parents worked long hours, and in her pre-school years she had various nannies. Once at school, she and her sister were left more to themselves, which she feels made her quite resourceful, independent and self-sufficient:

When we came home, there was nobody there, and we had to look after ourselves. That’s why I’m so independent now: I hate being looked after really, because I’m used to doing everything myself. When she could, my mother cooked, and my father would cook too. Sometimes he had to go away for weeks at a time to work, and my mother was sometimes working until 7 or 8pm.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.}

Unlike Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, it was usual in the Soviet Union for both parents to work full-time, but Kats-Chernin never held this against her mother.\footnote{Refer Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2 for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon.} This is more likely to happen in an environment where working mothers are the exception rather than the rule. The way she describes her mother—and her father—displays her obvious respect for both of them:

My mum was never tired. She was doing this and that, always looking after us. She would make sure we practised, went to music lessons and then off to figure-skating training … She was amazing, but she never had time for herself, that’s the problem … I wanted to be a good person like her. She would have given her last shirt to somebody, and would never try to make money out of anybody, or cheat or betray. She never uttered a bad word about anyone. Everyone said she was an angel, and she was. She always felt sorry for somebody, and was always generous, giving to charity. She was one of those people who would live her life for others. My father was more critical of people, whereas my mum was accepting. But they both did everything for the family. They were really good parents.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.}

As will become more apparent in Chapter Five, Kats-Chernin’s description of her own mothering abilities suggests that she does not believe she has emulated the qualities of the ‘ideal’ mother that she perceives in her mother, and feels less adequate in this regard.

### 2.5.2 Education for a Musically-Gifted Child

Kats-Chernin showed a marked musical aptitude from an early age, and started formal music lessons when she was six. Prior to this she had taught herself, having observed her older sister’s lessons. Her sister struggled, but for Kats-Chernin, “it was like
reading the alphabet, or something I’d always seen’. She found it easy to read music, and to play by ear, but is modest about her pianistic prowess. She is able to acknowledge other abilities:

Some people can just pick up an instrument like the violin—just freakingly talented. I didn’t have that; even as a pianist I’m not that great. But I could read music—it was simply there. So I moved ahead. When I was eight or nine, I played the Moonlight Sonata, and everybody was amazed, though it’s not that hard, really. My hands were always too small to reach the octave, or the seventh or sixth. So I never actually played all the notes that were written and occasionally I changed the textures to fit my hands, but no-one noticed!

Musically adept students, for whom the music curriculum of the general schools they attended was not deemed sufficient, were able to receive more specific music education by attending special interest music schools when they were not required at general school. Kats-Chernin’s family recognised her talent, and sent her to such a school, the best in her hometown, Yaroslavl (an older Soviet Union town). She went almost every day for a music lesson, whether it be piano, solfège, music history or theory.

Kats-Chernin started writing music early, and improvised a lot. Her mother noticed this skill, and alerted the music school teachers to it. They decided she deserved extra lessons in composition, which she had from the age of eight:

In Russia, they knew how to pick a talent. They could see someone who was doing something unusual. Also in my school, they found out pretty quickly that I could play for all their functions, such as the centenary of the Revolution. I enjoyed doing this because it meant I could miss lessons to rehearse. I was the pianist for all these occasions, because I could pick up any song by ear really quickly. They would sing it to me, and I would accompany them.

Kats-Chernin excelled at the subjects studied in her general school, and was also a talented ice-skater. Her mother thought she should take part in some sport for health reasons, but the stress of too many activities led to her wish to abandon ice-skating, which she was relieved to do in favour of music at the age of 14. Her ice-skating teachers were annoyed, but her music teachers felt she could only do one thing really well.

---

well. Eventually her parents thought it better that she concentrate on music, and allowed her to stop the sport:

They said: “No more sport”. Those were the best words ever. Sometimes I came home from ice-skating training at midnight, and I had to do homework. I lost all my friends, because they noticed that I was always busy with music or ice-skating. I was never really popular, and when you are a little girl growing up, you want to be popular. I didn’t have a boyfriend until I was 19, and that was in Australia. I wanted a normal life like other people.172

At the same age of 14 in Year 8, Kats-Chernin passed the difficult examinations young students had to sit at that stage.173 For her senior secondary years, she was accepted into the conservatory college at the prestigious Gnessin music academy in Moscow, and decided to go.174 Her parents appreciated her obvious musical abilities, but did not immediately think she should become a professional musician:

They wanted me to become a lecturer at university, or a doctor or something similar. They wanted me to have a title to my name, and prestige. They also thought it would be safer for me to be employed full-time, and I must say they did disagree in some ways with my composition, though it wasn’t the composing they minded, but what I composed. They thought it was a bit too avant-garde. They would say: “Can’t you write something with a melody and a heart?”175

Despite their reservations, her parents educated themselves, listened to the radio, and were later proud of her work. Kats-Chernin claims they did not force her to do anything, only wishing she would be financially secure.

Her teachers, on the other hand, did not doubt that she would continue on with her music studies. While only 14, she left to study in Moscow, relatively undaunted by the prospect of leaving her family:

173 Year 8 in the Soviet Union was the equivalent of Year 10 in Australia. School education (in the then Soviet Union and in Russia now) starts at the age of six and consists of two stages, designated as the eight-year school and the 11-year school. The first four years, known as the primary school years, and the following four years, junior secondary, end what is sometimes termed ‘incomplete secondary education’. The final three years are called the ‘senior secondary’ years. Lepherd 55.
174 There is considerable pressure on students within such schools for not only maintenance of a place, but for the attainment of a standard of excellence. They are being groomed for the Conservatory, the pinnacle of Russian music development, entry being reserved for exceptionally talented musicians. Lepherd 59–60.
I loved it, being away from my parents! We did what we considered were naughty things, but they weren’t naughty at all, such as staying up late, very late. There were four girls in the room in the hostel. Students came from all over the country to attend this college. In my room there was also a violinist, a pianist and a singer, and there was a piano in every room.\textsuperscript{176}

The students lived in cramped conditions, had little privacy and were heavily policed. Kats-Chernin lived on $20 a month, which was possible because the cost of living was not then high in the Soviet Union:

You could buy a loaf of bread for around 12 cents, milk was about 15 cents, and the metro was 5 cents. Also, because I got good marks, I received an extra $5 a month. I tried every term to get the best marks, but in one term I only got a pass for a stupid subject, greatly unpopular with my fellow students—Military Training. That killed the $5 for me for the next term … We all hated Military Training—all that propaganda. I also hated sport, and got bad marks for both those things, but we had to do it; otherwise we wouldn’t have got through.\textsuperscript{177}

Despite these hardships, Kats-Chernin had a very thorough musical education. She adds that the situation provided her with an excellent social education. She has fond memories and no regrets about her time there.

\subsection{2.5.3 To Australia and Further Musical Education}

In 1975, Kats-Chernin’s family decided to move to Australia, as her father’s sister and family had done a few years before. They had invited Kats-Chernin’s father to visit, but the Russian authorities failed to grant permission.\textsuperscript{178} This greatly annoyed him, and the lack of freedom provided a catalyst for the decision to leave the Soviet Union forever. A number of people were migrating at this time, but in her town it was unusual:

At the time we left, there was a lot of turmoil, and many musicians left, for example Rostrapovitch. But we were the only ones from our town to go around that time, which was a big thing. People stopped saying hello to us, because everybody was scared. If the authorities became aware that people knew us, those

\textsuperscript{176} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{177} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{178} These were the years of the Soviet Union, established after the October Revolution of 1917, with an ideology based on the principles of Marxism and Leninism. Until 1992, policy for the Union was largely determined by the Communist Party (CPSU). The processes of humanisation and democratisation which were the forerunners in the breakdown of communism, and the establishment of a more democratic society, were not yet in place in the 1970s when Kats-Chernin’s family emigrated. Repression and suppression of economic, educational and artistic development were still in obvious evidence. Lepherd 51.
people would get into trouble … I remember my childhood very well, but I’m very glad we came here. I’ve never visited since. I had a chance to visit, but I didn’t take it. I’m still very conscious of my fear.179

Kats-Chernin appears to harbour no resentment about the move, and her first impressions were positive:

I remember being amazed at the abundance of everything—food, clothes … and people looked well, with colour in their cheeks. I was impressed by the friendliness of people around me. Friends of my aunt picked us up at the airport, and tried to talk to us in spite of the little English we spoke. My parents could not speak the language at all, and it was much harder for them than us, but eventually they learned, not perfectly, of course.180

The greatest revelation was the “miracle photocopying machine”!

In Russia, if we needed a copy of something, we had to write it out again. To get our passports copied when we were leaving the country, my father had to make extra trips to Moscow, and stand in long queues. I thought the photocopying facility that I discovered in Australia was the most incredible piece of equipment. Even now I am grateful for its existence, with the masses of manuscript paper I work through because of the need to keep copies before I send them to the copyist. Now I use the fax machine to send music off. Fax is yet another miracle!181

Kats Chernin learned some English at school, and could read English, but when she first arrived in Australia, she could only understand if people spoke slowly, especially if the Australian accents were strong. She felt she needed to learn more vocabulary, and found it embarrassing to speak at first, so tended to wait until she was spoken to, since she prefers to speak with grammatical precision. This suggests a degree of perfectionism that appears also to have stood her in good stead in her compositional work. After two months’ English study with her sister in a course for migrants at the University of New South Wales, Kats-Chernin auditioned at the Sydney Conservatorium. To her amazement, she was accepted into the piano stream mid-year, which she appreciated since it meant she could improve her English more quickly:

At first we spoke Russian at home, until I went to Germany in 1980, after which time I had no-one to speak Russian with. Since my return to Australia in 1994,

my Russian vocabulary has become less rich. I speak it with my sister, but we ‘break’ into English quite often, as it seems easier to express thoughts this way.\textsuperscript{182}

The immigrant experience does not appear to have been traumatic for Kats-Chernin, and she has been resident in Australia now for a total of 20 years. Clearly she feels comfortable here:

\begin{quote}
I call Australia home for sure now. My roots and those of my children are here, and I can’t imagine living anywhere else. I like to travel to Europe though, just for a different kind of inspiration, to see my friends, and to work with musicians there, if the occasion arises.\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

Kats Chernin’s musical training in the Soviet Union meant that the audition at the Sydney Conservatorium was “children’s play” for her. In Aural Studies, she had done “really complex, advanced things such as taking musical dictation in Shostakovich style, and we had to play two parts of a Bach three-part fugue and sing the middle voice. So the aural tests here were really nothing for me, even operating in English”.\textsuperscript{184}

Kats-Chernin studied first with Gordon Watson, who was head of the piano department at the time, but her real desire was to compose. A year later, she entered that field of study:

\begin{quote}
I didn’t know it existed before, because when I first came, I was just finding my way. I arrived in the middle of the year, and they’d just started a pilot course, so I got into that one, and then went into composition, so I did parallel courses in piano and composition. I had to do a bit more work than other people.\textsuperscript{185}
\end{quote}

Kats-Chernin studied composition with Edwin Carr for six months, and then with English composer and musicologist Richard Toop for three years. She was his first composition student after he arrived from a period in Germany working with Stockhausen. Toop gave her private lessons, introducing her to music from the German modernist world, which she found very exciting. She wrote her first orchestral piece as part of the requirements for the final exams of her Diploma, a piano concerto, which

\textsuperscript{182} Kats Chernin email, 17 November 2008.  
\textsuperscript{183} Kats Chernin email, 17 November 2008.  
\textsuperscript{184} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.  
\textsuperscript{185} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
was performed by the NSW Conservatorium Orchestra in 1979 with Kats-Chernin as soloist.

Kats-Chernin was also selected to join a group of composers to attend the first Summer School for Young Composers. There were eight composers in total, including Graeme Koehne and Carl Vine. Each had to write an eight-to-ten-minute piece for orchestra. She feels her piece “had no future”, but appreciated the opportunity to be part of the project, and to have her work performed by the Australian Training Orchestra, and recorded by the ABC.

Towards the end of her Diploma course, Toop advised Kats-Chernin to continue her studies overseas. He suggested particular teachers, and assisted by writing applications in German for her. She is extremely grateful for his dedication in teaching her, and for his encouragement to further her compositional career. An application was made and awarded for a Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) scholarship to study with Helmut Lachenmann in Hanover, Germany.\(^\text{186}\) When Kats-Chernin had completed her course in Sydney, six months remained before her departure overseas, and she managed to procure Australia Council funding to continue lessons meanwhile with Richard Toop.

### 2.5.4 German Experiences

When she arrived in Germany in 1980 at the age of 22, Kats-Chernin could speak no German. The experience of arriving to live in a country where she could not yet speak the language was of course familiar to her, and again she was able to overcome the difficulties inherent in adapting to a new and foreign environment. It is likely that the sense of independence she acquired at an early age through having both parents working, and through spending some of her teenage years far from her family home, was helpful to her at this time.

Kats-Chernin attended a four-month language course at the Goethe Institute before commencing work with Lachenmann. She felt a certain confidence as a composer after

\(^{186}\) Translation: German Academic Exchange Service.
studying with Toop, but the first few months in Germany were challenging, both linguistically and musically:

Lachenmann gave his classes in German. I did understand some of it, but was really struggling for the first half a year with him, because his language is highly intellectual. He’s an amazing composer and musician. Nothing was simple with him. He asked more than you could answer.\textsuperscript{187}

Her study with Lachenmann was invaluable to Kats-Chernin’s future compositional career. She appears to have applied many of the concepts he taught her both in the way she thinks about her own music, and in her teaching:

Lachenmann said to me: “You have material that is your own. You have your own instrument, and you create your own instrument out of that instrument.” That instrument could be a glissando going up, with tremolo, and finishing with a pizzicato. He talked of thinking about the different elements of a piece as a family, about the need to make a decision how one part related to another.\textsuperscript{188}

Kats-Chernin says that Lachenmann taught her to “look beyond the instrument; for example, when you use a piano, it’s not just about how to press the keys down. That training, ‘to go beyond the obvious’, eventually becomes automatic.”\textsuperscript{189} She realises that he conveyed many things that only later sank in. When she teaches in this way herself, and sees her students’ blank faces, she is reminded of how difficult it was.

Despite being a hard taskmaster, Lachenmann was good to his students, inviting them over for wonderful meals cooked by his Japanese wife, a prize-winning pianist in her own right, as a reward for their hard work. Kats-Chernin says that in some ways he was a father figure to her, which indicates that in spite of her self-reliance, she derived at least some comfort from this. A year after she came to Germany, Lachenmann moved to Stuttgart, and Kats-Chernin would then travel for six hours each way by train once a week for lessons with him.

During this period of study in Germany, Kats-Chernin met her future husband, a German chiropractor, and became pregnant with their first child, born in 1982, while

\textsuperscript{187} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.  
\textsuperscript{188} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.  
\textsuperscript{189} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
still studying with Lachenmann. She was concerned that he would no longer take her seriously, and worked hard to prove her intention to continue composing once a mother:

A colleague, who was also studying with him, told Helmut that I needed to finish a piece very quickly because the table at which I wrote needed to be used as a nappy table. When next we met, he said to me: “I’ve heard you’re trying to finish this piece very quickly.” I felt guilty about that. I didn’t want him to think that once the child was born, I couldn’t compose any more. I didn’t want him to feel I was going to be lazy.  

This suggests some awareness on Kats-Chernin’s part that motherhood and composition might still be considered by some to be an unusual blend.

As well as taking lessons with Lachenmann and becoming a mother, Kats-Chernin was forced to find work, since her husband was not earning a secure living, and was in debt. Balancing these three major focuses was very difficult at times, but Kats-Chernin displays the wisdom of retrospect with her opinion that this predicament forced her to accept all commissions offered, and to form musical groups to supplement her income, enabling her to gain invaluable experience for her future career.

2.5.5 Summary

Kats-Chernin’s upbringing in the midst of a musical family of the Russian intelligentsia provided her with an excellent environment in which her talents could be fostered. The independence she developed at a young age seems also to have assisted in building her confidence and in developing a sense of entitlement to pursue her goals. It was expected in the Soviet Union that women would develop careers and continue working after having children, and though her parents were concerned that a compositional career might not provide Kats-Chernin with a secure income, they did not attempt to prevent her from furthering her musical studies. They also made an effort to

---

190 Kats-Chernin interview, 2004. For further commentary on Kats-Chernin’s reaction to Lachenmann’s remarks, refer Chapter Five, Section 5.3.1.
191 Further details of Kats-Chernin’s income-earning efforts will be provided in Chapter Eight, Section 8.5.3.
192 Earlier in the twentieth century in the Soviet Union, there were potential political ramifications for composers whose music did not conform to the ideals of socialist realism. This would not have impacted on Kats-Chernin’s compositional development, since she migrated to Australia in 1975 at the age of 18, and developed her compositional career thereafter.
understand and appreciate what they first considered to be her rather inaccessible and avant-garde music.

Growing up in Russia appears to have had certain distinct advantages with regard to Kats-Chernin’s musical training. First, teachers sought out, recognised and encouraged specific talents, irrespective of gender. Unlike Australia, Russia’s art music tradition, both in its creation and its performance, was considerably more firmly established, historically entrenched and respected within the culture of the country. Second, her musical training in Russia was rigorous, building excellent foundations with which to embark on tertiary musical studies in Australia.

Richard Toop was an important male mentor in Kats-Chernin’s first years of compositional study in Australia, as was Helmut Lachenmann in Germany, who pushed her to new compositional levels. Having gained her diploma at the Sydney Conservatorium, and with her departure for Germany, Kats-Chernin was embarking on a serious career as a musician and composer. The necessity early in her career to use her musical talents to earn an income afforded her invaluable experience and placed her firmly on the path to becoming a well-known and successful composer.

Kats-Chernin did not return to Australia to live and work until 1994, after 14 years overseas. By then she had two more children, and was quite experienced as a composer, but says she had to “start again” after her return, and that it was only back in Australia that she truly started to develop a career: “Before that I was writing little student pieces, and then a couple of pieces which weren’t very good, and that was it”. She had always maintained strong family ties and musical connections in Australia, and was well-placed to develop a rich career as a composer in Australia.

---

193 Refer Appendix One, Section A1.8.
2.6 Katy Abbott (b. 1971)

2.6.1 Early Years: The Musical One in the Family

Abbott describes her middle- to upper-class background as privileged. She attended one of Melbourne’s private schools, Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC) for the duration of her junior and senior schooling.\(^{195}\) The family set-up in which she grew up was traditional, and not unusual in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s in Australia. Second-wave feminist ideas relating to the nuclear family as the primary site of women’s oppression, promulgated by Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan and others, were relatively new during Abbott’s childhood, and had not yet widely permeated society.\(^{196}\) Her father, like the progeny of many first-generation immigrants, was hard-working, dedicated and successful in his career. He was an anaesthetist who worked long hours. Like many women of her generation, Abbott’s mother’s primary role was to remain home to care for children. She worked as a secretary prior to Abbott’s birth, and gained her Year 12 qualification while Abbott was at primary school. After this she undertook fine arts subjects part-time at university, though did not complete a degree. She was entrepreneurial, and some of these ideas came briefly to fruition, including a business trading in antiques. Post-natal depression following the birth of Abbott’s younger brother remained undiagnosed for many years, and may have held her back from reaching her full potential. The family was comfortably off, though not especially wealthy.

Abbott’s paternal grandparents migrated to Australia from Czechoslovakia when her father was five years old. It was only after her grandfather’s death in Abbott’s early twenties that her family learned her grandparents were Jews who escaped their country. Her great grandparents had been killed in Auschwitz, and her grandfather was fearful that a holocaust may happen in Australia, and that the family might experience anti-Semitism.\(^{197}\) He decided to keep their Jewish heritage secret from his son, Abbott’s

\(^{195}\) Refer Section 2.3.4, where this school’s early progressiveness in education for girls is noted. Margaret Sutherland taught music at this school in the second decade of the twentieth century. See also Appendix One, Section A1.6.

\(^{196}\) Chapter Three incorporates a more detailed discussion of second-wave feminist ideas.

\(^{197}\) Katy Abbott, second interview, 10 August 2005 and 22 February 2006; email communication, 29 December 2008. This fear of anti-Semitism was understandable and not uncommon, and is evident in the unreliability of the Census figures. The number of European Jews who entered Australia between 1944 and 1960 is estimated at 20,000–35,000, but this figure does not include the apparently significant
father. Abbott admires the family’s ability “to push through hard times”, and the story forms the subject matter of her opera *Milushka* (2000). Rather than the “raw emotions” that might have been evinced, this choice was made “because it was an interesting topic”. Abbott maintains the situation has not greatly influenced her composition, except to leave her with a “sensitivity to the human impact of events such as war”, which has manifested in works that address more generally themes of loss, country, family, determination and celebration of life.198

Abbott’s grandfather appears to have been particularly influential in developing her musical interest:

> No-one in my immediate family was musical, although my grandfather played violin a bit … My grandfather had a very nice violin, and he really wanted me to play it … When I was learning violin, which I did until Year 8, we used to play together, until I got better than him, and then he didn’t want to play any more! I learned violin and piano, and singing later.199

Abbott’s grandfather’s brother is a violinist too, and at one time was a member of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Another important influence in Abbott’s early music development was one of her neighbours, a piano teacher:

> My neighbour across the road was a piano teacher, and like a third grandmother to me. I knew she really cared about me and thought of me as a ‘granddaughter’. I used to go over to her for lessons. Her name was Mavis Shannon, and she was fantastic. I never did an exam—I’ve never done an AMEB exam. It was playing for pleasure, and that’s what she always encouraged. She was a terrific player … To a certain extent she was a role model. Her husband died reasonably young and so she built a life for herself, surrounding herself with intelligent and good people.200

Abbott thinks her younger brother might also be musical. She speaks of his beautiful bass voice that would be suited to classical art song, but he has chosen not to develop

---


number of Jews who chose not to declare themselves Jewish due to concerns about anti-Semitism. There was at this time hostility shown towards the entry by refugees into Australia, and Jews were of course a particular target for it. This can be attributed to Australia’s isolationism and the ‘White Australia’ policy. There was fear that non Anglo-Celtic immigrants would take jobs, and undermine Australian living standards. The pressure to assimilate into a still predominantly Anglo-Celtic Australian society was immense, and many Jews chose not to align themselves with the Jewish community, or inter-married with non-Jews. W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia* (Blackburn: Australasian Echuca Press, 1986) 61–65; Suzanne D. Rutland, *The Jews in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 51–52.
these talents. Her mother also has latent musical talent, which Abbott fostered through teaching her to sing to a level that enabled her to pass an audition for the Melbourne Chorale. Nevertheless, Abbott is the most musical in her family, though during high school did not seriously consider music as a potential career.

2.6.2 From Secondary School to Music: The Transitional Years

Towards the end of her schooling, Abbott was still unclear what she wanted to do. It is possible that the lack of close role models of confident career women is partially responsible for this lack of direction. Her school did not discourage girls from reaching their full potentials, but she would have appreciated more career direction:

I was one of those kids who was academically average, though I didn’t need extra help. I didn’t stand out in anything, and I got lost in the system. I was also extremely quiet. I would never take part in class discussions, and was mortified when I was asked a question. My husband makes fun of me because I got into trouble twice in my life at school, and on neither of those occasions was it my fault! I was a good girl!

Whilst Abbott was not pressured in terms of a particular career direction, she feels there was an implied assumption that she would attend university:

There were no expectations on me to become a doctor, or any particular profession. I never felt pressure to get top marks, only to do the best I could. I think my school teachers and parents expected that I would go to uni. My mother may have wanted me to have the experience that she didn’t have. Overall my parents had a preference for me to go to uni and do something ‘nice’, which I have, though they wouldn’t have expected it to be music.

Abbott’s parents tried hard to help her find a direction, and she remembers being taken to a career counsellor in Year 12. She does not recall the particulars of the meeting, but thinks that music may have been mentioned. She had studied music at school only while it was compulsory until Year 8. In Year 9 Abbott learned jazz piano outside school, but was unmotivated. She studied singing from Year 9 onwards as an extra subject, and also learned percussion in Year 12. Singing was particularly enjoyable, and she considered taking it in Year 12, but instead chose VCE subjects that would keep her options open. Abbott concentrated on singing jazz at a time when it was only possible

---

\(^{201}\) Abbott interview, 2004.
to study classical music at Year 12 level, and advisers at her school felt that the quick transition from jazz to classical music would be difficult. She slightly regrets heeding that advice, but had insufficient self-confidence to assert herself.

Abbott’s mother took her to university open days, and suggested she start with a year of Arts subjects to help her decide her career path. At one such event Abbott learned of the degree in education she would eventually undertake, but disagreed with this advice from her mother, and opted instead to study towards the traditionally safe women’s profession of nursing. She felt this training would be a better use of her time, since after just a year, she could potentially find employment in a hospital at a basic nursing level. This decision may have been influenced by advice given by her grandparents:

My paternal grandparents came out to Australia with nothing, and they always said: “You need to get an education and get a job, so that if you get married and divorced, you can support yourself.” That was the catch cry—they loved me so much that they didn’t want to think that I would not be able to support myself. My grandparents had been quite wealthy in Czechoslovakia, and they arrived in Australia with only £50, and the taxi driver cheated them. They were out on the pavement. I really admire the way they worked and worked to get themselves a life. They worked too hard really, which came out of a sense of insecurity.  

2.6.3 The Emergence of Musical Creativity

Abbott discovered that nursing did not suit her, but the year was not wasted. Her dissatisfaction with the course led her to seek solace in singing, and her voice matured and developed. She played the piano, taught herself chords and wrote songs. Positive feedback came from her friends when she sang and played to them. She discovered a two-year diploma course in music at Box Hill TAFE, and applied. In this environment, Abbott started to feel at home:

For the first time in my life, it clicked. I realised I had retained a good knowledge of theory, and that I could apply it—it was so exciting. I enjoyed the creative side, and people liked my voice. I was invited to join the big band, because they felt my voice was suitable for that style of singing. I got a lot of recognition, and thought: “So this is what it’s like to excel”. I was 18 or 19 by that stage.  

Her confidence heightened, Abbott decided to discontinue the diploma, and accepted a place in a teaching degree course at the University of Melbourne. She learned much about herself, recognised a natural teaching ability, and musically was “in a good place”. Upon completion of the course, she was engaged, and at the relatively young age of 23 in 1994, married Keith Abbott, who was studying Organisational Psychology at the University of Melbourne.\textsuperscript{205} Like many young Australians, Abbott wished to travel, her intention being to backpack around the world before marriage. Keith also wanted to tour the world, so they married, saved money, and traveled together. The ten-month trip included New Zealand, USA, UK, Europe, India, Israel, Turkey and Africa. The couple did not work while overseas, except for six weeks’ volunteer work in India.\textsuperscript{206}

Keith was instrumental in Abbott’s development as a composer. He appears to have recognised and validated her creative abilities, indicating that he is the product of a generation of men that no longer assumes women’s most significant contribution to society lies in the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{207} According to Abbott, it was he who suggested she could consider being a composer. She found herself wanting to undertake further study towards a Graduate Diploma in Composition which had been available at the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne, and before departure overseas, applied to do so with the intention of beginning after her return. During the time away, she remembers “starting to be consumed with these thoughts about whether I could be a composer and whether I could call myself a composer. At the time I didn’t think I could, but I started to think about it …”\textsuperscript{208}

After their homecoming, Abbott taught full-time. She enjoyed teaching, but did not consider it a longer-term career. At the age of 27, she applied to do the Graduate

\textsuperscript{205} The average age of first marriage for women (and men) is gradually increasing. When Abbott married in 1994 at the age of 23, she was slightly younger than the average age for women in the early 1990s, which was just under 25. Refer “Australian Social Trends 1994—National Summary Tables—Family Formation”; \url{http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS}, accessed 29 December 2008. Abbott had expected and wanted to get married, and had a group of friends who got married around the same time. Abbott second interview, 2005 and 2006. However, she realises that she was married relatively young, though this was in part due to the couple’s decision to undertake an extended overseas trip together. Abbott feels that she and her husband have “done their growing up together”. Abbott interview, 2004. Her desire to have children came later. Refer Chapter Five, Section 5.3.1 for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{206} Abbott email, 29 December 2008.

\textsuperscript{207} The women’s partners’ roles in their lives and careers will be further revealed in Chapters Six and Seven.

\textsuperscript{208} Abbott interview, 2004.
Diploma, and dropped from full-time to part-time teaching in order to have time to study. The course was cancelled, but Abbott was now highly-motivated, and persuaded the University to allow her to enrol for two years (1998–1999) and take subjects which had formed part of the diploma, including Orchestration, Techniques 3, Music History and Conducting. It was during this time that she met and studied with Stuart Greenbaum, then a PhD student in composition, and he became both good friend and compositional mentor to Abbott. In 1999 she enrolled for a Masters degree in Composition, studying with Brenton Broadstock, who became another important and respected musical role model. She graduated in 2001, by which time she aimed for a serious career in composition, and by 2002 had enrolled in a PhD in Composition with Broadstock. During her candidature she gave birth to twin boys (born 2003), completing her PhD in 2007.209

2.6.4 Summary

Abbott’s immediate family was not especially musically-oriented, and she did not start composing until her mid-late twenties after a few years of marriage. Her father was involved with his medical career, and her mother has not pursued music seriously, though is interested in art. Abbott’s musical encouragement as a youngster came from figures outside the immediate family. Her grandfather appears initially to have inspired her musical interest, and her piano-teaching ‘grandmotherly’ neighbour played a similar role. She was shy at school, an average student academically, and in Year 12 felt there was nothing that inspired sufficient passion to pursue as a career, except that she was a proficient pianist and enjoyed singing jazz. Later her musical peers at Box Hill TAFE and her husband contributed significantly to her burgeoning self-confidence as a creator of music, and this was continued by compositional mentors Brenton Broadstock and Stuart Greenbaum.

209 Abbott’s experience of balancing her compositional studies with motherhood will be examined further in Chapters Five and Eight of this thesis.
2.7 Conclusions

The analysis of the early lives of these four women from different generations reveals some differences. Katy Abbott encountered more personal challenges in discovering her suitable vocation than did the others. To a degree this will have been mitigated by the gradual decrease during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in public, cultural obstacles to the idea of a woman aspiring to become a composer. Elena Kats-Chernin also benefited from growing up in a later era than did Margaret Sutherland or Ann Carr-Boyd. In addition, her early musical education in the Soviet Union was more rigorous than its equivalent in Australia, and different cultural expectations in Russia of women’s role in society were also an advantage.

Some similarities are striking. Chapter Seven will refer to the importance of encouragement provided to musically talented women through upbringing in an environment in which education and musical or artistic pursuits are highly valued. In the nineteenth and early to mid twentieth centuries, when girls’ education still prepared them for future roles as wives and mothers, and the feminist push for female access to professions usually inhabited by males was not yet fully underway, such a background appears to have been an essential pre-requisite for a woman to feel entitled to aspire to a traditionally male compositional career. This necessity has been diluted by second-wave feminism, but still maintains importance today. Indeed, all four composers in this study have benefited from growing up amongst highly-educated, intellectual, musical and artistic extended or immediate families.

In addition, whilst female mentors have been present, all four women have appreciated significant input from male mentors who have not made distinctions on the basis of gender. It would have been particularly important earlier in the twentieth century in assisting Sutherland and Carr-Boyd to develop their creative talents, but has also been a catalyst for Kats-Chernin and Abbott in their penetration of what is still regarded as a male-dominated career.

---

210 Refer Appendix One, Section A1.6.
This completes Part One of this thesis, which has laid the foundations for the forthcoming exploration of aspects of these four women’s challenges as composing mothers in Australia.
PART TWO: FEMINIST POSITIONS

CHAPTER THREE

FEMINISM AND MOTHERHOOD: SECOND WAVE AND BEYOND

3.1 Introduction

By the 1950s, equal pay and opportunity were becoming major feminist issues, culminating in the second-wave, or ‘equality’, feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. The struggle for women’s independent existence inherent in second-wave feminism incorporated some strong feminist critiques of established models of motherhood. In this chapter, persistent expectations and ideologies of motherhood, resisted by some second-wave feminists, will first be outlined. The evolution of feminist attitudes to motherhood from the second wave of the 1960s to the present emerging third wave will then be traced. This scrutiny will be undertaken with two aims in mind. First, it will further elucidate the feminist theoretical background against which the experiences of Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott will be evaluated. Second-wave feminism arrived too late to significantly affect the life and career of Margaret Sutherland. Nevertheless, she was progressive for the time in exhibiting certain feminist tendencies. The second goal in this chapter is to establish the feminist model that best informs these case studies.

The issue of feminist attitudes towards motherhood, both in Australia and elsewhere in the western world, has been fraught since the middle of the twentieth century. Emily Jeremiah reminds us that second-wave feminist thinking about motherhood is often presented as a “drama in three acts”. The first ‘act’ encompasses the ‘repudiation’ of motherhood by some early second-wave ‘equality’ feminists. Simone de Beauvoir portended this in 1949 in her book *The Second Sex*, followed by Betty Friedan,

---

1 Refer Chapter Two, Footnote 159, and Appendix One, Sections A1.3 and A1.4.
2 Jeremiah 22.
Germaine Greer, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone and Ann Oakley, who are important exemplars of this trend. The second ‘act’ is a revision of this standpoint, and is characterised by a ‘recuperation’ and re-evaluation of motherhood, evident in the diverse writings of so-called ‘difference’ feminists Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow and Sara Ruddick in America, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva in France, and others. The third(-wave) ‘act’, now in progress, does not dismiss these earlier viewpoints, but extends and challenges them. This is a postmodern feminism acknowledging diversity amongst women and incorporating a multiplicity of choices, seeking ways in which equality can co-exist with difference.³

Before proceeding to the main focuses of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge the history of injustice to women that gave rise to second-wave feminism. The contribution of liberal feminism with its emphasis on men’s and women’s common humanity, and the development of equal opportunities for women in education, public and economic life, was invaluable.⁴ Patricia Grimshaw notes that despite social reforms in the twentieth century that removed some barriers to women’s participation in public life, the life experience of many women had not changed significantly. The Australian labour movement had not shown evidence of the type of socialist revolutionary activity promulgated by Marxist writers that might have offered women the opportunities required to become economically-independent workers. The ideology of separate spheres for men and women continued. Most women were still economically dependent on men for much of their lives, and their primary roles lingered in the private, domestic sphere, as wives, mothers, and sometimes housekeepers. Young women awaited marriage and then ceased work. Women only remained in the workforce if they were single, their marriages broke down, or they were very poor.⁵ Work was shaped by the “assumption of a wife off-field to take care of dependents and the household”.⁶ The ‘good worker’ was the man who could work long hours, unencumbered by family responsibilities.⁷ Proponents of liberal feminism overturned the “all-but compulsory homemaker and motherhood role”, and the longstanding rule that women resign from

³ Jeremiah 22–23, 25; Doucet 25.
the public service once married, was abolished. Books like Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970), responded to the “fundamental social inequities that resulted from child-bearing” that restricted women to narrow roles. These had an awakening and liberating impact on many women that cannot be underestimated. In their polemical book in defence of second-wave feminism, Monica Dux and Zora Simic point out that there were “ideological threads that were downright hostile to mothers”, but that “whatever their theoretical positions might have been, the net practical effect of second-wave activists was to bring about reforms that were helpful to mothers”. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott have absorbed benefits from the considerable accomplishments of second-wave feminism. However, as Anne Manne aptly states: “In moments of intense cultural rebellion, balance and nuance fly out the window”, and this is evident in early feminists’ proscribing of at-home motherhood and the prescribing of paid work, a neat inversion of patriarchy’s foregoing insistence that biology was destiny.

### 3.2 Twentieth-Century Ideologies of Motherhood

Twentieth-century expectations of motherhood are the residue of attitudes that are traceable back hundreds of years. Interpretations of two historical ideologies have been particularly influential in the development of the ‘myth of the good mother’ which still exists in the Western world: Christianity and Freudian psychoanalytic theory. In her article “Writing and Motherhood”, Susan Rubin Suleiman cites Julia Kristeva’s compelling argument relating to the Christian myth of the Virgin Mother. Kristeva sought to discover what it was about the Christian representation of ideal motherhood, as embodied in the Virgin, that satisfied women for many centuries, but is now being challenged. Rubin Suleiman summarises Kristeva’s tentative conclusion as follows:

> … a denial of the male’s role in procreation (virgin birth), a fulfilment of the female desire for power (Mary as Queen of Heaven), a sublimation of the woman’s murderous or devouring desires through the valorisation of her breast (the infant Jesus suckling) and of her own pain (the *Mater dolorosa*), a fulfilling

---

9 Dux and Simic 113. For an example of this liberating impact, see McCalman, *Journeyings*, 253. McCalman quotes from an interview with Joyce Thorpe: “I couldn’t believe it. I just felt a new person—my whole life was explained to me. I read *the Female Eunuch*, and the whole sex role conditioning was explained to me—it was like a burden rolling off my back.”
10 Dux and Simic, 114, 116.
of the fantasy of deathlessness or eternal life (the Assumption) and above all a
denial of other women, including the woman’s own mother (Mary was “alone of
all her sex”)—all of this being granted upon one condition: that the ultimate
supremacy and divinity of the male be maintained in the person of the Son, before
whom the Mother kneels and to whom she is subservient.  

Rubin Suleiman also implicates psychoanalytic discourse developed by Freud in the
representation of ideal motherhood. According to Freud (and a number of his
followers), the challenge for the little girl is to make a satisfactory transition from the
pre-oedipal phase of ‘masculine’ (clitoral) eroticism to ‘feminine’ (vaginal) eroticism in
order to become a mother. She must reject her mother in favour of her father, reconcile
herself to her ‘castration’, and give up the active impulses of the pre-oedipal phase to
replace them with the desire for passive gratification and longing for a child. In the
traditional psychoanalytic literature, and indeed elsewhere, the good mother is
characterised by tenderness, willingness to sacrifice, and exclusive involvement with
her child. It is assumed that the interests of mother and child are identical. Subsequent
feminist critics have argued that this character is culturally conditioned, and suggested
that Freud was simply revealing and analysing psychological formations produced
within patriarchal societies, rather than describing innate feminine qualities.  

In the early and middle years of the twentieth century, it was still expected that
women’s primary roles were within the domestic sphere as ‘ideal’ mothers and
housewives—they were expected to stay at home. In addition, the early twentieth
century was an era when new responsibilities and standards for housewives and mothers
were being imposed from outside the home and the local community, both in Australia
and elsewhere. Nancy Chodorow draws attention to this:

Women’s family role became centred on child care and taking care of men.
Women of all classes [were] now expected to nurture and support husbands in
addition to providing them with food and a clean house.

---

12 Rubin Suleiman 126–127. See also Julia Kristeva, “Hérétique de l’amour”, Tel Quel 74 (Winter
13 Rubin Suleiman 114–115. Although Freud’s theories have been re-visited and re-interpreted in the
light of cultural change by later theorists—in particular French Psychoanalyst and Psychiatrist Jacques
Lacan (1901-1981)—his initial ground-breaking theories have had a lasting significant influence, and
their importance should not be under-estimated.
14 Summers 389.
The 1920s was a decade of rapid suburban expansion, and Barbara Cameron notes that “from about 1922 there was a backlash against post-war emancipation, successfully persuading women that their place was in the home, rearing healthy young Australians to populate the country, and this pressure increased throughout the decade”.\textsuperscript{17}

Prevailing scientific literature prepared for women by government and professional agencies gave explicit advice on how to run a household and manage a family, with almost exclusive emphasis on the physical health and well-being of the child, and on women’s role in realising the articulated standards.\textsuperscript{18} Just as women were becoming more able to regulate for themselves the number of years spent bearing children, the expectations for maternal performance were heightened.\textsuperscript{19} The ‘good mother’ would listen to this advice and organise care of children around a routine, leaving her little opportunity to direct her own life. Fear tactics were often employed to force compliance with advice, leading sometimes to anxiety and guilt, and failing to acknowledge mothers’ ability to comprehend their own children’s needs.\textsuperscript{20} Middle-class and working-class women were a concern for the advocates of this new domesticity, and were often blamed for the dwindling birth rate, and reproached for their selfishness.\textsuperscript{21}

Professional advice to mothers had shifted away in the 1950s from the somewhat dictatorial ‘scientific’ model of the ‘good mother’. However, its replacement by a more natural approach which appealed to, and took for granted, maternal instinct, was just as demanding, since it required that a mother be ‘in tune’ with her child’s needs, and be constantly available to respond.\textsuperscript{22} Janet McCalman claims that “the weakness of the suburban ideal of the 1950s and early 1960s was its desperate perfectionism … born of idealism and idealisations”.\textsuperscript{23} Oakley describes this ‘myth of motherhood’ in her book \textit{Housewife} (1974), claiming that the myth was used as a rationale for women’s continued presence in the home. According to Oakley, the myth contains three assertions: that all women need to be mothers; that all mothers need their children; and

\textsuperscript{17} Cameron, “The Flappers and the Feminists”, \textit{Worth Her Salt}, 265.
\textsuperscript{18} Reiger, “Women’s Labour Redefined”, 73, 81–83.
\textsuperscript{19} Holmes 79.
\textsuperscript{20} Chris Everingham, “Motherhood”, \textit{Australian Feminism: A Companion}, 226.
\textsuperscript{21} Andrea Hyslop, “Agents and Objects”, \textit{Worth Her Salt}, 241.
\textsuperscript{22} Everingham 227.
\textsuperscript{23} McCalman, \textit{Journeyings}, 251–252.
that all children need their mothers. Oakley blames the existence of the myth on feminine gender-role socialisation, which stressed maternity as all women’s destiny, and Freudian theory, which made maternity a key theme in feminine psychosexual development. From these premises, it followed that if a woman did not become a mother, she could not be considered a ‘feminine’ woman, and to have children but assign their care to someone else, even the father, brought social disapproval. In Western culture at this time, motherhood was the chief occupation for which a female was reared, and was considered her greatest achievement, and her only real means of self-realisation.²⁴

Australian author Betsy Wearing summarises the expectations on mothers emanating from the myth:

The word mother conjures up in our minds thoughts of propagation of life, self-sacrificing efforts spent in the interests of husband and children, long hours of work spent each day for which there is no monetary gain, examples of gentleness and advice freely and generously given.²⁵

Wearing further claims that both official and lay notions of motherhood in Australian society stressed the responsibility of the biological mother for the rearing of her own children, and that quotations such as that above demonstrate the mixture of myth and legend, sacred and secular ideas, sentiment and idealism, values of fertility and chastity and the moral worth of motherhood which provides a mystifying aura surrounding motherhood in our society and which obsurses the reality of the lived experience of mothering for women in an advanced, industrial capitalist, society such as Australia in the 1970s.²⁶

In an effort to discover how women were experiencing mothering, Wearing undertook a research project in which she interviewed 150 Australian-born mothers of young children in the Sydney metropolitan area between 1977 and 1979, in part to discover the extent to which this ideology still permeated women’s lives.²⁷ Their responses indicated that the majority of women still believed the biological mother to be the

²⁴ Oakley, Housewife, 186–190.
²⁵ Wearing 9.
²⁶ Wearing 9–10.
²⁷ Wearing’s research was among numerous empirical studies that demonstrated continuing commitment to a sexual division of labour in which women took primary responsibility for home and children and men were the major breadwinners. Pringle 100.
rightful and natural person to take primary responsibility for the nurture and care of children. They thought motherhood was an essential part of womanhood, that a mother should put her children first, and children needed their mothers in constant attendance. They acknowledged that motherhood was hard but rewarding work, and low-status but important. This ideology was endorsed by both working-class and middle-class women. The latter were more likely to have had access to resources outside the arena of motherhood and domesticity that enabled some modification of the ideology, in order to gain time to pursue other activities such as paid employment, study, cultural, political or social activities. These were exercised in addition to mothering, however, and did not to any degree diminish the primary place mothering had in their lives, or lead to a relinquishment of primary responsibility for children; rather another set of ideas was added to those already held, leading to the creation of the ‘superwoman’ ideal. Most Australians still took for granted that the nuclear family was the backbone of society. Some second-wave feminists interrogated these ideologies or models of motherhood, and criticised the nuclear family as the primary site of women’s oppression.

3.3 The First Act: Second-Wave Feminism and Repudiation

Simone de Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex*, originally published in French in 1949, arguably the indispensable founding text of feminism’s second wave, has since been critiqued by many feminist authors. Not the least of these are Daphne de Marneffe and Anne Manne who have challenged the message implicit in de Beauvoir’s manifesto. According to de Marneffe, de Beauvoir’s message was that “refusing traditional feminine roles was a pre-requisite for ‘masculine’ achievement”. Manne’s observation is similar, that de Beauvoir had “internalised a sense of male superiority, how uncritically she imbibed the masculine principle as the higher standard to which women must aspire”. The implication from de Beauvoir’s hypothesis is that because of a woman’s “life-giving functions”, she is more vulnerable to perceiving herself as passive and “done to”, rather than as an active “doing” agent. De Beauvoir felt that motherhood led to “the mother’s sacrifice of her individuality and freedom”, and

28 Wearing 12, 42, 44, 49, 60, 67, 73, 100, 200.
29 Pringle 98.
30 De Marneffe 26.
stressed the “inevitable limits of the mother-child bond”. Her comments on the pregnant woman exemplify this:

…in the mother-to-be the antithesis of subject and object ceases to exist; she and the child with which she is swollen make up together an equivocal pair overwhelmed by life. Ensnared by nature, the pregnant woman is plant and animal, a store-house of colloids, an incubator, an egg; she scares children who are proud of their young, straight bodies and makes young people titter contemptuously because she is a human being, a conscious and free individual, who has become life’s passive instrument.

The mother, de Beauvoir claimed, “as in marriage or love, leaves it to another to justify her life, when the only authentic course is freely to assume that duty herself”. She highlighted the dependent, passive situation of mothers at the time, her suggested means of rescue for women from “maternal servitude” being that a woman must deny her biology and female identity, and emulate male behaviour:

We have seen that woman’s inferiority originated in her being at first limited to repeating life, whereas man invented reasons for living more essential, in his eyes, than the not-willed routine of mere existence; to restrict woman to maternity would be to perpetuate this situation … she cannot be a mother without endeavouring to play a role in the economic, political, and social life of the times.

When de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*, “the constraints on women’s reproductive freedom were still so vast and strict that it was hard to disentangle passivity and lack of choice from motherhood itself”. Nevertheless, this repudiation of motherhood permeated many subsequent analyses by 1960s and 1970s second-wave feminists, the (often childless) intellectual and political descendants of de Beauvoir.

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan’s concern was less with women’s desire to marry and mother, and more with the ideology that conferred a mystical worth upon a woman’s mothering and work within the home at the expense of the

---

32 De Marneffe 27.
33 De Beauvoir 231–232.
34 De Beauvoir 259.
36 De Beauvoir 259.
37 De Marneffe 28.
development of her “ability and education to discover and create”.

Friedan controversially likened the suburban home to a concentration camp, and wrote that it was “urgent to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness, in women”.

De Marneffe claims that Friedan accepted unquestioningly the values of the prevailing culture with regard to achievement. “Because of the feminine mystique”, Friedan asserted, “it is the jump from amateur to professional that is often hardest for a woman on her way out of the trap”. She argued that “even if a woman does not have to work to eat, she can find identity only in work that is of real value to society—work for which, usually, our society pays”, and “being paid is, of course, more than a reward—it implies a definite commitment”.

Germaine Greer now claims that The Female Eunuch (1970) was not a feminist text arguing for the brand of equality that suggested women should strive to be like men, and is critical in her later book The Whole Woman (1999) of some of the tenets of second-wave feminism.

However, her depiction of the 1960s mother’s role within the suburban nuclear family was somewhat contemptuous:

The working girl who marries, works for a period after her marriage and then retires to breed, is hardly equipped for the isolation of the nuclear household … Her horizon shrinks to the house, the shopping centre and the telly. Her child is too much cared for, too diligently regarded during the day, and, when her husband returns from work, soon banished from the adult world to his bed, so that Daddy can relax. … The home is her province, and she is lonely there. She wants her family to spend time with her, for her only significance is in relation to that almost fictitious group. She struggles to hold her children to her, imposing restrictions, waiting up for them, prying into their affairs.

In Kate Millett’s influential book Sexual Politics (1971), she took a similar view of the nuclear family as “a force frustrating revolutionary change”. Shulamith Firestone offered a related perspective in her book The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution (1972), in which she claimed that the nature of the mother-child bond was

---

39 De Marneffe 29; Friedan 67.
40 Friedan 305.
41 De Marneffe 29.
42 Friedan 346.
43 Greer, The Whole Woman, 1–2.
44 Greer, The Female Eunuch, 224–225.
45 Millett 158; quoted in Dux and Simic 112.
“no more than shared oppression”, and that the “heart of woman’s oppression is her child-bearing and child-rearing role”. Firestone advocated a technology that could eliminate biological reproduction. To free women from their reproductive biology was a prerequisite for sexual liberation, sexuality and motherhood being incompatible. Firestone thought that the alternative to family was no family, and everyone should be an individual with no ties.

Like Firestone, Ann Oakley saw the myth of motherhood as the major source of women’s oppression, along with the division of labour by sex. She argued that there is no scientific basis for a maternal instinct, but rather the desire for motherhood was culturally induced and the ability to mother was learnt. Betsy Wearing took Oakley’s assertion of the non-existence of a maternal instinct further with her research in Australia in the late 1970s. Wearing’s research aimed to test the use of the assumption of maternal instinct “as legitimation for the division of labour along sex-lines within the family, with consequent restrictions on the ability of women to compete equally with men in the market and political arenas of society”. Some employed, and most feminist participants in the study, did express ideas that sought to take into account the needs of the mother herself, to allow her to develop potentialities apart from those relating to mothering, and to share the total responsibility for parenting with men and/or with other members of the community. Wearing argued that whilst these ‘utopian’ ideas challenged some aspects of the ideology of motherhood, they did not systematically attack the structure of male power which enabled the ideology to be perpetuated:

The overall effect has not been to redefine motherhood so that the individual mother relinquishes her primary responsibility for her children, but to add another set of ideas to those already held. The total effect appears then to be the creation of an ideal of the ‘superwoman’.

Wearing took a step further ahead of some other second-wave feminists who had interpreted equality as meaning women should eschew mothering and behave according

---

46 Firestone 73.
48 Oakley, Housewife, 199, 201, 221, 222, 236, 241.
49 Wearing 11.
50 Wearing 71–73.
to masculine models. She suggested that possibilities for change were dependent upon women gaining a greater share of material and status resources through increased education, continuation in the workforce after marriage and the birth of children, control of contraception and abortion, enlightened solidarity and redistribution of the division of labour in the home.\textsuperscript{51}

In addition, Wearing proposed improved child care facilities, shortened, more flexible hours of work, and schemes to encourage men to participate in parenting without economic loss or diminution of status.\textsuperscript{52}

### 3.4 The Second Act: Recuperation

Adrienne Rich’s seminal book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), a blend of scholarship and autobiography, was probably the first second-wave feminist ‘recuperation’ text in which the pleasures of mothering and its potential as a source of strength were acknowledged alongside its oppressive aspects.\textsuperscript{53} Rich gave a more positive reading of women’s bodies as potential sites for positive sensual experience if they could recapture a bond with nature in a world without male oppression.\textsuperscript{54} She “created a place for maternal passion” by problematising the *institution* of motherhood rather than motherhood itself, and claimed that this institution was based on patriarchal constructions of women through which women could be governed and dominated.\textsuperscript{55} Her premise was that a maternal ideal incorporating the concept of motherhood as empowering could surface if patriarchy were overthrown, mothers being powerless under patriarchy.\textsuperscript{56} The attribution of higher value to motherhood *alongside* the transformation of society was advocated by Rich in order to achieve women’s greater independence.\textsuperscript{57}

The groundbreaking nature of Rich’s differentiation between ‘experience’ and ‘institution’ is always acknowledged, but a number of feminist scholars have since

\textsuperscript{51} Wearing 204.  
\textsuperscript{52} Wearing 204.  
\textsuperscript{53} Dux and Simic 113.  
\textsuperscript{54} Everingham 228.  
\textsuperscript{55} De Marneffe 30; Jeremiah 23.  
\textsuperscript{56} Chodorow with Contratto, “The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother, 83; Hallstein 99.  
\textsuperscript{57} Everingham 228.
criticised aspects of her work. Chris Everingham observes that there was an implicit assumption in Rich’s work that mothers were naturally virtuous and good. Consequently Rich was less clear on how oppression might be alleviated in a society where mothering could provide grounding for an alternative value system, thereby providing women with more control.\textsuperscript{58} Emily Jeremiah argues that Rich “tended to obscure the interaction between subject and ideology”, implying that there is “a pristine kind of maternity that lies beneath patriarchy’s overlay”, a notion that relies on the conception of patriarchy as a monolithic entity, ignoring the “fragmentary, unfixed nature of institutions and ideologies”.\textsuperscript{59} A third commentator, Daphne de Marneffe, maintains that in placing emphasis on a daughter’s need for her mother as a role model of resistance to patriarchy, Rich ignored the question of the type of loving care a child might need prior to her potential need for a role model.\textsuperscript{60}

Nancy Chodorow’s book \textit{The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender} (1978), whilst still widely regarded as an influential feminist text, has likewise been critiqued by later feminist writers in light of subsequently evolving attitudes to motherhood. Using object relations psychoanalytic theory and the infant research available at the time, Chodorow offered a reinterpretation of Freud’s discourse. She sought to demonstrate that mothering was not simply biologically determined. Women’s desire to mother, and thus to participate in their own oppression, was also socially and psychologically determined or ‘reproduced’, as a result of having been mothered by women. Since girls identify more strongly with their mothers than do boys, they experience longer-lived feelings of extreme closeness or ‘oneness’ with their mothers, and wish to repeat this pleasurable experience by themselves becoming mothers. Therefore, they are in a better position to be able to learn the attributes of mothering; for example, empathy and a greater interest in interpersonal relationships. Boys, on the other hand, need to separate from their mothers at an earlier age in order to identify with their fathers, from whom they learn the attributes of autonomy. Chodorow’s solution to liberate women from “the constraints of an unequal social organisation of gender” was a recognition of “the need for a fundamental re-

\textsuperscript{58} Everingham 228.  
\textsuperscript{59} Jeremiah 23.  
\textsuperscript{60} De Marneffe 31.
organisation of parenting, so that primary parenting is shared between men and women”.

