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**REDEFINING THE TRADITION: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN
THE EVOLUTION AND TRANSMISSION OF AUSTRALIAN
FOLK MUSIC**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of
The Australian National University**

February 2008



Declaration

I, Jennifer Deirdre Gall, hereby declare that, except where otherwise acknowledged in the customary manner, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this work is my own, and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other university or institution.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jennifer Deirdre Gall", written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer Deirdre Gall

*For my Grandmother
who brought her music to the Coorong;
and
Patricia Hughes.*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation undertakes an examination of the truth of the assertion that Australian folk music represents a predominantly masculine, working class genre — the view expressed in the official Commonwealth Government description of Australian folk music, the publications of the academy and promoted by the media. In this thesis, the women who have played a key role in the history of Australian folk music are restored from obscurity, highlighting the need for a root - and - branch revision of the history of Australian folk music.

I argue that the evidence of primary sources confirms the role of women as integral to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. The way in which oral and written traditions interact in the music of Australian women is explained; traditional boundaries of class which have been used in the past to delineate who owns folk music are challenged; and it is argued that the piano must be admitted into the category of bush instrument, thus expanding the range of the accepted Australian folk music repertoire.

Australian women's folk music, as distinct from Australian indigenous women's music, has its origins in the social, political and economic upheavals of the eighteenth century. It embodies the dislocation experienced by pioneering women who travelled to Australia from the British Isles and other European countries, either as convicts or free settlers. Emergence of new post-industrial forms of folk music is also prominent. Songs and tunes preserved through oral transmission and the development of homegrown Australian songs represent the dichotomy of old world and new world cultural values. Published broadside ballad sheets and piano arrangements of folk songs and dance tunes were embraced by Australian women and shared widely through oral and hand-written transmission. Diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, archival music collections and field recordings provide evidence that women from a broad range of economic, educational and social backgrounds performed folk music from the earliest days of settlement in a way that was unique to Australia.

Analysis in this thesis is structured by the chronological sequence of case studies spanning the 1840s to the present. Case studies covering this extended period demonstrate the diversity of women musician's lives, their place in the evolution of Australian folk music from early settlement to contemporary times and the changing manifestations of transmission affecting each generation. Both the items in the repertoires of the women studied and aspects of their identity (indicated in their choice of songs) are regenerated by performance of their music. Investigation of this process concludes with examination of the contemporary operation of transmission in the case study of my own participation in the evolving tradition of Australian women's folk music.

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REDEFINING THE TRADITION: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EVOLUTION AND TRANSMISSION OF AUSTRALIAN FOLK MUSIC.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Visitors to the official Commonwealth Government's 'culture portal' are bluntly informed that "the foundation of Australia's later day folk music" after white settlement is composed of songs about convicts, itinerant male bush workers, bushranger ballads and gold miners.¹ There are no portraits of women amongst the images used to illustrate this introductory section of the website. The Government's message is entirely in keeping with the view of much of the academy and with popular belief. Until recently, scholars have focused on the transportation broadsides, colonial ballads and bush songs; most famously, Russel Ward, who used folk songs as key evidence in constructing his view of national identity in *The Australian Legend*.² In 2003, the book *Verandah Music: Roots of Australian Tradition*, by Graham Seal and Rob Willis challenged the historical definition of folk music by presenting representatives of Australia's culturally diverse folk life. The concise portraits of men and women in *Verandah Music* laid the foundations for in-depth scholarly analysis of folk music in Australia.³

This thesis challenges the existing stereotype of Australian folk music by revealing the role of women in the evolution and transmission of the genre. The apparent lack of

¹ <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/music/folk/> and Bush Songs and Music: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/music/bush/>

² Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1958.

³ Graham Seal and Rob Willis, *Verandah Music: Roots of Australian Tradition*, Curtin University Books, Fremantle, 2003, p.14.

women's folk music in Australian history is due to the assertion in the popular press, in the media and in many publications of the folk revival that authentic folk music is the creation and property of the male rural working class. It is claimed that these songs are the true expression of our national character. This view fails to recognise music played in the home — lullabies, work songs and so-called parlour music versions of traditional music often performed by women — and reflects the reluctance of revival collectors to acknowledge the role of the piano as a bush instrument. Many women assumed a non-performance role in folk revival field recordings, supporting and prompting their husbands to function as the primary informant and disguising the importance of their role in the survival of these songs. Women collectors such as Hilda Lane and Mary Jean Officer did not assert ownership of their folk music collections in the way that male collectors did. Their work is catalogued in archives within the collections of their male colleagues, obscuring it from recognition.

The folk music made by Australian women forms a significant component of the field recordings held in the National Library of Australia (NLA) Oral History and Folklore collection and yet this is not acknowledged in the government 'culture portal'. Their contribution is obscured by the ethnographic methodology of the revival era. John Meredith, the most prolific collector of the time, believed that he must collect as many items from musicians as possible in a visit because his informants were elderly and might not live long enough to be re-visited. This approach resulted in the originality and quantity of the musical items assuming priority over a documentation of the way in which the people interviewed used and created their musical traditions. Women's music lost its distinctive character and became absorbed into the greater mass of the field recordings. To attempt to find the repertoire of women musicians that have been obscured by revival collecting methodology requires awareness that "music is not just those sounds that can under some situations be satisfactorily recorded onto tangible media and reproduced on playback devices of varying quality."⁴ Musical performance is a complex mixture of behaviour, emotions, memories, "ideas, meanings, values and

⁴ Anthony Seeger, 'The Illusion of the Tangible: Music and its Recordings', *Communities and Memories: a Global Perspective*, third international conference of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* programme, National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 20th February 2008.

aesthetics”, and my dissertation engages these criteria for the critical evaluation of the role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music.⁵

To date no scholarly work provides analysis of the repertoire of Australian women folk musicians in terms of what the selection, structure and variations of particular items tell us about how and why women sang these songs. My research relates the choice of items and the manner in which they are performed to biographical information, providing deeper understanding of the women in my case studies. By learning and recording items sung by the women in my case studies I have documented the way these songs function for a singer — the way folk music narratives link the individual’s personal present to a transcendent performance — facilitating ongoing communication of a tradition. This use of myself in a subject/analyst role is one that does not fit comfortably within the established conventions of History and English dissertations, but it is an approach well established in the fields of Ethnomusicology, Folklore, Folk Music and Ballad Studies.⁶ If I am to explain the role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music in a manner that diverges from past research methodologies (predominantly men writing about women), then I must discuss how women folk musicians “*think* through music, decide who they are through it [and] express themselves through it.”⁷ The best way to accomplish this is to demonstrate a complete knowledge of their repertoires through archival research and through performances using their musical language.

I am aware that in indigenous communities and non-English speaking social groups, Australian women’s music functioned in very different ways to the case studies presented here. This thesis is limited to the music of women in the Anglophone culture that was established after white settlement in Australia.

Writing in 1913, the visiting American journalist and social reformer Jessie Ackerman acknowledged the part women played in the frontier life of the new colony:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jonathan Stock, *Is Ethnomusicology Relevant to the Study of British Folk Music? Some Thoughts and Key References*. 1999. Mustrad: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/mustrad/articles/ethnomus.htm>

⁷ Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, OUP, 1998, p.vi.

No words can express the part women have taken in the settlement of Australia...their names should be written large in the history of the country. They never will be. It is not the custom.⁸ ... Women have burnt, beaten and hammered their imprint upon this country in a manner that only Eternity will reveal. While men cleared the bush, women wrought to the extreme of their strength.⁹

Another impressive feature of home life is the extreme measure of genius for and love of music;¹⁰

These comments contrast strongly with Russel Ward's statement, written in 1954, at the beginning of the Australian folk revival, "In the last century women, or at least white women, could scarcely be considered as part of the bush-worker's world, and this famine of females is reflected in their ballads."¹¹ The conflict between this statement and Ackerman's observation above provokes the necessity of further investigation.

This thesis demonstrates, through the evidence of five case studies, that women have made an indisputable and unique contribution to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music in the Anglophone tradition. Their repertoires, and those of the other women referred to, prove that Australian folk music is a more complex genre than just the bush songs that Ward believed were the core of the Australian national character. The chronological sequence of the five case studies has been chosen because analysis of one musician would not have conveyed how Australian women's folk music is a genre that was used by women of different classes, how it operated in communities in relation to other kinds of music and how transmission continues today. The life and repertoire of a single musician would also not demonstrate the evolution of Australian folk music from a domestic pursuit into a commercial performance art form. Therefore I have structured the thesis around a series of case studies including myself. These case studies represent the ongoing process of adapting and re-creating musical forms from European traditions to create a sense of belonging for women in colonial and post-colonial Australia. The chronological sequence of

⁸ Jessie Ackerman, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, Melbourne, Cassell Australia, 1981, p.xv.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.74.

¹¹ Russel Ward, "Felons and Folk Songs", *Commonwealth Literary Fund: Lectures given at the University of Melbourne*, October 1954, p. 1.

these women's lives and their music illustrates the changing nature of the transmission of Australian folk song and the influence of popular and published material on traditional repertoires. The reader is asked to note that I write using two distinct identities: the first, as author of the thesis; and the second, as the subject of the final case study which analyses the way in which Australian women's folk songs function for a contemporary Australian woman folk-singer.

Georgiana McCrae's (1804-1890) collection of Scottish songs and piano music is representative of a genre of folk music, which has been overlooked by folk revival commentators because it was music made in the domestic sphere; because the songs were a transplanted tradition, not 'home-grown'; and because much of Georgiana's music was notated for piano and voice rather than existing solely in her memory as a result of oral transmission. In fact, Georgiana's repertoire was shared with passing musicians and handed on to her children in a manner consistent with the transmission of traditional music defined in the Introduction (p.19.).

Sally Sloane's (1894-1982) repertoire was first published in *Folk Songs of Australia* in the context of John Meredith's collecting activities. My research has brought to light field recordings made by Warren Fahey with Graham Seal that reveal hitherto unknown biographical details and new information about what the songs meant to her. Placing Sally at the centre of inquiry (as opposed to having her repertoire mediated through Meredith's narrative) offers new insight into the operation of transmission in her song collection.

Mary Jean Officer (1925-1996) was a folk music collector, a performer and member of the Folklore Society of Victoria in the Australian folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. She represents the continuing transition, within the tradition of Australian folk music, from organic to planned transmission, as she was not a member of her informants' families, nor a member of their immediate physical community. She felt a duty, inspired by the friendships she made with her informants, to preserve and publicise their contributions to the field research she conducted. Like Georgiana McCrae, Mary Jean Officer participated in the preservation and performance of traditional music in order to try and synthesize her old-world cultural values with new-world cultural realities. Her achievements have been overlooked because her

collecting activities were made as part of a team with Norm and Pat O'Connor and Bob Michel.

Cathie O'Sullivan's¹² performance career began with the reclamation of Australian women's folk music hidden behind revival performance stereotypes. Her music demonstrates the evolution and transmission of Australian Folk Music as archival source material recreated in new versions inspired by her conversations with elderly countrywomen.

The research technique of using myself as a case study adopts Leslie Shepherd's method of investigation described below:

It is true that informed and accurate scholarship is essential in ballad study, but it must be brought to life by actual experience of the folk tradition. More can be learnt from listening to a traditional ballad singer than by studying texts, and active participation in singing and dancing adds a dimension to academic study. Furthermore, some philosophical and metaphysical background is essential in a field that constantly reflects the changing beliefs of past generations. If we can learn to experience what lies at the heart of the ballad we shall resolve many of the questions that harass academic study.¹³

By learning and singing selected Australian women's folk songs, I have been able to analyse them as, firstly, a means of investigating the process of singing traditional songs in terms of the interaction of the singer with the text and song structure; secondly, a method of evaluating how folk songs function when they are sung in a traditional domestic context rather than a commercial performance context; and thirdly, a way of identifying the factors influencing the transition of music from archival sources into a contemporary context in the belief that "rather than being mutually exclusive, creativity

¹² Cathie O'Sullivan, now Cathie Summerhayes, Lecturer in Film Studies, School of Humanities, Australian National University. First established as a folk music performer through her touring and recording with *The Larrikins* in the 1980s, she made her first solo album *Artesian Waters* in 1982, and proceeded to record three more albums which explored the blend of traditional musical ideas with jazz, and free improvisation to create new Australian music.

¹³ Leslie Shepherd, *The Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meanings*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1962, pp.36-7.

and representation of tradition are mutually dependent; they define each other by their balance and interaction.”¹⁴

While the first two women, Georgiana McCrae 1804-1890 and Sally Sloane 1894-1982 learned their music primarily through transmission within a family lineage, Mary Jean Officer, Cathie O’Sullivan and my own research engaged Australian traditional music through the process of collecting and listening to archival field recordings of musicians outside the family circle. This can be seen as an attempt to re-connect broken lines of folk music transmission, creating a new concept of lineage. Mary Jean Officer’s collecting methodology placed a singer’s repertoire in the context of family relationships. O’Sullivan translated archival field recordings into new settings using instrumental arrangements and new music influences to communicate with a contemporary audience. My recordings experiment with the technique of singing the song in its original unaccompanied form, then creating an accompaniment inspired by the background sounds heard in field recordings, de-constructing and re-assembling the song in order to understand how both text and context interact.

My research demonstrates that women are often the invisible tradition bearers, the repositories of folk song repertoire, who have traditionally performed their music privately in their homes, as dance musicians, accompanying silent movies and on stage. The piano, an instrument hauled on drays, rafts and schooners to many remote huts and houses throughout the bush, is central to this collaborative nature of women’s music and should be acknowledged as a bush instrument. Women of greatly varying abilities played folk music from both written and oral traditions on pianos and other instruments, and the music they shared with passing musicians assisted the transmission of Australian folk music. Wives are often heard in field recordings supporting and prompting their husbands but the final recording is classified in an archive under the husband’s name only. In the Australian folk revival, mostly male performers popularised bush music on television and on tour,¹⁵ yet the ability of women musicians to create and transform the genre has kept folk music alive in the domestic environment and, in its new forms, in the music market place. Mothers

¹⁴ Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana, 1988, p.80.

¹⁵ For example, Alex Hood’s Arts Council schools tours of the late 1960s and 1970s and Lionel Long’s prolific commercial recordings for Columbia and EMI etc. between 1959-1980 as well as his television appearances in the 1970s.

taught their children their earliest songs as lullabies and dandling ditties, and men have often sung these childhood songs in field recordings later in life.¹⁶ Examination of archival records provides evidence of women's repertoires which include transplanted ballads (for example, *Green Bushes*) that have become Australian versions; the everyday use of "male" songs such as *The Old Bark Hut*, that were sung as lullabies in a very different manner to the popular guitar accompanied versions of male singers in the 1950s folk revival; and parodies penned by women such as *The Stockman's Last Bed*,¹⁷ a song often attributed to male sources.

Many women musicians are not present in the historical record because of their self-effacing behaviour and because many male collectors during the folk revival did not ask to hear women's work songs or lullabies. Women's music is part of the fabric of everyday life and so it is at great risk of disappearing as that fabric alters or decays with the passage of time. A constantly voiced lament by women from the early days of our settlement is that the details of a mother's repertoire have been forgotten. Recalling her mother in her 1880s Australian childhood, the poet Tilly Aston remarked: "I did not realise the value of these [songs] while she still remembered them, for she sang many which, as far as I can learn, have never appeared in modern collections."¹⁸

My thesis demonstrates the ways in which music used by non-indigenous English-speaking women in their daily lives might be defined as "Australian Folk Music". In folk music performance, women tried to reconcile their European cultural inheritance with the desire to make music to be used in every day life in the Antipodes. Australian folk music was and is the music used by Australian inhabitants as part of their daily lives, and through patterns of use, the music adopts characteristics that are identifiable as Australian. Items may be learned from a variety of sources but folk music is

¹⁶ Examples of songs learned in this way are found in the field recordings of Simon McDonald singing songs learned from his mother (eg. *There was an Old Woman Tossed Up in a Basket, Old Tremone*) made by Mary Jean Officer, Norm and Pat O'Connor, NLA TRC 2539/4.

¹⁷ Composed by Anna and Maria Grey, see *Annabella Boswell's Journal; An Account of Early Port Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981, pp.118-9.

¹⁸ Tilly Aston (1873-1947) was a blind poet, teacher and philanthropist who founded the Victorian Association of Braille Writers and the Association for the Advancement of the Blind. She sent four verses to the Editor of *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, 1959, of *Sylvia* notated from her mother's singing on 27th of June 1911 in Moonee Ponds.

defined by the variations that have developed over time, which provide evidence of use and transmission. The family and relationship networks were and are the main systems that facilitate the operation of folk music. It is used to accompany repetitive work tasks, to entertain, divert, placate and amuse, to console and sing as lullabies. Folk music demonstrates its usefulness in its ability to adapt to the circumstances in which it is performed. In its essential form, it is not performed for monetary recompense; however, folk music can also function in a commercial environment. It is distinguished from popular music genres by its adaptability to different performance environments, the encouragement of audience participation and through use of improvisation to include topical political comments. Australian folk music encompasses instrumental music, played mainly for dances, and songs, sung for the entertainment of others or for private consolation. While acknowledging the importance of women as dance and instrumental performers, the focus of my dissertation is analysis of their vocal repertoire.

Situating the thesis

When I was beginning the research for this thesis, a colleague remarked: “How will you find enough to write on – there is no Australian women’s folk music”.¹⁹ The same comment has been voiced many times throughout the course of writing. With the National Library of Australia catalogue documenting 3,137 folk music holdings originating from the contributions of women musicians,²⁰ I wanted to find out why this commonly held perception about our folk music persists. The answers are of course complex and are linked to how Australian folk music is defined.

The National Library of Australia (NLA) is the obvious archive in which to begin the search for Australian women’s folk music and folklore sources. An analysis of the

¹⁹ I believe that this colleague was referring to a perceived lack of love songs, songs about women’s issues, women’s work songs and lullabies as sung by Australian women. In fact this judgment arises from the stereotype of Australian folk music as bush music made up by and sung about Australian male itinerant workers and their work experiences; for example, *Click Go the Shears*. And *The Rye Buck Shearer*. For many folklorists, songs from the British Isles that were transplanted and varied in Australia have been discounted as “authentic” Australian folk music. The role of women in creating some of our most iconic folk songs, *Waltzing Matilda* and *The Stockman’s Last Bed*, has also been overlooked. An analysis of the repertoires of women folk singers reveals the real picture of how Australian women made and used folk music in their daily lives.

²⁰ This figure is the result of a Key Word catalogue search limited to Oral History and Folklore collection holdings, conducted on 8.3.07, using the terms “women folk musicians”. For “folk music” there are 2,289 results; “male folk musicians” returned 1,976 results.

collectors who have deposited field recordings in the Folklore and Oral History collection of the NLA²¹ reveals the following statistical information. There are 52 Collections listed, with a total of 37 collectors acknowledged; 28 of these are men, nine are women and three of these nine women are described as partners with male collectors. In a collection that is relatively new, the selection of material and the collection policy for the Oral History and Folklore collection have been very influential in the perceptions of Australian folk music. The relevant section of the collection development policy is reproduced below:

6.5 the Library has developed the most significant collection of its type in Australia, containing original recordings made by many of Australia's best-known folklorists including John Meredith, Alan Scott, Peter Parkhill and Rob Willis.²²

Puzzlingly, the summary of “Australia’s best-known folklorists” omits the names of any of the women who have contributed to the Oral History and Folklore collections. These are Olya Willis (co-interviewer with Rob Willis), June Factor (the Director of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection for over 25 years, the major public archive of children's folklore in Australia, now part of the Museum of Victoria, co-editor of *Play and Folklore*, and Board member of the Victorian Folklife Association.), Wendy Lowenstein (described by the National Foundation For Women²³ as “one of Australia's best known historians of folklore.”), Helen O’Shea (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Monash University), Mary Jean Officer and Pat O’Connor (co-interviewers with Norm O’Connor) and Gwenda Davey, AM, (listed in the NLA catalogue as the author of 138 audio and print-published Folklore works, Founder of the Australian Folklife Centre, Founder of the *Bringing Them Home Oral History Project*, and Principal Researcher for the current ARC Project: *Childhood, Tradition and Change*). Acknowledging women in the collection development policy would help dispel the common perception that Australian folk music and folklore is the preserve of male collectors.

²¹ NLA catalogue search, Feb. 2007.

²² National Library of Australia Collection Development Policy:
http://www.nla.gov.au/policy/cdp/chapter_6.html

²³ National Foundation for Women, Australian Women’s Archive Project
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0103b.htm> Sourced: 9.5.07

Miriam Dixson and Anne Summers have demonstrated the early colonial gender imbalance and misogyny that rendered women comparatively invisible and silent in the written record of early Australian history, factors which remain residual in our contemporary society.^{24 25} Historians must seek ways of overcoming the scarcity of historical documents relating to women, and my thesis, by using musical documents as evidence, is in part a response to this necessity. Adelaide scholar Philip Butterss investigated ballads as social history documents in his 1989 PhD Thesis *Australian Ballads: The Social Function of British and Irish Transportation Broadsides, Popular Convict Verse and Goldfield Songs*.²⁶ In Chapter 11, “Gender and Race”, he proposes that mid-nineteenth century songs of the goldfields voiced the male concern that women were “an object of desire; but they were also a source of fear...often presented as untrustworthy and predatory.”²⁷ This opinion is supported by the research of Summers and Dixson and is an indication of the general attitude of men towards women in Australia before the gender imbalance equalized. Arguably, vestiges of this attitude remain and have contributed to the relative obscurity of Australian women’s folk music in the public image promoted by the Australian Government’s ‘cultural portal’ and similar institutions.

The relevance of published broadsides to the lives of the people who bought or learned them and the value of these documents as historical documents has been the concern of independent scholar Hugh Anderson for over 50 years. In a conversation I had with him early in my research he expressed his regret that I would find little women’s music in published sources like the broadsides.²⁸ However, his books have been a particularly helpful resource for identifying songs describing the plight of

²⁴ Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda*, Penguin, *Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1994; and Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, Penguin, Camberwell, 2002.

²⁵ It is only now, in 2008, that for the first time Australia has a woman, Julia Gillard, as Deputy Prime Minister. Eva Cox, of the Women’s Electoral Lobby, said: “I think women who want to change the face of Australia are going to be more hopeful because having a woman at that senior level is going to be a good indicator of change.” *The Peninsula Online Newspaper*, 26.11.07: http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=World_News&month=November2007&file=World_News2007112624218.xml

²⁶ Philip Butterss, *Australian Ballads: The Social Function of British and Irish Transportation Broadsides, Popular Convict Verse and Goldfield Songs*, PhD Thesis, Submitted at the University of Sydney, 1989.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.254.

²⁸ Personal conversation with Edgar Waters and Hugh Anderson, National Library of Australia, 2002. See Ch.2 p.62. for references to Anderson’s research.

many different kinds of women: sentenced convicts, anguished lovers, faithful lovers, victims of crime, daughters leaving families, mothers leaving children and so on. The anonymity of the broadside authors and their unknown sex have not devalued the information about women in the ballad narratives.

Musicology offers an analytical tool for uncovering forgotten aspects of women's lives. Examining women's musical repertoires, analysis of the environmental sounds in the background of field recordings and the linking of particular songs with diary entries shines new light on the Australian women in history's shadows. Folk song provides an important record of Australian cultural history. Analysis of folk music is critical to "the reapplication of memory and the creation and re-creation of the emotional qualities of experience" which provides a more comprehensive understanding of the past.²⁹ Comparative analysis of published items and field recordings allows the researcher to balance the misogynistic views expressed in the following ditty, published in the *Sydney Gazette* of 17th July 1832: —

I will sing you a song of a settler bold,
Who lived at Botany Bay,
And who married a lady as I have been told
From the Fleet or the Marshalsea,
And who lived as long and as happy a life,
As a man can do with a ***** wife.³⁰

— with the contrasting tale of feminine bravery heard in Catherine Peatey's field recording of the traditional ballad *The Female Rambling Sailor*:³¹

With jacket blue and trousers white,
Just like a sailor neat and tight
For the sea it was the heart's delight
Of the female rambling sailor.

²⁹ David P. Coplan, 'Ethnomusicology and the Meaning of Tradition', in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, edited by Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, Daniel M. Neuman, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, c1993, p.45.

³⁰ Quoted in Douglas Stewart & Nancy Keesing, (Eds.) *Old Bush Songs and Rhymes of Colonial Times*, Angus & Robertson, 1976, p.22.

³¹ Catherine Peatey recorded by Norm O'Connor and Bob Michell, 1959, NLA TRC 2539/16.

When in storm upon the raging sea
She was ready at her station,
And her mind was as calm as calm could be
She loved her occupation.

Somewhat surprisingly, women commentators were sometimes instrumental in perpetuating the masculine identity of Australian folk music. In her Preface to *Old Bush Songs*, published in 1957, Nancy Keesing embraced Stephens's definition of folk songs as a purely masculine genre without reservation:

the first thing that the typical bushman does with a piece of verse is to set it to some tune slumbering in his brain, and drone it through his nose for the benefit of listening mates or gum trees...

She reproduces Stephen's romanticised vision without questioning the whereabouts of women in his view of rural Australia:

the typical bushman is ...the Bush-grown, Bush-rooted product, the nomad tethered in the limits of the cattle track, the shepherd stagnant among outstation sheep, or the man hidden all his days among the gullies and the ranges, in a world bounded on the one side by the remote township, on the other by the great Australian silence....³²

Further into the Preface, Keesing discusses the difficulty of defining folk song, concluding, "certainly no item could be remotely considered which lacked the unmistakable qualities of simplicity of form, the pace and the pulse of life being lived, and a certain constant attribute of singable enjoyment."³³ Certainly men were not alone in creating this kind of music. In Stewart and Keesing's book, in most published anthologies of Australian folk song,³⁴ and in the majority of commercial recordings of Australian folk song from the 1950s up to the 1970s,³⁵ songs describing the emotional and physical concerns of women, or acknowledging women as 'performers' or

³² A.G. Stephens, *The Bulletin*, 1901, in Douglas Stewart & Nancy Keesing, *Old Bush Songs*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981, p.viii.

³³ Nancy Keesing, *Ibid.*, p.xi.

³⁴ Keith McKenry *Origins of the Australian Folk Revival*, Mark Gregory's *Folkstream* Web Site: <http://folkstream.com/reviews/revival/origin.html>; <http://folkstream.com/songbooks.html>; and Edgar Waters, Doctoral Thesis, ANU, 1962, Bibliography.

³⁵ Australian Folk Songs Discography, http://folkstream.com/data/AFS_A-L.pdf, Mark Gregory, *Ibid.*

custodians of folk music since European settlement, are strangely absent.³⁶ The commercialisation and marketing of Australian folk music that flourished with the folk revival promoted a masculine image at the expense of the reality of a tradition where women had an equal, if less public, voice.

Chris Sullivan's published master's thesis: *Castles in the Air: Ideology, Myth and the Australian Folk Revival*, has been the primary work to challenge and criticise the motives of the notable collectors and folklorists of the Australian revival collectors.³⁷ His research describes the Australian folk scene at that time as heavily influenced by intersecting forces of communism and anti-Americanism blended with hero worship for American folklorists such as Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax and the English authority, A.L. Lloyd. Indeed, some Australian scholars and collectors looked to these figures to provide a model of how to go about preserving what they saw as the vanishing oral record of Australia's true cultural identity. It is arguable that folklore collectors of the time became too intent upon locating folk music that conformed to established models from other cultures so that they failed to recognize the value of the folk music of Australian women and many other cultural groups. This is an issue raised by Jill Stubington in her entry in the *Oxford Companion*, 'Folk Music in Australia: the debate', when she writes: "It seems clear that the only songs published by the collectors were those which fitted their expectations".³⁸ Lack of field notes describing a context of how the material was performed and what questions were asked, the sequence of how the items were remembered, and details about the lineage of each song hampers the usefulness of the early field recordings as ethnomusicological documents. Stubington makes interesting distinctions between traditional musicians and revival singers. The traditional musician is one "who has learnt musical skills and material from older musicians orally and by virtue of a particular kind of social connection with them."³⁹ A revival singer, "is one who has learnt skills from a variety

³⁶ "The collected repertoire shows a distinct lack of songs which refer to women's experiences...", Jill Stubington in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, Edited by Gwenda Beed Davey and Graham Seal, Melbourne, OUP, 1993, p.141.

³⁷ He is one of the most prolific collectors of Australian folk music, with 734 recordings listed in the NLA catalogue, representing 348 hours of recorded sound. The work is a detailed account of the days of the early folk revival in Australia.

³⁸ Jill Stubington, *Ibid.*, p.132.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132 and p.139.

of sources outside his or her own immediate family and social setting.”⁴⁰ I suggest that these distinctions are not as neat as this analysis implies; Sally Sloane is an outstanding example of a traditional singer who learned her music from many sources, but has thoroughly absorbed the material into her repertoire.

In the course of this dissertation I will demonstrate how the subject of each case study regards the idea of tradition and how this belief system affected the way in which the singer learned and performed their music. Tradition and revival are perhaps more interconnected than Stubington’s definition implies. She also remarks that Australian twentieth century folk songs are more political and satirical, relating to issues rather than emotions, and “there are not many love songs”⁴¹. By analysing a set of case studies spanning a period from 1840 to the present, I demonstrate that Australian women’s folk music has developed a branch of new music which is able to voice the “disembodied emotions” Stubington has identified as missing from the subject matter of the continuing Australian folk music canon.⁴² Performer Cathie O’Sullivan has incorporated her knowledge of Australian women musicians prior to 1950 to compose new music related to the tradition.

The fact that the National Library is the major funding body for folk music collection and has been since the early 1980s has also meant that its collecting strategies have provided a model for determining what is folk or traditional music and what is not. The collection began through the deposit of John Meredith’s early field recordings in the Manuscript collection of the NLA. Meredith’s recordings formed the basis of the publications: *Folk songs of Australia and the Men and Women who Sang Them, Volume One*⁴³ and *Volume Two*.⁴⁴

Acquisition of the early recordings in the John Meredith (1920-2001) collection of folklore and folk music was undertaken on the recommendation of Russel Ward to the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jill Stubington, Ibid., p.141

⁴² Jill Stubington, “Folk music in Australia: the Debate.” Op.cit.

⁴³ John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, Ibid.

⁴⁴ John Meredith, with Roger Covell and Patricia Brown, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, N.S.W. 1987.

then Director General, Harold White, in 1966.⁴⁵ Russel Ward had collected colonial and bush ballads as part of the research for *The Australian Legend*, acknowledging “three old folksingers, Mrs Mary Byrnes, Mr Joseph Cashmere and the late Mr John Henry Lee”⁴⁶ in the Foreword. Meredith began collecting in the 1950s when Hilda Lane (conductor of the People’s Choir in which Meredith sang) introduced him to Jack Hoopiron Lee, an old Shearer who sang bush songs.⁴⁷ Lane’s action in handing over the job of interviewing to Meredith is typical of the facilitating role women often assumed in the folk revival. Meredith was inspired by his meeting with Lee: “As a result of meeting him and hearing him sing I bought a tape recorder and began searching out old performers.” What happened next marked the transition of field recordings into the hands of musicians outside the family lineage of the informant and into the incarnation of the bush band playing folk music for public entertainment and financial reward.

It was about this time that I had the idea of forming a small ensemble to sing the songs I had collected. Brian Loughlin and Jack Barrie readily agreed to be in such a group and we went into rehearsal. I played the bush accordion... Brian the lagerphone... and Jack the bush bass, a one stringed, tea chest affair which had been described to me by one of my work mates. We gave our first performance, more or less as a joke, dressed up in false whiskers and nineteenth century clothes. It was a roaring success...⁴⁸

It was also the beginning of blurring the invented revival bush band with the music collected in the field recordings. Both the lagerphone and bush bass as traditional Australian instruments are inventions of the 1950s revival, and were not used by musicians recorded in Meredith’s field tapes.⁴⁹ The all-male *Bushwhackers*, in their performance style and their repertoire, created a musical model that became synonymous with the broad definition of Australian folk music.

⁴⁵ Papers of John Meredith, NLA MS 1007 Box 1.

⁴⁶ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1958.

⁴⁷ John Manifold published material collected by Hilda Lane in Queensland. See Chapter Two, p.1.

⁴⁸ John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women who Sang Them*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1979, p.17.

⁴⁹ “The Lagerphone as such originated in its modern form from a 1950’s country talent quest and concert.” http://www.wongawillicolonialdance.org.au/ausfolk_articles/bush_percussion.htm The tea-chest bass was derived from ships’ ‘foo foo bands’. Graham Seal personal communication, April 2008.

Meredith was concerned primarily with recording the old songs and melodies in the memories of the musicians he interviewed before the music of this generation died with them. Because of financial constraints he did not leave the tape recorder running when conducting an interviewing session and as a result there is very little information noted about the context for how items were learned and remembered by his interviewees. The questions of how transmission operated in Australia and how it interacted with the meaning of tradition in a colonial context were matters investigated by the academic, Edgar Waters. Transmission relating to cross fertilization of popular songs and folk music is a fundamental concern in Waters's doctoral dissertation,⁵⁰ *Some Aspects of Australian Popular Arts, 1850-1915*, written in 1962. The thesis described how songs of the urban popular stage were heard by rural workers who travelled back into the bush, where they introduced the remembered versions of the songs into the oral tradition. Waters's work also emphasised the importance of the songs composed by Duke Tritton to the evolution of Australian folk music. John Meredith had initially wanted to collect songs that were absorbed into the Australian tradition to the extent that the composer was no longer known. However, he later conceded, as Waters also contended, that Tritton's songs, particularly *Shearing in the Bar*, were fine examples of a developing, living tradition.⁵¹ I would apply the same argument to songs sung and composed by Australian women, notably, Helen Palmer and Doreen Bridges's song *The Ballad of 1891*,⁵² which is perhaps even more widely known as an Australian folk song than *Shearing in the Bar*. Waters's activities as a partner with Peter Hamilton in the Wattle Record Company⁵³ introduced him to the music of singers such as Catherine Peatey and Sally Sloane. His notes for the Wattle Recordings discuss the sources of their songs and characteristics of their vocal style, providing the foundation of my research in regard to the way in which these singers used their music. Waters's entry on Folk Song in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore* suggests that a narrow definition of folk song, e.g. arguing how much or how little oral transmission is involved in the evolution of a song, is counterproductive:

⁵⁰ Held in the NLA as one microfilm reel: NLA Mfm G24618.

⁵¹ See Mark Gregory's Web Site for Union Songs: <http://unionsong.com/u007.html>

⁵² Ibid., <http://unionsong.com/u114.html>

⁵³ The Wattle Record Company was established in 1955; its first record was *The Drover's Dream* recorded by The Bushwackers. The company recorded and published Traditional Australian singers and musicians as well as contemporary folk revival musicians.

It might seem then that the folk song collector might be well advised to record any song which shows signs of having been transmitted orally; to publish most of the material collected; and leave each folksong scholar to select for study those songs which met his or her definition of folk song.⁵⁴

This advice has underpinned my inquiry into the way in which each singer's perception of tradition has influenced the operation of transmission in her particular repertoire.

An investigation of improvisation linked to musical transmission is the theme of *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970*, by John Whiteoak.⁵⁵ He demonstrates the connection between all branches of "the 'unwritten music' of Australia's past...the 'folk musics', popular musics and art musics that drew vitality and character from musical alteration, embellishment and creation in performance."⁵⁶

Whiteoak maintains that "While improvisation is influenced by social context, it is also social gesture" underlining the capacity of a musician's style to tell us much about their use of performance to communicate meanings beyond the purely musical. This view is particularly relevant to my investigation of Georgiana McCrae's use of improvisation and variation in folk music transplanted in Australia from the Scotland. The idea of improvisation as social gesture also informs my investigation of how the women in my case studies used their music in the course of their daily lives; how bush songs are used as lullabies or domestic work songs, and how ballads or nationalistic folk songs from the British Isles are used as consolation and a means of making sense of emotion, relationships and memory in particular Australian environments.

The nature of transmission as a function of the individual's belief in tradition is the critical determinant in the definition of Australian folk music. Analysis of the field recordings and music manuscripts of women musicians demonstrates "how music establishes the cultural ground of emotional communication that guides the realization

⁵⁴ Edgar Waters, "Folk Song" entry in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, Edited by Gwenda Beed Davey and Graham Seal, OUP, Melbourne, 1993, p.153.

⁵⁵ John Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970*, Currency Press, Strawberry Hills, 1999.

⁵⁶ John Whiteoak, *Ibid.*, p. xi.

of tradition in performance.”⁵⁷ Whereas Hobsbawm and Ranger define tradition as distinct from custom in terms of the differing focus of consciousness, I prefer Australian collector and scholar, Barry McDonald’s definition of tradition for its acknowledgement of the importance of “spiritual/emotional power” in relationship systems.⁵⁸ He defines tradition as:

- a) A shared repeatable activity or complex of activities....
- and b) the activation of a certain spiritual/emotional power in the relationship-network of those involved in the collaboration. This power is produced by, and in its turn, generates the conscious desire for the activity, its objects (for example, particular songs, styles or stories), and the relationship network itself to persist—just as they had in the past, so on into the future.⁵⁹

McDonald’s later scholarship concerning tradition has been crucial in my analysis of the influences informing the choice of music the women in my case studies made to include in their repertoire. In particular, his articles *The Idea of Tradition Examined in the Light of Two Australian Studies*⁶⁰, as quoted above, *Tradition as a Personal Relationship*,⁶¹ and the later discussion of his ideas in David Atkinson’s article *Revival: Genuine or Spurious?*,⁶² provide the platform for my discussion of how and why Australian women learned and performed the songs they chose. For example, Sally Sloane’s extended network of informants beyond her immediate family demonstrates the operation of the oral tradition in the model McDonald describes, but more importantly, her participation in the operation of tradition is demonstrated in her choices of particular songs. To explore this proposal, I have implemented Philip Bohlman’s model of folk song analysis described below:

⁵⁷ David P. Coplan, ‘The Meaning of Tradition’, in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, University of Illinois Press, 1993, p.45.

⁵⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. (Eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.251 also referred to in Coplan, *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Barry McDonald, *The Yearbook of Traditional Music*, Vol. 28, 1996, pp.106-130., p 116

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, 1996, pp.106-130. McDonald’s investigation of tradition has evolved throughout his academic career. Completed in 2001, Barry McDonald’s PhD thesis contains extensive definitional discussion concerning tradition, in particular, the distinction between ear players and note players. It is entitled: “*You can dig all you like, you’ll never find Aboriginal culture there*”: *relational aspects of the history of the Aboriginal music of New England, New South Wales, 1830-1930*.⁶⁰ The focus of the thesis is the identification of a regional folk music with its roots in aboriginal culture, and discussion with women informants relates specifically to this.

⁶¹ *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 110, Vol. 435, pp. 47-67.

⁶² In Folk Song, “Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation”, edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson, The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004, pp. 144-162.

How does the folk musician learn a particular song? From whom? What personal stories relate to the musician's concept of the song? Was this performance an appropriate context for the song? What is the range of appropriate contexts? Does this version replicate others, or are there innovative elements? Would it be appropriate to add to or alter the piece? To compose a new song in its stead? The answers to such questions contribute to a more complete understanding of tradition, not simply a justification of tradition. They place the folk musician at the centre of tradition and insist that only through the analysis of performance can a broad understanding of tradition be reached.⁶³

My thesis answers Bohlman's questions in the five case studies I have undertaken, using musical analysis in relation to the singer's biography and by learning selected songs from the repertoires myself. I also address Graham Dodsworth's proposition that "Songs passed on via oral transmission will by their very nature gradually shed the authenticity of their original context." I will argue that authenticity has more to do with the relationship networks based on the individual's perception of tradition than the environmental features of a bygone era.⁶⁴ Individual musicians are my focus in relation to movements like the folk revival and folk festivals, and I do not intend to adopt the approach Graeme Smith has taken, "To describe and interpret a musical scene", by taking a broad view across two complex genres, folk and country music,⁶⁵ or Kim Poole's "ethnography of the performance event"⁶⁶ as experienced at contemporary Australian folk festivals.

Interconnectivity underlies the role of women as invisible, unacknowledged musicians in the academic study of Australian folk music to date. There are strong resonances in the observations made by Ruth Finnegan in her book, *The Hidden Musicians: Music*

⁶³ Phillip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 1988, p. 73.

⁶⁴ Graham Dodsworth, *The Nature of Folk Song in Australia: Origins and Transmission*, Masters Thesis submitted at Monash University, December 2000

⁶⁵ Graeme Smith, *Singing Australian, A History of Folk and Country Music*, Pluto Press, North Melbourne, 2005.

⁶⁶ Kim Poole, *Ideology and Praxis: An ethnomusicological study of the Australian folk music revival subculture, 1990-1996*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of NSW, 2002. p. iii

Making in an English Town.⁶⁷ Finnegan uses case studies to uncover the “invisible but organised system”⁶⁸ through which individuals make music, and emphasises the interconnectivity of different musics: “Once one starts thinking ...about what people actually do - about ‘is’ not ‘ought’ - then it becomes evident that there are in fact several musics, not just one, and that no one of them is self-evidently superior to the others.” Similarly, when one examines the music made by women as part of their everyday lives in Australia, boundaries between genres are often blurred and the way in which music is used is the best indication of how it should be classified. It is a mistake to look for patterns of transmission and performance practice methods that mirror those found in Europe or the British Isles. My case studies provided the accurate picture of how Australian women’s folk music has evolved.

Definitions

My thesis focuses on the lives and repertoires, both song and dance music, of selected Australian women musicians, to establish how their folk music was learned, collected and generated by them. This focus has necessitated a reassessment of the adequacy of received definitions of the terms ‘Australian’, ‘tradition’, ‘traditional music’, ‘folk’ and ‘performance’ in order to ascertain whether the material might be admitted as Australian folk music.

The distinctions, ‘Australian’, ‘traditional’ and ‘folk’, are highly problematic, given the apparently English, Irish, Scottish, American, German and numerous other origins of much of the material and the ready availability of firstly written, and later recorded, music. While I acknowledge the cultural diversity of Australia from its earliest days of settlement,⁶⁹ for the purposes of this study I have limited my research to an analysis of the Anglophone culture and how women’s folk music functioned within the power structures established as part of the British colonisation of Australia.

The concept of Australia as a frontier society is fundamental to my exploration of how folk music functioned for the women in my case studies who came here and those

⁶⁷ Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

⁶⁸ Ruth Finnegan, *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁶⁹ See Jill Stubington, “Folk music in Australia: the debate”, *Op.cit.*, p. 142.

who were born here. The Australian frontier exists on three levels: firstly, as a colonial outpost of the British Empire; secondly, as a settlement on the frontier of the nineteenth century with its transforming commitment to industrialization and mass-produced culture in the form of books, printed and recorded music and musical instruments; and thirdly, the Australian frontier of settlement in a country with established indigenous cultures. Isolation, scarce material resources, poor medical assistance, constant physical danger, and a predominance of men over women were the realities of early settlement. In September 1833, in the colony of NSW, out of a total population of 60,861, 44,668 were males and 16,173 were females, a disproportion approaching three to one.⁷⁰ This ratio altered very gradually.

To define the parameters of Australian folk music, I have examined music outside the Western art music performance tradition that has been used for entertainment, consolation and comfort by the six women in my case studies and other women musicians related to this analysis. The musical examples contain elements of oral transmission recognized as variation or new arrangement of a written source. I also include analysis of notated versions of folk music to explore connections with oral variants and to study the performance practice of the women who played or sang from written music, either published scores or hand-written copies. Australia's history is one of relatively rapid social and economic change since European settlement in 1788. Thus folk music in Australia encompassed, and still encompasses, interweaving written and oral traditions, nationalistic anthologies such as *Moore's Irish Melodies*⁷¹ and personal hand-copied collections with many influences from popular culture.

It is important to define the term 'performance' with regard to women's role in Australian folk music. In contrast with Stubington and Poole,⁷² I would argue that those who perform folk music at folk festivals and folk clubs as part of a professional performing circuit, and those who make folk music as part of domestic or community life, represent different categories of folk musicians. 'Performance' as music played within the family or for a group of like-minded people, who are often participants, is

⁷⁰ J.W.C. Cumes, *Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid, Leisure Times in Early Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne 1979, p. 215. There were, of course, many more aboriginal residents who were never accounted for in these figures.

⁷¹ Thomas Moore and John Stevenson, *Irish melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson ; and Characteristic Words by Thomas Moore*, James Duffy, Dublin , [19--]

⁷² Kim Poole, *Ideology and Praxis: An ethnomusicological study of the Australian folk music revival subculture, 1990-1996*, Op.cit.

very different to performance of music or song for a paying audience of people who are largely unknown to the performer. As audiences attending folk concerts increase in size, performers are no longer connected with the listeners through the personal ties of a small community. However, most of the audience will be strongly connected with much of the repertoire because of their own knowledge and involvement with commercial recordings of the music.

One of the strongest and most consistent features of folk music performance in Australia is the belief “that music is a form of expression which should be available, not just to a highly trained group of specialist musicians, but to the whole community.”⁷³ The emphasis is on inclusiveness, as opposed to the exclusiveness of the Western art music performance tradition.

For a contemporary musician, folk music performance offers the opportunity for exploring a familiar repertoire of songs and tunes learned from the playing of other musicians (either through live interaction or from listening to recordings), and placing a personal signature on the pieces through ornamentation, variation and arrangement. The definition of Australian folk music is perpetually under discussion by folklorists, folk musicians, musicologists and historians. For most commentators, the definition of Australian folk music is inextricably bound to the definition of Australian cultural identity, or a national character. The need to classify the Australian national character and identify a distinctive Australian music was driven initially by nineteenth century journalists and writers committed to using the printed word to establish the Australian tradition in literate consciousness: “most of the old bush songs ... are our earliest national literary expression...”⁷⁴.

Examining editions of the mid-nineteenth century periodical publication, *The Melbourne Vocalist*,⁷⁵ there are examples of the emerging bush songs interleaved with material such as *The Red Cross Knight*, *Let Us Be Happy Together*, *My Canoe is on the Ohio*, *The Death of Nelson*, *Home, Sweet Home*, *Land Ho* and *The Merry Zingara*. *Arrival in Melbourne* is published without a notated melody, assuming that the purchaser would be familiar with the tune from witnessing a performance of the song

⁷³ Jill Stubington, in Gwenda Beed Davey, and Graham Seal, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, Melbourne., OUP, 1993.

⁷⁴ Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing, Preface to *Old Bush Songs*, Sydney, A&R, 1981 (1957)

⁷⁵ Published by Williams, Melbourne, 1855-1857?

at the theatre, or that the metre of the words would be easily adaptable to a commonly known popular or folk melody.

Emigrant's Song No.3 *Arrival in Melbourne*

I'd be a gold-digger, (who wouldn't be?)
Living on damper, mutton and tea;
Or, (if my appetite I wish to pamper)
Changing my fare to mutton, tea, and damper....
I'd be a gold-digger, free from the thrall
Which fashion in cities imposes on all;

Where no "swell" will meet me with quizzical glance,
Though my beard is untrimmed, or cut "a la jeune France."
Where a "cove" feels at home in a "jumper" or "Guernsey,"
And in boots without blacking may walk like a swell,
Without any fear that, wherever he turns, he
Will get the "cold shudder" from some "nobby" pal.⁷⁶

This song encapsulates the emerging myths of 'the lucky country'; where masculine freedom, fortune hunting, a healthy disregard for authority, and dislike of snobbery are character traits. Damper, mutton and tea are Australian bush fare and a distinctive dialect of the predominantly masculine Australian "society" has already evolved. From early discussions in the *Bulletin* in the 1890s and Banjo Paterson's collection of contributions for his publication *Old Bush Songs*, in 1905,⁷⁷ the necessity to display the distinctive voice of the pioneering Australian people was seen as imperative by the urban literary class and proprietors of the popular press. No-one at the time recorded whether or not the "folk" who contributed their old bush songs to Paterson and succeeding editors sang anything else as part of their musical life, because this was not part of Paterson's aim. It is not known which of the many contributions to his

⁷⁶ *The Melbourne Vocalist*, Double Number, No. 6 1857, Melbourne, W..H.Williams, p. 83.

⁷⁷ Paterson, A.B. *Old Bush Songs: Composed and Sung in the Bushranging, Digging and Overlanding Days*, Australia, Cornstalk Publishing. Company, 1926.

publication Paterson discarded because they did not fit the bush definition he was trying to represent.⁷⁸ As Jill Stubington writes: “Much of the debate (about the definition of folk music) centres on what folk music ought to be, and therefore involves the values and attitudes of the contributors as much as the results of empirical investigation.”⁷⁹ The preoccupation with old bush songs disguised and still disguises the deeper nature of the music made by the Australian folk as it is represented in publications of Australian folk music.

