Australian broadcasting’s female ‘pilgrims’:
Women and work in the post-war ABC.

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2019

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Certificate of original authorship

I, Kylie Andrews declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Communications at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

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Date: 9 Jan 2019
Acknowledgments

Many people provided me with assistance and inspiration as I produced this thesis.

I am most grateful to my supervisor, Paula Hamilton, for her guidance and support. It has been a privilege to have her as a mentor. I was constantly bolstered by her wisdom and encouragement; her guidance sustained me and helped me discover more than I thought possible.

I would like to thank the team at the Centre for Public History, to Paul Ashton and Anna Clark and the generous community of scholars who welcomed me; thanks for listening and for all the feedback. I would also like to express my gratitude to Peter Cochrane for encouraging me to take the leap.

This PhD would not have been possible without the generous support of the University of Technology, Sydney. My research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship and a UTS Chancellor’s Research Scholarship. I am also grateful to have been endowed with the 2018 Clare Burton Scholarship, through the Australian Technology Network of Universities. I have been inspired by Clare’s legacy, to encourage gender equity and improve the lives of working women.

I would also like to thank all the archivists who were so generous with their time. Special thanks go to the team at the National Archives of Australia, Judith Paterson, Edmund Rutledge and Kerrie Jarvis. Thanks to Wendy Borchers, ex-ABC archivist and all-round inspiration; to Guy Tranter, ABC researcher and document archivist, and Mary Jane Stannus, Head of Content Services (ABC). Many thanks to Graham Shirley for permitting me to use to his incredible collection of interviews with Australian broadcasters and filmmakers; I learned a lot from listening to his work. Thanks also to Simon Drake and Bronwyn Murphy at the National Film and Sound Archive, the staff at the National Library of Australia, the British Film Institute, the BBC Written Archives Centre and the Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. I must also thank the wonderful staff and advisors at the UTS library, for their helpful training programmes and
invaluable research advice. I am also grateful for the consistent advice offered by UTS Ethics Advisor Racheal Laughery and the support of the UTS Graduate Research School.

During the course of this research project, I was lucky to have found a group of wonderful contributors who agreed to be interviewed. I would like to offer my special thanks to Bill Denny, Mary Kenihan, Marie Louise Persson, Pauline Thomas, Theo van Leeuwin, Mary Rossi and Emma Rossi. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Bob Sitsky and Col McPherson, who invited me to spend time with their inspiring family of ABC ex-staffers. Thank you all for so generously sharing your memories with me.

I have also been blessed in having wonderful family and friends, who have encouraged and supported me on this journey. To Lisa, Rosa and Cathy, my special thanks. Finally, I would like to thank Nick, Elisabeth and Jacob, my kind, patient and loving family. I could not have done this without your support and inspiration.

* * *

This thesis is dedicated to the determined women of the ABC who battled to forge careers in broadcasting.
This thesis has not been copyedited but has been checked by a proof reader: Jess Cox, from Quick Fox Editing.

This thesis follows a conventional format.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following research contains names and images of people who have died.
# Table of contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................... iii

List of figures and illustrations ................................................................. viii

Abstract....................................................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1 – Introduction.................................................................................. 1
  Women’s and feminist history........................................................................... 8
  The hidden labour of production and media history...................................... 17
  An integrated and transnational approach...................................................... 28
  Methodologies .................................................................................................... 32
  Sources ................................................................................................................ 35
  Outline of chapters ............................................................................................ 42

Chapter 2 – Discovering ABC women.................................................... 45
  Kay Kinane ....................................................................................................... 48
  Catherine King ................................................................................................ 51
  Therése Denny ............................................................................................... 55
  Joyce Belfrage ............................................................................................... 56
  How the cohort was ‘built’ to be public broadcasters................................. 58
  Responsible citizens, cultural custodians and the public broadcasting remit 74
  Their mission in action .................................................................................... 79
  Discovering ABC women ................................................................................. 91

Chapter 3 – The ABC and gender ......................................................... 93
  The marginalisation of ‘women’s work’........................................................ 93
  Compromised channels of advancement: Getting trapped in the typing pool 113
  Gendered behaviours...................................................................................... 116
  The ABC’s ‘other’ women contributors......................................................... 122
  Gendered language and the ABC ‘girl’ ........................................................ 123
  The gendering of content divisions .............................................................. 125
  Contesting women’s ‘worlds’ ....................................................................... 128
  Working without colluding ......................................................................... 136
  ABC women and citizenship ........................................................................ 139

Chapter 4 – Strategies at the local level ............................................. 144
  ABC mentors and advocates ........................................................................ 144
  Opportunities that arose during industrial disruption .................................. 153
  Bargaining from a position of strength ........................................................ 162
  Joyce and the ABC’s difficult transition to television .................................... 166
Chapter 5 – Transmediality .......................................................... 176
Moving between radio and television .......................................................... 176
Using the press .......................................................................................... 182
Other formats ............................................................................................ 189