Chodorow has since been taken to task for having stressed too heavily motherhood as socially constructed, as has Jessica Benjamin’s book *The Bonds of Love*. Both books were “among the consummate feminist texts that took inner life seriously”, but according to de Marneffe, Chodorow’s and Benjamin’s theories both

… appeared to operate from the premise that there was something inherently disempowering in being a mother caring for one’s children; that patriarchal society had instigated and enforced this disadvantageous position for women; and that it was a goal of theory to unearth the unconscious tributaries feeding this oppression.

In short, these writers positioned the desire to care for one’s children as a correctable condition. It is relevant to note that Chodorow, in her new preface to the second edition of *The Reproduction of Mothering*, perceives in retrospect a tension between her account of the psychological reproduction of mothering and the book’s political afterword, in which she argued for equal parenting:

If you take seriously that psychological subjectivity from within—feelings, fantasy, psychical meaning—is central to a meaningful life, then you cannot also legislate subjectivity from without or advocate a solution based on a theory of political equality and a conception of women’s and children’s best interests that ignores this very subjectivity.

In making this statement, Chodorow was not claiming that men “cannot or should not be caretakers of children or participate in parenting”. Rather she was emphasising that “the call for equal parenting”, whilst supported by her argument linking mothering and male dominance, was contradicted in consequential ways by her accounts of maternal subjectivity and its centrality for many women and of the correspondingly distinctive character of the mother-child bond.

---

63 De Marneffe 63.
The tension between the repudiation of motherhood, and the alternative position of stressing the contribution women made to society through their mothering together with the acknowledgment of its inherent pleasures, became more obvious by the 1980s. Radical feminists argued that women’s specificity needed to be recognised as a source of strength for them, and women-centred perspectives emerged that celebrated their ‘difference’. Lacan-inspired writers such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva rejected ‘equality as sameness’ and explored femininity as different, unique and valuable, reflecting on the implications of female embodiment and mothering.67 These theorists have subsequently been charged with essentialism, and with consigning the mother to a place outside culture, “rendering her silent and powerless”.68

3.5 The Third Act: Towards Third-Wave Feminism

Sara Ruddick, in her philosophical treatise on the nature of mothering, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (1989), reflects well the type of feminist writing about motherhood in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries:

To suggest that mothers, by virtue of their mothering, are principally victims is an egregiously inaccurate account of many women’s experience and is itself oppressive to mothers. For many women, mothering begins in a fiercely passionate love that is not destroyed by the ambivalence and anger it includes.69

Feminists now recognise that many women, including feminists, want to experience the richness and complexity of motherhood, in spite of its potentially oppressive aspects. Naomi Wolf does not question women’s desire to be mothers in her book *Misconceptions*. Rather she attempts to expose the difficulties inherent in motherhood today. These include the “social demotion” that comes with motherhood, and the pressure on women once they have children to assume and succeed at the dual roles of unpaid domestic work and paid employment, while men slip “back into the cultural roles with which they had grown up”.70

De Marneffe affirms women’s wish to mother, claiming that the legacy of the second-wave ‘repudiation’ remains still in the rhetoric around motherhood, in that it

---

68 Jeremiah 23.
69 Ruddick 29.
70 Wolf 210, 235.
“conceptualises mothering as antithetical to self”. She suggests that to define women’s traditional roles as oppressive can prevent recognition of the variability of women’s experience, and lead to a restricted understanding of what mothering can mean to women. De Marneffe maintains that though feminist activism has helped secure for women public power previously denied them, it has done little to challenge the assumption that “women who spend their time caring for children are powerless, un-self-actualised, and at the margins of cultural life”.

In her book *Maternal Desire* (2004), de Marneffe aims to “provide a framework for thinking about women’s desire to care for their children in a way that is consistent with feminism”. She argues that the desire to mother can be anchored in a woman’s experience of herself as an autonomous agent, and that maternal desire is currently constrained by a model of self that has developed in response to recent economic and social realities. Whilst she acknowledges that the previous problems of lack of access for women to education and the public world of work that Friedan and others protested about have largely been redressed, she claims that feminism has not taken into account the difficulties that arise with women’s relationship to work when they decide they want to spend time caring for their children:

In the 1960s and 1970s, spending time with children was seen as an obstacle to pursuing personal aspirations. Today, women’s successful integration into careers creates an obstacle to spending time with children.

De Marneffe draws on “that science of desire, psychoanalysis”, a “powerful means for understanding the desires women bring to their mothering, since it reveals to us that our wishes, motives, and beliefs never have a single fixed meaning, and that they are not always what they announce themselves to be”. She contends that women seldom perceive their desire to care for children as intellectually respectable, and attributes this situation to the devaluation of motherhood. De Marneffe argues further that it is time to recognise it as one of the choices women want to be free to make, and that political mechanisms to help them attain that goal should now be on the feminist agenda. The emotional adaptability required to mother sensitively is interfered with by the

---

71 De Marneffe xiv.
72 De Marneffe xv.
73 De Marneffe xv.
74 De Marneffe 4–5.
75 De Marneffe 7.
inflexibility of work situations, and this problem would be alleviated by greater 
flexibility in the workplace, and more humane policy for longer maternity leaves. 
These moves should be based on a shift in societal attitudes about the value of the 
mothering role, and the acknowledgment of women’s desire to mother.76

Australian author Anne Manne, in her book *Motherhood: How Should We Care for Our 
Children?* (2005) echoes de Marneffe’s views. She is critical of the repudiation 
of motherhood espoused by second-wave feminists, and uses lived experience, particularly 
(but not only) her own, to respond to this legacy. In particular she problematises the 
‘new capitalism’ and the consequent devaluation of the ethic of care. Manne considers 
the markedly different views that have existed within feminism on the issue of 
motherhood, perhaps the most obvious of which relates to sameness and difference. 
She dislikes the perception that equality means women must aspire to a ‘higher’ male 
standard, to achieve ‘sameness’ with men, and argues that more value should be 
assigned to female culture and the ethic of care involved in motherhood. When more 
women assumed higher-status roles within the workforce, Manne asserts that the status 
of mothers was lowered. Only if a woman was succeeding in the public realm or in paid 
work was she worthy of respect; otherwise she was ‘just a mother’.77 Like de Marneffe, 
Manne raises the possibility that the traditionally feminine role of caring for young 
children may be part of female desire, and asserts that caring for one’s children should 
be one choice among many in a society that recognises difference and diversity among 
women.78

Ann Crittenden in her book *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in 
the World is Still the Least Valued*, likewise points out the extent to which the 
mothering role has been devalued. “The dominant culture”, Crittenden observes, 
“considered child-rearing unskilled labor, if it considered child-rearing at all”, and this 
missed the obvious point that

… if human abilities are the ultimate fount of economic progress, as many 
economists now agree, and if those abilities are nurtured (or stunted!) in the early 
years, then mothers and other caregivers of the young are the most important

76 De Marneffe 12, 21, 26, 53, 86. 
producers in the economy. They do have, literally, the most important job in the world.79

This observation had already been borne out in the Australian context through investigations during the 1990s showing that at least half of all Australian economic production resulted from unpaid work within households. The Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated that the value of unpaid work was between 48 and 64% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).80

Addressing the guilt mothers at home are prone to experience because they are not contributing by earning an income through paid employment, Wolf offers a related economic argument. She points out that mothers make an economic contribution to the household through not receiving payment for the child care, domestic and chauffeuring work they perform for many hours each day.81

A common theme for writers such as Ruddick, de Marneffe, Manne and others is the ability to regard mothering as an expression of power, not according to the older, patriarchal definition of ‘power over’, but rather an aptitude to produce change, as Jean Baker Miller defines the concept in her article “Women and Power”. Baker Miller suggests that women have been most comfortable using their authority in the service of others, and have been effective in using this power to foster the growth of others, and towards the creation of empowerment in others.82 Marie Porter and Andrea O’Reilly name this capacity as it is present in nurturing ‘transformative’ power, a positive influence whose balance is in constant flux as the mother strives to nurture in a way that guides the child toward independence, thus propelling this particular power towards its own obsolescence.83 In opposition to the traditional view of the mother as passive, Jeremiah, citing Judith Butler and Mielle Chandler, prefers to view mothering performatively: a mother is ‘enacting mothering’. When motherhood is viewed in this way, potential is created for maternal agency and transformation of existing discourses,

79 Crittenden 11.
81 Wolf 251.
since dominant discourses on motherhood “depend upon their enactment for validity”, and are therefore vulnerable and open to change.\textsuperscript{84}

A common theme for contemporary feminist writers is acknowledgment of the difficulties inherent in striving to achieve a balance between the public world of work and the private world of mothering. Paid work can obviously enhance a woman’s sense of achievement, satisfaction and well-being, and increase the family’s income. However, the devaluation of motherhood contributed to the emergence of the ‘superwoman’ (already referred to by Betsy Wearing) who works as hard as a man at paid work, while simultaneously carrying out the lioness’s share of domestic duties—the woman who ‘has it all’ (or appears to) and ‘does it all’.

Wolf addresses this issue in \textit{Misconceptions}, maintaining that corporate life in America today relies on women’s willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of their children. She claims that second-wave feminism, in its insistence that women could do the job just like men, “covertly coerced working women to delegate the details of pregnancy, birth and early motherhood to some offstage setting—as if all this were some messy, slightly alarming private hobby”. She highlights the resultant need for a woman to become a “machine mom”, a super-functional mother/worker.\textsuperscript{85}

Wolf argues that women should not be forced to choose between “two such starkly exclusive worlds as ‘work’ and ‘one with kids’, as they now must”, and advocates for “Motherhood Feminism”. She believes this should take the form of a mothers’ movement to pressure government and employers to adopt more ‘family friendly’ policies. The real transformation, though, is one of the heart:

\textit{It will be a revolution when we don’t just say that mothers are important. It will be a revolution when we finally start treating motherhood and caring for children in general as if it were truly the most important task of all.}\textsuperscript{86}

Australian journalist Virginia Haussegger confronts similar issues in the Australian context in her recent controversial book \textit{Wonder Woman: The Myth of Having it All}

\textsuperscript{84} Jeremiah 25.  
\textsuperscript{85} Wolf 229.  
\textsuperscript{86} Wolf 283–287.
Like Wolf, de Marneffe and Manne, Haussegger holds aspects of second-wave feminism responsible for the devaluation of motherhood. For this she has been criticised by Dux and Simic, who feel that she blames second-wave feminism more than necessary for the “problems facing mothers today”. Haussegger claims that the early motives for establishing childcare in Australia were to subsume women’s sense of worth and identity into that of men: that is, dependent upon their success and position in the workforce. Critical of the notion that only the acquisition of a position in the paid workforce can lead to a meaningful identity, thus relegating motherhood to a lesser identity, Haussegger claims:

The whole experience of womanhood is rich and multi-faceted. It spans the world of children, partners, careers, community, family and creativity. Being a woman is a heck of a lot more than just succeeding in the workforce. For women to really be liberated we require something much better than the model of a male worker on which to fashion ourselves. That is what feminism has failed to recognise.

Haussegger acknowledges the contribution to women’s equality made by earlier feminists, but attributes the birth of the ‘superwoman’ ideal to second-wave feminism, echoing Wolf’s and de Marneffe’s views on the difficulties involved in the balancing act of trying to ‘have it all’:

As women, we carry the lion’s share of responsibility for our relationships, the birth of our progeny, the care and raising of our children, the feeding and nurturing of our families, the well-being or our spouses, the connection with our friends and the care of our communities. So while prohibitive barriers have been torn down, and once closed doors thrown open, and we’re urged to feed from an expansive menu of choice and opportunity, we have nevertheless still got a whole stack of stuff piling up on our ‘to do list’.

Haussegger cites Barbara Pocock, who criticises the misleading perceptions that households are now more egalitarian, paid work has meant liberation and equality for women, and ‘family friendly’ workplaces and flexible work practices now smooth the

87 Haussegger, Wonder Woman: The Myth of ‘Having it All’. Sylvia Ann Hewlett’s text Creating a Life, Professional Women and the Quest for Motherhood, is also interesting in this regard. Only 16% of the American women she surveyed thought it possible for women to ‘have it all’. Their new status in the workforce had not meant better choices in the domestic arena. These issues are also addressed in Susan Maushart, The Mask of Motherhood: How Mothering Changes Everything and Why we Pretend it Doesn’t.
88 Dux and Simic 117.
89 Haussegger 78–80.
90 Haussegger 7.
way for parents. Pocock claims that on average Australian women do 33 hours a week of housework, child care and shopping compared to men’s 17 hours.

Haussegger highlights the current fertility crisis in Australia and other developed, affluent, educated western countries, and the choice of many women to delay childbirth. Leslie Cannold addresses similar issues in her book What, No Baby? (2005), though her research and emphasis is on women who are childless by circumstance, rather than choice. Cannold attributes this crisis to high expectations placed on women to conform to the ideal of the ‘good’ mother by setting aside career ambitions, the dearth of potential male partners who want children, and, again, the ‘family-unfriendly’ workplace. Cannold advocates “torching, or at least weakening, the hold of the good motherhood myth”, and revolutionising the culture of the workplace. Like Wolf, de Marneffe, Manne and Haussegger, Cannold acknowledges the value of mothering, and women’s desire to mother:

It is wrong to question the rationality of those who want to care. It is wrong to make the practical demands of motherhood unnecessarily onerous and to ignore the unwillingness of fathers to do their fair share, while at the same time making women’s willingness to deny their own needs the test of good motherhood. It is as wrong to deny women the freedom to mother as it is to make motherhood seem an irrational choice for a woman to make.

3.5.1 Creative Mothers: Income, Time and Space

The issues relating to the importance of the ascription of value to motherhood as well as to paid work are applicable across the board, but creative mothers face added challenges. Most working mothers struggle to find a balance between work and family, but as Rachel Power points out, “the average job is seen as part of the social contract”,

92 One in four Australian women is childless, and the median age of women giving birth to their first child in 2001 was over 30, with this age increasing all the time. Haussegger 146. This ‘grey dawn’ of falling fertility has profound implications, Manne agrees, with its “potentially shrinking pool of workers supporting dependents, whether they be children or the elderly”, but the “non-market value” of care work is “not counted in our systems of accounting”. Manne, “Love & Money”, 72.
93 A study undertaken in 2004 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), that found Australia to have some of the least family-friendly policies for working mothers in the developed world, supports this assertion. Haussegger 128.
94 Cannold 169.
95 Cannold 319.
while art is more “an expression of the self”. Artistic careers are still sometimes seen as somewhat self-indulgent, and even irresponsible. Thus the creative mother may face the extra responsibility of justifying her need for self-expression, something that may not have “clear benefit to her family or indeed to society”. This may lead to an added burden of guilt for a woman who wishes to pursue her strong desire to be artistically creative. Adrienne Rich is eloquent on this topic, saying that although her husband was sensitive and affectionate, and helped raise the children, his was the “real work of the family”, since her work produced little income.

Rich also highlights another, perhaps more significant, challenge faced by creative mothers, that of the possibility of finding both the time and space in which to be creative. She speaks of the interruptions by her children when they were young, of her frustration at not being able to achieve 15 minutes to herself for work, and of the attendant guilt. Tillie Olsen expresses a similar sentiment when she says that “motherhood means being instantly interruptible, responsive, responsible” and “it is distraction, not meditation, that becomes habitual; interruption, not continuity”. “Work interrupted, deferred, relinquished”, she continues “makes blockage—at best, lesser accomplishment.”

In the 1920s Virginia Woolf had already recognised the plight of women writers who needed to be constantly available to others with her plea for ‘a room of one’s own’ and the courage to write freely as a woman. Referring to Shakespeare’s sister, who never wrote a word, she wrote:

She lives in you and in me, and in the many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh … If we live another century or so … and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think … then the

96 Power 4.
97 Mavor 5.
98 Power 5.
99 The financial contribution made to their families by the women in this study, and the sense of responsibility for doing so, will be elucidated in Chapters Five and Eight.
100 Rich 27.
101 Rich 23.
102 Olsen, Silences, 16, 31.
opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down.\textsuperscript{103}

Restrictions of time and space are an important facet of this conflict. If a woman has no ‘room of her own’ where she can escape domestic demands, how is it possible for her to concentrate and be creatively productive? Back in the mid-nineteenth century, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} at the kitchen table while cooking dinner with children underfoot, but her husband had a ‘room of \textit{his} own’.\textsuperscript{104} Australian composer Mirrie Hill composed at the kitchen table, which had to be cleared for mealtimes, while her husband Alfred Hill, also a composer, had his own study in which to work in peace.\textsuperscript{105} This predicament inspired the title \textit{Stravinsky’s Lunch}, Drusilla Modjeska’s biography of two Australian women artists, Stella Bowen and Grace Cossington-Smith. Modjeska tells the story as follows:

When Stravinsky was in mid-composition, he insisted that his family ate lunch in silence. The slightest sound, a murmur, even a whisper, could ruin his concentration and destroy an entire work. It’s not a particularly unusual story—great male artists have demanded more than that in the name of Art—and yet it worked on me, and in me, in ways that it has taken me a long time to understand.\textsuperscript{106}

Modjeska continues on to say that when this story was told to her at a luncheon one day, the women at the table thought it perfectly reasonable that Stravinsky would not want to talk at lunch, but that it was unreasonable to impose this on others, and especially on his children. They sought a compromise position, suggesting that he should have had his lunch brought to him on a tray, the point being that “even in the face of art, \textit{especially} in the face of art, life must go on”. It seemed that it was considered acceptable for a great male artist to be selfish and to sacrifice his children to his art, but women have not been afforded that privilege.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{103} Virginia Woolf, \textit{A Room of One’s Own}, 148–149.
\textsuperscript{104} Le Guin, “The Fisherwoman’s Daughter”, 169.
\textsuperscript{105} Crisp 48.
\textsuperscript{106} Modjeska, \textit{Stravinsky’s Lunch}, 16.
\textsuperscript{107} Modjeska, \textit{Stravinsky’s Lunch}, 16–17.
The narratives of creative mothers aired in the books *Strong Hearts, Inspired Minds, Double Lives*, and *The Divided Heart* attest to the existence of this challenge. The composing mothers interviewed by Judith Halstead for her book *The Woman Composer* also experienced this conflict. The traditional role of wife as supporter and champion of her husband’s work and principal carer of the children has allowed male composers greater freedom to concentrate on composition, while having a draining effect in the past on the creativity of a significant number of women. Two of the nine composers in Halstead’s study based their decisions to remain unmarried primarily on the need to concentrate on their musical careers. As will become clear in Chapters Four and Five, the subjects of this thesis have also grappled with this dilemma.

### 3.6 Conceiving Third-Wave Feminism

Wolf, de Marneffe, Manne, Haussegger and Cannold articulate the continuing impact of the ‘matrophobia’ that helped drive second-wave feminism, and the split between second-wave gains and lingering potentially oppressive ideologies of motherhood. They bring into focus both the need to imagine a feminist subject position that eliminates this residue of matrophobia, and to listen to alternative voices within feminism. It is a time of transition during which ‘third-wave’ feminism is being conceived. This feminist agenda advocates a significant reappraisal and re-structure of the workplace, in order to keep the public realm open for women, and accommodate maternal desire and the ethic of care. It would not automatically make the responsibility of caring for children women’s lot alone, but would acknowledge and value the contribution to society woman make through mothering. The agenda would seek ways in which the concepts of difference and equality can co-exist, not assuming that women’s difference always spells inequality, but rather interrogating and assessing the difference that difference makes. It would admit the potential positive power inherent in mothering, and incorporate the postmodern idea of diversity of desires.

---

109 The two composers referred to are Grace Williams and Judith Bailey. Halstead 90–91.
110 Grace, 311,319; Hallstein 104–105.
111 Doucet 26–27.
among women, allowing them to exercise different, empowered and equally-valid choices.\textsuperscript{112}

In *Work-Lifestyle Choices of the 21st Century* (2000), Catherine Hakim draws on a substantial amount of international empirical data showing that women now face and exercise choices as to how they will lead their lives, but make quite different choices. She identifies three broad preference groups: The first is ‘work-centred’ women (10–30%), and its polar opposite group is ‘home-centred’ women (also 10–30%). The third group, labelled ‘adaptive’ (60–80%), consists of women who shape their working life around the demands of family life. They have multiple goals and want the best of both worlds. They usually seek to combine work and family, with priorities switching between the two as necessary.\textsuperscript{113} They are motivated to find ways in which the two can co-exist; the choice to concentrate totally on one or the other is not an option.

Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott fall into Hakim’s third ‘adaptive’ category. As will be demonstrated in Chapters Four and Five, their experiences also resonate strongly with aspects of third-wave feminism. Sutherland was not alive to experience the emerging third wave, but it is argued in Chapter Four that she was a third-wave feminist prototype.

\textsuperscript{112} Saab 239.
CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDIES

COMPOSING AND MOTHERING: MARGARET SUTHERLAND AS THIRD-WAVE FEMINIST PRECEDENT

4.1 Introduction

As creative, working mothers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is tautologous to state that the lives of the four composers in this study have been influenced by feminism, considered to be one of the two great theories of liberation during the past century, and “one of several transcendent movements for justice which emerged in the [19]60s”.¹ The aim of this chapter is to explore Margaret Sutherland’s connections with feminism, the choices she made to blend a musical career with motherhood, and the expectations and realities of living out those choices. The principal contention of this chapter is that, though Sutherland stands out from the three other women in thus study as the one who did not live to experience the development of the third wave, and was in the final stages of her compositional career during the years of second-wave feminism, she was progressive for her time in being representative of certain feminist values which had not yet permeated society as a whole, and thus she helped pave the way for her female successors.

4.2 Links with Feminism

Sutherland was six years old when Australian women first voted in Federal elections in 1903, and 11 by the time they could vote in Victorian State elections. She came of age only a few years after the suffrage campaign, and in the early years of feminism in


122
Australia. This was a feminism with a conservative tendency, designed to uphold women’s roles as mothers and guardians of the home.²

There are few direct indications in primary and secondary sources that Sutherland overtly identified herself as a feminist, though a certain amount can be surmised from her attitudes and actions. According to Stuart Rosewarne, she openly acknowledged that she was influenced by the writings of her Uncle John, who had taken a less rigorous approach to Social Darwinist evolutionary theory than had his brother Alexander, and, albeit to a lesser extent, Sutherland’s father George. John maintained that women were not inferior, and acknowledged that the domestic role was a barrier to women’s social and intellectual development. However, he did uphold the idea that women’s domestic role was unavoidable because of their responsibility to preserve the race.³ It seems Sutherland had at least a partial intellectual awareness that some career sacrifices needed to be made if marriage and children were to be a part of her life.

This acceptance by Sutherland of the domestic, nurturing and protective roles envisaged for women of her era is particularly well demonstrated by her reluctance to end what had long been a disastrous marriage until 1948, when her children were 18 and 16. She felt the responsibility to protect them until they were “old enough to examine things for themselves”.⁴ The divorce process was more difficult than nowadays, because the requirement that one or other party acknowledge fault was still in place, and the stigma of divorce was strong.⁵ Sutherland would have been concerned about custody of the children, since doctors had a high standing in the community, and her husband’s view may have been respected more than hers. In addition, there were no social security benefits available for single mothers in Australia until 1974.⁶ The financial implications of divorce for women were thus more significant than nowadays.

² Refer Chapter Two, Footnote 159. See also Appendix One, Sections A1.3 and A1.4, where the evolution of feminist issues and activism in Australia is traced more thoroughly. For a fuller description of the suffrage campaign in Australia, refer Appendix One, Section A1.3.
³ Rosewarne 49.
⁴ Pratt interview, 8.
⁵ It was not until the Commonwealth Family Law Act of 1975 that all grounds for divorce based on matrimonial fault were removed. Refer Appendix One, Section A1.5 for further detail about the historical progression of Australian divorce law.
⁶ Refer Appendix one, Section A1.4, where the feminist push for a maternalist welfare state is addressed in some detail. See in particular Appendix One, Footnote 45 where the issue of welfare benefits for single mothers is discussed.
Sutherland did not entirely give herself over to the conventional domestic plot of her time. In other regards she showed, both in her expectations and her actions, that she exercised agency and a sense of entitlement in the choices she made regarding her domestic and work life. In short, she led what was arguably a ‘feminist life’. She never totally gave up her creative endeavours, neither when her children were young, nor in the face of her husband’s significant resistance to her musical ambitions. She also consistently led an unusually active public life, all while coping with a difficult marriage and raising children.

Sutherland had male friends, but operated predominantly in an environment of mostly single, strong and supportive women. This was naturally the case at the Lyceum Club, which she joined in 1923. The Club provided a venue where she could have her compositions performed, and she played a very active role in its musical life. She was eventually awarded Honorary Life Membership, granted to those who had given outstanding service to their fellow members or attained special distinction. The Catalysts, who used the Lyceum Club as their meeting place, and many of whom were Lyceum members, was also a particularly supportive and stimulating group of women for Sutherland. This group was formed in 1910 “to discuss and study intellectual and cultural subjects in the pleasant social atmosphere of lunch-hour or evening meetings”.

According to Helen Gifford, this was a formidable group of women, whose members were “critical of everything and everyone”.

Apart from being an active member of the Lyceum Club and the Catalysts, Sutherland led a busy public life in other regards. She composed, taught and gave recitals she

---

8 Joan Gillison, A History of the Lyceum Club, Melbourne (Melbourne: McKellar Press, 1975) 99. Based on the Lyceum Club in London, the Club in Melbourne was formed in March 1912 by a group of women who were aware of the significant but often unrecognised contributions of women in the community, and who saw a need for a place where women could gather together socially to pursue intellectual and other interests. It was initially a club for women with degrees from Melbourne University or those institutions recognised by Melbourne University. Women were also admitted who had distinguished themselves in art, music, literature, philanthropy, or who had taken a prominent part in education or rendered important public service. The climate for the formation of the club had, according to Joan Gillison, “built up over the 60 years that preceded its establishment. A great deal of philanthropic, professional and artistic work had been done by pioneer women, usually under difficulties, sometimes under severe discrimination, frequently under criticism and formidable opposition”. Gillison 28. Since 1959, the Club has been located in a building purchased in Ridgway Place, a lane off Collins St in Melbourne.
9 Gillison 70, 72, 77, 99.
10 Gillison 24–25.
11 Gifford interview.
organised herself and/or with the help of patrons such as Louise Hanson-Dyer through the British Music Society, and Ivy Brookes of the Lady Northcote Trust. She also found time to lobby ceaselessly for Australian composers (male and female) and music in general, and fought for the improvement of standards in music education. From 1927, Sutherland was a member of the Ladies’ Committee, which promoted the interests of contemporary Australian composers through concerts of the University Symphony Orchestra and the Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust.\(^\text{12}\)

In 1933, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) initiated competitions for composers. Sutherland took advantage of this opportunity, and won awards in various categories.\(^\text{13}\) During World War II she helped organise and administer a day nursery in Kew for children whose mothers had joined the workforce, and became Secretary of the “Women of the University Patriotic Fund”, a position she held for two years until it was necessary to employ a full-time, paid secretary due to the increasing workload. For the “Women of the University” she became intimately involved in organising a series of regular lunch-hour recitals to raise money for the Red Cross Prisoner of War Fund:

> During the war we gave midday concerts for the Red Cross every week … We had a constant following, and sometimes we were packed out. When I saw a list of the works we performed it absolutely staggered me. Only about 40 or 50 minutes. In aid of POW Red Cross, only a silver coin. There were no expenses except the hall because I had been left this piano—a Bechstein—which I left there permanently. The others gave their services free.\(^\text{14}\)

These concerts included works by Australian composers, and a series of “Concerts for Young People”. Sutherland held firm opinions on a number of issues, and was not reluctant to express them. A note in which she conveyed her views on the current musical culture in Australia explains the philosophy behind these concerts:

> Music must cease to be an awe-inspiring stunt. It must develop as an interchange of ideas—for after all, what is it but a language? It must begin to live within the minds of simple people who think simply—not in big headlines … we must enable those “simple people” to grow up on intimate terms with music. The Young Peoples’ Saturday morning concerts have been instituted as a modest beginning.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{12}\) Secretary of the Ladies’ Committee, Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust, letter to Margaret Sutherland, 16 April 1927, Herbert and Ivy Brookes Papers, AMSC, NLA, MS 1924.

\(^{13}\) The ABC, and the relationships of the composers with this organisation, will be addressed in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight.

\(^{14}\) James Murdoch, interview with Margaret Sutherland.

\(^{15}\) Sutherland, unpublished typescript, 1943.
Sutherland felt strongly about the development of musical life in Australia. In an article written in 1943, she stated:

Until recently music has been largely an imported commodity. Most of our musical life centred around the visits to this country of artists from abroad … it was imposed on, rather than growing within, the community. All this is a stimulus of sorts; but it has some very grave disadvantages. It puts the accent heavily upon limelight, publicity, excitement, lion-hunting, rather than on music-making for its own sake.  

Sutherland maintained that the War had given Australian music an opportunity to become less of an “imported commodity”, and to develop towards a national idiom, which led to the most notable achievement of ensuring that the site of the Victorian Arts Centre would be used for its current public purpose, rather than being sold to private enterprise. The Combined Arts Centre Movement (CACM), led by Sutherland with her good friend Lorna Stirling and John Lloyd, a public servant in the Victorian Titles Office, fought this battle for 13 years from 1943, and were eventually successful. Their efforts are explained in the following description by Mollie Turner Shaw:

In a year of intensive promotion [1943] these two, Lorna Stirling and Margaret Sutherland, continued to take leading parts. A number of groups joined in, 19 societies representing music, nine representing literature and drama, three painting, one ballet, and others, such as the Housewives Association, to a total of 50. Funds were raised by music recitals, art exhibitions, drama festivals. Ultimately, in 1944, John Lloyd, Lorna Stirling and Margaret Sutherland headed a deputation of 50 representatives and presented to the Chief Secretary a petition signed by 40,000 people. The cause, once established, was followed up by a great deal of work by a great many more dedicated and influential people before the idea of the Arts Centre became a reality and the first building, the National Gallery, was opened in 1968. Lorna Stirling and Margaret Sutherland must be regarded as the key figures in its inspiration.

The Movement was linked with Sutherland’s involvement with the Council of the National Gallery Society, of which she was a founding member, and which held annual music recitals as part of its activities. Also during the 1940s, she helped found the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), later the Arts Council of Australia. In addition, she had lobbied the Federal Government to set up a Ministry of Fine Arts when Labour Party politician John Curtin was Prime Minister (1941–1945).

17 Mollie Turner Shaw, quoted in Gillison 73.
Unfortunately this idea was abandoned after Curtin’s death when Ben Chifley became Prime Minister (1945–1949). For a time she served on the Australian Music Advisory Committee for UNESCO, and in the 1950s founded the Camerata Society in Melbourne to present concerts of contemporary chamber music, especially new music by Australian composers. In the same decade, Sutherland founded her own publishing company, Kurrajong Press, which published a few of her own works, together with those of other Australian composers.

There is little doubt that Sutherland felt confident in aspiring to public offices and duties that were in her time normally reserved for men. Helen Gifford verifies this:

Margaret had an instinct for where power bases came from—getting herself on the UNESCO Committee. I mean, a woman of her generation—that shows you the drive she had. She was confident of herself speaking publicly … one of the strongest women I’ve ever met.

It is a tribute to Sutherland’s energy and agency that she found the time for involvement in so many public activities while raising children, composing, and coping with a difficult marriage. Indeed such enterprises seemed to provide her with a sense of worth she did not experience in her marriage, and to help take her mind off the troubles at home. Sutherland admitted that her determined struggle for the Arts Centre, for example, could well have had something to do with her unhappiness in other aspects of her life.

One of the most overt indications of Sutherland’s affinity with feminism is her political activism in securing equal rights for women. After her divorce in 1948, she joined the League of Women Voters. The League was a vehicle for women working against discrimination at the political level, and Sutherland joined other women in the organisation fighting for increased representation of women and seeking equal rights generally. Certain opinions expressed later in her life must have been evolving at this time. In a letter to Australian composer Don Banks in 1967, she said she had been

18 Murdoch interview.
19 Symons 22.
21 Gifford interview.
22 Pratt interview, 8.
23 The League was formed in 1945 from an amalgamation of Women for Canberra, the League of Women Electors and the Victorian Women Citizens’ Movement. Lake, Getting Equal, 206.
treated in the past as a “poor frustrated female trying to do something she didn’t ought, and battering her stupid head against brick walls, and just being tolerated because one doesn’t hurt animals, especially female ones!”24 In 1972, she admitted to Mel Pratt that she had encountered “frightful prejudice” as a woman.25 It is likely that Sutherland’s knowledge of contemporaneous second-wave feminist activism further crystallised her awareness of discrimination she had encountered in the past.

Sutherland’s involvement in the League suggests that she was by then becoming more aware of the limitations of her Uncle John’s arguments. As noted, feminist sentiment was evolving towards the realisation that to achieve economic independence, women would need to win rights and freedom in the labour market, and increasingly feminists were embracing masculine norms and priorities.26 It appears that Sutherland had already been doing this for some time. As Helen Gifford said: “Men of Margaret Sutherland’s generation did not like their women working, earning a salary, or in any way setting themselves up in a sort of rival position that could take the light away from the man.”27 For a variety of reasons Sutherland tried very hard to keep her marriage intact while her children were growing up, but it had never been her intention to abandon her career aspirations after she married and had children. Maureen White confirmed that Sutherland had a “spark in her and she wouldn’t be dominated”.28

4.3 Motherhood and Composition: Choices, Expectations, Realities

Sutherland had two children: Mark (born 1929) and Jenny (born 1931). Bearing in mind her upbringing, education, ambitions, troubled marriage, and feminist tendencies, it is interesting to reflect upon why she might have decided to become a mother.29

Marriage, with its safety and closure, was still held out to be an ideal of female destiny in the early and middle years of the twentieth century. It was assumed married women

24 Sutherland, letter to Don Banks, 1 October 1967, Don Banks Papers, AMSC, NLA, MS 6830; quoted in Watters-Cowan, 342.
25 Pratt interview, 14.
26 Refer Chapter Two, Footnote 159, and Appendix One, Sections A1.3 and A1.4.
27 Gifford interview.
28 Maureen White, interview with the author, 14 June 2000.
29 At this time, the educated woman might pursue a career for a short time, but it was not expected that she would continue to do so once she married and became a mother. Refer Appendix One, Section A1.6 for further information on this topic. Norman Albiston had a number of affairs, resented Sutherland’s compositional activities, and was often quite cruel to her. Graham, “Composer, Wife and Mother: Margaret Sutherland as Conflicted Subject”, Chapter Two.
would have children, and that their primary roles dwelled within the domestic sphere as ‘ideal’ mothers and housewives.\textsuperscript{30} Marriage and motherhood appear not to have matched Sutherland’s expectations, as evidenced in her comment that she had been “absurdly starry-eyed” when she first married the attractive Norman Albiston.\textsuperscript{31} She was ambitious, and wanted a broader, more adventurous experience of life. It is likely to have been difficult for her to fit completely the existing socially-prescribed, submissive role for a married woman, which included as its most important tasks caring for children, and the provision to her husband of emotional and domestic support to enable him to pursue his career unimpeded. As Helen Gifford emphasises, women were not expected to be rivals to their husbands, but to live their lives through their husbands and children.\textsuperscript{32}

Remaining single and childless was not necessarily an attractive option. Drusilla Modjeska describes the disadvantages of spinsterhood in her article about the domestic situation of women writers between the wars:

> It was no solution to remain unmarried. Unmarried women who were dependent on support from a relative, usually a father, faced many of the disadvantages, though none of the advantages, of marriage. Unmarried daughters living at home were expected to take over domestic responsibilities as their parents grew old; it was the unmarried daughters who most usually nursed their parents through their last years. Those who supported themselves in one of the limited professional capacities open to them, were tied to a frequently unsatisfactory job, with low pay. It was not common, or easy, for unmarried middle-class women, especially when young, to establish their own household and most were forced to live at home.\textsuperscript{33}

The experience of motherhood appears to be one Sutherland wanted, since she had alluded to the mother instinct being the “life blood of any nation, and the world \textit{must} go on going round, mustn’t it?”\textsuperscript{34} As noted, it appears Sutherland had at least a partial intellectual awareness that some career sacrifices needed to be made if marriage and children were to be a part of her life, since she acknowledged that her Uncle John’s view that domesticity was unavoidable, had influenced her own.

\textsuperscript{30} Heilbrun, \textit{Writing a Woman’s Life}, 20. Refer also Chapter Three, Section 3.2.
\textsuperscript{31} Sutherland, unpublished autobiographical note, November 1960, 1.
\textsuperscript{32} Gifford interview.
\textsuperscript{33} Modjeska, “Rooms of their Own”, 346–347.
\textsuperscript{34} Sutherland, “How to Live in a Room-and-a-Bit”, 3.
Sutherland was raising her children in the 1930s and 1940s, when new responsibilities and standards for housewives and mothers were being imposed from outside the home and the local community, both in Australia and elsewhere.\(^{35}\) It is difficult to assess the degree to which Sutherland was influenced by these expectations, but it is important to be aware of social pressures she may have found difficult to avoid.

Sutherland’s upbringing raised her hopes of gaining due recognition as a successful composer, but also encouraged her to believe in the value of marriage and children, and she did not expect that she would be able to pursue her musical ambitions unimpeded. Her desire and determination were thus heightened to be a good wife, mother and composer, and this predetermined the personal conflict she experienced during the years of her marriage. Sutherland had to continue teaching for the first nine years of her marriage in order to pay household expenses while her husband set up his practice as a psychiatrist, and this was unusual. In order to do this, she had a housekeeper to help with some of the domestic duties, which freed some time for teaching and other activities.\(^{36}\) Although women’s lives earlier this century were still dominated by the domestic responsibilities they were expected to take on as a result of marriage and children, household help was not uncommon in middle-class families, and certainly necessary if women were to have any time to themselves.\(^{37}\)

Largely due to her troubled marriage, but also to some extent the demands of motherhood, like many creative women, Sutherland sometimes experienced difficulty in finding the time and emotional space to write music:\(^{38}\)

> I really gave the whole thing up but every now and again I’d break out. I didn’t write very much until the children were 16 and 18. Sometimes I went to stay with somebody just to write, you know. It didn’t work at all.\(^{39}\)

Sutherland was not as productive musically when her children were young in the early 1930s, lamenting that she “didn’t try to do anything on a scale I couldn’t cope with. You can’t with interruptions, you simply can’t.”\(^{40}\) Nevertheless, she wrote music for a

---

\(^{35}\) This was discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.2. See Reiger 72.

\(^{36}\) Graham 42, 62.

\(^{37}\) Modjeska, “Rooms of their Own”, 332.

\(^{38}\) Refer Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1.

\(^{39}\) Pratt interview, 7.

\(^{40}\) Murdoch interview.
number of songs for children, and in spite of the obstacles she encountered, managed to remain quite productive through the years of her marriage. As already noted, she also led a very active public life.

4.4 Summary

In choosing to marry and become a mother, Margaret Sutherland conformed to the expectation of her era of pre-second-wave feminism, but her assumption that she should be able simultaneously to develop a career as a woman composer in Australia was atypical. These suppositions were largely made possible through the influence of the exceptional family environment in which Sutherland grew up.

Little can be substantiated about the extent to which Sutherland was imbued with the ideology of the self-sacrificing mother, but it appears that her desires and determination to compose and to be publicly active outran any guilt she might have felt about not being constantly available to her children. No doubt the greater flexibility of hours offered by such careers as composition and private teaching enabled her to be mostly available to meet her children’s needs, even if it did simultaneously preclude her from composing in larger-scale forms, which demand that more extended periods of uninterrupted time be devoted to them.

It is clear that Sutherland’s upbringing in an educated, artistic and musical extended family shielded her to some extent from the feminist ideology and patriarchy of her era, even rendering them irrelevant. This afforded her what was still somewhat of a luxury in her era—to blend composition with motherhood. Despite this, it is evident that Sutherland led a feminist life in a number of important respects. She chose actively to seek and develop a musical career and a public life, but clearly had a simultaneous desire to be a mother. She appears to have been the ‘superwoman’ who ‘has it all’ and does it all’, problematised by feminist writers of the 1980s and beyond. Sutherland

41 These include (nine) *Songs for Children* (1929?), words by Ethel Martyr; *Nod* (Before 1930), words by Walter de la Mare; and *Cradle Song* (Before 1930), words by Louis Esson.
42 Graham 57.
43 These were cited in Chapter Three.
was in many ways a prototype of third-wave feminism, who “inspired admiration and some awe”, and was “definitely a role model to follow!”\textsuperscript{44}

\footnote{In Chapter Three, Section 3.5, the principal tenets of this evolving third-wave feminism were outlined. Carr-Boyd email, 20 April 2008.}
CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDIES

COMPOSING AND MOTHERING: A FEMINIST CHOICE?

5.1 Introduction

The influence of feminism in the lives of the three living composers in this study will be discussed in this chapter. Their relationships with feminism will be revealed first, followed by an exploration of the ways in which shifts in feminist theories and ideologies on mothering have acted on their lives and influenced their choices regarding careers and motherhood. The principal argument of this chapter is that, regardless of the extent to which the women conform to the expectations or reflect the cultural climates of their respective eras, their choices and experiences are best encompassed under the umbrella of so-called ‘third-wave feminism’. It is important to note that this socio-cultural current is still evolving.

5.2 Relationships with Feminism

5.2.1 Ann Carr-Boyd

Ann Carr-Boyd finds the question of identification with feminism difficult. She was a mother of young children, a music teacher and a composer in her early 30s when second-wave feminist activism was at its height. As Leslie Wilson et al concluded following a study of feminist self-labelling among midlife women who came of age with second-wave feminism,

A feminist identity requires a fertile seedbed: for example, a women's studies class, the cultivation of mother/daughter relationships, or connection with female mentors; or negatively, the experience of sex discrimination or violence, or hardship based on the extra responsibilities of career/children/caretaking etc.… In sum, there must be an exposure to the context of the issues and gains made by the feminist movement in the first and second waves, either through the eyes of mothering daughters, and/or through the mobilising experiences of
women’s studies courses, in order to (re)connect the political to the personal in the belief systems and identity-structures of mid-life women.¹

Whilst Carr-Boyd is willing to acknowledge the positive effects of feminism, she is reluctant to be linked with it too closely. There are a number of reasons for this. First, she feels she has not had any real experience of sex discrimination. Chapter Two revealed that positive mentoring and encouragement, particularly by men, facilitated Carr-Boyd’s musical development, and this has continued throughout her career. She has “received many commissions from largely male-oriented institutions”, and says that men have been most helpful in promoting her music, “so why would I start shouting about the iniquities of a male-dominated world?”² She does not perceive that her gender has been an obstacle, and feels “fortunate (but never smug!) not to have ever been thwarted in any way in anything I wanted to do”.³

A second reason for Carr-Boyd’s disinclination to sympathise fully with feminist causes appears to be that she thinks feminists have focused too heavily on women as victims instead of highlighting their past achievements outside the private sphere. Research for her Masters degree thesis on “The First Hundred Years of European Music in Australia, 1788–1888” disclosed many women who were successful from the eighteenth century onwards, “that no feminist has ever bothered to talk about”.⁴ It is widely agreed that the accomplishments of such women have not been acknowledged in history books, but Carr-Boyd’s view is understandable, since she speaks from her own experience.

Despite the undoubted gains made for women through the activities of the second-wave feminist movement, a negative impact was its glorification of the male model of paid work and the resultant devaluation of the choice to become a mother.⁵ This emphasis on women entering occupations previously occupied by men is how Carr-Boyd perceives the focus of second-wave feminism:

² Carr-Boyd interview, 2004; Carr-Boyd email, 2 December 2008.
³ Carr-Boyd interview, 2004. This attitude is reminiscent of the favourable attitude Carr-Boyd displays towards her early life revealed earlier. Refer Chapter Two, Section 2.3.4.
⁴ Carr-Boyd email, 2 December 2008.
⁵ Discussed in Chapter Three.
I take feminism to mean a movement that came into being in the 1970s with the appearance of women such as Germaine Greer, which brought the rights of women forcefully to the public view—their ability to take senior positions in companies, and to become lawyers, judges, artists and composers, as well as to have a bigger presence in everyday life outside the family scene.\(^6\)

The current fertility crisis has resulted partially from women feeling pressured to delay childbirth in order to pursue careers, in a world that does not make the combination of motherhood and career an easy option.\(^7\) It is particularly this inheritance from second-wave feminism that has contributed to the alienation felt by some women to feminism and their consequent reluctance to label themselves feminists. Carr-Boyd falls into this category, noting with some sadness her own experience of the phenomenon that the next generation is choosing not to have children:

> I think it’s a really difficult subject. It’s become really difficult, because I and a lot of my friends from my generation have had children, but our children are not having children! My eldest daughter was married to an Indian, and they had no children. My middle daughter will probably not ever get married. My youngest daughter has had a child, but is not married to the father.\(^8\)

This observation by Carr-Boyd partly accounts for the fact that, contrary to the findings in the study conducted by Leslie Wilson et al, the mother/daughter nexus has not caused Carr-Boyd to become more aligned with feminism. Her three daughters, aged in their late thirties and early forties, all work full-time, which is not unusual for ‘Generation X’ women; nor has this come as a surprise to their mother. Carr-Boyd did not consciously imagine herself as a role model to her daughters, but notes that “they’ve never known a mother who wasn’t working in music, so they don’t know the difference”. There was also a significant number of other mothers in their circle of friends and acquaintances who had challenging jobs.\(^9\) As noted, only the youngest daughter has become a mother, though it is not necessarily by choice that the older two have not. Carr-Boyd assumes that none of her daughters has time to think about feminism. It is likely that they do not perceive a need to do so, since they are living out quite naturally what might previously have been regarded as ‘feminist’ lives.\(^{10}\)

---

7. Refer Chapter Three, Section 3.5.
10. Refer discussion of Kathy Bail’s commentary on the younger generation of women’s attitudes to feminism later in this chapter.
Despite Carr-Boyd’s disinclination to associate herself closely with the feminist movement, she is aware that she is among those privileged, middle-class, western women whose lives have been positively affected by feminism. This was made abundantly clear to her during a trip overseas in 2000:

Feminism has affected us all. In 2000, I went with my friend Rosemary to Morocco on a two-week organised tour. In many countries, there obviously isn’t what you could call ‘feminism’! We saw kazbahs, which are little walled cities, where the people are a complete law unto themselves. I said to the guide: “What happens if you need to go to hospital?” You don’t go to hospital, do you! They try and fix it on the spot. I presume that goes for giving birth too! It’s always educational to go to other places. Many younger Moroccan women are out there in business, but for some of the older generation, there is no ‘feminism’ at all. It was a big eye-opener. The idea of sitting down in the middle of Morocco and writing art music is ridiculous. They are just trying to survive! …

Carr-Boyd perceives herself as fortunate. She has reaped benefits from feminism as a woman, “lucky to have been born in somewhere like Australia, where we are still more equal than in many other places”. In addition, she has not encountered distinct encumbrances because of her gender, but accepts that “there is still inequality—I’m not shutting my eyes to that”.

An extension of Carr-Boyd’s lack of desire to be labelled a feminist is her contempt for the label ‘woman composer’. She prefers not to be differentiated as a woman, and considers the term “a bit silly—after all we refer to ‘architects’ and ‘doctors’, not ‘woman architects’ or ‘woman doctors’”. She thinks she does not compose in an obviously feminine way, or that it is possible to discern whether a work is written by a woman or a man. As she composes, Carr-Boyd is simply working out how best to employ the compositional techniques she has learned:

When you are writing for a whole orchestra, you are tussling with the intricacies of rhythm, worrying about which instruments get which bits, whether you’ve got the balance right, where you bring a particular theme in. I am thinking about the music, not about the fact that I’m a woman.

---

Kats-Chernin was a teenager in the Soviet Union during the height of the second-wave feminist movement in the western world. She was less affected by 1970s feminist activities in Australia, and by western notions of feminism, though uses the same words as anyone might to define ‘feminism’, describing it as “standing for equal rights and ambitions for women and men”. The situation for women during the Soviet era (1917–1991) in the Soviet Union varied from that in Australia. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky envisaged that with the development of industry and a planned nationalised economy, women would obtain equal rights with men. They would have the opportunity to work outside the home, and to participate fully in the building of a new society. Childcare would become the collective responsibility of society as a whole through the provision of cheap, good quality public dining halls, laundries, sewing centres, crèches and nurseries. The two world wars and civil war had a strong negative impact on these socialist revolutionary ideals, but the ground had been laid for greater involvement in countries such as Australia by women outside the domestic arena in the public world of work. Women were mobilised into industry particularly during the very rapid reconstruction of the Soviet economy following World War II, and by the time Kats-Chernin’s parents were raising the family during the 1960s and 1970s, women were heavily involved in production. The proportion of women of child-bearing age in full-time employment was significant, and the percentage in higher education was amongst the highest in the world. Yet women did shoulder—and apparently still do—a greater burden than men of domestic responsibilities, though this appears to have been more true of working class women than for the so-called ‘intelligentsia’ within which Kats-Chernin grew up. The growth in female employment was not entirely matched by the expansion of services such as childcare and cheap, good quality dining

16 Anne Manne alludes to the negative repercussions of the ‘employment for all’ approach adopted by Eastern European countries post-war. She argues that the provision of child-care and short maternity leaves in these countries was insufficient, has contributed to the “demographic winter” they now face, and is not the ideal model for emulation in Australia or elsewhere. Manne, “Love & Money”, 72.
17 The proportion of women between the ages of 20–55 in full-time employment was as high as 85%, and 49% of those in higher education were women. Only in the USA, Finland and France was this rate greater than 40%. Pickard, “Women in the Soviet Union”.
18 Pickard.
halls, and overall women still occupied jobs at the lower end of the pay scale, with women’s wages still between 67–73% of men’s.