Indeed, old bush songs are “one of the true and traditional constituents of a genuine Australian mythology...the product of a genuine pioneering background”,⁸⁰ but they are not the only expression of Australian folk music. They are only representative of the music made by a portion of resident Australians who sought to communicate, in music, one set of ideals. In the light of the evidence of the field recordings of the 1950s, they are only a part of the complete repertoire of Australian Anglophone folk musicians, male and female.

Because Australia’s colonization by white Europeans began in the late eighteenth century, the impact of published sources on the evolution of our folk music is undeniable. I agree with Coplan that ‘tradition represents the immanence of the past in the present, linking modes of musical communication to the forces that have shaped them, and revealing the intervention of expressive culture in popular consciousness’.⁸¹ I propose that published versions of folk song represent as valid a form of musical communication as oral versions when considered in the context of musicians making music within the framework of their community, outside the elite performance venues of Western art music.

Bohlman amplifies this discussion about the relationship of oral and written traditions to the nature of folk music:

In effect, oral tradition extends backward in time beyond the point of recollection,

⁷⁸ For further discussion of Paterson’s selection criteria, see Fahey, Warren & Seal, Graham, *Centennial Edition of Old Bush Songs*, Sydney, ABC, 2005.

⁷⁹ Jill Stubington, ‘Folk music in Australia: the debate’, *Op.cit.*, p.133.

⁸⁰ Douglas Stewart and Nancy Keesing (Editors), *Op.cit.*, pp. xviii - xiv.

⁸¹ In Blum, Bohlman & Neuman (Editors), *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1991 p. 47.

whereas written tradition arrests and redirects the flow of transmission by specifying the vehicles for individual actions. Considered together in dialectical relation, however, oral and written traditions suggest that the possibilities for folk music's origins are virtually limitless... Literary representation of music serves as a link between the musical activities in many other social settings and the oral tradition of folk music.⁸²

Whether the sources are literary or oral, "the activation of a certain spiritual/emotional power in the relationship network of those involved in the collaboration" underpins the transmission of traditional material performed for non-commercial purposes.⁸³ Looking at the repertoires of the musicians represented in the field recordings held in the National Library, it is clear that the music they sing and play is drawn from, or influenced by, travelling minstrel shows, popular theatre songs, songs printed in magazines, religious songs and hymns, music hall items, radio jingles, ballads found in published sources, political and protest songs as well as those songs and tunes passed down through the generations: songs that may, at an earlier time, have been influenced by a written source in some way. These songs may or may not have been written down by those who knew them, but most importantly, they were the property of people who used them for their own entertainment, comfort or to make the routine of daily work more pleasant, and not sung for commercial gain. When Paterson printed the songs, he printed only words without musical notation, creating a rift between the musical life of the living folk song and the archival value of the written text.

Old bush songs and the archetype of the Australian masculine rural/bush worker provided the basis for the Folk Revival of the 1950s in Australia, perpetuating the nationalistic quest initiated in Paterson's publication. Australian folk music, in the big picture, has always been an amalgam of different genres and different generations of performers. Case studies of selected musicians reveal the subtleties of variation that occur in the process of transmission. The key to defining Australian folk music lies in the substantial body of music that has remained the cultural property of people who have sung and played it for their own enjoyment or consolation without manipulation

⁸² Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 12 & p. 29.

⁸³ Barry McDonald, 'The Idea of Tradition examined in the Light of Two Australian Musical Studies', *ICTM Yearbook for Traditional Music*, No. 28 (1996) p. 106.

by commercial interests or entrepreneurs. Often learned from family members, friends or from travelling musicians, this music was either painstakingly hand copied onto music manuscript paper, as in the case of Georgiana McCrae's repertoire,⁸⁴ or preserved in the memory of the musician, with a book of song lyrics as a prompt, as in the cases of Catherine Peatey and Sally Sloane.⁸⁵

The choice of material for early folk song collections such as Vance Palmer and Margaret Sutherland's *Old Australian Bush Ballads*, 1951, was driven by ongoing concern with the question of national identity: "Radical nationalist historians and those involved in the revival of interest in "folk music" since the 1950s have used the songs to construct a version of Australian identity which stresses egalitarian and anti-authoritarian attitudes, a version of Australian identity sometimes bearing little relationship to the earliest social functions of the ballads."⁸⁶ Russel Ward, like many other left-wing cultural activists of the 1950s, when he selected folk songs as source material for *The Australian Legend* (1958), was reacting against the conservative political climate. For him, and many subsequent social historians, the archetypal, mythical Australian was the itinerant, male bush worker, who represented rural freedom from the tyrannies of regimented urban labour and suburban lifestyle. But what of the diversity of Australian characters, indigenous culture, multi-cultural contributions and the social roles of women?⁸⁷ In everyday life pioneers made music out of every available resource and women were always participants in this process. Two passages from Tilly Aston's *Memoirs* illustrate the interaction of oral and written traditions:

Father was a shoemaker, and as he sat at his bench, making and mending for the feet of the community, he would fill my mind with rhymes and tales, and old Gloucestershire songs and tales. He sang well, but not as well as mother, who included in her repertoire quite a list of ancient ballads and folk songs. I did not realize the value of these while she still remembered them, for she sang many, which, as far as I can learn, have never appeared in modern collections. I learned to sing before I could walk...

⁸⁴ See Chapter 3

⁸⁵ See Chapters 5 & 6

⁸⁶ Philip Butters, *Australian Ballads: The Social Function of British and Irish Transportation Broadsides, popular Convict Verse and Goldfield Songs*, Op.cit., p.2.

⁸⁷ John Rickard, "National Character and the 'Typical Australian': An Alternative to Russel Ward", *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol 51, No. 4, 1979: pp.12-13.

...As a family we took our pleasures around the old harmonium, singing revival hymns or songs from the Christy Minstrel books.⁸⁸

The many strands of folk music as a living tradition do not fit neatly into a static definition. Making music to suit an occasion rather than arranging an occasion to suit the music is a description of the distinctive spontaneity of folk music practice.

Theoretical framework

Whilst we are sitting here singing folksongs in our Folksong Club, the folk are somewhere else singing something different.⁸⁹

Davis's comment neatly sums up the paradox inherent in any discussion of folk music. Its sentiments are amplified in Philip Bohlman's book, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, particularly in the Chapter "The Discursive Boundaries of Folk Music".⁹⁰ with his reference to Bauman's proposal:

Contemporary theory asserts that the identity that shapes groups and generates folklore may be both shared and deferential, that is, derived from both core and boundary, similarities and differences."⁹¹

From the earliest days of settlement up to the current operation of folk festivals in Australia, folk music performance has demonstrated Bohlman's claim that "classification stands to establish and articulate the discursive boundaries of folk music."⁹² The variety of Australian women's folk music described in my case studies illustrates this theory.

Activity and context are underpinning principles of my inquiry. The hidden domestic context in which Australian women often made their music influences the blend of

⁸⁸ Tilly Aston, *Memoirs of Tilly Aston, Australia's Blind Poet and Philanthropist*, Hawthorn, Melbourne, 1941, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁹ Tony Davis, quoted in Bill Scott's article, "When is a Folksong?" *Stringy Bark and Greenhide*, Vol. 2. No.1, February 1980, p.17.

⁹⁰ Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Op.cit., pp. 33-51.

⁹¹ Bauman 1972:34 in Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Ibid., p.58

⁹² Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Ibid., p.34

musical styles constituting Australian folk music.⁹³ The principle that music can best be understood by analysing its historical/cultural and traditional context is central to the New Musicology espoused by Lawrence Kramer, Nicholas Cooke, Marcia Citron, Rose Subotnik, Nancy Armstrong, Georgina Boyes, Ruth Solie, Linda Whitesitt and Carol E. Robertson amongst many others.

A fundamental influence on the way in which women were treated in Australian society was the gender imbalance established at settlement of a proportion of three men to one woman. As a result, power structures within Australian society reflected this inequity long after numbers of women had increased proportionately. Carol E Robertson's study, "Power and Gender in the Musical Experiences of Women" provides a relevant theoretical approach to examining the role of women in Australian folk music, particularly the proposal that: "associations of power with gender and music link these phenomena so closely as to provide an ideal forum for the exploration of performance as a universal key to social values and the processes through which gender roles fluctuate between stasis and change."⁹⁴ The operation of this principle is evident in each of the case studies.

The proliferation of commercially printed music coincided with Australia's settlement in the eighteenth century and determined that the process of transculturation moulded the practice of Australian folk music.⁹⁵ In the early colony, folk music, like art music, was influenced by 'transnational corporations in the field of culture, the corresponding technology, and the development of worldwide marketing networks for what can be termed transnationalized culture, or *transculture*'.⁹⁶ In Australian terms, these influences resulted in multicultural immigration, visiting European performance ensembles, establishment of musical publishing houses, sales of sheet music, and increased availability of machine-manufactured musical instruments. What resulted in Australia was de-acculturation of genres, (which were initially modelled on foreign

⁹³ Graeme Smith, "Folklore, Fakelore and Folkloric", in Ron Edwards, ed., *Proceedings of the Third National Folklore Conference*, Australian Folk Trust, Canberra, 1988, also in Philip Butters, *Op.cit.*, p.3

⁹⁴ Carol E Robertson in *Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, (Edited by Leonore Loeb Adler) New York, Praeger, 1991, p. 226.

⁹⁵ Wallis and Malm 1990:176 in Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995, p. 50.

⁹⁶ Garofalo (1992a) in *Popular Music & Society*, *ibid.*, p.42.

ones),⁹⁷ by adapting imported genres to meet the unique requirements of Australian social dance and musical performance. The most distinctive songs that evolved in Australia were those protesting about English domination, dubbed Treason Songs, the ballads glorifying the deeds of bushrangers such as Ben Hall, Ned Kelly and Jack Donahue. As noted by John Manifold in *Who Wrote the Ballads*,⁹⁸ they are distinctive because, for the most part, they dispense with the moralising and sentimentality of the published broadside ballads transplanted from Britain. Dance music reflected absorption of influences from art music and the blending of melodies from different cultural groups.

An appropriate analytical model for new world folk music is found in the American musicologist, Charles Seeger's observation that, "A culture may be understood to be a bundle of traditions; a tradition, a way of doing something that is inherited, cultivated, and transmitted by individuals associated in a society for many generations."⁹⁹ This definition, acknowledging the plurality and diversity of folk culture, is relevant, with qualification, to Australia. In Australia, transmission was more rapid and intense than the 'many generations', but Seeger's model of a folk culture created by interweaving bundles of traditions and interaction of different musical idioms is fitting, given that Australia's white settlement has been strongly multicultural from the start.¹⁰⁰ In adapting Seeger's American model,¹⁰¹ I have renamed his cultural idioms to interpret Australian music idioms as follows:

1. *Folk music and song, mainly oral in transmission*: initially this music was the result of multicultural migration to Australia from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as musical influences from European and Asian countries. While some music was transmitted in the manner of the pure oral tradition, other folk tunes were learned from published sources such as *Moore's Irish Melodies* or remembered from performances and adapted by the hearer. As settlement advanced outward into the

⁹⁷ See Wallis & Malm 1990:176 in in Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society*, Ibid.

⁹⁸ John Manifold, *Who Wrote the Ballads*, Sydney, Australasian Book Society, 1964, p.28.

⁹⁹ Charles Seeger, *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1977, p. 195.

¹⁰⁰ Jill Stubington, Op.cit., p. 142.

¹⁰¹ Seeger's original idioms are: (1) *a folk art, mainly oral in transmission*; (2) *a fine art, mainly written in transmission*; (3) *a popular art, hybrid of the first two, about equally oral and written in transmission.*, in "Music and Class Structure in the United States", *Studies in musicology 1935-1975*, Berkley, University of Columbia Press, p. 223.

bush, home-grown folk music developed as a response to the changed environment and social conditions. European/ indigenous fusions such as blues country and island music reflect this evolution.

2. *Art Music, mainly written in transmission:* amateurs and professionals performed this music. Performances of opera in particular took place in remote and relatively inaccessible areas of the country, which meant that broad sections of the population were able to hear art music. Classical music could be purchased through mail-order services. Some of this music became absorbed into the folk repertoire.

3. *Popular Music, a hybrid of the first two, about equally oral and written in transmission:* Published versions of popular music were available through mail order services and as free supplements in journals. Women would keep hand-written copies of song lyrics, borrowing sheet music from each other to note down the words. Melodies were learned aurally allowing scope for variations to occur. Charles Thatcher's songs of the goldfields and the many popular Songsters and collections like the Melbourne Vocalist are examples of this kind of music. Patriotic, nationalistic military music was popularised by the many brass bands found in country towns and cities throughout Australia. This music helped propagate popular melodies through band performances at community events. Those attending would remember the melodies in association with a special occasion and perhaps recall the tune later and perform it in a domestic context. In fact this is how Christina McPherson provided a version of the tune *Thou Bonnie Woods of Craigielee* to set Banjo Paterson's words to *Waltzing Matilda* to music.¹⁰² She had heard the melody played by the band at the races in 1861 and recalled it three months later at home in Dagworth Northern Queensland.

4. *Religious Music:* As settlement became more established throughout Australia, the church became a focus for community life. Often different churches would reflect the cultural background of the congregation. For example, Presbyterian congregations were largely comprised of Scots. In fact, the stability offered by a thriving Scottish

¹⁰² Jennifer Gall & Robyn Holmes, *Who'll Come A-Waltzing Matilda with Me*, <http://www.nla.gov.au/epubs/waltzingmatilda/1-Origins.html> (accessed 5.2.08) see also Richard McGoffin *Waltzing Matilda*, ABC Sydney, 1987.

Parish with its associated cultural pursuits in the new land was an incentive for Scots to immigrate. An enthusiastic advocate of immigration to Australia reassured potential Scottish immigrants:

In so far as the comforts of social intercourse are concerned, they will find themselves, from the outset, to all intents and purposes, in a Scottish rural Parish. There will be no violent change in their habits of life; the training of the children in the way of their forefathers will be cared for.¹⁰³

Church music was a tremendous influence on domestic music making. Hymns were often played and sung at home to accompany housework as well as in church.¹⁰⁴ Mary Gilmore describes the way in which the traditional family ritual of “beetling” the linen was adapted to conform to the change in religious faith of her grandmother by substituting a hymn for the original song:

Whatever was operated on was first folded as if for putting away, then laid on a block or a bench and hammered, the folds being turned over as the fabric became “kind”. There was a song that went with it. (Being Irish there would be!) But I had to sing a hymn, or say a verse out of the bible to keep the rhythm. But we sang the old Catch “Draw the sheet, Fold the sheet, Turn the linen over,” when we pulled the sheets.¹⁰⁵

Catholic Convents were often the primary source of music education in rural areas. Interestingly, my research has demonstrated that although many of these nuns were Irish immigrants, the music they taught was primarily classical for examination by the Trinity College, London, with arrangements of popular Irish songs and dances taught for Eisteddfods.¹⁰⁶ As a result of English cultural domination, traditional music came to be devalued by Irish immigrants. To ‘succeed’ as teachers, many nuns believed that they had to train classical musicians in the western art music performance tradition. In

¹⁰³ *Glasgow Argus*, 14th August, 1843, in Cliff Cumming, ‘The Celtic Presence: Scots in Port Phillip 1838-51’ *The Australian Celtic Journal*, Vol.3, 1990-1991, p.115.

¹⁰⁴ Musical Heritage of the North Coast Oral History Project: Jennifer Gall, NLA TRC 3294

¹⁰⁵ Mary Gilmore, *Old Days Old Ways*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963, p.56.

¹⁰⁶ Lismore Eisteddfod programmes, Richmond River Historical Society (RRHS): Music Folder.

fact, dedication to teaching and facilitating community art music exists as a distinctive tradition in its own right in Australia.

Musicological and philosophical inquiry

James Porter's Conceptual Performance Model¹⁰⁷ is a unique model for analysing the performance of a singer in terms of the way in which a song or musical item can become an expression of the musician's inner emotional life. The nature of early Australian field recordings does not permit Porter's model to be employed exactly as he developed it. Porter was able to analyse a sequence of recordings of public and private performances to chart and compare Jeannie Robertson's performances over a period of twenty years and a similarly continuous sequence of recordings does not exist in Australian field collections. However, it has been possible to adapt the model to show the relationship between events in women's lives and performance of certain music. The central concept of a singer's identification with the songs in her repertoire is fundamental to my analyses, as it has enabled me to achieve "an understanding of the musical process in formation, from the inside as well as from the outside".¹⁰⁸ The conceptual performance model is an essential tool for comparing the different performances of the same song performed by a singer.

Another dimension of inside knowledge of the musical process is Leslie Shepherd's consideration of the impact of oral transmission on the performance of ballads, which I have tested by including a sound recording of my versions of selected songs from the repertoires of women in my case studies:

Certain tones and inflexions have great antiquity, and the oral tradition is a living unwritten history in itself. It may be assembled from elements of singing style, equally from city street singers, from country folk, even from the chanting of children's nursery rhymes. At one time these tones and inflexions have passed between priest, minstrel and peasant; they have an uncanny power...¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ James Porter, *Jeannie Robertson's My Son David: A Conceptual Performance Model*, in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 89, Jan-March 1976, No 351, pp.7-26.

¹⁰⁸ James Porter *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁰⁹ Leslie Shepherd, *The Broadside Ballad, a Study in Origins and Meaning*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1962, pp. 36-37.

In learning and performing the songs for a recording, I test and document Shepherd's proposition that songs passed down through an oral tradition can function not just as entertainment, but at a deeper psychological level whereby the singer takes her place in a lineage of singers and uses the sense of this position to activate what Coplan described as "the ability of oral genres to reverberate between past and present".¹¹⁰

I have proven Coplan's assertion by learning and singing selected songs sung by the women in my case studies, the symbolic meanings in the songs became clearer through the process of committing the song to memory. Through performing the song and experiencing the way in which the narrative and melody interact and unfold, it is possible to suggest how these songs functioned for women singers in the past. Chapter six contains the discussion of this research. These songs are a record of the relationships between singer and teacher (the original singer), from which women drew strength and consolation by re-activating the bond of the relationship each time the song was sung. As James Porter demonstrated in his analysis of Jeannie Robertson's affinity with the ballad *My Son David*, folk songs like Catherine Peatey's Australian version of *The Female Rambling Sailor* enable a singer to deal with grief and loss arising from their real life experiences through re-enacting the song narrative in performance. Patterns of thematic repetition in the verses prolong the unfolding narrative to reveal the heart of the problem gradually, then continue the established song structure to translate the problem from past to present reality. For example, the slowly unfolding narrative of the 13 verse *Female Rambling Sailor* explains that she went to sea to escape her own grief (verses 1 and 2), excelled as a sailor (verses 3 to 7), falls to her death from the rigging (verse 8) and the last five verses of the song lament her death, concluding with a description of her fame on the river Thames. This last reference returns the singer full circle to the starting point of the narrative: Verse 1 "Come all ye maidens far and near and listen to my ditty, it was near Gravesend there lived a maid, she was both young and pretty."

For the Australian women represented in the field recordings I have studied, musical performance, particularly of traditional material learned aurally, created the time and space in which their own identity, fused with their performance, exists in a unique re-definition of self, challenging the stereotyped perceptions of folk music as a

¹¹⁰ David P. Coplan, Op.cit., p.45.

masculine domain in terms of subject matter and performance practice. This is an idea expressed by Virginia Woolf: "...it cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life, often unknown people by the way, somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past."¹¹¹ In the personal variations of text and the traces of her accents other than the singer's own, the operation of tradition is heard and the listener is aware of the generations chiming in unison, fusing past and present.

Methodology

This dissertation is concerned with comparing the published record with the practical use and survival of Australian folk music as it has been documented in field recordings to prove the active participation of women in the history of Australian folk music. The framework of this thesis supports a multi-dimensional approach to the analysis of the role of women in the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music. My critical analysis of the topic is undertaken as a musicologist, a social historian/folklorist and as an experienced performer of folk music.

My archival research was carried out in the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore Collection, the National Film and Sound Archive, The State Library of Victoria, The State Library of NSW, The Richmond River Historical Society, The Edinburgh School of Scottish Studies, Cecil Sharp House in London, the Finland-Svenska Folkmusikinsitut in Vasa, and the Kansanmusiikki-instituutti (Folk Music Institute) in Kaustinen. This research identified and compared songs from the point of view of different written and orally transmitted versions of songs in Australian field recordings. I was also able to compare the history of folk revivals, and folk in comparison with traditional music in these countries and the effect of nationalism on the evolution of folk music definitions.

Field work incorporated in the dissertation includes: a regional oral history project undertaken in 1995: "Music and Folklore of the Northern Rivers"; interviews, conversations and correspondence with a number of folklorists and folk organisers who have played a significant role in the Australian folk revival; interviews with four

¹¹¹ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, Penguin, London, 1993, p. 210.

generations of the Shaldar's family in Moruya, south eastern NSW and Melbourne to analyse transmission through the female line; visits to the McCrae Homestead on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria and Gordon Castle in Scotland which were both homes to Georgiana McCrae in the 19th century, to investigate the interaction of physical environment on the creation of repertoire.

In the position of musicologist and social historian I comment on the interaction of music and society, repertoire and gender, performance practice and the making of folk music, transmission of folk music within families or communities and the collection of this music by outsiders. As a practitioner and performer of folk music, I have "insider" knowledge of the way in which folk music functions, an understanding of the ways in which folk music acts as communication within communities, and the cyclical reappearance of many of the folk songs and melodies across generations of performers.

By making recordings of my versions of the songs selected from my case studies, I am examining this music as a re-creation of the inner domestic world in which women's music has been and is being 'performed'. This domestic world is authentic as an expression of Australian cultural identity as is the Bush. The act of creating this recording using traditional material in new settings is connected to the way in which Australian women's folk music has been transmitted over previous generations. Folk music often carries powerful associations with the physical environment of a musician's ancestors and/or the memory of how the song was taught through a significant relationship with an older person. However, each generation of musicians express their position in time, in some musical way, varying the original musical item to meet the needs of their environment.

Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter Two, *The Choir Invisible*, provides evidence for early Australian women's music found in diaries, letters and literature, seeking to illuminate the musical lives of these hidden women. It highlights the widespread settlement of women in even the most remote areas of Australia and relates how issues of social class influenced the interaction of traditional, popular, religious and art music performed in Australia as a frontier. For non-indigenous women from all social backgrounds, the piano was widely

used in these remote locations, and deserves acknowledgement as a bush instrument. The evidence demonstrates that the music women made and used as part of their daily routines, both privately and as communication with others, was most frequently a blend of genres that offered the means of strengthening a sense of belonging. Selected field recordings from my regional study of the Northern Rivers, Northern NSW demonstrate the connectivity between different musical genres that has influenced the evolution of Australian women's folk music.

Chapter Three, *Page and Memory: The Interaction of Written and Oral Traditions in the Music Collections of Georgiana McCrae*, explains how particular Scottish melodies and songs in Georgiana McCrae's hand - copied music collections assisted in transplanting certain elements of Scottish folk music into Australian culture. Her music collections were used as a way of easing the transition from life in Scotland to life in Australia; for her own consolation and entertainment, and as a means of creating bonds with her indigenous neighbours and with passing musicians. There is also evidence that Georgiana began to notate songs from the singing of at least one Highland woman prior to leaving Scotland after her marriage. In colonial Victoria, where she made her new life with her husband and their eight children from 1840 on, Georgiana adapted her music making to the colonial class structure. She shared her repertoire with all who passed, especially in the relatively remote homestead at McCrae on the Mornington Peninsula, occupied by the family for four years. Her store of readily recognizable Scottish, and Irish folk songs and melodies, such as *Over the Water to Charlie*¹¹² and the *Cock of the North*,¹¹³ were the basis of her communal repertoire. In addition, her keyboard training equipped her to sight read easily, but more importantly, the Scottish keyboard tradition emphasised the ability to improvise. Many of her hand notations give evidence of this style of music making, with their simple, quite bare harmonisations,¹¹⁴ creating freedom for reinterpretation and variation at each performance, accommodating the skills of participating musicians.

¹¹² Georgiana McCrae, 'The McCrae Homestead Song Book', Mss held at McCrae homestead, Dromana, Victoria, p. 207, see also Rosemary Richard's *Frae the Friends and Land I Love: The McCrae Homestead Music book.*, Self Published, 2005, p.180.

¹¹³ Georgiana McCrae, 'La Trobe Library', Music Book, 1817-1842 State Library of Victoria (SLV) Mss 2519/4

¹¹⁴ In particular, the La Trobe Music Book, SLV: which is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Georgiana's diaries and family papers reveal that her desire to play music socially in Australia led to opportunities for music making of all kinds, be it with Governor Latrobe, or with a "wanderer with a violin".¹¹⁵

In Chapter Four, *Tradition and Personal Identity: Sally Sloane Queen of Singing Folk*, I will contest John Meredith's view of Sally Sloane's significance both to his own collections and in relation to other field collections. In particular I will challenge his analysis (below) of women as the passive partner in musical relationships:

I must say that I have never found that the repertoires of women traditional singers I have recorded differs [sic.] greatly from those of the men. It may be claimed that the men had more opportunity of singing songs in and around their work places and of making up work-songs, but then women, in days gone by, had the same opportunities of singing while doing their house work, and most of them quickly picked up songs about shearing and bushranging from their men-folk.¹¹⁶

Sally Sloane was an exceptional singer, with the most extensive repertoire of any informant recorded by John Meredith¹¹⁷ on his collecting trips from the 1950s to the 1980s. Born in 1894, her repertoire consisted of songs learned from her grandmother via her mother and covered a variety of genres. A comparative analysis of Meredith's field recordings with Warren Fahey's later tapes provides new evidence about Sally Sloane's performance style, how she remembered her music and many previously explanations for the significance of her songs.

Chapter Five, *Tradition and Revival: Mary Jean Officer*, analyses the life of this important and little acknowledged revival collector. Born in 1925, Mary Jean Officer was viewed by her collecting partners, Norm and Pat O'Connor, as part of the Victorian Western District landed gentry. However, her childhood was founded on inherited oral traditions of family folklore based on ancestral experiences of English rural life. Mary Jean Officer initially took on her role as secretary of the Victorian Folklore Society as part of her search for a way to belong in Australia. In the course of her involvement with the Society, she worked with Norm and Pat O'Connor as

¹¹⁵ Francis Octavia Gordon McCrae, *The Piano Story*, Published by George Gordon McCrae, Melbourne, 1962, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Introduction to *The Sally Sloane Songbook: Australian Traditional Singer*, Op.cit., p.4.

¹¹⁷ John Meredith's field recordings are held in the National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collections.

interviewer and scribe to produce some of the finest, most carefully documented interviews of the revival period, forming friendships with notable singers such as Simon McDonald and Catherine Peatey. Like Rose Sayers,¹¹⁸ Officer did not fit the usual profile of the revival collector with left-wing or communist politics, and her work has not received the credit that it deserves, apart from interviews conducted by Edgar Waters in 1991 and 1992.¹¹⁹

Chapter Six, *Sounds in Translation: The Interaction of Archival research and Creativity*, examines how performance of archival material offers greater understanding of how the songs in field recordings could have functioned for the women who sang them. My own recording demonstrates the transition of music from archival sources into a contemporary context. “The Interaction of Authenticity and Creativity”, an interview with Cathie O’Sullivan opens the discussion about the search for Australian women’s folk music behind revival performance stereotypes, and the interaction of archival sources and creativity in new versions of old songs.

In this chapter, I also describe the performance-as-research I conducted in order to conceptualise how selected songs from the women in my case studies might have functioned for them in their daily lives.¹²⁰ My research entailed making sound recordings of a domestic environment and noting the ability of a folk singer to absorb these ambient sounds so that they act as an audio reference system to pitch songs and also assist in the memorising of the narrative. In addition, I analyse the process of how traditional ballads function as a means of releasing inner conflicts and expressing emotions that perhaps were not possible for the original singer to voice in any other way. Far from attempting to cling to the music of the old world and a vanished life,

¹¹⁸ Rose Sayers is the source of several interesting songs she learned from her father at Bullumwaal in Victoria and an interesting description of the Singing game, Green Gravel, remembered from her mother’s descriptions of an English childhood. See NLA TRC5113/1-2

¹¹⁹ NLA TRC 2762. Unfortunately Officer’s health deteriorated too rapidly for this interview to be continued in later sessions.

¹²⁰ Leslie Shepherd quoted on p.6; and John Blacking:

But musicology cannot account for the logic of musical systems without considering the pattern of culture and of social interaction of the music-makers...systems of tonal and rhythmic organization are cultural products, and sound structures are perceived and selected by individuals interacting in social contexts....a musicologist’s legitimate concern for the music in musical activity cannot ignore the fact that, if it is to belong to a tradition at all, even the most original, musical invention will to a greater or lesser extent draw on remembered sounds. (Some ‘Problems of Theory and Method in the Study of Musical Change’, *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 9. 1977 p.8.)

And Ian Russell in his article: ‘Working with Tradition: Towards a Partnership Model of Fieldwork’, *Folklore*, 117, 2006, pp. 15-32.

women used and varied the structure of these songs to process the deep emotional impact of cultural dislocation and isolation from community to adjust to life in Australia. Using and sharing their repertoire with other musicians was the basis of this transition. I use performance-as-research as an integral approach to the study of the original archival material and techniques used in my arrangements of five selected songs found in archival sources. *A Bhanarach dhonn a chruidh* sourced from Georgiana McCrae's manuscripts; *As Sylive was Walking*, from the singing of Mrs Aston, Moonee Ponds; *Green Bushes* sourced from Sally Sloane; *The Female Rambling Sailor*, sourced from Catherine Peatey and *The Stockman's Last Bed*, from the parody written by the Grey sisters. I will explain the principles I have employed to retain the traditional integrity of the music I have recorded as new versions of these folk songs.

In re-defining the tradition of Australian folk music, I seek to make these invisible female partners in the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music visible. The following case studies demonstrate that the folk music practised by women throughout history, and not just the convict ballads and bush songs championed folk revival commentators, has provided "the foundation of Australia's later day folk music."¹²¹

¹²¹ The Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal page for Australian Folk Music: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/music/folk/>

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHOIR INVISIBLE

*O May I join the choir invisible
...To make undying music in the world.*

George Eliot

George Eliot's lines relate well to the history of folk music in Australia wherein women were more concerned with *making* music than in *being seen* to be making music. This chapter provides an overview of the historical and sociological factors contributing to the perceived lack of women's folk music in Australian cultural heritage. It documents and validates the folk music made and performed by Australian women from the earliest days of settlement in preparation for the subsequent case studies of individual musicians. Interviews with four North Coast women are analyzed to describe how women in pioneering families learned and used the music that was part of their everyday lives. This information challenges the masculine ownership of Australian folk music conceptualized in John Manifold's Introduction to *The Penguin Australian Song Book*:

The first white men to settle in Australia were London pickpockets, Irish rick-burners, and poachers from the Midlands, already the inheritors of a long tradition of folk music...But the boys from the country found colonial conditions little harder than those they had left behind, and were prepared to go on singing in their ancestral way.¹

I sometimes wish, in vain, that we could keep up the strict etiquette that was observed by real bush singers. A young man used to learn his songs from the acknowledged singer of the district...²

¹ John Manifold, *The Penguin Australian Songbook*, Ringwood, 1979, p.ix.

² *Ibid.*, p.x.

In his notes, Manifold refers to 18 women as the sources for songs he has printed, but he makes no direct acknowledgement of women's involvement in the performance of Australian folk music in the main text of the songbook. There is no mention of female transports, female immigrants or the music they brought with them. How could the women he acknowledges as sources of songs *not* be part of an Australian folk song tradition and worthy of inclusion in the history quoted above? Manifold's remarks are symptomatic of the blindness to women's role in the performance and transmission of Australian folk music perpetuated in the writings of Ward and others of the revival era. In this and other similar descriptions of Australian women's folk music, the alleged lack of Australian women's folk music in publications is due, firstly, to the assumption that it was men who performed and sang most of the folk music; secondly, to the small number of songs attributed to, or explicitly about women that were noted by collectors; thirdly, the dominance of rural themes overwhelmingly imagined as male—despite the involvement of women in physical rural work; fourthly, the failure to recognise music played in the home, lullabies, work songs and so-called parlour music versions of traditional music often performed by women, and finally, the lack of consideration of how folk music operated in different ways across class boundaries.

The first part of this chapter examines the folk music of early colonial days in Australia by looking at the music practised by a variety of women from different social backgrounds. It explains the evolution of Australian folk music as a more complex process than the stereotypical view of songs composed and shared by male rural workers by investigating settlement as a process achieved by the interaction of men and women pioneers. The second section focuses on a particular region to analyse women's music making in the Northern Rivers district of northern NSW as a reflection of Seeger's model of folk music as "a bundle of traditions...inherited, cultivated and transmitted by individuals associated in a society".³ By referring to early historical documents and interviews in this region, the networks and cultural factors that influence the nature of music become visible.

³ Charles Seeger, *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1977, p. 195.

Women's contributions to folk music performance and transmission in the early days of Australian settlement had two main manifestations. Firstly, Australian women's folk music evolved through use as an integral part of everyday tasks: collaborative music used and shared rather than music performed for financial reward; secondly, pioneering life in Australia engendered relationships where work loads were equal and social boundaries permeable enough to facilitate interaction of the oral and written traditions; viz., bush songs, popular songs and piano arrangements of traditional material. The tasks shared by men and women were commemorated in shared bush songs. Marriages were frequently based on a partnership in which women deferred to men as the public negotiator. Evidence for this is heard in many field recordings in which the woman remains in the background offering word and melody cues to the man who is the primary interviewee. The contribution of women to Australian folk music has been subsumed in the mythology of the bush as a masculine world. As well as preserving music transplanted from Europe, women were partners in the creation of Australian Folk music. Like all partnerships women brought different qualities to their contributions and performed different interpretations of the bush repertoire as well as preserving transplanted music.

The initial European settlement of Australia in 1788 occurred at a time of European social and economic transition from manual to mechanised labour. The industrial revolution encouraged exchange of music between rural and town dwellers as cities drew in more of the rural population every year. Sales of published music scores increased as musical literacy increased with the emergence of the middle class and rising education standards. In the 1838 publication *Music and Friends*, William Gardiner describes how the Strutt family of Derbyshire took great trouble to educate their employees as trained musicians in their time off from factory work.⁴ Such tuition would have assisted merging of published music with the inherited repertoire of the workers. The ability to pick up new melodies easily by ear facilitated movement of printed music into the oral tradition.

⁴ William Gardiner, *Music and Friends*, Vol. I, London, Longman, 1838, pp. 512-13.

Apprentice boys would paste these fugitive leaves [broadsides] in the lids of their clothes-chests, seamen would fasten them in the back of log-books, milkmaids would paper the dairy walls with them, and learn the songs by heart as they churned: and after a while the dairy would be whitewashed and a new set of song-sheets pasted up, and so through the years layer upon layer of song would accumulate.⁵

The circumstances under which convicts and early immigrants came to Australia encouraged songs with themes of banishment from homes and loved ones, and fostered a lingering sense of Europe as the cultural home. By the nineteenth century the absorption of European culture blended with the music made in Australia to meet the needs of the new society:

Australia last century [19th] provided most of its folk with an environment very different from that of rural eighteenth century Britain. It was a very outward looking society, looking still to Europe and always eager to adopt their latest fashions in music and dance and absorb these into local culture.⁶

Archival field recordings of Australian women's folk music reflect this diversity of sources. What emerges from comparative analysis of written and oral evidence is that published music anthologies contained a considerable component of music originating in the oral tradition as well as contemporary songs. The kitchens, horse-rides, verandahs, laundries and dance halls where the music was "performed" to family and community "audiences" assisted women in using the diverse repertoire of material as folk music. Commercial distribution of music encouraged folk music transmission.

Printed broadside ballads⁷ became available commercially in the 16th century,⁸ and the distinction between popular songs and songs learned in an unbroken oral tradition

⁵ A.L. Lloyd in Leslie Shepherd, *The Broadside Ballad, A Study in Origins and Meaning*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1962. pp.5-6.

⁶ Andrews, *Take Your Partners*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1988, p.33.

⁷ Defined in the Bodleian Online Ballad Index: "Broadside ballads were popular songs, sold for a penny or half-penny in the streets of towns and villages around Britain between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries. These songs were performed in taverns, homes, or fairs -- wherever a group of people gathered to discuss the day's events or to tell tales of heroes and villains. As one of the cheapest forms of print available, the broadside ballads are also an important source material for the history of printing and literacy. Lavishly illustrated with woodcuts, they provide a visual treat for the reader and offer a source for the study of popular art in Britain."

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm>

⁸ Roy Palmer, *A Touch on the Times*, Penguin Books, 1974, p.12.

became more blurred. In 1582, Henry Chettle wrote in *Kind Hart's Dream*, of 'a company of idle youths, 'loathing honest labour and dispising [sic] lawfull trades, [who] betake them to a vagrant and vicious life, in every corner of cities and market townes of the realme singing and selling of ballads'." ⁹ The broadside ballad texts remain as a dynamic pool of material, true to the spirit of folk song in their ability to capture the flavour of a broad array of human experiences, often documenting murders and hangings of the moment. The widespread popularity of broadsides, documented in sales figures for the 19th century suggests that literacy was more widespread than official sources acknowledged. Roy Palmer provides the following comparisons of consistent high sales both in rural areas and in the city of London: "A small printer in a small town, Ford of Chesterfield, issued 139 broadsides, some in more than one edition, with a total of 282 titles; Catnach of London is said to have sold as many as two and a half million copies of each of two broadsides, in 1848 and 1849, which dealt with spectacular murders."¹⁰ A degree of partial literacy, combined with oral knowledge of melody or poetic form and ballad structure, enabled a reasonably broad section of the population to purchase and sing broadsides. Ballad sheets were popular because they were produced continuously to document the latest crimes or to cater to the latest generation of broken-hearted lovers or sweethearts reconciled after separation. This spontaneity made them fashionable and desirable for singers competing with their peers to keep their repertoires freshest. Predictable narrative structures and the often-familiar melodies broadsides were sung to make them accessible to a wide audience. The way in which these printed songs were absorbed into the oral repertoire along with older, "purer" songs was a "folk process" continued in Australia:¹¹

Generally the customer did not discriminate between ephemeral pot-poem, stage lyric and folk-song, any more than did the ballad hawker or publisher. Just so, to this day, the village singer will pour out traditional song, music hall song and aspidistra ballad without any finicky concern about categories. From the broadsides, the singers took

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.14.

¹¹ The bushranger ballad, *Bold Jack Donahoe* is a good example of this transition. See John Meredith, *The Donahoe Ballads*, Red Rooster Press, Ascot Vale, c1982.

any song that caught their fancy; and if it wasn't already a folksong, they quite often turned it into one.¹²

A.L. Lloyd concurs, writing,

Some specialists would try to keep the broadside ballads and songs entirely separate from the rest of folk song, and to consider them as a category apart. In fact the two kinds are as mingled as Psyche's seeds, and probably the majority of our 'folk songs proper' appeared on stall leaflets at one time or another, in this version or that.¹³

The published broadsides, many of which were transplanted in Australia, were very different to the eighteenth century European song collections compiled for a genteel audience, like those published in Herder's *Stimmen der Völker* (1778-79) and Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), which represented folk ballads as an unconscious creation, uncontaminated by education and thus supposedly reflecting the pure nature of the collective human mind. Percy's collection of ballads represented the themes of a "simpler" uneducated life rather than being part of the creation of this music. Most importantly, these editions are first and foremost exactly that: a collection of poems, ballads and folk songs that reflect the choice of the editor. They offered the purchaser "a drawing-room glimpse of arcadia."¹⁴ The music publishing industry took advantage of the concept of folk music as a 'social and communal possession' to increase their sales with material that was known to be popular,¹⁵ but 'the folk' were part of this transition from oral to written textual format, as those with money bought the books and continued to perform and vary the published items. Different streams of folk music developed as a result of this publishing attitude, with parlour and school editions of folk songs providing often-superficial renderings of some songs, along with faithful and sympathetic settings of other items. All were brought to Australia. My case studies examine the repertoires of the women who sang and played this music to discover what items actually became part of everyday life.

¹² Leslie Shepherd, *The Broadside Ballad, A Study in Origins and Meaning*, Op.cit., p.1.

¹³ A.L.Lloyd, in *The Broadside Ballad, A Study in Origins and Meaning*, Op.cit., p. 27.

¹⁴ Gordon Gregory, Personal communication, 6.7.07.

¹⁵ Sydney Finkelstein, *Composer and Nation*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1960, p. 18.

Often broadsides drew on existing folk songs for material, and these were often re-absorbed into the oral tradition to re-appear in Australia.¹⁶ Women coming to Australia from all social backgrounds wanted to maintain their attachment to the culture of their birthplaces while seeking to belong to cultural life in the new country. The evidence of how published songs were selected, copied, learned, used and re-circulated in the Australian cultural context tells us about how new identities were invented and maintained. The central importance of music to domestic life is evident in the large volume of written music, either meticulously written with full musical notation, or simply in the form of song lyrics, brought here by women immigrants. When women owned sheet music, it was considered valuable and was used as currency. An advertisement in a woman's journal of the 1870s announced, "Lady will exchange good music for baby's clothes"¹⁷ demonstrating that music had a practical commercial value as well as its aesthetic worth. Industrialisation altered the physical environment that had traditionally fostered folk music, but it also provided the means for folk music to evolve into a more diverse entity by accelerating transmission through publications and increased literacy. Often this involved the intersection of oral and written traditions.

Transmission of folk music across class divisions has always been a two-way process. Music brought to Australia by the governing class amongst the first settlers had already been shaped by the early seventeenth century fashion amongst the European court and gentry of "imitating the songs and dances and games of the common people, in a spirit more or less of burlesque"^{18 19}.

Convict Maids

The written evidence about life on board convict vessels and early colonial cultural life is limited, but the interaction of lower and upper classes is recorded, suggesting

¹⁶ Sally Sloane's *Green Bushes* NLA TRC 4/13-14 and Catherine Peatey's *Female Rambling Sailor* NLA TRC 2539/37 are two examples.

¹⁷ Irene Dancyger, *An Illustrated History of Women's Magazines*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1978, p. 75.

¹⁸ Edgar Waters, *Some Aspects of the Popular Arts in Australia, 1880-1915*, PhD Thesis, ANU, Canberra, 1962, p.8.

¹⁹ The complimentary process by which music of the gentry was taken and used by the lower classes is well illustrated in an anecdote about how Mozart (in Prague for the premier of *Don Giovanni* in 1787), observed a "rustic ball" where he "saw with whole-hearted pleasure how people jumped around with sincere enjoyment to the music of my *Figaro* which had been turned into all kinds of Contres and Teutsche". See Mosco Carner, Max Parish & Co., London, 1948, p.17.

that there were opportunities for musical exchange. Convict women are documented as active participants in the performance of song and dance, with their own style of parody and defiance. Female convict transports were fond of a dance, regardless of shipboard restraints. On the voyage to Australia, Nance Ferrel was imprisoned in a flour barrel with holes cut for her head and arms as punishment for her abusive behaviour. Far from collapsing with the ignominy of her costume, she accepted a pipe from one of her companions and “walked about strutting and smoking the tobacco, and making the others laugh at the droll figure she made; she walked a minuet, her head moving from side to side like a turtle.”²⁰ Writing in 1827, P. Cunningham described the amusements of the convict women in a manner suggesting a bizarre parody of the social life led by the gentry:

They danced several times weekly in the evenings throughout the voyage; kept up singing for an hour or two every night before retiring to bed; and had occasionally regular concerts and masquerades, at which the latter, dressed out in their gayest plumage, or disguised in fantastic habiliments, they would prolong the frolic till bedtime. Some of the passengers in the cabin would now and then go down into the prison to listen to the singers, several of whom possessed sweet and plaintive voices, while the fantastic airs and quavers of others were superlatively ridiculous.²¹

Some of the earliest documented songs of convict women were bawdy and voiced the resilience of the singers in the repressive colonial society. In the *Sydney Gazette* of 1836, Sarah Murphy, newly arrived in Sydney from Ireland appeared before the court charged with soliciting, while standing in the street below the window of a waterman, singing:

I've to the Factory been, my Jack
And Lost a Load of fat,
And wouldn't mind going there again,
For I'm none the worst for that.²²

²⁰ *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*, Edinburgh, 1822, pp. 110-117 in Anderson, Farewell to Judges and Juries, Op.cit., p.155.

²¹ 'Two Years in NSW', London, 1827, pp.261-65 in Anderson, *Farewell to Judges and Juries*, Op.cit., p. 151.

²² Printed in the *Sydney Gazette*, 1836 and cited in J.W.C. Cumes, *Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid: Leisure Times in Early Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1979, p.213.

In 1837, Bet Davis was charged with “being too musical in Essex Street.”²³ Similar songs were in the repertoires of girls prior to transportation to Australia, like Ann Walker, a servant girl, “charged with dipping the head of her master in a bucket of water and marching off singing

If I had a bean for a soldier, who’d go,
Do you think I’d refuse him, O’ no, no, no.”²⁴

These women came to Australia with a tradition of spirited verbal resistance to a political and legal system they could do little to fight physically or financially. Female convicts were well aware that the women who employed them in service often shared their criminal origins, and were thus disinclined to treat them as anything other than equals. As Babette Smith comments, refusal to accept notions of social superiority did not begin “only in the male mateship of the bush; it was undoubtedly also established through the domestic battles between mistress and female servant.”²⁵ This enduring outspoken and bawdy thread is evident in the recent field recordings of the treason, or bushranger songs of Sally Sloane,²⁶ and Lola Wright’s more pungent repertoire such as the song *Ultimo*:

Oh take me back to the shack in the back of Ultimo – I want to go
Right down the track at the back of Ultimo – I want to go
I want to be there with my honey, and she’ll cost me all my money
But she’ll make me a puddin, a dirty big puddin
Down where the breezes blow.

Down in the dell where the girls drink Gilbey’s Gin – to make them thin
Fried fish and chips are the only flowers that grow – in Ultimo
And you can meet my sister Suzie, with a face as bold as brass

²³ J.W.C.Cumes: *Ibid.*, pp.213-214.

²⁴ Babette Smith, *A Cargo of Women: Susannah Watson and the Cargo of The Princess Royal*, University of NSW Pres, Sydney, 1988, p.2.

²⁵ Smith, *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ben Hall, Jack Donahoe, Ned Kelly.

You can eat her Christmas pudding or put it – on the shelf
Down in the shack at the back of Ultimo – I want to go²⁷

Frontier, gender imbalance and the emerging identity of the Australian woman

The frontier I refer to exists on three levels, as discussed in the Introduction. Firstly, Australia was settled where an established indigenous culture existed, as an outpost of the British Empire; secondly, Australia was colonised on the frontier of a new century with its transforming commitment to industrialization and mass-produced culture in the form of books, printed and recorded music and musical instruments; and thirdly, the unique Australian frontier of rural isolation, sparse settlement, scarce material resources, lack of medical assistance, constant physical danger, and most importantly, more men than women. This ratio only altered very gradually and deserves closer examination.

By 1828 only a quarter of the population of 54,700 were females and, still, in 1841, females represented only a third of the population of 183,300. By 1831, there were only 576 European women in NSW: 85% of the convicts and the majority of free immigrants were men. Despite assisted passage schemes designed to boost the number of women between 1832 and 1851, the low percentage (33 ⅓%) of women coming as unassisted immigrants maintained the gender imbalance. In September 1833, in the colony of NSW, out of a total population of 60,861, 44,668 were males and 16,173 were females, a disproportion approaching 3 to 1.²⁸ In comparison with the 57% of women married in England at that time, in NSW in 1871, 77% of Australian women were married,²⁹ a pattern reflected in other colonies, which prompted the middle class Ellen Clacy to write in 1853:

To those of my own sex who desire to emigrate to Australia, I say do so by all means, if you can go under suitable protection, possess good health, are not fastidious or ‘fine lady-like’, can milk cows, churn butter, cook a good damper and mix a pudding.

²⁷ Lola Wright, interviewed by Alan Musgrove, 1996, NLA TRC 5681/5; interviewed by Rob Willis, 2001, NLA TRC 4778/57-58, 2002 NLA TRC 4778/69-70

²⁸ J.W.C. Cumes Op.cit., p.215.

²⁹ James C. Docherty, *Historical Dictionary of Australia*, Franklin Watts Australia, Sydney, 1993, p. 152.

The worst risk you will run is that of getting married, and find yourself treated with twenty times the respect and consideration you may meet with in England.³⁰

It was not until 1861 that the percentage of women in the population of 1.1 million reached 42% and the gender balance slowly equalized.³¹ What is clear from these figures, and from Ellen Clacy's description, is that women immigrants were coming to a male dominated society where the roles expected of them were founded on expected female subservience. Within this power structure, music offered one of the few means available for voicing women's longings, losses, hopes and frustrations, without exposing her particular and private thoughts .