Chapter 6 – Transnational engagements ....................................... 192
Secular pilgrimages and transformative departures ........................................ 194
Kay Kinane and the Imperial Relations Trust scholarship ................................. 203
Other opportunities for transnational learning .................................................. 206
The imbalanced polarity of the ‘dominion dynamic’ ........................................... 209
The exchange of programmes within transnational networks ......................... 210
Joyce Belfrage and public broadcasting’s employment networks ...................... 212
Therése manipulating the ‘dominion dynamic’ .................................................. 215
Kay Kinane connecting with American broadcasting ......................................... 223
The privileges of public broadcasting membership .......................................... 233
Networking through transnational subcultures .................................................. 236
Kay’s final, global opportunity to embody her mission ......................................... 241

Chapter 7 – Conclusion ................................................................ 244

Epilogue ............................................................................................... 249

Bibliography ......................................................................................... 254
Primary sources ......................................................................................... 254
Industrial documentation ............................................................................. 254
Interviews and oral histories ......................................................................... 258
Personal correspodence and diaries ............................................................... 260
Audio and audiovisual projects ..................................................................... 261
Press, newspapers and magazines ................................................................. 262
Reports and legislation ................................................................................. 263
Public seminars and speeches ....................................................................... 264
Secondary sources ....................................................................................... 264
Books and book chapters ............................................................................ 264
Journal articles ............................................................................................ 269
Conference papers ....................................................................................... 272
Theses and unpublished work ....................................................................... 272
Websites ................................................................................................. 272
List of figures and illustrations

Figure 1: Therése Denny directing scenes for an ABC documentary in 1963 ......................... 3
Figure 2: Kay Kinane is hired as Assistant Director of Education, 1964 ............................... 50
Figure 3: Kay Kinane consults for UNESCO in 1973 ................................................................. 51
Figure 4: Catherine King, circa 1960 ......................................................................................... 52
Figure 5: Catherine King and visiting performers in 1963 .......................................................... 53
Figure 6: Therése Denny at the ABC, circa 1964 ....................................................................... 56
Figure 7: Joyce Belfrage, ABC publicity photo, circa 1960 ........................................................ 57
Figure 8: Miss Kay Kinane in May 1938 .................................................................................... 62
Figure 9: ‘Kay Kinane: The pioneer spirit’ ................................................................................... 63
Figure 10: Therése Denny, publicity image, circa 1964 ............................................................... 73
Figure 11: The Sturt re-enactment comes to Goolwa in 1951 ..................................................... 81
Figure 12: Jimmy Little, presenter of A Changing Race, 1964 .................................................. 88
Figure 13: AWBC Report, 1977, Analysis of the Occupancy of 46 Major Job Titles ............... 108
Figure 14: ABC Federal Officers and State Managers, 1950 ...................................................... 109
Figure 15: ABC Talks officers, Sydney, 1951 ............................................................................. 109
Figure 16: ABC National News Readers, 1954 ......................................................................... 110
Figure 17: ‘Producers: The fine talk’, 1975 .............................................................................. 110
Figure 18: Therése on location for Men of Action, Mount Athos, Greece, 1958 ...................... 122
Figure 19: ‘Who will be Sydney’s Miss ABC?’ 1963 ................................................................. 125
Figure 20: The Staff ‘tea room’ at Gore Hill in the early days of television .............................. 157
Figure 21: Examples of Therése Denny’s use of the press ......................................................... 184
Figure 22: Therése Denny’s ‘family friendly’ career, The Listener-In, December 1954 .......... 186
Figure 23: Don and the Rainmakers, produced by Inglis, Wood & Kinane, 1970 .................... 190
Figure 24: The ABC’s Ruth Page (far right) and friends head overseas in 1954 ....................... 207
Figure 25: Kay Kinane advising with the Melbourne TV training school ................................. 232
Abstract

This thesis examines the careers of women who attained positions of authority in the privileged environment of Australian public broadcasting between the 1940s and 1970s, and reimagines the nature of women’s work at the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). It counteracts the widespread assumption that women were largely absent in post-war broadcasting, and reveals how and why a group of women, each with their own issues and ideologies to contribute to national debates, used the ABC as a vehicle for their activism.

Framed primarily through group biography, this history details how certain ABC women manifested their own agency within the limitations of the time and place, in both the messages they produced as radio and television producers, and through their positions within the gendered post-war workplace. It details the industrial strategies that female broadcasters activated in order to succeed – their transmedial methods, transformative departures, transnational exchanges and technical training – and the key industrial alliances they utilised to traverse previously inaccessible avenues of opportunity.

Taking an intersectional approach, this thesis also juxtaposes the careers of elite female producers against the majority of women workers at the ABC, contextualising the barriers, both official and unofficial, that prevented most women from sharing the same authority, opportunity and privilege that their male counterparts experienced. Challenging the male-centric narratives that dominate broadcasting historiography, this thesis examines the systems of exclusion and discrimination in the ABC workplace and highlights the nature of women’s work in public broadcasting; it enriches the historical landscape of women’s experiences and contributions within Australian broadcasting.