Kats-Chernin was raised in an environment in which having a career outside the home was assumed, and the ‘either/or’ dilemma was less a concern. This is the principal reason why she has “trouble” with the question of feminism.\textsuperscript{19} She does not refer to herself as a feminist, nor does she identify strongly with feminism. Since living in Australia, however, she has become aware of the need for a feminist movement:

For me, it’s really not an issue. I know that in this country, I have to acknowledge the feminist movement, because otherwise I wouldn’t have so many chances, probably. When I was studying, there weren’t many women around: Ann Boyd, Moya Henderson, Nicola Lefanu, and some others. There were very few women composers in general, although there were a few studying in my year, but not many became fully-fledged composers. But it’s actually very hard for men and for women.\textsuperscript{20}

Like Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin has not experienced the discrimination that might have encouraged her to adopt the feminist cause. This can be attributed to her talent as a composer, together with the gradual opening up of opportunities and changing attitudes towards women composers effected through the feminist movement. Kats-Chernin acknowledges this, but demonstrates a similar disinclination as Carr-Boyd to categorisation as a ‘woman composer’:

We don’t have to justify it any more, because a lot has happened, and a lot of good has been done for us, but I don’t need constantly to point out that I am a woman. I’d rather be thought of as a composer. Of course women have different psyches and different instincts: we are different, we just don’t operate in the same way as men do, but we still use the brain! Some men write mostly with their intellect, and don’t connect it with their emotions, but we shouldn’t generalise about the way women and men write music. Of course, one might recognise a particular feature that 	extit{might} appear, according to previous knowledge, feminine in some sort of way, but for me this makes no particular difference and I am really just getting on with my work.\textsuperscript{21}

The reluctance by both Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin to be qualified by the use of the word ‘woman’ in front of the vocational descriptor ‘composer’ also stems from a justifiable concern that their music may be judged according to different criteria from

\textsuperscript{19} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{20} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{21} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004; and email, 11 November 2008.
that of their male counterparts.\footnote{Although there is not firm evidence, it is likely that Sutherland would have felt similarly about this terminology.} Kats-Chernin admits that she prefers her work not to be “recognisable as a woman’s music”, because she believes the expectation lingers that women’s music will be “soft”, and prefers her music not to be placed in that category.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.} This is understandable given that in the past, music was thought to possess either feminine and masculine qualities, and women were expected exclusively to write graceful and delicate ‘feminine’ music. ‘Masculine’ music was considered more powerful in effect and intellectually rigorous.\footnote{This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.4, in the context of critical reception.} Both women project a well-earned confidence in their compositional capabilities that not all composers have, and this probably reinforces their opinion that a good piece of music will speak for itself.\footnote{As will be shown in Chapter Eight, Section 8.2, both women have developed the necessary aptitude for promoting their music, which, along with producing quality work, has undoubtedly assisted in bringing it to a wider public.} Kats-Chernin’s words testify to this: “When women say that they don’t have enough chances as women, it’s not true; all you have to do is write a good piece”.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.}

### 5.2.3 Katy Abbott

The generation to which Abbott belongs has grown up with some form of feminism, passed on by mothers, aunts and teachers. It recognises that previous generations did not have the same range of opportunities, and that feminist ideology has been integrated into the education system, social welfare departments, and other bureaucracies. Many of the rights women had to fight for, such as fertility control, are the natural expectation of younger women. With the word ‘feminism’, they tend to exercise extreme caution.\footnote{Bail 4.} Kathy Bail suggests that feminist ideals have not been abandoned, but rather “women’s ambivalence about ‘feminism’ is actually a demand for recognition of issues that appear to have been left aside by activists concentrating on advancing the broader political movement”.\footnote{Bail 5.} According to Bail, “the legacy of these efforts is double-edged: younger women assume their rights to the resulting opportunities yet they regard feminism as a
A prescriptive way of thinking that discourages exploration on an individual level.” 29 She further contends that,

the word ‘feminism’ suggests a rigidity of style and behaviour and is still generally associated with a culture of complaint. Young women don’t want to identify with something that sounds dowdy, asexual or shows them to be at a disadvantage. They don’t want to be seen as victims. 30

The ideas of this generation of women often fit a broad feminist agenda, Bail stresses, but they want to define places for themselves according to their own individual terms, which do not always fit the feminist mould. They are reacting against what they perceive as the restrictive dogma of organised second-wave feminism. 31

Abbott was a child in the 1970s when second-wave feminist battles were being contested in Australia, and has obviously felt alienated by the movement’s more militant aspects. As a somewhat non-political being, she used to be intimidated by the term ‘feminism’, and by the “bunch of fanatics” who called themselves feminists. This ambivalence to feminism varies from that of Abbott’s predecessors. She admits to having had moments when she “cursed feminism—that it gave me the opportunity to realise my potential, while at the same time making my life a lot harder”, because of the pressure created by second-wave feminism to have a career. 32

It is since she has become a mother that Abbott has perceived the need to engage with women’s issues. She has spent time reflecting on her feminist identity, and how best to “juggle” motherhood and a compositional career, and is now grateful for feminism, because she is “a composer through and through, and I wouldn’t ever want to give it up!” 33 Like Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, though Abbott is aware of the positive consequences of feminism, she is nevertheless reticent about associating herself too closely with it. She reflects her own generation, in her belief that “we don’t have to think of ourselves as feminists, because women of previous generations wore the angst and fought for all the rights that we take for granted today”. 34

---

29 Bail 4–5.
30 Bail 5.
31 Bail 5.
34 Abbott email, 2 February 2009.
Despite the obvious different choices faced by women composers, Abbott shares with Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin the desire that her music “stand on its own”, and the preference not to be segregated by being named a ‘woman composer’. She wants to be “a good composer, not a ‘female’ composer”.\(^35\) Abbott points out that men are not called ‘male’ composers. However, she began composing in a later era when the disadvantages experienced by women composers were beginning to be realised and rectified, and acknowledges that the label ‘woman composer’ has sometimes had advantages in creating opportunities. This was most obviously the case when Abbott was a student rather than a professional. At this level, she entered competitions and attended workshops restricted to females, and occasionally found herself the “token female” in others.\(^36\)

5.3 Motherhood and Composition: Choices, Expectations, Realities

5.3.1 To Be and How to Be a Mother

By the 1950s a more natural approach to motherhood had evolved, which assumed that the majority of women possessed a maternal instinct, would be automatically ‘in tune’ with their children’s needs, and willing to sacrifice their own needs in order to be always available to them. In the late 1970s, women still believed that motherhood was an essential part of womanhood, and that the primary responsibility for the nurturing of and caring for children belonged to mothers.\(^37\)

Ann Carr-Boyd was raising children during these years. She has three daughters: Xanthe (b. 1965), Katrina (1966) and Susanna (1969). Carr-Boyd falls into that category of middle-class women who had access to resources outside the arena of motherhood and domesticity, enabling her to modify the contemporary ideology.\(^38\) However, she had a “huge urge to have children”, saying it “has meant everything to her”.\(^39\) These sentiments indicate her willingness to comply with the ideologies and

\(^{35}\) Abbott interview, 2004. It is probable that Sutherland would have shared these sentiments. Refer Chapter Four.

\(^{36}\) Abbott email, 10 November 2008.

\(^{37}\) Refer Chapter Three, Section 3.2.

\(^{38}\) Refer Chapter Three, Section 3.2.

expectations of her times, as do the qualities she perceives make a good mother. A mother should be “capable and warm”, and Carr-Boyd is glad that she was “nearly always available” to her daughters. She is not aware that they ever resented the time she spent teaching and composing, and certainly do not nowadays, since “they’ve been really supportive when I’ve had performances in recent years; they’ve come along, which was lovely of them”. Carr-Boyd’s desire to have children was not only motivated by cultural expectations, but also by personal circumstances:

I didn’t have much family, because my father died when I was young, and my aunt and uncle, these cherished people, died a couple of years later. I had death all around me, and I wanted life! Everybody’s experience is different, but that hit home. I adored all those people, but I needed to see some young people too.

Kats-Chernin’s three boys were born during the period in Germany. Ilya was born in 1982, Alexander in 1984 and Nikolai in 1986. When Kats-Chernin was pregnant with Ilya, she was studying with Helmut Lachenmann. Her concern about what Lachenmann’s (somewhat misogynistic) response might be to her pregnancy suggests, among other things, that she had internalised some of 1970s second-wave feminism’s attitudes towards women’s choice to mother at the possible expense of developing a career.

Kats-Chernin had not given much thought to motherhood before she fell pregnant with her first child. The conception was not a conscious decision, but occurred during what she refers to as the “hippy time”. She was not yet married to the father, and was unsure whether she wished to spend her life with him. Kats-Chernin decided she wanted to keep the child, that she should “go with nature”. She married Ilya’s father, but thinks the marriage lasted too long; she tried to make it work because of the children. Alexander was a planned child, since she did not want to have an ‘only-child’. Nikolai was conceived during the final days of the marriage, which ended not long after her return to Germany following a visit to Australia in July 1985 to do a show called

42 Kats-Chernin’s words about Lachenmann have already been quoted in another context in Chapter Two, Section 2.4.4. It is probable she would also have doubted the possibility of a man of Lachenmann’s generation being aware of, and sympathetic to, the exigencies of the combination of new motherhood and composition. Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
“Dinosaur” with One Extra Dance Company. At this point she felt she could no longer sustain the relationship.

Needless to say, the divorce process had become simpler and less stigmatised than in Sutherland’s day, though Kats-Chernin has received little financial support from her ex-husband.\(^{43}\) Raising her sons alone has at times been challenging, but she does not regret having children, and clearly loves them intensely; they are the “brightest sparks” in her life: “I would die for them, that’s for sure”.\(^{44}\) Her only rue reveals that she appears to have been affected by the ideology of the self-sacrificing, ever-present mother:

> The only regret I have is that I don’t think my sons had a great life when they were children. I think they’ve suffered quite a bit. They had a disrupted childhood, because I was away a lot working, and my husband had girlfriends who changed frequently.\(^{45}\)

This perception is confirmed by the description of her notion of a good mother:

> A good mother is someone who sacrifices everything to bring up the child in the best possible way. She is a person who is patient and calm and attentive, and gives up a lot of her own wishes and ambitions. I wish I was that person, but I am far from it.\(^{46}\)

Abbott has three sons. Twins Kipling and Finnegan were born in 2003, followed by Zeke in 2006. Her choice to have children was entirely conscious, but in contrast to Sutherland and Carr-Boyd, the realisation of a desire to be a mother came later. She and Keith had been married for nine years before the twins were born:

> I’d never been maternal until the body clock thing started ticking on. I certainly knew that I wanted to get married, but I never thought about having kids, felt uncomfortable around them and didn’t like them very much. I’d hardly held a baby before my own, but I knew I’d love my own. I never thought I’d have a career—that’s something that has surprised me, because there was nothing that I was every really passionate about. It really did evolve.\(^{47}\)

Abbott felt that her mother’s creative and intellectual potentials were not fully realised because of her mothering responsibilities. She was aware that her mother was not

---

\(^{43}\) Refer Appendix One, Section A1.5 for information on Australia’s divorce laws.

\(^{44}\) Kats-Chernin, second interview, 9 September 2005.


\(^{46}\) Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.

afforded the opportunities of Abbott and her generation.\textsuperscript{48} Her former ambivalence about the prospect of motherhood was possibly fuelled by a concern that her own creative aspirations might be thwarted or restricted if she became a mother. The ticking of the ‘body clock’ provided a catalyst for Abbott’s realisation of her desire to mother. The timing of this discovery is significant, happening only after Abbott’s passion for composition was established, and her career was evolving. By the time Abbott had her first children, it was no longer uncommon for a woman to expect she might be able to combine a career and motherhood (though ‘having it all’ is not without its difficulties).\textsuperscript{49}

For both personal and cultural reasons, Abbott could be less concerned about her vocational ambitions being sidelined by the demands of motherhood.

Changes in cultural expectations for women are also reflected in Abbott’s ideas about the attributes that she perceives make a good mother. Her definition includes an acknowledgment that a mother’s desires might encompass elements of the world beyond her children:

Lots of love, love, love and smiles! Give firm boundaries and unconditional love and support. It’s also very important for the kids to see me as a human being with other interests. It helps promote respect too … Maybe I define ‘good mother’ as being and knowing myself/oneself. You’re always growing or developing, and when you become a mother, there’s so much of that … I’ve learned things about myself that I’ve found surprising. I know I need to have time away from home, even though I love being with my kids, because I really, really think I have a better quality of time with them when I’m there. I’m not concerned about my email inbox, or picking up the phone, but am actually enjoying being on the floor playing games with them.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite Abbott’s expanded definition of the ‘good mother’, it is possible to read into these comments an effort to justify to herself her desire to spend time away from her children in order to work. This suggests a concern that she may not be fulfilling enough the long-held ideal that a mother be always available to her children.\textsuperscript{51}

In her 1996 book \textit{Strong Hearts, Inspired Minds}, Anne Mavor addresses the ideology of the good mother. Despite the broad range of birthdates (1950s to 1990s) of the children

\textsuperscript{48} Abbott interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{49} Refer Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{50} Abbott interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{51} See Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2.3 for further evidence of this.
of the women artists featured in the book, the overall consensus was that a good mother “is one who makes sure she is fed along with the others” rather than “one who serves everyone else and gets the leftovers”. This suggests that attitudes have changed since Wearing’s survey in the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{52} However, this conclusion was not reached without “inner and outer struggles” and “most of the women had no trouble coming up with examples of how they are terrible mothers”.\textsuperscript{53}

These sentiments resonate with Abbott, and also with Kats-Chernin, who displays some guilt that she was not more available to her sons. The ideology of the ‘good mother’ also played a strong role in the formation of Carr-Boyd’s views on the qualities required of a mother, though she does not project an impression of herself as a ‘terrible mother’.

5.3.2 The Realities of ‘Having it All’

In Chapter Three, the arguments of a number of commentators were raised that addressed the difficulties inherent in the current pressure on women to manage the balancing act of ‘having it all’, perceived by many as a legacy of second-wave feminism. Women who want a career and children are faced with difficult choices, and undertake the greater share of the domestic workload along with their paid work, in a world still based on the assumption that a worker is masculine, independent, autonomous and free of domestic responsibilities. Women who desire creative careers, which are not always highly paid, are confronted by additional challenges. With the knowledge that all the women, except Kats-Chernin for the first of her children, made conscious choices to become mothers and to continue to work as composers, and that none, including Kats-Chernin, regrets that choice, it is pertinent to explore the nature of the expectations held by the women, and their experiences of the realities of performing these dual roles.

\textsuperscript{52} See Chapter Three, Section 3.2.
\textsuperscript{53} Mavor 6.
5.3.2.1 Ann Carr-Boyd

Carr-Boyd was not told explicitly when she was growing up that she could expect to ‘have it all’ in terms of being a mother and a career woman, but the idea was implicit in “a busy family whose members were always trying to achieve”. She had little experience of babies when her first daughter was born, though she says she did not have “romantic dreams” about raising young children. She was “stepping blindly into the unknown”, but found that prospect exciting. At first it was confronting to have “this little baby who cries, and you don’t really know why she’s crying, especially if you feed her and she’s still crying!” Carr-Boyd had her first two daughters in quick succession, but feels fortunate that her babies slept quite well from early on. She thinks in retrospect that having children is both a “great leveller”, and an experience she would not have liked to “miss out on”. 54

Carr-Boyd confesses that though she “kept slogging away”, and has “always had lots of energy and been fairly driven”, there was not much time for composing before her girls were at kinder and school, and that it was sometimes difficult to stick to a routine. 55 She encountered to some extent the frustrations about time and space that Rich, Olsen, Beecher Stowe, Hill and others speak of, saying that “it is totally impossible to think about composing when you are cutting school lunches!” 56 This comment resonates with Sutherland’s statement about the difficulties of composing with the interruptions imposed through caring for children. 57 Carr-Boyd carried most of the responsibility for the day-to-day physical and emotional nurturing of her girls, since her husband worked long hours outside the home and was often away, but he helped with activities such as driving their daughters to commitments during the weekend, and on those occasions when she was attending conferences. Carr-Boyd and her husband eventually divorced, but this was not until 1991, by which time her daughters were in their twenties, and independent.

Carr-Boyd needed to train herself to summon the creative muse and focus in the morning, but again views this situation in a positive light, saying that she feels this was

54 Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
57 Refer Chapter Four, Section 4.3.
made easier by the fact that she never lacked commissions, and so had the incentive of deadlines. She is proud of her ability as a woman to juggle the different focuses in her life, and does not really envy her male counterparts, though admits she would dearly love to have a secretary as does Peter Sculthorpe, allowing him to focus more exclusively on composing:

> Actually, if I was totally honest, I couldn’t sit down for that many hours a day and write music. I’m too restless. I need to get up and do something else. Sometimes, for sure, I could have wished for a couple more hours, but going away and doing something more mundane was a good break.  

Carr-Boyd taught piano in the afternoons and weekends, sometimes paying someone to mind her girls while she did so. She appreciated that the music-teaching term was the same as the school term, so she was freed from teaching during school holidays. It seems that even when away, she was mothering from afar, one example being when she was at a conference in Mexico City, and rang her family. The first comment one daughter made was: “Mum, where’s my white sports shirt?”

Overall Carr-Boyd is comfortable with the balance she struck between mothering and composition, and has appreciated the variety of tasks offered by being a composer and a mother. Had she at any stage been a full-time mother, she thinks she would have been seeking other activities. Motherhood and composition form equal parts of her identity, and she has no regrets about her choices to blend motherhood with music:

> My work is very important to me because from the age of 15, I was earning money from my music and art so had some sort of financial independence from that age. It was also good to be appreciated for my teaching, and then later on for the music I was writing … But I feel my life has been enriched so much by being married and having children, by sharing all the experiences with the children. I feel that my life is so much richer. I was lucky that I could work at home a lot.

### 5.3.2.2 Elena Kats-Chernin

Kats-Chernin’s experience reveals both similarities and differences to that of Carr-Boyd. Her parents did not communicate directly to her that she could ‘have it all’, and

---

did not pressure her to have children. However, being “brought up in the Soviet Union where women supposedly have the same rights as men and are encouraged to work in the same fields as men” as well as bringing up children, the message was inferred by the society around her.\textsuperscript{61}

When Kats-Chernin came to have children, she had few expectations, but thought it would be “easier than it actually was”. She quickly adapted to the idea of the unexpected first pregnancy, and “went along with it, as naturally as I could. I did not think too much about it, but did all the right things: I went to all the medical appointments, did the exercise classes and went to groups for expectant parents with my partner.”\textsuperscript{62} Sleep deprivation came as a surprise, as did the lack of control she felt over her children. Her doubts about her capacity to be a good mother are imparted again with her perception that she was not knowledgeable enough about such child-rearing practices as setting boundaries, and that it would have been preferable to have children when she was older and “much wiser”. Her sons’ teenage years were difficult, but she is grateful that she had boys, who “don’t hate mothers so much as girls do”. She says her boys “still love me, that I know”, and feels her relationship with them is easier now.\textsuperscript{63}

Unlike Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin lost interest in work immediately following her first son’s birth. She became “hooked on being a mother and a ‘slave’ to the little person who needed me. That gave me a good excuse not to do anything beyond being a mother.”\textsuperscript{64} She discovered an absolute contentedness:

I even enjoyed washing the nappies, because we had cloth nappies, and it was such a miracle. Everything was great. When he was tiny, he was just beautiful and unusual. And I thought: “Oh my God, I’ve created something”. It was fine until a colleague said: “What about your composition. Your teacher is asking when you are going to come back.” And guilt plunged right into me. I remember the first time leaving him with my brother-in-law, who loved him and was really good with him, but I didn’t want to leave at all, because I was breast-feeding and I had to express milk for the first time. I hated it so much. It suddenly became so stressful, having all this guilt that I wasn’t writing anything, or doing anything.

\textsuperscript{61} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
\textsuperscript{62} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
\textsuperscript{63} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
\textsuperscript{64} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
Looking back, nobody cared whether I wrote a piece—I could have taken half a year off, but I didn’t know that.  

Kats-Chernin could quite easily have fallen “into this comfortable role of being a mother, cook and cleaner, just doing the normal things”. Had she done so, she might have been spared some of the guilt she harbours about time spent away from her children:

I’m sure you can really enjoy that for a few years. And so one should! God, looking back I wish I’d had three years. For children it’s the best thing, the best thing, to have a mother full-time to themselves, because then they’ll never have this fear of losing out or being clingy, worried that the mother will go to work again, will leave them again, leave them with somebody, disruptions, rhythms not existing. When you’re at home all the time, you can always make a rhythm for the child, so that the child knows what happens at a particular time of day. And that’s really important for children, because every day is really long for them. For us the day goes really fast, but for them it doesn’t. So, yes, I would do it differently, but I didn’t.

Kats-Chernin concedes that “It could be the father too, who is a full-time parent. Absolutely. What’s the difference? The mother has a softer voice, and can breastfeed, but that’s only for a little while.” It is clear that even if she had been able to spend more time with her boys when they were young, she would always have needed to return to composition, since she emphasises that “I identify myself through my work absolutely and without it I would feel an incomplete person”. The self-reproach she experienced in being away from her sons was therefore an inevitable concomitant of her need to fulfil her creative desires.

In any case, Kats-Chernin could not afford to be the full-time mother she might have liked to be when her boys were very young. Continuing to find ways to earn money was all the more necessary for two reasons. Her husband had run up debts when the children were young, which she had to pay off. When the marriage ended, her third child was two years old, and from then on, she raised and financially supported her three sons on her own. When she was in Germany and her sons were very young, school hours were fragmented, so she encountered impediments to her creative time:

---

65 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.  
66 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.  
67 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.  
68 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
One thing about living in Germany was that sometimes the kids would be in school for only an hour or two at a time. They’d start at 8am, and then they’d be home again by 9.30am. So when I was at home, I often found I didn’t have much time to compose. But when we got back to Australia, and they went to school, they were away until the afternoon! At 3pm I left to pick them up, and I had to learn to drive a car. This used to be a rather welcome interruption, because I needed a break. ⁶⁹

Kats-Chernin had to use her time wisely, and like Carr-Boyd, though she found the interruptions of child-rearing annoying sometimes, she sees benefits in enforced breaks from composing. She feels proud as a woman that she is able to juggle different focuses, unlike some male counterparts with wives and children, who “have a sign on their doors saying ‘Do Not Disturb’, so their room is off-limits to a child, because the wife does everything to allow the genius to work”. ⁷⁰ This is redolent of Modjeska’s description of Stravinsky’s insistence on silence while he was composing. ⁷¹ However, Kats-Chernin echoes Carr-Boyd’s lack of envy for the different experience of her male counterparts:

> If I didn’t have kids, I wouldn’t use time wisely. I wouldn’t worry about it, whereas when I knew I had to pick them up from kindergarten in two hours, I would aim to manage a certain number of pages before then. I had to be very organised. I couldn’t wait for the muse to visit me. With many men, if they are not supported, they can’t compose you see. So they have to marry somebody supportive, whereas with women, we do it anyway, like I did! I had no support, and I just had to do it. ⁷²

For Kats-Chernin, “composing against the environment is more attractive than composing with it”. Obviously she thrives on a situation which many would find overwhelming. When her sons were younger, she had “constantly to think about” her kids. Now that they are older, and she has more time, she finds it harder to push herself. Of course composing is easier and faster as a mature composer, but she bemoans the fact that:

> It almost feels like it’s not work, and I wonder how I can make it harder, because I don’t feel as if I’m producing good work unless it’s difficult. So that’s my problem … I used to do the washing up and think about my piece … I’ve had to

⁶⁹ Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
⁷⁰ Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
⁷¹ Refer Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1.
worry about paying my son’s university costs, and think about all the bills. My handbag is full of stuff to do with my kids, medication for my son, and I have to cook, clean. Yes. I probably couldn’t function any more without all those things. I’m already noticing that things are easier without my son living here, and I’m wondering how to force myself back to writing.\textsuperscript{73}

Kats-Chernin has found that, whilst it used to be a real challenge, over the years she has become more adept at switching between composing and mothering:

Usually what’s bugging me is what I’m composing at the time. It buzzes in my head, and I can’t let go. So if I’m working on a composition, and then I become a mother again, my, I’m kind of split, and I have found that very stressful at times. But I realise that over the years that transition time between writing and being a mother has narrowed. That was a very hard time.\textsuperscript{74}

Kats-Chernin maintains that she would not have changed anything, and is “comfortable with not being one of the ‘greats’”, but reflects sometimes on sacrifices she may have made through bringing up children:

I do think that because I didn’t have a husband who would be my ‘wife’, that my chances of becoming a great composer like Stravinsky, John Adams or Stockhausen have been reduced. I’ve had to look after kids, so my mind could not be constantly busy with music alone. I don’t wish to imply that without children, I would naturally achieve greatness. I am not arrogant enough to hold this opinion. You don’t set out to be great, but to write good music, see if it’s performed and whether the pieces have a future or not. But naturally I can’t help wondering sometimes whether I might have achieved more as a composer if I’d had more time to concentrate on it.\textsuperscript{75}

After all the various challenges and sacrifices Kats-Chernin has experienced while raising three sons alone and building a very successful career as a composer, she is gratified that her sons are now interested in her work, and proud of her achievements. There were times when they lamented that all she did was write music, rather than talking and listening to them. Even her oldest son, whom she thinks felt most resentful of her focus on composing, has now “started feeling proud instead of embarrassed about the way I am”.\textsuperscript{76} This change of heart is reflected in the following quote, which also

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{73} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{74} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
\textsuperscript{75} For the past 10 years, Kats-Chernin has had a partner. He is from Berlin, and resides in Germany, but spends blocks of up to four months at a time in Australia. He is extremely supportive of her and her work, for which she is very grateful, but the responsibility for looking after her children remains principally hers. Kats-Chernin interview, 2004; email, 14 January 2009.
\textsuperscript{76} Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
demonstrates that Kats-Chernin tried to make up for time away from her sons by taking on a domestic load with which they could possibly have assisted:

I think it’s got better over the last five years. Before then it was problematic. If I had been going out of the house and doing the same thing, they wouldn’t care, but because I work at home, they valued it less. Now they’re proud of me, and really appreciate my music. I have had to make CDs for my oldest son’s friends and workmates, because he always wants them to hear my music. They ask me to teach them how to play things, and when their friends come over, they want me to play something to them, and they are impressed. That’s when I realise that I’m actually quite a different mum to other mums. One of their friends is making a film, and she wants to use my music. They also appreciate that I manage to feed them and clean the house, and write the music I do. The most musical is my youngest, though unfortunately he is not involved in music at the moment. He’s very talented. My middle one often sits down at the piano, which he plays by ear, and tries to play my pieces, or he composes a bit like me, in the same sort of style. It’s my oldest who has the biggest block. He can’t remember middle C—he just can’t. Every time I show him, he forgets. I don’t think it’s conscious, but he’s the one who used to resent my work the most. He was the one who painted all over my music when he was one year old. He always had something against it.77

5.3.2.3 Katy Abbott

Abbott did not feel pressured to “fill the shoes of some amazing person who had it all”. It was expected that she would attend university and train for a career, and she was “told she could do anything she wanted”, but thinks her parents would not have “liked the idea of me working and having children”. It is not surprising that Abbott perceived this attitude in her parents, and particularly in her mother, since the latter did not seriously pursue a career herself. She says that “they’re quite progressive now—they go with the times and are very supportive, but if at that time I’d set my mind to having a career and children, it may not have gone down too well”. No doubt influenced in this regard by societal expectations which had now become norms, Abbott says “it was probably my idea to think I could do the mother/work thing but I was never particularly maternal, or career-oriented, so it just wasn’t something I thought about.”78 She is growing bored with the current spate of media coverage about whether or not women can ‘have it all’, but is aware of the difficulties inherent in the syndrome of the ‘superwoman’:79

77 Kats-Chernin interviews, 2004 and 2005.
79 Refer Chapter Three, Sections 3.2 and 3.5.
I don’t believe it is possible to ‘have it all’. Something has to give—the house, the relationship, time with the kids. I believe the numbers of women who think they can have it all or actually want it all are becoming less as time goes by.\textsuperscript{80}

Abbott believes she did not have unrealistic dreams about motherhood. She had previously “never thought of myself as a mum”, but this changed. She now feels that “because it was what I really wanted, I had the energy to push through the tough moments”. True to character, she prepared herself as well to be a mother. Her second pregnancy, after a miscarriage, was twins, and, as well as being fearful of another loss, she knew that having two at once would be more difficult than one:

I used to practise my response (in my head) to what I would do if I felt that it would all get too much; for example, if they were both crying and I felt overwhelmed. Our ante-natal classes revolved around parenting baby twins and not so much around the actual birth, so I felt I had tackled the issues before they arose.\textsuperscript{81}

Though the earlier miscarriage robbed Abbott of some confidence, she is now sure she did the ‘twin thing’ really well, which gave me more confidence, so that I thought I was born to reproduce! That was quite nice, knowing that my body did that for me. My body’s not quite the same as it was, but I’m much prouder of it. I feel really amazed at it, to be honest!\textsuperscript{82}

When Abbott gave birth to her twins in May 2003 in Sydney, where she was living temporarily because of her husband’s employment, she was in the second year of her PhD (Composition) candidature at Melbourne University. She lost interest in composing during the time she had morning sickness, but this was short-lived. Friends and colleagues in the music world had expressed concern that she might not want to continue composing after the babies’ birth, but she was “quietly confident that this would not be the case”. This sentiment reflects the increasing acceptability of combining motherhood with a career. Abbott provides other reasons for her attitude:

I think that because I started composing later in my life, I hadn’t had enough of it to be ‘over it’. I still felt as if I was really in the beginning stages. It was new and evolving and still so exciting, and not something that I could just give up. Perhaps it also helped that Brenton Broadstock (my supervisor) and Stuart Greenbaum (lecturer in Composition) expressed concern about this on my behalf!

\textsuperscript{80} Abbott interview, 2005/2006.
\textsuperscript{81} Abbott interview, 2005/2006
\textsuperscript{82} Abbott interview, 2005/2006.
The fact that they worried and offered practical suggestions about how to keep composing gave me a goal to look towards. It is mostly to do with one’s own personal drive I think, but having support and concern expressed was indeed a positive affirmation for me.\(^{83}\)

Abbott composed less when the twins were babies, partly because she was living in Sydney, away from the possible child-minding assistance from her extended family in Melbourne that could have enabled more time to compose. Tiredness, and the “mush of mummy brain”, naturally also contributed to a lower productivity at this time. She had to leave the house to compose, paying a carer for this privilege, but found these occasions quite liberating. She relates one occasion when she used a friend’s house as a venue to compose while the friend was at work:

I wrote … a funky little pop thing called “Handsome” for *Words of Wisdom* … and it was just this perfect little succinct piece, and I knew as I was singing it that I was actually composing the end product, and that it wasn’t going to be a lot of work. The idea came when I sat down on the couch during a break, and picked up *Who* Magazine. I found a quote from Olivier Martinez, and tried to sing it. I didn’t compose anything else for the rest of the day. I just sang it, and my voice was resonating off the floorboards and hitting the walls, and it was really fun, and I just thought: “I’m alive”!\(^{84}\)

During her time in Sydney, she and her husband re-assessed their values, culminating in a plan to return to Melbourne. Abbott realised that the creativity of composition was one of her three principal values, part of her identity, and that she needed to make time for it “in order to stay sane”. She also identifies strongly as a mother, saying that she would only feel envious of child-free women if she weren’t able to compose, and that her children “are everything” to her. She noted this identification as a mother most obviously on one occasion when she felt compelled to inform a group of people she had not previously met that she was a mother. On another occasion, she found herself in a slightly confrontational situation, and was very glad to get home: “Oh here I am; I’m queen of the domain; I know where I am and how it works.”\(^{85}\)

Abbott’s husband works full-time, but minds the children during weekends so that she can compose. The couple aims actively for open communication on how to balance paid work and child-rearing. Keith (Abbott’s husband) feels he has an important role in

---

the emotional development of their children, and is more involved in his children’s lives than were the husbands of Sutherland, Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, who were from previous generations when expectations of direct paternal involvement were lower. The roles that character and working situation might also play in this should be acknowledged; Sutherland’s father managed to be unusually present in her early years.

For Abbott this overall change in paternal contribution is manifest in the differences between her own father and Keith in this regard. Her father “didn’t change one nappy, and was proud of it”, but has become aware that expectations about men’s involvement have changed, since

he’d now actually be ashamed of that. When we were back in Melbourne, he sometimes looked after the twins by himself, and did a terrific job. I think he really recognises that he missed out, and he wants to have a relationship with them. It’s amazing; I never expected him to do that. But he really loves looking after them and the boys love him looking after them.86

Shortly after the birth of Abbott’s third son, Zeke, in 2006, the family moved to Malaysia in order for Keith to take up a new position within his company. A few months later, he was transferred to Dubai, where the family remained until February 2009. Though Abbott had no help from her extended family during this time, she had a part-time nanny. For a period she was without a childminder, and it was difficult to find time to compose. She was “very grumpy, with no balance” between mothering and composing, and confessed at this time that this feeling of frustration did not come without guilt:

I even feel guilty for loving what I am doing. Most of my friends who are working mothers work to earn money and dislike their jobs. They wouldn’t be working if they didn’t have to, but I would be working as hard as I am even with absolutely no financial pressure. I find composing ’calms me’ and dare I say ’completes me’ and enables me to rejuvenate so I have something to give to my children.87

Fortunately, this guilt has dissipated as her children have moved beyond infancy, and Abbott has now reconciled with herself and her family that “composing is the way I spend part of the week”. When she feels comfortable with the people minding her children, she can compose “free of guilt”.88
Abbott’s experience of the greater involvement in child-rearing of her ‘Generation X’ husband is echoed in her comments on the comparison with her composing male colleagues. She feels they “have similar issues but in a different context”, and points out that nowadays there are a variety of choices about ways to find time to compose:

The main issue is time … It’s so difficult for male and female composers to make a living in Australia, so they’ve all got other jobs: conducting, performing, teaching … They’re all trying to compose in every spare moment that they have. It’s just that my other job is being a mum … My male counterparts seem still to have the major responsibility of making money for the family while the female partner either also works or looks after the kids. My male friends with young children have varying arrangements: one’s wife works full time, while he works part-time and composes one to two days per week, and looks after the baby one day a week. Another has a part-time position working for a university, and another without children still works part-time and composes part-time while his partner works. I have worked very hard but I don’t think I have had to work harder than my male counterparts.89

Abbott’s perception that her plight is not harder than that of her male colleagues can be interpreted in a number of ways. Unlike Kats-Chernin, she has a husband who earns an adequate salary, and has therefore shouldered less burden in this regard. This could enable a greater sensitivity to the predicament of male composers, who may be under more pressure to support families financially. Her sympathies for male composers can also be attributed to the fact that it is now expected that men will be more involved with the raising of their children, and that they will undertake a greater share of household tasks.

5.4 Summary

The relationships with feminism of Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott are noteworthy. Like Sutherland, Carr-Boyd’s upbringing in an educated, artistic and musical extended family rendered almost irrelevant the feminist ideology and patriarchy of her era. Kats-Chernin’s early years in the Soviet Union had a similar effect. This afforded them what was still somewhat of a luxury in their respective eras—to blend composition with motherhood.

Although Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott acknowledge feminism’s achievements, none is prepared openly to call herself a feminist. They do not perceive themselves as having been at the receiving end of discrimination, and the more militant aspects of second-wave feminism, particularly its repudiation of mothering, have no doubt influenced their reticence to identify with feminism. As Dux and Simic assert, feminist goals of “transcending traditional gender roles, while emphasising the role of women as individual agents, clash with the ways in which mothers are enmeshed with their children and inevitably dependent upon communities—other people rather than simply themselves”.

All three women place high value on motherhood. Should they openly identify with feminism, the cost of living with such contradictions “that go to the heart of their very conception of self” might be too high. All three reflect to varying degrees the ambivalence of Abbott’s generation with regard to the restrictive feminist dogma.

Like Sutherland, Carr-Boyd was typical of women in the era of pre-second-wave feminism, in that she chose to marry and have children. Kats-Chernin fell pregnant by chance with her first child, and wonders whether it would have been better to have children when she was older and wiser. Her ambivalence in this regard reflects the contrasting strains of thought in existence in the decade of the 1980s during which she gave birth to her three sons. The reverberations of the repudiation of motherhood espoused by second-wave feminism were still being felt. At the same time, there was a recuperation of the experience of motherhood, manifested in a reinvigoration of the notion of female difference and the potential of pleasure in mothering. The career/motherhood combination that she followed from the beginning was typical of the experience of women in the Soviet Union where she spent her formative years.

Abbott was unsure whether she wanted children, and was inspired to do so by the ‘ticking of the body clock’. This reflects the culture of her era. By the time she gave birth to her sons in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it was no longer assumed that all women wanted to become mothers, and there was a greater expectation that they

---

90 Dux and Simic 114.
would build careers before doing so. They would then become women who ‘have it all’, deftly and efficiently blending work with motherhood.

There are similarities and differences in the women’s expectations of motherhood and the ensuing realities. In a further resonance with Sutherland, Carr-Boyd’s desires and determination to compose outran reservations she may have had about not being constantly available to her children. The more flexible hours made possible by a composing and teaching career meant that she could actually be mostly available to her children when they needed her. She arranged her time so as to be there for her daughters as much as was possible, and feels she achieved a good balance.

Kats-Chernin exhibits more internal conflict than Carr-Boyd. She demonstrates an internalisation of the ideal of the good mother. For both personal and financial reasons, she was unable to give up composing, and feels guilt and sadness that she did not spend more time with her sons, particularly when they were younger. Abbott is slightly less undermined by this ideology, reflecting the now better-recognised desire of mothers to be fulfilled in a broader sense, but the realisation on her part of the benefits of continuing to compose does not come without the accompanying disadvantage of relatively frequent guilt at not being constantly available to her young sons, though this is dissipating with time.

5.5 Conclusion: Third-Wave Women

It is evident that Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott have led lives which fit a broader feminist agenda. They have benefited from the reduced levels of women’s oppression enabled by second-wave feminism. However, in deeply valuing their experience of mothering, they have refused a wholesale internalisation of its tenets. In choosing to be mothers and composers simultaneously, and not to compose as an “aside”, they all fall into Catherine Hakim’s ‘adaptive’ category. In continuing to take the major responsibility for the nurturing of children and for other domestic duties, as well as earning money from their compositions, to varying extents all four women earn the term ‘superwoman’. The challenges each has faced in so doing partially accounts for the

---

92 Radic, “Where are the Women Composers”, 45. Refer also Appendix One, Section A1.8, and Chapter Four, Section 4.5.
degree of ambivalence—demonstrated in particular by Kats-Chernin and, less so, by Abbott—that Sara Ruddick suggests is an inevitable concomitant of the pleasures of mothering.93

An evolving third-wave feminism was outlined in Chapter Three.94 These three women have chosen to be empowered by taking their places in the public realm, and by accommodating the maternal desire and the ethic of care so comprehensively investigated by de Marneffe, Manne and others.95 They are reflective of the postmodern idea of diversity of equally-valid choices and desires among women. For these reasons, the term ‘third-wave women’ is most appropriately applied to Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott.
PART THREE: MOTHERHOOD AND CREATIVITY

CHAPTER SIX

THE CREATIVE MUSICAL WOMAN IN HISTORY

6.1 Introduction

Now that the status of Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott as third-wave feminist women has been established, it is appropriate in Part Three to narrow the focus to the enactment of this position through their creative careers. The aim in Chapter Six is to remind the reader of the historical attitudes that have worked against a fuller realisation of women’s creative potentials. This will help explain why in the past there have been—and still are—fewer women composers than men, and why there has been a shortage of role models for the composers in this study, particularly for Sutherland. It will also provide some insight into the attitudes towards women composers that the subjects of this study have inherited, and have had to contend with in gaining credibility in their chosen creative vocation. The prevailing narrative was that women were not endowed with creative abilities equal to those of men. Western culture abounds with myths of male superiority in theological, artistic and scientific creativity. In this chapter, the gender-biased opinions of eminent philosophers, writers and psychologists will be examined. It will be shown how the historical attribution of male/female dualisms such as mind/body, active/passive and culture/nature, together with cultural and social expectations of male and female roles, have combined to reinforce these myths. The ways in which they have influenced the lives of creative mothers in particular will be explored, together with efforts that have been made to re-conceptualise women’s experience of the ‘either/or’ choice between motherhood and creativity.

6.2 Historical Notions of Women’s Creativity

For the western world, the idea of the male as prime creator mostly originates from the Old Testament of the Bible. God, interpreted as being male, was the first creator of life,
and this formed the basis for the “connections between creator and male, divinity and creativity, and divinity and male”.

Marcia Citron suggests this image of a male God alone creating the earth has confused women, and made it difficult for them from the beginning to imagine themselves in creative roles.

The status of women in Athens in the fourth and fifth centuries BC was low. Socrates (470–399BC) and Plato (427–347BC) were highly critical of this disparity, and argued that women should participate fully in the life of the state for the benefit of society, believing there was nothing in their nature to prevent them from doing so. Unlike Socrates and his esteemed teacher Plato, Aristotle (384–322BC) accepted the pre-Socratic view that women lacked the sentient and rational souls of men, which caused them to be physically and intellectually weaker, less capable of rational thought, and subordinate to male rule.

To Aristotle, the male was “by nature superior, and the female inferior, and the one rules, and the other is ruled”, and “this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind”.

The philosophical distinction between mind and body in western thought can be traced back to the Greeks, and highly influential philosopher, mathematician, scientist and writer René Descartes (1596–1650) was the first to provide a systematic account, and a radical reformulation, of the mind/body relationship. He theorised mind and body as two distinct entities incapable of merging, the mind being totally isolated from daily concerns, which were linked to the body. This theory, referred to as ‘Cartesian dualism’, led to the elevation of mind over body. The former came to be synonymous with the qualities of reason, culture, action, order, self, depth, reality, structure, transcendence, and the masculine, and the latter with emotion, nature, passivity, disorder, other, surface, appearance, matter, immanence, and the feminine.

---

1 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 46.
2 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 46.
3 Agonito 23–24, 41–42.
5 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 52.
6 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 52–53.
7 Guymer 88.
Many subsequent examples exist of the deployment of this hierarchical and essentialist theory towards the limitation of women’s participation in creative life. Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) strongly denied women’s creativity:

Women, in general, don’t like any art, are not well versed in any, and have no talent for it. They can acquire knowledge … and all that can be acquired through hard work. But that celestial fire that emblazens and ignites the soul, that quality of genius that consumes and devours … those sublime ecstasies that reside in the depths of the heart—these will always be lacking in the writings of women.8

Rousseau’s view that “a woman’s education must be planned in relation to man” was highly influential in Britain and Europe. A woman’s duty to a man “for all time” was to “be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy”.9

German philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), expressed similar views, positioning the educated woman as socially deviant:10

Laborious learning or painful pondering … destroy the merits that are proper to her sex … they can make of her an object of cold admiration; but at the same time they will weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex. A woman who has a head full of Greek, like Mme Dacier, or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquise de Châtelet, might as well even have a beard …11

Christine Battersby claims that Kant laid the epistemological foundations for nineteenth-century Romanticism’s theory of artistic creativity. A new rhetoric of exclusion developed at the end of the eighteenth century, which grew as the next century progressed, giving new life to the earlier tradition that placed women in positions of cultural and biological inferiority. This rhetoric lauded in ‘great’ male creators ‘feminine’ qualities of mind that seemed remarkably similar to Aristotle’s concept of femininity. The genius was a virile male who transcended his biology, and his femininity proved his cultural superiority. The reverse was not the case, since

8 Lettre a M. D’Alembert sur les spectacles (Amsterdam, 1758); quoted in Citron, Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 111.
10 The Enlightenment was an eighteenth-century movement in European and American philosophy, also known as ‘The Age of Reason’ in which reason was advocated as the primary basis for authority.
‘masculine’ attributes in creative women were condemned. It was expected that women’s energies would be consumed by ‘feminine’ procreative and domestic duties. Battersby asserts further that these Romantic standards of creativity have continued to this day, and are still used to define what is and is not culturally viable.\textsuperscript{12}

From the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, the writings of German philosophers Georg Hegel (1770–1831), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) maintained the link between rational mind and man, and irrational body and woman. Hegel thought that a woman should restrict herself to the sphere of the family, renouncing her individuality. A man’s life, on the other hand, lay in the state and in his profession, and family life was incidental. The reason for this distinction, according to Hegel, was that men and women possessed different natures. Women could “be educated, but their minds are not adapted to the higher sciences, philosophy, or certain of the arts.\textsuperscript{13}

Schopenhauer’s essay “On Women” has become known as a classic of misogynist writing. To him, women’s qualities were determined by nature, in all respects inferior to those of men, and lacking in aesthetic faculty.\textsuperscript{14} He believed that “neither for music, nor for poetry, nor for fine art, have [women] really and truly any sense or susceptibility”. They only wished to please others, and were “incapable of taking a purely objective interest in anything”. The reason for this, according to Schopenhauer, was that “a man tries to acquire direct mastery over things … But a woman is always and everywhere reduced to obtaining this mastery indirectly, namely, through a man”.\textsuperscript{15}

In his classic distinction between master and slave, Nietzsche associated the ‘master’ qualities of creative vision, power, pride, courage, willingness to take risks and to fight against conventional values with men, and the ‘slave’ attributes of passivity, humility, practicality, risk avoidance, and willingness to act out a prescribed role with women.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} Battersby 4–8, 10, 43.
\textsuperscript{14} Agonito 191–192.
\textsuperscript{16} Agonito 266–267.
Women could only create mortal human beings, and could not contribute to culture.\textsuperscript{17} “Everything concerning woman is a puzzle” Nietzsche argued, and “everything concerning woman has one solution: it is named pregnancy”.\textsuperscript{18}

The theories of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and his successors on the different psychosexual development of girls and boys, especially his belief that anatomy was destiny, had an enormous impact in the twentieth century. Freud promulgated the concept of ‘penis envy’, which occurred for the girl when she discovered that the male genitals appeared superior. This triggered the castration complex, for which she blamed her mother, leading to the Oedipus complex and a switch to attachment to her father.\textsuperscript{19} Her subsequent object choice was male, her way of obtaining the phallus being through bearing the man’s child. Freud identified the masculine with activity and the feminine with passivity.\textsuperscript{20}

British literary men of the eighteenth century such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, John Ruskin and Gerard Manley Hopkins reinforced the idea that men held the creative gift, as opposed to the generative powers of women’s wombs.\textsuperscript{21} This thinking continued into the twentieth century. Irish playwright, literary critic and socialist George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) believed in women’s rights, but still affirmed that women’s task was to perpetuate life, and the duty of the woman of genius was to bear the male genius who would be philosopher and artist.\textsuperscript{22} Shaw’s view exemplified well the historically passive, bodily position of woman as artistic object rather than creative subject. She has been model rather than artist, character or scribe rather than author, musical muse rather than composer.\textsuperscript{23} In a letter to his wife Nora, fellow Irish writer James Joyce (1882–1941) evoked mind/body dualism, and the difference between his own creativity and his wife’s procreativity:

\begin{quote}
I went then into the backroom of the office and sitting at the table, thinking of the book I have written, the child which I have carried for years and years in the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?”, Feminist Studies 1/2 (1974): 14.
\textsuperscript{18} Friedrich Nietzsche, “Wom Alten und Jungen Weiblein”, Also Sprach Zarathustra (1883), first part, trans. Rosemary Agonito; quoted in Agonito 268.
\textsuperscript{19} Agonito 297.
\textsuperscript{21} Gubar 244.
\textsuperscript{22} Stimpson 428.
\textsuperscript{23} Gubar 247–253.
womb of the imagination as you carried in your womb the children you love, and of how I had fed it day after day out of my brain and my memory.”

Feminist theorist Susan Stanford Friedman claims that “Joyce’s women produce infants through the channel of flesh, while his men produce a brainchild through the agency of language”. She argues that this “childbirth metaphor has yoked artistic creativity and human procreativity for centuries”, and “while the metaphor draws together mind and body, word and womb, it also evokes the sexual division of labor upon which Western patriarchy is founded. These “biological analogies”, she concludes, “ultimately exclude one sex from the creative process”.

Other biologically deterministic arguments have been utilised as justification for the denial of women’s creative and intellectual abilities. Jill Halstead’s book *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition*, is valuable for its detailed exploration of such assertions. She examines psychology (aptitude and personality), education and social history in an attempt to quash the myths of biological difference as the root of disparities in male and female musical (and other creative) achievement.

During the nineteenth century, the idea that brain size affected intellectual capacity was still taken for granted. Until recently, disagreement about slight differences in cognitive abilities lingered, despite the existence of more reliable methods of intelligence testing that have led to more sophisticated understanding of the nature of human intelligence.

Maccoby and Jacklin’s pioneering critical evaluation of the literature on sex differences (1974) describes as “fairly well established” the beliefs that females have greater verbal ability than males and that males’ visual-spatial abilities are superior. It has also been thought that the two hemispheres of the brain differ in specialisation, and that women’s brains are slightly less lateralised than men’s, integrating functions to a greater degree. Since it was believed that the male brain specialised its functions more strongly in each

---


25 Stanford Friedman 73–75.

26 gates 29.
hemisphere, the female brain was considered less well-equipped to process visual-spatial information (right hemisphere).\textsuperscript{30}

This biologically-dictated argument has been used to account for lesser accomplishment by women in such professions as art, architecture and engineering as well as music, where the suggestion has been that visual-spatial processing lies at the heart of many musical faculties, especially composition.\textsuperscript{31} There is now little support for the existence of these sex differences, which suggests that earlier perceived disparities between the musically-creative abilities of the two sexes were more due to inequalities in education and social expectation.\textsuperscript{32}

Recent research has found a distinct connection between musical aptitude and left-hemisphere advantage in musical processing.\textsuperscript{33} Non-musicians tend to exhibit a right-hemisphere specialisation for the performance of musical tasks, whereas musicians show the reverse, or no specialisation at all.\textsuperscript{34} This reinforces the opinion that most higher intellectual functions, including music, involve greater communication between the two hemispheres of the brain and are not subject to simple hemispheric division. Indeed, the fact that rhythm and pitch/tonality are controlled by different hemispheres, means that virtually all kinds of musical performance require inter-hemisphere processing and cooperation.\textsuperscript{35}

Hormonal differences between men and women have also served to explain stereotypical male and female behaviour. The male hormone testosterone was thought to increase the characteristics necessary for intellectual motivation required for many creative, intellectual and physical acts, including behavioural reactivity, enhanced attention, persistence, intensity, visual spatial skills and aggression. The female hormones of oestrogen and progesterone were believed to cause women’s passivity and domestic orientation. However, the role played by hormones is not universally scientifically accepted.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{30} Halstead 9, 11.
\textsuperscript{31} Halstead 13.
\textsuperscript{32} Halstead 7; Gates 28.
\textsuperscript{33} Halstead 21.
\textsuperscript{34} Gates 31.
\textsuperscript{35} Halstead 21.
\textsuperscript{36} Halstead 14.
Halstead concludes that contradictory information relating to neuropsychology and psychology of music functions suggests there is no firm evidence to indicate that women have a biologically-based lack of musical aptitude. She argues that it is the circumstances of women’s lives rather than biological factors that better account for the low number of women composers. Powerful ideas imposed by social and cultural surroundings prescribe definite roles and modes of behaviour for the two sexes, and there is complex interaction between inherited aptitude and environment. Halstead cites the research of Jacob Kwalwasser, who in the 1950s promulgated the idea that children respond creatively along the lines of thought imposed by society, which discourages middle-class boys from the serious study of music, and encourages them into higher-status, higher-earning careers more suitable to their stereotypical role as principal providers for the family. For girls it was more acceptable to engage in pursuits sometimes considered trivial, such as music. There were more girls involved in music at the school and amateur level, and differences in talent based on sex were small, but the majority of professional musicians, particularly conductors and composers, were men, indicating that at some point the serious pursuit of some musical career paths became unfeminine.37

Halstead claims that ideas on the sex differentiation of temperament and personality have also negatively affected the fulfilment of musical potential in females. The age-old idea of mind/body dualism discussed previously led to a belief in the natural divergence between the sexes with regard to personal characteristics. This notion continued into the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and beyond, and was particularly well expressed in 1880 by George Upton, who believed that a woman could interpret, but not create music, because of her innate nature:

To confine her emotions within musical limits would be as difficult as to give expression to her religious faith in notes. Man controls his emotions, and can give an outward expression of them. In woman they are the dominating element, and so long as they are dominant she absorbs music ... to limit them within the rigid laws of harmony and counterpoint, and to express them with arbitrary signs, is a cold-blooded operation, possible only to the sterner and more obdurate nature of man.38

37 Halstead 18, 24, 28, 29.
38 George Upton, Woman in Music (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1880) 21; quoted in Neuls-Bates 207.
Catherine Parsons Smith points to a renewed push to have music comprehended as a masculine pursuit, and to the consequent early twentieth-century backlash against women as creators. She maintains that “any professional gains made by women musicians and teachers of music in the period of romantic Americanism before World War I probably strengthened the fear that American art music had become, or was inherently, effeminate”. Modernism in music can thus be understood as a reaction to first-wave feminism.\textsuperscript{39} Parsons Smith draws upon the work of feminist literary critics Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who argue that “anti-feminism was a fundamental, motivating factor for modernism in twentieth-century literature”.\textsuperscript{40} According to Gilbert and Gilbar, there was a “privileging of certain twentieth-century works as purely aesthetic or philosophic objects” and a repression of significant aspects of the history in which nineteenth-century women authors were engaged.\textsuperscript{41} Such suppression, was “remarkably successful in music”.\textsuperscript{42}

This prevailing negative attitude towards women composers in America was also evident in Europe in the 1920s and thereafter. In his \textit{Survey of Contemporary Music} (1924), Cecil Gray said “A woman’s composing is like a dog’s walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all”.\textsuperscript{43} In 1947, Psychologist Carl E. Seashore expressed his opinion about the perceived innate differences in nature between men and women in his essay “Why No Great Women Composers?” Seashore’s approach was modernised, reflecting the improved status of women, since he believed that women were equal to men in talent, intelligence, and education for composition.\textsuperscript{44} However, he located the answer to the question raised in his essay’s title in woman’s fundamental urge “to be beautiful, loved, and adored as a person”, and man’s urge “to provide and achieve in a career … These two distinctive male and female urges make the eternal feminine and persistent masculine types”.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{39} Parsons Smith 98–99.
\textsuperscript{40} Parsons Smith 90.
\textsuperscript{42} Parsons Smith 99.
\textsuperscript{44} Neuls-Bates 297.
Commonly perceived innate personality traits of men have been listed as aggressive, unemotional, brave, decisive, independent, assertive, analytical, dominant, and inclined to take more initiative. In contrast, women were portrayed as passive, sympathetic, nurturing, yielding, childlike, intuitive, submissive and sensitive. Laree McNeal Trollinger’s study of musically creative women showed that they conformed less closely with these stereotypes, and used both males and females as sources of inspiration. In addition, the parents and teachers of such women tended not to place security foremost in their formative years, even though the protection and security of females had traditionally received emphasis in order to contribute to the survival of the species. Being less contained, these women were freer to explore and experiment in the wider world. This applies to all four composers in this study.