The gender imbalance cannot be ignored in any investigation of Australian cultural evolution, primarily because the legal, religious and cultural foundations of Australian society were constructed to cope with the dynamics of a predominantly male society. To address the problems of this kind of unbalanced society, women were imported to the colony as a commodity, to alleviate the lack of servants, wives and sex workers.³² For the first twenty years of the colony there was little light industry and too few free settlers to need domestic servants so the sentence for women convicts was "transportation plus enforced whoredom."³³ Marriage was the only way of escaping this career, but because the legal system confused marriage with ownership of a servant, such marriages were little more than sanctioned slavery. Viscount Castlereagh wrote in outrage to Governor Macquarie, "It has been represented to me that upon the arrival of female convicts in NSW, the unfortunate females have been given into the possession of such of the inhabitants, free settlers and convicts, indiscriminately, as made a demand for them from the Governor..."³⁴ In a society where men's ownership of women and their property was condoned, music was an intangible possession that could be retained by females in diverse circumstances.

³⁰ Mrs Charles (Ellen) Clacy, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53*, Landsdowne, Melbourne, 1963, p.151.

³¹ James C. Docherty, *Historical Dictionary of Australia*, Op.cit.

³² Miriam Dixon, in *The Real Matilda*, constructs an exhaustive discussion of the long-lasting effect of this treatment of women on our Australian cultural identity. "She examines formative colonial influences of our founding fathers- among them the self-doubting elites, the free poor, the Irish, and convictism as the founding institutions involved in producing an unusually masculinist culture." (1978: back cover précis.)

³³ Ann Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Penguin, Melbourne, 2000, p.316.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

Greater numbers of free women began to arrive in Australia in the early nineteenth century. For women who had lived a life of utter poverty in England and Ireland, their best chance of finding a new life and a share in ownership of land in Australia, was through marriage. Various assisted immigration schemes that began in 1831 tried to exploit the surplus of single women in England who migrated to Australia as a civilizing force in the new colony. Most famously, Caroline Chisholm declared that, “For all the clergy you can despatch, all the schoolmasters you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, will never do you much good without what a gentleman in that Colony very appropriately called ‘God’s police’ – wives and little children – good and virtuous women.”³⁵ These women may have felt a certain moral righteousness in their idealized status, but in fact, they had no economic independence and virtually no political voice. In the world outside the domestic sphere, a woman’s identity was mediated through that of her husband’s. In such a society, it is not surprising that love songs, in the tradition of the British Isles, are so difficult to find. Patsy Adam-Smith describes this transformation of feminine identity in the matrimonial venture to settle the frontier when she recalls this anecdote about her grandmother:

Grandmother (Adams) bustled about, her plump little figure dainty and sweetly dressed, her white hair bunned on top, singing in her unaffected, pure voice, ‘The Old Bullock Dray’. We all felt for a moment the nostalgia that had set her to singing that old bush song. She had been ‘shown the bush’ by her man all those long years ago when she’d accepted his invitation to ‘step up and take possession of the old bullock dray’....When I was married you thought nothing of it if you had to sleep under the old bullock dray while you were waiting for your man to build your house.³⁶

The teamwork of couples evident in the field recordings, or ‘mateship’, is celebrated as an aspect of Australian feminine identity in folk songs such as *Banks of the Condamine*, a love song wherein the woman tries to persuade her husband to let her accompany him on his droving trip, describing her skill not only with stock management, but with domestic duties: “*I’ll cook and count your tally love...I’ll wash your greasy mole-skins on the banks of the Condamine*”. The male in the song

³⁵ Chisholm, *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered: in a letter dedicated, by permission, to Earl Grey, London*, John Ollivier, 1847; cited in Summers, *Op.cit.*, p. 337.

³⁶ Patsy Adam Smith, *Hear the Train Blow*, Nelson, Sydney, 1981, p. 146.

repeatedly refuses to take her on the trip on the grounds that she is too delicate. Ironically, when he leaves, the woman will remain behind, alone in isolation, to battle with whatever crises might arise on the farm, despite the husband's belief that "*Your delicate constitution is not equal unto mine.*" A variant of this song, dating from the 1960s, voices feminine dissatisfaction with the subservient role of the woman in the traditional version by altering the lyrics as follows: "*I'll wash your greasy fore-skin on the banks of the Condamine.*"³⁷ This parody typifies the unpublished and often undocumented way in which women folk musicians addressed the lack of feminine subject matter in Australian bush music and humorously undermined the image of the tough, unromantic bush adventurer. The reality of pioneering life, cloaked in the mythology of an independent male supporting a dependent female, was much closer to the challenges of contemporary domestic life than is often acknowledged:

In one sense, the family in the Australian colonies was 'born modern',³⁸ in that from the start there was an absence of both the settled community and the wider kinship network which had served to legitimate and reinforce much of the sex role differentiation within the traditional family unit.³⁹

Images of the woman striving to be valued as a 'mate' are found repeatedly in Australian literature, as authors grappled with the fact that pioneering women had to develop both a masculine capacity for physical labour and self-defense as well as coping with childbirth, child-rearing and domestic duties. Mary Grant Bruce's heroine, Norah, of the *Billabong* books was a female icon for several generations of girls. Writing in 1922, Bruce describes Norah and Wally on their honeymoon: 'Dressed alike, in silk shirts and breeches, they might have passed as brothers; brothers almost equally matched in slender length of limb, in lithe agility, in wiry endurance.'⁴⁰ While Bruce's characters are middle class, their "endurance, resourcefulness, independence ... bronzed, lean, keen-eyed appearance"⁴¹ made them

³⁷ Gwenda Beed Davey, Personal Conversation, 12.7.03

³⁸ Elkin, 1957, p.2 in Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History', in *Women Class and History*, Edited by Elizabeth Windschuttle, Fontana, 1980, p.41.

³⁹ Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History', Op.cit., p.41.

⁴⁰ Mary Grant Bruce, *Billabong Adventurers*, London, Ward Lock, 1928, p.123. Quoted in Brenda Niall Seven Little Billabongs, Penguin Australia, 1979, p.181.

⁴¹ Prue McKay (Ed.), *The Peculiar Honeymoon and Other Writings by Mary Grant Bruce* 1986, p. 4.

a symbolic model for universal Australian family life. Female children, according to Bruce demonstrate their masculinity at an early age:

little sister scorns dolls, and uses them mainly for purposes of crude dissection....her claim to stock-whip and bridle is no less definite than that of the boy. Their games are the games of the soil, and it is not easy to see just where they merge into actual work—the work of sheep and cattle and horses, of garden and orchard, of the hundred and one claims that the land is always making.⁴²

Just as Norah suppresses any urges for fussy frocks, and refuses to put her problems ahead of the welfare of her all-male family, the women musicians in field recordings are for the most part, self effacing. Their repertoire is focused on universal themes of old imported ballads, and perpetuation of bush songs and treason songs wherein the central character is male. Just as the reader feels dissatisfied with the shallow description of Norah and Wally's relationship, the listener is left thinking that there is more information about women to be found in field research than has been discussed to date. Both Sally Sloane and Catherine Peatey in my case studies sing ballads about male heroes in a manner suggesting that they linked their identities to those of the protagonists, drawing strength from the process of singing the hero back into life.

Women's folk music was performed primarily in a domestic environment, increasingly by middle class women, and Anne Summers describes the historical invisibility that has obscured this social group from proper analysis:

It is these women who are the predecessors of the majority of women in Australia today: economically dependent and culturally impotent, their activities and influences were hidden within the home and hence could be overlooked. The price of being rescued from the ignominious fate of the female convicts and immigrants was to disappear from society and from history.⁴³

I suggest that very few women were culturally impotent if we assess their creativity not in terms of a patriarchal society's definitions of potency and success, but in terms of their own chosen creativity, particularly their music-making, within undeniably

⁴² Mary Grant Bruce in Mackay, *Ibid.*, p.227.

⁴³ Ann Summers, *Op.cit.*, p.359.

rigid behavioural constraints. Indeed, their activities were “hidden within the home”,⁴⁴ and perhaps scholars are more ready to overlook their achievements than their peers were.⁴⁵ It requires effort to translate the evidence of these women, because it is recorded in the intimate, unwritten language of embroidery, family recollections, letters, diaries, music collections and of course field recordings of songs, tunes and related stories. Mary Gilmore defines this unique women’s “language” of creativity as a lifeline bridging generations and linking the old-world with the new through the example of a family quilt:

One quilt had been made by Mrs Rickly’s great grandmother, one by her own mother. Both had been given her for her wedding. What beautiful ever-lasting sewing, and what slender starry patterns they both had! *More than ancestral, they were racial.*⁴⁶

This last description could equally apply to a performance of *Green Bushes* by Sally Sloane. Her version combines the accent of the itinerate railway worker from whom she learned the words, suggestions of her mother’s and grandmother’s singing phrasing and her own style of delivery.

It is significant that in the surviving ballads of the Australian oral and written tradition, songs of goddesses, super heroes or female supernatural beings are not present. Images of immortal women are not to be found apart from depictions of Mary in commonly sung religious hymns of all denominations. Even in music of the revival, women musicians set poems written by Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, embracing the idea of a masculine culture as an Australian musical identity. Two of Australia’s iconic folk songs depict this masculine aesthetic: Christina McPherson’s version of *Waltzing Matilda*, and *The Ballad of 1891* written in 1950 by Doreen Jacobs and Helen Palmer. Interestingly, Doreen Jacobs, in her interview with Keith McKenry,⁴⁷ is emphatic that she is not a folk musician, but composes in the art music

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Diane Bell with photographs by Ponch Hawkes, *Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987, approaches women’s history using an analytical framework constructed out of a woman’s experience of everyday life: “In their own words and through photographs, the private worlds of women produce memories that go beneath the surface of things. Heirlooms and hand-me-downs, teapots and prayer books, routines and rituals, cuttings from familiar gardens and the Singer sewing machine, make plain the patterns of this place.” (Back-cover summary)

⁴⁶ Mary Gilmore, *Old Days Old Ways*, Sirius, Sydney 1963, p.17.

⁴⁷ NLA TRC 5014

tradition. However, she acknowledges that *The Ballad of 1891* has achieved the status of an established folk song and is part of the Australian folk tradition. Kay Schaffer offers an explanation for the obsession of women composers of Australian folk songs with a masculine heroic model:

Absorption is a powerful fantasy in Australia. It is one of the ways in which the feminine is present in the bush tradition – not necessarily in actual figures of women inhabiting the bush, but in responses to the bush itself. The landscape provides the feminine *other* against which the bushman-as-hero is constructed.⁴⁸

Women, in their performance of bush songs and bushranger ballads cast themselves as masculine protagonists. It is not until the appearance of performers such as Phyl Lobl, Judy Small and Cathie O’Sullivan in the 1970s and 1980s that the concerns of Australian women are voiced explicitly in folk music performances of songs written by the women themselves. While singers such as Sally Sloane, Kath McCaughey and Catherine Peatey used transplanted ballads to voice emotional concerns, creating new music has been one solution to enable contemporary performers to confront and deal with women’s concerns in their own performance of folk music.

Where is home?

Australian women’s folk music reflects the tension between honouring the traditions of their ancestral birthplace and making music part of the cultural life of the new country. The choice between maintaining the cultural identity of the old-world and the need to adapt for survival in the new-world is the persistent and irreconcilable theme present in the evolution of Australian folk music. This was a cultural and psychological phenomenon experienced by all who immigrated to Australia, whatever their place in the social hierarchy. The flood of published Bush Ballads in the 1880s was a reaction to this deep sentiment, but these songs did not replace the European yearnings of many Australians for their “homeland”, even though they may have been born and bred in Australia. In fact by the 1880s, they may have been third generation Australians. Owing to the importance of nationalism in eighteenth and early nineteenth century European musical composition, arrangements of folk music were

⁴⁸ Kay Schaffer, ‘Women and the Bush: Australian National Identity and Representations of the Feminine’, in *Antipodes: A North American Journal of Australian Literature*, Vol.3., No.1, Spring 1989, p. 7.

arguably the most influential imported cultural commodity. Because of its relative melodic simplicity, folk music was adapted, across the classes, in various forms. These included nationalistic settings of traditional songs which were played wherever a piano could be found, bawdy rebellious ditties, orally transmitted songs and tunes through family lineage and a multitude of arrangements of dance tunes for instrumental ensembles of varying sizes. These settings were performed in venues including Government House, tents, domestic houses in urban and rural environments, woolsheds and other work places.

Wherever folk melodies were sung or played, whether in the parlour of Government House or in a rural shanty, the performer and the audience were striving to maintain a sense of cultural continuity between the familiar civilizing identifiers of the old-world and the new social environment with its alien landscape. In Australia, immigrants found themselves, quite literally, upside down, with all of life's seasonal rhythms reversed. They were living as a racial minority in a frontier society. Dislocation and isolation were the two most powerful challenges for immigrants that directly influenced the nature of evolving Australian folk music. The hearty bush ballads of the nineteenth century contrast strongly with the first impressions of the early settlers who recorded the

‘unnatural misery of solitude’ of which the newly arrived immigrant not infrequently complained. In the bush, particularly, men who came from the crowded towns of the old world could sense a nameless unfamiliar oppression: ‘I felt my own insignificance in a way which I cannot describe; the physical comparison was perfectly extinguishing’.⁴⁹

In her diary entry for Thursday 7th November 1839, Annie Baxter Dawbin wrote, “I’m perfectly miserable in this vile bush, without a rational companion to speak to.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ ‘Van Dieman’s Land Monthly Magazine’, No.3 (Nov1835) in George Nadel, *Australia’s Colonial Culture: Ideas men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1957, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Annie Baxter Dawbin, Diary for 1839 in Lucy Frost, *A Face in the Glass, The Journal and Life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne 1992, p.29.

Reading these descriptions it is obvious that there would be incongruity between the songs depicting rural life in the closely settled communities of the British Isles and the reality of isolated life in early, white, rural Australia. Alan Lomax writes that “The first function of music, especially of folk music, is to produce a feeling of security for the listener by voicing the particular quality of a land and the life of its people”⁵¹ The incongruity of songs based on a northern hemisphere calendar could not represent the Australian experience and this was instrumental in weakening the oral transmission of songs, particularly very old ballads. The positive effect of the lingering cultural ties to Europe was enrichment of Australian folk music, song and dance through transmission via a mixture of imported published music, performance and oral interpretations of these. Bush ballads gradually evolved from old melodies and poetic structures to voice descriptions of the life of the slowly emerging nation in the popular press of the 1880s.

In 1913, American women’s rights campaigner and Temperance activist, Jessie Ackerman, visited Australia and subsequently described the transition of Australians from immigrants to native Australians in *Australia From a Woman’s Point of View*:

As the people are in a transition period, evolving from old-world temperament into a state of local colouring of both mind and body, it is impossible to write of them in their present condition other than as a mixture of two races, in which the Australian type is decidedly manifesting itself in the younger generation.⁵²

For Patsy Adam Smith,⁵³ a working class child in the younger generation identified by Ackerman, traditions were constructed through interweaving stories and music from the old world with family rituals and the seasonal patterns of the new world. As the daughter in a family of railway workers of Irish heritage, Smith describes growing into her Australian womanhood by absorbing the old and the new cultural elements in the stories handed down within her family:

⁵¹ Alan Lomax, *The Folk Songs of North America : in the English Language*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y. c1960; in Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 52.

⁵² Jessie Ackerman, *Australia Form A Woman’s Point of View*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1981 (Originally 1913), p. 38.

⁵³ Author of 21 books, most notably *Folklore of Australian Railmen* and *The Anzacs*.

Stories were told and retold, embellished or honed down to polish them in the mould of all traditions. If the telling one night did not excite or interest the listeners, the next night the emphasis would be different, the timing, the tone, the silences altered. But always the core remained constant. In this way, by the time the child was conscious of telling the story herself she had become melded into the people, the land and the movements of the stars; time wavered and it was as though she took part in events and ages that were in reality her grandmothers', her parents' time.⁵⁴

The music Adam Smith made and enjoyed was likewise part of her friendships and social life in remote Waaia, in rural Victoria. As a child in a poor railway worker's family in the 1930s, Patsy Adam Smith's relationship with her "full-blood friend"⁵⁵ was a friendship of equals and music was special means of communicating outside the family:

One night Mum's sister Sadie who played the accordion came up and we had music and singing and dancing on the banks of the Murray in the light of a big fire and the moon, and Dolly sang,

*You may not be an angel
But I'm sure you'll do...*

And she danced a little behind the fires the women of her tribe used to do while the men leapt in front of the forefront of the dancers in the days before we came with our sophistication and our weight of numbers. Dolly would sing to me in her language and try to teach me the words, but I was not adept and we would roll and giggle helplessly with our arms round each other when I attempted to repeat the lesson.⁵⁶

Injustice, loss and banishment as themes in folksongs

Autobiographical books such as Patsy Adam Smith's *Hear the Train Blow*, offer clues about the social realities many Australian women faced in the transition from being Europeans to becoming Australians. The prevalence of certain songs in women's

⁵⁴ Patsy Adam-Smith, *Hear the Train Blow*, Op.cit., p.1.

⁵⁵ Adam-Smith, *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

repertoires provides further evidence about how individuals coped with this cultural and geographical transition. Themes of unjust loss of property, life and family reflect the particularly deep and enduring sense of loss and dislocation experienced by women coming to Australia and leaving behind almost everything that gave them their cultural identity: home, landscape, climate, family and employment. The continuity of this theme is demonstrated by the many versions of *Babes in the Wood* found in the field recording collections in the NLA and the fact that the song is still sung widely today. In my fieldwork for this thesis, I interviewed four generations of female family members (in the one family) ranging from 83 to 10 who sang *Babes in the Wood*. (Sound Examples 1-3)⁵⁷ Like a nursery rhyme, the original story has evolved into a song sung as a lullaby, or it is sung to entertain children,⁵⁸ but the first layer of meaning, the tale of unjust separation from loved ones, lingers. The poignancy and simplicity of *Babes in the Wood* encompasses the loss of childhood, the childhood home (which can be interpreted as the loss of the mother country). It also describes the injustice as well as the severity of the punishment. For women like Georgiana McCrae who migrated to Australia in accordance with her husband's wishes, resentment at unwanted resettlement lingered all her life. Several versions of *Babes in the Wood* exist in her music collection.

A duality of identity arose as Australia evolved from the convict era through the pioneering stage of the frontier years and into the urban and sub-urban age. The parent-child image of the relationship between Australia and the British Isles is one revival collectors tried to shrug off:

On the one hand, Australia is largely the “other” of Engla⁵, the mirror image. In metaphoric terms, the child directs his gaze back to the parent whose authority he challenges, but whose recognition he desires. On the other hand, the Australian character asserts an independent identity through an assumed relation not to the parent culture but to the land as other.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Nancy, the 83 year old member of the family declined to sing *Babes in the Woods* for the recording on the day, although she and her family said that she knew the song well.

⁵⁸ The Shalders Family Interviews, recorded June 2003 by Jennifer Gall, document three generations of women singing *Babes in the Wood*: Chris, 60, Sarah, 34, and Grace, 7.

⁵⁹ Kay Schaffer, ‘Women and the Bush: Australian National Identity and Representations of the Feminine’, *Antipodes, A North American Journal of Australian Literature*, Vol.3., No.1, Spring 1989, p.8.

This transition can be seen by again referring to the popular song *Babes in the Wood* and in the Australian real life version of the tale. Three children – Isaac, Jane and Frank Duff – were lost in the Victorian bush for nine days in 1864.⁶⁰ The story was retold in School Readers for generations and immortalized in William Strutt's painting, *The Little Wanderers, Home at Last*. An important feature of the Australian true story was the happy ending, and the contrast between the two tales may be viewed symbolically as a comparison of Old World punishment with New World benevolence.

To further extend the analogy of the parent-child relationship between England and Australia, the new society represented the offspring of the parent nation, the embodiment of the dominant political and social ideologies prevalent at the time of the founding of the new society.⁶¹ In Australia, these ideologies were a commitment to industrialisation and capitalist expansion, an English legal and political system and the family as the ideal social unit. There was a strong motivation for immigration to Australia from England from the 1840s based on “the prospect of establishing not a classless society, but a one class society, and that one class would be petty bourgeois in orientation”.⁶² The church reinforced these values and helped promote a social structure wherein women and their creative achievements disappeared from the official, published historical record, their identity blending into the status of mate to their male partner.

Songs of loss and banishment are strongly represented in the repertoires of the women I have studied. A fine example of this phenomenon is the *Female Rambling Sailor*, sung by Catherine Peatey in Victoria in 1954. The tale is poignant and unusual for this genre, in that the sailor girl adopts her disguise *after* she hears of the death of her lover. She establishes her own identity as a sailor, assuming the sailor identity of her lost lover. Tragically she is killed at sea in a storm. This song provides a powerful metaphor for the kind of identity crisis women endured as they carved out a new set

⁶⁰ Kim Torney, “Jane Duff’s Heroism: The Last Great Human Bush Story?” *The Latrobe Journal*, No.63 Autumn 1999 <http://calisto.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-63/t1-g-t7.html>

⁶¹ Hartz: *The Founding of New Societies*, Harcourt Brace and World, New York, 1964, in Summers, Op.cit., p.340.

⁶² Anne Summers, Op.cit., p. 339.

of cultural values in Australia. The feminine self must be disguised to pursue one's destiny.

A study of the Transportation Ballads popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries concerning women provides a catalogue of "Disconsolate Maids".⁶³ *Elizabeth Watson's Tale* and *The Young Man from the Country* relate tales of love betrayed leading to prostitution, and in Elizabeth Watson's case, prison and transportation. *Betsy Lee* and *The Convict Maid* are lamentations for the folly of theft that has led to transportation. *Tom's Pretty Maid* describes a promiscuous lover-thief, *The Maid's Lamentation* is about a woman's love for a political prisoner, *The Female Convict* tells of a female transport who is deeply repentant and dies of remorse at sea and the *Lamentation of Mary Braid* is a cautionary tale about incest, murder and resulting transportation. But how seriously did the real women of this class accept the calamities depicted in these songs? If one refers to the earlier contemporary descriptions of the music and dancing on board the convict ships (see above pages 48-9), it seems unlikely that these women were weighed down by the subject matter of transportation ballads. The transportation broadsides were, rather, exploited by British publishers as sensational, and above all, saleable subject matter for printed music.

Transportation did, however, have a profound influence on women's status in the new colony. Whether free or convict, all women arriving in Australia faced a great challenge in the guise of redefining their feminine identity in the new-world where the society regarded women primarily as a commodity. In a society built around masculine power structures enforced by physical strength, women's music, art, sewing and embroidery provided a means of creative expression enabling women to preserve a sense of feminine character when physical or political resistance was not yet possible. It is easy to underestimate the very high skill many women were able to bring to these achievements, given that such "gentle arts" were considered of little value in economic terms. Examination of the craftsmanship in pieces like the women's Rajah Quilt⁶⁴ held in the National Gallery of Australia, reveals a remarkable

⁶³ Anderson, *Farewell to Judges and Juries: the Broadside Ballad and Convict Transportation to Australia, 1788-1868*, Red Rooster, Hotham, 2000, p.135.

⁶⁴ The Rajah Quilt 1841 Textile, pieced medallion style unlined coverlet: cotton sheeting and chintz appliqué, silk thread embroidery, embroidered inscription panel at base of quilt: "To the Ladies/of the /Convict ship Committee/This quilt worked by the convicts/of the Ship Rajah during their voyage/to

degree of technical expertise, artistry and hours of meticulous labour. Like the Australian place names that entered traditional songs, the fabric pieces of quilting mapped the cultural journey undertaken by many women:

The girls, as soon as they could hold a needle, were set to work on new patchwork. But the new was not the old. We, in Australia, had not the patterns in prints that would make them. So, the square, the triangle, and the diamond had to be used, with the colours set out as best as one could arrange them.⁶⁵

This and hundreds of other pieces of similar work represent the signatures of women whose only means of expressing their individuality lay outside what were then considered male professions. These “domestic arts” are a valuable record of generations of women’s lives and are often the only alternative to written documentation available to historians. Similarly, Australian women’s folk music must be assessed as an expression of their cultural transition from the old-world to the new. Women coming to Australia after 1831 across the classes cultivated music as a means of facing isolation and dislocation. Writing in 1834, on the Swan River in Western Australia, Frances Louisa Bussell describes the demands of “turning our hand to anything in the course of the day” and the joy of sharing music with the family circle:

[F]or when evening comes & our duties are over I open the piano with I think much more pleasure than I ever did in England & all are ready to join in the chorus...⁶⁶

Women in country towns, and rural women who have been cloaked by Henry Lawson’s sentimentalized, dis-empowered *Drover’s Wife* deserve recognition for the active role they played in establishing homes and creating Australian culture.

Van Dieman’s Land is presented as a testimony of the gratitude with which/they remember their exertions for their/welfare while in England and during/their passage and also as a proof that/they have not neglected the Ladies/kind admonitions of being industrious/June 1841, "325.0 h x 337.2 w cm Gift of Les Hollings and the Australian Textiles Fund 1989, Accn No: NGA 89.2285, NGA Collection search: <http://cs.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=119802>

⁶⁵ Gilmore, Op.cit., p.17.

⁶⁶ Frances Bussell, letter to Capel Carter, her cousin, April 12th 1834, in *Lifelines: Australian Women’s Letters and Diaries 1788-1840*, Edited by Patricia Clarke and Dale Spender, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p.224.

Australian women, in their domestic world, often kept alive a dedication to a high standard of musical performance as well as preserving music linked to their cultural roots in the old world. This dedication combined with improvisational skills developed to make their music relevant in a new social context. Women in the middle classes practised their music to maintain their skills to support the musical life of the community. Mary Grant Bruce describes her Aunt:

Wherever she went she drew music to her. She played exquisitely, both harp and piano...there was no lack of talent in those days. People worked for it; my mother used to practice six hours a day...⁶⁷

Many women whose social position demanded that they labour ten-hour days and live in material poverty also kept music in their lives. Such a woman was Mrs Marvel, a childhood acquaintance of Patsy Adam Smith, and her house is described below:

As well as a lounge room there was a parlour with crumbling antimacassars on crumbling chairs, and a crumbling green plush cover on the now tinny piano.⁶⁸

The piano was a symbol of cultural connection and a means of expression for women of all classes who were trying to make sense of life and create a new identity in a new world.

⁶⁷ In Prue McKay, *The Peculiar Honeymoon and Other Writings by Mary Grant Bruce*, Op.cit., p.15.

⁶⁸ Patsy Adam-Smith, *Hear the Train Blow*, Op.cit., p. 40.

Women and ‘the old songs’ of the Northern Rivers Region



Fig. 1. Map of the Northern Rivers

To establish what kind of folk music pioneering women made and discover the networks that facilitated music transmission I analysed field recordings from a regional study on the North Coast of New South Wales. This study was an oral history and archival research project titled, *The Folklore and Musical Heritage of the Northern Rivers*.⁶⁹ The project took the form of twelve interviews with three men and nine women, combined with extensive research in the Northern Rivers Historical Society.⁷⁰ I was looking for evidence of the effect of European settlement on the North Coast in the mid to late nineteenth century on transplanted musical traditions.⁷¹ The distinctive quality of the musical traditions that developed in this region was the collaborative spirit that cut across the particular religious divisions of the region to sustain a high level of participation in music making. There is a scarcity of documentation about the transfer of music between white and indigenous women on the North Coast, but the following reference to Sylvia, a young woman brought up by Mrs. Pullen of Grafton, describes that she possessed

[A]n excellent touch and could play by ear. In the 1890s, when Sylvia was working at Main Camp Station, she astonished and enchanted [all] with her ability to play.⁷²

⁶⁹ Folklore and Musical Heritage of the Northern Rivers, NLA TRC 3294/1-10

⁷⁰ Richmond River Historical Society: www.richhistory.org.au/

⁷¹ Louise Tiffany Daley, in *Men and a River*, Angus & Robertson, 1981, p.vii, dates European settlement of the Richmond River District between 1828 and 1895. The families of the people I interviewed had arrived after 1862 when the region was opened up for farming after the cedar-getters had removed most of the “red gold” from the forests.

⁷² Henderson, Cunningham Papers, p.13. (Casino and District Historical Society) quoted in *North Coast Women: A History to 1939*, Baiba Berzins, Royal Australian Historical Society, Sydney, 1996, p. 160.

The relevance of the regional study to this dissertation is the evidence it provided about how women on the Northern Rivers adapted music making using oral and written transmission methods to strengthen the bonds of community as a basic function of traditional folk music practice.

Those interviewed recalled their family experiences of timber cutting and farming as pioneers in the area and the music making that was part of this country life. I interviewed people who identified with Italian, Scottish, Irish and English cultural influences, while adapting these musical sources to an Australian performance environment. I was expecting to find evidence of music preserving Scottish and Irish traditions, given that these nationalities were strongly represented in this area, moving north from original farm settlements on the south coast. There was indeed documentation, both anecdotal and in the form of diaries, of Gaelic speakers maintaining their language after settling in the area.⁷³ However, more potent than the connections with the music of Europe and the British Isles was the emerging Northern Rivers culture of inclusive, community focused, musical occasions, particularly dances and singing around the piano in a domestic setting. Underpinning this regional musical life were flourishing church choirs in the villages (Clunes, Eltham, Eureka, Federal and Bangalow) and towns (Lismore, Ballina, Casino and Grafton). The networks established through the friendships and musical alliances fostered by these choirs brought about an intersection of traditional music, popular music and art music.

These intersections embody Charles Seeger's definition: "A culture may be understood to be a bundle of traditions; a tradition, a way of doing something that is inherited, cultivated, and transmitted by individuals associated in a society..."⁷⁴ This blending of musical genres, made possible by strong community music making on the Northern Rivers, represents the way in which folk music has evolved throughout Australia into the kind of musical eclecticism and the ideal of community celebrated

⁷³ *Diaries of Donald Forbes McKinnon of Coraki* received by the Richmond River Historical Society (RRHS) in 1958. They are mainly in Gaelic, covering the periods: 1872-1874; 1875; 1882; and 1887. Janet Bagshaw in her interview with me (NLA TRC 3294/10) recalled that her sister in law and her brother were Gaelic speakers.

⁷⁴ See the Introduction for amplification of this idea.

at the National Folk Festival in Canberra every Easter.⁷⁵ My research into music making in this relatively small geographical region enabled me to examine the important sociological factors that contributed to the region's tradition of community music making.

Charles Jarrett's (1829-1908) *Tales of the Richmond* provided detailed descriptions of the families who came to the Big Scrub on the Richmond River in search of cedar.⁷⁶ James Green used Jarrett's recollections and consulted with him to write *The Lost Echo*, a romanticised account of settlement in the region. The book is highly sentimental, but it provides unique observations about the way in which music was created and used by the pioneers. In the following passage, the well-known song *Starry Night for a Ramble* is followed by a new bush composition, *A Song of the Scrub*:⁷⁷

[T]he billies were soon boiling, and night had hardly closed down upon them after a brief twilight before the whole company sat down in a friendly circle around the fire...Men women and children entered fully into the festive celebration...
... "A starry night for a ramble", rang out the concertina.... 'Now can't somebody sing us a song,' said Shelley after a pause. 'It will soon be time for the piccaninnies to go bye-bye. Let's have a good song with a chorus to it, and we'll all join in.'
... 'Very well, a song of the scrub it is' replied the Englishman. 'It is rough, but simple, the time the same as the sailor's chantey, and you can easily pick up the chorus, which everyone must sing':

A SONG OF THE SCRUB

Chorus:

*Sing us a Song of the Scrub,
The boomerang, spear and the club,
The scout's long tramp, the settler's camp,
Of wagons sunk down to the hub;*

⁷⁵ The National Folk Festival Web site shows the variety of genres performed at the event: <http://www.folkfestival.asn.au/>

⁷⁶ Charles Jarrett, column in *The Ballina Pilot*, 1894, press clipping in Cedar Cutter's File, RRHS. Jarrett's unpublished notebook is also held here.

⁷⁷ Samuel Bagnall's song, *Starry Night for a Ramble*, was published between 1873 and 1887 in London by Hopwood & Crew and became part of the Australian oral tradition.

*The bullocks strain hard under the lash,
Then out they come with a splash,
Sing us a Song of the Scrub. Etc*

‘That’s all right,’ said McGuire; ‘it suits the time and place.’⁷⁸

The spontaneous composition of the song by a ‘new chum’ is characteristic of Australian bush music. While women and children are present at the performance, as living proof of their involvement in the pioneering process, they are never mentioned in the three verses. A clue to this omission comes in the last line of the last verse: “*Join this song of victory, this song of the land.*” Presumably both women and men envisage themselves in terms of masculine strength and the land as the mother country.

A description of a corn husking party on the Richmond River in 1879 explains how courting, music and hard work were integrated:

It was husked on wet days and o’ nights; lucky was the farmer who had an attractive daughter or two, for there was always help at husking time for him...giant cobs flew over the straddle, and white husks accumulated in piles and sometimes almost covered the huskers; a whisper —the husks covered many a sly squeeze...then to make the work go with a swing, songs and choruses almost raised the rafters of the old barn. Some of their songs (do they stir your memories old timers?), “Ben Bolt,” “Love amongst the Roses,” “Walking Home with Angeline.”

In the break for tea and scones, the concertina player came forward, the room cleared of chairs and the dancing began. These popular songs were linked into the tradition of folk music sung to make repetitive work tasks less onerous. The author’s veneration for “the old stuff they played for the Lancers” is clear in the account of interweaving the oral and written components of the dance repertoire:

not a shuffle round the room, nor was it jazz, but a fine wholesome affair that required some skill. And their waltz tunes! Do you remember “Ehren on the Rhine”

⁷⁸ James Green, *The Lost Echo: The Story of the Richmond*, RRHS, Lismore, 2001, pp. 22-23.

and ‘Sweet Dreamland Faces’? And the old stuff they played for the Lancers? Phew — it stirs my blood now to think of it all.⁷⁹

The pioneering churches established in the district were Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist. Examination of archival evidence reveals that the different churches in the area asserted their identity with events such as the annual Orangeman’s Parade (Fig. 2) and the St Patrick’s night Roman Catholic Irish Music Festival.⁸⁰ (Fig. 3 & 4) However each of the women interviewed made no mention of experiences relating to religious tensions, confirming that the church had provided vital and extremely enjoyable opportunities for music making, either singing in the choir or playing the church organ. When asked about contention between the different religious denominations, women responded unanimously, that

No, there wasn’t any rivalry between the churches. We’d all go to each other’s functions and help each other out.⁸¹

Both Connie Millet and Janet Bagshaw learned to play the organ by ear, inspired to make music that was useful to the community and facilitated the congregation’s part in the music making, while the nine women interviewed sang in their respective Church choirs. The patterns of musical communication engendered by church music represented the use of music linked to the rituals of every day community life. In this region, the church provided the basis for social events such as picnics, dances, musical evenings and concerts, where non-religious music was shared. These social occasions provided women with the opportunity and the stimulus to learn and exchange songs and dance tunes.

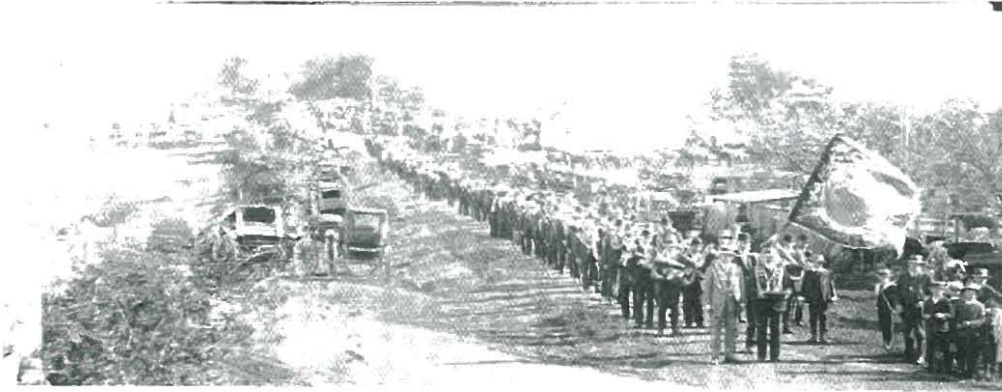
My field recordings from this region illustrate the widespread predisposition for people to *teach themselves* music in order to participate in, and indeed, create the cultural life of the community. In eighteenth century Europe families learned folk songs from their peers that were relevant to the community life of that era. In nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia, the relevant community music

⁷⁹ Anonymous contributor, in *A Century of Local Government, 1879-1979, The Story of Lismore*, Lismore City Council, 1979, p. 111. “*Eheren on the Rhine* ... was sung in the eighties notably by the German bands which then played in the streets.” Capt. C..A. Knapp, Bournemouth, in *Notes & Queries*, OUP, 30.5.1949, p.196.

⁸⁰ *Irish Music Festival File*; Richmond River Historical Society, Lismore, NSW. The first Irish Music Festival was held in 1916. Programmes are held in the RRHS, Music Folder.

⁸¹ Connie Millett speaking in an interview with Jennifer Gall, 2.6.95, NLA TRC 3294/1.

comprised hymns, band music, popular songs from the stage, choral music, art music and folk music from their country of origin. This music making reflects the major social change at work as pioneering families established farming as a means of economic survival in the post industrial revolution era.



Transport before the motor car
These photos are a record of meetings and group celebrations.
Note the buggies neatly parked and horses tethered
Clunes, Jiggli Valley and other Orangemen Orders c.1908



Fig. 2. The Orangemen's Parade at Clunes, 1908.



PROGRAMME

Irish 
National
Concert

ST. PATRICK'S NIGHT
MONDAY, 18th MARCH
1935



FEDERALETTE, LISMORE


NORTHERN STAR PRINT. LISMORE

Fig. 3. Programme for the St Patrick's Day Concert, 1935.

Programme



PART I.

"Hall, Glorious St. Patrick" MIXED CHOIRS.

1. Overture "Shamrock" (Middleton)

THE LISMORE CONCERT ORCHESTRA
(Conductor: Mr. H. S. Thomas.)

2. Chorus "Summer Song" (Redhead)

MARIST BROS.' BOYS' CHOIR.

3. Piano Duet "Irish Diamonds" No. 2 (Pape)

MISSES MARY GRAY AND JOAN FITZHENRY.

4. Action Song "Swinging" (Dickson-Brahe)

ST. CARTHAGE'S SCHOOL CHILDREN.

5. Recitation "The Careys" (John O'Brien)

MISS RUTH DENT.

6. Soprano Solo "The Wearin' o' The Green" (Traditional)

MRS. W. E. MCKAY.

7. Dance (a) "The Blackbird" MISS MARJORIE PINE.

(b) Double Jig MISS MARJORIE PINE and

(c) Duo Clog Waltz MR. TED McMAHON.

8. Bass Solo "The Dear Little Shamrock" (Jackson)

MR. JAS. CHISHOLM.

9. Chorus (a) "The Young May Moon" (Moore)

(b) "Night Sinks on the Wave" (Smart)

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE CHOIR.

Accompanists: MRS. M. DENT, A.T.C.L.; MISS IRENE REGAN,
A.MusA.; MRS. W. F. McDERMOTT; and MR. ERIC DAVIS.

Programme



PART II.

1. Overture "The Fiddler's Dance" (Fletcher)

MISS GERALDINE SPRING'S STRING ORCHESTRA
(Conductress: Miss Geraldine Spring.)

2. Dance Double Four Hand Reel.

PUPILS OF ST. CARTHAGE'S SCHOOL.

3. Soprano Solo "Kitty of Coleraine" (Traditional)

MR. W. E. MCKAY.

4. Recitation "The Pot of Shamrocks" (Anon.)

MISS MOLLIE DOUGHERTY.

5. Piano Solo "Polischenelle" (Rachmaninoff)

MISS JEAN FULLER, L.Mus.A., L.A.B.

6. Mezzo-Soprano Solo "The Kerry Dance" (Molloy)

MISS MARY McDONALD.

7. Violin Solo "Bohemian Girl" (Balfe-Monk)

MR. LESLEIGH ORMSTON.

8. Tenor Solo "The Minstrel Boy" (Moore)

MR. CLAUDE MANNING.

9. Chorus (a) "Viking Song" (Coleridge-Taylor)

(b) "Ascendit Deus" (Rev. J. E. Turner, O.S.B.)

ST. CARTHAGE'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR.

MASSED CHOIRS, "God Bless Our Lovely Morning Land"
(V. Rev. Dr. M. J. O'Reilly)

Fig. 4. Programme for the St Patrick's Day Concert, 1935.

Mrs Annie Bell, born in Clunes in 1900, the second youngest of seven children, describes the way in which her parents created a new way of life on the land after leaving England. Music making in the district adopted the established functions of folk music practice in the sense that individuals developed their musical skills to participate in community activities. Annie Bell describes how it was equally

important to her father to become both a farmer and a community musician to create a successful life, priorities she and her sisters inherited:

My father was born in 1856; he came out here in 1876. He had no education or farming experience... The early settlers worked for the railway cutting sleepers when they could spare the time from their own selection. [Dad] had 100 acres. It took him quite a while to get to the stage of putting stock on it. He hauled scrub for six or seven years. My Dad was self taught; he was the band master at Clunes and the choir master at Eureka.



Fig. 5. The Empire Day Maypole celebrations at Clunes, 1913. Annie Bell is the dancer at the extreme right identified with the biro mark.

Annie learned to be part of the community through the affection for her father and respect for his involvement:

My dad was very rotund, and when he used to play the organ in the church, I'd sit on his knee and when he breathed out I'd slide off, then I'd shuffle up again! If anybody

was musical they joined up with the choir. ...Everyone went to church and Sunday School then. As a child I belonged to everything in Clunes. We all joined in together.

Unlike her sisters who had a formal musical education and took part in competitions, Annie learned to play the piano by ear, a talent that linked her more closely with the community music making in which she lived:

My eldest sister was excellent at sight-reading, and I was the 'failure'. And yet, when we were at any party and they wanted to sing *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, I used to be called upon to play that because I could do it by ear.

Annie goes on to describe how the Maypole tradition was transplanted from England as an event associated with Empire Day celebrations in Clunes.⁸²

A.B.: Then we did the Maypole. I was nine years old in this photo. (Fig. 5) All the parents came. The Maypole was put in a different place each year. That's the Methodist church there.

J.G.: Who taught you?

A.B.: One of the school teachers. Mr Edwards played the violin for the dance. Now that's Edie McNiff, [pointing to the photo to the little girl crowned as May Queen] - that's their daughter, and the year before I was Queen and it was a great honour, and everyone bowed to you. It was on Empire Day. My mother used to say that that was why so many young men volunteered for the war.

Connie Millett,⁸³ (Fig. 6) born in 1924, also recalls the Maypole and Empire day Celebrations at Alstonville as an important family occasion intended to unite the community:

The Maypole, was performed for Empire Day 24th May, a picnic at the school and the children entertained the parents. There were dance nights, the children would have their games till half past eight then the parents would have their dances.

Rural life was constructed around hard work for each member of the family, and even transport to school was dependent on a farm horse being available.

⁸² The Maypole was part of Empire Day Celebrations in other villages in this area: Jiggi, Georgica, Eltham.

⁸³ Connie Millett interviewed by Jennifer Gall, NLA TRC 3294/1, Op.cit.

We had to ride our horses to Alstonville school, we rode our horses from here. Some of us double banked on the horses,
....We had to be home to help with 50 to 60 cows to milk. We got up at six and helped. None of my family went to high school.



Fig. 6. Connie Millett plays a dance tune in the living room of her farm at Rosebank, Northern NSW.

Music was woven into the routines of farm life. Connie's descriptions of music in her childhood are reminiscent of descriptions of traditional music nights in Ireland, when the kitchen floor was cleared for dancing:

The Johnson [family] came to the Northern Rivers when my father was a young man and they settled at Alstonville. My mother settled at Invercauld - Invercauld, just outside Lismore on the way to Gundarimba and dairy farmed there. [Her mother's parents were English, from Shropshire.] My father's family were dairy farmers at Alstonville. [Her father's parents were from Fermanagh in Ireland.] I was the only daughter in the middle of four brothers. We lived in Alstonville till 1934, then our parents bought a farm at Rosebank and I came there at nine and a half....

... At home there were community songs gathered around the piano, Alexander hymns on a Sunday night around the piano. Dad and Mum played the violin, Dad played the accordion, — mum played the piano as well. Dad played for dances at Alstonville, we had dances in our own home. I can remember rolling up the lino through the week and dancing in the dining room. And he and his mates would play. They used to play the Lancers a lot. All your neighbours would come along.

Dad used to love sitting out on the front steps playing his accordion. He'd have his little pet tunes and he'd go out there and have his cigar on the front steps and play on the front steps. One of his favourites was "Sweet Hour of Prayer" and he'd finish this off at night with that, and it is a pretty thing.⁸⁴

Like Annie Bell's childhood experiences, the influence of religious music enmeshed with secular songs and dance tunes provided the networks for music making in Connie's early life:

My dad bought me that organ when I was 17, it was built in 1917, an Estey organ. I was never taught the organ and I liked to fiddle around, a man was selling it leaving the district, so dad bought it. I played church music; I've been organist of our church since 1964, in the Sunday School for 38 years.⁸⁵ (Fig. 7)

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.



Fig.7. Connie Millett playing the organ in the dining room of her farm at Rosebank, northern NSW.

When Connie was 16 she started playing the piano for social dances around Clunes with two or more other musicians, Bill Restall and George McNiff on fiddle and accordion. The dance list is shown at Figure 8. Connie explains that “I played a fair bit by ear in those times” using the music book more as a rough guide, adapting the music to the movements of the dancers. Drawing on her childhood experiences of dances in the kitchen at home and the ability to improvise enabled Connie to reinvent the tradition of dance music for the next generation.

The chance to play dance music in the family band was the motivation for Janet Bagshaw, neé McClintock, to learn the piano. (Fig.9) Born in 1913, Janet came from a closely-knit Scottish family who lived at Urbenville on the north coast of NSW. Janet’s parents had migrated from Kirkontilloch, Glasgow, as they had lost three children to fatal illnesses and hoped to provide a better chance for any future children. Mr McClintock found work at Koreelah driving a steam boiler at the sawmill and Janet’s mother ran the post office. At the age of two, Janet was paralysed by polio and was unable to walk or move unaided from that time on. Music relieved her enforced

Wally	Fast Footsteps	Slow Footstep
Massi Farewell	y've got 6'	Jealousy
Sound All Stars	Roll out the Barrel	White Christmas
Bless 'em All	Oh Jonnie	Let the Band Play
Must Break a Promise	His in the Ocean	Shine of Larklee
mellow moon	Great Day for the Smith	mar with Mandolin
merry widow	Red Roses	Tape Ball
Valley of the Moon	Hey little How	I shall never forget
Somewhere in France	Beach in the Heart of Jesus	I don't want to set the
	Jungle Gangle Gangle	world on fire
	ading a Play	
Gipsy Tap	Pride of Erin	Schottische
Army Navy & Air Force	Come Back to Erin	King the Bell
Quarter Master Store	Believe me if all	Henry Bess
Pennsylvania Polka	Peggy O'Neil	Henry's Bandone
Break Bali Bali		
Show of Tropic		
Strip fiddle		
Selita	Boston 2 step	Barn Dance
Arthur Morris June	Teddy Bears Picnic	Happy Mills
One day when we were young	Tom Walter's June	Henry's Bandone
		Jan Pretty Girl
Palais Lyrique	Canadian 2 step	
Jan Pretty Girl	American Yanks	
In an old Dutch garden	Chin up Lewis Canyon	
Brother Bill	Old Tin Helmet	

Melodies Played during World War 2

Fig. 8. Connie Millett's Dance List listing the sets of melodies played for dances during World War II.

immobility, and her brother taught her to vamp on the piano. She describes the process of learning the instrument and the responsibility she felt about providing music for local dances:

My father had an old violin and my mother danced a lot. She always had a big supper ready, we always had lots of music at night. We had an old wind up gramophone, my father had an old violin my brother had a mandolin and an accordion and my father went to a clearing sale and bought a piano and my brother said to me, “if you get in and play the piano we’ll be able to go and play for dances, I can play and walk, [but] if you can’t walk you can’t dance and you can’t come out.” So my brother taught me the right hand of the piano, I couldn’t read the left... we had to ride ten miles to get to Urbanville and it didn’t matter what the weather was, if there was a ball on you had to go and play for it; and I remember my brothers coming home at four in the morning and chasing the cow up off the grassy ground. ...⁸⁶



Fig. 9. Janet Bagshaw, née McClintock, and her parents.

⁸⁶ Janet Bagshaw interviewed by Jennifer Gall, NLA TRC 3294/10.