This research gives credence to the argument that women can exhibit behaviour generally considered masculine (and likewise, men can express ‘feminine’ behaviour). It is clear that people are better-placed for higher intellectual functioning and professional success if they are less strongly stereotyped. A lack of any of these ‘masculine’ qualities, particularly self-esteem, inhibits the desire to be creative. Because young females have observed and possibly internalised women’s inferior position in society, and been aware of their perceived creative inferiority, the development of self-esteem has been more problematic.

Instead of subscribing to the belief that temperament is biologically determined and different for males and females, Jill Halstead agrees—as the current author does—with the widely-held view that whilst temperament (and uniqueness) may be inbuilt or genetically dictated, it is moulded and influenced by the emphasis and encouragement by society and culture of so-called masculine or feminine traits that are observed, imitated and reinforced.

48 Refer Chapter Two.
49 Halstead 55–56.
50 Halstead 46–47, 55.
These attitudes have created historically pervasive philosophical, psychological, sociological, cultural, economic and political biases against women as creators, which have been influential in restricting women’s access to the conditions conducive to the production of great art. The reasons why fewer women than men have attained eminence as composers (and artists), lie in the “circumstances surrounding women’s lives—circumstances largely incompatible with the exacting needs of musical creation”. As Linda Nochlin and others convey, the idea that talent will emerge against all odds needs to be interrogated. It is true that in recent times, increased awareness of the restrictions imposed on women has gradually resulted in less rigid sex-type socialisation, but Christine Battersby reminds us that “the progress of women in the arts has been like the slow, sideways progress of a crab towards the sea: a crab that keeps being picked up by malicious pranksters and placed back somewhere high on the beach”. In order to increase the number of women aspiring to become composers, the dominant stereotypes that have served to restrict and obscure female creativity need further deconstruction.

It is necessary to examine how these stereotypes have been deployed to thwart women’s chances for the creative opportunities required for potential inclusion in the musical canon, and thus for professional careers as composers. Several areas are worthy of attention in this regard. They include access to education in order to learn the craft of composition, opportunities for performance and publication (after ca. 1780), choice of musical genre, critical reception and possibilities for creative motherhood.

### 6.2.1 Access to Appropriate Education

As opposed to oral and improvisatory musical traditions such as folk and jazz, a formal education is necessary in Western art music in order to acquire the fundamental skills

---

51 Gates 31.
52 Nochlin 350.
53 Battersby 23.
54 Marcia Citron emphasises the enormous power wielded by the canon in defining those works considered to be the best. She describes the canon as “more or less equivalent with ‘standard repertoire’”, and points out the difficulty in altering it. Citron equates the musical canon with the field of literature, where “the canon functions as a basic tool in defining the scope of the discipline”. Works included “become source material for critical discourse and set exclusionary standards for works whose quality and thematic content do not meet certain disciplinary criteria”. Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 102.
required of a composer. The views of influential philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant have no doubt played a role in influencing societal opinion and the restrictions imposed by training institutions on women’s access to the appropriate training. These limitations were observed well by the late-nineteenth/early twentieth-century American composer Amy Fay when she claimed that women’s “whole training, from time immemorial, has tended to make them take an intense interest in the work of men and to stimulate them to their best efforts”.

Some aspiring female composers have met with parental (particularly paternal) resistance to the idea of the serious study of music. All four composers in this study are exceptions to this, encouragement by their fathers and other men having contributed to their development as composers. Women were also barred from the theoretical study needed to equip them for a compositional career, and this was true for aspiring artists as well. Composer Ethel Smyth emphasised this view in her essay “Female Pipings in Eden” (1933), in which she analysed the difficulties confronted by female composers of her time:

Face this truth: that because of what has been our position hitherto in the world of music, there is not at this present moment [1933] one single middle-aged woman alive who has had the musical education that has fallen to men as a matter of course, without any effort on their part, ever since music was!

Smyth was critical of “the misleading analogy which is often drawn between musical and literary careers”. Various commentators had questioned how women had managed to make a distinctive mark in literature, and not in music, suggesting that there was some “congenital defect in the female brain” that precluded women from excellence in musical composition. Smyth remarked, “what a relatively simple matter it is to become a writer”, since “you can teach yourself to write by reading, by watching life, by taking flights on your own and inflicting the result on such of your friends as have patience and discrimination”. However, she acknowledged that nineteenth-century female authors

55 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 59.
57 Refer Chapter Two.
58 Until the late eighteenth century, nude models were unavailable to women in art academies. Drawing from the living model was the ultimate stage of training, so women were essentially deprived of the possibility of creating major art works. In its need for thorough training, art is considered to be more analogous with music than is literature. Nochlin 354–355, Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 60.
59 Ethel Smyth, Female Pipings in Eden (London: Peter Davies, 1933); reprinted in Neuls-Bates, 286.
often needed to adopt male pseudonyms, and still did not write on such subjects as philosophy, astronomy, physics, and mathematics, since they had “no opportunity of studying such high matters”. 60

In her article “The ‘Woman Question’ in Music”, Jamie Kassler describes how music theory has been taught in the past in the British Isles, arguing that many social attitudes in Australia and the United States derive from this geographical location. 61 It should be noted that in the early centuries of the Christian church, women did take part in singing and divine worship. With the foundation of convents in the fourth century, they continued to sing, and the performing and compositional activities of nuns are well documented. 62 Kassler stresses the limited access most women have had to a thorough music education. Until the mid-eighteenth century, she claims, there were three avenues though which children could learn music: private tuition, apprenticeship and the grammar school. Private tuition was restricted to children of the upper class, and these students seldom entered the music profession. Music apprenticeships were regulated by guilds, membership of which was at first limited to men. Grammar schools followed the text and morality of the Bible and limited music education to boys, who would take their places in church and cathedral choirs. 63

Educational theory had traditionally specified the curriculum for the lower and upper classes only. With the rise of the middle class in the eighteenth century, it was necessary to develop a theory appropriate to this new stratum of society. Middle-class women were to receive a moderately well-rounded education, consisting of languages, elements of natural philosophy, and more importantly, the rudiments of music and other “ornamental” subjects. The invention of the pianoforte around the middle of the eighteenth century, and the requisite necessity to be able to read both treble and bass clefs, provided some middle-class women with an entrance into instrumental composition at a basic level. The traditional “rule of grace” of decorum, dictating that women of certain social rank should appear graceful rather than ungainly, remained however, and this served to limit their access to acquisition of appropriate skills for

60 Smyth 287.
61 Kassler 22.
63 Kassler 22.
composing music. Improvisation was the grounding for formal composition in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and continuo instruments were a principal means of teaching this skill. The rule of grace prohibited women from blowing wind instruments, and also from straddling continuo instruments such as the bass viol or cello, and the organ.64

Bourgeois women were more active in music-making in the late eighteenth century, as musical life increasingly became the province of the middle class following the French Revolution (1789–1799).65 They also had restricted access to the type of training that might lead to composition. Hoping for advances in political and legal status, women had taken an active part in the Revolution, but the emphasis on home and family and stability following the Revolution did little to fulfil this.66 The views of Rousseau and others still prevailed, that women’s education need not be as extensive as that of men. Women were destined by nature to dwell within the private sphere as wives and mothers, and the acquisition of knowledge might detract from that “true calling”.67 The words of one of the most enlightened men of his era, Moses Mendelssohn (grandfather of composers Felix and Fanny), exemplify this view: “Moderate learning becomes a lady, but not scholarship. A girl who has read her eyes red deserves to be laughed at.”68

In addition, music theory and composition were considered too challenging for female intellects. Such skills involved a grasp of logic, which was the prerogative of the male.69

Opportunities for women in musical education improved as the nineteenth century progressed, particularly for singing, which became an integral part of the female curriculum, but it remained true that relatively few women singers received adequate professional training. This was due to the aforementioned ‘rule of grace’, which

64 Kassler 22–23. Susan O’Neill shows that the notion that certain musical instruments are ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ still exists today. Clarinet, flute and violin continue to be perceived as suitable instrument choices for girls, while for boys, drums, trombone and trumpet are more likely to be chosen. Susan A. O’Neill, “Gender and Music”, The Social Psychology of Music, ed. David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 51–57.
65 Reich 130. This also reflected the contemporary trends that theoretically granted women equal status in education. Citron, “Women and the Lied”, 225.
66 Reich 131.
69 Kassler 23–24.
encompassed a perception regarding the impropriety of women’s performance in public. Similar prohibitions applied to professional female pianists.

A further issue which impacted on women’s education and subsequent contribution to musical life in the eighteenth, nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries was family background. Being born into an encouraging artistic or musical family has also helped men to develop creative lives, but it has been even more important for women to have been raised in an environment in which they could gain the necessary education and opportunities. High-achieving women report having received parental and social encouragement that enabled them to “transcend gender typing”. Citron notes that “women have had to depend upon assumptions other than that of their own tradition to understand the place and function of their contribution”. The research presented in her article “Women and the Lied” suggests that women who excelled in the composition of lieder in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century had generally experienced “youthful immersion in musico-literary circles”. Evidence suggests that this has remained true of twentieth-century composers. Lili Boulanger (1893–1918) benefited from enormous support for the development of her creative imagination from a family of musicians that included women professionals (grandmother, mother, sister). This is true of all nine women surveyed by Jill Halstead, and was a strong factor in assisting Sutherland and Carr-Boyed to pursue compositional careers.

---

70 Citron attributes this development to traditional German pedagogy that recognised the benefits to society derived from the well-reared child nurtured on the mother’s singing. It was considered an appropriate way of strengthening family ties and instilling basic moral values. Citron, “Women and the Lied”, 227. Another reason was that singing and piano-playing were perceived to maintain women’s gracefulness, as opposed to playing, say, wind instruments.


72 Family background has also been important for women artists. Linda Nochlin and Germaine Greer state that notable women artists through the centuries have generally been the daughters of artist fathers. Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, if not having so much parental encouragement, they have at least had a close personal connection with a strong, male artistic personality. Nochlin, 360; Greer, The Obstacle Race, 12.

73 “To be a great creator in art, one must be trained to it from one’s earliest years by a gifted parent or teacher. Mozart and Beethoven had fathers who fully realised the capacity of their sons, and they made them study early and late.” Fay, “Women and Music”; reprinted in Neuls-Bates, 218.

74 Nochlin 352; Halstead 86.


76 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 61.

77 Citron, “Women and the Lied”, 228.

78 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 61.

It was not until the final decades of the nineteenth century that the great European conservatories unwillingly began to admit women into advanced theory and composition classes. Women were excluded from such classes at the Paris Conservatoire until well into the nineteenth century, and only towards the century’s end were they admitted to programmes in these areas. At the Munich Conservatory, women were not permitted to study counterpoint until around 1897. Beforehand, anything but elementary harmony had been debarred. American composer Mabel Daniels was the first woman to be admitted to a score-reading class in 1902, and in a letter to a friend told an amusing story of the reception she received from male staff when she requested to do so. Even by the 1920s, women at the Royal College of Music in London were not thought to have the same ambitions as men.

Since women were first permitted to serious tertiary musical study, the number of women students has steadily grown. By the 1960s, it was less unusual to encounter women students, but they were still perceived as collectively of a lower standard than their male contemporaries. Women had long predominated numerically in secondary-level music classes in Britain, but began to dominate music education at the tertiary level only in the 1980s. Their examination results at this level equalled men’s by the late 1990s, indicating they had previously been disadvantaged in various ways, and that there was increasing awareness of past discrimination against women in education. Equality of academic success has not stretched to the wider music profession, with many fewer women than men having attained the middle and top ranks.

---

Chapter Two, Sections 2.2 and 2.3, where the supportive family backgrounds of Sutherland and Carr-Boyd are discussed.

80 Gates 31–32.
81 Citron, Gender and the Musical Canon, 59.
82 Daniels said: “If I had thrown a bombshell they could not have appeared more startled … ‘There have never been any women in the class. I am right, am I not, Herr Sekretariat’ said Stavenhagen. ‘You are right, Herr Direktor’, responded the other. He held his hands behind him and gazed at me as one might at a curious species of animal. I felt I ought to be tagged, like those poor creatures in the zoo. ‘Rare, From North America’.” From Mabel Daniels, An American Girl in Munich (Boston: Little Brown, 1905); reprinted in Neuls-Bates, 220–221.
84 Halstead 122, 129–130.
6.2.2 Opportunities for Performance and Publication

Nancy Reich alerts us that the acceptability or otherwise of women’s appearance in public as professional musicians in nineteenth-century Europe was to a large extent class dependent. Women from aristocratic families, or the so-called ‘bourgeois aristocracy’, were highly educated, gifted and skilled, they had fewer opportunities than their middle-class counterparts, since their participation in musical life was restricted to the private sphere. They neither performed in public nor published their work, providing them with little chance to grow artistically.\(^{85}\) Ruth Lee Martin stresses that the importance of a public performance cannot be under-estimated. It disseminates a composition and launches it on the ‘repertorial process’.\(^{86}\) It brings the composer’s name to a larger audience, confers tacit recognition and status on the composer by the musical establishment, and is an essential ingredient in a composer’s compositional growth.\(^{87}\)

Following attainment of an appropriate education in the foundations and practice of musical composition, and the creative process itself, publication of works is an essential part of the dissemination process and an important step towards a professional compositional career.\(^{88}\) Publication confers tangibility and a sense of permanence on a work, and enables its analysis and discussion.\(^{89}\) As Marcia Citron observes, “this boasts a poor record with regard to women: only a small percentage of their works have appeared in print”.\(^{90}\) Women composers were well aware of the marked discrepancy between their advanced musical training and society’s negative attitudes towards them, especially as published composers, and this led to lower professional self-confidence. Late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century German Lied composer Corona Schröter decried the prevailing attitudes in an announcement of her forthcoming Lieder publication:

---

85 Reich 126.
86 Lee Martin has developed a ‘repertorial process’ model. It is made up of several parts, beginning with the creative process itself (whether or not as a result of a commission). This is followed by mediation (interpretation in performance), critical judgment/reception (immediate and longer-term), and the (overlapping) dissemination process (recording, self-promotion, prizes, publication, analysis in the academy). The dissemination process should give rise to repeat performances or new commissions. Lee Martin 9–10.
87 Lee Martin 30.
89 Lee Martin 189.
90 Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 106.
I have had to overcome much hesitation before I seriously made the decision to publish a collection of short poems that I have provided with melodies. A certain feeling toward propriety and morality is stamped upon our sex, which does not allow us to appear alone in public, nor without an escort. Thus how can I present this, my musical work, to the public with anything other than timidity? The work of any lady … can indeed arouse a degree of pity in the eyes of some experts.  

The decision to publish a work was not only based on merits and the economics of the publishing industry. Prior to 1800, access to publication was largely controlled by patrons of political and ecclesiastical units, who supported the works of composers in their employ. Women were excluded from such employment, were denied this inbuilt outlet for publication. 

This situation altered after 1800, as music moved increasingly into the public domain, and the previous demand for new pieces was gradually overtaken by a preference for repeat performances. The composers best placed for repeat performances of their works were those with regular access to the musical establishment, consisting of other composers, performers, conductors, impresarios and board members of major performing organisations. Fanny Hensel’s case is an oft-cited and poignant illustration of this performance/publication combination. Unlike her brother Felix Mendelssohn, Hensel, a talented composer from an early age, was discouraged by her father from participation in the public world of music. She was supposed to remain “true to her sex by limiting the extent of her learning and by utilising her musical gifts for decorative enhancement rather than professional preparation”. From the closeted environment of her private salon, Hensel enjoyed very few public performances of her works, let alone repeat performances. She was counselled against publication by her brother, who perceived that

Fanny, as I know her, possesses neither the inclination nor calling for authorship. She is too much a woman for that, as is proper, and looks after her house and thinks neither about the public nor the musical world unless that primary occupation is accomplished. Publishing would only disturb her in these duties.

---

92 Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 106.
Corona Schröter, Clara Schumann and Fanny Hensel demonstrated the lack of confidence women composers experienced as a result of society’s restrictions on their public activities.\textsuperscript{95} Notable American composer Amy Fay (1844–1928) endorsed this view, saying that “women have been too much taken up with helping and encouraging men to place a proper value on their own talent, which they are too prone to underestimate and to think not worth making the most of.”\textsuperscript{96}

Citron identifies another gender-linked disadvantage that worked against initial and repeat performances. Women were not trained and hired as conductors, a natural outlet for performance of a composer’s works, and one that provided the opportunity for revision of orchestral works in preparation for publication. Hensel’s brother had performing groups at his disposal for just this opportunity through his conducting positions in Germany and guest appearances elsewhere.\textsuperscript{97}

It has been difficult for women to penetrate this world, largely because, according to Ethel Smyth, “no sooner did a woman leave college than she became aware of men’s firm intention to keep her out of that arena”.\textsuperscript{98} Smyth identified the opportunity to play in a first-class orchestra as

one of the main entrances to that delectable land of rough and tumble where alone salvation is to be found …. Here as nowhere else can you learn instrumentation, phrasing, conducting, rhythm; here the beautiful workaday part of your vocation gets into your blood automatically and gratis.\textsuperscript{99}

Smyth “burned with curiosity as to whither woman’s wings will carry her once she is free to soar”. She had grasped that with orchestral playing “lay the first step towards the liberation of a creative spirit”.\textsuperscript{100} Until the early 1930s, she noted, men’s unions, backed by conductors “contrived to keep women out of their bands—as some do still” (in 1933). The male “colleague” element was partly responsible, Smyth asserted, since

\textsuperscript{95} Citron, “Women and the Lied”, 231. 
\textsuperscript{97} Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 107. 
\textsuperscript{98} Smyth, in Neuls-Bates, 282. 
\textsuperscript{99} Smyth 283. 
\textsuperscript{100} Smyth 283–284.
“men are nearer to other men than they can ever be to women”. This left the “not
very advanced form of ‘education’” for aspiring women composers of “teaching school
children their notes” and singing on a voluntary basis in choruses. Smyth could see
this taboo starting to disintegrate, except with regard to women cellists. “Engulfed by
the rising flood of woman’s independence”, she suggested, “perhaps they [the BBC
Orchestra] are clinging to the violoncello as the drowning cling to a spar”.

In addition to positions as conductors and orchestral musicians, women were also
unable to “learn the meaning of the word authority and how best to use it”, because
positions such as chorus-trainers, and stage and lighting managers, were granted to
men. It is no wonder that as late as the 1930s some women composers still felt it
necessary to “conceal their femaleness and assume authorship under a neutral or
masculine identity”.

6.2.3 The Hierarchy of Genre

A further obstacle to the attainment by women composers of a public professional
profile is the “hierarchisation of genre”. In the formation of the ‘canon’, larger
compositional forms have been more highly valued. When “music settled in the public
arena” during the nineteenth-century, contemporary critics did not question these
qualitative distinctions. As the idea of a standard repertoire or canon of masterpieces
from the past gained credence, the more public, larger genres, particularly symphonic
works and opera, formed the majority, and this remains true now.

Lee Martin confirms that the larger orchestral forms encapsulate essential differences in
treatment of the genders. As noted, the essentialised male possesses masculine qualities
connected with the mind—with logic, order and rationality. The essentialised female,
on the other hand, possesses feminine qualities associated with the body—with emotions, disorder and whim. Because of the magnitude of an orchestral work, its compositional craft is heavily dependent on order and unity, and it has therefore been deemed an unsuitable medium for women. Orchestral music requires significant resources of people, time and money, which equate to power. Possession of a power base in the form of contacts or an established name as a composer is necessary in order to have works considered for performance.\textsuperscript{107} The smaller forms inhabited the private, non-professional sphere, as did women, both literally and metaphorically, so they were socialised into composing smaller genre works, and were more likely to achieve performances in this arena.\textsuperscript{108}

By the end of the nineteenth century, the perception that composition in smaller forms was an inferior activity was well entrenched. Reviewers linked gender with genre, casting negative aspersions on smaller forms, and the term ‘salon music’ became almost coterminous with ‘women’s music’, implying amateur qualities and less creative worth. Since more women than men were composing in smaller forms, their devaluation worked to diminish women’s confidence, and to exclude them from the canon, and thus from professional careers in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{109} To prove herself as a serious composer, a woman “should not conform to the expected ‘feminine’ pattern of small-scale composition”.\textsuperscript{110} With the first wave of feminism in the nineteenth century, “women had begun to challenge the status quo with regard to genre and the prestige attached to it”, and were experimenting with larger forms previously considered the realm of male composers.\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{6.2.4 Critical Reception}

Critical reception is another significant “marker on the professional path” to recognition as a serious composer. Citron reminds us that “reception reflects and establishes the criteria by which music is judged, and as such plays an obvious role in valuation … It serves as the framework in which pieces are reviewed and marked off for attention”. If

\begin{footnotes}
\item[107] Lee Martin 23, 29.
\item[108] Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 110.
\item[109] Citron, “Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon”, 110. The significance of the canon is noted in the current chapter, Footnote 54.
\item[110] Halstead 112.
\item[111] Lee Martin 25.
\end{footnotes}
a work receives such notice, the implication is that it “must be worthy of attention and therefore important”, and “the professional music critic has wielded considerable power”.112 Often reviews are perceived as definitive judgments of a work, despite the fact that it is difficult for critics to avoid imposing their own aesthetic values.113 “Even if the assessment is negative”, Citron claims, “an implied significance is missing when a work is not reviewed”.114 Neuls-Bates argues that critics of the late nineteenth century responded differently to women’s composition. They developed “a system of sexual aesthetics that analysed music in terms of feminine and masculine traits”. Women were expected exclusively to cultivate ‘feminine’ music, which “was by definition graceful and delicate”. In contrast, masculine music was “powerful in effect and intellectually rigorous in harmony, counterpoint, and other structural logic”.115

Women’s music has been less often reviewed than men’s, and its evaluation has been “gender-linked”, placing women in a “separate but not equal category that has widened the gulf between themselves and the homogeneous canon”.116 The tone of such reviews varied between patronising (“surprisingly good for a woman”), “too feminine” or “too masculine”. Nineteenth-century composer Cécile Chaminade composed music perceived to be “charming and graceful”, but other music was deemed to be “too virile”.117 A critic of the Lieder of Corona Schröter acknowledged inadequate musical training, but did not add that this made her creative achievements all the more remarkable.118 Ethel Smyth also noted how differently the press reacted to the works of men and women, and for this reason gave up reading reviews: “Why court depression needlessly?”119

6.3 Creative Motherhood: Barriers and Benefits

Dualistic ideas of masculinity and femininity have clearly influenced the creative opportunities and lives of all women, but its impact on mothers is most pertinent in this context. It is necessary to explore the particular conflicted experiences of women who

113 Lee Martin 186.
115 Neuls-Bates 223.
119 Smyth 294.
have not been content only to follow what Carolyn Heilbrun refers to as the conventional ‘feminine plot’ involving the security of love, marriage and motherhood. These women have felt compelled to acknowledge also what have previously been considered more ‘adventurous masculine’ impulses towards creative careers.  

As Gilbert and Gubar express with their description of the pen as metaphorical penis, writing has been considered a male preserve. It is unsurprising that writing mothers have best expressed the conflict experienced by creative mothers as a result of the pervasive perception that their role is to procreate rather than to create. Ursula Le Guin notes that no book by a woman with children has ever been included in the Canon of English Literature. Like others, she acknowledges that there is now less censure and more support for a woman who wants to be a mother and an artist, but there is still much room for improvement.

Literary critic and author Susan Rubin Suleiman traces the history of discourse on the tensions between writing and motherhood. Whilst acknowledging that the either/or theory is older than psychoanalysis, she is critical of the influence of psychoanalytic theories expounded by Helene Deutsch and others. Deutsch maintained that artistic creation and motherhood emanate from the same source. Mothers could therefore satisfy their creative desires through motherhood, having less need for other avenues of creative expression.

Le Guin explores the choice that women have been pressured to make between the “baby and the book”, and draws on Carol Gilligan’s thesis to highlight the difference between the respective responsibilities of males and females towards others. Gilligan asserts that in our society, males are raised to think and speak in terms of rights, and

---

124 Rubin Suleiman 118.  
125 Le Guin 178. Alicia Ostriker uses these same words to express the ‘either/or’ choice: “That women should have babies rather than books is the considered opinion of Western civilisation.” Alicia Ostriker, “A Wild Surmise: Motherhood and Poetry”; excerpted in *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*, 155.
women in terms of responsibilities. Consequently a man can assert his ‘right’ to freedom from relationships and dependents, but a woman lives more “as part of an intense and complex network in which freedom is arrived at, if at all, mutually”.  

Both Mara Faulkner and D’Arcy Randall emphasise this problematic binary, oppositional system. In her article “Motherhood as Source and Silencer of Creativity”, about author Tillie Olsen, Faulkner maintains that “women have been told, blatantly or subtly, that they must choose between motherhood and other creative work, including writing”. Randall, in her interpretation of aspects of Adrienne Rich’s seminal work *Of Woman Born*, blames patriarchy for its expectation that a woman must sacrifice maternity and “maternal voices” if she wishes for political, social, intellectual, artistic or literary power.

Rich epitomises the conflict confronted by women between the desire to procreate and to mother and its attendant responsibilities, and the desire to create. She uses her own situation to elucidate this struggle, eloquently expressing the pressure on the twentieth-century woman to choose between motherhood and other pursuits:

> The twentieth-century, educated young woman, looking perhaps at her mother’s life, or trying to create an autonomous self in a society which insists that she is destined primarily for reproduction, has with good reason felt that the choice was an inescapable either/or: motherhood or individuation, motherhood or creativity, motherhood or freedom.

The conflict between motherhood and creativity was difficult for Rich, and she initially saw the two activities of mothering and writing as mutually exclusive. When asked why she did not write poems about her children, Rich replied: “For me, poetry was where I lived as no-one’s mother, where I existed as myself”. Rich’s attitude in this regard was forced to alter over the years. Her first two collections of poetry (1951, 1953) showed her “the dutiful daughter of the fathers”, echoing the forms of the male poets, a “façade” that Rich felt was necessary to adopt at the time. By 1958, she was “split between a publicly accepted persona”, and a part of herself that she perceived as

---

127 Faulkner 213.
128 D’Arcy Randall 197.
129 Rich 160.
130 Rich 31.
131 Riley 211.
the “essential, the creative and powerful self, yet also as possibly unacceptable, perhaps even monstrous”\textsuperscript{132}. An awareness grew that poems had been inhabited by women, but not written by them. With the realisation that she had been conditioned by the ideas and subject matter of male poetry, Rich decided to break free from the traditions that had confined her work. Instead of emulating the poetry from which she learned her craft, the nature and subject matter of her work began to reflect her identity as wife, mother and poet.\textsuperscript{133}

Earlier in the twentieth century, French-born author Anaïs Nin had already rejected the separation of her creative and mothering activities. She repudiated the male ‘I am God’ authorial voice, saying that women’s creation must be “different from man’s abstractions”. It should be “exactly like her creation of children, it must come out of her own blood, englobed by her womb, nourished with her own milk”.\textsuperscript{134} Writing in 1978, Tillie Olsen remarked that not many novelists “have directly used the material open to them out of motherhood as a central source of their work”.\textsuperscript{135}

The received wisdom has been that it is unnatural, indeed impossible, to be a mother and be creative. Quite apart from the constraints on time and space in which to create, mothers have clearly felt pressure to create works according to a male code or practice.\textsuperscript{136} Many women have embraced Modjeska’s idea that in the face of art, life must go on, and articulate the need not only to value more highly their subjective experience as women, but to free themselves to express that subjectivity in their creative endeavours. They promulgate a different space in which inspiration is derived from life as it happens around them.

An important development by French radical feminists in theorising the relationship between writing and femininity and motherhood is relevant in this regard, and is well exemplified in the work of Julia Kristeva. The basis of Kristeva’s argument is that for women motherhood establishes a natural link, through the child, with the social world,

\textsuperscript{133} Riley 210–211.
\textsuperscript{134} Anaïs Nin, \textit{Journals} (August 1937); quoted in Battersby 44.
\textsuperscript{135} Tillie Olsen, \textit{Silences} (New York: Doubleday, 1979) 32.
\textsuperscript{136} These constraints were discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1.
providing a privileged means of entry into the order of culture and of language.\footnote{137}

Kristeva makes no absolute claims that motherhood favours creation, but rejects the either/or dilemma and suggests that motherhood and feminine creation are integrated:

Far from being in contradiction with creativity (as the existentialist myth still tries to make us believe), motherhood can—in itself and if the economic constraints are not too burdensome—favour a certain feminine creation. To the extent that it lifts the fixations, makes passion circulate between life and death, self and other, culture and nature …\footnote{138}

Long before these theories were developed, creative women were expressing the significance of the connection between their mothering and their art. Nineteenth-century writer Margaret Oliphant, who brought up six children, feels she benefited from the “difficult, obscure, chancy connection between the art work and the emotional/manual/managerial complex of skills and tasks called ‘housework’. To sever that connection would put the writing itself at risk, and make it “unnatural”.\footnote{139}

The writing ran through everything. But then it was also subordinate to everything, to be pushed aside for any little necessity. I had no table even to myself, much less a room to work in, but sat at the corner of the family table with my writing-book, with everything going on as if I had been making a shirt instead of writing a book … I took my share in the conversation, going on all the same with my story, the little groups of imaginary persons, these other talks evolving themselves quite undisturbed.\footnote{140}

In \textit{Silences}, Tillie Olsen cites German Expressionist printmaker, painter and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), who questioned whether the sensuality of working among children was not more beneficial overall than the luxury of concentrated working time:\footnote{141}

As you, the children of my body, have been my tasks, so too are my other works … I am gradually approaching the period in my life when work comes first. When both the boys were away for Easter, I hardly did anything but work … And yet I wonder whether the ‘blessing’ is not missing from such work … Formerly, in my so wretchedly limited working time, I was more productive, because I was

\footnote{137}Rubin Suleiman 125–126.
\footnote{138}Julia Kristeva, “Un Nouveau Type d’intellectuel: Le dissident”, \textit{Tel Quel} 74 (Winter 1977): 6–7; quoted in Rubin Suleiman 125.
\footnote{139}Le Guin 171.
\footnote{140}Mrs Harry Coghill, ed., \textit{Autobiography and Letters of Mrs Margaret Oliphant}, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974) 23–24; quoted in Le Guin 169–170.
\footnote{141}Kats-Chernin’s echo of these sentiments, outlined in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.2.2, are difficult to ignore.
more sensual; I lived as a human being must live, passionately interested in everything … Potency, potency is diminishing.142

According to Annie Gottlieb, Olsen was one of the pioneers in dignifying “uniquely female experience as a source of human knowledge”.143 Olsen’s own life as a writer and working mother of four daughters contradicts the idea that mothering and writing are mutually exclusive. For her, the losses to literature and other fields of knowledge have been incalculable “because comprehensions possible out of motherhood (including, among so much invaluable else, the very nature, needs, illimitable potentiality of the human being—and the everyday means by which these are distorted, discouraged, limited, extinguished) … have had … to remain inchoate, fragmentary, unformulated (and alas, invalidated)”.144

Lois Rubin has attempted to respond to Rubin Suleiman’s suggestion to ask today’s writing mothers what effect motherhood might have on their writing. From an increasing number of writer-mothers, Rubin selected and sent a questionnaire to 150 of them. From the 50 responses she received, the overall perception was the “deeper, broader creativity that resulted from motherhood, in spite of its demands on their time and energy.” Only 10% of the women mentioned more drawbacks than benefits.145

Perhaps American poet and scholar Alicia Ostriker (b. 1937) best articulates the positive impact motherhood can have on creativity:

The advantage of motherhood for a woman artist is that it puts her in immediate and inescapable contact with the sources of life, death, beauty, growth, corruption. If she is a theoretician it teaches her things she could not learn otherwise; if she is a moralist it engages her in serious and useful work; if she is a romantic it constitutes an adventure which can not be duplicated by any other, and which is guaranteed to supply her with experiences of utter joy and utter misery; if she is a classicist it will nicely illustrate the vanity of human wishes. If the woman artist has been trained to believe that the activities of motherhood are trivial, tangential to main issues of life, irrelevant to the great themes of literature, she should untrain herself. The training is misogynist, it protects and perpetuates systems of

142 Käthe Kollwitz, Diaries and Letters; quoted in Olsen Silences; excerpted in Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood, 111–112.
143 Annie Gottlieb, “Feminists Look at Motherhood”, Mother Jones (November 1976) 51; quoted in Faulkner 238.
144 Tillie Olsen, Silences, 202; quoted in Faulkner 216.
thought and feeling which prefer violence and death to love and birth, and it is a lie.\textsuperscript{146}

The degree of separation and/or intersection between the activities of mothering and composition for Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott will be examined in Chapter Eight.

\textsuperscript{146} Ostriker 159.
CHAPTER SEVEN
MUSICALLY-CREATIVE WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described historical attitudes that have caused women composers to be faced with particular challenges in realising their creative potentials. The intention here is to show how these have been evinced in the Australian context, and to highlight aspects peculiar to Australia’s colonial status. Appendix One provides background information about the roots of Australia’s transplanted musical culture and the beginnings of tertiary music education in Australia. This chapter will examine the manifestations in Australia of other issues raised in Chapter Six, namely dissemination, genre, reception, and the ways in which a living might be made as a composer. This will further illuminate the backgrounds against which the composers have built their creative careers in Australia, which will be examined in Chapter Eight. Scholarly research by Australian musicologists focusing on aspects of women’s experience as composers in this country will be drawn upon to assist in developing the argument that, whilst all composers in Australia have faced difficulties in bringing their music to prominence, women have faced obstacles that are unique to their gender. Although the prognosis for the recognition of women’s compositional creativity has improved considerably since Australia’s early days, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the untapped potential of Australian women composers.

7.2 Aspects of Dissemination: Publication, Recordings and Self-Promotion

Rowena Pearce reminds us that in the early years of the twentieth century, the market for published music in Australia beyond the popular and educational genres was small, and deteriorated further during the economic slump of the 1930s. There was little demand for Australian music overseas, which meant that publishing outside the undersized Australian market was difficult. The perception of women composers as
little more than amateurs was still pronounced, making publication a challenging issue for women in particular. Pedagogical interests were widely accepted as a female domain. This was reflected in the number of women whose elementary-level educational music was published, but also served to reinforce the notion of amateurism.¹

Philanthropist Louise Hanson-Dyer, a disciple of G.W.L. Marshall-Hall and married to Melbourne’s linoleum king James Dyer, had established L’Oiseau Lyre in Paris, a press which concentrated principally on early music. Hanson-Dyer supported the publication of women’s music, in particular that of Sutherland, whose early *Violin Sonata* Hanson-Dyer published in 1935. Alberts in Sydney also “courageously and unprofitably took up Australian works at a time when it was vital to composers to have printed (as opposed to today’s photocopied) scores to send out for performance consideration”.²

Recordings are an indispensable part of the repertorial process nowadays, since they “preserve temporal events and allow these events to become repeatable”. A recording is accessible to a wider audience, and “bestows status on the performance”.³ Women are under-represented on commercial recordings in Australia, and this obviously impacts on their inclusion in the canon.⁴

Gabrielle Smart points out that before the 1970s, women tended to have lower career expectations than men, and this inclination has lingered. Women were socialised to become wives and mothers, and required to supply the labour of a full-time wife and mother, which means they have lacked the long hours necessary to compose, promote and disseminate their music.⁵ Female children have been encouraged to take a more passive, less direct approach than males, and have inherited the perception that women are lesser composers than men. As Ruth Lee Martin stresses, in Australia it is as important to be able to promote one’s music and build networks as it is to have the ability to compose it. Self-promotion does not necessarily come easily to male or female composers, but women’s different socialisation has contributed to their greater reticence in openly demonstrating professional ambition, and to their lower self-

¹ Mirrie Hill managed to have half of her total compositional output published, and this is noteworthy for the reasons discussed. Pearce 66.
² Radic, “Margaret Sutherland Composer”, 404
³ Lee Martin 188.
⁴ Refer Chapter Six, Footnote 86 for a description of the repertorial process.
⁵ Smart 25.
confidence in self-promotion. This has further inhibited their prospects for entering the canon.

7.3 The Hierarchy of Genre

British and Eurocentric musical culture was transplanted to Australia, including the aesthetic values of the grand musical structures of nineteenth-century Romanticism in Europe. This led to the devaluation of smaller genres and their relegation to the non-professional sphere. For several reasons, Australian women composers have tended to favour composing in smaller genres. The demands of the private world of domesticity and motherhood make composing in the more time-consuming larger mediums particularly difficult, and concentration on smaller forms increases the chances for performances of their music. Margaret Sutherland expressed a preference for the intimacy of writing for a small group. Miriam Hyde (1913–2005) experienced domestic pressures that impacted on her choice of genre, saying that “the bigger the scale [of a composition], the less likelihood there is that it will come into fruition through the ever present limit of time, particularly for the women composer (and mother) with an average day fragmented around domestic claims”. Mirrie Hill’s public reputation became associated with the composition of miniatures, “and by inference, insubstantial works”, and she tried to draw attention to her larger orchestral compositions when describing her music in interviews. By the last decade of the twentieth century, women were still “smarting under accusations” that they “did not compose in the larger forms, not from the hopelessness of getting performances but because they were not able to control large forces”.

Despite these obstacles, Australia’s first known women composers of art-music, such as Florence Ewart, Mona McBurney and Georgette Peterson were composing orchestral music. The middle generation was also active in this regard, and in the 1950s and 1960s more women composers, such as Moneta Eagles, Dulcie Holland, Ann Carr-Boyd,

---

6 Lee Martin 193.
7 Discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.3, and Appendix One, Section A1.8.
8 Smart 25–26.
9 Symons 132. Sutherland’s opinions and choices about genre will be examined in more detail in Chapter Eight, Section 8.3.1.
10 Hyde 146.
11 Pearce 67.
12 Radic, “For and Against a Festival”, 2.
Mary Mageau and Helen Gifford began composing in the larger forms. There was an upsurge in the 1970s, and the numbers of women realising their desire and gaining confidence to compose for large forces has been steadily increasing since. Possible reasons include increased interest by the Federal Government at that time in commissioning compositions, more formalised courses in composition at tertiary level and, undoubtedly, the impact of second-wave feminism.

A tendency remains for women composers to avoid orchestral writing. This is particularly true of the symphony, which is “to some degree still regarded as the epitome of the Romantic ideal of transcending, absolute music”, and arguably the genre that still enjoys the greatest prestige. However, there is a gradual shift by women composers towards orchestral writing. At the end of 1999, around 20% of composers represented by the Australian Music Centre (AMC) were women, but their music comprised only about 10.57% of orchestral writing. Approximately 25.5% of AMC composers are now women, and around 16.5% of orchestral works are theirs. Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of female role models, and the acquisition of commissions still provides a challenge to women. The procurement of commissions, particularly for larger orchestral works, is much more beneficial than a less formal arrangement, since it enables a composer to devote more much-needed time and energy to composition, and is normally a guarantee that the work will be performed at least once. As composer Mary Mageau notes, the benefit also flows to the performer, who may have the opportunity to perform a work tailored to their specific talents.

13 Lee Martin 40.
15 See Section 7.6 below for further discussion of the situation for women composers after 1970.
16 Lee Martin 41, 80.
17 The Australian Music Centre (AMC) was formed in 1975 as a service organisation dedicated to increasing the profile and sustainability of Australian composers and other creative artists. The AMC introduced composer representation in 1988. Composers who apply and are accepted for representation enjoy a number of benefits such as library services, whereby composers can lodge their works in the collection, making them available for study and perusal by students, teachers, performers, broadcasters and others who use the library. There is also a facsimile score service for composers whose work has not been published: the AMC can reproduce copies of their scores and performance parts for sale, with the royalties being returned to the composer. The AMC also offers a range of services to all composers, whether or not they have qualified for formal representation. These include professional information, training projects, copying of parts, and promotion and international representation.

18 Lee Martin 41.
19 These figures were provided by Judith Foster of the AMC, 15 February 2008.
20 Lee Martin 159, 176–177.
7.4 Critical Reception

Marcia Citron’s assessment that reviews of women’s composition are often “gender-linked” is applicable also in the Australian context, though perhaps critics have not held quite as much power in Australia as Citron claims has been the case in America. Australia’s significantly smaller population and its small contemporary music scene have meant that the majority of composers and performers are known to audiences; thus word of mouth has rivalled the power of the critic.\(^{21}\)

Johanna Selleck demonstrates how broad social constructs or ideals underpinned the criteria by which Melbourne music critics praised or criticised a performance during the years 1880 to 1902. She claims these social constructs shaped reviewers’ expectations about desired qualities in a performer, and in turn these expectations were reinforced in the mind of the reader, though she acknowledges that this interplay between critics and audience may have been more powerful in the late nineteenth century than today. In the absence of competition from radio and television, newspapers played a greater role.\(^{22}\)

Selleck discusses the ways in which notions of identity are shaped through the use by music critics of sets of specific vocabularies or labels in the Melbourne press between these years. She points to Australia’s unique colonial, convict history, and to the role played by the musical arts in removing the stain of the nation’s brutal beginnings. In such an environment, where it was particularly important to clarify the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, labels in music reviews were powerful devices with which to endorse these boundaries. Selleck’s detailed analysis of these vocabularies indicates that they were indeed gendered, and acted to reflect and reinforce the differing expectations of men’s and women’s roles at the time.\(^{23}\) A woman who forgot her rightful place as selfless, passive, dependent, morally pure, chaste principal socialiser of children and moral guardian of the family, and indulged in the male domain of compositional creativity, was “neither man nor woman”, but “something which has no name and part in life”.\(^{24}\)

\(^{21}\) Lee Martin 186.
\(^{22}\) Selleck 2.
\(^{23}\) Selleck 149–193.
\(^{24}\) Selleck 190; Musical Times, 1 October 1882: 522; cited in Selleck 191.
Catherine Wilson addresses the issue of reception in her article about the Women’s Work Exhibition of 1907, surveying the nature of press reception received by women composers involved in the exhibition. Their musical efforts were recognised and treated relatively seriously by music reviewers in the *Argus* and the *Age*, but a number of reviews had a “distinctly gendered feel” and “attempted to play down women’s incursions into the ranks of what was traditionally male music-making”. Women’s music was characterised as the ‘lighter side’ of the Exhibition, “a frivolous and essentially ‘feminine’ enterprise”. The musical events served to complement the images of what was generally considered women’s real work. It was domesticity that dominated the Exhibition: marriage, motherhood, and domestic labour from needlecraft to the culinary arts.

Women composers married to composers could face the specific problem of being overshadowed by their husbands, and Mirrie Hill’s experience attests to this. Press articles tended to mention her connection with Alfred Hill, and to be somewhat condescending regarding her own musical contributions. She was often asked about her skills as a housewife, and it was commonly suggested that she could not perform the roles of housewife and composer without the latter suffering. As Rowena Pearce notes, a married male composer is highly unlikely to be asked about his housekeeping skills.

The situation had not greatly altered by the middle of the twentieth century. Gabrielle Smart discusses the treatment by the press of women composers in the period of the 1930s to the 1960s, and concludes that the “common use of patronising language appears to support derogative feminine stereotypes”. She notes that the situation has improved nowadays, but suggests that Sutherland’s generation of women composers

---

26 Wilson 443.
27 Reviews of orchestral performances were mixed. For example, the flighty, excitable natures of women together with inadequate instrumental balance were thought to be responsible for a disappointing first performance by an orchestra conducted by Mona McBurney. As Wilson points out, “unfortunately, the *Age* failed to question why so few of Melbourne’s female instrumentalists were cellists and double bassists. Convention and tradition had long confined aspiring female musicians to a small range of instruments.” Wilson 443–444.
28 Gustav Mahler went as far as to forbid his wife Alma Mahler (née Schindler) from composing, and only relented when she threatened to leave him. It was not until after Mahler’s death that she was freed to write music unimpeded by a seemingly oppressive father figure. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 61.
29 Pearce 47, 50–51.
30 Smart 26.
was still treated differently by the press. "Through the use of pejorative language", Smart argues, “women were placed in a different sphere to men and treated as a separate, homogeneous group of musicians”. This “portrayed women musicians as naturally lesser talents”. One such example is a critique of Sutherland’s compositions by James Murdoch: “There is never anything sloppy or sentimental in her writing”, he stated, as if this were a surprising achievement for a woman. Smart highlights the seemingly common practice of commenting on women’s appearance ahead of their compositional talent. In a piece about Dulcie Holland in the British and New Zealander (1938), she was described as “young, dark and vivacious”.

Women’s composition was trivialised in the press when it was “not viewed as a discipline which requires the acquisition of technique and long hours of application, but instead is endowed with an ethereal, ‘otherworldly’ quality”. This is aptly exemplified in the title of an article found in Dulcie Holland’s scrapbook: “True Australians, They Teach, Look After Homes As Well as Compose Music”. A further example is contained in the title and content of Miriam Hyde’s autobiography Complete Accord. She aimed to create the impression of a happy, balanced home life, to which end she ensured that her musical aspirations did not cause too much of “an encroachment on family life”. As Linda Kouvaras notes, “Hyde repeatedly stresses the achievement of happy and ‘complete accord that prevailed in our home’”. Her urge to ensure that her career was not perceived as more important than her role as wife and mother is not surprising. In the mid twentieth century, when Hyde was raising her family, expectations on women to make domestic life their primary role lingered.

An increasing awareness of the use of gendered language has led to more objective reviewing of women’s music in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Lee Martin’s discussion on the critical judgment of each of the composers involved in her research provides valuable insights into the ways in which gendered language has shaped perceptions of women’s musical talent.
study does not reveal strong indications of gender-related treatment. Of the three composers in this study who are currently active (Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott), none reports receiving reviews containing gendered or patronising language.

7.5 Opportunities for Employment 1930s–1960s: The ABC and the AMEB

Smart shows that the period from the 1930s to the 1960s was another time of huge change in Australia’s musical development. With the post-war boom of the 1950s, “Australia emerged from being a cultural backwater to a country with a new and individual voice”. This was “largely the result of the formation of the Australian Broadcasting Company, later known as the Australian Broadcasting Commission” (ABC) in 1932. Through this institution, previously limited outlets for Australian composition became much less so. According to Tunley, its impact “through its varied roles as broadcaster and entrepreneur and through its eventual establishment of orchestras in all capital cities, could hardly be over-estimated”. Murdoch credits the ABC with being “the principal instrument” in effecting the vital state that composition had acquired in Australia by the 1970s. The decade of the 1960s saw the emergence of music by contemporary Australian composers that gave “a totally new complexion to Australian music”. Tunley adds that it was only in the latter decades of the twentieth century that the ABC “lent positive and sustained support to serious Australian composition beyond the 5% ‘local content’ demanded of its broadcasts by law”. At this stage, writes Murdoch, the ABC

---

38 These composers are Helen Gifford, Miriam Hyde, Anne Boyd, Caroline Szeto, Elena Kats-Chernin, Mary Mageau and Ruth Lee Martin. Lee Martin 99, 112, 126–127, 140, 150,162, 171.
39 This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Eight, Section 8.4.
40 Smart 25.
41 Smart 25. Then Prime Minister Joseph Lyons declared that the Government’s purpose was to appoint able and impartial trustees for an important national service; their task would be to provide information and entertainment, culture and gaiety, and to “serve all sections and to satisfy the diversified tastes of the public”; quoted in K.S. Inglis, This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932–1983 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983) 5.
42 In its first year of operation, the ABC began to offer some encouragement to composers by awarding £450 in prizes for a variety of works, from a symphony to a chamber work. It was the ABC’s hope to lay the foundation for a national music literature. However, few Australian works were heard more than once. Inglis 27, 52.
43 Tunley 2.
44 The advent during the 1950s of the LP record was also a crucial factor in Australian composers’ development, since whole new areas of music were made accessible to the public, and especially that of post-war European music. Murdoch xi–xii.
45 Tunley 3.
46 Tunley 2–3.
acquired new, more progressive officers, and its musical programmes on radio, by comparison with what had been broadcast in the preceding decades, showed a remarkable adventurousness. Whatever criticisms may be made regarding other aspects of its operation, its responsible treatment of the Australian composer has been exemplary.  

Geitenbeek claims that the ABC was very supportive of women composers as well as men in a number of ways during this period. In the ABC Composer Competitions of 1933, a third of the placings awarded went to women. The ABC, along with other government departments, including the Department of Interior Film Unit, “tended to be the best employers of women as composers”. 

In 1936, the ABC established permanent orchestras in six states, which “raised the general standard of music-making and audience discernment”. It implemented a policy of touring international conductors and soloists, but despite some positive repercussions, resident soloists were somewhat neglected. Contemporary music in Australia was also ignored, though this development was partially rectified with the formation of the Society of New Music in 1949. This organisation introduced several hundred contemporary works by local and overseas composers to Melbourne audiences, and was the sole organisation of its kind until Australia became a member of the International Society of Contemporary Music in 1958.

---

47 Murdoch xi.
48 Prizewinners included Margaret Sutherland, Theodora Sutherland, Dulcie Cohen, Dulcie Holland, Miriam Hyde, Moneta Eagles and Phyllis Batchelor. “The Prizes for Composers: Broadcasting Commission’s Results”, The Australian Musical News, August 1933, 21; cited in Geitenbeek 30, 33. By the end of the 1930s, competitions for composers became unnecessary, as the ABC was virtually the only patron in the country, and was offered over 100 works a year. Inglis 52. The Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) also gave composer awards, and provided a fund to assist composers in the onerous task of copying their music, as well as subsidising the commercial release of Australian compositions. Geitenbeek 30, Murdoch xi.
49 For example, the career of Phyllis Batchelor began when she appeared on ABC radio with other promising students in a programme entitled ‘Young Australia’. This led to further opportunities, and she remained with the ABC until the 1970s. Despite the fact that Batchelor had much of her work performed, broadcast and recorded, only 8% has been published. Esther Rofe also worked with the ABC, initially as an arranger and later as balance officer. Dulcie Holland (1913–2000) and Moneta Eagles (1924–2003) both enjoyed successful careers as composers of film music with the Department of the Interior Film Unit in New South Wales. Geitenbeek 31.
50 Smart 25.
51 Covell 121.
52 Smart 25.
Geitenbeek maintains that, despite its apparent conservatism, the AMEB has also provided opportunities for women as musicians. From 1931 “the board encouraged contributions from all Australian composers regardless of gender”, and “the AMEB was always keen to promote Australian composers by publishing their works in the grade books and the free lists of the syllabus”. 53 Since the population of Australian composers was small, women composers, who were in the minority, were also invited to submit compositions for inclusion. Their works were not used with the frequency of their male contemporaries, but they were admitted without much controversy. 54 Geitenbeek concludes that “for all its shortcomings, the AMEB proved to be one of the best opportunities for women composers between 1930 and 1960, in terms or reaching a future public”. 55 Through its employment positions, women composers were provided with publication opportunities.