The distances travelled on horseback were considerable, but dancegoers would make the trip together on horseback from one district to another:

It [would be] a great night with a big full moon there'd be 50 or 60 people land up at our gate going to the dance....The dances would start at 8.30 and go until light. We'd go to Rathdowney to play – that was the furthest we ever went.

Writing in a Grafton newspaper about life in the 1870s, an anonymous “old Graftonian” describes the house parties that continued on up until the 1970s:

We danced the Waltz, the Quadrilles, the Lancers, the Valse Cotillion, the Mazurka, the Polka, ...Country dances were a great vogue. Some, indeed most of them, were held in great barns or roomy kitchens cleared for the purpose. As most of the folk came considerable distances over very different roads and the function commenced shortly after dark, and as sleeping accommodation for all was not possible, continued until daylight, which enabled all to drive home in safety and start work. So that a programme of 50 dances during the night was not unusual-and we danced the programme. The music was invariably an accordion supplemented on rare occasions by a violin, and the tunes were all practically identical. As most country folk could manage to ‘vamp’ on the accordion, the orchestra was frequently changed.... nothing could be heard but the drone of the accordion and the shuffle of feet...Once or twice a week as nothing for us young bloods, an we managed to shape up in the morning quite fit for a days work.⁸⁷

In my interview with Janet Bagshaw, she talked at length about the process by which her brother taught himself tunes and then passed them on to her. The motivation for Janet to play music was clearly fuelled by her great affection for her brother:

My brother got onto Dad's old violin and he used to sit next to the gramophone and listen in. He used to sit there by the hour and do it.... On the piano, he got me playing scales forever, ... then he'd teach me to vamp, all sorts of funny little vamps and then he taught me the right hand, I could only read the right hand. He'd learned everything by ear he never learned...

⁸⁷ *Grafton Envelope*: Clarence File: 10/10/1933, Richmond River Historical Society.



Fig. 10. Janet's brother Jim and his wife on their wedding day.

Like the experiences of Connie Millett and Annie Bell, the practice of the dance music was mediated through family religious music.

On Sunday nights [we'd play in the] long walkway between the old kitchen and the other rooms. Mother used to say, "You have an hour's playing out of this Christian Science hymn book and then you can do what you like." And she used to sit by the fire and knit and read to Dad. And Saturday night unless we were at a dance, we'd have neighbours all come for singing songs. Oh it was lovely!⁸⁸

After her brother married and moved away, Janet went in "every Sunday with the minister and played for church".⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Janet Bagshaw, NLA TRC 3294/10, Op.cit.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

For this family in rural Australia, the Scottish music tradition was a living one supported by newly composed dance tunes sent regularly from Scotland and supplemented by popular tunes learned by ear:

I can remember all the favourites. We used to get the papers from Scotland and there were songs printed in them and we used to play them. We had songs that we would play before they were even heard about here. There were a terrible lot of Quadrilles and Schottisches and old time things and all sorts of Scotch reels and quite a few Scotch people were there, and they'd congregate. There'd always be a demand for them to dance a Scotch reel, and they'd give a demonstration. They were pretty common old Scottish tunes, reels and Quadrilles, *The Flowers of Edinburgh*. They were lovely things.... The Cooees and the carry-on it was wonderful! ...Oh boy there was some wild dancing up there in the schottisches!

I think it just came naturally learning the things. It was great fun. There was always a big supper, everyone brought something for that. There was always an MC always a man to announce the dances.

Other visiting musicians would sit in and enrich the repertoire:

It was a sort of a floating population in those days, and we had one fellow he'd come up and say, oh I play such and such, so we'd say, come on, join in then! One time we had seven in the band! It was lovely and then of course they used to come out to our place on Sunday nights and have a play, it was lovely it was a really good life.... Matt Davis was a wonderful violin player and he would stay with us. He'd play with us for the dances.⁹⁰

Janet's other music making was as accompanist for the silent movies. With advice from the other pianist in the district she drew on her dance music repertoire and used the folk music in this new performance environment:

I played everything by ear, I'd find out if it was a Western....it was very awkward to work out. Elsie was good to me. She was postmistress at Urbenville and she used to

⁹⁰ Ibid.

tell me what she did. And once a year the big movies would come round and as sure as they would advertise them there'd be a flood!

The first night was hell, I was very, very nervous about it. They said "Don't worry, just go ahead and do what you think!"⁹¹

The family Scottish music traditions continued after Janet's marriage and her own children were born and her love of music and dancing was carried on by her nieces, with her father and brother's family:

New Years Day was...often enlivened by 'Young Bill' and his family also played guitar and sang great country songs and dance melodies. The nieces, Gwen and Betty danced in their Scottish costumes, Mac [Janet's father] recited Robbie Burns and he and Gran sometimes danced a short reel.⁹²

Songbooks and Scrapbooks

The illustration at Figure 11 is a page from a songbook belonging to an anonymous North Coast woman who lived near Meerschaum Vale, from the generation preceding the women I interviewed (this page dates approximately from the 1880s). The melody to the song *Wait Till the Clouds Roll By* was collected by Barry MacDonald in New England in 1996 in a set of dance tunes played by Ben Cherry: *Ben Cherry's, Wait Till the Clouds Roll By, Jenny Dear*, demonstrating how this popular song had been absorbed into the oral tradition to be used in various performance contexts.⁹³ (See Appendix 2. for the sheet music and broadside versions of *Wait Till the Clouds Roll By*.) I subsequently located a similar songbook owned by Kath McCaughey, who lived in Grafton on the Northern Rivers and who was interviewed by Dave de Hugard in 1985 and 1989. De Hugard's interview and the associated archives provide a link to the earlier generation of north coast women musicians.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *The Life and Times of Janet Bagshaw* written by John Fraser for her 80th Birthday celebrations in 1993, p.2. Document in the possession of Janet Bagshaw.

⁹³ in *Music from the New England Tablelands of New South Wales, 1850-1900 in Australia*, 1 sound disc (65 min., 35 sec.) [France] : Auvidis/UNESCO 1998.

Music Australia Search:

<http://www.musicaustralia.org/apps/MA?simpleTerm=wait+till+the+clouds+roll+by&searchbutton=Search&function=searchResults&searchInitiated=true&scope=scope&location1=Anywhere>

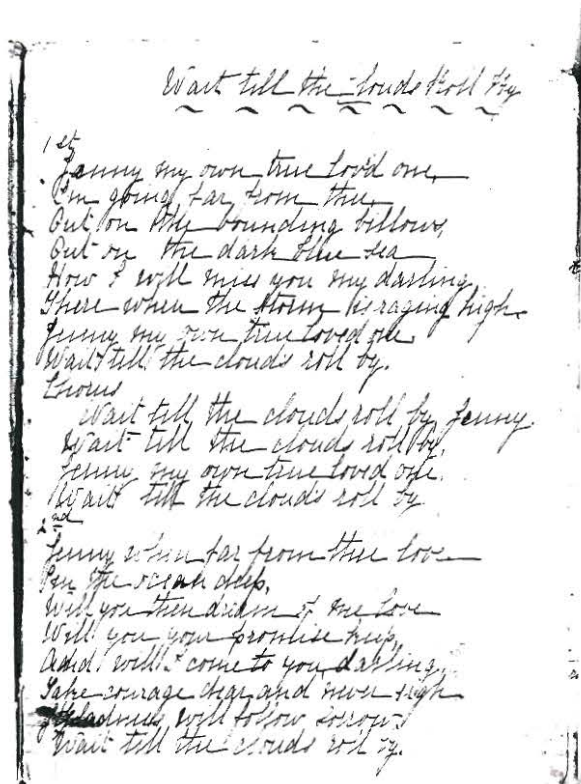


Fig. 11. Songbook depicting the popular *Wait till the Clouds Roll By*, c. 1880

Women used hand-written songbooks and scrapbooks to note down songs, poems and tune titles to aid the memory in later performances. Their contents represent the network of friendships that facilitated the collection of each repertoire. These books demonstrate the comprehensive knowledge of melodies held in the memories of the songbook owners, as well as the diversity of subject matter covered by the repertoire.⁹⁴ Songs are often interleaved with poems about sentimental events, reinforcing the picture of life in these rural communities as centered on the sung and spoken word for entertainment in the home. The most common term used by musicians interviewed by field collectors to describe the material in their repertoires is “the old songs”, or “the old tunes”.⁹⁵ The term “old” captures the essence of how

⁹⁴ A sample of the songs in the Meerschaum Vale song book, (in *Meerschaum Vale Envelope*) RRHS, dated approximately 1878, are: *Wait Till the Clouds Roll By*, *When Ye Gang Awa Jamie*, *Kathleen Mavourneen*, *The Gypsy Countess*, *I'll Hang My Harp on a Willow Tree*, and *The Farmer's Boy*.

⁹⁵ Mary Jean Officer described her collecting trips with Norm and Pat O'Connor in rural Victoria in the 1950s and 1960s: “We soon learned never to use the word “folklore” because nobody had ever heard of folklore, they knew absolutely nothing about it, so then we used to ask for old songs and then we got talking about the old days...” Edgar Waters interview with Mary Jean Officer, 2.12.91 TRC 2762, Cassette 2 Side B, Summary by Jennifer Gall.

Australian folk music and songs enabled singers to remember past events or the musician they had learned the item from. Often in the NLA field recordings, women will either refer to the existence of their songbook, or the turning of pages will be audible. These books almost always contain the words only.⁹⁶ Kath McCaughey's songbook/scrapbook contains many clippings of poems cut out from the "Poems for Recitation" section of *A Woman's Budget* 1917, lace patterns, and short diary entries, as well as song lyrics written out or in newspaper clippings.⁹⁷

Dave de Hugar's interview with Kath McCaughey identifies the many different kinds of music making this North Coast woman took part in. She describes the camaraderie of singing "old songs" in the early years of the twentieth century:

You would hear these old songs after we'd all been to a party or a dance or something. We didn't have any motorcars when I was young and o' course we all went on horseback. There'd be perhaps 20 of us go to the one place and coming home all these old songs'd be sung...girls and boys and the lot...they'd all join in and sing them. That's the way we used to hear it. But when they used to sing its not like today – they've got somebody to play the accompaniment for them but there was no accompaniment then, only the echoes in the bush when they used to sing ...the bush used to fairly rattle with them. You know we used to think that was great.⁹⁸

The interview also gives examples of the way in which women interpreted Australian bush songs differently from men. Kath plays the song, *My Own Native Land*, on accordion as a waltz, followed by discussion as to the meaning of the term 'native'. Some folklorists have interpreted the term as meaning an aboriginal woman, but for Kath McCaughey, the term means a white woman who has been born in Australia.:

D. dH. ...I knew these words and also 'no matter how far in the bush it may be with a dear native girl to share it with me'

K.M. That's right.

D. dH. 'native' meaning born in Australia?

⁹⁶ In Catherine Peatey's recordings. NLA TRC 2359/2, 6, 8, 16, 37. Sally Sloane also makes reference to her songbook in her interview with Warren Fahey and Graham Seal: NLA TRC 5724/1-7

⁹⁷ Kath McCaughey, interviewed by Dave de Hugar, NLA TRC 2869. The songbook is held in the Transcript run. Georgiana McCrae's songbooks, the earliest dating from approximately 1827, also include newspaper clippings of sentimental poems, news items and obituaries. See Chapter 3 for full details.

⁹⁸ Kath McCaughey interviewed by Dave de Hugar, NLA TRC 2869 Jan 1985-Feb 1989.

K.M. That's right...I said to Mumma one time, "was she a dark girl?" "NO!" Mum said "She wasn't - she was a native girl she was born out here..."⁹⁹

The meaning of songs is always determined by the context in which they are sung and by whom. Kath describes the distinction between songs she enjoyed and those 'belonging' to men, like *Bold Jack Donahue*. Unlike Sally Sloane, bushranger songs were not for her:

All those kind of songs they were very popular round at the country parties and in the hall or any thing that was on. And most times at these parties each guest would be called upon to render an item for them and these songs would come out and it'd always be a man that would sing them. But I sort of didn't like those...I'd like to listen to them and that whoever was singing them and that - but as for ...to pick it up and want to play the tune or learn it...no sir I wasn't fascinated with it.¹⁰⁰

In comparison with the public performance above, she provides a description of how her mother would sing as she sewed, the song bringing memories to life as she worked, blending past and present:

She used to sing songs to us...she'd be sewing, see - and I'd be there perhaps sewing buttons on or making eyelet holes for her and while she would be sewing handwork the both of us - mum would sing songs to me. Oh she always sang sad songs and things...this day I went over to the milking yard underneath the oak trees it was and I went there and mum was singing *Fernerie*: She plays the air on the accordion, recites verse one then sings the following verses:

*The wind is fair the day is fine
Swiftly runs the time
Our boat is floating on the tide
That wafts us o'er doon Fenerie...*

*Oh mother a name to me so dear
O must I must I leave thy care*

⁹⁹ Kath McCaughey, *Ibid.* p.16. Dave de Hugar's Transcription.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.49.

*To try a world so full of snares
Far far from thee and Fenerie*

*Farewell dear father best of men
Ah see she spreads her swelling sails
Adieu, adieu my native land
My last farewell to Fenerie.¹⁰¹*

Kath resumes the story:

And when I went over there to the thing the tears was all down her face there and I said to an old friend of mum's - I said "Sinclair...Do you know what I caught mum doing...I said Mumma was singing Fenerie and I went over there and she'd been crying. And Mrs Sinclair had a smile on her and she said "Did she tell you what she was crying for?" and I said "No she didn't. I would say Mum might have loved someone (smiles) I think so, that might have took her back a bit..."¹⁰²

Whatever had happened in the past for Kath's mother was kept secret, but the song was the means by which the grief of the event could be expressed.

De Hugard notes that Kath McCaughey had an exercise book titled: "Blaxland Flat School, Armidale Road, commenced 13th August, 1897" with the song words written in it. This version of the song includes verses missing from Kath's recollected version, and interestingly ends with a verse about a lost child:

*Oh Archibald my only child
Thy infant steps may heaven guide
If I return oh may I find
You smiling still in Fenerie¹⁰³*

The significance of the song for both mother and daughter is reflected in the different versions they remembered and this is important evidence about the way in which

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.17.

transmission of folk songs is strongly influenced by the events associated with learning the song.

For the North Coast women discussed in this chapter, a strong motivation was to make and share music that was useful to the community when performing outside the home. Music originating in the British Isles was maintained because of its capacity to be recognized by a broad variety of listeners. Inside the domestic sphere, songs and tunes were used to assist work routines, to process emotions and to share with close friends and family.

Looking back to records about women in the days of first European settlement, folk songs initially voiced the spirit of defiance convict women fostered to survive in the harsh conditions of the new colony. While settlers' wives chose less bawdy songs to sing, the use of music was just as fundamental to their struggle to survive and assert their own identity in a new land far from friends and family.

In conclusion, the evidence from the women discussed above can be used to refute the key points about the supposed lack of Australian women's folk music identified in the introduction to this chapter. Women were clearly part of all folk music making activities, including provocative street singing, instrumental music for dances and silent movie accompaniment, family gatherings and church services. Examination of the origins of Australian folksongs reveals the role of women as creators and collaborators in the evolution of Australian folk music. Many transplanted songs were preserved and used to express the unspoken thoughts and emotional concerns of Australian women musicians as well as performed during social gatherings. Because its themes are universal, folk music was performed by women, regardless of class, to communicate within their chosen social networks and to make sense of their lives.

In the subsequent case studies of selected women who lived in Australia from 1840 to the present, I will focus on how individual women from different social backgrounds and different eras have contributed to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. The first case study about Georgiana McCrae reveals how this genteel Scottish immigrant relied on her music and its links to her Scottish heritage in the transitional process of settling in Australia.



Fig. 12. Georgiana McCrae, self-portrait, 1824.

CHAPTER THREE

PAGE AND MEMORY: THE INTERACTION OF WRITTEN AND ORAL TRADITIONS IN THE MUSIC COLLECTIONS OF GEORGINA McCRAE

And her voice's rich music when nought discomposes
Like the nightingale's - full, soft and clear in its closes
Sinks deep in the soul-restraining or taming
Or should the theme prompt her, inspiring inflaming -
Then a songbird is she - but I'm not so bold
As attempt to describe how she charms young and old
With ballad or song of times now grown hoary
The "Auchindoon" bleeze - or "the bonnie Yerle o' Moray" -
Or when ended the ditty, the buzz and the throng
The honours and praises that quite overwhelm
The sweet bird of the magical song....¹

Georgina McCrae's collection of Scottish songs and piano music is representative of a genre of folk music, which has been overlooked by folk revival commentators because it was music made in the domestic sphere; because the songs were a transplanted tradition, not 'home-grown'; and because much of Georgina's music was notated for piano and voice rather than existing solely in her memory as a result of oral transmission. In fact, Georgina's repertoire was shared with passing musicians and handed on to her children in a manner consistent with the transmission of traditional music defined in the Introduction (p.19.). As Philip Bohlman comments, "folk music requires a vital social basis for its continued practice"² and Georgina McCrae, in her engagement with musicians from all social

¹ Poem written by Andrew McCrae in celebration of his and Georgina's 14th Wedding Anniversary: Dated "Undercliff (Arthur's Seat, Mornington Peninsula) 21st September 1844" in Thérèse Weber (Ed) *The Port Phillip Papers: The Australian Journal of Georgina McCrae*, PhD Thesis, School of Language, Literature and Communication, University of NSW, November 2000, Vol. 1. p.442.

² Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana University Press, 1988, p.53.

levels, as musician, teacher of her children and hostess for musical gatherings, facilitated the performance and transmission of folk music in the early days of colonial Victoria. By using Georgiana McCrae as a case study, I am challenging the notion of Australian folk music after white settlement —that is, the music made and used by people as accompaniment to daily tasks and in the rituals of everyday life, not performed for commercial gain — as consisting solely of bush songs about itinerant male bush workers, made and “owned” by this social group alone. Women with formal music training and women from all classes participated in the recreation and perpetuation of folk music and their contribution has been overlooked to date. In addition, those working class women interviewed by folk revival collectors often came from musical backgrounds that included the influence of formally trained musicians.³ The predominantly communist allegiances of collectors during the folk revival often determined the choice of nationalist material they requested from their informants and engendered the bush/ working class image they promoted for Australian folk music.

This chapter explains how Georgiana’s Scottish folk music repertoire, popular songs and the parodies she composed here were performed in colonial Victoria. The survival of her manuscripts, in particular the hand-copied scores, provide unique evidence of the music used by a pioneering woman. When analysed in relation to her diaries and letters, the personal transcriptions and harmonization of folk melodies and songs are a record of the musical tradition that Georgiana brought with her to Australia. They also reveal how this musician used musical items as an expression of her emotional state. Georgiana’s hand written variants of folk tunes preserve what Grainger described as “radical points of enrichment, inventiveness and individualization, evolved in accordance with personal characteristics and hallowed and cemented by consistent use.”⁴ Her musical signature is preserved in these documents. Georgiana was a highly accomplished musician and her wider repertoire included art music, operatic pieces, popular songs and dance melodies.⁵ Nationalistic Scottish folksongs are strongly represented in her repertoire and her

³ See Chapter 4 for the description of Sally Sloane’s grandmother who was a trained singer.

⁴ Percy Grainger, ‘Collecting with the Phonograph’, *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, Vol. 111, No. 12. May 1908, London, p.155; also in Jane O’Brien, *The Grainger English Folk Song Collection*, University of Western Australia, Music Monograph, 1985 p.ix.

⁵ Rosemary Richards’s book, *Frae the Friends and Land I Love*, Self-published, 2005, gives a commentary on the McCrae Homestead Songbook that provides analysis of Georgiana’s vocal and piano skill in relation to the repertoire.

written documents assert the perception of herself as a Scot in exile, but her music was the focus of the social interactions with people from all racial backgrounds in the new colony as she sought to consolidate a sense of belonging.

A most important distinguishing characteristic of a folk musician as compared with a concert musician is the readiness of the folk musician to provide music on request from a broad repertoire. Typically, a concert musician will be less inclined to perform any piece that is not in their immediate concert repertoire and at a concert performance standard.⁶ Georgiana's diaries reflect her readiness to play and sing with whoever was willing, whatever their musical ability or social background, and her ability to span the performance barriers of different musical genres. Her talent was rehearsed daily in the music she made to entertain and teach her family and the repertoire she drew on to share with visitors.

Georgiana Huntly Gordon was the illegitimate daughter of Jane Graham and George Gordon, who became the 5th Duke of Gordon in northeastern Scotland. Born on 15th of March 1804, she spent her childhood in bohemian Somers Town, London, living with her mother, educated by French nuns and a series of specialist tutors who taught her dancing, piano, singing, drawing and painting. Informal music-making within the Somers Town community was one of Georgiana's early experiences, recalled affectionately in her *Recollections of an Octogenarian*.⁷ Following her mother's injury in a carriage accident, she lived first with her grandfather and then her father in Gordon Castle, where she took her place at the piano during family gatherings, participating in the music making of the Gordon family—a tradition well documented in the patronage records for published anthologies of Scottish song and dance. For example, one dedication reads:

To her Grace, the Duchess of Gordon [Georgiana's Grandmother]
These Reliques of Ancient Scottish Poetry are inscribed by the editor; because her Grace's taste will discover their merit through the rust of time; Her patriotism will applaud their preservation; and her elevated rank and distinguished character will

⁶ Frederick Neumann, *New Essays on Performance Practice*, London, UMI research Press, 1989, & Ragnhild Knudsen, "Learning by ear or from written music: does it make any difference to the way we know a piece?" ICTM conference, Sheffield, 2005.

⁷ SLV MSS PA 04/64, Box 7.

extend to them that protection which they may justly claim from the eminent among our Scottish matrons.⁸

It was at Gordon Castle that Georgiana met and fell in love with her cousin Perico, and this romance is documented in a series of journal entries cross-referenced to matching dates on her piano music. The romance was thwarted by Georgiana's step-mother, Elizabeth Brodie, the Duchess of Gordon, who arranged, instead, that Georgiana should marry a lawyer, Andrew McCrae. There seems to have been little passion in Georgiana's acceptance of McCrae as her comment on her wedding day reads, "left my easel at G.C. [Gordon Castle] — and changed my name."⁹

In 1838 Andrew McCrae followed other family members to the antipodes. Unwillingly Georgiana joined him in 1840 with their four children and lived in a series of dwellings as her husband's business fortunes fluctuated. She gave birth to four more children in Australia. Later in life she lived apart from her husband, but when he returned ill, from Scotland in 1874, she nursed him until he died later that year. Georgiana continued to move between her children until her own death in 1890. Her Australian journal provides an important record of early Australian society describing the financial vulnerability of the early settlers (with examples like the purchase of her piano from a business associate of her husband's, forced to pay a debt),¹⁰ and the enjoyment expatriate Scots found in her musical evenings.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the nationalistic fervor in the press of the 1890s and the 1950s folk revival promoted the definition of Australian folk music as bush music, the property and creation of the rural laboring class, transmitted through an oral tradition. This is an inadequate classification as the practice of folk music in Australia incorporates multicultural influences from the old world, from stage performances and other musical genres and has always transcended gender and class. Georgiana's collection of five hand-written musical anthologies illustrates the process of transmission of folk music through the copying of music

⁸ Robert Jamieson's *Popular Ballads and Songs from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions*, Vol. 1, Edinburgh, Archibald Constable & Co., 1806. Tocher Archive, Edinburgh: D2 (S) JAM

⁹ Noted on a sheet: List of Portraits painted for Fame (and Money) in the Journal Feb. 1845, Thérèse Weber, *Port Phillip Papers, The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, PhD Thesis Critical Edition, University of NSW, 2000, p.494.

¹⁰ Entry for July 1st, 1842, *Port Phillip Papers, The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, Ibid. p.208.

manuscripts, a process to which women contributed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This process incorporated elements of oral transmission in the form of notated variations from the original, and fostered a tradition of improvisation by maintaining the simplicity of the piano accompaniments notated for traditional songs and dance tunes. Georgiana used her piano and vocal albums to teach her children, passing on the Clementi tradition in which she had been taught: “the old piano...assisted [Georgiana’s] little girls in learning music...”¹¹ and to make music with her family:

The concerts of the old bush days were now revived. (Georgiana) once more played and sang every evening, the manly voices of the elder sons blending with that of their mother.¹²

The use of the expression “old bush days” in this context connotes the linkages between the colonial frontier environment and the Scottish traditions of family musical evenings. The isolation and unsophisticated living conditions of bush life made the McCrae family eager to preserve and practise their Scottish music. The next generation of Australians would take this lack of domestic comforts as inspiration for creating songs related to their life on the land.

In the history of Scottish music, women are at the core of transmission and composition of songs from the earliest documented sources, and Georgiana’s life and music are consistent with this tradition. The most renowned singer of the Northeast is Mrs Brown of Falkland, or Anna Gordon, an educated woman whose ballads constitute the oldest repertoire of a single singer in Anglo-Scottish balladry. “They were mostly learned before 1759, at a time when the Northeast was still largely non-literate, and the old conditions of life had not been disrupted by social upheaval.”¹³ Buchan insists that Anna Gordon’s delivery of her songs was a recreation of the story rather than a rendering of a fixed text, and that she was a traditional singer in a transitional phase of ballad evolution. A daughter of a professor, literate and well educated, Anna Gordon learned her ballads from multiple female sources: her mother, a maidservant, and her aunt who had learned

¹¹ Frances Octavia Gordon McCrae, *The Piano Story*, published by George Gordon McCrae, 1962, p.5.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972, p.67.

her repertoire from old women living near her. I propose that Georgiana represents another transitional musician, with a different repertoire to Anna Gordon, but nonetheless, living the role of tradition bearer in her new colonial life. Her music collections document a link with pre-literate airs and songs, and her improvisational skills were employed to free her music from the inflexibility of the harmonized text and piano accompaniment. She grew up experiencing the “transitional, interactive nature” of Scottish culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, wherein “upper-class women were still able to be in contact with and draw upon vernacular tradition in their ballad singing and song composition, although society was sufficiently hierarchical to prevent the upward social movement of the lowly born”.¹⁴

The five hand-written music anthologies of Georgiana McCrae encompass songs with words and no music, transcriptions of songs with piano accompaniment, hand written copies of the airs for dance music, and copies of art music works. These scores and the music notated in them are significant for the following reasons: the time and effort involved in transcribing this amount of music by hand would only have been expended by a musician who was going to use the music she notated regularly;¹⁵ detailed sources for many of the pieces, indicates the range of music entering the domestic performance environment through similar collections across Australia; the variety of music transcribed indicates a desire to own music that would entertain a diverse audience and engage visiting musicians; the repertoire indicates a high level of technical expertise; and the nature of some of the scores suggests that the owner would practise the 18th century keyboard techniques of improvisation.

These music anthologies provide the primary source evidence for the discussion of transmission and the operation of tradition. The first section of the chapter challenges definitions of folk music that are exclusive of musical literacy and establishes the role of tradition in the music of Georgiana McCrae. For Georgiana and women like her, music maintained links with European culture while helping the musician to establish an identity and a new community in Australia. The

¹⁴ Ibid., p.454.

¹⁵ I estimate that each page would have taken 30-40 minutes to transcribe, depending on the presence of lyrics, based on a survey of three colleagues and my own transcription speed.

importance of the piano to women in rural and remote areas of the bush is central to this analysis.

The second section of the chapter links biographical facts to analysis of the scores. It critiques Georgiana's hand-written music manuscript books in relation to her life through inquiry about how her musical activities reveal the issues of social authority, gender and performance (as defined in the thesis introduction) to assess her role in the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music. Throughout this discussion, the operation of transmission and adherence to tradition are documented. The three main periods of her life were: Early musical education while resident in London; life at Gordon Castle; marriage to Andrew McCrae and removal to Australia.

Both the formally educated Georgiana McCrae and the ear-trained singer, Sally Sloane, (the subject of the following case study) have repertoires that provide documentary evidence of multiple exchanges between aural versions of traditional music and other music forms using improvisation and variation; transmission occurring through family traditions of musical education and also by interaction with other musicians, either by sharing written music or by sharing music through ear learning. Material found in both women's repertoires is widely played in the folk community today.¹⁶

McCrae's social position was upper middle class and Sloane's working class, but many items in McCrae's repertoire bear the hallmark of folk music, as distinct from popular or art music, wherein the practitioner exerts ownership of the material by varying and re-creating the original item, performing it themselves in relation to their community without commercial intervention. The inclusion of different versions of the same song in Georgiana's music demonstrates her interest in the nature of folk song variations. Her attention to detail regarding the provenance of traditional items in her anthologies is consistently documented on the pages. While Georgiana's musical practice was founded on written music and Sloane was an ear-

¹⁶ For example, *The Flowers of Edinburgh* reproduced in Georgiana McCrae's Manuscripts is used widely for dance accompaniment and Sally Sloane's song *The Springtime it Brings on the Shearing* is a standard in any bush band's repertoire.

singer and player, both women's repertoires demonstrate the operation of tradition as explained in the Introduction. While the core of the musician's repertoire remains constant, details are changed in order to communicate with the present audience.

The performance environments in which Georgiana McCrae and other pioneer women played their music encouraged the treatment of the music manuscript as a "live text". Folk music tunes were familiar to many European settlers because of their transmission through art music settings as well as oral transmission. The structure and melodic form of folk songs meant that it could be shaped by the musician to communicate with the audience as it changed from occasion to occasion. To quote Finkelstein:

Wherever folk music continues as a living tradition, it is a voice of its own times. It is distinguished by its combination of simplicity and artistic truth, or immediate relation to life; a product of the fact that it is a social and communal possession, constantly put to use like a well handled tool.¹⁷

The music of McCrae and Sloane embodies this idea in ways I will discuss in each case study.

McCrae represents the transition of Scottish traditional, popular and art music, from the drawing rooms of her homes in England and Scotland, to the parlors of Australian frontier homes. She embodies the prevalent tension felt by many women in the colony between allegiance to an old world cultural identity and the necessity to find the means of creative, musical expression to survive and communicate with others in the new colonial environment. The tension documented in diary entries between Georgiana and her husband arising from McCrae's control over Georgiana's money and her right to make a living as an accomplished miniaturist are symptomatic of the kind of power imbalances which were the source of matrimonial conflict in colonial society in this era. For Georgiana, the great appeal of the Scottish songs and dances she played stemmed from the capacity for this music to bridge the past and the present, bringing to life a sense of connection and continuity of traditions, allowing her to temporarily transcend her domestic

¹⁷ Sydney Finkelstein, *Composer and Nation*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1960, p.18.

situation. Her great facility with performing this music also gave her an important power base for securing a network of friends and social allies through her musical entertainments. Georgiana McCrae endured periods of financial distress and lived, for six-and-a-half years, in a modest slab dwelling in a relatively remote location on the Mornington Peninsula while her husband pursued his dream of living a farming life. She wrote:

We are 53 miles from Melbourne, the Church and the Doctor – our nearest neighbour 6 miles away – The others Mr Barker at Cape Shanck 14 miles south from here – & Capt Reid late 45th Regt 10 miles north of us —¹⁸.

Wherever she lived, she always maintained her personal identity as the daughter of the Chief of the Gordon clan, and her musical links to her Scottish roots.

A substantial proportion of the written music she brought with her from Scotland had been copied by hand from collections in London in the early years of her education, and later, in the 1820s at Gordon Castle. It is evident that she continued to add to her hand copied music collection when she reached Australia. In addition, a large proportion of this music consists of piano settings of Scottish and Irish folk songs and dances. I assert that by choosing and copying music in Scotland and in Australia, and the ways in which she used and performed this material, McCrae was contributing to the transmission of folk material in the antipodes. Her music conforms to the key criteria for definition of folk music: music, which is *a* version, not *the* version of the song or tune; music learned from relationship with others who hold a powerful emotional significance for the musician; music that demonstrates evidence of transmission: improvisation and variation, and “reverberates between past and present;”¹⁹ music that is performed in a community context not an art music construct, and music which “produces a feeling of security for the listener by voicing the particular quality of the land and life of its people”²⁰

¹⁸ Entry for July 1846 in Georgiana McCrae’s Journal, Edited by Thérèse Weber as *The Port Phillip Papers: The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, Op.cit., Vol 2, p.586.

¹⁹ Coplan, in Blum, in Stephen, Bohlman, P.V., Neuman, Daniel M. *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, Illinois, Illinois University Press, 1991, p.45.

²⁰ Alan Lomax, 1960:xv in Phillip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Op.cit., p.52.

The fact that she also played art music and popular songs in no way detracts from the legitimacy of her significant place in the evolution of Australian folk music. In the eighteenth century Scottish music tradition inherited by Georgiana, the two distinct types of music: 'folk' and 'classical' "coexisted within the same cultural framework and even, to some extent, interacted, while retaining their individualities and behaving, in a sociological sense, quite differently from each other."²¹ It is also important to note that in comparison with Highland Gaelic songs kept alive in an oral tradition, Lowland Scots songs and tunes were recorded in manuscripts from approximately 1630 on and were in print in publications such as *Orpheus Caledonius* by 1725,²² representing the beginnings of a printed music tradition. The Scottish Nationalistic songs, either traditional or composed by her relatives, were the connection with Georgiana's heritage. The folk song settings from other nationalities, the popular songs and the art music settings, were the means of making new connections with whoever visited her home in Australia and contributed to the creation of a new sense of community and a new cultural identity. Her hand copied music books replicate some of the main thematic threads as those in the Margaret Sinkler Music Book dating from 1710, which is also a "record of old Scots tunes and fashionable airs" and historically significant "in its vivid references to people places and events of the time."²³

Improvisation is part of the Scottish tradition, facilitating the survival and transmission of the kind of music Georgiana played by linking written and oral traditions. In the Preface to Patrick MacDonald's 1780 publication, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*, the collector remarks that he intends the settings to be merely a guideline as to how a performer should accompany the songs:

It is left to performers, either to take them as they are, or to fashion them according to their own taste or system.

²¹ David Johnson, *Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, London, OUP 1972, p.3.

²² Francis. M. Collinson, *Traditional and National Music of Scotland*, Lon., Routledge and K. Paul, 1966, p. 120.

²³ James Porter, 'The Margaret Sinkler Music-Book, 1710', *Review of Scottish Culture* Vol. 16, 2002-3, Tuckwell Press, pp.1-18.

Georgiana would have been familiar with this collection as her Grandmother, the Duchess of Gordon, is listed in the Subscriber's list as the purchaser of two copies. MacDonald stresses the importance of improvisation and flexibility in the choice of accompaniment:

Some of those airs, will probably produce their happiest effect, when sung or played, in a simple expressive manner, without accompaniment, or at most, with a few octaves founded to the empathetical notes, such as were struck upon the harp in former times. Any regular accompaniment...will perhaps weaken, in some degree, their native expression, by giving them a modern artificial appearance.²⁴

In many of the pieces, the piano accompaniment is simple, allowing for improvisation depending on the number and skill of other participating musicians. There is also a Gordon family tradition of poems, written by various members of Georgiana's family with notes instructing that the words be sung to well-known airs.²⁵ In the performance tradition Georgiana experienced during her life in Scotland, singing traditional songs unaccompanied was also customary.²⁶ Georgiana, like other musical settlers, needed her broad repertoire to maximize opportunities to make music with whoever happened to visit, particularly during her time on the Mornington Peninsula: "In early Melbourne days, her house was the rallying place for genuine, or talent of any kind."²⁷

Georgiana described herself as an exile from Scotland throughout her life²⁸, and her music was an attempt to assert her cultural heritage and affirm her personal identity in relation to the 'community' of people, both indigenous and immigrant Australians, with whom she associated. Although she complained of homesickness, her music making through social networks created a position of notoriety she could not have achieved in Scotland. Her journals testify to the frustration and anger she felt at certain times about the poverty and isolation in which she considered herself powerless, but the media of the day depicts her as someone who was significant in Melbourne society. Georgiana's music supported her social success through the inclusive nature of her repertoire, her hospitality and her skill as

²⁴ Patrick McDonald, *Collection of Highland Airs*, Edinburgh, 1784, Tocher Archive, G3 (41) MacD, p.18.

²⁵ For example, in SLV MS 12831: F3606 There are copies of poems by Alexander, Fourth Duke of Gordon, marked in this way.

²⁶ Henry Graham, *Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, London, A.G. Black, 1900, p.101. where he refers to Allan Cunningham's *Scottish Songs*, 1818, Introduction. Vol.I.

²⁷ Alexander Sutherland. Obituary for Georgiana McCrae in the *Melbourne Australasian*, May 1890, copied by Hugh McCrae, in MS 12831, Box 3606/14, State Library of Victoria.

²⁸ Letters to Ethel Anderson, 5th January, 1888, Hugh McCrae Papers MS 13051 BOX 3723/11, also cited in Niall.

a practitioner. The folk music pieces offered familiar and accessible music across the social spectrum of a diverse colonial audience.

Perhaps the strongest lament voiced continually by Georgiana is her longing for a permanent home and this complaint strengthened her attachment to the traditions associated with the music she had brought with her — the traditions of a technique inherited from her classical piano teacher and the traditions of Scottish music made and re-made by her father's family. From her earliest years, she moved constantly; first between Scotland and London, then after her marriage, removing to Australia, where the pattern of her early married life was continued by the constant changes of home as Andrew McCrae abandoned the legal profession to farm. On the 27th of June, 1845, as she camped in a make-shift hut at Arthur's Seat on the Mornington Peninsula, she wrote, regretting the move from her established life in Mayfield, "Thrice happy those who have never dwelt but in one dear settled Home in their native land!"²⁹

Despite the continual setbacks and up-rootings caused by her husband's ill-fated farming and employment schemes, Georgiana's piano playing and singing enabled her to develop continuing strategies for communication and intimacy within the financial and emotional constraints of her marriage. George Gordon McCrae, Georgiana's son, describes the rich variety of characters the family entertained, providing many opportunities for sharing music and stories:

To her many useful and domestic qualifications, our mother added all the graces of an accomplished hostess and entertainer—our house lying on the road branching off to Cape Shank, Western Port and the Heads, we used not infrequently to be called upon to extend our hospitality to passers by. There were no inns or "dak bungalows" in our part of the country...people would 'drop in' unannounced and unexpected very often too; inconveniently though it was.... it is certain that we saw in the course of these impromptu visitations many really extraordinary characters, and listened to some remarkable yarns and stories as if noted down and compiled would have made a most readable volume.

²⁹ Thérèse Weber, *op.cit.*, Vol. 2. p. 556.

In brief, we saw at our table examples of most phases of colonial Society from “His Honour the Superintendent” down to the travelling “bagman”....³⁰

One of the most colourful musical characters who visited the homestead on Mornington Peninsula was a German itinerant labourer. He provides an interesting real-life characterisation of Von Herder’s idealised notion of the Spirit of the Folk:

Friedrich was a tolerably tall, stoutly built young man who carried himself like a soldier. He had been in the “Land wehr?” and had “Served the King” his “three years”, after which, travelling all through Germany he got as far as the Russian frontier always gaining some fresh experience as a cabinet maker...He was fond of quoting his favourite authors translating passages for us into German = English with freedom and confidence between whiffs from his generously painted pipe.....he would become almost idyllic in describing the beauties of nature upon the soul, in a sort of Allegro movement;- (long passages of monologue in phonetic German)...upon which, snatching up his guitar, he would improvise something Germane to the occasion...

.... My Father who highly appreciated Friedrich’s Song, his guitar: pieces and accompaniments, used not infrequently to send for him in the evenings when he would give us all of the best in his repertoire. Among these pieces and songs I liked particularly “An invitation to the dance”, a “Song of the Months” “the Postilion of Moscow”, “Napoleon’s March”, “Eiserl and Beisrl”, “Vaterlandslied” and some Burschen Drinking songs” etc.³¹

Challenging stereotypes: Georgiana McCrae and the music of pioneer Australian women.

In the evening, the rain cleared off, - and I heard from the Shore, snatches from an old Barrel -organ – ground slowly – and rapidly by turns, – the notes of the old familiar air “Les Graces!” the graceful flow of the tune coming in interrupted “gusts” across the water seemed to sympathise with my sense of its contrast to my surroundings! And always seemed to give a wailing tone to the concluding bars, as if it repeated again and again, “Il faut subir son sort!” [*One must endure one’s lot in*

³⁰ George Gordon McCrae, *Reminiscences*: SLV MS 1208 2503/5 (d) Vol. Iv.

³¹ George Gordon McCrae, *Reminiscences*, Ibid.

life] — At last, it ceased – and I found everything in our Cabin cold, damp, comfortless and strange with a haunting odour of new paint!³²

These lines from Georgiana’s journal, written the evening she departed from England, describe how she conceived music as an extension and expression of her emotional state. Her music manuscripts are in a sense a journal of these associations. Georgiana McCrae is a historical pioneering figure whose music making contrasts with the stereotypes of Australian nationalist music sought by collectors in the folk revival.³³ Georgiana herself preserved the intangible aspects of her heritage to maintain a sense of continuity in her adopted land, where often the realities of everyday life on a primitive Australian homestead were in conflict with her identity as daughter of the Chief of the Gordon clan. Georgiana’s music became, in Australia, a ritualized behaviour as defined by Christopher Small:

People who live on the margins of society also invent their own,[rituals] not necessarily consciously, in order to keep alive that precious sense of who they are, where they belong, and what they think the relationships of the world ought to be, without which no human being feels it worth while going on living, and in order to pass on that sense to the new generation.³⁴

Georgiana’s diaries leave the reader in no doubt that her fundamental sense of identity was linked to her Scottish nationality with its associated rituals, but her life demonstrates qualities of resourcefulness, resilience and a dedication to music evident in the domestic record of many pioneer women.

Throughout the 19th century the cultural environment women inhabited was such that: the right to work and the nature of employment were controlled by male power structures; financial autonomy as a woman was rare; and isolation affected women from all classes. Georgiana’s life in Australia typifies the ambiguous class system of early settlement wherein being “well-born” did not guarantee a high material

³² Journal entry written at Gravesend, the first evening on shipboard before leaving for Australia; Georgiana McCrae, *Port Phillip Papers: The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, PhD Thesis by Thérèse Weber, University of NSW, 2000, Vol. 11, Part One, p.46.

³³ “I wasn’t particularly interested in folklore, just Australian nationalism,” Wendy Lowenstien interviewed by Edgar Waters, NLA TRC 1946, p.16 of transcript.

³⁴ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 1998, p.97-8.

standard of living in frontier society. She was simultaneously the well educated, albeit illegitimate, daughter of the Duke of Gordon and the wife of the Andrew McCrae, who struggled to make a life in Australia, first as a squatter and then as a public servant. For Georgiana, music was a language and a lifeline in communicating with the outside world as it passed by all her homes, and a means of voicing her own emotions that she chose not to express elsewhere. Her notations of Scottish pieces and folk music items, as music outside the mainstreams of popular and art music, perfectly expressed the ambiguity of her social and emotional situation in Australia. She did not relinquish her piano playing until old age and residence with her children made practice impossible: “She was a talented musician: indeed, after she had passed her seventieth year, she could still sing Jacobite ballads to her own accompaniment with feeling and expression that captivated the audience.”³⁵ As she became steadily less mobile, she wrote that “if she could only get to her piano her spirits would improve”.³⁶

An examination of her musical repertoire offers a unique view of her private and public emotional interactions with others. Like many of her fellow women immigrants, Georgiana had to follow her husband’s attempts at making a living in the colony wherever his ventures took him. Andrew McCrae dreamed of establishing a cattle run that would make him self-sufficient, restore his economic fortunes and provide a family home for future generations. It was Georgiana’s ability to design the homestead and carry out the practicalities of the move that enabled McCrae’s vision to be realized, at least temporarily. Here Georgiana cared for eight children and managed to find time to paint and hold open-house musical evenings. The slab house embodies the contradictions of rural life for many Australian women settlers arriving from the relative civilization of 19th century Europe.

McCrae Homestead, designed by Georgiana, remains today as a well proportioned, aesthetically well-sited dwelling, and yet the stark simplicity of its construction is confronting given the realities of the family life that took place in it. There are two rooms in particular which have special significance when considering how

³⁵ Alexander Sutherland, Obituary for Georgiana McCrae in the Melbourne Australasian, May 1890, copied by Hugh McCrae, in MS 12831, Box 3606/14, State Library of Victoria.

³⁶ Brenda Niall, Op.cit., p.253

Georgiana lived. These are the dining room with its cottage piano (Figs. 13 & 14.) and Georgiana's Sanctuary where she retired from her family to paint and write letters. They represent the dual sides of femininity: the need for social communication by the outer, public self and the need for solitude and private communication with the inner self. Music for Georgiana was the language that facilitated communication for both public and private selves, and her chosen media were piano and vocal music. In a real sense, Georgiana's music is the vanished voice of the house: the piano was located at the heart of the home, in the dining room. Here Georgiana reinforced the connections between the old world traditions and the new, between her inner emotions and outer realities, and where she strengthened the communion of fellow musicians and their audiences. The particular configuration of the room demonstrates the central significance of the piano in the daily life of the family home and the sense of ritualised order imposed by playing music on this instrument. Georgiana's eldest son, George Gordon McCrae, describes the central role of his mother in the life of the family:

As little boys, we owed everything to our mother, who then had the entire charge of us and in the midst of few could know what difficulties, laid down the foundation upon which our tutor came afterwards to build upon so faithfully-It was from her that we inherited our ideas of drawing, painting and music...As for singing, we all are blessed with "Ears" as far as the third or present generation. Our tutor was himself no mean performer on both flute and violin, but did not affect the piano, yet for all that taught us the rudiments, the clefs and scales and what not besides else thus preparing the ground before our mother took us in hand at no small sacrifice of time either, as she kept house, governed the servants, made sometimes and often mended our clothes.³⁷

³⁷ George Gordon McCrae, *Reminiscences*, SLV MS 1208: 2503/5 (d) Vol. Iv.



Fig. 13. Georgiana McCrae's Piano, Arthur's Seat, Victoria.



Fig. 14. Georgiana McCrae's Piano, Arthur's Seat, Victoria.

The importance to the family of Georgiana's piano is commemorated in *The Piano Story*, a short essay written by the second youngest daughter of Andrew and Georgiana McCrae, Frances Octavia Gordon, who was born at Arthur's Seat Homestead on the 20th of June 1847 and died in Western Australia in 1941. It is the piano that acts as narrator, and despite the sentimentality of the piece, the undisputed value of the piano for Georgiana's children is evident:

The old piano has known many joys and sorrows, has watched the dark, silky hair of her mistress fade gradually to silver, and the little ones who once stood on tiptoe to touch the keys with their pink, flower like fingers develop into middle-aged men and women...

Georgiana's musical open house parties were greatly valued by all levels of society, and it is clear that all kinds of music would have been shared and transmitted at these gatherings.

So many people flocked to hear the dear old piano that it was quite enough to turn her head, but then in the year 1841, a piano was in some sort a rara avis in terra....

....The genial Father Geoghan, afterwards Catholic Bishop of Adelaide, more than once sang to the accompaniment of the old piano, "Cruiskeen Lawn" was his best song,There was a Mr Brierly, afterwards marine painter to the Queen, who was subsequently knighted, and Captain R.W. Bunbury, a Navarino hero, and his charming wife, who infused great expression into her singing: also Benjamin Boyd....to say nothing of sundry settlers and men of various occupations, who all paid their respects to the old piano and passed many a pleasant evening in her company.³⁸

To distance Australian women's music from "authentic" bush music, scholars have cited the popularity of the piano in colonial Australia, inaccurately. John Manifold writes:

The balladists frequently mention the piano, but never as a "bush" instrument. Whether at the pub or in the station homestead, played by Mary Grant Bruce or by "the shanty keepers daughter," it is a girl's instrument; almost a symbol of the contrast between outback and civilization.³⁹

³⁸ Frances Octavia Gordon, *The Piano Story*, Published by George Gordon McCrae, Melbourne 1962, pp.1-2.

³⁹ John Manifold, *The Violin, the Banjo and the Bones: An Essay on the Instruments of Bush Music* (1957). Rams Skull Press, Ferntree Gully [Vic.] 1957 p.6.

The description of the rough journey to Arthur's Seat made by Georgiana's piano is reiterated in many women's journals in the pioneering history of Australia. In fact, the piano and the harmonium assisted the transmission of both vocal and dance music through the interaction of ear players and note players and through the system of musicians exchanging their music to be hand-copied by friends. While the piano was not as portable as a fiddle or concertina, the broad ownership of pianos across the spectrum of Australian society demonstrates the non-elitist appeal of the instrument, and supports the claim that it functioned as a folk instrument. Janet Bagshaw, recalling her role in the family dance band in Urbenville, northern NSW, related that despite restricted family finances during the depression, her father bought a piano at a clearing sale (see Chapter Two). This early twentieth century account builds on substantial evidence in the nineteenth century describing the prevalence of pianos in the bush, when families would sell their furniture to pay debts rather than lose the piano to creditors.