7.6 Second-Wave Feminism and the ‘A’s: ABC, APRA, Australia Council, Academia, AMEB and AMC

The significant developments in Australia’s musical climate during the previous three decades set the scene for ever-increasing activities in the contemporary music scene from 1970 to the present. Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott have benefited from such developments. During the 1960s, the number of major commissions offered to Australian composers grew from very few to around 85 in the year 1970. Most commissions emanated from universities, the ABC, Musica Viva, Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) and the Australian Opera. Towards the end of the decade, the Federal Government, which had previously been somewhat neglectful of composers, became more involved in the provision of financial support to composers through commissions. 56 This happened first through its Advisory Board,

53 Geitenbeek 31.
54 Composers invited to make submissions to the 1932 syllabus included Alfred Hill, Mirrie Hill, Ivy Ayres, Fritz Hart, Margaret Sutherland and William James. Men had three or more works in the syllabus each year, compared with one or two by women. These men were also on the advisory board for the selection of music, a board to which few women were admitted in the 1930s. Geitenbeek, “Reaching a Public”, 31-32. Other women composers who wrote educational music, much of which has been included in the AMEB syllabus, include Miriam Hyde, Dulcie Holland and Brisbane’s Marjorie Hesse (1911-1986). Crisp 50. Geitenbeek 33.
55 Geitenbeek 33.
56 Up until this time the only support available had been through a scheme known as the Music Foundation operated by APRA, which provided subsidies towards recordings, publication of scores and duplication of orchestral parts. By the middle of the 1950s, awards had been given to 80 composers. Tunley 4.
Commonwealth Assistance to Australian Composers, and later through the Australian Council for the Arts (now known as the Australia Council). One of the Board’s first projects was an anthology entitled *Musical Composition in Australia* (1969). This comprised a catalogue of the works of 46 selected composers, an historical survey and a selection of commercially available records and scores.\(^{57}\) It is pertinent to note that Sutherland, such a pivotal figure in Australian composition, was not included in this volume, and neither were any other women composers.\(^{58}\) Further interrogation of the nature of women composers’ experience in Australia was required.

In the 1960s, significant challenges were mounted to the “prevailing cultural paradigm” of Australian musical culture as a “necessarily conservative, because transplanted, imitation of a parent British culture, and one in which the attitudes of the late nineteenth century” prevailed. Kay Dreyfus argues that the decade of the 1990s “may well come to stand beside the decade of the [19]60s in importance”. The most significant challenge to this dominant cultural paradigm, of Australian musical life, she asserts, came from feminism.\(^{59}\)

This shift is evident in several initiatives. The Australian Women Composers’ Network was formed in 1990, primarily as a response to the anger of women composers, who were excluded from significant musical activities and commissions.\(^{60}\) These included the Australia Bicentenary Celebrations (1988), the Keating Artistic Fellowships (1989), the ABC’s orchestral commissions (1989) and its Classic Compact Disc Collection and the Brisbane Musica Nova Festival (1990).\(^{61}\) Two festival conferences of women’s music were staged in 1991 (Adelaide), 1994 (Melbourne), and a third early in the following decade (2001 in Canberra). These were opportunities for the performance of Australian women’s compositions, and for the delivery of a variety of scholarly papers in the area of feminist musicology.

---

\(^{57}\) Tunley 4.

\(^{58}\) Symons 25.

\(^{59}\) Kay Dreyfus, “In Search of New Waters”, 155–156.

\(^{60}\) This panel consisted of active women composers, sympathetic male composers and others working within the arts who shared its ideals. Its aim was to agitate politically for policy change. Lee Martin 43.

\(^{61}\) All seven major orchestral commissions for Australia’s Bicentennial celebrations were given to men; women were ignored when the Keating Artistic Fellowships were awarded; all four major ABC orchestral commissions went to men; of the 18 composers commissioned for the Musica Nova Festival, not one was a woman. Lee Martin 42–43.
In a paper initially presented at the Australian Composing Women’s Festival and Conference in 1994, Radic isolates three areas that currently interested musicologists: life narratives of composing women, the ways and means of achieving permanence in the consciousness of musicians and the public, and current feminist theory emanating from other disciplines such as literature, fine art, history, sociology and psychology. Research then in this area was “comparatively new and piecemeal and has had no overview imposed on it by institutions or by other disciplines”. Feminist musicology began to be taken more seriously in some Australian university music departments, due largely to a shift in attitude that Marcia Citron pinpoints to 1985, when Joseph Kerman’s book *Contemplating Music* was published.

Lee Martin reminds us that academic institutions are historically bastions of male authority. At the end of the twentieth century, there was continued reluctance to include female composers in repertoire studies in Australian universities. If a work is taken up by the academy, this is a further significant factor in its dissemination, since “the academic world imbues the work with the authority of the discipline of musicology with hundreds of years of tradition behind it”. Courses devoted to women’s music are currently offered biennially only at the University of Melbourne and the Sydney Conservatorium, and will be for the first time in 2009 at the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University.

Increased attribution of value to feminist musicological studies has given rise to a number of gender-based critiques of the Australian musical scene. Relevant in this context are recent commentators who have been critical of the ABC orchestras’ infrequent programming of Australian works, and more particularly, works by

---

62 Radic, "For and Against a Festival", 3.
64 Lee Martin 190-191.
65 Brydie-Lee Bartleet will offer the course at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University. Other committed individuals such as Linda Kouvaras, Kerry Murphy and Sue Robinson (University of Melbourne), and Sally Macarthur (University of Western Sydney) have for a number of years included strong gender components in their undergraduate courses, and supervised undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations involving gender studies. See Linda Kouvaras, “A Letter to the Editor”, *MSA Newsletter* 66, (March 2007): 35-38 for a summary of ongoing endeavours in this field.
Australian women composers.\textsuperscript{66} The latters’ increasing discontent with the ABC’s poor record in commissioning and programming their works led to the Australian Women Composers’ Network taking as its essential goal in 1991 the lobbying for policy change within the ABC.\textsuperscript{67} Lee Martin’s survey of the years 1988–1992 shows that of the 35 works commissioned by the ABC during these years, only one work was commissioned from a woman composer.\textsuperscript{68} There was a significant increase in the number of composers commissioned over the years 1994–1998, but the number of compositions per composer reduced. Women composers’ chances of repeat performances also dropped in this period, which is not without ramifications:

It is simply not enough to have one performance of an orchestral work. For a composition to be a serious contender for inclusion in the canon, repeat performances are essential … It is with repeat performances that a circulatory effect is set in motion, creating interest in the composer and their works, thus generating further performances and commission.\textsuperscript{69}

Australian women composers have fared a little better with regard to their representation in teaching and resource kits made available by the ABC, but the same trend has appeared as for orchestral performances and commissions. In terms of the number of compositions represented, women are more disadvantaged than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{70} The ABC was also involved in the Australian Composers’ Orchestral Forum (ACOF) initiative (1980–2005), established as a joint venture with the AMC and the Music Board of the Australia Council. Its principal aim was to provide emerging composers with the invaluable opportunity to work with a professional orchestra.\textsuperscript{71} By far the majority of composer participants were men, but some women composers, such as Elena Kats-Chernin and Caroline Szeto, found the experience beneficial to their careers. Women composers were increasingly being included as participants within the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{66} For example a pilot study covering the year 1991 published by the Australia Council in association with the Western Australian Department for the Arts indicated that the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra programmed no works by women composers in that year. Radic points out, however, that the data lacked breadth. Radic, “What Difference Does it Make”, 25.
\textsuperscript{68} Lee Martin 44–45, 54.
\textsuperscript{69} Lee Martin 48, 64, 185.
\textsuperscript{70} Lee Martin 75–76, 79–80.
\end{flushleft}
orchestral world at grass roots level, but only one female composer (Elena Kats-Chernin) became a tutor in the ACOF.\textsuperscript{72}

Sally Macarthur points to the dearth of women’s music performed by ABC orchestras, and presents the results of a survey of performances by music companies in Sydney during the decade 1985–1995.\textsuperscript{73} Startlingly, 85\% of works were by non-Australian composers, and 98\% were by men. Macarthur asserts that “discursive practices issuing from the Government and its affiliated funding body for the arts, the Australia Council, individual music companies and even individuals, function to produce, reinforce and perpetuate notions about music which have a normalising and regulatory effect on music culture as a whole”.\textsuperscript{74} Factors other than overt prejudice also contribute to this. There are fewer women composers than men, so the pool of works is small. In addition, mainstream Australian audiences are not favourably disposed to hearing Australian repertoire, and organisations are obliged to play music that satisfies the tastes of the paying public.\textsuperscript{75} This situation has not changed in the twenty-first century.

The Australia Council claims to exercise a policy of positive discrimination towards women composers, but Macarthur maintains that up until 1995, it had not succeeded in achieving a higher percentage of women’s music performed. In the years 1982–1995, only 8.64\% of grants were awarded to women. In the latter period of 1992 to 1995, the figure increased from 7.65\% to 10.5\%, probably because of lobbying by the Australian Women Composers’ Network, and the resultant media publicity.\textsuperscript{76} A more recent assessment of this situation shows a steady increase in the percentage of grants awarded to women composers. In 2005, 20\% of grants involving composition went to women. This figure rose to 21.4\% in 2006, and to 23.8\% in 2007.\textsuperscript{77}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{72} Lee Martin 76–77, 179.
\textsuperscript{73} “Music companies” is the term used by Macarthur to refer to mainstream arts institutions that give performances involving music. She conjectures that her Sydney results can be generalised to Australia as a whole, and to other countries. Macarthur 130.
\textsuperscript{74} Macarthur 88.
\textsuperscript{75} Macarthur 50, 57, 64, 83.
\textsuperscript{76} Lee Martin 55–56.
\textsuperscript{77} Grants to composers mostly come under the Australia Council’s Music Board category of ‘New Work’ (from 2007), ‘New Work (General)’ and ‘New Work (Emerging)’, but also under ‘Skills and Arts Development: Individuals’ and ‘Project Fellowships’.\textsuperscript{59} http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/publications/amr/music, accessed 21 December 2007.
Acknowledging the fact that “previously defined boundaries between musical genres are being crossed and exciting new genres are being created”, these grants do not only include so-called ‘classical’ or ‘art’ music, but also electronic, jazz and fusion music.
\end{flushright}
Macarthur attributes the Australia Council’s seeming reluctance to commission women largely to early training, and establishes a direct link between the AMEB system of musical training and the repertoire that constitutes music performed in the concert hall. She concludes that growing up with the AMEB system causes students to learn without question to play repertoire predominantly drawn from the western art-music tradition of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to reproduce the system endlessly. Australian works are tokenistic in AMEB syllabuses, Macarthur asserts. She acknowledges this had improved slightly by the decade of her study (1985–1995), and that the 1996 syllabus stated a commitment to including compositions by Australian and New Zealand composers.

Peter Tregear is similarly critical of AMEB syllabuses. He claims that the aim with the initial establishment of such an examining body was not only to provide additional income, but also to provide the Conservatorium with a controlling influence over the musical education of children from a young age. The AMEB also came under criticism from its inception for the rigidity and conservatism of its syllabuses. Teachers at the Conservatorium lamented the fact that students would arrive having studied their requisite pieces, but with no deeper knowledge of the music or of their instruments.

Since 1996, the AMEB has adopted less conservative practices, and advocates more strongly for the inclusion of contemporary Australian works. In 2000, a policy of inclusion of at least one Australian work in all grade books was adopted. Current syllabus review documentation stipulates the inclusion of Australian works in the manual lists, but without a requirement for students to present Australian works. Since 2001, the syllabus review process has been based on direct consultation with and
input from teachers, students, parents and examiners, rather than being an ‘in-house’ process. This has opened up the possibility for more diverse syllabuses. The AMEB does not have a formal policy of affirmative action towards the work of women composers, but claims no gender bias in its selection of works for inclusion in the syllabus. Two of its six current board members are women, as are over half of its examiners.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census data revealed that, of those people who listed their profession as ‘composer’, only 20% were women. Results from the 2006 census indicate this figure has risen to 24%. These figures are relatively in line with the numbers of women composers represented by the AMC. In 1996 17% of Australian composers represented by the AMC were women. That number is now around 25.5%, which is still low, but the increase is notable. A survey of 2008 programmes for Australia’s mainstream arts organisations indicates that, in spite of the seemingly more enlightened approaches of significant bodies such as the Australia Council and the AMEB, the percentage of performances of works by Australian women (and men) composers has not increased significantly since the decade of Macarthur’s survey. This is most likely because mainstream organisations are increasingly accountable to corporate sponsors, who tend to be conservative in their musical tastes, as are their audiences in general.

Lee Martin maintains that the awarding of prizes is another important aspect of the dissemination process. They not only provide composers with publicity and visibility, but also validate their work. A particular problem which has affected women composers is that competitions have often imposed age limits, meaning that women who have delayed their careers to raise children have been disadvantaged. She suggests that more thought should be given to the implications of such age restrictions. The high-profile AMC/APRA Classical Music Awards appear to have taken this into

85 Macarthur 44. It is difficult to assess the degree to which women might be less willing than men to list their profession as ‘composer’, but the possibility should be borne in mind.
87 Macarthur 44.
88 Lee Martin 191, 263.
account, as well as being notable for awarding women composers along with men. In 2007, of the four composition award categories, two were won by women and two by men, and all are aged over 40. Neither do the APRA Professional Development Awards, held every two years, impose an age limit. The 2006 award in the Classical genre was won by a woman—Natalie Williams.

7.7 Summary

Women have been disadvantaged in the dissemination of their work, particularly in the areas of publication, performance and recording opportunities. Unlike their male counterparts, they have experienced a lack of role models, abilities and confidence for the necessary self-promotion. The women’s movement of the late 1960s and 1970s helped expose the “cultural chains keeping women at home and in low esteem”, and the current generation of women composers in their 30s, 40s and early 50s have experienced less prejudice, and had more opportunities to enter a previously male-dominated world. Nevertheless, they are still to some extent acculturated with negative attitudes towards their own abilities. It can still safely be said, as Radic did in the mid-1990s, that “today the odds against Australian women who compose have shortened”, but they have not yet evened out completely. Women composers remain in the minority, and there is further reassessment to be done before the gender of the artist makes no difference to recognition as a serious composer.

89 Started by the AMC and originally called ‘The Sounds Australian Awards’, these Awards were first held in 1988. Since 2001, the Awards have been presented in collaboration with APRA, and aim to raise public awareness of new classical composition, as well as highlighting the achievement of organisations and individuals in the Australian new music scene in general. They have attracted the attention of prominent political leaders, and award-winning works receive extensive performance and ABC broadcast. http://www.amcoz.com.au/projects/awards/about_the_awards.htm, accessed 21 December 2007.


92 Smart 28.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CASE STUDIES

EXPERIENCES AS MUSICALLY-CREATIVE MOTHERS IN AUSTRALIA

8.1 Introduction

Chapter Six illuminated historical attitudes towards women as composers. Reasons why there had been fewer well-known women composers than men were provided, along with particular issues faced by women who composed music. Among the challenges highlighted were barriers to education, publication and performance, lack of self-confidence and reticence in self-promotion, the disinclination by women to compose in the more highly-valued orchestral music genre, and the dearth and gendered nature of critical reception. The chapter culminated with a discussion of views held in the past about mothers who chose to simultaneously pursue creative careers. These attitudes led many women to feel conflicted about their dual roles, and to feel pressured to mould their creative products into a male-centred model that avoided infiltration into their work of the subjective experience of mothering.

Chapter Seven explored these issues in the Australian context, devoting attention to dissemination of the works of women composers (including publication, performances, recordings and confidence with self-promotion), choices of genre, the nature of critical reception, and opportunities for commissions and employment. The role of this chapter is to examine the particular experiences of Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott in relation to these issues. The ways in which they do and do not reflect the perceived experiences of Australian women composers in general will be demonstrated.¹

¹ The musical education of these women was addressed in Chapter Two.
8.2 Dissemination

8.2.1 Margaret Sutherland

Sutherland shared with her nineteenth and early twentieth-century predecessors, both overseas and in Australia, the consequences of entrenched prejudices against women as creators, and the sad situation of lack of opportunity for women composers to publish and have their works performed. Of the over 200 compositions composed by Sutherland, only 58 have been produced by publishing houses. The Australian Music Centre holds copies of these scores, as well as approximately 12 facsimile copies of unpublished ones, but well over half Sutherland’s works remain unpublished in any form. Apart from her Songs for Children, which were issued by Allans in 1929, significant publication of Sutherland’s works did not occur until the mid-1930s, when Louise Hanson-Dyer of L’Oiseau Lyre showed the first real sign of confidence in her music by producing eight of her vocal and chamber works. This was in stark contrast to Sutherland’s experience with renowned publishers Boosey & Hawkes:

[They] were very enthusiastic and it had passed all the readers two or three times, and then they were waiting for Stein to come back from Europe. I had just M. Sutherland on it, and he was willing to do it, until he discovered that I was a woman. In the Guild the women said the same thing, that they had the greatest difficulty—as composers of course—not as performers. It is that they think that a woman can’t be creative.

This occurrence no doubt contributed to Sutherland’s later comments about the prejudice she felt she had encountered as a woman.

From the 1930s, the AMEB encouraged Allans to publish compositions by women and men composers, inviting some, including Sutherland, to submit compositions toward their syllabuses (though the works of women composers were not used with the frequency that men’s were). In addition to Songs for Children in 1929, Allans

2 Refer Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.2, and to Chapter Eight, Section 8.2.
3 The figures for publication and recordings of Sutherland’s music were gleaned from the latest, complete catalogue of her works appended to Cherie Watters-Cowan’s thesis, pages 460–669.
4 Radic, “Margaret Sutherland: Composer”, 404.
5 Sutherland refers to the Composers’ Guild in London, of which she was for a time Regional Representative. Murdoch interview.
6 Refer Chapter Four, Section 4.2.
7 Geitenbeek 32. Refer also Chapter Seven, Section 7.5 for details of the contribution of the AMEB.
published seven of Sutherland’s vocal works from the 1930s to the 1960s, three chamber works in the 1960s and 1970s, eight piano works in the 1930s and 1960s and three piano works in the year 2000. Alberts in Sydney took on publication of *Concerto for Strings* in 1953, four of Sutherland’s later vocal and chamber works in the 1960s and 1970s, and her opera *The Young Kabbarli* in 1972. Most recently, Keys Press in Perth, WA has published five of Sutherland’s chamber works, edited by David Symons. Other publishers of Sutherland’s works include Oxford University Press, Currency, Augener and Wirripang. Her own company, Kurrajong Press, published five of her works in the 1950s: two chamber works, two piano duets and one piano solo.

Sutherland travelled to Europe in 1951 and 1952, later in her career and after her marriage ended, one aim being to investigate possibilities for publication of her works by overseas companies. Sutherland thought local publishers were supportive enough to women composers, but her success with European publishers was limited, and a clear majority of her published works emanated from Australian companies.

Sutherland’s involvement in performances and recordings of her music contributed towards her establishment as a talented musician, and assisted in developing networks important during her later career. It also attests to her desire to have her works performed and recorded, and concern about the nature and number of such public presentations continued throughout her career. This is no doubt due largely to the strong personality attributed to Sutherland by many who knew her. Her thoughts on the importance of having works performed seem to prefigure Ruth Lee Martin’s comments on this subject:

> [Having works performed was] very difficult in the past. Now we have grants. In the past many of us had to write our own parts, even orchestral parts. It was a

---


9 Refer Chapter Four, Section 4.2.

10 Garretty 51.


12 Sutherland’s determination and strength were explicated in more detail in Chapters Two and Four. People who knew her attested to these character traits. These include: Margaret Schofield, interview with the author, 4 October 1999; Elizabeth van Rompaey interview, 7 October 1999; Jane Bunney, 20 January 2000; Madeleine Crump, 30 March 2000; Stuart Rosewarne, 26 April 2000; Maureen White, 14 June 2000.

13 Refer Chapter Six, Section 6.2.2.
very expensive thing to have an orchestral work performed: £250 at least. It is a tremendous advantage to hear quickly a work which has been written. We used to have to wait years to get a first performance, but by then you would have moved on to other areas. Then it is difficult to get back there, to be able to profit from what you hear because you have passed it by.\textsuperscript{14}

Approximately 70 of Sutherland’s 200-plus works have been recorded, both during her lifetime and posthumously. Her relationship with the ABC was not always unproblematic, but was generally productive, and Sutherland benefited through the composer competitions, and performances and recordings of her works.\textsuperscript{15} This happened mostly between the 1930s and the mid 1960s, when the ABC was providing Australian composers with a number of such opportunities.\textsuperscript{16} The ABC recorded in excess of 56 of her compositions during her life, including eight of her 25 orchestral works, and her opera \textit{The Young Kabbarli} (1964, recorded 1973).\textsuperscript{17} It also sponsored performances of at least 11 works, with \textit{Open Air Piece} and \textit{Three Temperaments for Orchestra} each receiving two performances.\textsuperscript{18}

Sutherland’s connection with the BBC was considerably more fraught. From 1942 to 1952, she submitted 16 scores for assessment, all of which were declined for performance and recording.\textsuperscript{19} Only one work was ever performed by the BBC, the \textit{Trio in C Major} for violin, clarinet and piano, presented as part of a “Concert of Works by Australian Composers” in London on 18 February 1937. The work was later rejected

\textsuperscript{14} Murdoch interview.
\textsuperscript{15} Watters-Cowan 277. Sutherland took advantage of this opportunity to compete, and in 1933 won awards in three categories: Section 3: Suite for String Orchestra (overall award), Section 14: Violin or Cello solo (special prize: Victoria), Section 15: Song or Duet (Victorian award). See List of ABC Composition Competition Awards, “The Prizes for Composers: Broadcasting Commission’s Results”, \textit{Australian Musical News}, 1 August 1933, 21. In 1935 she won awards in six categories: Section 5: Chamber Music Compositions for Three or More Instruments (Trio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano [1934]), Section 7: Unaccompanied Vocal Work for Male Voices, Section 9: Two-part song for Children’s Voices, Section 10: Unison Song for Children’s Voices, Section 14: Piano Solo, and the special State prize. See List of ABC Composition Competition Awards, \textit{Australian Musical News}, 1 October 1935, 10. Sutherland also won prizes for \textit{Afterglow} (1936), \textit{Australia} (1944), \textit{The Land Where I Was Born} (1934-5), \textit{Trio in C Major} (1936), \textit{Two Blue Slippers} (1936) and \textit{Two Choral Preludes} (1934-35). Watters-Cowan 277.
\textsuperscript{16} Refer Chapter Seven, Section 7.5.
\textsuperscript{18} Watters-Cowan 277. Refer also 279-280, Table 7.2, for a list providing full details of compositions submitted by the composer to the ABC.
\textsuperscript{19} In spite of their rejection, three compositions received positive reports. They were the \textit{Quartet for Strings} (1937), \textit{The Orange Tree} (1938) and the \textit{String Quartet} (1937). Watters-Cowan 275–276.
by BBC readers in 1949. Cherie Watters-Cowan proffers several plausible reasons for the BBC’s somewhat hostile attitude. The compositions submitted were not necessarily her best, but those that were likely to be evaluated quickly. The British perception of Australia’s colonial status also played a part, some comments by BBC readers about Sutherland’s nationality being mentioned with “a certain degree of condescension”. The possibility of gender prejudice cannot be ruled out. The composer’s name, and hence gender, was clearly stated on the submissions, and gender-based rejections were widely manifest in many organisations at this time, and prevalent in the BBC.

Sutherland performed for several recordings by the ABC of her compositions, usually together with co-artists with whom she had extended collaborations. These were primarily works for smaller forces, often scored for unusual combinations of instruments played by available musicians, to increase the likelihood of performances. Sutherland “wrote a quartet for Piano, Clarinet, French Horn and Viola, simply because there were the players available”. This group included seven vocal works (18 individual songs) and 11 chamber works. Sutherland was active as a soloist, but only recorded one solo work in her career, the Six Profiles for Piano (1946, recorded in 1948). Watters-Cowan suggests this lack of solo recordings was because Sutherland’s earlier solo piano works were essentially pedagogical, and others were written late in her career when ill-health curtailed her ability to perform. Six further works were recorded which Sutherland is believed to have accompanied. She made her final recording in 1967 playing percussion in her chamber work Verses to Music (c1964) for male narrator, piano, flute, viola and percussion.

20 According to Watters-Cowan, it appears that this work, along with works by Fritz Hart and Clive Douglas, was broadcast by the BBC in conjunction with the ABC as part of a promotion of Australian music following the ABC 1934–1935 Composers’ Competition. Watters-Cowan 276.
21 Refer Watters-Cowan 265–266, Table 7.1, for a list providing full details of compositions submitted to the BBC.
22 Watters-Cowan 274.
23 Watters-Cowan 275.
24 Murdoch interview. As Radic points out (Appendix One, Section A1.8), composers at this time in Australia were obliged to arrange performances of their works to fit the available local resources. Sutherland’s experience reflects this situation.
25 Watters-Cowan 146-147. Refer these pages for further details of works recorded.
26 Watters-Cowan 146.
27 ABC archives name the soloist, but not the accompanist. The ABC Document Archivist believes Sutherland accompanied, as she was noted as composer. Watters-Cowan 147-148.
28 Watters-Cowan 214.
Thirteen other recordings were made by Sutherland’s contemporaries, but with direct input from her through communication with the performers during rehearsals and recording. These included five works for solo piano, three chamber works, three orchestral works and her opera *The Young Kabbarli*. These recordings were made from the 1950s to the 1970s, mostly by the ABC, but with one each by Discourses ABM, Brolga and EMI. Watters-Cowan identifies a further 27 recordings where Sutherland’s input is unknown: five vocal works, 13 orchestral works, three works for solo violin, two for solo piano, one harpsichord solo and three chamber works. Again these are ABC recordings other than one each by Phillips, Columbia and Festival Records. Four more recordings (three vocal works by the ABC and one chamber work by Move) were made of performers for whom the works were most likely written.

The final groups of recordings date from 1989 following Sutherland’s death in 1984, and can be seen as retrospective legacies. Twenty-eight works have been recorded since that date: 10 chamber works, 14 for piano, one piano duet, two for orchestra and three vocal works. Of these, Sutherland’s music is recorded on six Tall Poppies CDs, there are two recordings made by the Canberra School of Music (CSM), and one each by Discourses ABM, Move, New Market and Perihelion. The ABC again figures prominently in this list. The latest CD featuring works by Sutherland—two of her *Three Chorale Preludes* (1940s) played by Trevor Barnard—was recently produced (2008) by Divine Art, a London record company.

There is evidence to suggest that Sutherland had little hesitation to promote her music and build networks. ABC and BBC documentation in particular indicate that Sutherland was “determined to achieve recognition for her artistic merit, both in Australia and abroad”. It seems that prior to John Hopkins’s appointment as ABC Director of Music in 1972, Sutherland’s regular approaches to the ABC led her to be

---

29 Watters-Cowan 149. Refer 149-150 for further details of the works recorded.
30 Watters-Cowan 150. Refer 150–151 for further details of the works recorded.
31 Watters-Cowan 151. Refer this page for further details of the works recorded.
32 Watters-Cowan 152–153. Refer these pages for further details of the works recorded.
33 In Chapters Six, Section 6.2.2, and Seven, Section 7.2, the importance of the ability for self-promotion was discussed, as were the particular challenges faced by women in this regard.
34 Watters-Cowan 286.
regarded as a “troublemaker and an agitator” by previous editors of ABC music programmes who “were staunchly male chauvinists, and appallingly conservative”.  

Some of Sutherland’s attempts at self-promotion are documented in her diary, “These Things I Must Remember”, and detailed in Watters-Cowan’s thesis. Approaches were made to the BBC, the Central British Council, Boosey & Hawkes, Chester Music, Augener, and Elkin Music during her trip overseas in the early 1950s. She also met with Louise Hanson-Dyer, to whom she was already well-known, to discuss performance and publishing possibilities, and attended a number of conferences, committee meetings, lectures and social engagements during this later overseas trip. Sutherland was obviously aware of the need to establish useful networks, and for letters of introduction. Helen Gifford verifies that Sutherland made use of women’s clubs to secure accommodation both overseas and in Australia, and that she would always have carried letters of introduction. Letters to people like Don Banks and Peter Sculthorpe, in which she encourages meetings with relevant musicians, further illustrate this competence.

8.2.2 Ann Carr-Boyd

Carr-Boyd’s publishing experiences have been more positive than those of her predecessor, Margaret Sutherland. Nearly 40% of her more than 100 works have been taken on by publishing houses, with the remainder held as facsimiles by the Australian Music Centre. Sutherland was able to derive little benefit from the AMC’s facsimile and promotional services during her lifetime, since this organisation was only founded in 1975.

35 James Murdoch, email communication to Watters-Cowan, 30 December 2005.
36 It is not known whether Sutherland kept other diaries, but this is the only one available for examination. It is among the Sutherland family records held by her grandson, Tony Bunney.  
37 In a letter to Sybil Hewett, dated 29 March 1943, on the subject of opportunities for composers during the Second World War, Hanson-Dyer wrote that “our friend M.S. if she heard of it would be putting her hand in for herself saying that she was the one Australian composer bar none”: quoted in Watters-Cowan 386–387. Engagements included the Society for the Promotion of New Music, the Composers’ Guild of Great Britain, the International Music Council. She attended lectures delivered by Frankel, Fricker, Matyas Seiber, Elisabeth Lutyens, Alec Rowley, Adrian Crut, Harriet Cohen, Vaughan Williams, Yehudi Menuhin, Eugene Goossens, and Alan Rawsthorne, among others. Watters-Cowan 324–325.
38 Watters-Cowan 323.
39 Helen Gifford, telephone conversation with Watters-Cowan, 3 February 2006. Watters-Cowan 323.
40 Watters-Cowan 243, 344.
The publication of close to 75% of Carr-Boyd’s works has happened since the year 2000, by two companies, Wirripang and Carlisle Print, and is further evidence that men have been particularly active in promoting her work. The timing of this publication demonstrates greater recognition in general of the need to promote the music of Australian composers, and in particular an increased awareness of the need to bring women’s music more into the ‘public ear’. This developed later in the twentieth century, and more so in the current century.

Carr-Boyd is quite satisfied with the efforts made on her behalf by Wirripang, who have published 11 of her works to date:

I can’t speak highly enough of the people at Wirripang. They now have about 40 composers on their books and never stop working. They are publishing sheet music, CDs and books, all of which they do themselves. They don’t just sit in Wollongong, but make sure they attend suitable conferences, wherever they may be, in order to sell their products.

Carlisle has also been a champion of Carr-Boyd’s music, and has published 16 works so far. The company’s principal focus is typesetting music, but Carr-Boyd is the first composer with whom they have forged a publishing agreement:

I am Stephen Bydder’s only composer. He mostly typesets music for composers and has done some really big jobs. He set himself up in business with me as his ‘guinea pig’, so to speak. He has made quite a few sales of my music.

It is mostly Carr-Boyd’s earlier works that remain unpublished. This is not because they were seen as less worthy or mature compositions, but rather that fewer publishing opportunities were available then for all composers. Alberts was more interested in publishing popular music, but did produce four of Carr-Boyd’s works during the 1970s. The company’s publication of classical music stopped without warning in 1980, and Carr-Boyd and others were forced to seek other publishers. Currency Press issued two works in 1998 and 2000, but she feels they are not strong promoters, and sales have not been good. Other publishing houses Carr-Boyd has had involvement with are Red

---

41 Refer Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1. Wirripang is owned and managed by Brennan and Anne Keats, and Carlisle Print by Stephen Bydder.
42 Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.
43 Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.
44 Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.
House, Allans, Keys, Grevillea, Fretful and Hillside, each having produced one of her works.

Carr-Boyd has also enjoyed greater fortune with the performance and recording of her music than did Sutherland. The vast majority of Carr-Boyd’s music has been performed, because she has “written music when people have asked me to write it”, and commissions are usually made for a specific reason, to be performed at a particular time and place.\footnote{Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.} There are also approximately 95 recordings of her music, though most of these were made in the 1990s and after 2000.

Australian composer and entrepreneur Robert Allworth has been responsible for a large number of recordings of Carr-Boyd’s works on his ‘Jade’ label, which he established to promote the work of Australian ‘art’ music composers. Carr-Boyd met Allworth in the 1980s when they were colleagues on the Fellowship of Australian Composers Committee, and she feels he always had a good sense for music to be recorded and published. He was initially intrigued with her piece \textit{Fandango} (1982) for mandolins, mandolas, guitars and bass, which he included in an anthology in the early 1990s. This was the second CD containing Carr-Boyd’s music, and the success of \textit{Fandango} “really moved things along” for her career.\footnote{Carr-Boyd email, 19 June 2008.} Recordings of Carr-Boyd’s smaller works are in around 56 anthologies produced on the Jade label. Evasound recorded seven works in the early 1990s, and Wirripang has included her music in four of their CDs so far. The Southern Cross, Red House, Cootamundra and Tall Poppies labels have also produced small numbers of her compositions.

The relative success Carr-Boyd has had with publication, performances and recordings attests to the high quality of her music. A portion of her success may also result from ability to promote her work. Her relatively unusual family background and upbringing were conducive to the development of her talents as a composer, and she gave much credit to her mentors for having recognised her potential and pointed her in future

\footnote{45 Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.  \footnote{46 Carr-Boyd email, 19 June 2008.  The first CD was produced by Southern Cross Records in 1989, and contained Carr-Boyd’s piece \textit{The Bells of Sydney Harbour}, for organ. \textit{Fandango} continues to be a well-known and popular work. In 2008, it was voted number 55 in ABC Classic FM’s survey of the most favourite chamber music works. Carr-Boyd was one of only two Australian composers featured, the other being a woman also: Elena Kats-Chernin with \textit{Russian Rag}, \url{http://www.abc.net.au/classic/classic100/chamber/100list.htm}, accessed 19 January 2009.}
directions. Carr-Boyd was initially unwilling to admit to being ambitious, saying “people usually came to me and asked me to teach and to write music, and this kept me very busy”. She tends to understate her achievements, an example being her statement that she had not “deliberately gone out and explored new soundscapes as some other women composers had done”. After some thought, she confessed to being “horribly ambitious”, but that she would not have said so five years ago.

Unlike some of her compositional forebears, Carr-Boyd does not recoil from being in the public eye, having performed in public from an early age. She regards self-promotion as a necessary evil, but says she feels “fortunate that I haven’t had to do too much of this, as I am really bad at it”. Carr-Boyd suggests that she has been somewhat protected from having to spend time actively promoting her own music because she “had children and a husband, so there were always so many immediate demands to fulfil that it was not possible to linger on such things”, but in spite of this she is “still terribly busy”. Although now admitting to some ambition, she remains reluctant to relate her success to her own efforts. As noted, Carr-Boyd prefers instead to ascribe her good fortune to recognition by others:

I think that one must always have humility. I have never tried to force my music on anyone, but am most grateful if they are interested enough to commission it, to perform it or to listen to it … Nowadays, I am busy writing music, and in some wonderful way, Anne and Brennan Keats [of Wirripang], Stephen Bydder, Valda Silvy and Dr Arthur Bridge are all busy promoting my music. How did I get so lucky?

---

47 This was discussed already in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.
48 In Chapters Six, Section 6.2.2 and Seven, Section 7.2, historical factors contributing to women’s greater reticence in openly demonstrating professional ambition, and their lesser willingness to promote their own work, were discussed in more detail.
49 Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
50 Carr-Boyd email, 30 April 2008.
51 Refer Chapter Two, Section 2.3.4.
52 Valda Silvy is Director of Fine Music at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. She has produced two large volumes of Carr-Boyd’s music in the form of an education kit for Year 12 students, and hosted various performances of Carr-Boyd’s music, including a schools master class and gala concert as part of her 70th birthday celebrations in July 2008. Dr (formerly Fr) Arthur Bridge has commissioned over 170 works from Australian composers. Among his first was a commission from Carr-Boyd. He telephoned her “out of the blue” in 1996 to commission a work, the Fantasy for Harp and Orchestra (1996). He has commissioned seven further works from her, including Moonbeams Kiss the Sea (2001) for piano, symphonic poem The Cosmic Web (2000), Romance for Flute and Orchestra (2002), Starburst (2002) for Bridge’s 50th birthday, Cool Valley and Boulevard Waltz for oboe, flute and string quartet for her 70th birthday concert in July 2008, and Piano Concerto No. 2, also for her 70th birthday. Carr-Boyd email, 21 June 2008; interview, 2004; and email, 30 April 2008.
Carr-Boyd explored the issue of self-promotion with three female colleagues, who “all agree that, on the whole, men are far more satisfied with themselves and comfortable with self-promotion”. In fact they consider the active self-promotion by another female colleague to be somewhat obnoxious.\(^{53}\) Whilst Sutherland was an exception, Carr-Boyd is more typical of many clever women of her own and previous generations in still perceiving open self-promotion as somehow ‘unfeminine’, and in seeing ‘humility’ as a positive characteristic. She prefers instead to adopt a more passive role in self-promotion, and is disinclined to be seen to be openly promoting her own abilities and work.\(^{54}\)

### 8.2.3 Elena Kats-Chernin

Kats-Chernin has similarly encountered few problems with publication of her work, estimated at 140 compositions. Her music has been published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes (New York) since 1998, on a ‘need to use’ basis.\(^{55}\) All Kats-Chernin’s scores are held by the AMC, who, in agreement with Boosey & Hawkes, are licensed to represent her in relation to music written for smaller ensembles. Prior to 1998, two works were produced by Red House, but she has no involvement with other publishing houses:

> I am quite happy with the situation with regard to the publishing of my music. Of course, the system is not perfect, and could be better organised. My publishers cannot keep up with my output and sometimes the pieces are out there already, with the publishers not yet aware of them, so it can be a bit confusing.\(^{56}\)

The majority of Kats-Chernin’s music has been performed, because she usually composes for commission. In her opinion, those of her works that have not made it to the concert platform were not wasted, since they have all been important to her compositional development. Kats-Chernin has received several prestigious orchestral commissions, and been especially successful in achieving performances by major Australian orchestras, especially the Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO). With two exceptions, her orchestral works have been performed by major orchestras, with many

---

\(^{53}\) Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.  
\(^{54}\) Refer Chapters Six, Section 6.2.2, and Seven, Section 7.2.  
\(^{55}\) Lee Martin 150.  
\(^{56}\) Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
repeat performances.\textsuperscript{57} One example is the piece \textit{Retonica} (1993) which was commissioned by the AMC for an exchange programme with the Swedish Ministry of Cultural Funding to be performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in Stockholm. It was never performed by this orchestra, but has since enjoyed several performances, at least two by the SSO, one by the Queensland Symphony, and another by the Bavarian Radio Orchestra in Munich.

In the early 1980s, Kats-Chernin was selected for the Australian Composers Orchestral Forum, where her orchestral work \textit{Bienie} (1979) was workshopped.\textsuperscript{58} Her comments on this experience illustrate the significant role played by the opportunity to hear her work performed:

\begin{quote}
That piece basically got me going really, because I heard the orchestra play what I wrote, and I realised my mistakes too, and I knew that I had to do better the next time. It wasn’t a bad piece, but I made a lot of mistakes I think, from a balance point of view. At some point I had strings repeating material just stated by the brass section, thinking it would be the same sound, but it was obviously a total flop—nothing! And of course the brass is so much stronger. If you have eight brass, even 50 strings can’t get over them. One brass instrument is as strong as 20 violins. But this is something that you learn at the time.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Kats-Chernin’s participation in the Composers Forum yielded a further benefit in the form of a commission from the Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO) granted as she was leaving for Germany in 1980. It took her some time to write this work, entitled \textit{Stairs}, which was completed in 1984, and premiered in 1985 by the AYO.\textsuperscript{60} This was her second commission, but the first for orchestra. The first commission, from Sydney’s Seymour Group, was also received prior to her departure for Germany. Entitled \textit{In Tension}, for flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, violin and cello, it was completed in 1982.\textsuperscript{61}

There are around 88 recordings of Kats-Chernin’s music, though not all her work has been recorded. Nearly half of these contain her music exclusively, with the remaining half consisting of anthologies of which her music forms part. The ABC has been the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[57] Lee Martin 90, 146.
\item[58] The importance of having a work performed, and preferably more than once, was discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.2.
\item[59] Kats-Chernin, communication with Ruth Lee Martin, 22 July 1998; quoted in Lee Martin 144.
\item[60] Lee Martin 144–145.
\item[61] Kats Chernin interview, 2004.
\end{footnotes}
most prolific recorder of her music, and indeed ABC Broadcaster Phillip Adams has selected Kat’s Chernin’s composition *Russian Rag* (1996) as the theme music for his Radio National programme “Late Night Live”. In 2008, this popular work was also voted number 77 in ABC Classic FM’s survey of the most favourite chamber music works. Other companies that have recorded Kats-Chernin’s music include Tall Poppies, Move, Wirripang, Vox Australia, Melba, Perihelion, Signum, Wergo, Innaminka, and Great White Noise.

Like Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin maintains that she does not spend much time promoting her own music, saying that it is “hard and time-consuming”. The months following her return to Australia in 1994 formed her most active period of self-promotion, since she needed to build anew her career in Australia after being away so long. Kats-Chernin had students make recordings of her music, which she then distributed around if she felt they were good enough. She also attended many concerts and listened to much music by other composers, and agrees this initial hard work paid off in the longer term. Kats-Chernin finds networking “very distracting from the actual work of composing”, and now does little of it. It has not come naturally to her, and she has struggled with her “own shyness for years”. Echoing Carr-Boyd, she feels that “if you try and push too hard, it works against you”, but thinks this is true of both female and male composers. Kats-Chernin has developed a habit of sending material to musicians, mostly when they have requested it, and feels that promotion is easier now that the internet is available. An excellent example of a positive outcome from the distribution of her work is when friend and cellist Rosemary Quinn asked Kats-Chernin to give her something “to listen to”. This was the work *Clocks* (1993) (for 20 musicians and tape), which was premiered by Ensemble Modern at the opening for a new centre for multimedia in Karlsruhe, Germany. Quinn, a member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) at the time, passed it to Richard Tognetti, who was impressed, and had the ACO perform it at the Huntington Estate Music Festival. The work has now been performed more than 12 times. The ABC subsequently contacted her, and she has since received at least two further commissions from the ACO. For Kats-Chernin, it is “not so much promotion

62 [http://www.abc.net.au/classic/classic100/chamber/100list.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/classic/classic100/chamber/100list.htm), accessed 19 January 2009. *Russian Rag* also features in the Australian clay-animated movie “Mary and Max”, which opened the annual 2009 Sundance Film Festival in Utah in January 2009. This movie, written and directed by Adam Elliot, will be released in cinemas in Australia in April 2009.

as it is maintaining the contacts and keeping the music alive”, and this strategy appears to have worked well for her.  

8.2.4 Katy Abbott

Abbott is at an earlier stage of her career than Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, though she has happily reached the point of composing only when she is sure it will be performed, and/or recorded or published. She is less advanced with regard to dissemination of her work, but already has around 46 compositions to her name. To date, it is mainly music written for school and undergraduate-level students that has been published. Reed Music has issued four editions of her Autumn Song (2001) for tenor saxophone, alto saxophone, oboe, and clarinet with piano accompaniment, and the work is included in the latest AMEB syllabus. Reed has also published Echoes of Another Age (2001) for tuba and piano, Egyptian Wish (2002) for soprano saxophone and CD, Flipside (2002) for saxophone, and Fragments of Gratification (2001) for piano. The remainder of Abbott’s music is held in facsimile editions by the AMC, but she currently aims to achieve publication of more professional-level music.

Abbott is not satisfied with the number of commercial recordings of her music, though there are around 11 semi-professional CDs. Her song cycle Words of Wisdom (2003) for vocal sextet has been professionally recorded by the ABC. Her symphony Souls of Fire (2004), performed by the Kiev Philharmonic Orchestra, was released as part of Volume 12 of the “Masterworks of the New Era” series by ERM Media in April 2008. The tenor saxophone version of Autumn Song has been included in a CD entitled “Hinterland” released by Reed Music in 2006, and Sunburnt Aftertones III (2001) was recorded live for DVD at a concert by the New Audience Ensemble at BMW Edge as part of the Melbourne International Festival in 2005, and produced by Exero. Abbott aspires to have more CDs available in the marketplace.

All Abbott’s music has been performed. She is well aware of the experience of many composers that a work is performed once, and then “sits in the bottom drawer afterwards”, and is becoming more discerning about whom she writes for vis-à-vis the

---

64 Kats-Chernin interview 2004; email, 1 May 2008.
potential “future life” of a work, saying that she does not “see the point in writing a piece knowing it will have just one performance”. She is happy with the numbers of repeat performances of some of her works. *Words of Wisdom* (2003), for instance, was workshopped several times, performed and broadcast, toured in NSW and WA, and has had several ‘one-off’ performances since. Abbott composed *Fast Ride in a Suave Machine* (2006) for Orchestras Australia, which received five performances in four states within two weeks of its premiere. It has been performed “numerous times by other orchestras who have become aware of it”. Abbott is less content with the numbers of performances of other works, for example her song cycles *It is Just the Heart* (2006) for soprano and string quartet, and *No Ordinary Traveller* (2006) for mezzo soprano, clarinet, percussion and piano. These have received only one or two performances, though she finds compensation in having had the opportunity to write for particular performers, and also with the fact that she received grants through OzCo and Arts Victoria to write these works. Performances of her works are now happening without prior contact with her. This is gratifying, and attributable, she believes, to the availability of scores through the AMC.

Abbott is aware of the need to spend time promoting her own music, and made a conscious decision early in her career to devote time to this. During the phase of attempting to establish her name, she spent 20–25% of her time marketing, but hates “selling” herself. She does so only because she “can see that it’s beneficial”. She posts out scores and CDs, and has letterheads, business cards, and a website. She believes people take her more seriously because she appears professional, and though it takes time away from composing, realises that “it’s just the nature of the beast these days”:

> Sometimes I’ll do a mass mail-out. For example in 2004, I sent the score of my string quartet to about 15 string quartets around the world. I wrote them all separate letters and included CDs. I actually felt sick afterwards. If I do more than a small amount of that sort of thing at a time, I feel nauseous and uncomfortable. It’s completely against my nature, but otherwise people won’t know I’m there, and I won’t get opportunities.

---

68 Abbott email, 23 June 2008
69 Abbott email, 23 June 2008
70 Abbott email, 1 May 2008.
71 Abbott interview, 2005.
With two moves overseas, three young children to look after, and a bigger reputation, she devotes less time to promoting her music:

I have not had any time for self-promotion. I still realise that it is a necessary evil, but as my reputation develops, it is becoming easier, and I can be much more discerning in marketing myself. It is now more a matter of networking and maintaining contacts than actually establishing myself. I can enjoy the process more because I am taken seriously from the beginning rather than having to prove myself. I have also had more work than I can handle for the last year and for the coming year (completely wonderful!), so I am not so stressed about networking at the moment.\footnote{Abbott email, 1 May 2008.}

As Abbott’s career progresses, she believes more in the quality of her own work, which makes any effort required to promote it more palatable for her. She is not at all uncomfortable with her music being in the ‘public ear’, but remains less so with talking about it before an audience, or with expressing opinions on such topics as Australia’s musical climate. She thinks her confidence in this regard will continue to grow as she becomes more senior in her industry. Like Carr-Boyd, she did not always consider herself ambitious, but since the discovery—somewhat surprising to her initially—that she could compose music, she feels more justified in acknowledging both a competitive streak and the desire to continue writing music. She considers she has high expectations of herself that were not necessarily inculcated by her parents, who “just wanted me to do my best”, but is now thankful that she can set goals for herself, and “rise to the challenge”.\footnote{Abbott interview, 2005.}

8.2.5 Summary

The musical climate in Australia during the years when Sutherland was composing meant that she experienced a greater struggle with dissemination of her music than did her three successors. The positive repercussions of second-wave feminism that contributed to the increasing acceptance of women as composers and to the push to bring their work into the public realm came too late for Sutherland. So too did the greatly increased opportunities for promotion and dissemination of art music by Australian composers afforded by the AMC. Founded in 1975, the Centre’s activities have been considerably more beneficial for Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott than
for Sutherland during her lifetime. The work of publishing houses in producing Australian compositions has escalated since the late 1990s, with the establishment of dedicated companies like Wirripang.

The ABC featured prominently in recording Sutherland’s music, but the majority of her music remains unrepresented in this medium. With the increasing sophistication of technical equipment and the advent of the CD and other modes of music-listening such as the internet and iPods, recording has become a more prevalent means of dissemination. This change is reflected in the numbers of recordings of the music of Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, as it will be for Abbott also as recordings become more frequent with her steadily increasing number of commissions.

The gradual increase in the frequency of commissioning Australian composers since the late 1960s has allowed Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott more opportunities than Sutherland for exposure of their music via official performances. In contrast, Sutherland received no commissions until late in her career in 1967, and was therefore often obliged to compose for instruments played by colleagues, and to organise performance opportunities herself.

Sutherland struggled for recognition in a climate less favourable, particularly to women, to the establishment of a reputation as a serious composer. Her atypical skills in self-promotion were thus extremely valuable in bringing her creative products into the public sphere. Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott seem less comfortable than did Sutherland with the concept of coaxing their music into the limelight, though are fully aware of the need to do so in a musically competitive environment. It appears that Sutherland’s personality traits, pitted against opposing cultural forces still resistant to the local musical product and also to the idea of a female creator, propelled her to ‘spread the word’ about her music and that of other Australian composers. Whilst Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott are reluctant to display too high a degree of aggressive, ‘unfeminine’ behaviour in promoting their own work, they are aware of the necessity to have a presence in the arena of music-marketing and networking, and have developed skills in this area.
8.3 **Genre Choices: “Grand Musical Structures” versus the Intimacy of the Smaller Form**

### 8.3.1 Margaret Sutherland

Approximately 12% of Sutherland’s compositions are for orchestra, but there is evidence that to some extent she internalised historical ideas about women composers’ limited ability to write for larger forces and their preference for smaller, more intimate genres.\(^{74}\) A comment made late in her career testifies to this:

> A woman can contribute in a special kind of way. I don’t think that women want to write the same type of things as men, but their contribution is no less important. They [men] seem to have the same yardstick all the time, this symphonic business.\(^{75}\)

The demands of the private world of domesticity and motherhood at times allowed Sutherland little time and space to write for larger forces. She “didn’t try to do anything on a scale I couldn’t cope with. You can’t with interruptions, you simply can’t”.\(^{76}\) She also contended with the hostility of her husband, whom she said “was quite a musical person—as long as I wrote for children …”\(^{77}\)

Sutherland’s strong desire to have her works performed necessitated pragmatism on her part. Her music was more likely to be publicly aired if she wrote smaller works for instruments played by her circle of musical colleagues: “I wrote a quartet for Piano, Clarinet, French Horn and Viola, simply because there were the players available”.\(^{78}\)

Sutherland’s preference for the “intimacy of writing for a small group rather than a big orchestra” seems in part to have been caused by self-doubt regarding her technical abilities in orchestration.\(^{79}\) This had been “a concern for her since her youth and first overseas trip”.\(^{80}\) Her perception was upheld in some ABC reports, which indicated difficulties she had in writing idiomatically for some instruments. Sutherland’s seeming

---

\(^{74}\) These were addressed in Chapters Six, Section 6.2.3, and Seven, Section 7.3.  
\(^{75}\) Murdoch interview, 1968.  
\(^{76}\) Murdoch interview.  
\(^{77}\) Margaret Sutherland, letter to Don Banks, undated, AMSC, NLA, MS 6830; quoted in Watters-Cowan 337.  
\(^{78}\) Murdoch interview.  
\(^{79}\) Unidentified clipping, ABC Radio Guide; quoted in Symons 132.  
\(^{80}\) Watters-Cowan 282.
unwillingness to make relatively straightforward alterations by consulting readily-available orchestration texts is an indication of a degree of resistance on her part to the pressures imposed on composers to write for larger forms in order to be taken seriously.  

A further contributing factor to Sutherland’s choice to compose chamber works, particularly earlier in her career, is that she could see little future in composing orchestral works in Australia. Fortunately, the establishment of the ABC in 1932 and its state symphony orchestras provided an environment in which her explorations in this medium could blossom from the mid 1930s onwards, and the medium occupied her increasingly over the next three decades. Her first work for full orchestra, Suite on a Theme by Purcell (1935) was performed by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 1939. According to David Symons, her “finest and best-known achievements in the medium” were produced between 1950 and 1964. It was in the orchestral genre rather than in the smaller forms that her productivity escalated following her divorce in 1948. The increased time and emotional space afforded her at this stage was surely a contributing factor. Equally interesting is the fact that most of Sutherland’s orchestral compositions are of quite modest proportions, her longest work, the violin concerto, lasting only 25 minutes in performance. It is tempting to surmise, as Symons does, that she never entirely ceased equating her female sensibility with “more modest compositional scope”.

8.3.2 Ann Carr-Boyd

Like Sutherland, only around 12% of Carr-Boyd’s music is for orchestra, but in contrast to her predecessor, she derives great satisfaction from writing in the orchestral medium, and began doing so early in her career. The second piece she composed was her Symphony in Three Movements, a finalist in the Royal College of Music Patron’s Fund Competition in London in 1964. She has also written extensively for piano (her main

81 Watters-Cowan 121, 282–283.
82 Symons 17–18, 62.
83 Symons 131.
84 Symons 131.
instrument), harpsichord and organ, but is willing “to take on anything”, as evidenced by her works for mandolin, guitar, harp and a variety of ensembles.\footnote{Carr-Boyd interview, 2004.}

The labour-intensive nature of writing for larger forces and the greater difficulties in achieving performances are obvious, but Carr-Boyd does not attribute her genre choices to these factors. She has never lacked commissions, and claims “this has certainly affected the type of music I have written, since I have mostly composed for a fairly specific audience”.\footnote{Carr-Boyd interview, 2004.} The different artistic periods Carr-Boyd has traversed have largely been dictated by the people she is associated with at the time. An example of this is a period during the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s, in the early years of her marriage, when she was composer-in-residence to the Consort of Sydney. Managed by well-known harpsichord player Robert Goode, the group consisted of harpsichord/piano, flute/recorder, cello and guitar players, together with voice. At this time she wrote chamber music for various combinations of players in the Consort, together with solo music for Goode and his students. Another such time she calls “the Franz Holford period”, when the latter was editor for Alberts Classical Music Division in the 1970s, and commissioned her to write some solo and chamber music works.\footnote{Carr-Boyd interview, 2004.}

Carr-Boyd embarked on the composition of orchestral music early in her career, but most of her works in this medium have been composed since 1990. Commissions by Dr Arthur Bridge partially account for this, since he has requested four orchestral works from her since 1996.\footnote{Commissions by Dr Arthur Bridge for orchestral music have featured prominently, accounting for 25% of Carr-Boyd’s output in this genre. Refer Footnote 52 in the current chapter.} It is likely also that as her daughters have matured and become less dependent, more time has been available to broaden her horizons and to find herself in situations in which orchestral commissions might come her way.

\subsection{Elena Kats-Chernin}

Kats-Chernin became inspired to write in the orchestral medium because of “a fascination with the range of sounds available and the endless possibilities in terms of instrumental choices”.\footnote{Kats-Chernin; quoted in Lee Martin 143.} Despite feeling intimidated in rehearsal when confronted with
an orchestra performing her music, she counts two orchestral works in particular as having special significance for her, and is ambitious “to write something much bigger than I have ever done, such as an opera with choir and orchestra”. However, only around 13% of her total output to date is orchestral music.

Kats-Chernin began early to write for orchestra. Her first work in this genre was the *Piano Concerto* (1979) which formed part of her final assessment at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Her aims were twofold: first she wrote it to perform it in the final examination for her Diploma in Piano Performance. Her hands were quite small, so she composed it with that in mind, and also because she did not want to play Mozart! Second, she was eager to write for orchestra, and took the opportunity to do so as part of her assessment in composition, saying “it was quite an amazing experience, because I had to learn how to write for bigger forces”. The work was performed by the Conservatorium Orchestra, with Kats-Chernin as soloist.

Kats-Chernin’s next opportunity to write for orchestra followed not long afterwards, when she was selected to take part in the inaugural Australian Composers’ Orchestral Forum (ACOF) in early 1980. For this she composed *Bienie*, completed in September 1979, and performed during the Forum in January 1980.

While in Germany, Kats-Chernin undertook “a lot of challenging projects”, mostly “little student pieces”, and from 1985 to 1993 earned a regular income writing for music theatre. During this time, and following the completion of *Stairs*, she wrote no concert music, partly because of feeling disillusioned with this medium due to changing trends in music meaning that “nobody knew what to write”. Despite receiving a further commission in 1989, while still based in Germany, to write a work for the SSO, Kats-Chernin dates her serious career composing “concert music” from 1994 when she

---

90 These are *Clocks*, which gave Kats-Chernin “courage to continue composing for the concert hall”, and *Zoom and Zip* (1997), commissioned by the ACO. Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
91 This was mentioned in Chapter Two, Section 2.4.3.
92 Kats-Chernin email, 12 November 2008.
94 It was largely due to this that Kats-Chernin was selected for the Australian Composers Orchestra Forum.
95 Mentioned in Chapter Seven, Section 7.6. It was initially referred to as the “Inaugural Summer School for Young Composers”.
96 Kats-Chernin interview, 2004; Lee Martin 145.
arrived back in Australia at the age of 37. This later re-entry to the orchestral medium explains why a surprisingly small percentage of her total oeuvre is music for larger forces.

8.3.4 Katy Abbott

Abbott has composed relatively often for larger forces. Of her 45 works to date, 15 (30%) fall into this category, 10 being for string orchestra, a medium in which she feels particularly comfortable, as she does with music for voice. Even before she started composing, Abbott “always had a dream to write a symphony before I died”. This dream was fulfilled in 2004 with the completion of *Souls of Fire*, which she wrote as part of her PhD portfolio of compositions. She found that being forced to write for orchestra was the best way to learn this craft. It was challenging, but Abbott learned a lot, and her “orchestral writing and composition in general has improved immeasurably” following this invaluable exercise. She has now composed four works for full orchestra, the most recent being *The Peasant Prince* commissioned by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, to be premiered at The Adelaide Festival in May 2009. Abbott has also written a full opera entitled *Milushka* (2000) which was performed as part of the University of Melbourne Faculty of Music’s Opera Project.

8.3.5 Summary

Sutherland exhibited some reluctance to conquer the orchestral genre, feeling more confident and comfortable with the intimacy of smaller forces, though she tackled this craft more later in her career following her divorce, by which time her son and daughter were no longer dependent. Whilst Sutherland felt that “this symphonic business” remained largely the preference of male rather than female composers, her successors all enjoy writing for larger forces, and all started to do so early in their composing lives. Their desire to write in this mode, together with the recognition of the need to do so in order to achieve greater recognition in their field, reflects the continuing aesthetic value assigned to the “grand musical structures” within Western culture. The growing

---

98 This work is entitled *Transfer*, and was completed in 1990.
100 Abbott email, 23 June 2008.
101 Refer Chapters Six, Section 6.2.3, and Seven, Section 7.3.
confidence of women in their creative abilities, and increasing cultural acknowledgment of their aptitude in this medium, have further contributed to the enthusiasm exhibited by Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott to achieve mastery in this field.

8.4 Gendered Critical Reception

Appraisals of the use of gendered language in music criticism from the late nineteenth century to the end of the sixth decade of the twentieth century were explored in Chapter Seven.\(^{102}\) A survey of reviews of Sutherland’s compositions does not reveal extensive use of language that could be construed as gendered, but examples do exist. The first is a comment by Arnold Bax in the 1920s. He was impressed with her Sonata for Violin and Piano, and pronounced it to be “full of remarkable ideas”, and “the best work by a woman I know”.\(^{103}\) This statement was taken at face value at the time, and Sutherland took no umbrage. There are further examples of remarks that may now be considered patronising. Roger Covell praised Sutherland for having “naturalised the twentieth century in Australian music”, but could be construed as criticising her for being too cerebral for a woman in adding that “Miss Sutherland’s music has a heart, but it is ruled by a very shrewd head”.\(^{104}\) A remark by James Murdoch that “there is never anything sloppy or sentimental in her writing” is in the same vein.\(^{105}\)

There are further instances, and it is not surprising that these are all found in BBC reports of compositions submitted by Sutherland in the 1950s.\(^{106}\) Of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1925), one reader said it was “nothing but a hysterical froth of empty platitudes!”\(^{107}\) and continued on to say that he hated “this kind of pretentious prattle!” Of two vocal works composed when Sutherland’s children were young—Cradle Song (1929) and September (1930s)—an assessor wrote that “these songs seem rather childish and silly”. Another commented of Cradle Song that it “might keep the baby

\(^{102}\) Refer Chapter Seven, Section 7.4.
\(^{103}\) Sutherland , “1920 and So On”; Foreman, Bax, 220. This remark was mentioned already in another context in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.5.
\(^{104}\) This quote (Covell 153) was presented in another context in Chapter One, Section 1.2. Covell’s comment about her music could equally be interpreted as a compliment on the balance Sutherland appears to have achieved between the ‘heart’ and the ‘head’.
\(^{105}\) From LP, Australian Festival of Music, Vol. 8, FC-80025, ABC recording; notes by James Murdoch. Refer Chapter Seven, Section 7.4.
\(^{106}\) Watters-Cowan has carried out a thorough examination of the critical reception of Sutherland’s works, including media reviews and ABC and BBC reports on compositions submitted to them by the composer.
\(^{107}\) BBC report on Margaret Sutherland’s Sonata for Violin and Piano, undated; quoted in Watters-Cowan 270.
awake by irritating its sense of tonality”. There are two disparaging reports of Sutherland’s *House Quartet in G Minor* (1942). One writer stated that the work “isn’t even good homespun, and in any case, I mistrust the claims of these ‘obliging’ composers, to whom any old ‘dress’ is all the same!” Another said the work was “disarmingly naïve and clumsy. There is no ‘house’ I know on which I would inflict this work”. A panel member wrote of the ballet music *The Selfish Giant* (1947) that it was “pretty soppy stuff but it would do at children’s hour time, hardly elsewhere”, whereupon it was relegated to a juvenile section of the BBC programme “The Children’s Hour”. Finally, the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* (1947) elicited the comment that “this is all very friendly and sweet but as music it really cannot, however one looks at it, be seriously considered”.

Carr-Boyd is not aware of ever having been reviewed in a gendered manner, and there is little evidence of any such language. One possible exception is a review in 1972 by Fred Blanks in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, of the premier performance of Carr-Boyd’s setting of Psalm 110 (*Dixit Dominus*) for small choir, piano and string sextet. The review began favourably: “The music begins wildly, and gradually turns tame, paying its respects to such excellent models as Messiaen, Stravinsky and Britten along the way.” The following comment, that “it sounded competent, and also self-consciously assertive”, can be considered patronising, and suggestive that it is not the natural province of a woman composer to be assertive.

---

108 BBC reports on Margaret Sutherland’s *September*, 20 April 1954, and *Cradle Song*, 7 May 1954; quoted in Watters-Cowan 268-269. Of the style of this work, Symons writes that it indicates a “new spare, more haunting style to some extent prophetic of the later Sutherland”, and that “the gentle melancholy of the lonely mother singing her child asleep while the father has ‘gone a-shearing down the Castlereagh’, is intensified in the music through the juxtaposition and superposition of dissonant melodic centres … which, however, lack final resolution”. Symons 46. It is therefore likely that the BBC assessor thought this modernist style not only inappropriate for ‘cradle music’, but also that Sutherland transgressed by crossing the boundary to write in a style normally the preserve of male composers.  
109 BBC reports on Margaret Sutherland’s *House Quartet in G Minor*, 8 and 15 October 1952; quoted in Watters-Cowan 274.  
110 BBC report on Margaret Sutherland’s ballet music *The Selfish Giant*, 28 May 1952; quoted in Watters-Cowan 273.  
111 BBC report on Margaret Sutherland’s *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, 28 May 1952; quoted in Watters-Cowan 286.  
Kats-Chernin’s music has been widely and mostly positively reviewed, and this has provided for her the very necessary “marker on the professional path”.\textsuperscript{113} She is not aware of having been reviewed differently from her male colleagues. Having surveyed a range of reviews of Kats-Chernin’s music in performance, both here and overseas, the writer is unable to find any evidence of gendered language. Abbott too, says she does not think her music has been reviewed in this manner. There are still relatively few reviews of her music, but gendered language is not a feature in any of them.

Some reviews of Sutherland’s music reflect the less-enlightened times in which she was composing. With the exception of a few works composed in the 1960s, most of Carr-Boyd’s output was written in subsequent decades, by which time there was greater awareness of the inappropriateness of incorporating gendered language. The positive experiences in this regard of Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott indicate that feminism has contributed to an inevitable increase in the unacceptability of reviewing women’s music differently.\textsuperscript{114}

\section*{8.5 Making a Living}

\subsection*{8.5.1 Margaret Sutherland}

It was late in Sutherland’s career when significant challenges to the prevailing cultural paradigm of Australian musical culture were mounted in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{115} Commissions were few beforehand, and Sutherland’s experience reflects this. She did not receive her first fully professional commissions until 1967, at the age of 70. These were \textit{Extension} for piano, commissioned by the Australian Musicians’ Overseas Scholarship Fund, and her \textit{String Quartet No. 3}, commissioned by APRA.\textsuperscript{116} Sutherland earned some income from composition, mainly through her involvement with the ABC, but like all composers of her time, particularly women, she could not hope to make a living through composition alone, but survived mostly through her teaching and performing activities, and was never wealthy.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[113] Mentioned earlier in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.4.
\item[114] Refer Chapter Seven, Section 7.4.
\item[115] These were explained in Chapter Seven, Section 7.6.
\item[116] Symons 178.
\item[117] Sutherland’s teaching activities prior to her departure in 1923 to study overseas were described in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.4.
\end{footnotes}
On her return from Europe in 1925, Sutherland again taught at the Conservatorium, with the more prestigious position of a teacher of “pianoforte, chief study” students. She also resumed her position as Goll’s understudy in collaboration with Ruth Flockart.\textsuperscript{118}

During the years 1930–1939 when her children were young, Sutherland composed and performed less, but continued teaching privately, though sometimes erratically because of the need to be available to her children.\textsuperscript{119} She also kept teaching at the Conservatorium, finally resigning in 1939 at the suggestion of her father-in-law.\textsuperscript{120} It appears Sutherland did not teach much subsequently, though she accepted some private students in the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{121}

It was unusual at this time for a woman to remain working following marriage, but Sutherland did so to enable her husband to establish himself in his career as a psychiatrist.\textsuperscript{122}

\begin{quote}
For the first 9 years I had paid all household expenses, dressed the children myself and paid for their schooling—this because I thought it would give him more of a chance to establish himself. (It did, of course, not work out that way.)\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

Sutherland bought a car when they had first married, and her father-in-law assisted by financing the purchase of premises in East Malvern where her husband, Norman Albiston, could build his practice. The property included a house, for which they paid rent, and both their children were born while they lived there. After five years—partly because of strains in the relationship with Sutherland—Albiston decided to establish himself as a psychiatrist in the city, and took rooms in Alcaston House in Collins St. The family rented a house in Berkeley St, Hawthorn, and Sutherland took in boarders to bolster the family income. In 1939, the house was sold, and they moved to a house in Studley Avenue, Kew.

\textsuperscript{118} The Melbourne University Calendar, 1926 (Carlton, Melbourne: Ford & Son) 59; quoted in Watters-Cowan 226.
\textsuperscript{119} Watters-Cowan 235, 237.
\textsuperscript{120} Margaret Sutherland, unpublished autobiographical note, November 1960, private collection of Tony Bunney.
\textsuperscript{121} Elizabeth von Rompaey, interview with the author, 7 October 1999; Watters-Cowan 226.
\textsuperscript{122} For further detail on this issue, refer Appendix One, Sections A1.4, A1.4.4.
\textsuperscript{123} Sutherland, unpublished autobiographical note, November 1960.
It was expected at the time of Sutherland’s marriage that a husband would provide financial security for a woman and their children, but it was less true in this case. Albiston’s practice was never profitable, and Sutherland found it very difficult to extract money from her husband for household expenses:\footnote{Gifford interview.}

\begin{quote}
The paying over to me of housekeeping allowance caused a lot of misery. If I asked for it he would say I could not have it because I asked. If I did not ask, he would say that was the reason it was not forthcoming. Generally eventually it was not given to me, but left somewhere round the house, where I was to find it in due course.\footnote{Sutherland, unpublished autobiographical note, November 1960.}
\end{quote}

Although there is no clear evidence of this, Sutherland may have derived a small amount of financial assistance through the child endowment scheme introduced by the Federal Government in 1941. The campaign by feminists in the 1920s and 1930s for a motherhood endowment to be paid to mothers staying at home with children was, however, unsuccessful.\footnote{Fuller explanations of these schemes can be found in Appendix One, Sections A1.4.2 and A1.4.3.}

After the couple’s divorce in 1948, Sutherland remained in the Studley Avenue house, and again took in boarders to earn income. Eventually her financial situation necessitated a move, and she purchased a one-bedroom flat in a block of 40 in Power Street, Hawthorn, for around $8,000. Helen Gifford claims that Sutherland “would have had a lot of help to get that $8,000, because Norman Albiston hadn’t made money”.\footnote{Gifford interview.}

In addition to income from teaching and boarders, Sutherland performed throughout her career, though it is unclear the extent to which such activities directly added to her funds.\footnote{Sutherland’s performing activities prior to her departure overseas in 1923 were discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.4. Others were discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.6, and in the current chapter, Section 8.2.1.} Following her return from overseas, Sutherland presented and was involved in many concerts from 1926 onwards, but these were fewer after her first child Mark was born in 1928. She appeared as both soloist and associate artist, and performed in a variety of programmes, both of her compositions and those of others.\footnote{See Watters-Cowan 245–253 for further details of some of these performances.}
8.5.2 Ann Carr-Boyd

Unlike Sutherland, Carr-Boyd had support from her husband as primary income-earner in the household when they were raising their family, at the same time priding herself on always having made a significant financial contribution in addition to being primary carer to her daughters. She started earning money from her music at the age of 15, so had some financial independence from an early age, and was loath to give that up. When her daughters were young, she undertook volunteer work in the school in the form of acting as accompanist for the high-standard choir and for Suzuki method lessons for string instruments, and private pupils brought in some income. Carr-Boyd says she did not set out to have a teaching career:

I really fell into teaching the piano by accident. Although I think I know HOW to play the piano, I don’t regard myself, and never did, as anything other than pretty ordinary on the keyboard. When my father became ill and died, I was the only one available to take over his pupils. On our return to Australia from England, we settled in the district where my father and uncle had taught for years, and people came to the door asking me to teach them. First it was young people, then adults, and it never stopped.\textsuperscript{130}

While raising her family, Carr-Boyd also made money through commissions, and from conducting a number of radio programmes. In the early 1980s, she presented a programme entitled ‘Composers of Australia’ on ABC national radio, for which she received regular payment. She later introduced two 90-minute programmes on women composers for ABC national radio as part of a month-long celebration in NSW of women in the arts. Carr-Boyd was also responsible for many programmes on Australian music for 2MBS, including a series on Australian and British women composers. Some of these were paid and others voluntary.\textsuperscript{131}

The money Carr-Boyd earned herself went into a separate bank account, and with it she “paid for all the extras”, such as clothes for her and the children. She enjoyed the freedom to buy things she required with her own money, and derived satisfaction from appreciation she received for her teaching and composition, as well as for her mothering.

\textsuperscript{130} Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.
\textsuperscript{131} Carr-Boyd email, 10 May 2008.
Carr-Boyd still likes teaching, and relishes the opportunity to present master classes in schools and universities to maintain her knowledge of what is happening in that environment. However, she laments that “in an ideal world, I probably should have spent, and should still spend more hours composing”. In later years, since she and her husband divorced, teaching helps Carr-Boyd to maintain financial independence.

Writing for commission is enjoyable for Carr-Boyd, and she has only seldom felt restricted by her patrons’ requirements, or uncomfortable with operating in a particular medium. She compares this work with the often heavy demands of the domestic realm, and finds relative freedom when composing:

> It was still up to me what notes went out there, you know. I was the boss, and I do remember thinking sometimes when I was really heavily pressured to be all things to everybody, that here I could ‘do my thing’. Nobody was going to tell me how to write something—I did it myself.

Carr-Boyd delights in the “white heat” of feverish activity sometimes engendered by goals and deadlines, and suspects she would be less productive without them:

> In the 1970s I was writing my *Look at the Stars* pieces for piano. Book One was written in 1978, and that was written in white heat, because it was to be published by Alberts. I had all these ideas tumbling out, and I wrote the pieces. Although Alberts had not requested it, I thought I had to write Book Two, given all the developments with the skies, and our attempts to fathom what is happening in the universe. The last three pieces in Book Two are hanging fire, because something else always comes along. I think we’re all the same. If you have a deadline, then you’re going to work towards it. I really think that people who say: “I’d like to sit down and write a piano piece today” are as rare as hen’s teeth!

The commissioning of Australian composers has steadily increased since the 1970s, so the experience of Sutherland’s successors has been different. Carr-Boyd’s record of receiving commissions is particularly positive, and this can be attributed to two major factors. It is indicative of the respect with which her composition has been held for some years, and of her willingness to attempt a wide variety of commissions.

---

133 Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
134 Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
135 Refer Chapter Seven.
In contrast to Sutherland and Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin has taught little to supplement her income as a composer. This is partially due to the greater variety of employment opportunities in music available in Germany. In the early years of her marriage, when her children were young, she needed to find work to provide for her family. At various times, Kats-Chernin did a little teaching, played in a piano bar, and became a repetiteur for dance rehearsals. She also formed an ensemble, called ‘Red Hot and Blue’, with two sopranos and a tenor who were studying opera at the Hochschule für Musik in Hanover. Kats-Chernin wrote arrangements for three voice parts and piano of well-known songs by Cole Porter, the Andrews Sisters and the Beatles, among others. The group became well known, playing in pubs and similar venues, and earned good money. She ceased playing for this group following the birth of her second son in 1984, but through one of the members of this ensemble, met Australian dancer and choreographer Rhys Martin, who was then with the Bremen Tanztheater. Kats-Chernin collaborated with him in the work “Dinosaur” commissioned by ‘One Extra Dance Company’ in Sydney in 1985. Upon her return to Germany, she was contacted by Martin, whose company was re-locating to Bochum, and was asked to take on the job as accompanist for the company:

Bochum is about two hours from Hanover, near Cologne in the Ruhrgebiet. It’s an interesting area—industrial, proletarian, raw and honest—and it was booming at the time. I was 28 by then, and had just had my third child. It was extremely tough. I had to get him off the breast, and get up at 6am to catch a 7am train to be in Bochum by 9.15 am. I played a class from 10am until 12 noon, and took a train back at 1pm, arriving back at 3pm. The pay was so good, I felt it was worth the effort.136

When rehearsals for productions started, Kats-Chernin had to stay overnight in Bochum. She feels this became very difficult for her children, but managed to employ a family friend to mind the children—“a beautiful woman, like a grandmother”. This connection in Bochum fortunately led to further work in the theatre:

I started with one production, and then some theatre people became aware of my work, and liked it, and I got more work. I used electronics a lot, and I really enjoyed doing that, because it was something different from concert music. It’s instant. You go into a studio for a session, and the musicians would play

anything. For example, they might knock on the wood of their instruments, or blow into the mouthpiece of a tuba, while making some vocal noises. I’ve made many recordings of that material, and even now those archives sound fresh. I worked on three or four theatre productions in a year, and later six, and the more I did, of course, the more I was away from home.\textsuperscript{137}

Kats-Chernin received few commissions during the years in Germany. Her work \textit{Reductions} (1983), a work in five movements for two pianos, was requested by the \textit{Hanover Hochschule} pianist Hermann Kretzchmar. This was an unpaid commission, but Kats-Chernin enjoyed writing it, and it was eventually published by Red House Editions.

This work situation became “so tricky and involved”, that Kats-Chernin thought she should leave the country, or she “would never stop working so hard”. In addition, her desire to write concert music re-emerged. Her first foray back into the medium was a dance project for \textit{Ensemble Modern}, which she undertook with Martin. The result was her work \textit{Choros} (1993).

Since her return to Australia in 1994, Kats-Chernin’s career has burgeoned, to the extent that her music is well-known and regarded both in Australia and overseas. She has enough commissions to earn her living from composing, and sometimes writes music that has not been commissioned. While bringing up her sons as a single parent, she has had little financial support from her ex-husband, so has not refused any commissions. Only in the first few months following her return to Australia did Kats-Chernin resort to accepting government financial assistance. The sense of independence gained early in her life made this somewhat humiliating, and she aimed to support herself and her sons without welfare as soon as possible. While being paid a government allowance, she sought work, applying for menial jobs such as sandwich-making and cleaning. She also learned typing skills, which have proved useful since.\textsuperscript{138} When she gained a teaching position at the Sydney Conservatorium in 1995, the government assistance ceased. During this whole period, she put effort into establishing herself as a composer, and when her compositional work increased, she resigned from the Conservatorium after a year.\textsuperscript{139} The first few years following her divorce and return to Australia were

\textsuperscript{137} Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{138} The allowance received by Kats-Chernin is now referred to as a ‘Newstart’ allowance.
\textsuperscript{139} Kats-Chernin email, 3 December 2008.
particularly difficult financially. She sometimes found that the total amount earned from a commission would need to go towards an unexpected expense incurred on behalf of her sons, for example braces.\footnote{Kats-Chernin email, 13 January 2009.} Although this has sometimes been a precarious existence, Kats-Chernin has appreciated the relative freedom it has provided:

I am a freelance, creative artist, who works on commission. You don’t always quite know where your money is coming from next week, or how much it will be, actually. Sometimes you don’t have much, and sometimes quite a bit, and you need to budget differently from other people. I don’t have set hours to work in and I love that. I can’t imagine working 9am–5pm every day. I cannot do the same thing every day. I can do it for a week, two weeks or even for six weeks, but then I need some freedom.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.}

Only recently has Kats-Chernin found herself in a position where she can reject commissions:

I feel as if I’m coming to the stage where I can probably pick and choose more. I should be able to do that. I used to take every commission that came my way, and I still do to an extent, because commissions don’t pay very well. It’s very rare that you get paid a lot. The ballet [\textit{Wild Swans}, 2002] was good, but when you consider the months I spent on it, it’s not so much.\footnote{Kats-Chernin interview, 2004.}

\subsection*{8.5.4 Katy Abbott}

Abbott’s situation is different from her predecessors Sutherland, Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, because her decision to pursue a compositional career came at a later stage.\footnote{Abbott’s school-teaching career was described in Chapter 2.6.3.} Since she had children, her husband has been the principal salary-earner, while Abbott’s ever-increasing stream of commissions contributes to the household income. She has not ruled out the idea of resuming her teaching career if necessary once her children are at school, in order to feel she is making a more significant financial contribution to the family.\footnote{Abbott interview, 2005.} This need becomes increasingly unlikely, since she currently has enough compositional work to last until the end of 2009.


8.5.5 Summary

In Sutherland’s era, it was the norm for women musicians to teach rather than compose.\textsuperscript{145} Sutherland’s ambitions lay in the field of composition, but she had little choice but reluctantly to continue teaching and performing in order to survive financially. She earned additional income through rent paid by boarders, and some performing activities may have contributed financially, though not necessarily directly. Teaching assisted Carr-Boyd with her desire to maintain some financial independence within her family when her children were young, and is still necessary to supplement the income she receives from commissions and royalties. However, she derives greater satisfaction from her pedagogical role than did her predecessor, and is more disposed to continue meeting the demand for her teaching skills.

Kats-Chernin has taught little, but while resident in Germany was left with little option but to earn money by taking on jobs as an accompanist for dance and theatre, and by performing regularly with a vocal ensemble in bars and other venues. With her growing reputation since returning to Australia in 1994, she has earned her income solely from composition. The demands imposed by three young children, together with her compositional work, have precluded Abbott from further income-earning activities, and her husband’s income has shielded her from the need to seek work outside the home at present. She is open to the idea of teaching to earn money once her children are at school, but her growing compositional workload may render this unnecessary.

Whilst it is still difficult for composers to earn enough to support a family or make them wealthy, the opportunities to earn an adequate living have proliferated during the later years of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first.

8.6 Creative Motherhood: Mothering in the Music

8.6.1 Margaret Sutherland

In Chapter Six, society’s long-held perceptions that motherhood and creativity could not co-exist were illuminated, as were the conflicts women experienced between their

\textsuperscript{145} Refer Appendix One for further information.
mothering and writing practices. Alongside second-wave feminism came a questioning by women writers in particular of the previous assumption that motherhood and creativity should be entirely separate pursuits. Authors lamented being restricted to topics that conformed with a ‘male code of practice’.147

Sutherland’s children were born in 1929 and 1931. She was raising children long before the mothering/creativity dilemma eventuated as an issue perceived worthy of interrogation. As Sutherland’s continued productivity during her child-rearing years indicates, her desires to mother and to write music were ever present. She had little time to write music in the early 1930s, but a clear connection between music and motherhood is evident in the vocal music she composed as the decade progressed.148 The appeal of the theme of childhood was evident in the poetry she set to music when her children were young, despite the fact that such a theme was not likely to be perceived as suitable for ‘serious’ music, and BBC assessors’ belittling comments about Cradle Song testify to this.149 It is a setting of a poem by Australian poet Louis Esson (1878–1943) for voice and clarinet, and describes a lonely mother singing her child asleep while the father is out shearing.150 Sutherland composed this around 1929 with her children in mind. During the same period, she set to music Walter de la Mare’s poem Nod, though the manuscript is unfortunately missing.151 Songs for Children (1929), a collection of nine songs based on the poems of Australian poet Ethyl Martyr (1888–1934), is also among the few works Sutherland wrote at the time of her entry into motherhood.152 A few years later in 1936, Sutherland composed Five Songs, to the texts of poems by Australian poet John Shaw Neilson (1872-1942), and the first was entitled ‘For a Child’.153

146 The difficulties faced by creative mothers in finding time and space to create were addressed in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.1. The challenges faced in this regard by the composers who are the subjects of this thesis have already been addressed in another context in Chapters Four, Section 4.3, and Five, Section 5.3.2.
147 Refer Chapter Six, Section 6.3.
148 In the poetry Sutherland chose to set to music in her early vocal compositions, David Symons notes a preference for “themes traditionally associated with women … namely marriage, motherhood and childhood”. Symons 53.
149 These were described in Section 8.4 above.
150 Symons 46.
151 Watters-Cowan 556.
153 The other poems are: 2. When Kisses are as Strawberries; 3. May; 4. In the Dim Counties; 5. Song be Delicate. According to David Symons, Shaw Neilson’s poetry “has a generally autumnal, bitter-sweet
In the early to mid-1930s, Sutherland wrote a number of choral songs for girls’ voices, probably for the girls at Merton Hall (Melbourne Church of England Girls’ Grammar School), which her daughter Jenny attended. Sutherland selected texts involving biblical and patriotic subjects, as well as the themes of nature, love and childhood. These include *Psalm 121* (1930s); Ethel Martyr’s *Two Blue Slippers* (1935); *The Blue of Australian Skies* (1930s) by Australian poet James. L. Cuthbertson (1951-1910); and *The Land Where I was Born* (pre 1934), *Break of Day* (c1934), *Quietly as Rosebuds* (c1934), *The Green Singer* (1934) and *Lament for Early Buttercups* (c1935) all by John Shaw Neilson.¹⁵⁴

In the mid to late 1930s, Sutherland composed other vocal works, one dramatic work, one ballet, nine chamber works, 19 instrumental solos, and one orchestral work. It is clear that motherhood and composition were not mutually exclusive activities, especially in the years when her children were very young and thus most in need of her time and care. Her devotion to and preoccupation with her offspring during these years inevitably infiltrated her musically creative activities.

### 8.6.2 Ann Carr-Boyd

Carr-Boyd prefers to think of mothering and composition as two separate areas of her life. She does not believe she ‘writes mothering’ directly into her music, but when her children were young, it is clear that these two spheres converged. As in other aspects of her career, Carr-Boyd views the writing of music for children as a natural consequence of the environment she found herself in at the time, and welcomed the opportunity:

> Being a mother brought me into touch not only with my own children, but with lots of other children too, and this re-introduced me to the world of children and their music. I grew up in a household of music lessons and in an environment where young people were making music.¹⁵⁵

The importance attributed to music education in schools was increasing, providing Carr-Boyd with more chances to write for children. As noted, she also accompanied string

---

¹⁵⁴ Symons 47.
¹⁵⁵ Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
groups and a children’s choir, and appreciates this “intimate association” with choir, string and piano music, since it helped her learn “what works and doesn’t work” when composing for them.\textsuperscript{156} Some of these opportunities to compose were informal, while others were commissions:

The wonderful teacher who taught violin to my girls suggested I write a little piece for strings and piano, so I did. It was called \textit{Dance for Strings}, and was the sort of little informal piece you do because your own children are getting a wonderful education; the chance is there so you do it. A bit later I was thrilled to write a piece for the combined schools concert, a commission for massed recorders with piano and bongo drums.\textsuperscript{157} I loved that. I also wrote \textit{Six Piano Pictures for Young Players}, and \textit{Listen: Seventeen Piano Pieces for Children} because I’d been associated with the piano and children for so long, and felt I had some insight into what they like and don’t like playing.\textsuperscript{158}

When her daughters reached their teenage years, and as different opportunities arose, Carr-Boyd wrote less music specifically aimed at children, but now sometimes composes for her own and other people’s grandchildren.

In addition to her obvious pleasure in composing music for children, it can also be understood as a means to establish a semblance of balance between mothering and music when she was raising her family. She has never considered her children a hindrance to her creative career, but manages to find appropriate ways to give attention to both.

\textbf{8.6.3 Elena Kats-Chernin}

There is sometimes a close connection between Kats-Chernin’s mothering and her composition. At first she said she did not “really know what life would be like without children”, but that she felt her music was “somehow shaped by being a mother”. She could not immediately articulate how, but this became clearer as she reflected. Kats-Chernin does not rate highly the music she wrote when her children were very young, because of the lack of time available, but the responsibility of motherhood appears to have contributed to the production of music that is closer to her real musical nature. Kats-Chernin cites European composers, such as Stockhausen and Ferneyhough, who

\textsuperscript{156} Carr-Boyd interview, 2005; email, 20 January 2009.
\textsuperscript{157} This piece is entitled \textit{Travelling}, and was written in 1981.
\textsuperscript{158} These pieces were written in 1976 and 1981 respectively. Carr-Boyd interview, 2005.
experimented with avant-garde techniques, and thinks the temptation would have been greater to continue to follow a more experimental path, had she not had children, because she would have had more time. In retrospect, she doubts this would have been the best avenue to pursue:

My true nature is based in melody and harmony, but earlier in my career I didn’t know that. If I hadn’t had children, I might not have had the same chance to … be myself … Maybe in some ways motherhood has helped me be myself, because without them I would probably have been more worried about what the élite musical minds thought about my music. And because I would have had nothing else in my life—well there may have been a partner, but no children—I would possibly not have felt secure in my personality, that I am who I am. I would only have been identifying myself as a composer. Now I can identify myself as a composer and a mother … If I were just a composer, I would have had much more pressure on me, and maybe that would not have been good for the music. I feel it could have been less good … I had no time to muck about; I just had to do it.  

Kats-Chernin has written little music for her own or other children, but did find composition a useful emotional outlet when her second son Alexander became ill with Schizophrenia in 1998 at the age of 14. She believes this was the most significant catalyst in steering her back towards expression in her music of her natural affinity with harmony and melody, and for a “loss of inhibition” regarding these musical elements. At this time she wrote Sonata Lost and Found for piano, which is “completely based around him”:

It’s a sonata in four movements, and the second movement, “Unfinished Lullaby” is the one that has most significance. The other movements are not as strong, funnily enough—they are very energetic and ‘full-on’. I named the second movement “Unfinished Lullaby” because for me it was like a lullaby you sing, but it’s not finished, and you want to sing it again. I thought he was going to die, you know—I wasn’t sure. The music starts very simply with a melody in the right hand with ‘spread out’ minor triads in the other, but then the music is distorted by the left hand. This continues throughout the rest of the four-minute movement. That distortion seemed to best describe how he was, how his mind was distorting itself.

Kats-Chernin claims she did not consciously start out to write the movement in this way, though at the time was certainly not interested in writing music that was “too
harmonious”. In hindsight, she thinks that subconsciously, everything at this time had to be disturbed and distorted, to express the elusiveness of things, “that you can’t hold onto anything”. This was the first music Kats-Chernin produced after her son became ill, and she immediately thinks of him whenever she hears the work played. She believes she would not have survived this experience without the outlet of composition. Kats-Chernin wrote another little piece inspired by Alexander’s illness, the much simpler *Get Well Rag*, but regards the *Sonata* as a more significant expression of the sadness and despair she felt after he became unwell.

Alexander’s illness further cemented Kats-Chernin’s realisation that there are “so many more important things in life than worrying about what your peers will say”. She discovered that some methods she had previously experimented with no longer felt right:

> I was trying to be somebody else because it was the trend to be ‘modern’. It was all very interesting and I did experiment for a while, but at some point I saw that it took too much energy. I really admire people who find a new sound, because it’s so much harder to do, and to explain how to do it, but you constantly have to think, and can’t let go and allow things to happen automatically. But harmony and melody are my thing.  

8.6.4 Katy Abbott

Abbott does not think her musical style has changed since having children, but that most of her works “would have been written anyway”. Her creativity, she claims, has not been noticeably stimulated through having children. Although she has written music for younger people, this influence stems more from her life as a teacher than her own children.

There are a few exceptions to this, the most significant being her symphony, *Souls of Fire*. The work deals with the theme of loss, the first movement being a response to an experience of having got caught up in the Anzac Day Parade. While writing the first movement, Abbott had a miscarriage, which had a devastating impact on her: “The

---

162 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
163 Kats-Chernin interview, 2005.
165 Loss, country, family, determination and celebration of life are themes that resonate for Abbott, and have become themes in her work. This was discussed earlier in Chapter Two, Section 2.6.1.
difference between losing an unborn child and someone you love is that when you lose someone you have known and loved, you lose the past, but when you lose an unborn child, you lose the future with that person”. This experience informed the material for the second movement:

The motive of two perfect 5ths a semitone apart is really the basis of the whole second movement. That rang true in me for some reason—I could connect that idea of loss with this music. I hadn’t had that happen a lot before; I hadn’t been able to relate a melodic or harmonic idea to anything programmatic. I had a lot of solos or very small groups of the orchestra playing, and then a full tutti. You know when something terrible has happened, and you go to sleep, and when you wake up, you think everything is all right, and suddenly you remember that it’s not. I find that excruciating, and though I haven’t tried to make it too programmatic, this element is in it.

Abbott became pregnant with her twins while composing this music. She finished the short score just before they were born, and then orchestrated it. At this time it became “more a compositional exercise; I didn’t have time to think about the deep meaning behind it”, but it remained important to her to represent in musical terms what had been a meaningful experience.

Abbott names three further works that bear some relation to mothering, and these have been composed since the birth of her boys. One was written for grade three and four children of MLC (Sydney) School’s Kent Choir to sing at the school’s Opera House Gala Concert in 2007. She was “given free reign” with the theme ‘famous Australian females’. The work is entitled Famous, and is written for soprano choir, cello and piano. In her programme notes, Abbott states:

In 2006, the Childhood Foundation reported that ‘children admire people whom they actually know and engage with over pop and sports stars. Mothers attained the highest number of votes, with Dads not far behind, followed by friends, siblings and other family. Then Lance Armstrong and Delta Goodrem. Many familiar and household names appear in this three-minute piece, yet the most important woman will be revealed …

---

166 Abbott interview, 2005.
Abbott acknowledges that her mothering role had an influence in her choice of whom that “most important woman” would be. It is, of course, the mother!

Abbott wrote the second movement of her work, *It is Just the Heart* (2006) for soprano and string quartet, with her own children in mind. Entitled ‘Dinosaur’, it was inspired by an image of a small child viewing the dinosaur exhibit at the Melbourne Children’s Museum. Finally, her most recent work, *The Peasant Prince*, is dedicated to her three sons, “in the hope that they may know their dreams and have the courage to follow them”.

8.6.5 Summary

Of the four composers in this study, Kats-Chernin displays the least reluctance to articulate direct representations of experiences of mothering in her music. This reflects the increased acceptability that motherhood and creativity need not be mutually exclusive activities. Abbott provides a similar example of programmatic elements relating to her identity as a mother in her symphony *Souls of Fire*. Whilst both Sutherland and Carr-Boyd wrote music for children, this was mostly when their own offspring were young, and was a means of blending these two activities at the time their children were most needy of their attention, rather than an overt wish to integrate these two facets of their lives. It was probably also due partially to the expectations still prevalent in their respective eras that they demonstrate primary involvement with their children. It does nevertheless suggest their willingness to accept the relative impossibility of maintaining a complete separation between two such meaningful roles.

Examples of overt writing of motherhood into the music are the exception rather than the rule, and there remains a desire on the part of all four composers to convey a sense of separation between their mothering and creative endeavours. They all display ambition to succeed in the public sphere in their chosen musical vocation. It remains

---

170 Refer Section 8.3.4 of this chapter. The work is based on dancer Li Cunxin’s story. He started at the Beijing Dance Academy in 1972 at the age of 11, later defected to America, and by 1995 was a principal in the Australian Ballet. His mother had told him to follow his dreams. These themes are reflected in the children’s book *The Peasant Prince*, which is based on Li Cunxin’s book *Mao’s Last Dancer*. Abbott email, 2 February 2009.

171 Refer Chapter Six, Section 6.3.

172 This may also prove to be the case for Abbott.
true that to flaunt their mothering roles in a culture still somewhat reluctant to value highly the work of mothers is not likely to enhance their credibility as committed, professional composers.

In her book *Motherhood: How Should We Care for Our Children?* Anne Manne speaks of nursing her child one day, and simultaneously listening to a radio programme where a French painter was discussing her life, painting and motherhood. What Manne heard the painter say unexpectedly “gave her heart”. She acknowledged the fatigue and lack of time when her children were small, but proposed an alternative way of viewing it: “Being a mother had opened her to a kind of love so deep, made her confront her own vulnerability so profoundly, that this love worked not against, but with her creativity.”173 These comments resonate with Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott, who each found it difficult to describe exactly how mothering might have impacted on their creative work, partly because they had little experience of composing without the presence of children in their lives. However, all three women were able to identify with the overall sentiment expressed in the painter’s comment, that the profundity of feelings involved in the experience of mothering could not help but alter them in a way that somehow fed their simultaneous desire to create music.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have focused on aspects of the lives of four Australian women from different generations, spanning the period between the final decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. The conclusions reached are divided according to the three parts of the thesis, each of which is aligned with one of the central themes outlined in Chapter One, Section 1.4. These will be addressed in turn. A brief reflective retrospection will follow on the process of applying the two principal methodologies adopted in this thesis—feminist biography and oral history.

9.2 Foundations: Family Background, Upbringing and Education

In Part One of this study, I sought to discover the ways in which each composer’s family background, upbringing and education impacted on her decision to enter the traditionally male field of composition. Margaret Sutherland, Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott have developed their composing and mothering roles in Australia against the backdrop of this country’s unique beginnings as a colonial, frontier, masculine and isolated society. Until the final three decades of the twentieth century, women’s upbringing and education prepared them for what was thought to be their principal role in life, to raise families within the domestic realm. They were not expected to have aspirations and ambitions beyond this function.

Whilst music, and in particular its teaching and performance aspects, were available options for women, the creative abilities involved in composition were considered more the province of men. All composers experienced difficulty in the colonial environment of Australia, but composing women faced particular challenges on the road to recognition. Special determination and resiliency was required, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.
Exploration of the early lives of the four subjects reveals both differences and similarities. Although Abbott took relatively longer than the other three women to discover her vocational niche, this situation has been somewhat mitigated through the increasing encouragement provided to women composers during the later years of the twentieth century and in the first decade of the twenty-first. Kats-Chernin also benefited from being born later than Sutherland or Carr-Boyd, and also from having spent her early years in the former Soviet Union, where musical training was more rigorous than in Australia. There were additional advantages for Kats-Chernin from having grown up in such a society. Fewer restrictions were placed on women’s career aspirations, and there was considerable fostering of people who demonstrated particular artistic or musical talents.

Certain similarities between these women from different generations are striking. I have stressed the importance of the influence of family members and other mentors on a musically talented woman in supporting her musical pursuits through encouragement towards and the provision of appropriate education. In a world where serious composition was a male province, such a background has been essential to a woman’s sense of entitlement to a career as a composer. This requirement has dissipated somewhat with the impact of second-wave feminism, but is still important today. All four composers in this study have benefited from being raised in families that have valued education and artistic endeavour highly.

What is more remarkable is that, though female mentors have been present in all four cases, each of these women has enjoyed considerable input from male mentors who appear not to have treated them differently because of their gender. They have been fortunate enough to enjoy the positive influence of individual males who were unusual in that they were less reflective of otherwise dominant incumbent patriarchal systems. This contribution was integral in promoting the development of the creative talents of Sutherland and Carr-Boyd in particular, but has also been crucial to Kats-Chernin and Abbott in assisting them to avail themselves of opportunities within what is still regarded as a male-dominated profession.
9.3 Feminist Positions: The Impact of Feminism

My aim in Part Two of this thesis was threefold. I wanted to explore the composers’ personal relationships with feminism, to demonstrate the ways in which feminism has actually impinged on their lives, and to establish the levels of frustration, and/or satisfaction each woman has experienced in blending motherhood with composition. It was necessary to address the experiences of Margaret Sutherland separately, since, unlike the three living composers, she grew up and developed her compositional career prior to the advent of second-wave feminism.

Sutherland came of age within a society already altered by the first-wave ‘Woman Movement’, and by the achievement of the vote as a result of the efforts of the suffragists in the early twentieth century.¹ The feminist movement at this time remained conservative, its aims being the maintenance of women’s position inside the private sphere of the home. Sutherland did not appear to question society’s expectations of women’s mothering role, and chose to marry and have children. Due to the unusual family background mentioned above, neither did she anticipate that she could not simultaneously cultivate a serious career as a composer.

Whilst it is not known whether Sutherland identified herself as a feminist, the nature of many of her activities suggest she lived a feminist existence, one in which she exercised agency and choice with regard to her domestic and professional life. The very active role she played in musical and public life was uncommon for a woman of her era, and her alignment with the League of Women Voters from 1948 is an obvious testimony to her feminist affinities. Unlike most women of her time, educated or otherwise, Sutherland endeavoured to do justice to both her mothering and musical pursuits, and in so doing was a role model for her female followers, and a third-wave feminist prototype.

Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott fall within Catherine Hakim’s ‘adaptive’ category of women in having opted to be composers as well as mothers. They have done so within a society imbued with the attitudes of the second-wave

¹ The first-wave feminist movement was referred to as the ‘Woman Movement’ in Australia. Lake, *Getting Equal*, 19.
feminist movement towards mothering, and with its legacy of the ‘superwoman’ who both has and does ‘it all’. To varying degrees, each woman has also felt the impact of an evolving, more pluralist third-wave feminism that encompasses recognition of the need for a significant reappraisal and re-structure of the public world of work in order to keep this realm open for women, together with the higher valuation and incorporation of women’s maternal desire. Against this background of altering feminist agendas, the longstanding ideal of the gentle, self-sacrificing, mother has held sway tenaciously, and has influenced each woman’s views of what constitutes the model of the good mother.

Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott have experienced varying degrees of conflict in balancing their mothering and creative roles. Like Sutherland, Carr-Boyd received an upbringing that did not preclude her sense of entitlement to pursue her desires to mother and to compose. Although she has sometimes encountered difficulties in balancing the two, she values both functions equally. Carr-Boyd is appreciative of the variety the two roles have brought to her life and her ability to juggle them successfully, and harbours little if no resentment about the opposing demands placed on her time.

Kats-Chernin displays an ambivalence towards the often conflicting demands of her single-mother situation and compositional career positions. Although she would always have found it very difficult to forego her creative goals, she regrets not being more available to her sons, and feels she does not fulfil the ideal of the good mother. This level of conflict and guilt is surprising given her upbringing in a country where it was the norm for a mother to work, and her strong identification as a composer. Such feelings may have been alleviated had she not been forced to devote quite so much time to composing in order to provide adequate financial support to her sons. Comparing herself with certain male counterparts, Kats-Chernin is able to acknowledge and appreciate her achievements as a woman in using time well to become a successful composer as well as primary caregiver and provider for her sons.

Like Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, Abbott identifies unequivocally as both a mother and a composer. She was born into a later generation, and has enjoyed more financial and parenting support from her husband, so is less undermined by the ‘good mother’ ideal. Abbott’s opinion that she is a better mother when she has ‘time out’ to compose was, until recently, accompanied by significant feelings of guilt at not always being there for
her sons, but she does not believe her challenges as a composer and parent are greater than those of her male counterparts; they are just different.

Neither Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin nor Abbott is prepared openly to call herself a feminist. Each feels some discomfort with some of the more strident aspects of second-wave feminism, most notably the repudiation and devaluation of the work of care involved in mothering. All three to some degree reflect the ambivalence of Abbott’s generation with regard to restrictive feminist dogma, and do not wish to be perceived as victims of a patriarchal society. They are reluctant to be construed as belonging to a separate group of ‘women composers’ but would rather have their music judged on its merits alone. This can most obviously be attributed to the fact that music written by women has traditionally been considered less accomplished than that of men.

All four women have led lives which fit a broader feminist agenda, and the three living composers understand that they have benefited from the reduced levels of women’s oppression enabled by second-wave feminism. However, they hold their experience of mothering in deep regard, and to varying extents have taken on the major responsibility for the nurturing of children and for other domestic duties, as well as earning money from their musical endeavours. They have eschewed complete engagement with a second-wave feminist agenda, and can more readily be referred to as third-wave women.

In their reluctance openly to declare themselves feminists, while simultaneously living third-wave feminist lives, Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott operate outside as well as inside second- and third-wave feminist theories. So, too, did Sutherland, even though her career pre-dated these movements. Such theories are nevertheless invaluable to studies such as this one, since they provide a secure foundation upon which to evaluate aspects of the public and private lives of these women. Furthermore, their value is reciprocal. In applying third-wave feminist theories as a prism through which to view not only these three contemporary women, but also Sutherland retrospectively, this study has added nuance in demonstrating how ‘lived’ lives can, in turn, critique theory.
9.4 **Motherhood and Creativity: Musically Creative Women in Australia**

In the final part of this thesis, my intention was to examine the historical attitudes towards women as creators, and to expose the impact of these on particular aspects of women’s musical creativity. I then considered how these notions have played out in Australia, and in particular in the creative lives of the four subjects of this study.

Women composers have always been fewer than men, but the number of successful female composers is steadily increasing. It was long thought that women’s biological and emotional make-up precluded them from creative facility, and they were assigned the principal role of motherhood and domesticity within the private sphere. More recently it has been argued that there are specific reasons why women have not developed musically-creative abilities. They have encountered a number of barriers to their achievement, the most important of which has been restrictions on their access to appropriate education, which has precluded them from the acquisition of essential musical skills, particularly to tackle the most highly-valued orchestral medium. The number and nature of their public appearances have likewise been curtailed, as has the requisite dissemination of their work. Against this background of discouragement, women composers have been less able to develop the confidence and skills crucial for self-promotion, and have sometimes had their musical efforts belittled by musical critics. Moreover, certain views have been held about mothers who have chosen to have simultaneous creative careers. These have led many women to be conflicted about their dual roles, and to feel the need to mould their creative products into a male-centred model that has largely forbidden the representation of subjective experience of mothering in their work. Women writers in particular have interrogated this situation.