An intense bond existed between women and their pianos as they adapted to life in Australia. In 1846 Stewart Mowle described in his diary, the journey of his wife's piano on the back of dray from Duntroon to Ajamatong near Lake George: "It had been packed by Thompson in wet sheepskins, and the result was that the back was loose, the polish taken off part of the top of it, and almost all the keys had been shot the eight of an inch out of their places."⁴⁰ Annie Baxter Dawbin noted the arrival of her piano at her property at Yesabba, after a similar journey in February 1840: "It is in excellent tune and not the least hurt – I had a good strum."⁴¹ Clotilda Bayne, the wife of an Anglican clergyman who had immigrated to Adelaide from England, wrote on the 5th of September 1890, not long after her arrival in Australia, "...I sit and play to myself *Moore's Irish Melodies*."⁴²

⁴⁰ Clarke, Patricia, *The Life and Times of a Colonial Woman, Mary Braidwood Mowle*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1986, p.92.

⁴¹ *Diaries 1834-68*, State Library of NSW, Dixson Library, MSQ 181; in Lucy Frost (Editor) *The Face in the Glass: The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, Port Melbourne : William Heinemann Australia, 1992, p.33.

⁴² Clotilda Bayne, the Diary, inscribed "Clotilda Bayne, the Rectory, Orlestone", covers the period 29 Dec. 1889 to 31 Dec. 1890. It describes Miss Bayne's journey from England to Australia via Italy, and the first few months of her life in Adelaide, where she arrived on 3 June. On 5 June she married an Anglican minister. The Diary includes details of daily life in Adelaide, many references to local Church affairs and several references to Cecil Sharp, the expert on English folk songs and dancing who then held a legal post in Adelaide. NLA MS 2733.

The widespread ownership of the piano by people living in the most remote rural locations gave the instrument a central role in the practice of folk music that it did not have in Europe and the British Isles. Deborah Crisp writes:

[The piano] was potentially a vehicle for all of the musical repertoire of the time, orchestral and chamber, operatic, vocal and choral, as well as keyboard. In addition, it provided a means of continuing the more homely folk traditions of Europe, the songs and ballads and dances.⁴³

Although the words of the folk song versions they performed were often ‘cleansed’ of sexual references and the melodies regulated into strict, printable tempos, the original airs remained recognizable and were accessible to ear players. Scottish musicians of Georgiana’s generation performed using improvisation, automatically varying what was on the written page. For musicians learning songs by ear, parody was and is a distinctively Australian way of claiming or reclaiming a folk song from a printed version.⁴⁴ The idea of adapting an existing song or melody to produce a familiar, yet new, item was a part of the family music tradition inherited by Georgiana. This use of parody; using a known melody and Australian-made words, is firmly established in the Australian folk tradition for male and female musicians as the first step in bridging the gap between cultures.

Music and Biography: Analysis of the Scores.

The greatest proportion of Georgiana’s hand-copied music consists of mainly Scottish and some Irish dance tunes and songs copied from a wide variety of sources, some traceable, others more obscure. What appears to have been most important to Georgiana is the flexibility of this music: its ability to bridge past and present and entertain people from all social levels. The tune remains connected to the past through its familiarity to the audience and musician, while the arrangement reflects the current musical and social environment of the player and audience, and makes the music relevant to the present. For the performer, the music offers the possibility of finding a

⁴³ Deborah Crisp, ‘The Piano in Australia, 1770 to 1900: some literary sources’, *Musicology Australia*, Vol. XVIII, 1995, p.25.

⁴⁴ See Introduction, Chapter One and Chapter 6 for further discussion.

balance between perpetuating a familiar pattern of notes and creating new music to suit the moment.

There are five known hand-written music books that belonged to Georgiana McCrae, and they are all slightly different in character, although there are many items that appear and re-appear in several of the books. The items I have selected are representative of a repertoire that the owner intended to be played with others.

The folk pieces Georgiana transcribed are very different to the Scottish folksongs arranged by Beethoven to the words supplied to him by Edinburgh publisher, George Thomson, in 1815, which are described as, “jaunty with a semblance of folk elements (with) a single bass note ... that gives an imitation of a folksy bass drone.”⁴⁵

In comparison, Georgiana’s transcriptions have been made from Scottish published anthologies and probably from other hand written transcriptions available to her throughout her life. These transcriptions usually encourage freedom for improvisation and variation because of the simplicity of the accompaniment reinforced by the tradition of improvisation long established in Scottish keyboard performance practice. Each of the music books offers pages from a lifetime of music as used on a daily basis.

Georgiana’s repertoire reflected the various stages of her life, beginning with her formal musical tuition in London blended with the informal music making of the Somers Town community, her gathering of a Scottish repertoire while living with her grandfather and father, and the parodies she composed in Australia with her children’s tutor, James McLure. The documented links between her biography and her music provide important insight into how music functioned as a means to express feelings about events. This insight suggests that other women would have used music in this way. In studying her life, there are persistent themes that moulded her choice of repertoire. Her unflinching readiness to play music with all-comers in Australia is recorded in the family papers. Georgiana McCrae’s mother, Jane Graham asserted that she had been married to George Gordon, but no record has been found to this effect. Ambiguity of social position and a sense of injustice were Georgiana’s lifetime concerns based on her illegitimate birth. Several times in her long and eventful life she

⁴⁵ Tim Cornwell, *The Scotsman* newspaper, 7.4.05 <http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/Longlost-Beethoven-duets-with-Burns.2616299.jp>

suffered bitter disappointments and she held her stepmother, the Duchess Elizabeth, responsible for much of her misfortune, including her “exile” in Australia.⁴⁶

A piece of musical evidence for the permanent sense of injury Georgiana carried, is found in the simple song, *Babes in the Wood*. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the song has been a favourite item in the repertoires of many Australian women. Three versions of the song and a newspaper description of the actual historical murders that provided the basis for the words are found throughout her large collection of music. The example at Figure 15 is in *The Gordon Castle Songbook*, and it appears to be a quick transcription or sketch of a harmonized version.⁴⁷ In the *McCrae Homestead Music Book*,⁴⁸ the song retains this melody but has been transposed into A major, and it is described in Georgiana’s hand writing as “The best version.” The 6/8 time signature and florid left hand arrangement in the example below conflicts with the pathos of the tale and in the later version the accompaniment has been simplified.

⁴⁶ Brenda Niall, *Op.cit.*, develops the argument of Georgiana’s sense of unjust treatment from the Duchess in her biography, based on Georgiana’s 1828 Journal: MLV MS 12836 3611/1, Examined 30.5.05

⁴⁷ SLV MSS 12018

⁴⁸ Held at the McCrae Homestead, Dromana, Victoria.



Fig. 15. *Babes in the Wood*, Gordon Castle Version

Childhood and Early Music Education

Fanny Holcroft, a pupil of Clementi and daughter of the author Thomas Holcroft, was Georgiana's childhood piano teacher. Fanny Holcroft was an important influence in Georgiana's life, as the vivid description in her *Recollections of an Octogenarian* attest.

She laid the foundations of strict self-discipline and attention to technical detail that Georgiana remembered vividly throughout her life:

She wore gold-rimmed spectacles and was a very Dragon for keeping time and most particular about fingering—we began with “Purcell’s Ground”—and “The Copenhagen Waltz”—Then “Handel” & some duets by Kotzeluch, Haydn’s Overture in D & Mozart’s Waltzes. My rapid progress under this painstaking teacher was most satisfactory so far as I, myself was concerned...⁴⁹

There was deep affection shared between teacher and pupil, perhaps the strongest emotional warmth from a woman that Georgiana experienced in her childhood, as Georgiana recorded no messages from her mother or other female relatives that compare with the poem given to her by Fanny Holcroft “On the day I entered my teens”:

Dear Girl, may thy innocent heart,
Ne’er experience affliction or guile
May each birthday, improvement impart.
On thee may affection e’er smile—
Lov’d, loving, long mayst thou be blest
And joys filial, long be thy own.
And when youth’s sager scenes shall depart,
May thy age find protection and rest.⁵⁰

Sophie Horn was her singing teacher and probably supplied many of the songs of the popular stage that survive in her music books. In teaching her own children to play the piano, Georgiana imparted not only the part of her repertoire that incorporated traditional music but also the traditions associated with her own teachers.

Her early education in Somers Town, London, was unusual for a woman at that time. As Brenda Niall observes: “from the mixture of aristocrats and working class, French and English, brought together by chance in Somers Town she learned the skills of

⁴⁹ McCrae, Georgiana. *Recollections of an Octogenarian*. SLV PA 04/64, Box 71.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

survival and improvisation which she herself would later need to use.”⁵¹ Georgiana’s musical performance practice maintained these values. Attendance at a French day school ensured that she was bilingual. Later, in 1830, the school became a convent run by the French nuns of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. While she remained a protestant, her exposure to the Roman Catholic faith gave her a religious tolerance that remained an integral part of her enjoyment of eclectic social gatherings. The residents of Somers Town⁵² were a collection of sophisticated bohemians, and made an impression on Georgiana’s early years, probably influencing her own inclusive attitude to social and musical gatherings. The neighbouring Chauvet family had a son who was a professional flute player, and the household of Madame Mosse hosted musical gatherings, “during their *petite soupers*, (they) sang at the table glees, catches, or solos without accompaniments.”⁵³

The French influence in Georgiana’s childhood is profound. After her formal education ceased at the age of ten, until the age of sixteen, the elderly Abbé Huteau came twice a week to teach her “Composition, History and the use of the Globes”.⁵⁴ A violinist before becoming a priest, Huteau encouraged Georgiana’s singing practice.

...he took great pleasure in hearing me sing, and thought so well of the capabilities of my voice that he seriously recommended me to study for a Prima Donna, because with a correct ear, mobile features & a retentive memory, he said, I could not fail of achieving fame and fortune, far more readily than by toiling for years at miniature painting...One evening M Huteau brought with him Mr Taylor of Covent Garden Theatre to hear me sing, and his opinion was that I only needed study to develop a fine mezzo soprano of *two octaves* in compass.⁵⁵

This passage indicates the dedication with which Georgiana approached her musical practice and also provides a rare description of the quality of her voice and the extent of her vocal range at the age of 15. The information is helpful when analyzing the scores

⁵¹ Brenda Niall, op.cit., p.10.

⁵² For historical background of Somers Town see <http://www.kingscrossvoices.org.uk/>

⁵³ McCrae, Hugh, *Georgiana’s Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*, Sydney, William Brooks, 1983. p.18.

⁵⁴ *Recollections*, Op.cit.

⁵⁵ *Recollections*, Ibid.

in her collection and trying to assess which were Georgiana's favoured pieces for herself, or more the kind of music to accompany the vocal efforts of others. She writes,

Later, I had lessons from MD Serres for drawings... There were two elderly sisters of these brothers Serres, Miss Serres nearly blind.... Miss Joanna taught drawing and music.⁵⁶

Perhaps this Joanna Serres is the owner of the initials JHS on the cover of Georgiana's Music Manuscript Book.⁵⁷ The possibility of a career as a singer was not realistic for a woman of her lineage unless she was to flout her family and Georgiana decided on a respectable career as a portrait painter. From this time on, Georgiana's musical performances took place in domestic environments and the focus of her repertoire shifted to relevant music.

The Mystery of the smallest manuscript book: MS 12831.⁵⁸

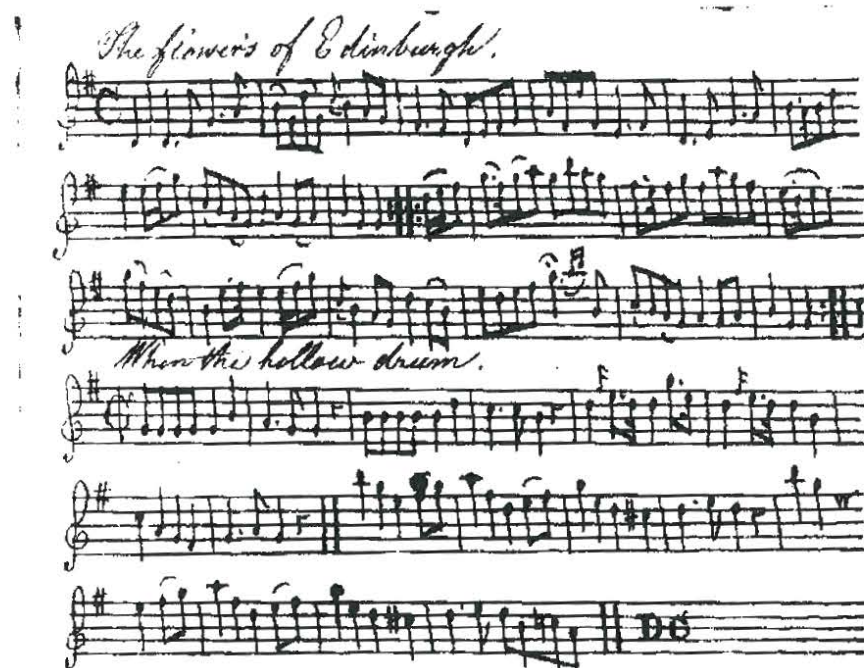


Fig. 16. *The Flowers of Edinburgh and When the Hollow Drum*

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ SLV MS 12018 2516/3.

⁵⁸ SLV Box 3740/9a MS 12831 (Dimensions 19cmx 15cm).

The ownership of this small book of Dance Melodies is puzzling, but its survival indicates that it was important to the family. The music in it is a collection of dance tunes, which are well known in the Australian folk repertoire even today (Fig. 16) and represent a musical selection in which any dance musician visiting the family would find familiar items. It is written in a child's hand, with pages devoted to the practice of drawing treble clefs, and is very well thumbed with several of the pages scribbled on by a child. It is conceivable that they were copied by Georgiana to assist her in remembering the tunes that accompanied her childhood dance classes, as dancing masters were often renowned as fiddlers as well. The shape of the bass clefs is completely different to those in Georgiana's hand in her other Music Books, so possibly this book belonged, originally, to the tutor employed by the McCraes: John McLure, or perhaps it belonged to one of the McCrae boys, and was used to notate the tunes McLure taught them. McLure was a native of Skye and a graduate of the University of Glasgow, "a student of divinity who arrived on the *Brilliant* from Mull ... intimately acquainted with the Gaelic language...".⁵⁹ McLure played the fiddle and the flute and taught the McCrae boys rudiments of music theory to supplement the tuition given by their mother. Several of the transcriptions have the chording characteristic of Scottish fiddle tunes, and this suggests the book was possibly McLure's childhood music book as there is no record of Georgiana or any of the boys playing the fiddle. Most dance tunes in the manuscript are still played widely today for bush dances and for Scottish Country Dances.

The Contents of the Book are:

1. *The Lisbon Minuet*
2. *Nancy's Fancy/Faint and Weary: Quick Step*
3. *Urquhart's Stathspey* by Peter Agnew/*O'er the Moor Among the Heather*
4. *North of the Grampian Hills: Reel: Matthew Briggs: Jig*
5. *Craig Ellachie Bridge* by Mr Marshall: Reel
6. *Ally Crowther: Reel*
7. *Cropies Lie Down: Jig*
8. *Miss Farquharson's Strathspey* by Mr Marshall
9. *Miss Rose Blackhall's Strathspey / Donald McGregor's Rant: Reel*
10. Hornpipe

⁵⁹ *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, Sydney, G. Howe, 1803-1842, 27th of January, 1838, in Brenda Niall, Op. cit., p.312.

11. *Thurot's Defeat*: Jig
12. *North of the Grampians* by Capt Fraser: Strathspey/ *Thurot's Defeat*: Jig
13. *Rachel Rae*
14. *Rachel Rae*; *March/Jenny Nettles*: Reels
15. *West's Hornpipe*
16. *Soldier's Joy/ The Grinder*
17. *Miss Betty Robinson's Reel/ The Opera Hat*
18. *Timor the Tartar/Sandy O'er the Lee*: Reels
19. *The Miners of Wicklow/ The Merry Beggars*
20. *Kenmures on an' awa' Willie/The Bride's Breast Knot*
21. *The Welsh Harper/ The Bold Dragoon*
22. *Sir David Hunter Blair's Reel/ The Maid of Lodi*: Jig/ *The Troughs of Cromdale*
23. *Hibernia/Fly Not Yet*: Jigs
24. *The Flowers of Edinburgh/ When the Hollow Drum*
25. *Irish Gambols*: Slip Jig
26. *Trip to Lexlip*: Jig: Duke of Queensbury's Scots Measure
27. *A Scottish Measure/ Bung Your Eye*: Jig
28. *The Humours of Frankford*: Jig/ *John Small's Minuet*
29. *Laura and Lenza*
30. *The Hills of Glenorchy*
31. *Big Bow Wow*: / *The Hills of Glenorchy*: Jigs



Fig. 17. Gordon Castle before the fire, as Georgiana would have known it.



Fig. 18. Gordon Castle, 2005.

Georgiana's move to Gordon Castle in relation to her music manuscripts⁶⁰

In the early 1820s, Georgiana's mother, Jane Graham, was seriously injured in a carriage accident and Georgiana was taken to live with her grandfather, Alexander,

⁶⁰ 1. The Latrobe Library Songbook: c.1817-1840 MS 2519/4, State Library of Victoria
2. The McCrae Homestead Music Book: c.1822: re-bound c.1875 ⁶⁰
3. The Chaplin Music Book from the Library of Harry Chaplin, held in the Fischer Library, University of Sydney
4. The Gordon Castle Songbook: probably the 1820s. SLV MSS 12018-2519/4

fourth Duke of Gordon at Gordon Castle. The move to Gordon Castle was a profound change of environment from Somers Town, where the prevailing atmosphere was one of belief in the transformative powers of the French revolution. At Gordon Castle, life continued with the same patterns and seasonal routines used for generations. Even today, when one visits the castle, (Fig.17 &18) the sense of a separate world inside the estate walls is palpable. Here, all ideas about a career for Georgiana were shelved as she assumed the role of companion to her lonely grandfather.

The fact that it was her grandfather and not her father who stepped in and brought her to live in Scotland must have had an impact on Georgiana. Her awareness of the precariousness of life and her dependence on the will of others for the direction of her fortune is a theme that is reflected in her diaries. Art and music were fundamental to the way in which she constructed and maintained her identity when she left her mother and finally when she travelled to Australia. Family affections were changeable, but music more than any other part of Georgiana's life, provided a consistent connection with her childhood and her Scottish heritage.

Georgiana's father married the wealthy heiress, and acclaimed musician, Elizabeth Brodie in 1812, an event that had a significant impact on his daughter's future. Just ten years younger than the Duchess, Georgiana would have felt some rivalry with this woman whose musical talents were described effusively by Walter Scott:⁶¹

She played Scotch tunes like a Highland angel. I never in my life heard such fire thrown into that sort of music.

While it was the Duchess's duty to find a respectable husband for Georgiana, there was no incentive to find someone with whom Georgiana would be happy. Georgiana's grandfather, the old Duke, died suddenly in 1827 and less than a month afterwards a serious fire nearly destroyed the east wing of the castle completely. These events marked the end of Georgiana's years of relative freedom and ended her position as the lady of Gordon Castle. From this time on, her destiny was driven by the Duchess's apparent need to remove this "accidental child" from the sphere of Gordon activities.

⁶¹ J.G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, Robert Cadell, Edinburgh. p. 427. In Brenda Niall, *Georgiana*, Op.cit., p.48.

The record of these years exists in an edited version of Georgiana's diary for this era,⁶² wherein is documented the tale of her disappointment over her thwarted romance with Peter Charles (Perico) Gordon. Throughout the account, music features prominently in the courtship, revealing the importance of music as a means of communication in these delicate situations. Dates that correspond with significant events documented in the Journal are noted on one of the music manuscript books, *The Gordon Castle Songbook*.⁶³ Georgiana married Andrew Murison McCrae on the 18th of September 1830 at Gordon Castle, and thereafter, the music books document her married life away from Gordon Castle.

Each one of Georgiana's music books contains a component of music arranged from mainly Scottish and some Irish sources. The inclusion of this music is common in the hand-copied anthologies of the same era I examined in the National Library of Scotland. However, it is the large quantity of Scottish songs and the references in her diaries to the importance of these songs and tunes that makes Georgiana's collection outstanding. The diligence with which Georgiana transcribed the Scottish material is related to two traditions: her lineage as daughter of the Duke of Gordon and the loyalty she exhibited to preserving "the old national ditties"; and the strongly established tradition of women (such as Lady Anne Barnard, Carolina Baroness Nairne and Miss Joanna Baillie) as the tradition bearers of Scots music. Her diary entry for early March 1829 lamented a lack of suitable reverence for Scots songs in the younger generation in Scotland:

One forenoon Lady W (Wedderburn) took me to call on their cousins the Hopes of Pinky House, and made me play the song "By Pinky House oft let me walk" for the edification of the young ladies (Still in the school room) who have not yet learned to appreciate the old national ditties...⁶⁴

Georgiana saw herself as carrying on the tradition of musical guardianship established by the Gordon family, in particular – her grandmother, the Duchess of Gordon. This role is described in the Editor, Robert Jamieson's dedication to his

⁶² 'Stray Leaves From an Old Journal Long Since Committed to the Flames', Ms by Georgiana McCrae, copied from her journals of 1828-9, MS 1208, McCrae Family Papers, La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria. Quoted in Niall, Brenda, *Georgiana*, Op.cit., pp. 55-71.

⁶³ SLV MS 12018.

⁶⁴ SLV MS 12018b: 251602.

1806 publication, *Popular Ballads and Songs from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions*; Vol.1:

To Her Grace the Duchess of Gordon, exc. exc. exc. These Reliques of Ancient Scottish (sic) Poetry are inscribed by the Editor; because Her Grace's Taste will discover their merit through the rust of time; her patriotism will applaud their preservation; and Her elevated rank and distinguished character will extend to them that protection which they may justly claim from the eminent among our Scottish matrons.⁶⁵

The written tradition was considered a far more reliable way of preserving this form of Scottish cultural heritage than the oral tradition. Georgiana's manuscripts demonstrate her adherence to written preservation of this kind of folk music but in traveling to Australia and playing this music in a colonial environment she was reinterpreting the tradition for a new audience and in a new domestic environment that was quite different to the aristocratic circles where it was first aired in her hearing. The presentation and use of her music differ in important ways from that of the famous Lady Nairne, who went to extraordinary lengths to hide her identity as the author of the songs originally published in Purdie's *Scottish Minstrel*.⁶⁶ Georgiana was always at pains to attribute authorship to the items she transcribed, and is concerned with preserving her personal musical tradition rather than re-creating items by altering words or composing melodies.

Many eighteenth century Scottish editors and collector/arrangers dedicated their manuscripts to Georgiana's grandmother, the Duchess of Gordon, and she is frequently listed as patron for these publications. Georgiana, however, used her own talents to copy the music she treasured by hand — she was her own musical archivist. What distinguishes her in taste from her grandmother is her willingness to notate tunes like “The air noted down from the singing of an old Highland woman” in the Gordon Castle Songbook. (Fig.19) In making this transcription, Georgiana recognized the importance of the oral tradition. It is possible, given its date and place in this particular anthology that she noted it down just prior to marrying and leaving Gordon Castle forever. If so, it represents Georgiana's identification with

⁶⁵ Edinburgh, J. Ballantyne & Co. The Tocher Library, School of Scottish Studies D2(s) JAM

⁶⁶ For a full account of the elaborate subterfuge, see Charles Rogers, *Life and Songs of the Baroness Nairne with a memoir and poems of Caroline Olyphant the Younger*, John Grant, Edinburgh, 1905.

music of a deeper Scottish heritage outside the boundaries of the castle world that she could carry with her to the new world: music taken from an older tradition in an attempt to strengthen her own links with a cultural heritage that could reinforce her identity in a foreign new world.

A Highland air
Noted down from an old woman singing it.

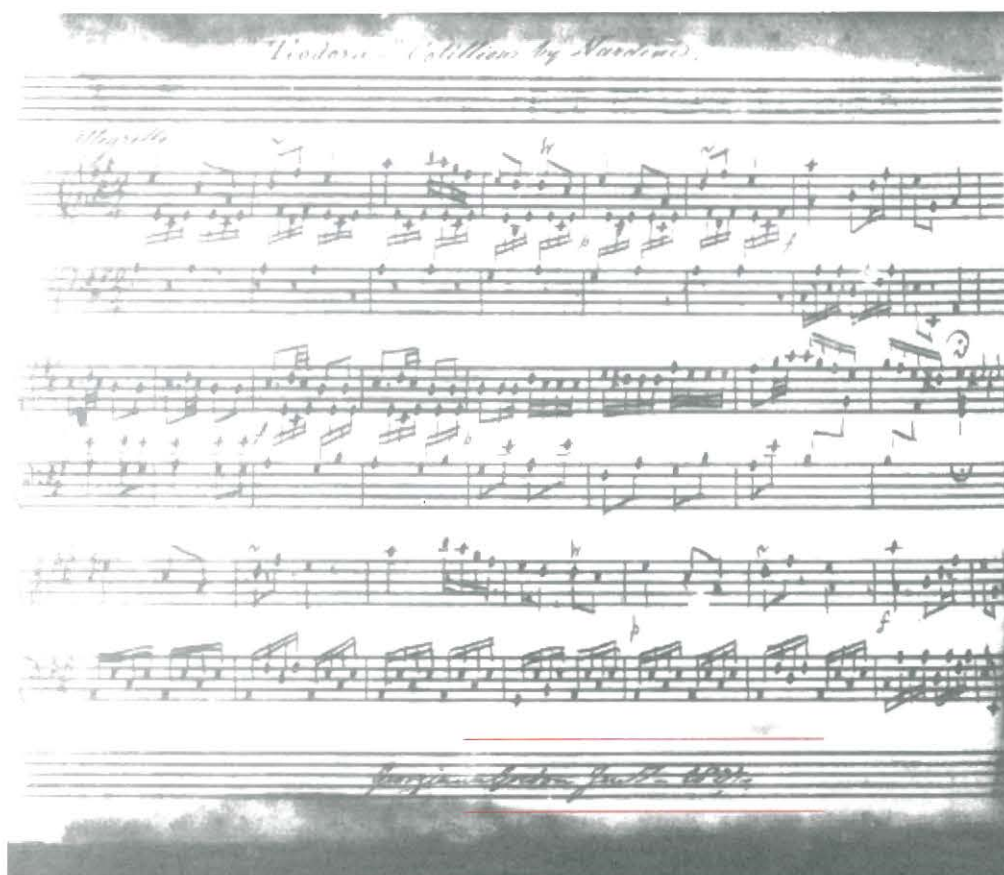
A Fragment 1829

Plaintive... Haste, Haste, show 怜acing soon O'er sink
 into the sea. Come right come friendly right, bring
 rest & peace to me. For I am broken hearted, My
 joy wishes all flesh.

Fig. 19. *A Highland Air noted down from the singing of an old Highland woman.*
 Note Georgiana's experiments with the accompaniment (small notes) in the last 3 bars.

The Latrobe Library Songbook: c.1817-1840 MS 2519/4

This appears to be the oldest of Georgiana's adult music anthologies, judging by the comparatively youthful, rounder character of the handwriting and notation, the strength of the hand and broad spacing of the tablature. True to the spirit of the other three music books, the contents are eclectic, with examples of Scots songs, settings of traditional Gaelic airs, Italian duets, Broadside, an Indian song contributed by her relative Robert Gordon, popular songs published by Burns and also sourced from *Moore's Irish Melodies* and a dance tune: *Teo Dora – Cotillion* by Nandini. (Fig. 20)



**Fig. 20. Teodora Cotillion by Nandini. The inscription reads:
Georgiana Gordon. Jan 17 1827.**

Of all the music books, the *Latrobe Library Songbook* offers a unique record of music linked to events in Georgiana's life through the dates on specific pieces. Six of the items are dated and mostly relate to journal entries written during the time of courtship by her cousin Perico. They are: *The Lament of Flora Macdonald*, *Blue-Eyed Mary*, *Oh Bonnie Lassie come Over the Burn*, *A Guilded Barb*, *Perche Mi Lasci*, and *Teo Dora- Cotillion* by Nandini. Georgiana used music as a means of

expressing her emotional life as well as her journal and her daily conversations. The dates on her music pages (during her time at Gordon Castle and Gordon Hall in 1827-1828) were a constant reminder for years afterwards of the emotions that had shaped her selection of music and the music that had voiced the emotions of that time. Using music in this way as a private language is not peculiar to women musicians. However, these examples add an important dimension to the written record of Georgiana's life and emphasize the associations carried with these melodies each time they were performed in Australia many years after they were copied in Scotland. The following songs are examples of the kind of Scottish music that appealed to Georgiana at this stage in her life after leaving London, when she was seeking to integrate herself into the world of Gordon Castle and Gordon Hall, the residence of the Laird of Wardhouse where her cousin Perico courted her.

Oh Bonnie Lassie come over the burn

Oh Bonnie Lassie come over the burn, And gin your sheep wander I'll gie them a turn; And

will be dae happy in yonder green shade, Gin ye'll be my dauter, and let me be your maid.

*I have a wee doggie that veins at my heel
And that little doggie he's awa' sweet
But it's nae get to my doggie, I'm aye aye I do
If I could be my dauter, I'd sit on my stool.*

*Seven scores of a lammas are a my awn flock
But I'd sell a lammas out o' my 'gan' stock
And buy thee a headless, see coming and going
Gin ye could come, I wad be sit on my stool.*

Linda Gordon Feb. 26. 1827

Fig. 21. *Oh Bonnie Lassie Come Over the Burn.*

O Bonnie Lassie Come over the Burn is dated ‘Gordon Castle: December 31st, 1827’. It is a very simple song of courtship, in the key of A, partially in Dorian mode, but Georgiana’s piano setting shades the air towards A minor. The sentiments of the lyrics are similar to those of *Leezie Lindsay* and *Lassie Wi’ a Yellow Coatie*:

(Verse 1)

*O bonnie lassie come over the burn,
And gin your sheep wander I’ll gie them a turn;
And we’ll be sae happy in yonder green shade,
Gin ye’ll be my dauntie, and sit on my plaid.*

Georgiana had quite probably met her cousin Perico by this date (the relevant journal pages have been lost or destroyed) and her thoughts of romantic possibilities were conceivably taking shape around the musical entertainments she shared with him. The song is not anthologized in the most common publications of the era, and I have found no other printed version to date. Georgiana may have learned it from a family member or houseguest, or notated it from local musicians on the Gordon Estate. Her interest in local traditional musicians is documented in the following description of the outing to visit a blind piper who lived near the castle:

Perico took me, he on his pony & I on foot — to see Jean Cooper and her brother Joe the Blind piper ...at Perico’s bidding Joe played several favourite old airs, winding up at Perico’s request with ‘Saw ye bonny Leslie?’ — while I seated on a low stool made a sketch of poor Joe—⁶⁷

Joseph Cooper is mentioned again in the journal after visiting Gordon Castle to play the music for the dancing for the Laird’s 75th birthday celebrations.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ ‘Stray Leaves from an old journal long since committed to the flames’, SLV MS 12018, p.6, McCrae Family Papers, La Trobe Collection.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14.

Blue Eyed Mary

Come, tell me Blue eyed stranger, say, whether dost thou come
 On that wide world a stranger, hast thou no friends no home? They called me
 Blue eyed Mary, when friends and fortunes failed, But ah! how

fortune's wry, I now am Fortune's child

<p>Come here, I'll buy thy flowers And ease thy hapless lot</p> <p>Still wet with morning showers I'll buy, forget me not!</p> <p>Head'd or, then take those jewels They're fading like my youth</p> <p>But never like these roses Shall wither Mary's breath</p>	<p>Look up, thou poor forsaken I'll give thee home and home</p> <p>And if I'm not mistaken Your woe again will wane</p> <p>But never, I'm happy Mary But never had Fortune's child!</p> <p>Who neer from Fortune's care May yet be Fortune's child!</p>
---	---

Fig. 22. Blue Eyed Mary

Blue Eyed Mary (Fig.22.) is mentioned in the journal entry of February 5th, 1828:

In the Evening the Old Laird would have me to sing-‘Blue Eyed Mary’- He took a great fancy to the simple little ditty when I sang it to him at Gordon Castle, & asked me to copy it for Miss Margaret, so as the song was at hand I had no excuse after this had been sung and applauded Perico asked me to sing some of the old Scotch ditties and I did so-...⁶⁹

The song describes the transition of the narrator from “Sorrow’s Child” to “Fortune’s Child” through the benevolent intervention of a “Kind Sir”. The appeal of this ‘simple little ditty’ for Georgiana is not surprising, given her own recent transition from life in Bohemian Somers Town in London to the grandeur of Gordon Castle in Scotland with the assistance of her grandfather. The setting of the song is very simple, in keeping with its structure and theme. Where Georgiana copied it from is not clear. She could well have noted it from memory and added her own accompaniment.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a song titled "The Meeting of the Waters". The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The second system has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The third system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are written below the third system: "There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet, as that vale in which flows the". The score is handwritten and appears to be a personal copy.

⁶⁹ Stray Leaves from an old journal long since committed to the flames', SLV MS 12018, p.5, McCrae Family Papers, La Trobe Collection.



Fig. 23. *The Meeting of the Waters.*

In comparison, *The Meeting of the Waters* is a direct copy from Moore's *Irish Melodies*⁷⁰ (Fig. 23) with the vocal line and elaborate piano accompaniment. Moore's was a favourite anthology in homes of all kinds and classes in Scotland, Ireland and England and in Australia. The lyrics and the direction, 'with passion' at the beginning of the piece would have had great appeal for Georgiana at this time in her life as she savoured the sanctuary of Gordon Hall:

*'Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace.'*

⁷⁰ *Irish melodies with symphonies and accompaniments* by Sir John Stevenson; and *characteristic words* by Thomas Moore, London, Longmans, 1866.

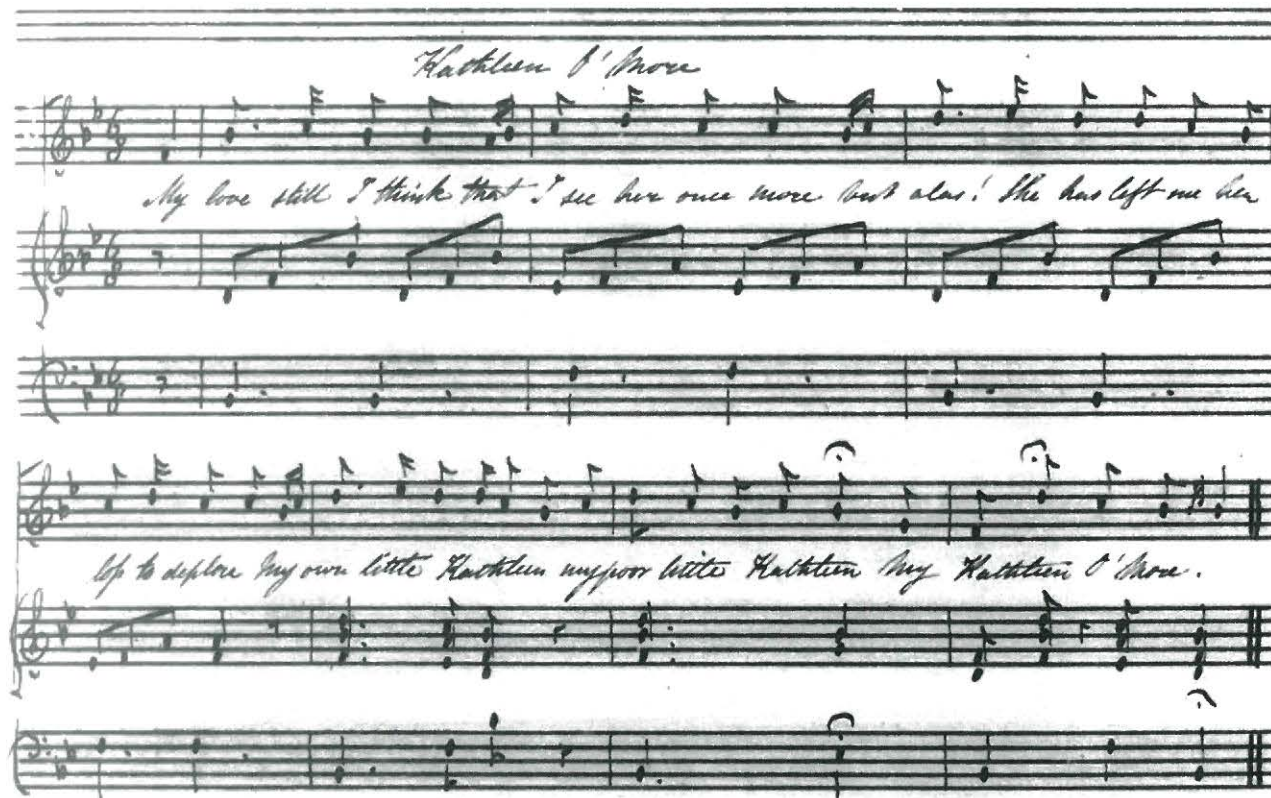


Fig. 24. *Kathleen O'More*.

Kathleen O'More is an interesting inclusion, as the National Library of Scotland dates the most likely period of its publication as a broadside between 1870 and 1890. Georgiana's version predates this by at least 40 years, and like her version of *Blue Eyed Mary*, she could have noted the song down from memory and supplied the simple setting for voice and piano. It was also published in *Songs of Ireland*, c1879⁷¹ as *Kathleen O'Moore*, but the illustrated Broadside held in the National Library of Scotland depicts a plaid-clad couple and the information that it was "Sold by B Stewart, Botchergate, Carlisle."⁷² Like many similar songs, *Kathleen O'More* was claimed by both Scots and Irish, and the frequency with which the song was sung by the two races could be offered as a strong argument for equal cultural possession.

⁷¹ J.L. Hatton and J.L. Molloy, cited in <http://www.contemplator.com/ireland/komore.html>

⁷² <http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/scans/74407637.jpg> also examined by Jennifer Gall at the National Library of Scotland exhibition, *The Word on the Street*, August 2004.

Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch

Roy's wife of Aldivalloch, Roy's wife of Aldivalloch, Wat ye twis she cheated me as

I came o'er the bonie o' Balloch She wad it she wad the wad be wad she said she led me

but if my hat to the fiddle fiddle to queen this time the cards of left her wad

Roy's wife of Aldivalloch Roy's wife of Aldivalloch Wat ye twis she cheated me as I came

o'er the bonie o' Balloch
 I she was a canny queen
 And wad it wad ye wad the Highland wad
 She wad it I, had the bonie wad
 To I, I wad Roy of Aldivalloch
 Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch

<p>The hair has aye, the eye the clear The wad it wad the wad the wad To me the wad will be done The wad it wad the wad the wad Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch</p>	<p>But Roy, it wad the wad the wad Perhaps this day will be done I wad, the wad the wad the wad The wad it wad the wad the wad Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch</p>
---	--

Fig. 25. Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch

Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch (Fig. 25) is a fine example of a folk song that weds words from a known composer; Elizabeth Grant (1745-1814) with a tune attributed to Neil Gow, but one that has many different manifestations. The tune is found in *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1802) entitled *Ruffian's Rant*,⁷³ and has two other sets of lyrics. In keeping with the cross-cultural transmission of folk songs from the eighteenth century onwards, Grant was born in Ireland to Scottish parents, and she spent the last years of her life in Bath. Georgiana's version preserves the simple model found in the other Scots songs described previously.

And Ye Shall Walk in Silk Attire, or The Siller Crown (Fig. 26) as it is also known, was written by Miss Susanna Blamire (1747-1794) with the music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop (1786-1855). The song was quickly absorbed into the oral tradition, as Napier published the original version, describing the author and composer as unknown.⁷⁴ Susanna Blamire's biography bears similarities with Georgiana's. An orphan at seven, Susanna was brought up by an aunt and attended the village school. As diverse in her interests as Georgiana, "She liked dancing, 'doctoring' and playing her guitar."⁷⁵ She lived in Scotland from 1773 and wrote in Scottish dialect: she "adopted Scotland and the Scotch with enthusiasm, and thenceforth wrote Scotch songs such as a Scotchwoman."⁷⁶ Georgiana's version of the song has no curiosities in the lyrics, but it does seem as though the vocal ornamentation has been noted down according to her taste. The use of Italian speed and dynamics suggests that the song was copied from a published source. *The Siller Crown* appears twice again (p.2 at top of page) in the McCrae Homestead Music Book. The first at page 55, in the version "as sung by Miss Paton", in 3/4 time, in E flat major; the second version at page 221 is attributed to Burns, written in the key of F, in 6/8 time. The original transcription in the Latrobe Music Book is in D, in common time, and with a different melody that does not modulate. The different copies are characteristic of Georgiana's habit of collecting several versions of the same piece, almost always attributing the music to its source or its composer when known. The

⁷³ See The National Burns Collection Web Site for a scanned version of this air: http://www.burnsscotland.com/database/results.php?search_term=Ruffian's%20Rant&PHPSESSID=22vpiq77bk8rfcabq0gatfgd57&searchdb=scan

⁷⁴ Lesley Nelson-Burns' Folk Music Site: <http://www.contemplator.com/scotland/silkattire.html>

⁷⁵ *Scottish Women Poets of the Romantic Period*
<http://www.alexanderstreet2.com/SWRPlive/bios/S7021-D001.html>

⁷⁶ Sarah Tytler and J.L. Watson, *The Songstresses of Scotland*, Strahan, London, 1871, p. 245.

large number of Burns versions she collected affirms a fondness for his settings. The appeal for Georgiana of *The Siller Crown* was quite possibly in the lyrics, as it

The Siller Crown

Andante

And ye shall walk in sith attire & siller has to spare / Gin ye'll consent to be his bride, her think on / Would nae mair / Th' she wad buy a siller gown wi' a poor broken heart? / And what's to / me a siller crown / If frae my love I part? / And ye shall walk in sith attire and siller has to / spare / Gin ye'll consent to be his bride her think on / Would nae mair / From infancy he lov'd me still / And still my dearest still prove / How wad it can thine own fulfil / Which first repair'd his hole / I wouldnae walk in sith attire

In Appassionato

me a siller crown / If frae my love I part? / And ye shall walk in sith attire and siller has to / spare / Gin ye'll consent to be his bride her think on / Would nae mair / From infancy he lov'd me still / And still my dearest still prove / How wad it can thine own fulfil / Which first repair'd his hole / I wouldnae walk in sith attire

Fig. 26. *The Siller Crown*

is evident from Georgiana's choice of music that she had an empathy with Susanna Blamire's words with their distinctive "plaintive feeling of grief...part and parcel of her own existence before they were reproduced and thrown off to relieve the beatings of a lonely heart."⁷⁷

Georgiana's rendering of *Leezie Lindsay* (or *Lyndsay* as she spells it)(Fig. 27) differs from the Burns version lyrics as it has a simpler narrative without the dialogue between male and female characters. The most significant difference is the alteration of the last line from Georgiana's version "My *pride* and my darling to be" to Burns's "My/his *bride*⁷⁸ and my darling tae be." As in other traditional Scottish songs, a man's true love must be proven before consent to marriage is given by the woman, although the two are not mutually exclusive.⁷⁹ The first verse of her version is identical to the Burns version except for the last line. The other three verses are different (this transcription preserves Georgiana's spelling and punctuation):

1. *O ye are the bonniest maiden*
The flower o' the west countrie
O gang to the Hieland's Leezie Lindsay
My pride and my darling to be.

2. *I've goud an' I've gear Leezie Lyndsay*
And a heart that has only but thee
They shall all be thine Leezie Lyndsay
Gin ye my lov'd darling will be—

3. *She has gather a gown o' green satin*
And a bonny blithe bride is she
And she's off wi' Lord Ronald Macdonald
His pride and his darling to be.

⁷⁷ Sidney Gilpin, *Songs and Ballads of Cumberland and the Lake Country*, London John Russell Smith, 1874. p.4.

⁷⁸ My highlighting.

⁷⁹ See also *The Lass of Glenshee*, in which the shepherd woman declines the offers of marriage from her lordly suitor until he clearly expresses his devotion rather than offering her coaches and the like: "Now years hae gane by since we buskit te gither. And seasons ha'e changed, but nae change is wi' me,"



Fig. 27. *Leezie Lyndsay*

The connection between music and emotion is most clearly documented in the journal entry in which Georgiana farewells Perico:

I stayed to conceal my countenance...& sat down to the piano to play over some songs for the sake of bringing a few tears to my relief—after a time I heard the Carriage wheels coming round to the door, and soon afterwards ... Perico's foot on the stair, and next moment he was standing beside me, and said in a rather reproachful tone 'You did not come to bid me goodbye, so I have come to you'...having gulped down the rising tears, I said 'Goodbye' as well as I could clasping his hands and we parted—'Our undying hopes deep hidden in our silent hearts'....I turned to the piano to finish my practicing, keeping time with my tears—⁸⁰

Australian journal entries disclose that Georgiana never forgot these particular 'undying hopes' and the music associated with this time remained in her collection to preserve the recollections of the life that might have been. This evidence suggests that further

⁸⁰ 'Stray leaves from an old journal long since committed to the flames', SLV MS 12018, p.24, McCrae Family Papers, La Trobe Collection.

research may uncover similar collections of music and linked journal entries to develop understanding of how Australian pioneer women used their music.

Georgiana's interest in music as a multidimensional record of family activities and memorable performances is represented by her inclusion of *Chunda's Song*. (Fig.28) The note at the bottom of the transcription states: "June 5th. This air was brought from India by Robert Gordon." Why the date is significant is not clear. The harmonization is bland and does little to enhance the possibilities of the melody, restricting the tonality to G major. It appears that Robert Gordon was a man of significant influence on the India Board in the 1830s, but what influence, if any, he had in Georgiana's life is unclear. At this stage of her life, Georgiana was living with her husband in Edinburgh, and the Indian song may have represented a breath of exoticism in her domestic world.



Fig. 28. *Chunda's Song*

The McCrae Homestead Music Book: c.1822 (held at the homestead on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, which is now a National Trust property) and the *Gordon Castle*

*Music Book*⁸¹ contain much of the music associated with Georgiana's documented music-making in Australia. The songs that lingered in her children's memories were the impassioned Jacobite songs, quite probably because the defiance of authority voiced in them resonated with Georgiana's personal struggle with the relatives who influenced the course of her life and ultimately influenced her marriage and the subsequent migration to Australia. Her daughter Frances Octavia wrote of Georgiana's music in the 1840s:

Such songs as "There was a King in Thule,"[Gordon Castle Music book: item No. 5 & Chaplin Music book item No. 141] "The Deep, Deep Sea," "Auld Robin Gray," "The Lord [sic] of the Leal," [Gordon Castle Music book: item No. 5 (Fig. 28)] were sung with admirable taste and feeling by the lady of the house, the tutor assisting with his flute, and, at times, a wandering visitor with a violin. French, Italian, Spanish and German ballads were all included in the repertoire, but the old stirring Jacobite songs pleased the boys most.

Their mother sang with such verve that a vision seemed to arise before them of the outlawed prince, his pale and haggard features pinched with hunger, a hunted look in the bonny blue eyes, as he crouched; low in the heather and bracken, hiding in rocky caves known only to his faithful followers. "Charlie is my Darling," "Awa, 'Whigs, Awa"[Gordon Castle Music book item No.3] "Over the water to Charlie"[McCrae Homestead Music book: P. 271] The latter songs interested the elder lads, as they had often heard their mother speak of the Jacobites passing their glasses over the water carafe when drinking. The toast was "Charlie Over the Water" – this was their secret sign.⁸²

Both of these music books also contain significant numbers of dance tunes and sets of dance tunes. It was this music that Georgiana chose to play for her neighbours, the Bunurong people. Frances Octavia McCrae describes the scene of the Bunurong Aborigines squatting on the verandah of the McCrae homestead at Arthur's Seat on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, in the mid 1840s to listen to her mother, Georgiana, 'playing lively Scotch airs' on the piano: '...they testified their admiration by loud cries of "Go on, Missey, very good," waving their hands about and keeping time with the music.'⁸³

⁸¹ SLV MS 12018 - 2519/4.

⁸² McCrae, Frances Octavia Gordon, *The Piano Story*, Op.cit., p.3.

⁸³ McCrae Ibid., p.4.

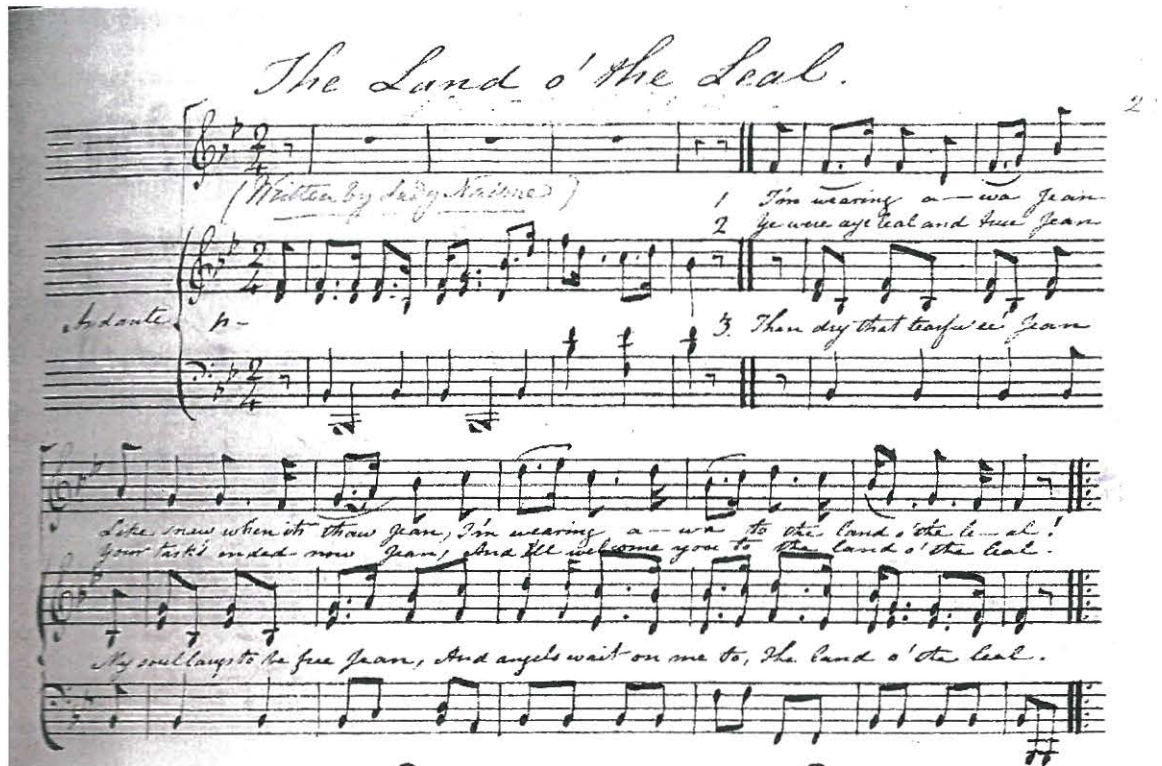


Fig. 29. *The Land o' the Leal*

It is highly likely that the tunes referred to in this passage were some of those found in the last forty-nine pages of the *McCrae Homestead Music Book*. These are transcriptions of Irish and Scottish dance tunes and airs set for piano, often attributed to the composers: Neil Gow, R. Mackintosh, John Anderson, and Turloch O'Carolan (acknowledged as Carolan) amongst others. Examples of the Scottish dance tunes are: *Lady Madelina Gordon's Strathspey and reel*; *The Parks of Fochabers*⁸⁴ *Reel*; *The Banks of Spey*⁸⁵; *Gae to Berwick Johnny* in jig time. Examples of Irish dance tunes in this section of the book are: *The Foxes Sleep* jig; *Carolan's Concerto* and *Planxty McGuire* by 'Carolan', which has the comment in Georgiana's handwriting, "My Favourite Dance" (p.302). The performance of these tunes for an audience on the verandah rather than on a concert stage affirms the music as folk rather than art music. Georgiana's Scottish airs are an attempt at communication between one who felt herself an alien in a new world and the native occupants of the land.

⁸⁴ The town where Gordon Castle is situated in North Eastern Scotland.

⁸⁵ The River at Fochabers.

It is important to relate Georgina's music making to the pioneering life she found herself living. When Georgiana arrived at Arthur's Seat in June 1845, the main house was unfinished and the boys, under the direction of their tutor, John McClure, had built three small, temporary thatched huts; the thatch being a matter for serious discussion: "Our tutor charged himself with the laying of it after a manner practised in the Isle of Skye of which he was a native."⁸⁶ This sentence describes the reliance by the immigrant Scots on traditional knowledge to cope with the physical lack of sophisticated building materials in their isolated selection. They adapted ancient thatching techniques to use the available wheaten straw from the family's first colonial crop. Similarly, Georgiana built the musical culture of her new family home on the foundations of the traditional music she had brought with her as written music and the traditions of improvisation and inclusive performance with all available musicians. As she writes in her journal entry of 26th September 1842:

"Lachlan Mackinnon came out to dinner, in the evening delighted him, and myself, not a little, By playing several old gaelic liltis."⁸⁷ And again on November 14th, she writes that: "Henry/Montgomery/<Mackinnon> & Donald Mackinnon arrived to "pot luck"-which proved to be "nae luck of a" - but in the evening - a few auld world ditties made Donald fancy himself in his dear native Isle."⁸⁸

The Gaelic airs and songs are significant items in the *Gordon Castle Music Book*, documenting the oldest Scots music in Georgiana's repertoire.

The other items that provide evidence of the way in which music was shared and adapted as part of friendships and relationships are the songs and melodies in Georgiana's collection which are transcribed in someone else's hand and sometimes a combination of Georgiana's handwriting and other unidentified hands. Some, if not all, of these unsigned notations are the works of John McLure, as his handwriting is recorded in a parody he composed and presented to Georgiana. McLure's handwriting on the parody appears to match that appearing throughout the *Gordon Castle Music Book* on a number of song transcriptions.

⁸⁶ 'Mr McLure is a student of divinity who arrived on the Brilliant from Mull on Saturday last (1838) [is] intimately acquainted with the Gaelic language....' In Brenda Niall, *Georgiana*, op.cit., p.178.

⁸⁷ Thérèse Weber, *Port Phillip Papers: The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, PhD, University of NSW, 2000, p.216.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

The song parodied is entitled '*The Maid of Llangollen*, Air "Maltreath" ('Walsh', or more probably, 'Welsh'). The original version and piano setting is scored in Georgiana's hand, while underneath, McLure has written the parody. (Fig.30)
The original verses are:

*Tho' lowly my lot and tho' poor my Estate,
I see without envy the wealthy and great,
Contented and proud a poor shepherd to be,
While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me,
While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.*

*My way o'er the mountain I cheerfully take
At morn when the song birds their melody make.
And at eve I return with a heart full of glee
For the maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.*

*Glenarvon's rich lord passes scornfully by
But wealth can ne'er make him as happy as I
And prouder than ever the proudest I'll be
While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.⁸⁹*

McLure's parody is below:

*Tho' lonely my hut and tho' dismal the view,
I'm free from great ills such as "bills coming due",
Contented and proud a poor squatter to be,
While the maid of the Yarra smiles sweetly on me.
While the maid of the Yarra smiles sweetly on me.*

*At morn I set out on my old faithful hack
Over gullies and creeks with "the sun on my back"
Wirth light heart I return to my damper and tea
For the Maid of the Yarra smiles sweetly on me*

⁸⁹ See *The Globe Song Folio: A Collection of Popular Songs, Duets and Sacred Songs*, New Revised Edition, E.W. Cole Book Arcade, Burke and Collins Streets Melbourne, 1908. p.92. This is a revised, Australian edition of an original edition published by Bayley and Ferguson, London and Glasgow.

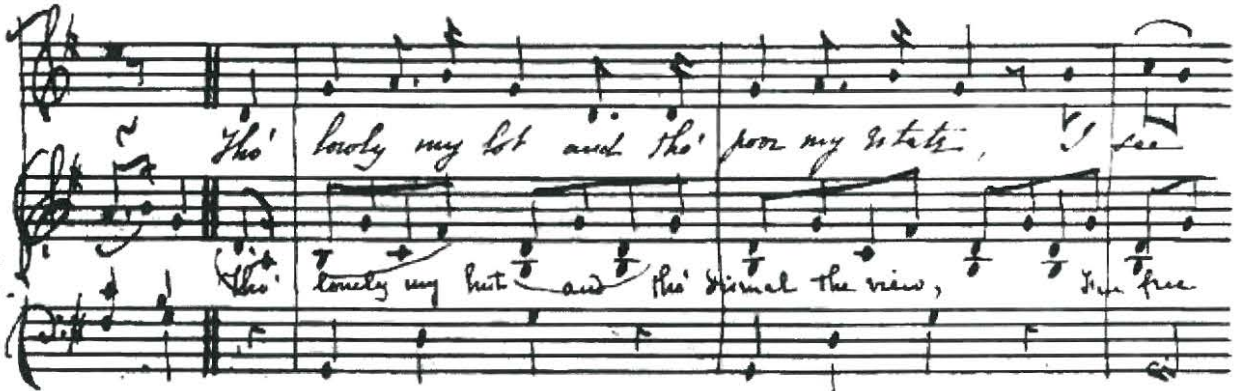
The Maid of Claythorpe

or "Malbrough" / British

Moderato



The' lovely my lot and the' poor my state, I see
The' lonely my hut and the' dismal the view, the free



such without duty - the wealthy and great, contented and proud
from great ill - such as - 'bills coming due', contented and proud



a poor sheep head to be, While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on
 a poor squatter to be, While the Maid of the Yarra - smiles sweetly on her

me, While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me
 me, While the Maid of the Yarra - smiles sweetly on me.

At noon I set out with my faithful huck
 One excellent Cuckoo with "the huck on my back"
 With light heart I return to my dearest of the
 In the maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me
 The Muller was his folk's passing scornfully by
 With a large "special favour" they have their by
 More contented than they had any station to be
 While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.

My way over the mountain I cheerfully take
 I got more when the song birds their melody make
 And of you I return with a heart full of love
 In the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.

Glenarvon's rich lord passed scornfully by
 And wealth can never make him as happy as I
 And prouder than ever the proudest I'll be
 While the Maid of Llangollen smiles sweetly on me.

McLure

Fig. 30. McLure's parody of *The Maid of Llangollen*, written on the second vocal staff.

*The Melbourne big folks passing scornfully by
 Talk of large “special surveys” they have in their Eye
 More contented than they with my “Station” I’ll be
 While the Maid of the Yarra smiles sweetly on me.*

The entry in Georgiana’s journal places the parody in the context of the move the family had to make, for financial reasons, from the house in Mayfield, Melbourne, to the selection on the Mornington Peninsula at Arthur’s Seat. (Fig. 31) Georgiana was resentful about leaving the relative civilization of Melbourne for the bush. Georgiana associated McLure’s choice of the Welsh air to the McCrae’s maid, Sarah Thomas “as the air of Joanne Baillie’s version is a favorite of our maid of Llanybethlan”.⁹⁰ The parody written and notated by both Georgiana and John McLure is evidence of the friendship between the two.

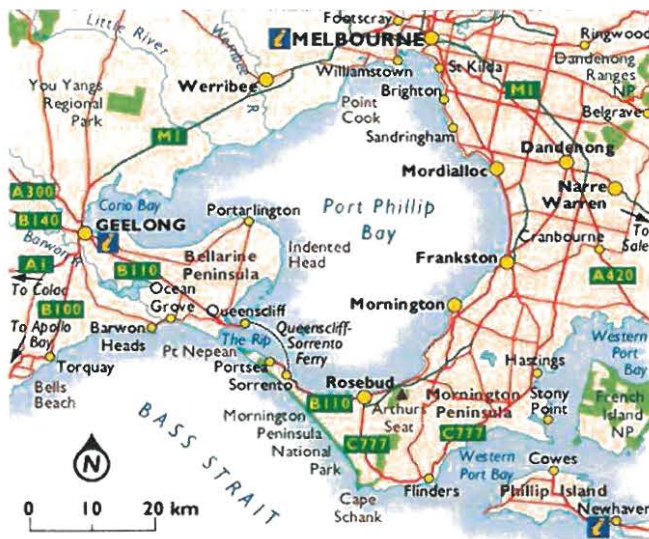


Fig. 31. Map showing the location of the McCrae property, Arthur’s Seat ▲.

There are twenty one items quite probably written in McLure’s handwriting and fourteen in a probable combination of Georgiana’s and McClure’s, demonstrating the shared enjoyment of music. The joint transcriptions document a dimension of their friendship that is not recorded elsewhere in written sources. It appears that Georgiana and John McLure shared the things most important to both of them as individuals: arranging, writing and performing music, dedication to scholarship,

⁹⁰ Journal entry for the 27th of September 1843, in Thérèse Weber, *Port Phillip Papers. The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, Op.cit., p.302.

devotion to the children and pleasure in the company of each other. In Georgiana's journal it is clear that she found Andrew McCrae's temperament difficult to deal with.⁹¹ His eccentricities resulted in rifts with his legal partners, and ongoing disagreements with his wife. For Georgiana, McLure offered companionship and intellectual stimulation. For McLure, Georgiana embodied the culture, education, feminine beauty and affection, the musical partnership and inclusion in family-life that he enjoyed. I suggest that for both of them, music was the form of expression where all these realities were voiced without compromising the formal relationships and social obligations of their circumstances as Squatter's wife and Tutor.

Documentation of the relationship survives because Georgiana was a literate musician and recorded the creative partnership in her manuscripts. I propose that similar relationships were commemorated in the unwritten folk music shared by many other women in Australia.

I Do Not Love Thee (Fig.32) is the first of the songs in the *Gordon Castle Song book* written in both Georgiana's hand and that of McLure. The first verse and music notation is in Georgiana's hand and the other two verses are written in McLure's hand. The lyrics were composed by Caroline Norton (1808-1877) and as in the case of Susanna Blamire, there is an interesting parallel between her biography and Georgiana's. The granddaughter of playwright Richard Sheridan, Caroline Norton suffered physical abuse from her husband. Although George Norton lost the ensuing divorce suit, he was given custody of their children and the court sanctioned his right to collect his wife's literary earnings. Caroline's writings based on her life experiences (*English laws for women in the Nineteenth Century* 1854 and *A Letter to the Queen* 1855) were instrumental in highlighting and reversing the great injustice of English law in relation to cases like her own.⁹² Georgiana believed that she had been unjustly treated by her step-mother's interference with her courtship by cousin Perico and her failure to honour the Duke of Gordon's wishes that Georgiana should receive an adequate inheritance.⁹³ Justly or unjustly, Georgiana held Andrew McCrae responsible for squandering her money

⁹¹ See "differences of opinion with Mr McCrae", in *Port Phillip Papers*, Op.cit., in Index, Vol. 2: References pp. 196, 364, 370, 522, and 532.

⁹² Mary Mark (Editor) Celebration of Women Writers, Website, University of Pennsylvania, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/norton/nc-biography.html>

⁹³ Brenda Niall, Op.cit., Ch 14, pp.219-236.

through unwise investments and for keeping her an “exile” in Australia through his financial ineptitude. Whether conscious or not, the choice of this song for joint transcription by McLure and Georgiana is a significant one in the light of the biographical similarities of the author and the musician. The second of the verses in McLure’s handwriting is interesting as the first line is the same as that of verse three of the original, but the rest of the verse bears no resemblance to the other original lyrics:

Verse 3

*I do not love thee yet when thou art gone
I seek thee as tho’ thou wert truly dear
And teach the fleeting moments as they pass
To bring me nearer where thou art.*

Perhaps McLure wrote a misremembered verse, or perhaps it was his own composition. There is a possibility that either McLure or Georgiana set the poem to music.

Another parody written by John McLure is preserved in Georgiana’s journal, and dated “Mayfield, October 1843”,⁹⁴ and is a satire of Thomas Moore’s song *Go Where Glory Waits Thee*. The original version is in Moore’s *Irish Melodies*, arranged as a duet.⁹⁵ McLure’s version demonstrates the way in which older songs were adapted to express the sentiments of colonial settlers facing the challenges of pioneering life:

*Come. Where Fortune waits thee,
And when Hope elates thee
O then keep clear of Bills
Tho’ the gain seem certain
Nought required but starting
& keep clear of Bills -
Oft does speculation*

⁹⁴ Georgiana McCrae, *Port Phillip Papers: The Australian Journal of Georgiana McCrae*, PhD Thesis by Thérèse Weber, University of NSW, 2000, p.320.

⁹⁵ *Irish melodies with symphonies and accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson; and characteristic words by Thomas Moore*, Edited by Francis Robinson. James Duffy, Dublin, 1866, pp.6-9

I do not love thee

I do not love thee! No, I do not love thee. But yet when thou art gone

I am sad And my sin the damning ally above thee! My requiem

Thou behold thee I am glad *I do not love thee, yet when thou art with
Whatever thou dost seems most well done to me*

Dim *And often in my solitude I sigh
That those I do love are not more like thee*

*I do not love thee, yet when thou art gone
I seek thee as tho' thou wert truly dead*

*And teach the fleeting moments as they pass
To bring me nearer where thou art*

Fig. 32. *I do not Love Thee* with the verses written in what appears to be McLure's hand.

*Lead to ruination
And one's expectation
Seldom e'er fulfills -
Then I'd urge upon ye
As you love your money
To keep clear of Bills -
When perchance you're hearing
Someone auctioneering
O then keep clear of Bills
Town lots, and suburbans
Have caused much disturbance
O then keep clear of Bills
Better far to settle
Down with sheep and Cattle
Where the blooming Wattle
Fragrant dew distils
Wrapt in golden fleeces
Rich in curds and cheeses
And nought to do with Bills*

There are twenty-seven transcriptions of the un-harmonised melody lines of Scots Airs, such as *Three Ravens, Lord Derwentwater, Sweet William and Little Musgrave*. These songs appear to be well known favourites of Georgiana's that she was confident of playing by adding an accompaniment without needing to notate one: the notations are an "aide memoir", as they have only one verse. Similarly, Sally Sloane and many other Australian ear singers kept notebooks with the words or part of a song and/or its verses written in it to remind them of the shape of the song. Written and oral traditions interacted to ensure that a broad repertoire of music was remembered. The familiarity of these songs made them perfect for performance during Georgiana's musical evenings to include "All-comers" in the music making.

The hand written music collection of Georgiana McCrae represents an exceptional resource as: an example of the repertoire of a Scottish immigrant in the 1840s; as a

record of Gaelic songs and Scots transcribed from the oral tradition; as a key to the personal life of a colonial woman through the dates and annotations on the scores linked with those in her diaries and letters; and as examples of notation designed to facilitate improvisation and ease of transmission. Georgiana's place in the transmission and evolution of Australian Folk Music is as a musician in transition: a woman who gathered music from many sources as a record of the places she had lived and the relationships she had with friends and family. As such, she is representative of the many pioneering women whose repertoires have not survived in written documentation. Music had great significance for her as a record of her private emotional world and as a means of constructing an external public life in a new country. Georgiana used "the ability of oral genres to reverberate between past and present.... dependent on their capacity for emotional expression"⁹⁶ to blend with her own traditions of notated music and improvised accompaniments. A great deal of the music in her collection remains part of the folk tradition in Australia today, such as the dance tune *Cock of the North*, written to commemorate Georgiana's father, which remains an extremely popular melody in the bush dance repertoire. But it is the way in which Georgiana *used* music as much as the particular items that entered the continuing folk repertoire that make her important in terms of the historical record of Australian folk music.

This study of Georgiana's music-making supports Stephen Blum's assertion that "Ethnomusicologists can make a crucial contribution by demonstrating how music establishes the cultural ground of emotional communication that guides the realization of tradition in performance."⁹⁷ While Georgiana McCrae's cultural and social background is vastly different to that of Sally Sloane, her music shares the same strong grounding in performance as a living part of her community. Their repertoires reveal that for both women, transmission of Australian folk music occurred through the adaptation of published, hand copied and orally transmitted music to meet the vicissitudes of life in the new country. Their music demonstrates the desire to preserve music that captured the quintessence of the old-world, and a willingness to blend in new musical materials to create inclusive bush music: a genre that provided a voice of self-expression for women of all classes. That men

⁹⁶ David P. Coplan, 'Ethnomusicology and the Meaning of Tradition', in Blum, Bohlman & Neuman *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, University of Illinois Press, 1991, p.45.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

were part of this music making in exchange of repertoire and shared performance is also clear; a very different reality to the established masculine image of folk music devoid of women as creators and performers.



Fig. 33. Sally Sloane

CHAPTER FOUR

TRADITION AND PERSONAL IDENTITY: SALLY SLOANE, QUEEN OF SINGING FOLK

While Georgiana McCrae saw herself as a Scot living in exile in the antipodes, Sally Sloane never associated herself with any other than an Australian identity. Her repertoire preserved a number of transplanted songs, but rather than acting as a lifeline to a distant culture, they were associated in her memory with people and places that were important in her life in Australia.

Most researchers will first listen to Sally Sloane's repertoire in the form of field tapes recorded by John Meredith, Edgar Waters, Chris Sullivan, Emily Lyle, Warren Fahey and Graham Seal. Initially, these folklorists and their collecting policies create the context for the information that exists. It is my intention to change the focus and to bring Sally Sloane into the central position to illuminate how she gathered the music that she valued and used. Like George Eliot's image of the candle, which when reflected in the polished brass mirror transforms the random scratches into a symmetrical pattern radiating from the flame, Sally's personality imposes an order and meaning on her repertoire.¹ To analyse Sally Sloane's song repertoire and define the distinctive stylistic elements of her vocal performances, it is necessary to understand how her experiences and relationships influenced her musical process. Her approach to songs is that of a traditional ballad singer² – the narrative is set in motion by the melody to generate a “complex, existential process in which units of both

¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Penguin, London, 1978.

² Meredith's and Waters's descriptions of Sally's prodigious store of songs and tunes echo Sabine Baring-Gould's recollections of a ballad singer he heard in the Oxenham Arms in South Zeal as a schoolboy in the 1850s: “He seemed to be inexhaustible in his store of songs and ballads; with the utmost readiness, whenever called on, he sang, and skilfully varied the character of his pieces - to grave succeeded gay, to a ballad a lyric.” Baring Gould, ‘Among the Western Song Men’, *Illustrated Magazine*, 102 (1892), 468, in Martin Graebe, ‘Sabine Baring Gould and his old singing men’, in *Folksong Tradition, Revival, and Re-Creation*, Edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson, The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004, p.175.

cognitive and affective experience are embedded.”³ This Chapter considers Sally’s songs as an expression of her worldview. It examines the line of transmission connecting Sally Sloane with the singers in the past from whom she learned her songs – a line of transmission linking Sally to those who collected her music during her life, thus ensuring the transition of her music into the future. The nature of this transmission process is critical to the role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music.

The field recordings on which I have based my analysis represent the transition of music learned in a direct line of transmission into music recorded for distribution to an audience outside the family and community of the singer. Folk music collectors making the field recordings were motivated by their perception of threatened Australian traditional music that needed preservation, and a desire to gather songs which could be recorded and performed by contemporary folk musicians, often for financial remuneration.

The Australian Folk Revival (c.1950-1978) accelerated the transition of music which had evolved as part of a discrete community’s musical life performed by a soloist for her/his community, into traditional music performed and re-arranged in a manner that was never envisaged by the original ‘composers’ or traditional performers. Because the performance was captured by a recording apparatus and became replayable, ‘errors’ were identifiable by the new audience of listeners who heard the recordings. In a live performance tradition, deviations from the ‘perfect’ rendition of the song were and are the life of the song. In order to increase the appeal of these songs to a wider audience, it became customary for the folk revival musicians to perform them with accompaniment; guitar accompaniments added to traditional unaccompanied songs translated Australian material for audiences across the world.

³ James Porter, Jeannie Robertson’s *My Son David: A Conceptual Performance Model*, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol 89. January-March 1976, No. 351, p.17.

The commercial folk music recordings of A.L.Lloyd⁴, Pete Seeger⁵, Alan Lomax⁶, and Burl Ives⁷ played an important role in the development of Australian folk music performance in the 1950s. Promoting folk music as ‘the music of the people’, their example encouraged Australian folk musicians in their use of folk music as a voice of left wing politics and Australian nationalism. Adding guitar accompaniments to traditional songs and tunes⁸ helped transform the music into a commodity more accessible to listeners in the mass market. The musicians⁹ who have recorded items from Sally Sloane’s repertoire since John Meredith made the first recordings in 1953, used accompaniments for all their arrangements of her unaccompanied songs demonstrating the transition of folk music from its use with its original domestic community into a world community of consumers, almost all of whom have no personal connection to the music.

Sally Sloane’s music is the oral record of a series of personal relationships inspired by affection and respect resulting in new performances of the songs embodying aspects of both the original singer and the new performer. The field recordings provide an “audio portrait” of Sally Sloane, created by her vocal idiosyncrasies, the fragments of conversation recorded between her and the collectors who made the recordings, and the background sounds of her personal sound world – the particular creak of her floor boards, and the sound of her dishes in the sink in relation to the songs she sings. For

⁴A.L. Lloyd, English folksinger and author. (1908-1982) See the book, *Come All Ye Bold Miners* (1952) and *Folk Song in England* (1967) and the records *The Iron Muse* (1963), *First Person* (1966), *Leviathan* (1968), *The Great Australian Legend* (1969) for the music that influenced the Australian revival; and NLA TRC 4883/28-9 for information about his time in Australia as a young man.

⁵ Pete Seeger (b. 3rd May, 1919) “Musician, singer, songwriter, folklorist, labor activist, environmentalist, and peace advocate, Seeger was born in Patterson, New York, son of Charles and Constance Seeger.” <http://www.peteseeger.net/biograph.htm> Seeger visited Australia in the 1963, and was a strong influence on the development of folk music in connection with left wing socialist political ideology. See NLA TRC 5361/7; TRC 3139/20; TRC 2272/143 & TRC 4/5 for recordings documenting his performances and talks in Australia. See also NLA TRC 2539/4 for a composite tape produced by Norm O’Connor for presentation to Seeger in 1963.

⁶ “Alan Lomax (1915-2002) Building on the pioneering work of his father, John, whom he accompanied on folk-song recording tours of the American South and Southwest in the 1930s and 1940s, Alan set out after World War II to do nothing less than draw the folk music map of the world.” <http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/lomax/>

⁷ Burl Icle Ivanhoe Ives (14th June 1909–14th April 1995) was an acclaimed American folk singer, author, and actor. His album *Folksongs of Australia* had wide circulation and great influence on musicians.

⁸ *The Bushwhackers* and *The Ramblers*, Beth Schurr, Glen Thomasseti etc.

⁹ Beth Schurr, Martin Wyndham Reid, Alex Hood, Glen Thomasetti and Graham Seal’s band *Steam Shuttle* in the early revival; Cathie O’Sullivan, Kate Burke and Ruth Hazelton, Jason and Chloe Roweth since 1980. See <http://folkstream.com/> Mark Gregory’s Discography of Australian Folk Music recordings.

Sally Sloane and many women singers, her home and the sounds distinctive to it, are the only 'instrument' that accompanies her songs.¹⁰

It is significant that in their field activities, the personalities of John Meredith and Warren Fahey were imposed on the material collected. They remain the mediators of the music that we hear. At the conclusion of his interview, Fahey asks Sally what songs she used to sing while playing the fiddle and she answers him with a remark that illustrates how she self-selected the kind of songs collectors would and wouldn't be interested in, "*Oh 'When the fields were white with daisies' ... Oh, all those songs in the war time, you wouldn't know'em.*"¹¹ And she stops talking abruptly. This remark indicates that she edited a proportion of songs out of her repertoire when facing the collector's microphone. As Jill Stubington remarks,

Collection is fundamental and critical. Field recording is not a neutral activity, but reflects the circumstances of the recording... a different collecting personality and a different approach result in a very different collection of field recordings.¹²

The surviving field recordings offer the opportunity for contemporary musicians to participate in transmission of Sally Sloane's repertoire by learning songs from her performances. The next stage of transmission, linking past, present and future, occurs when a contemporary musician listens critically to every sound on the field recording in order to learn the song. Accurate learning relies on acknowledgement of the relationships between past transmitting singers and the field collector that have shaped the version of the song recorded. This process will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The beginning of this chapter discusses how Sally's role in the folk revival of the 1950s was shaped by the power of her personality and the relationship she had with John Meredith, other collectors and contemporary musicians. It is followed by discussion of Sally Sloane's versions of the songs in relation to James Porter's

¹⁰ Clare Van Kampen, *Music at the Globe*, BBC Radio 3 Early Music Show, Sunday 12 November 2006, discusses the way in which Shakespearian musicians used the wattle and daub construction of the Globe and its unique acoustic behaviour as part of their performance technique.

¹¹ Rob Willis *did* record Carrie Milliner singing this song. NLA TRC 3042

¹² Stubington, Jill. Preservation and conservation of Australian traditional musics: an environmental analogy, *Musicology Australia*, Vol X 1987, p. 4.

“conceptual performance model”¹³ in which he states, “Whatever ‘the song’ is, its identity cannot be demonstrated, nor other features such as its existence through time fully delineated, until we are able to trace that identity in the mind of the singer or a number of singers.”¹⁴ Porter has developed a Conceptual Performance Model based on analysis of Jeannie Robertson’s singing of the ballad, *My Son David*. He analysed nine recordings. “Distinctive features became apparent at once, features which seemed on rehearing to recur as major interdependent wholes. ... The structural element that does emerge as fluid during this period is a textual one.”¹⁵ This fact is true for Sally Sloane’s singing as well. Sloane’s recordings of *Green Bushes* were all made in her home, while Jeannie Robertson was recorded singing *My Son David* in her home and in concert situations. This fact, and my analysis of the relationship between the songs and the background sounds in Sally’s field recordings are the essential differences in my analysis of her singing compared with Porter’s methodology. The Chapter concludes with a detailed analysis of Sally’s five versions of *Green Bushes*, developing discussion of the relationship between the song, the mind and the life of the singer.

Sally and the Folk Revival

At the end of World War II, Australia experienced a growing interest in the distinctive customs of ‘the common man’ and cultural activities that were distinctively Australian in comparison with the influences of American mass culture.¹⁶ One of the manifestations of this new movement was the growth of folk clubs in the 1950s dedicated to the preservation and performance of home-grown Australian folk music. Bush bands and bush dances were a product of this era, seeking to promote the ideology of the bush community which might be paraphrased as mateship, a slap-up supper provided by the ladies and songs re-telling tales of prowess and endurance of itinerant bush workers. This reenactment of Australian anglophone colonial culture was underpinned by the dedicated efforts of field collectors such as John Meredith, Edgar Waters and Russel Ward.

¹³ Porter, 1976, pp.7-26

¹⁴ Ibid., p.11

¹⁵ Ibid., p.12-13.

¹⁶ Davey, Gwenda Beed and Seal, Graham. *A Guide to Australian Folklore from Ned Kelly to Aeroplane Jelly*, Sydney, Kangaroo Press, 2003, p.122.

Without John Meredith's field recording activities of the 1950s, and the work of those collectors who followed his lead¹⁷, the voice and musical talent of Sally Sloane would have been unknown by the generations of performers and folk enthusiasts who have been influenced by her repertoire and her personality. This reality highlights the importance of sound recording devices in the perception and definition of Australian folk music from the 1950s up to the present. Field recordings were and are directly related to evaluations of folk music authenticity by scholars, performers and folklorists. A field recording of a singer or instrumentalist is a non-written record of their music. Regardless of the source of the musician's material, the implication is that this music is not part of the western art music performance canon. The informal setting for the recordings, usually the kitchen or living room of an informant's home, with the associated background noises of domestic life, contribute to the authenticity of the exercise. In Meredith's recordings there are sounds of the domestic setting in which Sally Sloane used her music, for example, the sounds of dish-washing with her rendition of *The Spring Time it Brings on the Shearing*,¹⁸ (Sound Example 4) but the tape is rarely left to run and record the context of how items were recalled in the space of the interview. Meredith, at least on tape or in his notes, did not ask detailed questions to explore how Sally's music related to her life. While there are still tantalizing hints of information about song lineage never fully provided by Sally, the Warren Fahey/Graham Seal interview offers a less interrupted soundscape of how Sally used her music, not just as an accompaniment to domestic duties, but as the fibre that linked people and events in the web of her life.

The strength and the weakness of Meredith's recordings lie in the fact that he utilized relationship networks to select the people he collected music from. Essentially he interviewed people recommended to him by his friends and musical acquaintances. This technique is substantially different to the approach of ethnomusicologists researching in communities culturally detached from their own. Meredith's system is founded on recording the music that informants were comfortable to perform for him within the relationship established between musician and collector. In this model, the collector plays a definite role in transmission of the tradition he or she is recording.

¹⁷ Edgar Waters and Peter Hamilton, Chris Sullivan, Warren Fahey and Graeme Seal.

¹⁸ John Meredith Collection, NLA TRC 4/19.

Chris Sullivan claims that John Meredith “passed off a relatively small body of music, the result of unplanned, indifferent, chance recordings, as representative of the vernacular music historically performed, not just in the areas recorded, but throughout Australia as a whole.”¹⁹ It is imprecise to claim that Meredith’s informants provide a comprehensive coverage of all Australian folk music, “Although the 1,200 items from which the selection was made were gathered almost entirely within the boundaries of New South Wales, the material presented is representative of the whole continent.”²⁰ However, “chance recordings” is not an adequate evaluation of his methodology. Meredith’s achievement is most accurately assessed in terms of the link he represents in the continued traditions of the particular musicians he interviewed and Sally Sloane was one of the most important of these. Edgar Waters explains,

You have to remember that Sally’s songs were a disappearing genre...they date from a time when, because of rural isolation, people used these songs for consolation...John Meredith preserved what he rightly saw as a disappearing genre.²¹

Sally’s granddaughter, Cheryl Wotton, in an interview with Rob Willis, Jim and Valda Lowe in 2001, commented:

None of the children inherited the love of that sort of thing. It just sort of stopped with Nan. It was lucky that she was able to give all that information to John [Meredith] because it would have gone with her.²²

In his 1986 diary, Meredith referred to Grainger’s consciousness of the daily deaths of a generation of folk singers, “...dragging what might be deathless with them into the gone-ness” remarking that “I’ve often had the same feeling when some of the old people whom I haven’t recorded, whom I know have lots of old musical treasures, die before I can record them.”²³ It is interesting to note that Sally Sloane did not describe

¹⁹ Ibid. p.65.

²⁰ John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, *Folk Songs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1979.

²¹ Edgar Waters, Personal Conversation, 19.10.06

²² NLA TRC 4778/1 13.2.01 In fact her son Les is recorded playing with her in NLA TRC 4/12, but transmission into the next generation of her family is not recorded.

²³ John Meredith, *Journal of a Collecting Trip to Rockhampton from 28 April to 13 May 1986*, NLA Transcript, NLA TRC 2222/177-178

herself as a folk musician. She sang “old songs”,²⁴ songs that had particular significance because they were learned from family or from people who meant something important to her as she grew up. Listening critically to the evidence of the field recordings – the background sounds as well as the music – provides essential information about her performance practice in relation to her repertoire. The lines of transmission and the relationships they represent are re-affirmed with each performance.

Field recordings form the basis of the canon of Australian folk music as the source material for performance of folk music by the collectors, subsequent musicians and broadcasters. They also represent the personal connection established between the collector and the informant, “Most of the songs included belong to no specific locality and the fact of their being collected in New South Wales is simply a coincidence of time, place and persons.”²⁵ In the case of Meredith and Sloane, the collector was motivated by a desire to preserve endangered traditions and the informant was pleased to be appreciated. Sally Sloane’s powerful personality ensured that John Meredith returned to visit her on successive occasions, gathering a much broader repertoire than he had originally intended, although he did not collect all her store of music.

It is critical to assess the recordings made of Sally Sloane’s music in relation to the definition of folk music provided in the Preface to *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*:

At a time when folk songs are defined as songs by anyone calling himself a folk-singer, the authenticity of this collection must be emphasized. It does not belong to print and to literature, and the use of the word ‘folk’ in the title is not as a prefix of self-consciousness. The individual items vary from the smooth and relatively subtle to the coarse and awkward, but all approximate the traditional and come as close as Australians ever may to music growing directly from the culture and work of an indigenous people.

²⁴ John Meredith, in *The Sally Sloane Songbook: Australian Traditional Singer*. Edited by Gay Scott, Bush Music Club, Sydney, 2004. p.4.

²⁵ The Preface of John Meredith and Hugh Anderson’s *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*, Op. Cit., p.7.

Meredith later realised²⁶ that his search for authentic, anonymous, bush songs meant that he missed out on known gems like Duke Tritton's *Shearing in a Bar* as well as the many lullabies and other women's work songs he may have overlooked.

Each piece included, to some degree, fulfils the definition of John Meredith that a folk song is one composed to describe some happening or some aspect of the life of the singer, or of someone near to him, and 'written purely for the purpose of self-expression or commemoration'.²⁷ [Shirley Andrews's emphases]

The use of the underlined expression is ambiguous, as Shirley Andrews commented in her review in *Tradition* in 1968,

I am surprised that he should consider self expression, as the be-all and end-all of artistic endeavor. I would think that a vital factor is the part played by the "folk" themselves. The song couldn't have passed into oral tradition except for them.²⁸

I suggest that what Meredith intended in his definition was to link the subsequent lineage of singers in the oral transmission of the song into the composition process. For example, Sally Sloane learned *Green Bushes* from Jack Archer because meeting him and hearing him sing was important to her, and the song itself had a special resonance for her. In her subsequent performances of the song she varied the structure and added her particular stamp with her unique vocal technique.

Meredith's belief in connection between the singer and the song as a means of expression of their life experiences is the keystone of his field recording collection, and the model for many of the collectors who have followed in his footsteps. The original informant recommended further singers or suggested possible areas to explore, and the web of song and singers expanded from each encounter.²⁹ While this method does not follow the ethnographic principle of focusing on a discrete geographic community as the basis of folk music study, Meredith's methodology has

²⁶ Personal conversation with Edgar Waters, July 2004, in which he related his conversation with Meredith.

²⁷ Ibid., p.8.

²⁸ Shirley Andrews, Review of *Folk Songs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them* in 'Australian Tradition' No.17 September, 1968, p.7.

²⁹ For example, NLA TRC 4/5A records Sally Sloane playing with Mrs Gibbons in a recording made by Meredith in the 1950s. (The exact date is not documented).

merit in relation to Australia's pattern of settlement and rural isolation. His style of collecting uncovered patterns of musical connections between variants and singers across different localities. These could well have been overlooked if established ethnomusicological conventions had been used of limiting fieldwork to a small distinct or separate community. He explains,

In a few instances, songs and dance tunes have been duplicated to demonstrate aspects of variation in folk song and music. From the examples given it is seen how a song learned from a single source by two or more singers can end by being sung to vastly different tunes; and how a dance tune played by several musicians in the same district will develop many variations that may well be the result of the direct influence of the instrument on which it is played.³⁰

Memories of home-made music were present as a powerful influence in Meredith's childhood memories, particularly recollections of his father who played the accordion when he was home from his droving journeys. Music was connected to this pattern of departure and return, reunion and loss, and the accompanying emotions Meredith felt about his father's roving life. While Meredith was only nine years old when his father died, the influence of his father on his relationship with bush music was profound. The overwhelming emotion recorded in the Introduction to *Folksongs of Australia*³¹ is of affectionate nostalgia:

In front of the fire, Dad's face would take on that serious, far-away look of the button accordion player, and he would coax tune after tune from the old instrument -a sad haunting waltz tune that I carried around, half remembered at the back of my mind, until one day, years later, Sally Sloane...played the same tune, 'Jack's Waltz', and the memory of it and those nights in front of the fire came flooding back.³²

Music was the language in which Meredith preserved the memories of his father. The shared waltz in the repertoires of Meredith's father and Sally Sloane was a coincidence that helped cement the friendship between the two musicians and ensured

³⁰ John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, Op.cit., p.8.

³¹ First published by Ure Smith in 1967.

³² Ibid. p.14 -15.

that the recording sessions continued from 1954 until 1961.³³ It was fortunate that Sally was recorded at all, given that Fred Sloane, Sally's husband, was the musician to whom Meredith was introduced. However, Fred insisted that Sally was the one with the impressive repertoire, and the authority of Sally as a performer ensured that a rich variety of material – the bush songs Meredith was primarily seeking, the older ballads learned from her mother, grandmother, step-father and bush workers and a collection of music hall and popular items – was recorded over the next seven years. Over 150 items were collected from Sally, and they provide the jewels in Meredith's field collections. Meredith coined the title for Sally as "Queen of Singing Folk".

Meredith's mother provided the incentive for him to translate the memories of his father's music into practice by promising him a new accordion when he could "play the old one properly".³⁴

I picked up enough tunes to qualify within six months and became the owner of a brand new 'Melba' button accordion. I could still remember some of Dad's old tunes; I learned more from 'Pop' Wright and from the Field boys' playing, and then added to my repertoire with tunes picked up from visitors. A few other tunes I learned by listening to our old gramophone.³⁵

This description of how Meredith learned his music encapsulates the criteria that formed the basis of his collecting policy. He looked for music his informants had picked up by ear from the playing of their relatives and friends and the occasional external source. There was no attempt to approach his informants claiming a scholarly intention, as Meredith believed that this would have been pretentious:

It is of no use to tell them that you are a folk-lorist collecting folk song. They don't know the meaning of either word, and the use of polysyllables immediately classifies the collector as a city slicker.

Meredith clearly saw himself as part of the tradition he was collecting, and this participatory role influenced the kind of music he retrieved from those he interviewed.

³³ Ibid. p. 162.

³⁴ John Meredith, *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*, Ibid. p.16.

³⁵ Ibid.

As a bush musician self-taught using the bush method of ear learning, he was qualified to ask other bush musicians to play him their repertoire.

I have always found that ‘old bush songs’ is a definition understood by most old folk; that a collector should always be prepared to sing a song or two and play some tunes himself to establish the necessary bond of sympathy with the performer.³⁶

Women informants, particularly, were unlikely to offer lullabies and children’s songs when requested to perform the kind of music demonstrated by Meredith.³⁷ It is fortunate that the strength of Sally Sloane’s personality ensured that Meredith recorded a fair proportion of her diverse repertoire, stretching the boundaries of the material he originally sought to include her stage repertoire, the rare Christmas carol *Christ was born in Bethlehem* and the traditional ballads transplanted from the British Isles, as well as the old bush songs.

Graham Seal³⁸ reiterates the impression of Sally as an imposing woman.

Sally was forthright, very friendly and welcoming. She was used to receiving visits from folklorists and liked to hold court and to perform...she was well aware of her status established by Edgar³⁹, and she felt it was right to keep that alive. She didn’t try and play up in an egotistical way, but behaved as a singer of authority.⁴⁰

Water’s notes to the Wattle recording describe Sally’s exceptional status:

Mrs. Sloane’s style of singing was handed down to her along with the family songs. The manner in which she produces her voice, her feeling for melody and her control of melodic variation, her use of free and sensitive rhythms — these are some of the marks of a style of folk singing that has been transmitted in a remarkably pure

³⁶ Ibid. p.19.

³⁷ In comparison, Mary Jean Officer, Pat and Norm O’Connor recorded a broader selection of material from people like Mrs. Rose Sayers, who sang ‘Green Gravel’ and described the accompanying children’s game in detail as her mother described it to her.

³⁸ Seal accompanied Warren Fahey on a collecting trip in 1976 to visit Sally Sloane. He is currently Associate Professor at Curtin University of Technology in Folklore/Folklife and Cultural History.

³⁹ This is a reference to Edgar Waters’s notes to the Wattle Record, *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians, Archive Series Number One*, released in 1957, which included three songs from Sally Sloane.

⁴⁰ Graham Seal, telephone interview, 30.10.2006.

form.... Mrs. Sloane's stock of songs and tunes is very large, much larger than that of any other Australian folk singer known to the collectors of the Australian Folklore Society. The exact size of her repertoire is something still to be revealed. Her mind is a well of music learned many years ago.⁴¹

Ambiguity about the history of her life is apparently a quality Sally cultivated. She told various collectors about her career as a singer on the stage at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney during World War II, performing under another name. In the interview conducted by Warren Fahey in 1976, Sally describes her Tivoli experience as a one-night appearance, but there is some uncertainty about this.

That was the night we went to the Tiv. There was eight thousand in it, and there was as many outside, me and Bill Boundy. I played the old Irish Washerwoman on accordion and he played the strung bass and he was the biggest clown you'd ever seen, he'd ride the thing like a horse; Not the bush bass, the big double bass. I couldn't look at him he was that funny. It was nearly all soldiers we had in there. And me and Bill would come on and nearly bring the house down. "We want more!" They all yelled! We only played one tune.⁴²

Graham Seal described the tantalizing way she offered songs from her repertoire when he visited her with Warren Fahey⁴³ on this same 1976 collecting trip.

Warren left the tape recorder running...she would break into song going about the kitchen getting the lunch ready, making sandwiches, making the tea. Warren and I would request songs and Warren followed up on what he'd already recorded. When Sally did sing, it was like tempting us with bits of songs...we'd ask her to follow up on who she'd learned the song from or something about where it had come from, but she wasn't necessarily able to answer.⁴⁴

Unfortunately these questions were never again asked or answered, as there were no more follow-up recording trips.

⁴¹ Edgar Waters, notes to the Wattle Record, *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians, Archive Series Number One*, Wattle, 1957, p.3.

⁴² Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey, 4.5.76, NLA TRC 5724/6

⁴³ Warren Fahey is a Sydney Folklore Collector and founder of Larrikin Records. See <http://www.warrenfahey.com/>

⁴⁴ Graham Seal, telephone interview, Op.cit.

The most striking characteristic of Sally's singing that Fahey, Seal and Meredith commented on was her different, distinctive performance voices. Meredith describes two styles,

Rather amazingly Sally Sloane had two singing voices, which might conveniently be termed "folk" and "stage". The first was used for all those lovely old Irish ballads Sal had inherited from her grandmother, through the medium of her mother, and this was a hard, clear, unemotional voice and style, very much in the Irish tradition. The other voice was reserved for those stage and art songs of probable music hall origins. It was a rich mezzo-soprano with a little vibrato and she used it for such songs as *The Deep Shades of Blue*, to give one example.⁴⁵

Graham Seal describes a number of voices, and this is substantiated in my analysis of the field recordings made by Meredith and Fahey and Seal.

She shifted her style to suit the song and was able to perform in a number of different styles. She sang to us as an audience, – she would close her eyes when she got going; she found a stillness once she got going. Most of the songs she sang sitting down were like this.⁴⁶

Communicating the story in a song narrative is Sally's primary motivation behind her performances. To this end she would modify her accent not only to suit the character of the song (e.g. the Irish accent adopted for her rendition of *Oh Biddy You are so Handsome*)⁴⁷ but also to entertain the audience. Her interview with Fahey and Seal alternated light and dark material, with the frivolous *Oh Biddy You Are so Handsome* following the serious *Old Oak Tree*. In the serious ballads her voice is arresting and ensures the listener's attention is focused on the narrative and not distracted by sentimental stylistic elements or by an irrelevant accompaniment.

Sally's accordion playing (particularly *The Morning Star* NLA TRC 4/12) and certain of her stage Irish songs (*Paddy Fagan*, NLA TRC 4/12) sound as if she could have

⁴⁵ John Meredith's Introduction to *The Sally Sloane Song Book: Australian Traditional Singer*, Edited by Gay Scott. p. 4.

⁴⁶ Graham Seal, telephone interview, op.cit.

⁴⁷ NLA TRC 5724/4

learned the music from the playing of the Irish-American Flanagan Brothers as recorded on the widely available 78 recordings of the 1930s, or were at least influenced by the style of playing and the distinctive rhythm they brought to their music. The quality of her voice in these songs sounds more nasal, almost as if her responsive ear has adopted the vocal quality produced by 78-rpm recording technology. This possible connection with Sally's music and commercial recordings does not diminish her stature as a traditional musician. Keeping in touch with the changes in traditional music in the country of origin and adapting the new music to Australian conditions continued the transplanted tradition. As Janet Bagshaw remarked in her interview with me in 1995, her family band, playing in and around Kyogle in northern NSW, relied on getting the latest dance music sent out to them from Scotland to keep their repertoire up to date while maintaining the inherited Scottish repertoire.⁴⁸

Dale Dengate, a long term member of the Sydney Bush Music Club and Chairperson of Australian Folk Trust from 1989 to 1993, recalls that Sally had a very strong personality, one that she found amusing but also challenging. Dengate remembers a concert at the Sydney Bush Music Club when Sally was asked to perform one of her traditional songs.

Sally had a bit of the devil in her. Once John [Meredith] asked her to sing some of the old bush songs and she sang Jingle Bells, – it absolutely horrified John.

She goes on to describe Sally's vocal style,

Sally's voice was piercing – something quite different. I didn't really like it. I can't say I found it pleasant.⁴⁹

Gay Scott suggests that Sally had a better rapport with men than women.⁵⁰ "I used to get cranky with her because she didn't care what she said and Alan [Scott] would laugh and say that that was Sally, you had to take her or leave her, well I didn't feel like taking her at that stage!"