The odds against Australian women as composers have diminished, but they have certainly not been immune to historical opinion and the resultant lack of opportunities to penetrate the traditionally male and public world of the composer. Second-wave feminism contributed to the increasing promotion and acceptance of women as composers, as did the foundation of the Australian Music Centre in 1975. These changes came too late for Sutherland’s career, and she experienced a greater struggle with the dissemination of her music than did her three followers. Indeed the production
of Australian music by publishing houses has only really significantly increased since the late 1990s.

With the increasing sophistication of technical expertise in recording, it has become a more prevalent means of dissemination. This change is reflected in the numbers of recordings of the music of Carr-Boyd and Kats-Chernin, and this is also envisaged for Abbott as her still relatively young career blossoms.

The numbers of commissions granted to Australian composers have likewise increased since the late 1960s, and this has afforded Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott more opportunities than Sutherland both for remuneration for their work, and for exposure of their music via official performances. Sutherland was first commissioned late in her career in 1967, and was more often obliged to compose for instruments played by colleagues, and to organise her own performance opportunities.

Sutherland struggled more than her three followers for recognition of her music, and her skills in promoting her work, and that of other composers of her generation, were unusual for a woman of her time. Though they are aware of the need to market their music, and have done so to varying degrees at different moments in their careers, Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott are less comfortable with promoting themselves, particularly in ways that might still be perceived as aggressive and repellent. They have attempted to find more subtle means, such as circulating their music and maintaining contacts in the music world. A degree of success had been achieved by all three through the adoption of such methods.

Sutherland was ambitious to bring her music to a wider public, but was less confident in writing for orchestra. She thought it more the realm of male composers, and preferred the intimacy of smaller musical groupings. Only later in her career did she devote more time to compose for larger, orchestral forces, following her divorce and once her children grew up. Her successors have been less reticent in this regard. They all like writing for larger forces, and started to do so early in their careers. Their desire to master this mode can be attributed to increasing cultural recognition of women’s abilities in writing for larger forces, and to the continuing aesthetic value assigned to the “grand musical structures”.

252
Sutherland’s music was reviewed on occasion in a gendered fashion, which reflected the attitude of her era towards women composers. There is little evidence that language utilised in reviews of the music of Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin or Abbott is ‘gendered’. Such language is deemed inappropriate following the advent of second-wave feminism.

Whilst it is still difficult for composers to earn a comfortable living from composition alone, opportunities have proliferated during the later years of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. Such chances were few for Sutherland. Teaching was a more acceptable profession for women, and as did many other women musicians of her era, she relied principally on this means to earn money. Her husband provided some financial support, but this was never freely given, and Sutherland continued to take students for a number of years following her marriage. Carr-Boyd has always taught music, deriving greater enjoyment from it than did her predecessor, and appreciating the level of financial independence it gave her during marriage. Unlike Sutherland, she has often been commissioned, so has had other income-earning avenues, but teaching continues to contribute to her financial independence.

For most of her sons’ young lives, Kats-Chernin has been financially responsible for them, but has done little teaching. When in Germany, she earned money as an accompanist for dance and theatre, and by performing regularly with a vocal ensemble in bars and other venues. With her expanding reputation since her return to Australia in 1994, Kats-Chernin has made her living solely from activities related to her composition, but has not been in a position to turn down any commissions until recently. Abbott has taught more than Kats-Chernin, since school music-teaching was her profession prior to becoming a full-time composer. While her sons are young, she is financially supported by her husband, but is able to contribute to the family finances through her commissions, which are steadily increasing in number.

None of the four composers has made many conscious attempts to write mothering into their music. They prefer to regard them as separate endeavours, and do not see a particular need to represent their mothering in their music. This is explained by the lingering perception that such music might not be taken seriously. Kats-Chernin and Abbott have each directly represented certain experiences related to mothering in their
work, but these examples are few. Sutherland and Carr-Boyd wrote music for their children when they were quite young, but this stems more from the convenience associated with integration of their two focuses at this stage.

9.5 Methodologies in Reflection

9.5.1 Feminist Biography

It has been made clear in this thesis that, for the women involved, gender has influenced their experiences of the public world of work and career differently than it has their male counterparts. A major aim in this study has been the application of feminist biography’s principal tenet: the need to examine the impact of private lives on public activities. This has the effect of revealing women’s alternative backgrounds, and enables them to be written into history in a manner that validates their dual lives and consequent achievements in the face of the often conflicting demands of motherhood and career. This methodology has contributed to the current scholarship on four important Australian women composers by viewing their lives from a particular angle most germane to their accomplishments in the different realms of their existence.

9.5.2 Oral History

In its privileging of lived experience, and its ability to uncover hidden stories, an oral historical methodology has similarly been pertinent to this study, whose focus has been to bring composing mothers’ particular experiences to light. This modus operandum is not without its potential problems, and two are worthy of note here. The first is an unequal balance of power between researcher and interviewee, and the attendant opportunity for the interviewer to shape the interviewees’ responses. The second relates to the sometimes unreliable nature of memory noted in oral narratives. The author has been fortunate in having encountered no significant problems with either issue.

With regard to the former, the collaborative approach intended was attained, with all interviews being conducted in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation. There are two principal factors that account for this situation. First, there was a significant degree of common ground between me as interviewer and the interviewees, as I am also a mother who is simultaneously vocationally involved beyond the domestic realm. Second, there
was a palpable desire on the part of the three living composers to share their personal experiences as women composers in order to have them exposed to and validated by a wider audience. In addition, the three living composers were provided with the opportunity to comment on the written interpretation of the discussions, and felt the need to suggest only minor alterations.

The latter possible complication—the perceived unreliability of memories recounted orally—was perceptible to some extent in Carr-Boyd’s remarkably positive appraisal of her mothering and compositional experiences. However, this is not considered to be a flaw in the context of this thesis, in which personal lived experience as narrated by the women is acknowledged as a ‘psychologically’ true—a different but equally valid credibility.

9.6 Conclusion

My overall intention has been to examine the experiences and the particular challenges faced as women by four Australian composing mothers. Whilst each of these ‘case studies’ is worthy of attention in her own right, it has been illuminating to compare and contrast the experiences of the four women against the background of broader historical and cultural contexts, in order to discover the ways in which they do and do not conform with the expectations and norms of their times.

There are a number of opportunities for further research beyond the current study, but I will conclude this thesis with two possibilities that I consider to be the most interesting and valuable of further areas for exploration. First, this thesis has adopted a feminist biographical methodology, but the approach of psychoanalytic biography may also have much to offer. There are common aspects to the two styles, such as the consideration of private as well as public lives, and negative as well as positive personal attributes, but a Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalytic approach might also explore such issues as family constellations, infantile and subsequent traumas or ‘accidents’, identifications, and subjective positions taken up in relationships with other people. This could create a
more profound picture of the impact of such vicissitudes on the lives and careers of these women.  

Second, in the current culture of increasing pressure on men to take a greater role in caring for their children, it would be enlightening to discover how some male composers might be experiencing their roles. This curiosity on my part was heightened by an article recently published in Melbourne’s *The Age* newspaper entitled “Driven by Distraction”. Author of fiction Damon Young reveals a little of his experience in blending fatherhood with his writing career. Young begins by citing Cyril Connolly’s book *Enemies of Promise*. Although Connolly does not maintain that children cannot bring happiness and fulfilment, he does say that parenthood is disastrous for the creative life. His son asleep in the pram nearby as he writes, Young strongly disagrees with Connolly’s contention:

> Reading to my son reminds me of the basic power of plots and characters … Likewise playing with him has been a great exercise in creativity. Whether it’s morning lego, drawing diggers or making a chair-and-doona cubby, playtime accustoms me to open-ended, free-thinking activity. It urges me to be less cautious, less conservative in my writing, to commit myself to the twists and turns of the process, rather than desperately chasing outcomes. It becomes less rigid, and more innovative … But most importantly, my son is a commitment, a living line in the sand.

I wonder whether Young’s newfound, increased appreciation of process over product is still unusual, or whether there are more creative men in Australia today who can acknowledge the difficulties and pleasures involved in apportioning more equally time and value to the dual roles of parenting and a creative career, as did Sutherland, and as do Carr-Boyd, Kats-Chernin and Abbott. I hope someone will take up this research challenge.

---

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Interviews with Margaret Sutherland

Murdoch, James. Transcript of taped interview with Margaret Sutherland. 3 April 1968. James Murdoch Papers, Australian Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia, MS 8372.

Pratt, Mel. Transcript of taped interview with Margaret Sutherland. 5 April 1972. Oral History Section, National Library of Australia, TRC 121/31.

Interviews with Acquaintances of Margaret Sutherland

Bunney, Jane. Interview with the author. 20 January 2000.

Crump, Madeleine. Interview with the author. 30 March 2000.

Gifford, Helen. Interview with the author. 16 September 1999.

Rosewarne, Stuart. Interview with the author. 26 April 2000.

Schofield, Margaret. Interview with the author. 4 October 1999.

Van Rompaey, Elizabeth. Interview with the author. 7 October 1999;


Interviews and Other Communications with Ann Carr-Boyd, Elena Kats-Chernin and Katy Abbott


———. Second interview with the author. 9 August and 2 September 2005.
Kats-Chernin, Elena. First interview with the author. 23 June 2004.

———. Second interview with the author. 9 September 2005.


Autobiographical Notes and Articles Written by Margaret Sutherland


Other Autobiographical Sources and Memoirs


Newspaper Articles/Reviews/Reports

Anon. BBC Reports on Margaret Sutherland’s *House Quartet in C Minor*. 8, 15 October 1952.

———. BBC Report on Margaret Sutherland’s *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. Undated, 1950s.

———. BBC Report on Margaret Sutherland’s *Cradle Song*. 7 May 1954.

———. BBC Report on Margaret Sutherland’s *September*. 20 April 1954.


———. “Margaret Sutherland’s Works”. *Australian Musical News*. 1 April 1926. 25.


Letters

Hanson-Dyer, Louise. Letter to Sybil Hewett. 29 March 1943.

Secretary of the Ladies’ Committee, Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust. Letter to Margaret Sutherland. 16 April 1927. Herbert and Ivy Brookes Papers, Australian Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia, MS 1924.

Sutherland, Margaret. Letter to Don Banks. Undated. Australian Manuscript Collection, National Library of Australia, MS 6830.

Secondary Sources

Books


Goodall, H.L. *Writing the New Ethnography.* Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2000.


Book Chapters, Essays, Encyclopaedia and Dictionary Entries


Chodorow, Nancy J. with Susan Contratto. “The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother”.
Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory. Ed. Nancy J. Chodorow. New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1989. 79–96


Cusick, Suzanne G. “Gender, Musicology, and Feminism”. Rethinking Music. Ed.
498.

Davies, Susan. “Kathleen Fitzpatrick: Sculptor with Words”. The Discovery of

De Vries, Susannah. “Jane Sutherland (1855–1928), Margaret Sutherland (1897–1984):
Outstanding Women in Art and Music”. Strength of Purpose: Australian Women
of Achievement from Federation to the Mid-20th Century. Sydney: Harper


Dreyfus, Kay. “In Search of New Waters: Australian Music Studies in the 1990s”.
The University of Western Australia, 1995. 155–163


Faulkner, Mara. “Motherhood as Source and Silencer of Creativity”. Tillie Olsen "Tell
Me a Riddle". Ed. Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt. New Brunswick, New Jersey:

270


Parsons Smith, Catherine. “‘A Distinguishing Virility’: Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music”. *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and


**Journal Articles**


**Theses**


Patrick, Ann. “*The Young Kabbarli*: Daisy Bates as Operatic Heroine”. MPhil, University of Western Australia, 1996.


Watters-Cowan, Cherie. “Re-Constructing the Creative Life of Margaret Sutherland: The Evidence of Primary Source Documents”. PhD, University of New South Wales, 2006.


**Manuscripts**


Documentaries, Video/Audio Recordings


Internet Sites


APPENDIX ONE

ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA:
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A1.1 Introduction

This appendix provides additional information that can further enhance the understanding of the history of women, family and music in Australia inherited by the composers in this study. The unique situation of women in the nineteenth century will be summarised first, followed by an examination of the causes, activities and achievements of twentieth-century women’s movements in Australia. The position of women musicians in particular will then be addressed, including the early musical culture transplanted from the United Kingdom and Europe, the founding of tertiary music institutions, and the ‘old’ and ‘middle’ generations of Australian women composers.¹

A1.2 Women in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Australia

In 1783, American James Matra (who had been a midshipman with Captain Cook on the Endeavour) suggested that the British Government establish a colony in New South Wales. He envisaged a society in which he would rule over public life as Governor, and men, as heads of families, would rule over women and private life (and Europeans over other races).² In her seminal Australian women’s history book The Real Matilda (1976), Miriam Dixson seeks to explain Australian women’s alleged status as the “doormats of the Western world”.³ By the time the women’s movement emerged in Australia in the 1880s, Australian women had acquired a lower overall standing than women in other democracies. Dixson argues that a history unusually steeped in misogyny has bequeathed Australians restrictive stereotypes of men and women with

¹ The issues relating to Australian women in general are addressed in Sections A1.2 to A1.7. Those relating to Australian women musicians and composers in particular are addressed in Sections A1.8 to A1.11.
² Grimshaw et al, Creating a Nation, 27
³ Dixson 11.
nuances specific to Australia. A number of reasons for this have been proposed, in particular by Dixson in the abovementioned text,⁴ and by Patricia Grimshaw et al, in *Creating a Nation*.

Settled Australia’s birth and formative decades occurred during the crucial period of England’s modernisation in the nineteenth century. Work and family structures were previously integrated within the home; thus the location of work did not entail separation from family life. Women and children had been co-workers in the home, and the status of each sex derived as much from identification with family as with work. Industrialisation beginning around 1750 meant that the concentration of economically productive effort gradually moved to larger-scale organisations outside the family, leading to the separation between the public world of work and the sphere of private domestic labour. This had implications for women’s work, for the employment and family roles of both sexes, and for the relationship between family and the economy.⁵

The most significant long-term consequence was the differentiation of family roles. Urban working-class women in particular followed their traditional work out of the home into the factory, but the decline later in the nineteenth century of employment of married women outside the home was connected with the increasing belief that women’s natural domesticity should be exercised within the home. Often a woman became the non-employed, economically dependent housewife, with child-rearing as her major focus, while the man worked outside the home as economic provider for the family. Even if she was employed, domesticity remained the primary role expected of a woman.⁶ This nuclear family form of children living together with their mother and father, who were performing specific roles, is a product of the late nineteenth century, and therefore has had a relatively short history.⁷

Dixson espouses Louis Hartz’s picture of Australia in the early days of European settlement as a fragment from the body of industrialising Western Europe at a moment when the “lower orders” were beginning to influence communities on a scale never

---

⁴ Dixson 13, 115.
⁶ De Marneffe 6; Oakley, *Housewife*, 34.
before encountered. The experience of British working women had implications for Australian women in the early days of the colony, since British concepts about women and work were to a large extent transported here along with British immigrants. The traditional employment areas for working class women in Britain—domestic work, agriculture and textiles—were not replicated exactly in Australia. Other aspects of British working life were emulated, including the division of labour into men’s and women’s work, the fact that women were paid less than men, and the notion that married women should not work outside the home after marriage. The situation for middle-class British women, who were deemed too respectable to work for wages and were restricted from education, was also mirrored in Australia. So too was the idea that nursing, teaching and typing were ‘respectable’ occupations for middle-class women beginning to work for wages later in the nineteenth century until they married.

Like their British counterparts, Australian working-class women flocked into lower-waged secondary manufacturing roles after the introduction of machinery, particularly in the clothing and textiles industry, though to an extent this factory system deprived women (and children) of employment that could be carried out in the home. During this period of accelerated capitalist development, women evolved more into “millstones, mouths, hostages to fortune”.

Because of the need to care for children, more women dropped out of the structure of paid work, a change accompanied by a diminishment of their human value, since the attribution of such value seemed inescapably tied in with work. Women’s standing in patriarchal society had often been derived from that of ‘her man’, but modernisation and industrialisation diminished even that derived status.

Convicts and the ‘casual poor’ were among the products of the industrial revolution, and many of Australia’s early settlers fell into these categories, and carried significant cultural weight. Dixson attempts to tease out the “quality of personhood” accorded to women by men of the same social strata, “and consequently much of the self-concept of

---

9 Until 1966, women employed in the Australian Public Service were required to resign when they married. This was referred to as the ‘marriage bar’.
10 Ryan and Conlon 2, 7, 15, 17, 18, 48.
11 Ryan and Conlon 13, 49.
12 Dixson 226.
these women”. She suggests that men “on lower ranges have insisted—the process is largely unconscious—on one final consolation: ‘their’ women shall stand lower on the status ladder, and thus lower in their own self-evaluation”. This effect is exacerbated by the fact that throughout much of the nineteenth century, men outnumbered women. This “grotesque imbalance” must have contributed to women’s low standing.

In this regard, it is also important to note the influence of the high numbers of Irish people living in Australia in the nineteenth century. The Irish, generally less literate and skilled than other immigrant groups, were mostly clustered on the lower rungs of the status hierarchy. Russel Ward claimed in *The Australian Legend* that the strong influence of the Irish on Australian working-class attitudes was an important ingredient in the developing distinctive Australian ethos. The commonly-held English view of the Irish was that they were rather primitive, and that it was only the shade of an Irish Catholic’s skin that distinguished him from an Aborigine! This attitude can be traced to English imperialism in Ireland, which prior to the sixteenth century was a prosperous land, but became the “first substantial object in the Western world of those forces which have been described as ‘imperialist’”. The resultant colonialism “kept the Irish ‘primitive’, provoking ambiguous and ambivalent responses in the modernising English—responses that ultimately had their consequences for Irish men (and hence for Australian women)”. The Irish man in Australia, like the Aborigine, had to endure this English colonial arrogance and “passed on to his women the humiliation and blighted self-image which imperialism enforced on the colonised Irish male”. Dixson suggests that one major source of Australian mateship and male-bonding can be located in the Irish, and points to the link between mateship and drinking.

---

14 Dixson 90.  
15 Dixson 221.  
16 Dixson 121.  
17 In the nineteenth century between one-third and one-quarter of Australia’s population was Irish. Dixson 155.  
22 Dixson 159.  
23 Dixson 155.  
24 Dixson 169.
The lower numbers of women in some areas such as gold rush sites was an important factor in colonial relationships.\textsuperscript{25} The absence from familial responsibilities and domestic influences left incentive and time for casual sex, drinking, smoking, gambling and fighting. This male environment contributed to the construction of a style of ‘frontier’ masculinity which valued all-male company and activities over domestic ties, and was essentially hostile towards women.\textsuperscript{26}

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, after the gold rushes of the 1850s, women gradually infiltrated these spaces through the immigration of single women, and equal numbers of boys and girls born to colonial parents.\textsuperscript{27} This increasing presence was critical to social transformation in the final decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1890s, at least three in four colonial men were married by their mid-40s, and this increase in the number of married men reinvigorated the ideal of the respectable, prudent family man encouraged in the colonies before the 1860s. Such a working man’s masculine ideal of investment in domestic responsibility was widely at odds with the myth of the rough, independent frontier male referred to above. This ideal was also manifested among the urban middle class, with the belief that men and women were fundamentally different in nature and function. The result was the fostering of separate spheres for the two sexes: the man was active, public, money-earning, home defender; the woman private, domestic, caring, moral and spiritual guardian. Although this model took a different shape in the colonial context, it was as essentially derivative of English social attitudes as was the working-class model.\textsuperscript{28}

White colonial settlement has often been depicted as a masculine story, of men who displayed courage, endurance and adventure, and who provided for women. This obscures women’s importance in the economic expansion of the colonies. Women were the sexual partners of white men, bearing colonial babies who not only provided the

\textsuperscript{25} A notable exception to this is in the area of hotel-keeping. Around 60% of hotel licences at this time in both city and regional areas were held by women. Colonial reformers had promoted female immigration to Victoria (and elsewhere) because of a belief in the beneficial social effects of women, and their presence as owners of licensed public houses could to some extent temper the excesses of exclusive male companionship. Although a man could enjoy a drink in the company of men, it was likely he was entering the house of a woman. Clare Wright, \textit{Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australian Female Publicans} (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003) 5, 28–33.

\textsuperscript{26} Grimshaw et al, 114.

\textsuperscript{27} In the three decades from the 1860s to the 1890s, women bore on average seven children. Grimshaw et al, 120.

\textsuperscript{28} Grimshaw et al, 114, 117.
basis for a new community, but also justification for men’s employment, and the stimulation for the acquisition of trappings of civilised, genteel life. Women cared for young and old and laboured in the unpaid domestic arena, enabling men to devote themselves to productive labour. They also worked in significant ways on the land in public paid employment, often taking on work considered monotonous by men. In short, it can be argued that women provided the foundations for the economic transformation of Australia. Women benefited from this economic development and its subsequent prosperity, but also faced hardship and deprivation to be with men.29

Dixson maintains that colonies often lack solid upper social strata: an aristocracy, upper-middle class and ‘aristocracy of the mind’.30 As a frontier and a colony comparatively highly populated with convicts and the casual poor, this situation was reflected in Australia in the nineteenth century.31 Australian élite males (the land-owning ‘squattocracy’, merchant, financial, governing and professional strata) experienced uncertainty about their legitimacy and authority, and were still far from throwing off the narrow and derivative attitudes that made it “resemble the ‘colonial bourgeoisie’ described by some Marxists as a puny specimen of the genre”.32 As a result of this class structure (and with some important exceptions), Australian intellectual strata were not especially robust or revered. It seems impossible for women not to reflect this self-doubt. Australia lacked a noteworthy feminine intelligentsia (with significant exceptions), and there was a paucity of strong female role models. This contrasted with countries such as England, the United States and Sweden, where intellectual women, along with some aristocratic, upper-middle- and middle class women were key players in building the nineteenth-century women’s movement. When

29 Grimshaw et al, 114–116, 121.
30 Dixson 179.
31 It is important to note that although historians have often considered the convicts as a criminal class, in reality they represented a reasonable selection of the working people of Britain, distinguished from others more by a sense of adventure, carelessness about property and bad luck. Grimshaw et al, 63.
32 ‘Squattocracy’ is a term for the aristocratic pretension of squatters, whom the colonial governments permitted to graze stock on vast areas of land from the 1830s in exchange for a very small fee. The squatters of the 1830s and 1840s were often also depicted as wild, hard-drinking, fighting men of the masculine ‘frontier’ myth, but as they became wealthier and married, they increasingly presented themselves as members of the landed Establishment on the English model. Helen Doyle, “Squattocracy”, The Oxford Companion to Australian History, ed. Graeme Davison et al (Melbourne: OUP, 1998) 605; Dixson 225.
placed in an international context, the Australia’s women’s movement was therefore less effective, though there were many fine and dedicated women.33

The demand for the vote came in the late nineteenth century. Dominant ideas about family, ensuring that women’s non-domestic activities did not breach conventional concepts of masculine and feminine, were also increasingly resisted. The feminist movement, or the ‘Woman Movement’ as it was called, emerged on more than an individual scale in the Australian colonies. At that stage no Australian woman enjoyed basic political rights, married women were denied the right to own property, to sovereignty over their own bodies, to custody of their children, and were often left in poverty if deserted by the husband. The situation of married women, the burden of mothers and the sexual degradation of women brought on by the colonial, frontier model of manhood was the major preoccupation of these women.34 It is to the activities and achievements of this Movement that I will now turn.

**A1.3 The Suffrage Campaign**

The ‘Woman Movement’ perceived that Australian masculinity was a problem. There was a sense that men should become more like ideal women—chaste, pure, loving, selfless, temperate, restrained and companionable. It was considered necessary to combat this masculine culture with the enfranchisement of the “national motherhood of women”. It was also agreed that women needed the vote to better defend themselves and their children, to seek reforms to give married women property, custody and inheritance rights, and to protect little children.35

Harriet Dugdale, a woman long interested in the ‘woman question’, was the first Australian on record to advocate full citizenship rights for women. In response to respected philosopher John Stuart Mill’s essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869), she wrote a letter to the Melbourne Argus, and published a utopian book in 1883 entitled *A Few Hours in a Far Off Age*.36 Dugdale imagined free, strong and unconstrained

---

33 Dixson 224–225.
34 Lake 19; Summers 349; Grimshaw et al, 130.
36 It was contended that “women of all social groups were denied access to a secure share of the family’s resources, to control of their sexuality and childbearing, and to social power, by men who appropriated those aspects of women’s lives for their own empowerment”. Colonial newspapers referred to this as the
women joined with men in companionate marriages, in an environment where drunkenness and prostitution were unknown. However, Dugdale does not appear to have received much support until 1884, when she formed the first of a number of pro-suffrage organisations, the Woman’s Suffrage Society, along with Annie Lowe, Annette Bear-Crawford and others. This was followed by the formation in Sydney by Louisa Lawson of the Dawn Club, a social reform club for women. Lawson, Rose Scott and Lady Margaret Windeyer were among a group that established the Womanhood Suffrage League in Sydney in 1891, to secure the franchise for women according to the same conditions that applied to men.

A relentless and determined campaign was waged throughout the decade of the 1890s, involving thousands of women and many men, and suffrage societies existed in all cities and in many towns throughout Australia. White women were eventually enfranchised in the Federal sphere in 1901, and able to vote in their first Federal elections in 1903, making Australia the second country in the world (after New Zealand in 1893) to grant women the vote. The right to vote in state elections, considered more important since most issues concerning women were state responsibilities, was obtained slowly state by state (or at that time, ‘colony’ by colony). South Australia was first in 1894, followed by Western Australia in 1899, New South Wales in 1902, Tasmania in 1903, Queensland in 1904, and Victoria in 1908.

The part played by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the suffrage campaign in all colonies is interesting to note. The WCTU’s significance was no doubt bolstered by the perception of women’s vulnerability to the manifestations of the masculine culture referred to above. The Union had been formed in Victoria in 1885, and expanded to 57 branches by 1891. Women in these groups were determined to take their role as guardians of the home seriously, in order to protect themselves and children from violence, sexual abuse and poverty, all associated with excessive alcohol

‘woman question’. Grimshaw et al, 155. In his essay, Mill argued that the “supposed appropriateness of the separation of women to the domestic sphere and men to the public was no more than a mechanism by which men dominated women, and made women’s interests subordinate to their own”. Grimshaw et al, 156–157.

37 Lake 23.
38 Summers 350.
39 Grimshaw et al, 171; Lake 21.
40 Summers 349.
41 Summers 347, 374; Lake 27.
consumption. These decentralised groups provided a valuable resource for the Woman Movement through the gathering of thousands of signatures in petitions collected to demonstrate women’s desire for the vote. In 1891, for example, a petition was arranged that eventually contained no less than 30,000 signatures. Vida Goldstein, one of its canvassers, claimed that it was the largest petition ever presented to the Victorian parliament. It captured the public imagination, and indicated that a great majority of women were in favour of the vote and of being on an equal footing with men in every respect, but it did not achieve its immediate aim. Its size and obvious connection between suffrage and temperance may have consolidated the political opposition to women’s suffrage in Victoria, where the longest campaign of all was waged.  

Women of the Woman Movement debated and supported a range of issues, not the least of which were in the arenas of divorce and child custody, and education, topics to be addressed later in this chapter. It can be argued that the major achievement of post-suffragist feminists in Australia was the creation of a maternalist welfare state.

A1.4 Feminism and the Creation of A Maternalist Welfare State in Australia

In her book Women and Economics (1898), American activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman stressed the importance of economic independence to women’s emancipation. Her thinking influenced Australian feminists to the extent that freedom and independence, rather than equality, dominated Australian feminist discourse by the interwar period. Suffragist Rose Scott was one feminist influenced by Gilman’s book. She believed that sexual coercion in marriage was a result of women’s economic dependence on their husbands, and that this made it a profoundly problematic institution, an opinion she expressed in a paper she delivered in 1903 entitled “The Economic Independence of the Married Woman”.  

Central to the goal of building a maternalist welfare state was the appointment of women to a range of state positions such as police, gaol matrons, factory and school inspectors, magistrates, Justices of the Peace, lawyers and doctors. Again, the

42 Lake 23–24.
introduction of women into these roles was not sought in pursuit of ‘equal opportunity’, but rather to ensure the protection of women and girls. This seeming preoccupation with the condition of wives and mothers has sometimes been conceptualised as a conservative tendency in the history of feminism leading to a perpetuation of women’s traditional roles. However, the revolutionary character at the time of this demand for the economic independence of mothers should not be underestimated. Particularly in the aftermath of World War 1 when reproduction was a high priority, feminists insisted that state resources be invested in maternal and child welfare, women’s hospitals and maternity benefits. Labor women proposed a platform of four interrelated planks to secure women’s independence, the first of which was the maternity allowance or ‘baby bonus’, followed a few years later by the child endowment, the motherhood endowment and the push for equal pay and opportunity.

A1.4.1 Maternity Allowance

Labor women argued that an income from the state was a citizen mother’s right, and party leader Andrew Fisher was receptive to this. As Prime Minister, in 1912 he introduced the maternity allowance of £5, a one-off payment equivalent to about five weeks’ wages for a working woman, to be made on the birth of a child. There was concern over the effects of industrial life on women’s reproductive and general health, and the state had a vested interest in the health of women and children. The payment was also in recognition of the need for race propagation, and that “maternity is more dangerous than war”, as Fisher had stated. It was accompanied by the issuing of a medical certificate to encourage women to use the money to pay for medical attention. The large investment was considered judicious for a developing nation, since the higher the population, the wealthier the country might become. Thus women in their capacity

44 Lake 49, 58, 67, 92.
45 Grimshaw et al, 222. None of these maternal and child welfare allowances were intended to apply to single mothers who gave birth ex-nuptially. The unmarried mother and child without a male provider was still highly stigmatised, with her survival largely dependent upon her silence and/or hiding. Sympathetic support was hard to obtain, and the only obvious escape routes were abortion (often unsafe and illegal), or marriage. Significant numbers of illegitimate babies were killed or abandoned in the years prior to World War I, and only in 1974 were social security benefits extended to single mothers in Australia. Shurlee Swain, Separate Spaces: Mapping the Melbourne of the Single Mother, Kathleen Fitzpatrick Memorial Lecture, delivered at the University of Melbourne, 16 May 1996 (Melbourne: The History Department, University of Melbourne, 1996).
46 The allowance was extended to unmarried mothers—though this was controversial—but not to non-whites. Lake 75.
as mothers had a central part to pay in economic growth, though as the tag ‘baby bonus’ suggests, the survival of babies rather than mothers was stressed.\textsuperscript{48} Cynical conservative critics remarked that the Prime Minister was simply trying to woo recently enfranchised women voters, though it did seem to be testament to the power of the woman’s vote.

\textbf{A1.4.2 Child Endowment}

During World War I, prices rose considerably, and people felt wages were insufficient. As Jill Roe states, the idea of family allowances was originally advanced by British feminist Eleanor Rathbone and the Fabians during World War I. Rathbone “recognised the liberation of wives and the relief of child poverty in large families through their husbands’ army allotments”.\textsuperscript{49} This was “relevant to the soldiers’ wives gathered up in social centres in Sydney” and these family allowances became ‘child endowment’ in Australia.\textsuperscript{50}

The discontent about insufficient wages was fuelled further by differences in the basic wage at State and Federal levels. Prime Minister W.M. Hughes honoured an election promise to hold a Royal Commission on the cost of living, which became known as the Basic Wage Commission of 1920, chaired by liberal thinker Justice A.B. Piddington, KC.\textsuperscript{51} The Commission’s report recommended a basic wage of £5 16s 6d rather than the existing £3-4, but was ignored.\textsuperscript{52} Piddington observed that the cost of having a family had the potential to influence many men to remain single, which would have a negative impact on the nation.\textsuperscript{53} He agitated for a living wage supplemented by a scheme of child endowment, with the idea that the basic wage should cover husband and wife, and the child endowment would be paid by the state to ensure children were adequately fed and clothed. This would be an investment that would pay off at a later date through the children’s future contributions as workers to the economic prosperity of the nation.\textsuperscript{54} The first system of child endowment was initiated within the

\textsuperscript{48} Roe 7.
\textsuperscript{49} Roe 9.
\textsuperscript{50} Roe 9.
\textsuperscript{51} Ryan and Conlon 104–105.
\textsuperscript{52} Reiger 67.
\textsuperscript{53} Grimshaw et al, 221
\textsuperscript{54} Reiger 109–110.
Commonwealth Public Service in November 1920, but was of little use to those who were not public servants or married to public servants. In June 1927 the matter was referred to a Royal Commission appointed by the Commonwealth Government, which filed majority and minority reports. The former claimed that such a scheme was unnecessary and unjustifiable, but the latter report, by Labor representative John Curtin and Mildred Muscio, President of the National Council of Women, claimed the scheme was a logical result of the living wage doctrine and a measure of justice. The Government decided not to establish an endowment scheme and the matter was left to the states, but only NSW adopted a scheme, with the Family Endowment Act of 1927.\(^55\)

It was not until January 1941 that the Federal Government (UAP) introduced child endowment, long promised by the Labor Party. Five shillings per week for each child under 16 except the first, was paid, regardless of parental income.\(^56\) The payment was extended to the first child in 1950, though inflation eroded its value. In 1976, taxation allowances for dependent children were abolished, but the child endowment was increased, renamed the ‘family allowance’, and eventually became means tested.\(^57\)

### A1.4.3 Motherhood Endowment

Feminists of the 1920s and 1930s stressed that all women should enjoy economic independence, and believed that married women should not have to forfeit the economic independence they enjoyed prior to matrimony. Australian women activists such as Muriel Heagney, Jean Daley, Irene Longman, Jessie Street and Edith Cowan argued that citizen mothers should be rewarded with an independent income, providing a means to disconnect motherhood from the demeaning status of wifehood. They believed that an equal and happy marriage was one in which both husband and wife were wage earners, and that mothering should be regarded as national work and paid for as such.\(^58\)

The campaign for mothers’ rights and women’s economic independence “came together most radically in the proposal for a federal scheme of motherhood endowment”.\(^59\)

Labor women and non-party feminists joined in supporting the motherhood endowment and equal pay. They were under no illusion at the time that paid employment was the

---

\(^{55}\) Summers 392-393.

\(^{56}\) Grimshaw et al, 257.

\(^{57}\) Stuart Macintyre, “Child Endowment”, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 119.

\(^{58}\) Grimshaw et al, 229; Lake 87, 89, 91, 98.

\(^{59}\) Lake 103.
best road towards the emancipation of women, especially when combined with caring for home and family. Paid work was often exploitative and exhausting, and working class women in particular were among the most overworked citizens. Some non-party feminists and women of the labour movement welcomed A.B. Piddington’s proposal for a basic wage together with child endowment, but felt it did not go far enough, because they wanted to secure not only the welfare of children, but also the independence of women. Jessie Street, for example, pointed out the inequity and inefficiency of a system that paid a family wage to all men, regardless of whether they had family responsibilities. Feminists were critical of the idea that women might be defined solely in terms of their domestic and maternal functions, but there still existed a sense that for the ordinary woman marriage was the happiest state. They acknowledged the importance to the nation of the maternal role of socialising the next generation, considering it to be women’s unique contribution to humanity. Feminists also believed that the maternal role, for those who chose to adopt it, should be enhanced and valued, through payment to women for this national work. Only in this way could women become physically, financially and legally free of domination by their husbands.

Feminists succeeded in getting the case for remuneration for mothers’ work on the political agenda by the late 1920s, and raised awareness of the idea that women should have economic independence, but were not successful in their aim for the instigation of the motherhood endowment. Male opponents, rather than speaking on behalf of the mother as feminists did, stressed the duties of the wife to her husband and children, services they felt should not be marketed. There was harsh criticism, in particular, from men on the left, who were afraid that their wages might be threatened. The issue was further complicated by the fact that feminists’ emphasis at the time on women’s responsibilities as mothers shaped a situation in which such duties could simultaneously be used against women. This could eventuate through the citing of mothering tasks as a reason for confining women to domestic duties and dependence on their husbands.

60 The principle of a ‘family wage’ was not institutionalised in centralised wage fixation tribunals or in collective wage bargaining in the United Kingdom and the United States, but the demand for a living wage with a family component for adult male labour was also utilised as a strategy by the British and American labour movements. Bettina Cass, “Redistribution to Children and to Mothers: A History of Child Endowment and Family Allowances”, Women, Social Welfare and the State, eds. Cora V. Baldock and Bettina Cass (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 55; Lake 74, 92, 98, 103, 105.
61 Summers 363; Lake 91.
62 Lake 101, 106.
Feminist activists continued to stress that women working at home had a right to remuneration, just as working men did. They had hoped that the childhood and motherhood endowments would render redundant the justification for a higher wage for men because of their need to make provision for wives and children; thus the goal for equal pay logically necessitated these endowments. It grew increasingly clear that if women were to achieve economic independence, they would need to jettison the politics of difference and win women’s rights and freedom in the labour market, through identity with men, and increasingly feminists embraced masculine norms and priorities. Some women expressed their disapproval of this, considering it to be grounded in self-interest, but by the 1930s this became the new path to the elusive goal of equality. Although the campaign for equal pay had been waged for a number of years already, renewed and single-minded concentration on the cause ensued.\textsuperscript{53}

**A1.4.4 Equal Pay and Opportunity**

Women workers in Australia did not unionise until the 1880s and 1890s when many entered the food, textile and laundry industries.\textsuperscript{64} In the Harvester judgment of 1907, which outlined the basic wage concept, Justice Higgins had decreed that women were not entitled to the same wage as men except when doing exactly the same work. In the landmark Rural Workers’ Case of 1912, Higgins restated the principles of the Harvester Case. He said that whereas a man was legally obliged to support his family if he had one, the same was not usually true of a woman. This was the justification for women who were undertaking ‘women’s work’ to be entitled only to half the male wage, which was enough merely to enable a single woman without dependants to pay for her own food, shelter and clothing. Only in industries where women competed with men for traditionally male jobs was there any likelihood that they could be paid the same. The rationale for this was the possibility of men being ousted from these jobs if women were paid less for them. Higgins did not approve of the idea of women working, and the vast majority of breadwinners was still men. He did realise that around half of working men did not have dependants to support, but felt he could not discriminate between married and single men. The solidarity of working men was thus maintained at the expense of

\textsuperscript{53} Grimshaw et al, 252; Lake 99, 107, 109, 202, 206.

\textsuperscript{64} Margaret Thornton, “Equal Rights at Work”, *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, 85.
proper remuneration being paid to those women who struggled to keep themselves, and sometimes dependants as well, on a single woman’s wage.\textsuperscript{65}

For some years already, the Victorian Lady Teachers’ Association had campaigned for equal pay for women teachers, and had received support from other groups such as the Women’s Post and Telegraph Association, the Women Public Servants’ Association, the National Council of Women and the Women Typists Association. In response to the Arbitration Court decision (Rural Workers’ Union Case) of 1912, the case for equal pay was also made at the Women’s Industrial Convention, convened by the Victorian Trades Hall Council in September, 1913.\textsuperscript{66} The Convention’s existence was a manifestation of the acknowledgment that, having been admitted to citizenship, it was now necessary for women to organise politically and economically. More middle-class women were entering the workforce, and some welcomed the release from the restricted choice of domestic duties, and began to argue that work was a human right as well as a necessity. There was much discussion at the Convention as to the meaning of ‘equal pay’, particularly since many women worked in ‘women’s’ jobs such as teaching and office work, and there was virtually no male rate of pay for women to aspire to. It was argued that the nature of the work, rather than the sex of the workers, should be the basis of pay rates, and that whatever was considered a decent living wage for a man should be also paid to a woman. The Convention passed a resolution asking the Labor Party to proceed with legislation, at federal and state levels, to delete the term ‘sex’ from legislation covering award determinations. Despite these efforts, the assumption remained that most adult women would find security and reward in marriage and motherhood, and that they would devote themselves to the nurture and protection of their children.\textsuperscript{67}

The defence of women’s right to work continued to gather momentum, and the campaign for equal pay was reinvigorated. Equal pay was considered not only a right in itself, but also a necessary precondition of women’s claims to all available occupations.

\textsuperscript{65} Summers 337–338; Grimshaw et al, 208.
\textsuperscript{66} Lake 97.
\textsuperscript{67} Grimshaw et al, 210–211.
Women, after all, could only claim the same jobs as men if they did not threaten to undercut their wages. 68

Even by the 1930s, most claims for an equal basic wage were refused. During the years of the Great Depression in this decade, the rate of unemployment for women was actually less than for men, since women received only 54% of the wages men could expect, and inevitably women were accused of taking men’s jobs, and of failing to produce the children the nation needed. 69 Women in Victoria, concerned about contemporary developments in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany (where women had been driven from the workforce), formed the Equal Status Committee, which emphasised the right of women to work on an equal footing with men. 70 A member of this Committee, socialist and feminist Muriel Heagney, had spent her life fighting for equal pay for women, and felt very strongly about women’s right to economic independence. In her book Are Women Taking Men’s Jobs?, published in 1935, she attempted to prove that this accusation was misplaced, pointing out that Australian women’s wages were among the lowest in the world, and that the tardiness of unions to support equal pay was the real reason women kept their jobs while men were less likely to. 71 Although unions supported the principal of equal pay on the grounds that it would protect men’s jobs, they did not campaign for it as strongly as they would on issues relating to jobs, wages and working conditions. Employers were opposed to equal pay, citing Mr Justice Cullen’s judgment of March 1913, where he had stressed the lower physical strength, endurance and productivity of women. Employers did not mention that they could often extract higher productivity for almost half the cost! 72

Though rarely articulated, the real issue in the deliberations about equal pay was the relationship between the sexes. The question was whether it should be based on the clear divisions of labour, status and power inherent in the traditional breadwinner/dependant model, or whether there might be the possibility of allowing the evolution of a new form of relationship based on economic independence and freely-chosen interdependence. The Depression could possibly have provided an opportunity

---

68 Lake 180–181
69 Summers 399; Grimshaw et al, 252.
70 Grimshaw et al, 252.
71 Lake 181; Summers 399.
72 Summers 399–400.
to reject the traditional ways of dividing people based on sex-role prescriptions, but unfortunately it tended to reinforce them.\textsuperscript{73} At the second annual meeting in September 1939 of the Council of Action for Equal Pay (CAEP), formed in 1937 to coordinate the equal pay campaign and led by Muriel Heagney, it was resolved that when women replaced men who were enlisting to fight, the full male wage should prevail.\textsuperscript{74} However, during World War II, many feminists, aware of the suffering men were enduring, found it difficult to maintain their militancy.\textsuperscript{75}

Following the invasion by the Japanese of the Malay peninsula in early 1942, there was a concerted effort in Australia to achieve a state of readiness for battle. The National Security Act of January 1942 provided for the mobilisation of all available labour, male and female, into the workforce, and that the workforce be structured in such a way as to meet the requirements of the defence forces.\textsuperscript{76} As in World War I, the prospect of women’s encroachment of men’s domain was unsettling, and an emotional debate ensued. Unlike the US and Britain, Australia did not legislate for equal pay for the duration, and some trade unions voted to reject women workers altogether, whilst others chose to protect men’s interests by insisting, in line with the ACTU resolution of 1941, that women in men’s jobs be awarded equal pay. Employers preferred to maintain the cheapness of women’s labour in order to preserve the resultant higher profits\textsuperscript{77} Prime Minister John Curtin gave assurance that the mobilisation of women into industry was temporary, and that women occupying what had traditionally been men’s jobs would be replaced by men at the first available opportunity. In response to the argument, Curtin set up a temporary tribunal, the Women’s Employment Board (WEB), in April 1942 to regulate the wages of women working in men’s jobs.\textsuperscript{78} Its first judgment awarded women in some sections of the metal trades 60\% of the male rate for the first month and 90\% thereafter. Although the Board’s existence was threatened by the Opposition, which used its majority in the Senate to disallow the regulations which established it, the WEB eventually had jurisdiction over about 70,000 women, and most were awarded 90\%, and in some occupations 100\%, of the male rate.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{73} Summers 400–401.
\textsuperscript{74} Grimshaw et al, 254.
\textsuperscript{75} Summers 400.
\textsuperscript{76} Summers 414.
\textsuperscript{77} Grimshaw et al, 259.
\textsuperscript{78} Summers 414–415; Grimshaw et al, 259.
\textsuperscript{79} Summers 415.
The wartime effort of the WEB set a precedent for the increase of women’s wage rates, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s, equal pay and equal opportunity were the major feminist issues. The upsurge in demand for labour during these decades meant that paid work became more normal for women, and the attitude to women continuing to work after marriage softened, with the Commonwealth Government removing the marriage bars in the Public Service and banks in 1966. Emerging politicians within the Labor party now argued that the male family wage was an anachronism, since women were breadwinners too. These developments made inferior pay rates increasingly intolerable.

In 1949, the Arbitration Court had raised women’s rate of pay to 75% of men’s, a decision which angered many women’s organisations, and inspired them to re-double their efforts to achieve full equality. When employer groups applied in 1952 to have this rate reduced to 60%, women’s organisations responded by again putting the case for equal pay. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, women’s organisations and trade union women continued to campaign for equal pay. One such group was the Feminist Club, formed in Sydney in 1914 with the aim of promoting women’s status. In 1950 this Club demanded that women in the armed forces be granted equal pay. Women teachers also protested at the refusal of their claim for equal pay, which was finally granted in 1958, but only in NSW, which became known as an ‘equal pay state’. Clerical workers and meat industry workers were among the diverse range of groups waging similar campaigns.

Significant differences existed between the claims made by older feminist groups, and groups based in the labour movement and in communities where most women were housewives. The former continued to push for women’s economic independence through an individual wage supplemented by child and motherhood endowment, while

80 Lake 202, 211–212.
81 Grimshaw et al, 301-302; Lake 212.
82 Grimshaw et al, 276.
83 Lake 211.
84 Lake 10, 52.
85 Grimshaw et al, 276; Lake 150.
86 Grimshaw et al, 301.
the latter argued for a family wage to support a husband and wife, regardless of whether workers had wives.\textsuperscript{87}

Feminists during the 1950s and 1960s, often working against the odds, laid essential foundations for the successful equal pay cases between 1969 and 1974. In 1969, feminists finally secured a significant symbolic victory, though limited in its effect. The Arbitration Commission awarded equal pay, but only for equal work strictly defined: it did not apply to work usually performed by women, but only to work ‘of the same or a like nature’ to that of men.\textsuperscript{88} This led feminists to demand access to occupations that had traditionally been the realm of men, and this increasingly became the cause of those who desired to join the more public world of men, though some women still expressed disapproval of this seemingly new pursuit of self-interest.\textsuperscript{89}

The range, nature and vehemence of Women’s Liberation (WL) activism increased considerably during the 1970s, and became more confrontational when the Women’s Action Committee (WAC) members in Melbourne took tram rides for which they only paid 75\% of the fare, highlighting the unfairness of women’s lower wage rates. In 1972, the WL movement, together with the Union of Australian Women and the National Council of Women, prepared and presented submissions to the Arbitration Commission National Wage case to try again to obtain recognition for ‘equal pay for work of equal value’, and the equal pay decision of 1973 was an important step forward.\textsuperscript{90} However, a study conducted in 1974 by the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labour and the OECD revealed that 80\% of women were still not receiving equal pay for work of equal value. This was due, it seemed, to the boundaries that still existed between what were considered acceptable professions for men and women, which meant that most women were unable to prove that their work was of equal value. In 1974 the Arbitration Commission extended the adult minimum wage to women, and Prime Minister Whitlam announced that full implementation of this decision should be achieved by 30 June 1975. In this year the equal pay decision was threatened when male union officials and employers joined in defining new classifications for most women employees to place and keep them in inferior

\textsuperscript{87} Lake 211–212.
\textsuperscript{88} Thornton 86.
\textsuperscript{89} Lake, Getting Equal, 202, 212, 218.
\textsuperscript{90} Lake 224–225
The question of equal representation at all levels of women in the workforce was still a serious issue to be faced.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) was very much a product of second-wave feminism. Legislation prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sex (as well as race, marital status, sexuality and other grounds) was enacted in the Commonwealth, states and territories from the mid-1970s on. Feminists were hopeful that this legislation would finally ensure the sex of the person was irrelevant to the performance of a job, but the Acts contained many ambiguities and exceptions. The legislation enabled complaints to be lodged with a specialist agency, but the procedure for dealing with them was problematic. The confidential process of conciliation impeded the wider dissemination of knowledge about discrimination against women in the workplace. Also, the complainant was required to demonstrate that she had been treated less favourably than a hypothetical man in similar circumstances. This was difficult, since the gender-segregated labour market meant that women were rarely similarly situated. In 1985, the reconstituted CAEP and some feminist organisations persuaded the ACTU to run a comparable worth test case, which failed, but nevertheless prompted a number of initiatives designed to improve the pay and conditions of women workers. Affirmative Action (AA) was intended to place responsibility on employers to change the gender balance of the workplace, and legislation was enacted in the 1980s to cover some public sector workplaces, universities and all other workplaces with more than 100 employees. Unfortunately the legislation only required the preparation of an AA plan by management. Compliance was erratic and penalties for non-compliance low, so AA was symbolically important, but its initial promise was not fulfilled. In the 1990s a dilution of institutional commitment to EEO was evident, probably because it was generally accepted, but overall EEO failed to address the segmentation of the workforce, and there has been no real structural change. Instead, the women workers who have tended to benefit are those whose workplace patterns have more closely resembled those of a full-time, male worker in a position to follow a linear career pattern, rather than those whose work encompasses casual, outwork, contract, part-time work, and interrupted careers.92

---

91 Dixson 36–37.
92 Thornton 86–89.
The gap between men’s and women’s wages has remained intractable.\textsuperscript{93} Indeed, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for Average Weekly Earnings showed that there had been a 1.7\% increase in the gender pay gap between the years 2004 and 2006. In May 2006, Australian women were earning 83.6 cents in the male dollar compared with 85.3 cents in May 2004.\textsuperscript{94} However, women in theory now have the formal right to equal pay, supposedly have equal opportunity in the public world, have more options than previously as to how to structure their lives, and are able to live more independently. Equal pay and opportunity were major aims of second-wave feminism, and motherhood came to be regarded as a barrier to women’s financial independence and to their selfhood. Mothers who choose to exercise the choice to blend the private world of domesticity and motherhood with the public world of work carry a heavy load, since the organisation of the workplace is still geared to the more masculine experience of autonomy and freedom from domestic responsibilities.\textsuperscript{95} The arguments of second-wave feminism with particular reference to motherhood, its legacy and subsequent developments in feminist thought were the subject of Chapter Three of this thesis.

\textbf{A1.5 Divorce and Child Custody: 1857–Present}

Divorce first became possible in the Australian colonies when the first comprehensive divorce legislation (which made it available under secular law) was enacted in the years immediately following the 1857 British Matrimonial Causes Act (England and Wales). By 1873, all Australian colonies had enacted legislation similar to this Act. This early legislation was fault-based, providing for legal divorce only on the ground of adultery. The sexual double standards of the time meant that women needed to prove adultery aggravated by another offence such as cruelty, bigamy or desertion, while men needed to prove only adultery.\textsuperscript{96}

The divorce extension bills in late nineteenth-century Australia coincided with the emergence of the Woman Movement, with the politicisation and coalitions of women’s groups. Marriage was still viewed by both sides of the debate as an essential component

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{93} Thornton, 86.
\textsuperscript{95} Lake 278.
\end{footnotesize}
of social and political stability, but there was extended debate about marriage and divorce. Some ambivalence existed among women activists who felt that easy divorce might lead to greater abandonment of wives and children, and that economically dependent women might not benefit from the reforms the way they were designed. It was not until 1923 that all states had amended their respective Acts to provide that adultery alone was sufficient grounds for a woman to divorce her husband. In the late 1880s and 1890s, additional grounds for divorce were included in state divorce legislation such as assault, desertion and drunkenness. There remained other grounds that varied for men and women though, and all grounds were still fault-based. Most female petitioners for divorce at this time were in paid employment or small business: those without independent incomes were less likely to be in a position to seek divorce.  

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Australian family remained a patriarchal institution. Only fathers were endowed with the rights of guardians, which usually only became apparent when fathers died or parents separated or divorced. In 1916, with the Testator’s Family Maintenance and Guardianship of Infants Act, widows automatically became their children’s legal guardians. Non-widows still had no legal custody rights to their own children, and outrage at this lack of legal rights was an important reason why women joined the Woman Movement.  