⁴⁸ NLA TRC 3294/10

⁴⁹ Dale Dengate interviewed by Jennifer Gall, Glebe, 22.5.06

⁵⁰ NLA TRC5696 Gay Scott interviewed by Jennifer Gall, 21.8.06

Sally's niece, Cheryl Wotton, recalls Sally's caustic tongue, describing a family wedding:

One of Col's aunties was a lovely lady, off the land, very well educated. Sally went up to her and asked, 'You wouldn't be related to the black Wottons would you, that live near the bridge at Dubbo? Well it went down like a ton of bricks.... oh it was a talking point for weeks afterwards!'⁵¹

Sally also had a ribald sense of humour, and throughout her interview with Fahey and Seal this is constantly woven into the conversation.⁵² An example of Sally's humour is captured on Meredith's field tape, NLA TRC 4/12B. After she plays Merrily Kiss the Quaker's Wife on the accordion she recites, "The Quaker's wife got up to dance and I got up to teach her, I took her by the lily white — (suggestive pause)— something! – Hand, I suppose, (laughs); aw, did you have it on there?" (Referring to the tape recorder).

With all her eccentricities and regardless of whether people liked her voice or not, Sally Sloane became linked to the community of the Sydney Bush Music Club. The songs she had sung at home and continued to sing there became part of the repertoire of this urban group of people. Gay Scott and Dale Dengate found Sally's behaviour difficult and alienating but respected her great achievement as a woman musician keeping alive traditional music in the Bush Music scene dominated by male musicians. As a tribute, Gay Scott edited *The Sally Sloane Song Book*, illustrated by Dale Dengate, and published in 2003.⁵³

Chris Woodland recalls that Meredith grew an Angel's Trumpet plant from seeds taken from Sally Sloane's garden,⁵⁴ a symbol of the bond between the two, but after the 1960s his visits grew less. In my interview with Gay Scott,⁵⁵ she remarked that

⁵¹ NLA TRC4778/1 Interview with Cheryl Wotton by Rob Willis, Jim and Valda Lowe, 13.2.01

⁵² NLA TRC 5724/4. *Sally*: "I was married when I was 16...I had 5 kids when I was 22. He (her husband) was never satisfied unless he had one there and one on the crib."

⁵³ *The Sally Sloane Songbook: Australian Traditional Singer*. Edited by Gay Scott, Bush Music Club, Sydney, 2004.

⁵⁴ Chris Woodland, 'John Meredith: the Man I Knew', in John Meredith, A Tribute, Kevin Bradley Editor, NLA Canberra, 2006, p.7.

⁵⁵ NLA TRC 5696 Gay Scott interviewed by Jennifer Gall, 21.8.06

Sally expected that Meredith would maintain the relationship formed in the 1950s and continue to visit her.

He [Meredith] used to go up and see Sally but as time went on, well I wouldn't say that he dropped her, but, well, he went on with other things, and left her. I think she felt she should have had more attention.

Sally refers to Meredith often in her interview with Fahey, suggesting that she missed his visits. However, the most valuable achievement of Fahey's interviews is the relationship they document between Sally's music and her life. Fahey kept the tape rolling almost continuously while Sally sang and spoke and thus captured the interrelationship of songs and singers down the generations and explained the lineage of the people Sally learned her music from, both in historical detail and in the influence on Sally's performance style. These seven tapes reveal the songs that were deeply ingrained in Sally's memory late in her life, suggesting that these songs were associated with important people who taught them to her. They contrast with Meredith's earlier interviews, where the quantity of material recorded was great but conversation was severely edited because Meredith's limited finances meant that he had to conserve tape. In 1976 Sally was 82 and her choice of repertoire represents the songs that were arguably most significant for her. There is a notable increase in vocal strength and assurance with certain songs when she sings *The Maid of Fainey*, *Ben Hall*, *The Luggage Van Ahead*, *The Green Bushes*, and *The Journeyman Sailor*. There is none of the hesitation that impairs performance of other songs. I have used the 1976 field recordings as a means of assessing Sally's musical process when performing to both entertain and inform her listeners by singing the songs which she believes it is her duty to communicate. Quite simply, the songs recorded by Fahey and Seal in this late interview withstood the test of time and were still used often as part of her musical and emotional life in her eighty-second year. A significant proportion of the same items, including the stories accompanying the songs, was recorded again by Emily Lyle's recordings in the same year.⁵⁶

Sally's Songs

⁵⁶ NLA TRC 494

Analysis of the later field recordings of Sally Sloane demonstrates that “contexts help release meaning in the artifact”.⁵⁷ By examining the combination of historical detail, lineage of song transmission and the soundscape of the domestic environment in which Sally sings her repertoire, it is possible to understand the songs as artifacts recreated as a fusion of art, the past (where and when the song was learned) and the present (meaning the ‘present’ recorded on tape). Analysis of the field recordings reveals creation and recreation of a standard arrangement of words and music throughout time, absorbing the stylistic idiosyncrasies of each singer, some of which are adopted by the new singer, others of which are discarded forever. As an introduction to his “conceptual performance model”, James Porter expands upon the importance of performance as the context underpinning accurate ethnomusicological analysis:

([M]usical performance involves a psychological and therapeutic function for the practitioner in isolation as well as for social usage). It is performance, viewed holistically as from the standpoint of the practitioner, which remains the most important act, the one upon which all descriptive, analytical, representational, or demonstrative techniques must focus.⁵⁸

Sally’s choice of music has four qualities: 1. A clear narrative and symbolic level to engage a broad audience; 2. Resonance of the song text with the singer’s own life experiences; 3. Aesthetically appealing melodies; and 4. Connection to the personality of the individual from whom the music was sourced. The strength and nature of these relationships determined how well the item was remembered and influenced the degree of synthesis of stylistic characteristics from the original singer with those of the new one.

I will demonstrate this model by analyzing the interview conducted by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal in 1976, which represents the most complete recorded performance context surviving. Comparing this interview with the items recorded earlier by Meredith, it is evident that Sally performed her songs to engage the new listeners.

⁵⁷ Ian Higgins, Seminar paper on *Interdisciplinarity*, ANU School of Humanities, 2005.

⁵⁸ James Porter, ‘Jeannie Robertson’s My Son David: A Conceptual Performance Model’, in *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol 89, Jan-March, 1976, No 351, p.9.

“Performance, indeed, is the act which not only unites verbal and musical concepts, but also blurs the rigid distinction between improvisation and memorization.”⁵⁹

The consistent characteristic of Sally’s recorded vocal performances is her skill in communicating the narrative to the audience. Her stylistic alterations of accent, timbre, use of vernacular expressions and phrasing all support this primary motivation. Her singing recreates the action of the narrative; fusing past and present in the way she incorporates elements of her informant’s stylistic qualities, predominantly their accents and phrasing.⁶⁰ Sally’s repertoire is linked to how she remembers events in her life and how she connects the past and present. It is inextricably woven through the activity of her daily life and fused with her imagination and memories. Alan Lomax refers to this as:

The authority of the singer.... summed up for the Irish in the term “blás”, and ultimately, it seems to me, this authority depends upon the emotional maturity or, at least, upon his grasp of the content of the songs he sings and the subtle hidden currents of emotion in these songs.⁶¹

Age enhances rather than detracts from a traditional singer’s ability to perform traditional material:

In most cases, therefore, since so many of these songs are tragic and, in their way, art of a high order, a singer weathered by time and buffeted by the disappointments and tragedies which are normal to life, can more effectively realize this inner content. His “blás” improves with age even though his voice may lose its youthful freshness.⁶²

The recordings of Fahey and Seal demonstrate the flow of memory and connections between life events and songs for Sally, as the session is relatively uninterrupted by the need to turn off the tape recorder to conserve tape. Sally is acutely aware of the deterioration of her voice, but just as firmly committed to giving her performance.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.17.

⁶⁰ Simon McDonald, recorded in Creswick in the 1950s shared this quality.

⁶¹ Alan Lomax, Sleeve Notes to Shirley Collins - False True Lovers (fled3029) 1959, reproduced at <http://www.thebeesknees.com/bk-sc-sleeve-notes.html>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ NLA TRC 5724/3 Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, 4.6.06

I dunno, – if you’d heard me about 40 years ago– I can’t sing now. You know I nearly cry now sometimes over it, [I was] always singin’ when John’d come – I’d be cookin’ away or doin’ something, he used to say ‘ that’s when Sally sings the best when she’s at the sink, washin’ up.’

Are ya ready? [She sings in a more formal accent, starting close to microphone then moving back. She stretches the timing of the melody]

Adieu sweet love-ly Nancy ten thousand times adieu...

The interview begins tentatively, and Sally’s age is evident when she sings *The Journeyman Tailor*. In the background the fire is crackling and the wind is wailing through a crack in a window as she sings using a vernacular pronunciation of the words. The juxtaposition of the summer setting of the song and the wintry sounds of the field recording are striking as Sally exerts her power, shifting the listener out of the present and back into ballad reality. Line 3 of Verse One differs from the version in Meredith’s *Folksongs of Australia*, which is transcribed from Sally’s earlier singing as *The Journeyman Sailor* and reads, “He was brisk and airy, she saw him pass by.”

Sings:

On a bright long summers day
When a young journeyman tailor was going that way
He been promised to Mary she saw him pass by
And she called to this young man and bid him draw nigh.

O where are you going and what is your name
O where was you born prey, tell me the same [sound of a fire- iron in the hearth]
I was born in Derry, fair lady said she
And James is the name my godfather gave me.

O James I would have you to wed love with me
And you shall have your Poor man to wait upon thee
You shall have a footman when you go to ride
[car/truck passes] and the day you wed love I’ll be your fond bride

Fair lady your features does please me well now
But her birth and education would never agree
Now her birth and education would never agree,
For some countryman's daughter, is more fitter for me

[Sally intones, holding the last note of the song: "There you go, that's as old as the hills!"]

After the tape is stopped and re-started, Sally proceeds with a strong performance of *The Maid of Fainey*. This is sung much lower than the earlier Meredith recording and is now pitched with D below middle C as the tonic. The lyrics refer to the maid's sweetheart whose name is John and this line makes her laugh – perhaps because of the references to John Meredith in conversation with Seal and Fahey prior to recording. In this song, true love is thwarted once again.

There was a Maid of Fainey of youth and beauty bright
Who had a score of sweethearts to court her day and night (I'm a bit low) (but she doesn't alter her pitch when she resumes singing)
Oh she had one sweetheart and he was her father's man
If I am not mistaken I think his name was John (laughs)
(sound of the fire is clearly audible)
Oh they both walked out together all in her father's park
And they both sit down together for to have some private talk
Saying here's a token of true love and a ring he broke in two
Saying you keep one half for me and I'll do the same for you.

And h'all this time her father stood patiently behind saying daughter if I catch him
some refreshment' e will find (truck drives past outside)
I will send 'im to a far off land where he'll be treated as a slave
O daughter I'll confine you all in your lonely room (lonely room has some hesitation and a laugh – then she says, "Oh God!" and laughs)

I will give you bread and water and that will be your doom.
I don't want your bread or water, nor anything you have.
If you rob me of my Johnny I'll go down to my silent grave
Not another word was spoken not as much as fare thee well

Not another word was spoken not as much as fare thee well
For her heart's strings they were broken which rang the parting knell (laughs)

W.F. That's a particularly beautiful ballad.

S.S. I did a lot [like that] for John.

Sally is insistent about singing *Madge* for Fahey's recording, repeatedly suggesting it when the conversation leads elsewhere. It was Sally's mother's song and tells a sentimental tale of a girl who has 'gone astray' but who wishes her mother to know that she still loves her. The nature of steadfast love is an important theme in this and many other of Sally's songs, and offers a contrasting idea of love compared with the previous song about the woman who dies because her father forbids the consummation of her love. The resolve in Sally's tone of voice about singing *Madge* conveys her concern about communicating to others the message contained in the song narrative. She recognizes a duty to pass on the message in the songs she has inherited, in this case, the need of the fallen woman to send her pure love to her elderly mother. Sally voices her personal obligation as a singer to the characters in the songs to tell their stories and by so doing, to keep them alive. Indeed, her musical inheritance is always twofold: – the song and the duty to communicate it.

As I strolled out the other evening pleasure bent
After business worries of the day
I met a girl who shrank from me, and her I recognized
As a schoolmate in a village far away.
"Is that you Madge?" I said to her, she quickly turned away,
"Don't turn away Madge for I am still your friend!"
I'm going home next week
The old folks for to see, perhaps a message you would like to send

Chorus

Just tell them that you saw me
And then they'll know the rest
Tell them I am looking well you know
And whisper to my mother dear if you should get the chance

Tell her that I love her as I did long years ago

Your face is pale your cheeks are thin, come tell me where you're ill
When we first met your eyes shone clear and bright
Come home with me when I go Madge the change will do you good
Your mother wonders where you are tonight.

Chorus

An extension of Sally's role as story-teller is as defender of the innocent women in a number of her songs, notably, *The Red Rose Top*, *The Old Oak Tree* and *The Red Barn*. In the fragment of the *Red Barn* that she remembers, it is the murdered girl's mother who dreams of the whereabouts of her daughter's burial place, leading to the discovery of the body. Sally's comment at the conclusion of her performance illustrates her involvement in the narrative and her condemnation of the injustice and the brutality of the crime. (Sound Example 5)

Oh mother dear I'm going to the red barn to meet my William dear
They will not know me on the road or when I do get there
Straight way she went to the old red barn and never more was seen
Three long weary weeks had passed when our mother dreamt a dream
She dreamt her daughter was murdered by the lad she loved so well
At the very corner of the red barn and there her body did dwell.

(Speaks) The coot mangled her all up and buried her.
They dug the ground and there they found her

Sally's concern for exposing injustice continues with the performance of *Ben Hall*. This is a song well suited to deeper exploration of the process outlined in Porter's Conceptual Performance Model, "in which units of both cognitive and affective experience are embedded."⁶⁴

In her interviews with both Meredith and Fahey, Sally recounted the story about Ben Hall's sister, the mid-wife who had been present at her birth and delivered her. This

⁶⁴ James Porter, Op.cit. p.17.

was Mrs Coobung Mick, whose husband betrayed Ben Hall to the troopers and who was carrying a child at the time of the bushranger's shooting,

(said by some to be Ben Hall's) and when the child was born it had thirty-two spots on it, and that child was exhibited throughout the length and breadth of Australia for show purposes [as the Leopard Boy]. The spots were supposed to correspond with the thirty-two bullet wounds in Ben Hall's body!...Ben took to the bush then, and turned out to be a highwayman. When he found out what happened, his wife had gone, and his stock and everything was destroyed and he became a bushranger⁶⁵

This story was received with the song from Sally's mother. In the later interview, with Fahey and Seal, roughly twenty years after Meredith recorded *Ben Hall*, she performs all eight verses strongly, only pausing to clear her throat and apologetically take a glass of water to soothe her voice in verse six. There are minor modifications to the words, but the verse structure remains the same as the original recording and the version that appears in *Folk Songs of Australia*. (Sound Example 6)

An outcast from society he was forced to take the road
All through his false and treacherous wife who sold off his abode,
He was hunted like a native dog from bush to hill, and dale,
He was hunted by his enemies and they could not find his trail.

O up with his companion's men bloody scorn to shed
He oft times stayed and lifted hands with vengeance on their head,
No petty mean or pilfering act he ever stopped to do,
But robbed the rich and hardy man and scorned the poor.

One night as he in ambush lay all on the Lachlan plain,
When thinking everything secure to ease himself at lay,
When to his consternation and to his great surprise
Without one moment's warning a bullet passed him fly.

Oh it was soon succeeded by a volley sharp and loud
With twelve revolving rifles all pointed at his head,

⁶⁵ John Meredith and Hugh Anderson, *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them* 1979, p.165; see also NLA TRC 4/12A.

'Where are you Gilbert, where is Dunne/' he low down he did call,
It was all in vain they went up there to witness his downfall.

They riddled all his body as if they were afraid,
But in his dying moments he breathed curses on their head, [she sobs.]
That cowardly hearted Cundell the sergeant of police,
He crept and fired infamously till death did him release.

Although he had a lion's heart more braver than the brave,
Those cowards shot him like a dog no word of challenge gave,
Though many friends had poor Ben Hall his enemies were few,
Like the emblem of his native land his days were numbered too.

Its through Australia's sunny clime Ben Hall will range no more.
His name is spread both near and far to every distant shore.
From generation after this his parents will recall,
And rehearse to them the daring deeds committed by Ben Hall.

Sally's vocal style suits the nature of the ballad as a lament and this late performance of the song is a fine example of "blás" as defined by Lomax.⁶⁶ Her vocal style could almost be described as keening, and many listeners react to the singing by describing it, like Dale Dengate, as "unpleasant."⁶⁷ This "unpleasantness" is a result of the emotion she is communicating. Ben Hall's tragic death also had resonance for the antagonism many Australians of Sally's generation and social background felt towards representatives of authority like police and squatters. Sally's conversation in both Meredith and Fahey's recording reveals her attachment to the song. She was connected with Ben Hall's sister-in-law at birth and she believed it was her duty to tell the tale and emphasize the injustice of Hall's punishment through her vocal delivery as much as in her verbal explanation. The later rendition of the song has dropped roughly a tone from the version recorded by Meredith,⁶⁸ but retains the original power

⁶⁶ See above, p.12.

⁶⁷ Dale Dengate interviewed by Jennifer Gall Op.cit.

⁶⁸ The problems with pitch variation in the original recordings make it impossible to determine the exact pitch.

with which Sally sang. Ben Hall and Ned Kelly were the people's heroes as Sally describes them.

S.S. I'd hate to hear his reputation – O God scandalized! He wasn't a bad fella!

W.F. No he got the rough end of the stick didn't he!

S.S. No – you're tellin' us! And the same with Ned Kelly, – his mother, they put her in jail when she was going to have one of her babies, every time there'd be any wrong—of course Ned was supposed to do it.... It's a pity he didn't git a few more of them!⁶⁹

When Fahey asks her if she knows the song about Ben Hall titled *The Streets of Forbes* she responds vigorously, "I wouldn't sing *any*, only the real one."⁷⁰ Her comment supports the evidence that Sally believed that her songs were a cultural inheritance from those who taught her. She was committed to performing the song as a means of telling the story she had been entrusted with. *The Streets of Forbes* was not handed down through her family and therefore it could not be true to her inherited understanding of Ben Hall's life and death. John Manifold reportedly collected this song from Mrs Ewell of Bathurst, the words written by Ben Hall's brother in law, John McGuire, and reproduced in the *Penguin Book of Australian Folk Songs* in 1964.⁷¹ Perhaps there was also a touch of rivalry with Mrs. Ewell prompting Sally's response to the question about the *Streets of Forbes*. The direct line of transmission is Sally's measure of authenticity. This is demonstrated by *The Luggage Van Ahead*. Originally a sentimental parlour song, Sally learned it from her mother and sang it with the same intensity as she delivered *Ben Hall*. The story of the father nursing his distressed child while his wife lies dead in the luggage van of the train contains the themes of loss and abandonment that resonated for both women strongly enough to change the song from a ditty into a family heirloom of the intangible kind. Sally's performance of *The Luggage Van Ahead* is commanding. (Sound Example 7)

As the train rolled onward, the husband sat in tears
Thinking of the happiness of just a few short years

⁶⁹ Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, Op.cit.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Manifold, John, *The Penguin Book of Australian Folk Songs*, Penguin, 1979, p.77. See also the Digital Tradition correspondence on this topic, <http://www.mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=5571>

Baby's face brings pictures of a cherished hope that's dead
But baby's cries can't waken her in the luggage van ahead.

The listener's first reaction is to pass over this sentimental song in the search for the next authentic 'traditional' item, but Sally's delivery demands an audience. Her songs often concern the plight of the disadvantaged and the victims of tragic circumstances and the practical help she gave to people in times of difficulty also demonstrates this concern. Her granddaughter, Cheryl Wotton, comments on Sally's sympathies for those who were in difficulty. "Nan was always taking strays under her wing if anyone needed a break – she'd have the whole family to stay."⁷² Sally's music epitomizes her personal values.

After *Ben Hall*, Fahey tries to discover if Sally knows any other bushranger songs, but she can't recall any. Instead she returns to recollections of Meredith and the publicity he created for her, "I've got all me photos in there, up at Newcastle, me and John...John and I was in *Walkabout*."⁷³ She follows this thread and sings another song recorded earlier by Meredith, *The Rambling Sailor*. In comparison with the songs she has already sung, her vocal delivery is more detached and her vowels more rounded, projecting the influence of Jack Archer⁷⁴, from whom she learned the song originally. (Sound Example 8)

I am a sailor stout and bold long years I ploughed the ocean
To fight for my king and country too for honour and promotion
I said brother sailors I bid you all adieu, I'll go no more to the sea with you
I'll travel the country through and through and I'll still be a rambling sailor.

Now if you wish to know my name, my name it is young Johnson
I have commission from the king to court a girl at Sanson
With my false heart and flattering tongue I'll court them all and marry none
I'll court them all and marry none and I'll still be a Rambling Sailor

Oh when I came to Greenwich town now lassies there were plenty

⁷² Cheryl Wotton, interviewed by Rob Willis, Jim and Valda Lowe, Op.cit.

⁷³ Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, NLA TRC 5724/2.

⁷⁴ Jack Archer was an English itinerant railway worker from whom she also learned *Green Bushes*.

So boldly I stepped up to one to court her for her beauty
I said my dear what do you choose the brandy, ale and rum punch too
Beside a pair of new silk shoes to travel with your rambling sailor.

[She forgets the words and gives a paraphrase of the next verse]

[Speaks] Oh something where she put him in bed with somebody. I forget!

The original version she performed for Meredith had five verses, the fifth incomplete, and reversing the second and third verses as they are sung in this version. In fact I think that the verse sequence of the later version sung for Fahey sounds more logical. This version is sung in F, and again Sally comments that her pitch has dropped from where she used to sing the song. Directly after it, she sings *The Red Rose Top* and her delivery becomes grave, not detached, with very deliberate phrasing to emphasise the cautionary message of the same two verses of the song that she sang for Meredith. This song came to her from her grandmother learned from her mother's singing. The vowels sound less formal than *The Rambling Sailor*, but the words are very distinct and there are pauses to emphasise the sorrowful interpretation of the narrative. (Sound Example 9)

I'll (la la) the red rose top
And I'll plant the willow green, green,
All I hope that you may see
O slighted I have been.

Oh when your thyme has pulled and gone
They care no more for you, you;
There's not a place your thyme goes waste
But it spreads all over with rue, rue. spreads all over with rue.

The vagaries of her memory are an annoyance for Sally, and she explains how she copes when trying to keep track of her songs⁷⁵:

There was a couple I wrote down here the other day (goes and gets them). That's the trouble with me I have a job to think of the start of things.

⁷⁵ Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, NLA TRC 5724/2.

Boston City is one of these, sung in a more directly engaging style with flatter vowels and surprisingly she sounds like an ordinary old lady singing a popular song.⁷⁶ This item is from Sally's stream of songs concerning law-breakers and outlaws that *Ben Hall* belongs in and *I've Been a Wild Boy* that follows *Boston City* in the Fahey recording.

I was born in Boston city in a place you all know well
Brought up by honest parents and the truth to you I'll tell
Brought up by honest parents and reared most tenderly
Till I became a sporting man at the age of twenty-three.

My character was taken and I was sent to gaol
My father tried to bail me out which proved of no avail
The jury found me guilty and the clerk he wrote it down
I'm going to a ten-year stretch in a place called Charles Town

Farewell my aged father who tried to bail me out
Likewise my dear old mother oh bitterly did shout
With the tearing of her old grey locks as the tears came trickling down
My son my son what have you done to be sent to Charles Town

There's a girl in Boston city and a girl that I love well
And if ever I gain my liberty with her I mean to dwell
And if ever I gain my liberty as I have had before
I'll give up all my (unclear)...as I ought to've done before.

At the beginning of Tape Three she sings *I've Been A Wild Boy*, with very round vowels and a strong attack, leaning close into the microphone. Learned in Parkes from a gold miner, Harry Bartlett, who worked with her father, this song probably reflects the accent of Sally's teacher, conforming to a pattern in her performance practice of maintaining the vocal nuances of the person from whom she learned her material. The song is sung in B flat major but she consistently flattens the D when she sings "been" in the last line "been a wild boy" to emphasize the protagonist's transition from bad to good conduct. (Sound Example 10)

⁷⁶ I cannot find any reference for this song.

Oh my father he died he left me his estate
I married a lady whose fortune was great
And through keeping bad company I spent my entire store
I have **been** a wild boy but I'll be so no more

There was Bill Tom and Harry and Betsy and Sue
And two or three others belonged to our crew
We sat up till midnight and made the town roar
I have been a wild boy but I'll be so no more

Oh the first down to Newgate a prisoner I went
On a van of cold iron I had to manage
As I had to find comfort as I lay on the floor
I have been a wild boy but I'll be so no more.

O the next down to Newgate a prisoner I stand
And what I had longed for is now out of hand
And if ever I gain my liberty as I've had before
I'll be a good boy and I'll be so no more

Oh bad luck to all married men that visit strange doors
I have done so myself but I'll do so no more
I'll go home to my family I'll go home to my wife and
I'll be a good boy all the rest of my life

I was always too fond of treating ladies to wine
Till my pocket grew empty too late I could find'
Twenty pounds in one night oh I spent there and more
I have been a wild boy but I'll be so no more...(Speaks) I should have sung it at the
first

Sally is less confident in her performance of *Farewell Lovely Nancy*, confusing verses and losing the melody. She regains her assurance with her performance of *The Wee One*, a song that documents the plight of a man left to look after a child that is not his – a form of injustice less commonly documented in folk song than the reverse

predicament. True to the lineage of the song and the nationality of the singer who taught her, Sally adopts an Irish accent to sing *The Wee One*. (Sound Example 11)

I am a young man cut down in my blossom
I married a young girl to comfort my all
She goes out and she leaves me and falsely deceives me
And leaves me with a wee one that ne'er is my own

Chorus

O dear or the day I got married, I wish I was single again,
With my weeping and wailing and rocking the cradle
And nursing a wee one that **ne'er is my own (Irish accent)**

While I'm at work, my wife's on the ran-tan,
Hi on the ran-tan with another young man
She goes out and she leaves me and falsely deceives me
And leaves me a wee one that ne'er is my **own (Irish accent)**

Sally's recitation of Molly Baun Lavery is incomplete, unlike the version she sang for John Meredith in the 1950s, and she is unable to remember the tune to sing it for Fahey. However, she recites fragments of the story with her characteristic style of confiding a well-known family story. The version printed by Meredith is almost identical to the one printed in Colm O'Lochlainn's *Irish Street Ballads*, with its seven verses.⁷⁷ In the version she recites for Fahey and Seal she gives a verse mentioning Jimmy, and Jimmy Randal is a character who features in the version quoted in full in the Albert B. Friedman's *Folk Ballads Anthology*, sourced as "sung by a Kentuckian."⁷⁸ The other important revelation in this segment of the recording is that Sally owned a songbook, a hand-written exercise book⁷⁹, words-only, of the songs, to which she referred when her memory failed. It must be noted that Sally sternly instructs Fahey not to record any of her "yabber", which is in fact what he has just done. While this behaviour would possibly contravene current ethics policies relating to field work, the fact remains that in leaving the tape recorder running Fahey

⁷⁷ Colm O'Lochlainn's *Irish Street Ballads*, Pan, London, 1978, p.58.

⁷⁸ Albert. B Friedman (Editor), *The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World*, 'Text JAF, 30:360,sung by a Kentuckian.' Penguin, New York, 1982, p.26.

⁷⁹ Email communication from Warren Fahey, 19.11.06

captured crucial information about how Sally's singing related to her life and the way music was inextricably linked to life experiences. No other collector recorded comparable information to place her song repertoire in a cultural context. Sally tells the story of Molly Baun,

S.S. That's where 'e went out the young fella he had a girl Molly Baun. He went out and a shower of rain come (sic) on, and anyhow she put her apron over her head, and he thought it was a swan, and anyhow he fired and he killed his sweetheart, and he ran home to his uncle and his locks grown gray, and he said uncle dear uncle I've shot Molly Baun, her apron being about I took her for a swan, to my own sad misfortune it was my own Molly Baun

[Still Speaking:]

Oh Jimmy dear Jimmy, don't run away.
Stay in your own country, and don't run away,
Stay in your own country till your trial comes on,
And you'll ne'er be condemned by the laws of the land.

W.F. Does it have a tune

S.S. I forget that one. Where's me book?

W.F. Does it have a tune

S.S. I'll tell you in a minute

W.F. Its got a good tune has it?

S.S. (The tone of her voice alters, as if she's reading, possibly looking down the index of a book) "Young Molly Ban, Ballad", Where is it? 'Come all you young fellows that follow the gun, beware of going a shooting by the late setting sun, it might happen to anyone as it happened to me to shoot your own true love under a tree.'

I wanted to see if I can (sic) get the start of it. Don't you start that thing going with all my yabber on it!

(Starts singing. stops.)

You've got to have the proper twang to get going on these. Oh no it can't be my song. No I can't get it.

Contrastingly, the next song recorded is *Green Bushes*, which Sally sings without hesitation, from beginning to end in a six-verse version.⁸⁰ This song had particular significance for Sally and this will be discussed further in Section Three below.

The Christmas Carol *Christ Was Born in Bethlehem* is a simple tune and verse structure suggesting a children's carol. Although the verses are jumbled and Sally makes slips, she sounds very confident in her approach to the song with a vocal strength consistent with those songs she has known for many years. Religious songs are rare in early Australian field recordings, and this one contains detailed descriptions of Mary's involvement with Christ's body and suggestions of the mystical nature of the Passion.

Christ was born in Bethlehem
Christ was born in Bethlehem
Christ was born in Bethlehem
And in a manger lay
And in a manger lay
And in a manger lay
Christ was born in Bethlehem
And in a manger lay

Mary she came weeping
Mary she came weeping
Mary she came weeping
And stole away my Lord etc.

The Jews they crucified him
The Jews they crucified him
The Jews they crucified him
And nailed him to a tree etc.

Mary begged the body
Mary begged the body
Mary begged the body

⁸⁰ She leaves out the second verse printed by Meredith in *Folk Songs of Australia*.

And laid him in the tomb

The Luggage Van Ahead (Sound Example 6) follows sequentially in the recording session, perhaps triggered by the connection between the songs concerning the theme of mother and child. In the carol above the mother and child relationship carries sacred connotations and the reverence associated with this connection is consistent with Sally's delivery of the *Luggage Van Ahead*.

While Fahey asks the questions, Sally clearly remains in control of the line of thought she wants to pursue. The associations of songs, events and characters are the mental web that constructs her pattern of response to Fahey's requests for information and music. There's an interesting synchronicity in the interview as the sound of a small clock ticking is audible in tape one and tape two and Sally refers to herself twice as a kind of wind-up musical time piece; "Oh I'm not wound up yet."⁸¹ And "He must think I've got a main spring!"⁸² She perceives herself as a pragmatic seer mediating between the present and past where the old songs collectors seek are 'kept' in her memory: "Oh they'll all come to me by and by."⁸³ To reach back to the source requires a process of being "wound up" by the action of recollection and musical performance.

Similarly, Fahey's question about how Sally learned the instruments she played elicits a response that illustrates the integration of music, the character of the person who taught her and the other skills that were part of the interaction.⁸⁴

W.F. When did you start playing instruments, – learning?

S. S. I was about seven year old when I started the mouth organ. Used to be an old fella – he come from Botany in Sydney. I'd say go on Pat, and he was boarding with us, and I used to sing and he'd supply me with the mouth organ and the gun. Always had a gun, champion shooter I was, out of 20 shot there was 19 rabbits and a pigeon.

⁸¹ NLA TRC 5724/2

⁸² NLA TRC 5724/3

⁸³ NLA TRC 5724/1

⁸⁴ NLA TRC 5724/4

Tell you what, I'd bore a hole in a tree like that at 30 yards, the bankers used to come down on banker's holidays and they'd watch Sal shoot these bullets through that hole and ring the bell on the back.

This train of thought leads her to a detailed description of work in the gold mine in Lithgow and she then sings the only verse she knows of the song *The Cry Look Out Below*. She remarks that it was her mother's song but that she never learned it properly, despite the "lovely air."⁸⁵ Sally's involvement with the narrative of her songs is complete. After singing it, she retells the story of the song *The Old Oak Tree*.⁸⁶

Dark was the night, cold blew the blast and thickly fell the rain
When Eliza left her own dear home and she never came there again
She promised James her own true love, that with him she would be
At ten o'clock that very night beneath the old oak tree.

Night rolled on and day rolled on and Eliza was not home
No more it grieved her own dear friends to know where she could roam
At last her widowed mother cried just like a widow wild
I'll search those woods all round and round till I find my darling child.

For three long weary weeks or more they searched the woods around
Till the journey proved of no avail and Eliza was not found
The cause of all this sad, sad sound was the owner of this ground
Squire Scobal he went out to hunt well with his own hound

Those dogs began to sniff and snarl and tear away the ground
It was more than his whole whip could do to drive away those hounds
Those noble men all gathered round and called for pick and spade
They dug the ground and there they found this missed and murdered maid.

There was a knife pierced in her breast that caused more grief and shame
And on the handle of the knife they found Squire Scobal's name

⁸⁵ NLA TRC 5724/4

⁸⁶ Printed by P Brereton, Dublin 1867 as an Illustrated Ballad on one sheet, Bodleian Ballad Index, <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm>

I done the deed Squire Scobal said and I pierced her in the breast
Its with a stick I knocked her down and I need not tell the rest
These noble men all gathered round and called for pick and spade
They dug the ground and there they found that missed and murdered maid

Whilst gazing on this cold, cold corpse with a heavy look of pain
He pulled a pistol from his waist and he fired it through his brain
They buried him just where he lay, no Christian grave had he
No man was found to bless the ground beneath the old oak tree

The Irish broadside has been absorbed into Sally's Australian worldview, and she is outraged equally at the brutality of the murder and the brazen stupidity of the murderer in leaving the murder weapon with the victim.

Well he was a big squatter, and this girl he mucked around with her, and he killed her and he never said anything about it, and they went out hunting with the dogs, and you know what them dogs are like, sniffin' and snarlin', and tearing and anyhow they held a bit of an examination and there they found her body they dug around and found 'er. (Shouting) And he left the knife in the breast! That's what done him in!⁸⁷

Fahey continues the interview, but with the stories of *Ben Hall* and the *Old Oak Tree* fresh in her mind, Sally continues to relate her responses to these narratives and makes it clear that she is no tragic victim of fate. She knows how to defend herself, even if her claim to boxing expertise is a tall one.

W. F. Do you know any songs about boxing.

S. S. No I used to do it, not sing it. I was able to box. There was a fellow lived along side of us one time and he was putting the larry over—

W. F. What's that?

S.S. (Laughs) Well anyhow I knocked 'im, and of course my old man knew I could box. And 'e said Oh she hit me, and he ran away on his hands and knees.... They were gone next morning.

The fellow who learned me used to travel with the shows, a fellow by the name of Johnson. I can take me own part! I used to love it too!

⁸⁷ NLA TRC 5724/5

Sally continues her recollections of female self-defence.⁸⁸ First she adopts traces of an Irish accent and sings, then maintaining the accent she tells the story of her grandmother being approached by an insolent male. (Sound Example 12)

Oh Biddy you are so handsome, you are so tall and straight
You are the prettiest Irish girl that ever I did meet
And if you'd only marry me I would not care at all
If they never grow a praetie in the town of Donegal
The first night I met her she was dancing at a fair.....

[Speaks] When my Granny came out here she was a lady in waiting, she used to cook the praeties in ashes. So she had a great big floury potato cooked in ashes this day and the groom fella he came to the door this day when she was having her dinner.
“Ah he says, your beautiful Irish (unclear, ‘wild oats’?)”
She said “d’you lik’em’,
“Yes” he said and she picked up this big floury potato and she hit him fair in the eye with it, and he roared and he rubbed it.

Sally describes how vocal music was interlinked with the transmission and teaching of dance steps in several anecdotes. She sings the dance calls for an unidentified dance figure :

S.S. There used to be an old (laughs) woman in Parkes who had a dancing class, dad used to tell us and she used to say, (sings) “Get hold of this one **sol de diddle dee**, get hold of that one **dee de diddle dee**”, she’d be singing and learning them to how do the steps, oh it’d be funny all the lads used to get down there.

— and for the Varsovienna, or ‘Varsoverana’ as she pronounces it.⁸⁹
(Sings) “There’s another one here and another one there, and another one here and another one there, and another one, and another one and another one right here etc. ... That’s what you’d sing for the hop”. I don’t sing the Lancers. My mother used to sing the sets when they’d be dancing, put’em all through their paces.

(Sound Example 13)

⁸⁸ NLA TRC 5724/6

⁸⁹ Mrs. Patricia Hughes also recalls having been taught the dance with the same words in her childhood in Olinda, Victoria, in the 1920s.

Sally's mother had a store of reels as well, as she discloses in the following passage describing how Sally was taught to play and sing by her mother.

W.F. Where did you learn the fiddle?

S.S. There used to be an old bloke board with us, fellow by the name of Bob Vaughan, he used to work on the rail, God he could play! He said, 'somehow I'll learn you to play'. I said, 'If I learn, it'll be by meself. (Sic)'

Mother used to sit down and lilt the old reels, – you know what lilt is.... You know, in the way of a quick tune, (Sings a tune she hesitantly calls the *Blackberry Blossom*, in C)⁹⁰ well she'd sing the notes and I'd finger it. She started me on Ben Hall, nice and simple. 'Learned the mouth organ first then the Jews harp, then the fiddle then the accordion, I can play a waltz on the piano, I've got me guitar in there but its got a broken string.

Sally started to learn musical instruments at the age of seven, as stated earlier in the interview. Her recollections above confirm that *Ben Hall* was the first song she learned and she remained confident to perform it at the age of 82. The connection with her mother and through her mother to her grandmother is one that is mentioned constantly throughout the interview and in Meredith's notes and the other surviving recordings. Indeed, the connection almost fuses grandmother, mother and daughter into one musician at times, —

W.F. Did your mother play the concertina?

S.S. Oh lovely she did.

W.F. Did she ever sing while she played it?

S.S. Yeah, yeah, lovely she did. She used to sing 'My Son Teddy' and play, "Go on Sarah, sing My Son", they'd say...Oh I can't. She used to get out of breath like me.

⁹⁰ This sounds nothing like the other version of the *Blackberry Blossom* she recorded earlier for Meredith (NLA TRC4/12) and much closer to the family of tunes related to the Irish tune, Con Cassidy's Highland.

So vivid was this link between the generations, kept alive by her mother's stories⁹¹, that Sally gave collectors the impression initially that she had learned songs directly from her grandmother.⁹² This was not possible, as Sarah Alexander had died six years before Sally was born, but the line of oral transmission was literally a lifeline through the generations, adding authority to Sally's vocal delivery. The song that perhaps shows best the development of Sally's "blás" as a traditional singer is *The Green Bushes*. The following section offers a detailed analysis of the different versions of the song recorded by Waters, Fahey, Seal and Meredith.

Green Bushes and the Conceptual Performance Model

There are six field recording versions documenting the life of the song in Sally's custody, documenting how the song remained alive in a transplanted culture. The following analysis examines the documented history of the ballad and "traces the identity of the song in the mind" of Sally Sloane.⁹³ Transcribed below is the composite version of the words. (Sound Example 14)

THE GREEN BUSHES

Sung by Sally Sloane and recorded by John Meredith in 1956

As I went a-walking one morning in spring,
To hear the birds whistle and the nightingale sing,
I spied a fair damsel, so sweetly sang she,
'Down by the green bushes where 'e thinks to meet me.'

'Oh what are you loitering for my pretty maid?'
'I'm a-loitering for my true love, kind sir she said.'
'Shall I be your true love, and will you agree
And forsake the own true love and go along with me?'

Oh come let us be going, kind sir if you please,

⁹¹ "My grandmother used to sing Danny Boy, when my mother was with me she broke her hip, we had the wireless here and she used to sit here, - Gracie Fields sang it this day, "Oh she said, my poor old mother used to sing that". Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, op.cit. p.2.

⁹² Edgar Waters wrote in his notes to the Wattle recording Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians, Number One, 1957, p.3. "Her grandmother came to Australia in the 1849s from County Kerry in Ireland. She was a fine singer, her granddaughter says, with a great store of songs and dance tunes. Some of them she passed on directly to Sally."

⁹³ James Porter, Op.cit., p.17.

Come let us be going from under those trees.
For yonder is coming my true love I see,
Down by the green bushes where he thinks to meet me.’

But when he came there and found she was gone,
He looked all around him and cried quite forlorn,
Saying, ‘She’s gone with another and quite forsaken me,
So adieu to those green bushes for ever cried he.’

‘Oh I’ll buy you fine beavers and fine silken gowns,
I’ll buy you fine petticoats flounced to the ground,
If you’ll prove loyal and constant and free,
And forsake your own true love and go along with me.’

‘I want none of your petticoats nor your fine silken walls/robes (*printed as robes, sounds like walls*)⁹⁴

I was never so foolish as to marry for clothes,
But if you’ll prove loyal and constant and true
I’ll forsake my own true love and go along with you.’

Last verse from the other three field recordings

‘I’ll be like some schoolboy, I’ll spend all my time in play,
For I never was so foolish as to be lured away.
No false-hearted young girl shall serve me so any more,
So adieu to those green bushes, its time to give o’er.’

This analysis examines historical documented copies of *Green Bushes* and Sally Sloane’s versions of the song in relation to James Porter’s statement: “Whatever ‘the song’ is, its identity cannot be demonstrated, nor other features such as its existence through time fully delineated, until we are able to trace that identity in the mind of the singer or a number of singers.”⁹⁵

From the earliest printed sources c 1816, *Green Bushes* crossed and re-crossed boundaries of musical genre and culture, from the oral tradition to the popular ballad

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.11.

press, the theatre, into western art music and was carried across the world through the oral tradition to continue its life through the lives of its singers in Australia. *Green Bushes* is documented in field recordings and notations of the oral tradition, in Ireland, England, Canada, Nova Scotia and the USA, and it was published in many broadside ballad versions in the 18th and 19th centuries in England and in New York. Mrs Fitzwilliam sang it in John Baldwin Buckstone's play, *Green Bushes*, 1845, and the performances of this play in England, Australia and America either revived the existing song or encouraged transmission of the new version as it was sung in the play.⁹⁶ The Bodleian Library Broadside Ballad *Sweet William* with instructions directing that it be sung to the tune of *Green Bushes* was printed between 1813 and 1838, and *Among the Green Bushes, and J. Catnach (London), 1813-1838* in Johnson Ballads Fol.30 in the Bodleian Library Broadside⁹⁷ both predate the use of the song in Buckstone's play. Peter Kennedy in *Folk Songs of Britain and Ireland*⁹⁸ gives six field recorded versions and twenty-six printed versions, some of which are transcriptions of field recordings or notations. Taking into account the evidence of the broadsides and other related versions of the song: *The Cutty Wren*, *The Queen of May*, *The Shepherd's Lament*, and *Sweet William* through either melody, theme or related lyrics, and the many Broadside cross-references to songs related to *Green Bushes*, I would agree with Kennedy that "we can presume it was traditional long before it was used by Buckstone."⁹⁹ Documentation for published versions of the song is comprehensive, implying that it enjoyed wide popular circulation and performance. *Green Bushes* has engaging narrative complexity and there is great potential for the singer to invest their personality in the performance. The story engages the listener, and at a deeper level, the narrative links the audience to the song through the characters, who represent archetypes,

'felt' as embodied forces, pulling this way or that, intersecting points in a network of linked relationships, driven by passion to their destiny. By

⁹⁶ John Buckstone, *The Green Bushes*, Player's Edition, 3.2.1845, State Library of NSW, DSM/829.89/B

⁹⁷ <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm>

⁹⁸ Peter Kennedy, *Folk Songs of Britain and Ireland* Cassell, London, 1975, p. 378.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Op.cit., p.378.

comparison with the invisible but strongly felt network that links them and the Fate that controls them their personalities do not matter.¹⁰⁰

The protagonists' lack of personality allows the listener space to empathise with the emotional web acted out in the course of the song by the male and female characters.¹⁰¹ Symbolism in the song connects the singer and listener to the past. *Green Bushes* epitomises the power of orally transmitted folk music that enables both singer and listener to experience a sense of belonging to an all-encompassing pattern of fate and relationships, while simultaneously recognizing that the song is a reflection of these patterns. Singer and audience ideally form a community of shared meaning in the course of the performance.

It is a circular narrative. A man out walking in spring sights 'a fair damsel' singing "Down by the green bushes where he thinks to meet me" (in Meredith's *Folk Songs of Australia* this is transcribed as "where *she* thinks to meet me", but Sally sings *he*. Both pronouns are found in the printed sources, representing different interpretations for different singers). In Sally's version, the woman sings a song that attracts the new suitor ahead of the old one: perhaps a test to see who arrives first? Possibly these are references to some other, earlier layer of magical meaning and ghostly, revenant lovers, which have been simplified over time. He asks what she's waiting for and when she tells him it is her true love, he offers to take the place of the man she's waiting for. When she sees her old lover coming she leaves with the protagonist. The lover arrives and realises he's too late. Meanwhile, the first man offers the woman fine clothes to entice her to commit to him, but she explains that all she wants is his

¹⁰⁰ Willa Muir, *Living With Ballads*, Hogarth Press, London 1965, p.157.

¹⁰¹ Stewart describes the cyclical myth, which may well underlie *Green Bushes*. "The folk theme has remained constant to the elements of the act, which derives from the worship of a Mother-Lover-Goddess in whose control all life, all death were held." [*Green Bushes* is linked, like *The Two Brothers* discussed by Stewart] "... With the early ritual practice of the Sacred King and his Tanist Brother and Successor.... at a certain time of the year, one chosen man superseded the present 'king' usually by killing him. The victim represented the light part or waking year, his successor the dark season, or waning year. The story never ends, for the goddess brings the light-brother back to life in the spring, at the end of the dark-brother's reign.... The resolving element in this perpetual struggle is the Goddess (in *Green Bushes* this is the 'Fair Damsel') who restores. Poetically she sings the song of life, and all living things respond to her music, including her chosen dead lover." In *Where is St. George*, Moonraker Press, Bradford on Avon, 1972: pp.17-25

fidelity. In the final verse, the old lover announces himself cured of the attachment to the woman.¹⁰² Apparently, all the parties are satisfied with the new arrangement.

The song has more to it than the superficial tale of flexible fidelity. Is the girl really 'false hearted', or has she simply tired of waiting for a lover who would prefer to be off adventuring? Has her 'true love' died and become a revenant lover? This is a possible interpretation given the emblematic meaning of the nightingale¹⁰³ mentioned in verse one as a messenger from the dead or transformed loved one, and the association of the colour green with death and the supernatural.¹⁰⁴ The symbolism in the song offers the possibility of many different interpretations linking the old world to the new.

Music of European origin, like *Green Bushes*, remains a strong vein in Australian folk music, and the variations that occurred here reveal much about the evolution of a distinctive folk music. The transmission of folk song in Australia represents exchange between men and women, men and men, through relationships like father and daughter, wife and husband, mother and son, as well as sharing songs between networks of friends, receiving music by post in remote locations and learning new items from travellers, in the way that Sally Sloane learned *Green Bushes* from Jack Archer, an itinerant railway worker.

Green Bushes is an important example of the introspective ballads that contrast with the more popular, diversionary, Australian folk songs like *The Rybuck Shearer*, *Click Go the Shears* and *Botany Bay* favoured in the bush band repertoire. Like Catherine Peatey's versions of *The Bonny Bunch of Roses* and *The Female Rambling Sailor*, they provide not only a continuing link to a European cultural background, but also, a framework adaptable by the singer to express their own emotions and to reflect their personal place in patterns of relationships. The length of the song allows the singer time to establish a rapport with the characters in the narrative and use the performance to live through the questions posed in the verses. Folk song, like myth,

¹⁰² In the melodically related broadside, *Sweet William*, (Catnach, 1813-1838) the woman is rewarded for her faithful wait by her returning sailor lover with many rich and exotic gifts. Perhaps *Green Bushes* was a riposte explaining that protracted loyal yearning, even when rewarded lavishly, is no substitute for the riches of companionship when life is short.

¹⁰³ Wimberly, Lowry, Charles. *Folklore in the English Ballads*, New York, Dover, 1965, p.242

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

no matter how ancient its origins or its subject matter, is always concerned with contemporary relationships, here and now... its value lies not in its truth to any actual past whose reality we can establish or disprove but in its present usefulness as guide to values and to conduct.¹⁰⁵

The existence of *Green Bushes* in the repertoire of Australian singer Sally Sloane demonstrates how life circumstances and relationships between the singer and another musician resulted in transmission and survival of the song. These living links forge a living, evolving tradition.