Feminists embarked on a long campaign for equal custody rights for men and women, fuelled by the opinion that the bond between mother and child “must perforce be stronger than that between father and child”. One case in 1924 added to their resolve in this regard. This involved the refusal to grant custody to a mother, who was supporting her daughter through her work as an actress, on the grounds that she “had never allowed her maternal affection to interfere with the call of her profession”. The Women’s Political Education League (WPEL) sought provision for mothers’ equal custody rights, as well as legislation preventing fathers’ ability to will their estates away from their wives and children, leaving them penniless. Another Bill before the legislature affecting children in the early twentieth century.
century was the Infants Protection Bill, requiring deserting fathers to pay maintenance for their children.\textsuperscript{103} Mothers’ rights to custody of their children only become law in NSW in 1934 (1940 in SA).\textsuperscript{104}

In the first half of the twentieth century, divorce was still considered a disgrace.\textsuperscript{105} The belief that women were responsible for maintaining the marriage, and therefore also for its breakdown, was still evident in society’s responses to divorce cases, and the stigma of divorce, particularly for couples with younger families, was still quite strong.\textsuperscript{106} With expectations changing as the century progressed, marriage was viewed more critically. The structure of divorce law, however, remained largely unchanged until criticism of fault-based divorce emerged in the 1950s, during which time feminists continued to lobby for uniform divorce laws, achieved in 1959.\textsuperscript{107} After 1966, in conjunction with the repeal of Section 49 of Commonwealth Public Service Act that barred employment of married women, there was increasing pressure for a complete reform of divorce legislation. After much controversy and debate, this came in the form of the Commonwealth Family Law Act in 1975.\textsuperscript{108} All grounds for divorce based on matrimonial fault were removed, and the only necessary ground was ‘irretrievable breakdown’ of marriage, evidenced by a separation of one year. Spouse and child maintenance and child custody were also to be decided on a no-fault basis.\textsuperscript{109}

Around 40% of marriages now end in divorce.\textsuperscript{110} Although the reconstruction of marriage as a terminable arrangement following the enactment of the Commonwealth Family Law Act in 1975 may have contributed to this rate, this legislation can only partly explain the high rate of marital breakdown our society is now witnessing. Though marriage used to have a more significant economic and political basis, it had assumed an increasingly great emotional weight following industrialisation and the

\textsuperscript{103} Lake 62.
\textsuperscript{104} Lake 73.
\textsuperscript{105} McCalman, Journeyings, 84.
\textsuperscript{106} Katie Holmes, \textit{Spaces in her Day: Australian Women’s Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s} (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1995) 69; Modjeska, “Rooms of their Own”, 332.
\textsuperscript{107} Pringle 101.
\textsuperscript{108} Lake 150; Members of the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL), formed in Melbourne in early 1972, were influential in shaping the new Family Law Act (1975), and in having the value of women’s domestic work taken into account in the distribution of assets upon break-up of a marriage. Lake, \textit{Getting Equal}, 237, 241.
\textsuperscript{109} Grimshaw and Nelson 191.
\textsuperscript{110} Pringle 103.
ensuing exodus from the home of production, education, religion, and care for the sick and aged. As the present divorce rate testifies, heterosexual relationships based on the anticipation of continuing romantic love and the expectation that all emotional needs will be met within that one intense relationship can be full of conflict and often founder. The increasing chance for many women to earn a living has meant that it is also more possible for some to leave unfulfilling marriages and instigate divorce.

A1.6 Education for Australian Women: Late Nineteenth Century to the Present

Efforts on the part of the Woman Movement to reform education meant that middle-class women began to acquire a more institutionalised education in the last decades of the nineteenth century. New secondary schools were established to prepare middle-class girls for university and thus for certain professions and a more public life. Presbyterian Ladies College, established in 1875, was the first school in Australia to provide girls with an education equal to that of boys, as opposed to the various academies and young ladies’ seminaries which during the 1870s and ‘80s had groomed girls in various accomplishments but which did little to stimulate the intellect. The free, compulsory and secular Education Acts introduced in most states in the early 1870s had conceded the principle of equal education, but only at an elementary level designed to provide basic literacy. Noeline Kyle argues, however, that the growth of state education for women is generally now seen as having provided minimal benefits to women, and that the resultant lack of survival of the private ladies’ schools, which had at least provided some variety and flexibility, was in some ways a retrograde step.

The growing educational achievements of women were greatly facilitated by the efforts of people like C.H. Pearson, who was closely associated with the movement for higher education for women in England, where there had been more pressure than in Australia.

111 Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 192, 213.
112 Pringle 104.
113 Janet McCalman points out that “the only indelible marks of being middle-class were mental, not monetary”, and that “the true mark of being ‘middle-class’ was being educated”. McCalman, Journeyings, 113; Grimshaw et al, 171.
114 Such private education was mostly only available to a middle-class social élite. Kyle 216.
115 Summers 324, 326.
116 Kyle 216.
for single women to find professional careers to support themselves. Pearson (who claimed John Stuart Mill as an acquaintance) strongly supported academically oriented secondary education for girls, was one of the founders of PLC, and its first principal.

The Senate of the University of Melbourne passed a resolution in May 1872 stating that there was no sufficient reason why women should be excluded from the University. Bishop Charles Perry, a foundation member of the University of Melbourne Council, was absent from Melbourne on parish business at that time, so was deprived of his right to oppose the motion in the University Senate. Instead he published a treatise on the propriety of female intellect in the *Argus*. This article articulated the orthodox view of women’s intellect that had existed in the nineteenth-century western world, and was the ideological foundation of the education of the nineteenth-century woman. Perry tapped into deeply held beliefs about the place of women in society, arguing that a woman’s physical and intellectual excellence was of a different character to a man’s: she was distinguished by the delicacy of her brain, and of other parts of her body. These were Perry’s grounds for his opinion that a woman’s education should be radically different. He believed that education should improve the inherent qualities of each sex, and that a woman’s education should be suited to the female character. A woman’s instinct was to desire the status of wife and mother. Girls should not be educated to expect an autonomous life, but to be dependent upon and subject to their husbands, and to find happiness in the care of them and their children. It was with this purpose in mind that women should be educated. Perry suggested that women should study history, languages, the *belles lettres*, the phenomena of the universe (with popular explanations), arithmetic, some elements of geography and algebra, together with the arts of music and painting. They should not exercise their minds with critical scholarship or philosophical speculation, in the higher branches of pure or mixed mathematics, or political or professional science, since they possessed neither the natural inclination nor the capacity for these subjects.

---

117 Summers 324.
118 Grimshaw et al, 171.
119 Perry was Church of England Bishop of Melbourne from 1848–1872, a foundation member of the University of Melbourne Council, and an important figure in the development of education in the colony of Victoria. Theobold 10.
120 Theobold 10–12. Refer Chapter Six for further examples of historical attitudes towards women’s abilities.
Between 1880 and 1920, education for women continued to be informed by these ideas of the sexual division of labour, the eugenics movement, beliefs about the inferior physiology and capacity of girls and women, and in general, opposition to intellectual study. Despite a gradual widening of educational opportunities for girls in private secondary schools and élite state high schools, educational rhetoric urged all women to be better wives and mothers, with continued emphasis on domestic subjects, which limited access to mathematics and science.\textsuperscript{121}

The three colonial Universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide permitted women to graduate with degrees (as opposed to taking single subjects only) in 1881, and other universities accepted women on equal terms with men as they were established.\textsuperscript{122} According to Marjorie Theobold, Australian women had an easier path into university than women in Britain, since colonial universities were state-funded and thus more vulnerable to the demands of classical liberalism for equity and fair play. They were also secular, leaving them free of the clerical influence that kept women out of the Oxbridge colleges.\textsuperscript{123} As Anne Summers points out, it was not so much a feminist consciousness that informed the campaign to admit women to universities; in fact the education campaign had arisen before the discussion of women’s political rights became more widespread in the final decade of the century.

C.H. Pearson, PLC’s first principal, expressed the sentiments of the times in separating the idea of women’s political rights from their right to education. He maintained that married women should remain as they were in England, barely able to own property, though conceded that women exercised direct influence over children, husbands and lovers and thought these ‘rulers’ should be educated. As noted, the critics of women’s entry into universities were concerned mainly with whether or not intellectual exertion would diminish a woman’s capacity to fulfil her maternal responsibilities. The advocates of equal education took care to demonstrate that the essential female qualities of gentleness and refinement would not be compromised. Pioneer women university

\textsuperscript{121} Kyle 213.
\textsuperscript{122} Lake 37–38; The first female graduate from an Australian university was Bella Guerin, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne in 1883. Theobold 55. The appointment of the first female full professor did not occur until 1959, when Dorothy Hill was appointed a professor of Geology at the University of Queensland. http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs, accessed 23 April 2007.
\textsuperscript{123} Theobold 56.
students did not regard themselves as feminists, but reaffirmed that women’s basic
calling was to motherhood, and education was considered necessary to equip them to
mother adequately.124

In her essay about Women in Ormond College at the University of Melbourne, Sarah
Stephen discusses well-founded observations. In the early years following admission of
women to the university in 1881, male and female students operated in different spheres
and their habits differed according to their sex. The arrival of women at Ormond had
gone largely unmarked, women having maintained a certain amount of compliance in
entering what they realised had previously been a man’s world. Towards the end of the
1890s and into the early twentieth century, once the reality set in that women were there
to stay, and were excelling academically, men’s concern to defend their preserves
became more evident.125

Kathleen Fitzpatrick notes that the concept of a right to university education for women
or men did not exist in the early years of the twentieth century.126 Many of the first
women to access higher education had the advantage of an élite upbringing that
encouraged them to become educated, and most students came from non-government
schools.127 Those few women who did manage to go to university relished being in an
atmosphere in which they had their intellectual demands satisfied, and generally
experienced more egalitarian treatment than they would later encounter in the world of
work or within the conventional marriage structure.128 It can be argued that these
conditions have not altered greatly in the current era, but Australia then was more
obviously than nowadays a man’s country.129 The accomplishments of those women
who entered university in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were
symbolically important in contributing to the slow transformation of perceptions of
women’s nature and capacities.130

124 Summers 323–329
125 Stephen views the University of Melbourne as a microcosm of an Australian university at the time.
Sarah Stephen, “A Quest for Collegiate Identity: Women in Ormond 1885 to 1910”, Ormond College
126 Fitzpatrick 149.
128 Kelly 153.
129 Fitzpatrick 149.
130 Grimshaw et al, 171.
The number of women on campus steadily grew, but an interesting new worldwide trend in educational ideology developed after the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{131} It was argued that appropriately feminine subjects that would prepare girls for their domestic destiny should be provided at primary school level. This was in marked contrast to a quarter century before, when girls wanted to study the same subjects as boys. The trend had little effect in most secondary schools, however. Some women graduates advocated for the teaching of Domestic Science at university level on the grounds that it “represented a legitimate development in Applied Science in a sphere where women’s talents and sensibilities were particularly important”.\textsuperscript{132} It was predicted that women would never develop the ability for independent analytical work, but over 25\% of Bachelor of Science graduates at the University of Melbourne from 1889–1922 were women. Of those 84, 28 continued on to study at graduate level. By 1908, women chemists began to stand out, though it was unlikely for women among the Chemistry or Physics staff to be granted parity with men: mostly they remained at the level of tutor or demonstrator. They fared better in the fields of Biology, Zoology and Botany, subjects thought to be “less coolly masculine” though Biology demonstration was a predominantly female role at the end of the first World War.\textsuperscript{133}

In her book \textit{Degrees of Liberation: A Short History of Women in The University of Melbourne}, Farley Kelly maintains that the atmosphere at the University for those members of the second, pre-World War 1, generation of women was altering, with the gap between the first and second generations of women students widening. This was reflected in the Princess Ida Club, a women’s club established by and for members of the first generation of women students, to allow them a separate space in which they could provide mutual support in their academic endeavours.\textsuperscript{134} There was growing dissatisfaction with the “old school” management of the Club, and with the separation

\textsuperscript{131} It took 16 years (1883–1899) for the first 100 women to graduate from the University of Melbourne. During the next seven years a further 113 women graduated. By 1915, 395 had done so, and by 1921 the figure had reached 700. \textsuperscript{Kelly 77.}
\textsuperscript{132} Kelly 61.
\textsuperscript{133} Kelly 60–63.
of the sexes in the day to day social life of the University.\textsuperscript{135} Political controversy was also less prevalent in this era.\textsuperscript{136}

It was growing apparent that women graduates faced different challenges to their male counterparts, particularly with respect to the conflict and balance between private and public aspects of their lives. It was considered that educated women made cultured companions and conscientious mothers. Women graduates of the early 1900s who achieved the difficult balance between the demands of marriage, motherhood and career without the catalyst of financial need were rare.\textsuperscript{137} The educated woman might pursue a career for a short time, but it was not expected that she would blend her professional life with motherhood following marriage.\textsuperscript{138}

Of those young women who were serious about their future careers, few questioned that they should take on employment that was an extension of the feminine mission to nurture and to civilise. From the 1920s, the expanding caring professions attracted middle-class women with a sense of vocation. Many became nurses, but the most daunting of the caring professions was medicine. Women who aspired to become doctors were often thwarted by the low level of science and mathematics teaching at school, and those that succeeded were likely to be concerned that marriage might not come their way.\textsuperscript{139} Many women became schoolteachers, which had been a major professional outlet for women in Australia since the nineteenth century, and female music graduates were no exception to this.\textsuperscript{140}

The woman who chose to pursue a profession, and thus did not marry, was not yet regarded as a ‘real’ woman, but rather an eccentric exception.\textsuperscript{141} Women university graduates were much more likely to remain unmarried or childless than were other

\textsuperscript{135} This desire for easier communication between the sexes subsequently gathered momentum during the 1920s. Kelly 81.
\textsuperscript{136} Kelly 66, 68.
\textsuperscript{137} In 1913, Trinity College Hostel traced 75 former residents, and of these 43% were married. Kelly 55, 57.
\textsuperscript{138} McCalman, \textit{Journeyings}, 182–183.
\textsuperscript{139} McCalman, \textit{Journeyings}, 185.
\textsuperscript{140} Modjeska, “Rooms of their Own”, 333. For example, of the 211 women at the University of Melbourne in 1907, 88 were music students, most of them studying single students. Kelly 60.
\textsuperscript{141} Remaining single was not necessarily an attractive option. Refer Chapter Four, Section 4.3 for further detail. See Modjeska, “Rooms of their Own”, 346–347.
women of their time and class.\textsuperscript{142} Women were expected to cease work when they married, and the woman who gave up her career to become a wife and mother was deemed to have carried out her highest vocation. Motherhood clearly still defined women, and any other activity was activated by economic necessity or was seen as a frustration of natural destiny.\textsuperscript{143} Hence women were less likely to receive scholarships for further study abroad, and less likely to gain academic employment.\textsuperscript{144} The perception of women’s role as guardians of the home was fundamental to the ‘Woman Movement’ in Australia, and this attitude extended to education being directed towards motherhood, considered a vocation in need of specific training.\textsuperscript{145}

Naturally, the number of male students declined during World War 1, and the places available for women at the University of Melbourne increased, with the proportion of women growing from 14 to 32\%.\textsuperscript{146} Females could not enlist to fight, but were mostly supportive of the idea that men should volunteer, and female university students assisted the war effort by knitting trench socks for the troops at Red Cross afternoons and during lectures. A large number of women somewhat resented their exclusion from direct action. They wondered why they should be spared the hardships, when in fact the war was as important to them as to men. Even the participation of the few women medical graduates was discouraged, though members of the female-dominated profession of nurses were able to lend their services to a far greater extent.\textsuperscript{147} After World War 1, policymakers were not convinced that formal training of women in the areas of industry they had infiltrated during the War was necessary. Instead women were encouraged to return to the home, and this position was not criticised until 1935, but change was slow to occur.\textsuperscript{148}

Between 1920 and 1960, two world wars, a depression and the beginnings of boom economic times brought changes to people’s lives. The break with old inequities was not immediate, but the previous discrimination on the basis of gender was on the decline. Debates about female education were volatile, but women’s experience in the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[142] MacKinnon 95–96.
\item[143] Holmes 67; Summers 326–331.
\item[144] Susan Davies, “Kathleen Fitzpatrick: Sculptor with Words”, \textit{The Discovery of Australian History}, 172.
\item[145] Summers 337.
\item[146] Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{Centenary History of the University of Melbourne} (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1957) 141.
\item[147] Kelly 72, 74.
\item[148] Kyle 214.
\end{footnotes}
classroom continued to be based on an outdated domestic ideal.\textsuperscript{149} With the advent of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, feminists had a new and unprecedented impact on Australian education. They took as causes the development of new policies for primary, secondary and tertiary education, changes to curriculum content and outcomes, policies affecting women’s employment in education, together with a variety of other projects and research.\textsuperscript{150}

By the 1970s there were clear similarities in the provision of education for girls and boys, but sex-differentiated patterns and outcomes were still common in the higher years of secondary schooling and in tertiary institutions. During the 1970s and 1980s the Australian Government sponsored three national inquiries into girls and schooling, and provided funding for research concerned with greater gender equity in education. Campaigns to persuade the general public that ‘Girls can do anything’ were promoted in schools and the media. Universities were required to account for their treatment of women, and legislation was enacted to guarantee non-discriminatory access. Feminist research in education, which hardly existed before the 1970s, became extensive, and much of this work has had an international impact. Research has analysed assessment and teaching practices, mapped patterns of subject choice and achievement, reported action research projects, and developed theoretical constructs of how individuals negotiate their gendered identity in the context of education.\textsuperscript{151}

To what extent this research impacted on the overall area of education is questionable, given that girls’ participation and achievement in education had already significantly improved before these inquiries and research were initiated. By the 1970s, the retention and achievement of girls in school was nearly equivalent to that of boys of similar class background, but the obvious difference in the choice of courses they undertook, and also in the extent to which they participated in further and higher education, had long been typical of the Australian educational landscape. It was 1970s feminists who pointed to this situation as a problem, and became unacceptable for educational institutions to be seen explicitly to prepare girls and boys for sex-differentiated adult lives. Legislation was passed guaranteeing equal access to all subjects, and there was

\textsuperscript{149} Kyle 217.
\textsuperscript{150} Yates 74, 76.
\textsuperscript{151} Yates 77.
widespread criticism of literature that portrayed stereotyped roles for women. The heaviest emphasis was on women gaining access to paid work and typically male occupations.\textsuperscript{152}

Another important feminist agenda of the 1970s was that students should be taught about women as well as men, leading to the emergence of the discipline of women’s studies and the teaching of feminist history at the higher education level.\textsuperscript{153} Women’s studies grew out of the radicalism of the women’s movement in the 1970s, but also from pressure at the time for the disadvantaged to gain access to tertiary education. In this environment, feminist academics and students began to question the absence of women from the content of the university curriculum, the absence of pedagogy that could liberate women students, and the absence of women academics to teach such courses.\textsuperscript{154} Lyndall Ryan identified four distinctive models for women’s studies courses that have developed since the 1970s, and claims that variation on these models are evident in most Australian universities today.\textsuperscript{155} Ryan argues that in comparison with its counterparts in New Zealand, North America and the United Kingdom, women’s studies in Australia has had less secure growth, partly because the academy in Australia has been less open to interdisciplinary challenge. Whilst women’s studies has not altered the face of academia or ‘changed the world’ in the ways its original perpetrators envisaged, it has encouraged new ideas in teaching, research, and scholarship.\textsuperscript{156}

Accordingly there has been a shift in expectations of students and teachers about the rights and possibilities of women in education. Mathematics, medicine and law are no longer seen as unusual subjects for women to study, and girls appear to believe that they are equal to boys and have equal rights. In 1988 women’s participation in higher education surpassed that of men, and the proportion of women with post-school qualifications continues to grow. They remain a minority of post-graduate students, indicating that feminist reforms have so far had most effect in schools and on undergraduate university participation (and least in the technical and further education

\textsuperscript{152} Yates 79.
\textsuperscript{153} Yates 79.
\textsuperscript{154} Lyndall Ryan, “Women’s Studies”, \textit{Australian Feminism: A Companion}, 365.
\textsuperscript{155} Lyndall Ryan 367-368.
\textsuperscript{156} Lyndall Ryan 365-369.
sector). Research suggests, however, that many feminist concerns still exist about what knowledge is most valued in educational institutions.  

A1.7 The World Wars and Women: Impacts and Activism

Janet McCalman stresses that “the two world wars have been the great engine houses of social and political change” in the twentieth century, and “few citizens of the combatant nations evaded the transformations that total war brought to their society”. Nevertheless, the impact on women’s opportunities to move out of the domestic realm was not noted in the aftermath of either World War, but emerged later.

The situation for University women during World War 1 (1914–1918) was reflected throughout society. The vacuum created by the absence of some 300,000 Australian men at this war opened up some opportunities for women, but unlike their counterparts in Britain, there was not a dramatic upsurge in women’s workforce participation, since women were encouraged back into the home after the war. Instead there was a continuation of the steady increase that had been noted over the previous 20-odd years. Overall it was men’s status that was more enhanced by this war.

The increase in political, economic and social prominence that women did gain was reflected in the overwhelming vote in favour of early closing of hotels in referenda held in most states in 1915 and 1916. This result also owed something to women’s disproportionate electoral influence. The WCTU, along with other powerful groups, had long campaigned for restrictions on alcohol consumption as a means of protecting women from sexual and domestic violence and poverty, and the War gave them some chance of success. World War I also accelerated the movement of women workers away from domestic service into new openings in shops, offices and factories, and into areas they had not infiltrated before such as banking, insurance and the public service. They developed skills and occupational identities in typing, shorthand and clerical work. There was much resistance to women’s increased movement into new areas of paid employment, and it appears that women were accepted as long as they were

157 Yates 81-83.  
158 McCalman, Journeyings, 159.  
159 Ryan and Conlon 78; Grimshaw et al, 215, 218; Summers 380.
contained within occupations considered appropriate for females, and therefore posed little threat to men’s occupational realms.\textsuperscript{160}

Other areas to which feminists directed their energies included pacifist campaigns and the anti-conscription movement in the name of responsible motherhood. This opposition to war laid the basis of an enduring tradition of feminist pacifism.\textsuperscript{161} Other women patriots who felt impatience at the limitations imposed on their sex in being barred from involvement in direct action, channelled some of their zeal to the home. Women were expected to maintain the home front, as they had learnt to regard motherhood as their vocation. Homemaking became more than housekeeping: it involved the “creation of a microcosmic world from which could radiate the love, devotion and labour which the woman poured into it”, and in a way made a virtue out of a necessity. This notion of a woman’s role was reinforced in wartime, since it gave ordinary men affected by the horrors of war something welcoming to return home to. War was considered the ultimate proving ground for nations and men, and Gallipoli was hailed as the nation’s birthplace. Men were acclaimed as heroes for their more direct involvement in war, women receiving fewer acknowledgments for their contribution to the war efforts, for their different sufferings, and for giving birth to the men who went to war.\textsuperscript{162}

The situation for women during the years of the World War II (1939–1945) was not dissimilar to the previous war. In general, few women joined the armed forces, with middle-class women being less vulnerable to Manpower directives than their counterparts among the working class. The lot of women was to sit at home and wait, and Melbourne University was again “strangely quiet and feminine”. Women assumed new responsibilities in the absence of their men, and in doing so, perhaps ‘found their feet’.\textsuperscript{163} However, adjustments to women’s roles were temporary, since the majority of women resumed their pre-war lives of full-time domesticity when their husbands and

\textsuperscript{160} Grimshaw et al, 215–217.
\textsuperscript{161} Lake 63.
\textsuperscript{163} McCalman 196. This opinion was expressed by Monica O’Farrell, a schoolgirl during World War II who was interviewed by Janet McCalman. McCalman, Journeyings, 195.
other job-seeking men returned from the war.\textsuperscript{164} It was not until the 1960s that a woman who took on paid employment once she was married with children began not to be seen as contravening the stereotype.\textsuperscript{165} Only a minority of women in civilian employment came under the jurisdiction of the Women’s Employment Board (WEB).\textsuperscript{166} This implied that the majority of women employed in traditional female jobs would not be earning a high wage, and would not necessarily wish to continue after the War ended. Towards the end of the War, previous ideas about what was appropriate for women began to be reasserted. John Curtin’s comment that the home was a woman’s citadel, and that he expected most women would be absorbed into the home following the War, exemplifies this attitude.\textsuperscript{167}

\textbf{A1.8 Women Composers and the Transplanted Musical Culture of Colonial Australia}

The colonisers of Australia were predominantly migrants of a British and Eurocentric culture. Notions of women’s creative and compositional abilities were inherited from that culture, and prevailed in Australia well into the twentieth century. As Johanna Selleck states, “in late nineteenth-century Australia, as in other parts of the western world, questions about what women were inherently, or biologically, capable of, were hotly debated”.\textsuperscript{168} A commentator in the \textit{Australasian}, for example, stated:

\begin{quote}
What women can do is yet to be shown. It may be the case that her brain does not and cannot advance beyond the childhood types. It may be that she has never yet emulated the highest intellectual achievements of man for the simple reason that she is inherently incapable.
\end{quote}

The author acknowledged, nevertheless, that “she has not started in the race on equal terms”.\textsuperscript{169} Physicist and scholar William Sutherland (1859–1911), uncle of Margaret Sutherland, expressed the view that “the woman composer is as wonderful a rarity as ever”. Although the numbers of male and female pianists appeared to be the same, he maintained, “the world does not owe a single great pianoforte composition to a

\textsuperscript{164} Summers 425.  
\textsuperscript{165} Summers 151.  
\textsuperscript{166} The WEB had been set up to regulate the wages of women working in jobs previously undertaken by men, or jobs which had not been done before and for which there was no award wage. Summers 414.  
\textsuperscript{167} Summers 418–419.  
\textsuperscript{168} Selleck 156.  
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Australasian}, 15 November 1879; quoted in Selleck 156.
woman”. Sutherland admitted that Clara Schumann and Cecile Chaminade were exceptions, but that “in the intellectual world the woman, after her exemplary industriousness and successful girlhood, seems to be restricted to the role of handmaiden. She cannot take the initiative”. An editorial on the subject of women’s musical creativity from the Australian Musical News, penned by well-known critic and British migrant to Australia Thorold Waters, showed this perspective still being conveyed in the late 1930s:

Any voyage of discovery through musical biography becomes singularly arid if one is looking for instances of major compositions from the hands of women. There is not one proved symphonist of vital force among them yet, although some few have made the effort at either true symphony or the symphonic poem. … As Creators, they have in no single instances been originators. To a woman, they have been imitative of men.

In the 1960s, renowned Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe is reported to have said to University of Sydney composition student Anne Boyd: “Oh but Anne, you must know that women can’t write music. I mean there are no great women composers—show me the great women composers.” As late as the 1980s, Melbourne composer Linda Kouvaras was told by her piano teacher that “women don’t create, they make babies.”

These were not the only attitudes transplanted from Europe and Britain. According to David Tunley, “music-making (in its widest sense) in Australia was modelled, long after frontier ways had given place to a more urban sophistication, upon traditions inherited from Britain, more especially from Late Victorian England”. Most commentators on Australia’s musical history agree with this view, including Monique Geitenbeek, who maintains that even by the 1930s and 1940s, Australia was “still relatively insecure about the worth of its own music, and the standard of its composers. Its musical culture operated in the shadow of Britain and Europe”. Deborah Crisp expresses a similar opinion, asserting that “until the 1930s, Australia had virtually no tradition of musical composition of its own”. She states that before that time, “few Australian composers

---

170 William Sutherland, “Education of Women”, undated newspaper article contained in scrapbook volume (1904), AMSC, NLA, MS 2967 Box 1; quoted in Watters-Cowan 378.
172 Anne Boyd, personal communication with Ruth Lee Martin, 23 October 1998; quoted in Martin 117.
173 Linda Kouvaras, conversation with the author, 6 November 2008.
174 Tunley 1.
175 Geitenbeek 32.
were concerned with originality, being content to imitate European trends”. Crisp’s 1979 article focuses particularly on the situation of women composers in Australia, and represents one of the first of a number of scholarly texts in Australian musicology to interrogate the implications of gender in Australian composition, and to raise awareness of women’s contributions as composers and musicians, and of the contexts in which they have worked.

According to Jane Belfrage, prior to the 1970s, accounts of Australia’s musical history tended to “amplify women’s silences and men’s musical achievements”. Belfrage cites Roger’s Covell’s seminal book Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society (1967), “a touchstone for subsequent research into Australian music history”, as a clear example of this. She refers to this text as a colonialist, nationalist narrative that produces and reproduces an Australian national identity “imagined as white and male”.

Eminent Australian musicologist Thérèse Radic writes of the “convict songs and the limping rhymes of the pastoral ballads” that represented the first colonial experience of music-making in the early period of colonial settlement in Australia. She contends that these folk songs were not widely transmitted in written form, and when they were, reflected more the values of a “society devoted to an exclusive code of male mateship and success measured in terms of materialism”. Very little women’s folk art remains from that time, owing to “their physical invisibility which has left our women voiceless in this field”. Belfrage agrees, claiming that “a male tradition of Australian bush music became the Australian tradition”, and “there are very few songs by or about women in the colonial Australian folk music tradition”.

---

179 There are obvious difficulties in preserving any folk traditions in a pre-recording era. Dissemination of folk music and other improvised forms suffered in competition with published music which became easily available at low cost to amateur performers. If less of this music had been lost, the criticisms that abound in the literature that Australia’s musical heritage is largely derivative and unoriginal might be considered a little unfair, since folk music has strong potential to serve as vehicles for national sentiment. Selleck shows that creative traditions were overlooked in the press in favour of concert-hall music in the nineteenth century, and asserts that present-day musical historians have tended to concentrate more on high-art concert music than improvised art forms, thereby excluding a large and vital segment of Australia’s composing population. Exceptions to this are scholars John Whiteoak, Jennifer Hill, Kay Dreyfus, among others. Selleck 39–41; Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 97.
Women were more significantly represented musically in other ways, particularly as piano teachers and singers, more than as instrumentalists. As teachers, they were the major providers of encouragement to subsequent generations of Australian musicians. Women used music in the drawing room to “knit up the family” and also to establish churches and unite communities” in the new and threatening land. Covell is disparaging about such drawing-room music, though he acknowledges its role:

Shameful as it may be to have to say so, the drawing-room ballad must be counted as one of the major influences, if not the major influence until recently, on the bulk of Australian composition. The alacrity with which the drawing-room ballad naturalised itself and bred beckons parallels with the notorious fecundity of Australian rabbits.

Belfrage says that for Covell, the parlour represents “the private, feminine sphere; it is in the public masculine sphere that real music is made”. The fact remains that women’s role in this regard was highly significant, since much colonial music was based around song with women playing piano accompaniment.

The “desire to cultivate the old values in the new land” through the re-production of “the music of home”, and a response to the experience of isolation, led to the importing and sale of an apparently surprisingly large number of pianos (and other instruments). Jennifer Hill asserts that the numbers have sometimes been over-exaggerated by such people as Oscar Comettant, a French juror at the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition held in Melbourne. Covell reminds us that the late nineteenth century was a “heyday of domestic piano ownership in all Western European countries.” Colonial Australia’s special devotion to this instrument was certainly apparent though, and there is no doubt that the possession of a piano symbolised respectability, gentility and the achievement of status. For young girls, real virtuosity was not encouraged, but mild

---

185 Covell 23.
187 Songs dealt with a variety of different subjects, but love songs represented the most common category, closely followed by patriotic and nationalist songs. Hill 202.
189 Covell 20.
accomplishment was, and their piano-playing also played a useful role in courtship activities.\textsuperscript{190} Indeed young women of talent gained greater recognition in the interpretative rather than creative areas of music.\textsuperscript{191} There were apparently some prolific women composers of parlour music, but their music was not as frequently published as that of male composers.\textsuperscript{192}

Radic maintains that though Australian women have not been directly discouraged from composing music, there has been a deep-seated prejudice against their work, and their efforts have been trivialised.\textsuperscript{193} She acknowledges that this neglect has been shared with male composers, and that it is “the common fate of even the best work of our best composers”, since “of all the arts, creative music is the most neglected here”.\textsuperscript{194} Women’s battle, Radic continues, “was simply different. For her [the woman] there was always the uphill fight to find time in domestic circumstances”.\textsuperscript{195}

Radic (and others) note that in the years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most composers were obliged to “arrange performances of their works to fit the available local resources and promote themselves as best they could in an environment indifferent to the local product and before a public convinced that only Europe could produce the genuine article”.\textsuperscript{196} She comments that “Australian composers were very rare birds indeed”, and “when one was spotted its colonial status embarrassed listeners”. In addition, she asserts that “since British music was then considered vastly inferior to the German or even the Italian models the unfortunate Australian composer was left in a crippling double cringe”, and “in that environment a woman composer was as puzzling and as miraculous as a heat mirage in the desert”.\textsuperscript{197} The “sorry response of Australians

\textsuperscript{191} Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 103.
\textsuperscript{192} Macmillan 19; Jennifer’s Hill’s thesis, which singles out more frequently-published composers of song for attention, would seem to bear this out. Only one of the 36 composers she discusses is a woman.
\textsuperscript{193} Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 106.
\textsuperscript{194} Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 108.
\textsuperscript{195} Radic, “Australian Women in Music”, 108.
\textsuperscript{196} For example, Deborah Crisp agrees with this assessment of the general neglect of all contemporary composition by women in Australia, but suggests that at the beginning of the twentieth century, “the few women with the temerity to call themselves composers” were treated with even less tolerance. Crisp, “Australia’s Women Composers”, 48; Radic, “Margaret Sutherland: Composer”, 403.
to Australian music was never based on sexual prejudice”, Radic says, “though the education and work opportunities available to musicians certainly was and still is”. 198

Selleck cautions against such strong assertions. She shows that not only were contemporary works by European composers (male) more often found in concert programmes during the latter part of the nineteenth century than they are now, but also that a surprising number of new works by Australian composers were performed. 199 Selleck further contends that, at least in Melbourne, a remarkable number of women composers had works performed or published. 200 Nevertheless, of the 44 composers referred to in press advertisements, previews or reviews, only seven were women, which is clearly still not a significant percentage. 201 Selleck maintains that this figure does not mean that women were not composing regularly, but rather that their works were not on public display, or not brought to fruition through the same avenues available to men. 202

Along with Radic and others, Selleck acknowledges certain conservative traits in the music world, and explores their development. The heightened sense of national identity that found expression in the works of artists and writers at the time did not appear to transfer to the same extent into the sphere of music. Unlike a painting, Selleck argues, a composition does not exist in itself once complete, but requires continual skilful reproduction, which binds a musical performance more closely to an existing canon of works, and makes diversion from it more difficult. In addition, it is easier to express Australian identity in a pictorial or descriptive medium rather than in the more abstract form of music. Selleck also points to the unique role played by music in reinforcing links to the ‘old world’, and in proving Australia’s equality with its British ancestry. Music had a particular part to play in removing the moral stain of Australia’s convict heritage, reinforcing links to the “morally supreme” culture of Europe and England. 203

---

198 Radic, “Margaret Sutherland: Composer”, 406.
199 This is in spite of the fact that there was a ban on Australian composition at the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888. Selleck 30–32, 54.
200 Ann Carr-Boyd echoes this sentiment. While conducting research for her MA thesis “The First Hundred Years of European Music in Australia: 1788–1888”, she was surprised to discover how many women were composing (mostly lighter) art music during the nineteenth century. Some of this music is now preserved in the State Libraries of New South Wales and Victoria, and elsewhere. Carr-Boyd email, 20 January 2009.
201 Selleck 35.
202 Selleck 173.
203 Selleck 53, 57, 61, 63.
The concert platform was the ultimate venue for display of civilised behaviour, providing “indirect confirmation of ideals about race, culture and nationality”. 204

Echoing Radic’s contention that male composers always had better employment opportunities than females did, Geitenbeek says that it was not until the mid-1940s that the Australian Musical Examinations Board (AMEB), in conjunction with the university conservatoriums, allowed women any access to positions of authority within their internal hierarchy. 205 Positions requiring compositional skills were, however, generally limited, and more often than not, it was men who were chosen to fill these jobs “at a time when the cultural climate did not wholly encourage or support the concept of women as composers”. 206 Unlike women composers, males “had a way out and up—into the very ranks of the controllers, the university-based musicians”. Women’s roles are “usually to teach composition and to compose almost as if it were an aside”, though this situation has now improved somewhat, with some women working and being paid as composers within that system. 207

A1.9 The Founding of Tertiary Music Institutions: 1890–1915

Musical life in Australia was greatly vitalised into a “rich and flourishing musical society” in the early years of the twentieth century by the establishment in the 1890s of three tertiary music institutions: the University of Melbourne Conservatorium (1890), the Albert Street Conservatorium (1895—later the Melba Memorial Conservatorium) and the Elder Conservatorium at the University of Adelaide (1897). 208 The New South Wales State Conservatorium in Sydney was created in 1915. Few musical developments before this had exerted more than a temporary influence. 209 Prior to this,

204 Selleck 73.
205 The second Ormond Professor of Music, Franklin Peterson, arrived in Melbourne from Edinburgh following his appointment at the end of 1900 following G.W.L. Marshall-Hall’s dismissal. In 1897, when the need to raise external funds arose, Peterson decided to create an Australian public examination system, which was initiated at the Universities of Melbourne and Adelaide (and which developed into the Australian Musical Examinations Board—AMEB in 1918). Peter Tregear, The Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne: An Historical Essay to Mark its Centenary 1895-1995 (Melbourne: CSAM, University of Melbourne, 1997) 39–41; Geitenbeek 31.
206 Geitenbeek 32.
207 Radic, “Where are the Women Composers”, 45.
209 There were exceptions to this, and hopeful signs for the future included the popularity of choral societies and the many successful tours of visiting opera companies during the second half of the nineteenth century. Tunley 2.
the training needed to bring musical talent to fruition was difficult to find, and there was an exodus overseas of young artists such as Nellie Melba and Alfred Hill.\textsuperscript{210} The appearance of these institutions enabled new opportunities for professional musical training and provided facilities designed for the propagation of music.\textsuperscript{211} They attracted to them men of the calibre of G.W.L. Marshall-Hall and Fritz Hart (both in Melbourne), and Henri Verbrugghen and Alfred Hill (Sydney). Gaining a diploma or degree was not the necessity at this time that it is now, and very few students studied full-time, but rather completed chosen subjects.\textsuperscript{212} With the exception of commercial operatic performances, serious professional life revolved around these institutions. David Tunley maintains that “with their establishment modern musical Australia may be reckoned to have commenced”.\textsuperscript{213}

G.W.L. Marshall-Hall, first Ormond Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium, established regular orchestral concerts in Melbourne, and his university orchestra, later taken over by Bernard Heinze, played a crucial role in Melbourne’s musical life until around 1940 when the University handed over organisation of concerts to the Australian Broadcasting Commission.\textsuperscript{214} Marshall-Hall dominated musical society from 1890 until late in the 1920s, a period that was populated by large numbers of graduates from the two Melbourne conservatoriums, sustained as well by semi-professional and amateur musical societies.\textsuperscript{215}

Marshall-Hall is acknowledged for his encouragement of women composers. At the University of Melbourne Conservatorium, and after 1900 at his own Albert St Conservatorium, compositional techniques became part of the training of female instrumentalists.\textsuperscript{216} He “saw no reason why his many female students should not be given the technical instruction necessary for them to compose music”.\textsuperscript{217} During this period, a generation of women musicians emerged who “as students, private teachers,
performers and composers were the mainstay of music society, though not its managers”. 218

English composer Fritz Hart is also to be credited with championing Australian women composers. With the prolonged absence overseas of Marshall-Hall, Hart took full control of the Albert Street Conservatorium in 1914. 219 Under the patronage of Dame Nellie Melba, Albert Street was seen by the musical establishment as the best place to go for instruction in singing and composition. 220 Until 1936, Hart “single-handedly conducted a musical experiment” there in “artistic equal opportunity which was to be found nowhere else in Australia or probably the Western World”. 221 Hart was an inspiring compositional mentor to a number of composers, male and female alike.

Belgian-born violinist and conductor Henri Verbrugghen was the foundation director of the State Conservatorium in Sydney, and was also supportive of female composers. 222 He established regular orchestral concerts in Sydney, and provided practical support for Australian composers through access to performances by his Conservatorium orchestra (later the NSW State Orchestra), founded in 1916 and comprising staff, professionals and students. 223 By 1919, the orchestra was offering a total of 132 performances in Sydney, and later toured country towns and other states. Unfortunately, Verbrugghen left to take a position in Minneapolis in 1920 upon expiry of his contract at the NSW

---

218 Teaching was an obvious choice for women musicians, since it could be undertaken without too much disruption to home life. It could also provide an outlet through which to channel creative, compositional skills and urges, examples being the vamping manuals published by late nineteenth-century teachers Emily Patton and Miss de Lacy. Selleck 174; Patton, “Rediscovering our Musical Past”, 10.


220 Nellie Melba held, and continues to hold, a special place in the hearts of Australians. This can be partially attributed to her public demonstrations of pride in her Australian heritage, perhaps manifested most obviously by her decision to return to Australia (as an international star). She was revered also in Europe, and seen at the same time as representing notions of Empire. Therefore “imperialism, nationalism, and ideas about what it meant to be Australian were united in the persona of Nellie Melba”. (Selleck 78). Melba promoted her Australian image, being defiant, extrovert, independent, irreverent, and outdoor-loving, but at the same time was at home in the glamorous British, Edwardian world. This dual image was reflected in press reviews of the time, which were atypical. They went beyond the usual vocabulary reserved for women of charm, delight and delicacy, and incorporated important characteristics usually associated with male performers. Selleck 77–78, 90–91, 180.


223 Tunley 2; Pearce 27, 32; Robinson 569–570.
State Conservatorium. The reason for his choice to leave appears to have related to the change of government to one which was less interested in supporting an orchestra, but he was greatly missed.

A1.10 The ‘Older Generation’ of Australian Women Composers

By the late nineteenth century, musical culture was thriving enough, particularly in ‘Marvellous Melbourne’, to support six months of music performances of the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition, and also the large choirs and orchestra that continued after it.\(^{224}\) This period produced what Radic refers to as “the older generation of women composers, the inheritors of the colonial piano players”.\(^{225}\) Only in the 1970s did the music of such early Australian composers begin to come to light. Sadly the life’s work of many women composers disappeared after their deaths, “overlooked by families, discarded by diligent associates and consequently excluded from historical scrutiny”\(^{226}\). This situation reflects the traditionally-held expectation that women’s principal role was within the private, domestic sphere, and that public activities were thus incidental and not worthy of commemoration.\(^{227}\)

Two composers in particular, whose manuscripts, published works and some private papers are fortunately housed in the Grainger Collection at the University of Melbourne, achieved a measure of fame. They were Mona McBurney (1862–1932) and Florence Ewart (1864–1949). They composed operas, orchestral and choral works along with songs and ensemble works consistently over almost four decades, and “contributed actively throughout their careers to musical and literary societies as composers and performers”\(^{228}\).

\(^{224}\) For a thorough investigation of the diversity of musical life in Melbourne at this time, see Selleck 15–47; Radic, “Adelaide Women Composers’ Festival”, 7.

\(^{225}\) Radic, “Adelaide Women Composers’ Festival”, 8.

\(^{226}\) Patton, “Rediscovering our Musical Past”, 10.

\(^{227}\) Refer Section A1.2 of Appendix One for a more thorough account of the general situation for women in nineteenth-century colonial history.

\(^{228}\) Patton 10–11.
A1.11 The ‘Middle Generation’ of Australian Women Composers

A number of the so-called middle generation of women born before 1930 benefited from the still relatively new university culture, though it was not until nearly the mid-twentieth century that women gained any positions of authority in the music world. Margaret Sutherland studied with both G.W.L. Marshall-Hall and Fritz Hart in Melbourne. Linda Phillips (1899–2002), Esther Rofe (1904–2000), Peggy-Glanville Hicks (1912–1990), and Phyllis Batchelor (b. 1915) “were shielded from the prejudices [against women composers] by coming under the wing of Fritz Hart at the Albert Street Conservatorium”. Miriam Hyde (1913–2005) studied at the Elder Conservatorium in Adelaide, and the work of Mirrie Hill (1889–1986) was supported by Verbrugghen at the NSW State Conservatorium, where she, and later Dulcie Holland (b. 1913), studied with Alfred Hill (whom Mirrie married in 1921). Nevertheless, in the early part of the twentieth century, with Australia’s Eurocentric focus, and its perception as culturally less developed than Europe, there was still a strong feeling then (which remains now) that in order to reach one’s full musical potential, formal study overseas was necessary. The Royal College of Music in London was considered by many aspiring Australian composers to be a prestigious institution. Sutherland studied overseas, but did not align herself with an institution. However, a number of her immediate successors, including Rofe, Glanville-Hicks, Hyde and Dulcie Holland (1913–2000) all had periods of study there in the early 1930s.

It is said that women composers were not particularly active in contemporary music until the 1960s, but a few composers of this middle generation were pioneers in developing “a musical language able to express the unique nature of the Australian landscape and the newly independent society”. They were tireless in their efforts to strengthen the voice of women composers, and their influence on following generations.

---

230 Sutherland was awarded scholarships to study piano and composition (with Hart) at the Albert St Conservatorium in 1913. Likewise Mirrie Hill was offered a government scholarship to study at the NSW State Conservatorium in 1916. It is notable that such scholarships discriminated overtly against women. Married women were not eligible, and if a woman married during the term of her scholarship, it would be cancelled. Sutherland, “Three Universities in One”; Pearce 27–28.
231 Crotty 1.
232 Pearce 31.
233 Petrus 84–85.
of Australian women composers cannot be underestimated. Innovations in the music of Mirrie Hill (who did not study overseas) and Margaret Sutherland is particularly credited with exposing the adherence of Australian composers “to the stale Romanticism”. Although the tonality, rhythms and orchestration are fundamentally European, Mirrie Hill was one of the first to include elements of Aboriginal music in her compositions, with her works *Three Aboriginal Dances* (1950) and *Arnhem Land Symphony* (1954). Crisp suggests that the originality of Hill’s music can be partially attributed to the fact that she did not study in Europe, and was therefore not inflicted with “stultifying European compositional techniques”.

According to Roger Covell, it was Margaret Sutherland “who really naturalised the twentieth century in Australian music. Long before World War II she was writing music which paralleled the neo-classical reaction against Romantic styles in most other European or Europe-derived societies.”

---

235 More detail on Sutherland’s role as champion of subsequent generations of composers was provided in Chapter Four.
238 Covell 152.
APPENDIX TWO

QUESTIONS FOR INITIAL INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS, 2004

1. How would you describe the socio-economic group to which you belong?
2. What sort of education have you had?
3. What were the expectations of your parents/family/teachers?
4. Was there conflict regarding your musical ambitions within your family during your upbringing?
5. Was your family musical?
6. Who were/are the significant role models for you?
7. How would you describe your social milieu?
8. Was your husband/partner supportive of your career?
9. How have your children impacted on your life?
10. Was your husband/partner an active and present father?
11. How do your children view your career?
12. Do you think your experiences as a partner/wife/mother differ from those of your male counterparts (with similar levels of education and coming from similar socio-economic backgrounds)?
13. Which have been your most sustaining friendships? How have your friendship patterns altered over your life?
14. How do you feel you have changed over the years? Can you describe the ‘phases’ of your life? And for your work?
15. Do you ever doubt your abilities?
16. Have you found it easier to compose since you separated from your husband/partner?
17. How do you feel about getting older?
18. For whom are you composing?
19. Have you ever, or do you currently, feel you compose ‘as a woman’?
20. Has your compositional approach changed through partnership/marriage/motherhood? If so, in what ways?
21. What, if any, issues have been raised in combining motherhood with your career?
22. What have been, or are, the barriers to your creativity, if any?
23. Have you needed to develop ‘strategies’ to assist in combining your professional/creative and family lives? If so, can you describe them?
24. What does the term ‘feminism’ mean to you?
25. Do you identify yourself as a feminist/with feminism?
26. Has feminism had any perceptible effect on your upbringing/domestic/creative life?
27. Has your music/performance been received/reviewed/discussed in gendered terms?
28. Do you keep a diary/journal, and if so, does it in any way facilitate your creative process?
APPENDIX THREE

QUESTIONS FOR SECOND INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS, 2005

1. Can you choose one-two compositions of yours which have special significance for you, and talk about the music, and why it is significant?
2. When was each of your children born?
3. Were you told as a girl/young woman that you could do anything you wanted?
4. Was there an expectation you would marry and have a family?
5. Did your mother work outside the home, or have a career apart from child-rearing?
6. What was/is your relationship with your mother? Has she supported your career choices?
7. What expectations of motherhood did you have prior to having children?
8. What was the first (and subsequent) pregnancy/ies and the birth process like for you? Did the reality of being a mother live up to any ‘romantic’ dreams you may have had?
9. Did you lose interest in composition or other work when you were pregnant, or when your children were very young? If so, at what point did you regain it?
10. What decision-making process did you go through to have children?
11. Did/do you feel an advantage over men that you can give birth?
12. How would you define a ‘good mother’?
13. Has being a mother stimulated your creativity as a composer in any way/s?
14. How has composition affected your perceptions of motherhood?
15. Did you ever write music for children, or were/are there aspects of mothering reflected in your music? Or was composition something you treated more as a realm apart from your mothering?
16. How important is/was work/composition in the construction of your identity/purpose/self-esteem/financial independence?
17. Did/do you ever feel envious of child-free women?
18. Have you/do you ever felt guilty for wanting time away from your children?
19. Have you ever perceived your role as a composer as a threat to your identification as a woman/mother/partner?
20. Did/do you feel that the responsibility for nurturing your children emotionally/physically was/is largely yours?
21. Did the balance of responsibilities for domestic duties alter following the birth of your (first) child?
22. Are you happy with the way in which you have been/are able to blend motherhood with your creative and other endeavours; i.e. with the ‘balancing act’, or would a more ‘linear’ career structure have appealed?
23. Would being a full-time mother at any stage have been difficult for you?
24. In what areas of your life do you feel ‘powerful’—e.g. as mother, partner, composer, teacher, other?
25. Is role-modelling to your children important to you/?Are you aware of having provided/providing them with a model of a working/creative mother?
26. Were there any values or ideas that were particularly important to you actively to instil in your daughters/sons?

27. How do you think your heritage has helped define you as a person?

28. Would you describe yourself as ambitious, not necessarily in the straightforward, upwardly mobile way, but in terms of what you personally wish to achieve in the different facets of your life?

29. How do you feel about being referred to as a 'woman composer'?

30. Do you feel you identify more with male or female composers?

31. In light of the knowledge we have that in the past composition has been a male domain, do you think you have had to work harder for recognition than your male counterparts?

32. Did you ever have any reservations of fear about the public nature of success, about making your accomplishments public?

33. Has your music been published to the extent you would like it to be?

34. Do you need to teach to supplement the income you receive as a composer?

35. In her book *Motherhood: How Should We Care for Our Children?* Anne Manne reveals her own experience of mothering young children. She says that while nursing one of her children, she felt estranged from the prevailing public conversations about children, since the tone was resentful, emphasising only the burdens and obstacles that children presented to public achievement. While breast-feeding one day, she heard a radio programme in which a French painter was talking about her life, painting and motherhood. Unexpectedly, what the painter said “gave her heart”. The painter was not dishonest about the fatigue or lack of time when her children were small, but she gave another way of seeing it: “Being a mother had opened her to a kind of love so deep, made her confront her own vulnerability so profoundly, that this love worked not against, but with her creativity.”

Could/Would you describe any of your experiences in a similar way?

36. At another point in the book, Manne discusses the work of Catherine Hakim, who, after having pulled together a huge range of international research, identified three broad preference groups of women. The first is ‘work-centred’ women (10-30%) for whom paid work or competitive endeavour in the public realm is the chief source of meaning. Voluntarily childless women with a single-minded career focus are concentrated here, but it also includes some mothers. The polar opposite group (also 10-30%) is ‘home-centred’ women, for whom family life is the chief source of pleasure, identity, meaning and honour. The third group, labelled ‘adaptive’ (60-80%), consists of women who shape their working life around the demands of family life. They have multiple goals and want the best of both worlds. They usually seek to combine work and family in two clear patterns. Some do this in sequence, and others combine work and family throughout the life cycle.

Which of these groups do you feel you belong to a) by choice; and b) in reality?

---

Author/s:
GRAHAM, JILLIAN

Title:
Composing biographies of four Australian women: feminism, motherhood and music

Date:
2009

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/35371

File Description:
Composing biographies of four Australian women: feminism, motherhood and music

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.