Tradition enables a singer to learn a song from the past and send it on into the future through a performance provoked by feeling, and the transmission of the song *Green Bushes* demonstrates this process. Porter proposes that traditional singers choose certain songs as favourites because they deal with issues that are important in their lives, consciously or unconsciously. Their performance of the song reflects this in subtle ways:

The singing of a ballad cannot be viewed simply as an act in which a text (understood to mean a “story”) is set in motion by a singer with a tune, but as a complex, existential process in which units of both cognitive and affective experience are embedded.¹⁰⁶

The following discussion of Sally Sloane’s version of *Green Bushes* is based on five different performances recorded over 23 years by four collectors:

1953 NLA TRC 2539/5 recorded by John Meredith

1956 NLA TRC 4/19 recorded by John Meredith

c.1957 NLA TRC 2539/79 recorded by Edgar Waters¹⁰⁷

c.1960 NLA TRC 4/13-14 recorded by John Meredith

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Small, *Musicking, The Meanings of Performance and Listening*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press 1998, p.100.

¹⁰⁶ James Porter, *Op.cit.*, p.17.

¹⁰⁷ The version of *Green Bushes* sung by Sally Sloane used on the Wattle record released in 1957 was compiled from two or more ‘takes’ so that the full seven verses were represented. (Personal email communication with Edgar Waters, 18/6/06)

1976 NLA TRC 5724/1-7 recorded by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal

Sally Sloane's performance of *Green Bushes* is consistently slow and legato: "Hallmarks of this performance are the pure, unemotional vocal style, long lyrical phrasing and the relaxed tempo that draws the listener in to the story."¹⁰⁸ In fact, the tempo, while rhythmically flexible, is consistent with that of a tactus or resting heartbeat of roughly 63 beats a minute, a fundamental reminder of the interrelationship between singer and song. In the field recordings of *Green Bushes* melodic subtleties are not obscured by instrumental accompaniments and imposed arrangements. As manuscript notation cannot capture the subtleties of rhythmic variation, nor the textural effect of Sally's phrasing, the best illustration of these characteristics is a sound sample of the longest version of *Green Bushes*: NLA TRC 4/19 recorded in 1956 by Meredith: (See words above)

I have endeavoured to gain an understanding of the connection between Sally's life and the words of the song, what James Porter describes as "understanding the musical process in formation, from the inside as well as the outside."¹⁰⁹ John Meredith noted that Sally learned *Green Bushes* when she was twelve years old from Jack Archer.¹¹⁰ The song remained a favourite with Sally in her adult life and was recorded by several different collectors who visited her. *Green Bushes* was important to her for many reasons. Firstly, Jack Archer must have been a significant personality in her childhood to pass on a song that remained so vivid for Sally throughout her life. To learn this lengthy song at the age of twelve would have taken dedication and I suggest that the resolve to learn it arose out of Sally's affection and/or respect for the original singer.

The emotional conflict described in the song could well have resonated with Sally's own complex family situation. Her mother, Sarah, left her biological father, Tom Frost, and lived with William Clegg. Sally adopted Clegg as her surname. Clegg's name appears on her marriage certificate and that of her sister Bertha, and she had written permission from Clegg for her marriage to John Phillip Mountford¹¹¹. This

¹⁰⁸ Edgar Waters, *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians*, Booklet in Wattle Record Archive Series Number One, Sydney, 1957, p.3.

¹⁰⁹ James Porter, *Op.cit.*, p. 9

¹¹⁰ John Meredith, *Op.cit.*, p. 173

¹¹¹ Valda Lowe, *Op.cit.*

suggests a changing dynamic between Sally and the two most important men in her early life—the loss of her biological father through her parents’ separation and the new father who took responsibility for the daughter he gained through the relationship with Sally’s mother. Loss and belonging in relation to significant male figures are important themes in her life. In the late 1940s, Sally remarried and her second husband, Fred Sloane, forbade her mentioning the name of her ex-husband, as noted previously. Once again, an intriguing ambiguity about the terms of separation from the original husband continues a family pattern begun by Sally’s mother, a pattern that occurs in the words of *Green Bushes*. If we accept traditional folk song performance as ritual,¹¹² the connection between Sally’s life experiences and the song is evident:

During the enactment of the ritual, time is concentrated in a heightened intensity of experience. During that time, relationships are brought into existence between the participants and the model, in metaphoric form... In this way the participants not only *learn about* those relationships but actually *experience* them in their bodies...sometimes to the point where the psychic boundary between the mundane and the supernatural world breaks down so that they leave behind their everyday identity...¹¹³

Sally’s itinerant childhood influenced her musical repertoire of old traditional songs of European origin, Australian bush songs and popular music from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her early exposure to many different musicians and the influence of her musically talented mother gave her versatility and a breadth of repertoire to match her powerful personality. Sally accepted the influence of the paranormal in life, as her account of the Leopard Boy attests,¹¹⁴ in relation to the death of the bushranger Ben Hall and the song she sang commemorating this event. The metaphoric language in the traditional songs she sang is a notable feature of her repertoire.

Green Bushes is a song rich in symbolism derived from the lyrics that are remnants of earlier related songs. The simplicity of the song allows the symbols to create a link

¹¹² See note above on ritual, Ch 2.

¹¹³ Christopher Small, *Op.cit.*, p.96.

¹¹⁴ John Meredith & Hugh Anderson, *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*, 1979, p. 165.

between mythology and earlier culture and endurance of these influences in the folk stream. While it is impossible to know what images Sally saw when she sang the song, an analysis of the words offers a guide to the power of the song that has kept it alive in both the oral and written tradition for probably more than 200 years:

The starkness and simplicity of folksongs is deceptively simple, for all extra material has been discarded; yet the powerful images are never weakened or lost.... If the life symbols were not present the song would have disappeared long ago.¹¹⁵

...The literal reading of the ballad plots often conceals an older and deeper flow of images which should be re-examined as a sequence of pictures, in much the same way as dream or visionary sequences appear to the inner eye.¹¹⁶

From the conversation recorded by Fahey and Seal in their 1976 interview, it is clear that Sally identified very strongly with the stories told in her songs. In Sally's version of *Green Bushes*, remnants of past singers remain in the distinctive phrasing and her pronunciation. In Verse 7, "false heart-*id*") is clearly identifiable as a reproduction of Jack Archer's cockney accent, and this sound in translation represents the personal relationship that placed the song in Sally's repertoire. The influences from other singers in the lineage of the song remain as anonymous ghostly imprints.

In the five field recordings identified above, Sally's performance varies each time with phrasing, word choice and changes from a four-verse version to a six-verse and a seven-verse version transcribed in Meredith and Anderson's book *Folksongs of Australia and the Men and Women Who Sang Them*.¹¹⁷ Comparative analysis is hampered by the fact that tape speeds are variable because of the age of the original equipment, and the fact that user copies are on cassette, which results in speed variations between tape players used for listening. However, I believe that Sally's pitch remains relatively consistent in each performance, with E above middle C as the tonic. This takes into account the speed problems of Meredith's tape recorder in the 1956 version, which gives a slightly lower pitch for the starting note. The following

¹¹⁵ R.J. Stewart, *Where is St George? Pagan Imagery in English Folk Song*. Moonraker, Bradford on Avon, 1977, p. 27.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹¹⁷ *Op.cit.*, p.173.

comparison describes the differences between the versions of *Green Bushes* using my transcription of the words reproduced above as reference:

1. NLA TRC 2539/5, 1953: verse 1, verse 3 as verse 2, verse 3, and verse 7 as verse 4. This version has a more regimented rhythm and has less freedom in the delivery.
2. NLA TRC 4/19, the 1956 version is an outstanding performance with the verses flowing 1 to 6 in sequence. The phrasing is longer and the vocal line sustained. There are kitchen noises at the beginning, a faint slosh of dish-water and then the groan of a drawer closing, shuffling movement and the way the voice volume waxes and wanes indicates head movement until a comfortable posture is found and the song gathers momentum. There is an audible drone, possibly the tape machine motor, but it sounds more like a refrigerator to me. It provides a useful harmonic reference point. There is a feeling in this performance that in the course of the song the singer leaves the domestic realm and enters the ballad world created by the narrative.
3. NLA TRC 2539/79, 1957: verse 1, verse 3, as verse 2, verse 3 and verse 7 is verse 4. Sally's foot is audible tapping as a pulse or tactus, speeding up and slowing with her delivery of the narrative.
4. NLA TRC 4/13, C1960: There is a clock ticking in this version at about double the speed of the pulse or tactus in the song. Once again, the foot tapping is audible and the hint of pages rustling in a slight moment of hesitation between verses 2 and 3. Was she reading from a version that she had written out?
5. NLA TRC 5724/3-4 recorded by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal in 1976: This version has six verses, leaving out verse 2, "Oh what are you loitering for..." The pitch has dropped by approximately 1½-2 tones.

The different versions demonstrate two different styles of performance: two ways of translating the original narrative. In the shorter versions Sally has more detachment from the lyrics, and in the longer ones she sounds as if she is totally immersed in the narrative. *Green Bushes* takes on a different shape and style to meet the requirements of the situation in which it is sung. The four-verse version captures the bones of the plot with a balanced structure of two verses for introduction and proposal and two verses for the old lover to discover the woman's change of heart, condemn her decision and move on. It is in the line "no false-hearted young girl shall serve me so anymore" that we hear Jack Archer's accent mirrored in Sally's pronunciation of

'heart-id'. (Sound Example 15) The six-verse version has a different message. The woman has three verses in which to consider the proposal and reject the old love, the old love has one verse to lament and the woman has the final two verses to clarify that she doesn't want material gifts; she wants immediate companionship and an end to 'loitering'.

Consistent in Sally's recorded performances of *Green Bushes* is her commitment to communicating the narrative to the audience. Her stylistic alterations of accent, timbre, use of vernacular expressions and phrasing support this primary motivation. Her singing recreates the action of the narrative, fusing past and present in the way she incorporates elements of Jack Archer's accent with her own strong performance style. The story of tangled love affairs in the song is illuminated in performance by her ability to infuse the song with her imagination and perception. *Green Bushes* in all Sally's versions displays her "grasp of the content of the songs she sings and the subtle hidden currents of emotion in these songs."¹¹⁸ In the final performance of *Green Bushes* when she was aged 82, her "blás" remains strong despite her age.¹¹⁹ The five versions of the song analysed above show how variations in Sally's performance of the song offer different narrative possibilities, reflecting how she remembered the story on different occasions, influenced by the context of the recording and her mood at the time.

Conclusion

I have examined Sally Sloane's songs by placing her at the centre of analysis to illuminate how she gathered the music that *she* valued and used to understand her place in the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music. Her music survives in the field recordings made by Meredith, Fahey and Seal, Lyle, Waters and Sullivan, but her strong personality ensured inclusion of items and stories *she* wanted to relate. The background sounds of her home: the fire crackling while the wind howls outside, sounds of crockery and water as she washes up, opening and closing drawers in the kitchen, movement as she straightens herself in her chair to sing, indications of restlessness settling into a focused performance gauged from the relationship of voice

¹¹⁸ Alan Lomax, Sleeve Notes to Shirley Collins - *False True Lovers* (fled3029) 1959, reproduced at <http://www.thebeesknees.com/bk-sc-sleeve-notes.html>

¹¹⁹ Sally Sloane interviewed by Warren Fahey and Graham Seal, NLA TRC 5724/6.

dynamics and the microphone position. This audio portrait provides the evidence of Australia's finest recorded traditional woman singer.

Fahey and Seal's field recordings build on the evidence of Meredith's tapes to illustrate the way in which Sally's repertoire was linked thematically in her memory to significant events and people. What is an apparently random choice of songs from different cultural origins is a repertoire constructed through a lifetime of relationships. Her repertoire exists because of the process defined by MacDonald as "the activation of a certain spiritual/emotional power in the relationship-network of those involved in the collaboration."¹²⁰ Sally Sloane is a bard and a story weaver of the first order. Her songs have been sufficiently powerful to survive the transition from their origins as unaccompanied items performed within the intimate domestic environment of her family to the contemporary performance contexts of commercial recordings and folk festival stages. The process of how a contemporary musician interprets Sally Sloane's music through understanding the connections between biography and song choice forms part of the discussion in Chapter Six, *Sounds in Translation, Re-Interpreting Music from Archival Sources*.

¹²⁰ Barry McDonald, *The Yearbook of Traditional Music*, Vol. 28, 1996, p.116.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRADITION AND REVIVAL: MARY JEAN OFFICER

The central thesis of this work is that the contribution of women to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music has been overlooked and not analysed in depth. I assert that Australian folk music is a tradition in which musicians other than the male rural working/labouring class have participated through receipt and exchange of songs and melodies. Georgiana McCrae's collection of Scottish songs and piano music is representative of a genre of folk music disregarded by folk music scholarship to date because it was music made in the domestic sphere; because the songs were imported, not 'home-grown'; and because much of Georgiana's music was notated than being learned purely as a result of oral transmission. Georgiana's repertoire was shared with passing musicians and handed on to her children in a manner consistent with the transmission of traditional music defined in the Introduction (p.19.). Sally Sloane's repertoire was published in *Folk Songs of Australia* as music collected by John Meredith. My research has brought to light field recordings by Warren Fahey with Graham Seal that reveal hitherto unacknowledged biographical details and new information about what the songs meant to her. Unlike the earlier recordings by Meredith, the tape recorder was left running, capturing the flow of the interview, thus enabling more precise analysis. Placing Sally at the centre of inquiry with an interview that is relatively uninterrupted offers new insight into the operation of transmission in a woman's repertoire.

This chapter describes the life and work of Mary Jean Officer in the context of the work's hypothesis. Her particular skills as an interviewer have been overlooked because she worked as a partner in an interviewing team with Norm and Pat O'Connor. She participated in the transmission of Australian folk music in accordance with the concept of Tradition referred to above.

Officer was a folk music collector, a performer and member of the Folklore Society of Victoria in the Australian folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. She represents the continuing transition, within the tradition of Australian folk music, from organic to planned transmission, as she was not a member of her informants' families, nor a member of their

immediate physical community. She felt a duty, inspired by the friendships she made with her informants, to preserve and publicise their contributions to the field research she conducted singly, with Norm and Pat O'Connor and occasionally with Bob Michel. Her activities can be regarded as participation in the continuing tradition of the music of the people she interviewed. She also contributed to the evolution of Australian folk music by making available the music she helped collect to a wider audience. While her aim was to find, collect and preserve the endangered folklore of the Australian bush, her work was also an attempt to affirm her personal identity in relation to the 'community' of people she interviewed. Like Georgiana McCrae, Mary Jean Officer participated in the preservation and performance of traditional music in order to try and synthesize her old-world cultural values with new-world cultural realities. Officer describes this synthesis in an interview with Edgar Waters:¹

I was a displaced person. I grew up here [Australia] without the European culture [her education had been a product of]...I went along to the Folklore Society...I think it was the enthusiasm of people like Wendy Lowenstein that drew me in. I stopped being a displaced person and belonged.

Her approach to field collecting contrasts with the approach of her fellow collectors, Norm and Pat O'Connor and illustrates a distinct difference in masculine and feminine roles in collecting activities. Most particularly, it represents a significantly different approach to the detached, historicized approach of Norm O'Connor. O'Connor saw the commercial potential of music recorded in the field tapes and started Opal Records to market Australian material.²

Officer's dedication to establishing and sustaining a community of musicians linked to the informants and performing the items collected is clearly documented in her contributions to the Monthly Newsletters of the Victorian Bush Music Club, *GumSuckers' Gazette*, and *Tradition*; also in miscellaneous articles, an oral history interview conducted by Edgar Waters³ (referred to throughout this chapter); a lecture on folklore,⁴ and her surviving collecting notes. For Officer, transmission was most definitely "a conscious giving-and-receiving relationship that celebrates, not only the continuity of the gift, but, perhaps more

¹ NLA TRC 2762/1; 2.12.91

² The Austral Singers, *Australian Songs* Opal Records 001-LA-A c.1951

³ NLA TRC 2762/1-2

⁴ *What is Folklore?* NLA TRC 4946/12 & 13.

importantly, the continuity of the relationship that keeps such giving and taking alive”.⁵ However, the kind of community within which this exchange occurred was no longer the small community in which her informants lived. Rather, it linked the Melbourne suburban Folklore Society of Victoria and the Victorian Bush Music Club (the performance branch of the organization) (Figs. 34 & 35) with the informants’ regional community, through concerts in the bush and in the city, featuring performances by both the informants and the society members. Neither these performances, nor the collecting trips received any financial backing from outside sources, and were intended to support the spirit of an existing folk culture. Officer reiterates in the interview with Waters,⁶ in her lecture⁷ and her writing,⁸ that these people were close friends for whom she had love and respect and a shared spiritual devotion to the bush. Figures 36 and 37, photographs taken by Norm O’Connor, depict Mary Jean Officer visiting the bush environment inhabited by Simon McDonald. They represent Officer’s discovery of friendships that enabled her to discover and recover her own connections to the Australian countryside.

This spiritual connection with the bush was of course personal and distinctly different to those of her informants, but it was the basis of her rapport with many of the people she interviewed. These country folk lived in response to the rhythms of bush work and experienced accumulated family recollections as their permanent reality. Meeting people whose working lives reflected this strong connection with the land brought Officer to a recognition of her own cultural identity.

The chapter has four sections: *The Squatter’s Daughter*, discusses the oral traditions linked to Mary Jean’s family lineage; *The Folklore Society of Victoria*, describes the importance of the organization in the dissemination of nationalistic music discovered by the folk revival collectors; *Collecting Trips with Pat and Norm O’Connor*, outlines the methodology of these successful field recording activities and the final section deals with the ideological differences which led to the split in the membership of the Folklore Society of Victoria.

⁵ Barry McDonald, “The Idea of Tradition examined in the Light of Two Australian Musical Studies”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 28 (1996) p.22.

⁶ NLA TRC 2762/1-2

⁷ *What is Folklore?* TRC 4946/11-1, 16.7.83

⁸ NLA TRC 2539 Papers for the Norm O’Connor Collection in Transcript Run.



Fig. 34. Victorian Bush Music Club: Keith Watson, Mary Jean Officer, Frank Nicholls, Joy Durst, Margaret Downing.



Fig. 35. Recording the new versions: Mary Jean Officer, Pat O'Connor and Norm O'Connor.



Fig. 36. Simon McDonald and Mary Jean Officer at Simon's house, Creswick Victoria, c1955.



Fig. 37. Simon McDonald at home.

The Squatter's Daughter

Mary Jean Officer was born on the 18th of November 1925, named in memory of her paternal grandmother Mary Grace Hebden. She had two brothers, an elder brother Colin, and a younger brother, John. After their father's death in 1936, Roy and Hugh Officer, two of his cousins assisted in supervising Mary Jean, Colin and John as they grew up.⁹

Mary Jean's own family story in Australia began with the arrival of her great grandfather, Robert Officer, in Australia on the *Castle Forbes*, the first of March 1822. Her father's father, William, served as a supervising doctor to the convict chain gangs in Van Dieman's Land and spoke out against the cruelty of punishment meted out to his charges. Leaving Tasmania, he took up land near Deniliquin, where Mary Jean's father was born in 1870, the fourth child of twelve. Mary Jean was always proud of the fact that the "Old Tom Patterson of One Tree Plain" of the well-known folk song was her grandfather's first cousin. William Officer owned the property, "Zara", midway between Deniliquin and Hay in the Riverina. He and his wife, Mary Grace Hebden had four sons, and eight daughters. Theresa, (1868-1955) was the eldest and most publicly renowned of the daughters, as a leader of the Women's National League, a conservative group of 'ladies' who fought for votes for women. Theresa also acted as a NSW Justice of the Peace.¹⁰ Mary Jean Officer's father, Ernest, studied for an MA and a law degree in Melbourne, but then in 1894, his father recalled his son to assist at home throughout the tensions associated with the shearer's strikes and the depression. Ernest spent the rest of his life on the land. After his father's death in 1913, he brought the property back to profitability and invested wisely for the family's future. The pattern of life retained much of the stamp of the early days of settlement. Mary Jean explains:¹¹

⁹ Dr Colin Officer, Eulogy delivered at the Funeral of Mary Jean Officer: 20th June 1996. Private papers copied and sent to Jennifer Gall, p.1. Also, family history information in this section comes from a series of letters written to me by Dr Colin Officer in 2005.

¹⁰ Dr Colin Officer's expression, *Ibid*.

¹¹ Interview with Edgar Waters, *Op.Cit*.

When my mother married him (he was 53, she was 25 at the time) in...1923...the bullock wagons still brought in the year's stores and the wool went out on that same wagon...obviously they had jinkers, they probably had a car, but that was the way it had always been done...the world that they'd known really was an old world...he was a great story teller, he used to tell us lots of stories of his childhood, hunting kangaroos and rescuing the dogs from them. My mother was English, born in Kent of a Devonshire family. She was 28 years younger than my father. Her father was a great raconteur, so much so that he wasn't allowed to carve the evening joint because he'd tell these marvellous tales waving a piece of meat in the air...¹²

Ernest Officer died suddenly of a heart attack in 1936, aged nearly 66. Dr Colin Officer, brother of Mary Jean, explains that their mother coped with the loss by talking about him constantly to reinforce the memory of his personality in the memories of his children who were all very young when he died.¹³ Her inherited gift of storytelling helped ease the family grief and re-affirmed the family bonds through the telling of a continuing narrative. Mary Jean's mother, (a trained doctor who devoted her life to developing Baby Health Centres in Victoria), had a great collection of seafaring expressions from her father, which Mary Jean wrote down in a long list, the beginnings of a life-long interest in the origin of sayings and the meanings behind colloquial language. In a sense, she was searching for the stories behind the stories. Her mother also had a great collection of tales from her Devonshire family background which she used to relate to Mary Jean as a child "in exactly the same words every time".¹⁴ Officer remarked that this annoyed her when young, but as an adult she was able to appreciate the gift of her mother's "value for accuracy"¹⁵ as she calls it. The tradition of storytelling and the way in which stories interwove family life and connections with the land clearly made a strong impact on Mary Jean and fuelled her passion for discovering the similar networks of the people she interviewed.

Officer was introduced to folk songs at school, *Oh No John* and *Dashing Away with the Smoothing Iron*, both of which she loathed until the day she heard Tom

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Personal Letter addressed to me from Dr Colin Officer, Op.Cit.

¹⁴ Interview with Edgar Waters, Op.Cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Newbound sing *The Spanish Merchant's Daughter* with his sister with great gusto, which she loved.¹⁶ The fact that they sang the song as a dialogue and brought the words to life had immense appeal for her. Officer recalls her youthful dismay at her father's struggle on the land and the way his workmen would "write themselves off with drink",¹⁷ which she describes as "very boring and limiting."¹⁸ This response contrasts with her later awareness of Simon McDonald's unfortunate accidents and temperamental quirks related to his drinking bouts. These alcoholic misadventures in no way diminished her warm affection and respect for this fine musician when she met him and recorded his songs. Through her friendship with individuals like McDonald, Officer came to appreciate the ability of these singers to become part of the life of the song, to make the version their own that made all the difference.

Dr Colin Officer's eulogy for Mary Jean Officer's funeral in 1996 describes how she became involved in the work of collecting folk songs and folklore. Most important is his observation about how this work re-established her connections with the rural life with which she had such strong empathy.

In the 1950s the Australian folklore movement attracted her strongly, so Jean started to travel extensively, collecting nearly forgotten songs, meeting many unforgettable country folk, widening her horizons socially and putting down the music of her songs. Over these years she re-established those links with the land and the bush which had been lost when her father left the Riverina and the family property.¹⁹

Officer's life was very different to that of most of her interviewees. In conversations and correspondence I have had with her brother, it seems that their mother exerted a strong influence over her daughter's course of study and expressed a desire for Mary Jean's company that took precedence over any serious professional career. Discouraged from studying her passion, Renaissance History, at university, Mary Jean instead began a degree in commerce, from which she withdrew to concentrate on her piano studies in Australia and abroad. As her brother remarks,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Dr Colin Officer, Eulogy delivered at the Funeral of Mary Jean Officer, 20th June 1996. Private papers copied and sent to Jennifer Gall, p. 2.

Society was indeed ambivalent over whether women in those days should work at all in that bitter post-war period. Memories of male unemployment were recent and bitter. So Jean remained her mother's companion and a stimulant to that busy lady.²⁰

From these comments, it would seem that although Mary Jean Officer had a comfortable existence free from financial worries and the constraints of regular working hours, her life had been shaped to accommodate her mother's need for company and perhaps even permanent control over her. The fact that Mary Jean never married may have been due to the years of obligation to her mother and reluctance to enter into any other relationships involving constant consideration of someone else's wishes. While her mother played host to many of the Folklore Society gatherings, the enthusiasm Mary Jean brought to her accounts of the collecting trips into the bush describe a delight in escaping the confines of suburban living.

The Folklore Society of Victoria and the Victorian Bush Music Club

Mary Jean Officer's introduction to the Folklore Society of Victoria came from her piano teacher, Biddy Allen, who passed the invitation on when she found she could not attend a meeting. (Officer was earning a living teaching piano to some of Allen's pupils). She describes the occasion:²¹

It was Hugh Anderson talking on Australian Folksongs, which he said didn't exist, they were all something else; this started quite a discussion and I joined that evening. I think the enthusiasm of Wendy Lowenstein drew me in. The first two people I ever met were Tom Newbound and Simmie McDonald. (Figs.36 & 37) They were both charming people with a great zest for life, and I think that's the key thing about practically everybody I met.

In the years up to the point where she joined the Folklore Society of Victoria, Mary Jean describes her feeling of cultural alienation as that of a displaced person, with the disparity between the Australian landscape and the European culture in which she had been educated. As she became more involved with the Folklore Society, its members

²⁰ Dr Colin Officer, Eulogy. Op.cit., p.2.

²¹ Interview with Edgar Waters, Op.cit.

and the people she interviewed drew her into a sense of shared cultural identity. This need to belong to a community to find a sense of identity differed from the O'Connor's political motivation to collect folklore to resist the onslaught of American culture. By collecting and promoting the music of pioneers in rural Victoria, the O'Connors hoped to stimulate performance of this material.

Studying the archival records of the Folklore Society of Victoria (FLSV) puts Mary Jean Officer's role in early collecting activities into historical context. The Folklore Society of Victoria was formed in 1952 as an initiative of a group of people, mainly writers, who were concerned about the post-war cultural environment described by Norm O'Connor as "a great national effort to prevent what is now known loosely as a 'democratic' country, of being overrun by fascism."²² The Victorian Bush Music Club was formed in June 1959 and the activities listed in the annual report for 1961²³ include social outings, a discussion night at the home of Joy Durst, a Woolshed Dance, Singabouts and other activities far lighter and less politically motivated than the FLSV. Figure 34 is a photograph of a performance of the Club bush band, featuring Mary Jean Officer on the bush bass. By the early 1960s a broad cross-section of the community attended meetings, representing a noticeable difference in political outlook between the extremes of communism and right wing ultra-conservatism of members such as Rose and Bill Sayers. It is interesting to note the strong representation of women in all the activities of both the Folklore Society and the Bush Music Club.

O'Connor corroborates Officer's recollections about the "raging argument"²⁴ within the society about a definition for folk song and folklore, given the relative youth of Australian non-indigenous culture. This debate gradually subsided as field-collecting activities produced a wide assortment of orally transmitted material both of Australian and European origin. Writing in August 1960 in the Victorian Bush Music Club Monthly, Mary Jean Officer advertised the activities of the Folklore Society:

²² Norm O'Connor Interviewed by Chris Sullivan, Op.cit. p. 9 of Transcript.

²³ Bush Music Club Annual Report, Norm O'Connor Collection, Papers in Transcript Run, NLA TRC 2539 Box 3.

²⁴ Gwenda Beed Davey, Op.cit., Tape 3 p.1 of Summary.

Most people when they sing Australian Bush Songs assume that these songs have just naturally been presented by those who used to sing them. Unfortunately this is not so, as much work is required by interested people to find the songs, to talk to people who may have sung the songs, and to attempt to jog their memory in the hope that they could supply us with more songs relating to Australia and our most interesting past.

The Folklore Society is actually engaged in this work, and is anxious to hear from, or about, people who have any knowledge of Australian songs, who can tell us stories about life in the outback, or who have any interesting old papers, books, music and sheets etc.

The Secretary of the Folklore Society is Miss Jean Officer, 15, Church Street, Toorak, tel. 50-4896. If you can help the society in collecting songs, or are interested in Folklore generally, then you would be very welcome at any of the Society's meetings which are listed under "Coming Events".²⁵

She was by now engaged in collecting with the O'Connors on a regular basis. Friendship with the people she interviewed was extremely important to Mary Jean. Both Simmie McDonald²⁶ and Catherine Peatey²⁷ are mentioned with warmth and affection: Catherine is referred to as someone who became a close friend. Others recorded were Tom Newbound,²⁸ Mrs Foster,²⁹ Aaron Harry and Sophie Briggs,³⁰ Alf Dyer,³¹ Rose Sayers,³² the Treasure family of Dargo,³³ Dave Phelan,³⁴ Jack Collins from Ballarat, ("a marvellous ballad reciter") and Charlie Audisch on fiddle and concertina, who "said he'd rather miss his evening meal than his evening play."³⁵ While Pat and Norm O'Connor remark about the challenge of finding a quiet room in which to record people without chiming clocks and so forth, Mary Jean rejoiced in

²⁵ In Norm O'Connor Collection Papers, Op. cit. Box 8.

²⁶ See Hugh Anderson's biography, *Time Out of Mind: Simon McDonald of Creswick*, National Press, Melbourne, 1974. and the Wattle recording, *Traditional Singers and Musicians in Victoria*, originally published in 1963 by Wattle Records, re-issued in 2004 by Wattle recordings, the Victorian Folk Music Club and the National Library of Australia.

²⁷ See *Traditional Singers and Musicians in Victoria*, Ibid.

²⁸ NLA TRC 2539/6,20,22,23

²⁹ NLA TRC 2539/39

³⁰ NLA TRC 2539/ 32 & 39

³¹ NLA TRC 2539/004, 22

³² NLA TRC 5113/2

³³ NLA TRC 2539/32

³⁴ NLA TRC 2539/69

³⁵ Gwenda Beed Davey, Op.cit., Cassette 2, Side B p.4 Summary by Jennifer Gall.

these reminders of the environment to which the informant belonged. She describes with relish the day they recorded Alf Dyer after he'd been chatting with a carrier down on the Mitta River:

Suddenly his version of Barbara Allen came back to him. Not only did we record him singing, but we had the birds as well...one of the most charming recordings we made.³⁶

When Officer joined the Folklore Society in 1958, she stepped into an organization that set up solely to entertain its members or encourage them to participate in musical performances as many folk clubs do now. The 50 or so members had joined the society to do something about preserving authentic Australian culture. Their efforts included much lively discussion about definitions of folklore, folk song and folk music,³⁷ and as Alan Marshall's presidency at the time of establishment indicates, there was strong representation from literary and social history circles, with Wendy Lowenstein, Ian Turner, Bill Wannan, Bill Beatty and Ron Edwards as members. There was a strong undercurrent of communism, but also a strongly conservative element amongst the membership. Rose Sayers was one such member, a middle-class bank-manager's wife with conservative political views. She had lived a rural life in Bulumwall and remembered her father's songs and stories and her mother's rhymes recollected from an English childhood. The politically diverse membership initially provided certain balances of ideology. In the case of Officer and O'Connor's collecting trips there were unexpected advantages in the kind of two-sided version of events they were able to extract from a situation where the workers and the bosses both had something to say.

As indicated by O'Connor in his comments above, writers, musicians and social historians were concerned that the assault of American culture would eliminate public memory of the literature, music and yarns of Australia's non-indigenous, and for some concerned scholars, indigenous, history. Allegiance to communism was part of this resistance to the threat of Americanization of Australian culture, and O'Connor states in his interview with Waters that:

³⁶ Interview with Edgar Waters, Op.cit.

³⁷ See NLA TRC 2539 Transcript Run for the papers relating to this era. An Index is available.

I joined the communist party in the army cartography unit...if you think about things you can't help but be a leftist because the right was so opportunist. I'm amused about (the idea of) the Reds taking over Australia. What the Communist Branch did was learn about Marxism, the trade unions...there was no practical or physical activity...we didn't *do* anything!³⁸

Political views were not discussed as part of Society meetings, and it was only in 1964, when Pete Seeger, who had visited the FLSV, was accused of "Un-American Activities" that personal political affiliations were aired, with the left wing members voting to publicly support Seeger. This eventually resulted in the split within the Society, which will be discussed in Section 4.

The primary cultural mission of the Folklore Society is voiced in Joy Durst's article, 'Thoughts on Australian Songs', in the *Gumsucker's Gazette*, March 1961³⁹ which outlines the concerns and strategies for keeping Australian music alive, preserving the traditional essence of Australian folk music while making it palatable to modern audiences:

Would it be in the best interests of our national culture to try to work against the tendency to sing them in a more up-to-date way? Should one condemn the altering of tunes and words that seems inevitable to take place?

To my mind, even if it were desirable, it would be impossible to prevent most of these songs from changing. The history of folk song seems to indicate that very few songs retain their earlier form...The danger today is that with the omnipresence of radio and gramophone our distinctively Australian musical expression is swamped and supplanted by non-Australian ways of singing and playing.

I haven't heard anyone even attempt to define the Australian way of playing and singing. But there are more and more of us who are quite sure we know when people are borrowing methods which are different from our own. Incidentally, I agree with Jean Officer when she says that more people should hear our traditional singers. We

³⁸ Edgar Waters, Op.cit., Tape 2, Side A.

³⁹ NLA TRC 2539 Transcript Run, Box 5.

should do this not in order to copy them slavishly but because by listening to them we are training our ear in Australian rhythms, inflections and cadences.

Canned music heard daily imprints on people's minds foreign ways of presentation, mainly American. Unfortunately, of all the magnificent streams of music in America, the world outside is largely presented with degraded forms that are not even true to the best of American traditions.

Doesn't it seem very probable that once the old songs being brought forward by the Folk Lore Society and the Bush Music Club are reinstated among us, a new body of songs and music will arise, based on the old, but reflecting the new life around us. In fact, looking through the pages of *Singabout* magazine hasn't this already begun to happen?

And looking further ahead still, it is my belief that we can have no truly Australian classical music until we have developed a really extensive folk music.

In actual fact, scholarship has proven that Australia has long been "assaulted" by popular American culture in the form of Minstrel shows, hillbilly songsters, shanties and many songs brought by American immigrants during the gold-rush of the 1850s. Social dance forms were constantly influenced by newly arrived versions from European dance halls and music publishers, and the population has been multicultural from the time of white settlement. What Durst mentions, but perhaps does not grasp in the heat of her missionary zeal, is that there *is* an Australian folk process which persists wherever traditions of transmission have continued. It is a process that absorbs and adapts the original item to suit the use it is put to in a particular Australian cultural situation.

The other process which influenced the activities of the Folklore Society and the Bush Music Club was the commodification of folk music, a transition from the low-key traditional transmission of folk song to the use of folk music for the sake of group participation. Arguably, performing the songs out of their original context challenged notions of true Australian folk performance practice, at least in that of the remote areas of the bush. Joy Durst herself is immortalized by a song anthology published posthumously (she had been working on a publication at the time of her death). The

songbook is complete with guitar chords, and the idea of accompaniment represents a major transition in the performance of traditional songs.

Because it was unrealistic to block cultural importation, the energy of the Society was thrown into efforts to publish and promote Australian writings of all kinds. Collecting the music and folklore from the people's mouths was the method that the O'Connors and Bob Michell developed as their area of expertise. Those who lived in rural areas and those who had moved to Melbourne after living a rural life were the targeted subjects for these interviews.

Mary Jean Officer attended St Catherine's, Toorak and studied piano from an early age. The formative teacher in her career was Bidy Allen, who gave Officer surplus pupils, enabling her to build up her own teaching clientele. Officer travelled to London and she attended the Sorbonne to study the piano from 1949 to 1951. She returned to Australia and continued to teach piano, but by 1957, she was involved in the Folklore Society of Victoria and also with the Victorian Bush Music Club. She took up guitar with tuition at Jen Beck's school – more a music camp – at "Warrawang", Cottlesbridge. Later she "dabbled" (her brother, Dr Colin Officer's expression) with concertina, lagerphone and also took singing lessons. Both Dr Officer and Norm O'Connor agree that solo singing was not her strongest accomplishment, but that she was happiest singing with others. In fact, her greatest skill was as a facilitator, promoting the music she helped to collect by enabling and encouraging performances and by giving lectures and writing articles about Australian folk music and folklore. Her role in organizing the activities of the FLSV was also effectively introducing the songs and stories of informants into a new community in the city. The intention was to keep the transmission as a two-way process, whether in the field or in the context of a more formal city singing session. In the *Gumsucker's Gazette* of December 1961, she reports a trip to Simon McDonald at Creswick which

was intended to be just a friendly call but Simon sang for us "Paddy Hegarty's Leather Breeches" in return for our singing his [Simon's] "when Jones's Ale Was New" and "The Lost Sailor." So we returned with a new song for us all, one we know

will interest Mrs. R Sayers particularly, as another version of it has long been sung in her family.⁴⁰

In the same edition, Officer describes her attendance with several other members of the FLSV at the Thistle Club of Wonthaggi.

Frank taught them “Swaggie’s Stroll” and “The Brown Jug Polka” which proved very popular. We recorded more beautiful songs from Mrs. Foster, and two lively ones, “The Herring’s Head” from Mrs. Haddow, and “The Lambton Wurm” from Mrs. Stirton.⁴¹

As well as the interactive collecting/performance sessions, the FLSV held regular Singabouts in either member’s homes or in venues such as the Toorak Scout Hall. The repertoire for these nights was posted in the Victorian Bush Music Club Monthly. For example, the songs listed for the Singabout of August 13th, 1960 were: *The Old Bullock Dray*, *Gum Tree Canoe*, *Travelling Down the Castlereagh*, *Reedy Lagoon*, *Swag All On My Shoulder* and *Banks of the Condamine*.

The conspicuous feature of the interactive field sessions and the ‘Singabouts’ is that the musical gatherings always featured guitar accompaniments. Practically all the songs collected had been sung without accompaniment by the original singers. There seems to be no good explanation documented for this phenomenon other than the portability of the instrument, people liked the sound of the plucked accompaniment and felt more confident about singing with this support. For Officer, her vocal uncertainty⁴² would have prompted her use of the guitar. Paradoxically, given the obsession of collectors such as Norm O’Connor with blocking Americanisation of Australian culture, singers such as Americans Pete Seeger, Alan Lomax and Burl Ives⁴³ were hugely influential on the course of the Australian revival. Their guitar accompaniments to songs shaped Australian musician’s ideas about what sound would be ‘right’ to supplement the melody line of the traditional material they wanted to sing.

⁴⁰ Op.cit., p.2.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Letter from Dr Colin Officer, Op.cit.

⁴³ Burl Ives and Percy Jones, *Burl Ives Folio of Australian Folk Songs*, Southern Music, Sydney, 1953.

Relative ease of learning simple guitar accompaniments also supported the inclusive ideology behind musical performances of Australian folk material such as the 'Singabouts'. However the restrictions imposed on rhythmic freedom and subtleties of melodic variation imposed by this instrument are drastic. It seems surprising that revival collectors who had heard these songs sung unaccompanied, and with animation, would be happy with the impact of guitar accompaniment as it flattened out tunes into inaccurate uniformity of rhythm and melody. This addition of accompaniment illustrates the transition of Australian folk music from an intimate activity shared within a small community, to the performance situation in front of a much larger audience who often participated in the singing. Traditionally, a singer would have her/his own items and participation would have been negotiable, but with the Folk Revival, a new dynamic of folk music, was predominant: it had become literally, music for the masses. Joy Durst exhorted aspiring folk singers to greater levels of participation in her article in *Gumsucker's Gazette*, August 1963, condemning the traditional performance practice of folk song:

Apart from the technique, "folk singing" is always in danger of becoming a bit of an individualist cult, and to a few this idea of hundreds of people joining in a song is anathema... We who support the Australian folk song movement should, I think, see the encouragement of mass singing as part of our work; to supply the deficiency first by teaching the songs, and secondly, by breaking down the inhibitions that have been imposed by Australians by modern life.⁴⁴

In this environment, rhythm, in the form of guitar and often bush bass⁴⁵ and lagerphone,⁴⁶ all revival inventions, became the opiate of the folk music masses,

⁴⁴ Op.cit. p.11.

⁴⁵ The origin of the tea chest bass in Australia is unknown, suffice to say there is an equivalent in America made from a wash tub and used by the 'jug bands'. Likewise in New Guinea natives played a similar instrument made from oil drums. In a similar manner to the lagerphone, the tea chest bass is linked with makeshift bands, skiffle groups and the Australian Bush Band. It compares with a tradition of improvised bush instruments such as the cigar box fiddle. The Bushwhackers Band of Sydney in the early 1950's first introduced the tea chest bass in a form that was quickly taken up by similar groups all over Australia, remaining popular today. John Meredith introduced the 'bush bass' to the band after a friend made a drawing from an instrument he had seen played on the Sydney wharf. It consisted of a ply tea chest with a strong cord attached to the centre of the base of the chest, knotted through a hole and strung to the top of a pole. Peter Ellis:

http://www.wongawillicolonialdance.org.au/ausfolk_articles/bush_percussion.htm

contributing to the uniformity of sound often associated with folk music performances from this and subsequent eras. The popularity of bush bands represented the process of migration of folk music from domestic setting to concert platform which previously had only occurred when classical composers such as Sharp and Grainger had collected and re-worked melodies in art music settings. In the art music environment, the audience may well have recognized the original folksong, but was not encouraged to participate in the performance. From the 17th century up to the 1950s, printed media, in the form of music manuscripts and anthologies had been the main means of commercially assisted transmission of folk music. The 1950s saw the beginnings of reconstructions effected through bush bands and the presentation of arranged versions of field recordings.

The idea of commercial recordings of field recording material was problematic for O'Connor. In his interviews with Waters, Davey and Sullivan, he asserts that he did not collect or disseminate Australian folk music for the purpose of making money. He did, nevertheless, produce a series of Australian folk music recordings on his label: 'Opal Records'. His reasons as stated were largely nationalistic.

I felt that Australians should start producing records. I had a bash, but went about it the wrong way. I didn't borrow thousands of dollars, I just recorded on my own equipment, but compared with flash American commercial recordings they were like chalk and cheese...I printed 500 copies with four titles on each record, including the Billabong Band, a Melbourne group.⁴⁷

As far as commercial recordings of Australian folk music were concerned, this was a difficult era of transition. On the one hand was nationalism, and an almost naive belief in the inclusive values and acceptable amateurism of spontaneous folk music gatherings. On the other were new forces of commodification and competition within

⁴⁶ The Lagerphone as such originated in its modern form from a 1950's country talent quest and concert. This was in the Australian town of Holbrook in which a rabbit poisoner submitted and won first prize with the instrument. A local, Mr Claude Meredith, was impressed and constructed his own model made with beer bottle tops. He presented it to his brother John, a founder of the Bushwhackers Band of 1952, who then introduced and dubbed it 'Lagerphone'. This original instrument is held by the Holbrook museum. Later the lagerphone acquired other names such as Boozaphone and Murrumbidgee Rattler.

Ibid.

⁴⁷ Norm and Pat O'Connor, interviewed by Gwenda Beed Davey, Op.cit. Tape 2.

an international music market. In the passage above, O'Connor voices the inherent dilemma in the marketing of "raw" folk music and implies the growing requirement for more sophisticated musical production to enable folk music to compete with other music in the market place. It was an arena Mary Jean Officer did not enter, except as reviewer for the Billabong Band's album, *Songs of Early Victoria*:⁴⁸ "They are the one band in Victoria to my knowledge, who sing only Australian songs and they have always believed that not only have we a tradition worth preserving but also we have already a national style worth developing."

While Officer was not a performer concerned with making formal commercial recordings, she remained a constant advocate of the importance of Australian folk music in our cultural practices. As well as her active involvement in the Victorian Bush Music Club and the Folklore Society of Victoria, she travelled to Sydney in 1962 to present a Seminar on "Collecting of Australian Bush Songs" at a weekend non-residential school organised by the Workers Educational Society. Other presenters were Edgar Waters (ANU), John Thompson (ABC Radio), D.R. Peart (Music Department of the University of Sydney), Mr. C. Hosking (Unesco International Folk Music Council), Russell Ward (UNE), Peter Hamilton (Wattle Recordings) and many other musicians from the Sydney Bush Music Club and other visitors. This was a significant event at which to represent the Folklore Council of Victoria and conduct a seminar as the only woman speaker. Despite Norm O'Connor's description of Mary Jean Officer as "radical establishment" and an innately conservative individual, by taking such an active role in a Workers Educational Society event, she aligned herself with folklore as the culture of the people, which definitely included workers and may have extended to the establishment.

Her belief in the importance of making the broadest audience aware of their musical heritage fuelled her writing for many publications. The line of transmission of the songs she recorded was her special interest, and the relationship represented by the passing of the song from one generation to the next, from father to daughter, from grandmother to grandson and so forth. This consistent reference to transmission

⁴⁸ *Gumsuckers Gazette*, March 1961, p.5.

makes her outstanding in the field of folklore scholarship of the folk revival era. In comparing the following two passages, the first written by Officer, the second by her contemporary in scholarship, Russel Ward, it becomes obvious that Ward's obsession with the Australian male bush dweller obscured the more subtle patterns of folk song transmission within families and between adults and children from his analysis of the evolution of Australian folk music.

Officer's article was written for the journal *Baby Health* June 1963⁴⁹ and entitled "Songs for the Children". She refers first to the field recordings of Catherine Peatey and next to those made with Simmie McDonald:

*"My name is Bob the Swagman and before you all I stand,
And I've had many ups and downs while traveling through the land.
I once was well to do, my boys, but now I am stumped up,
And I'm forced to go on rations in an old bark hut".*

Last century this was the song a father in Warrnambool used to sing his small daughter to sleep. He sang of the ration of flour and beef and sugar and tea that you were given each week, and how if you were not careful, you would find yourself going hungry by the end of the week. He sang too, of the flies and fleas, and the rain coming in the big hole in the roof where once the table had been:

*"Faith, the table is not made of wood like many you have seen,
For if I had one half so good, I'd think myself serene;
'Tis only an old sheet of bark-God knows when it was cut-
It was blown from off the rafters of the old bark hut."*

There are many verses; indeed, there is a tale of shearers starting to sing "The Old Bark Hut" as the train left Burke, and they had just got to the end as they arrived at Central Railway Station in Sydney. So I expect small Catherine Brown⁵⁰ was sound asleep before Bob ended with:

⁴⁹ Vol. 6. No.1, A Quarterly Journal Published by the Victorian Baby Health Centers Association, Carlton, Melbourne. (Mary Jean Officer's mother was a founder of this association.)

⁵⁰ *Brown* was Catherine Peatey's maiden name; in fact, her father's family name was originally *Braun*, and was altered to avoid prejudice as anti-German sentiments during WW1.

*“And all you younger people, in the days when you grow up,
Remember Bob the Swagman and the old bark hut.”*

It is unusual to hear of a bush ballad being used as a lullaby. Most people, when they recall the earliest songs in their life, find themselves singing an old rhyme that was brought out to Australia by grandparents or great grandparents. An Irish grandmother, Esther Gannon, used to sing this at Creswick, near Ballarat:

*“There was an old woman, she was rolled in a blanket,
She was ninety-nine times as high as the moon.
‘Old woman, old woman, old woman, said I,
‘Where are you going you’re climbing so high?’
I’m going to sweep the cobwebs from the sky,
And if you just wait, I’ll be with you bye and bye.”*
And then she would hum “*Die-ty diddle diety...*
And if you just wait, I’ll be with you bye and bye.”

The following conflicting passage by Ward comes from an article in *Australian Tradition*, December 1969, and is taken from “Folk Song and Ballad”, a talk given to the Port Phillip Folk Festival, 1968.⁵¹ His argument is that “a folk song cannot be defined by concentrating on origins, but that a song becomes a folk song whatever its origins, in proportion as it is taken up by people, repeated mainly by word of mouth, and passed from singer to singer.” However, his further analysis makes no reference to women or family at all in the chain of transmission. He identifies three ways in which Australian folk songs began:

One, they are in fact communally composed by illiterate or semi-illiterate bush singers, folk singers, common people usually at that, by an individual chap though he sings it in the shearing shed or in other such places where men gather together for work or relaxation...He tends to have a lot of outsiders or supporters, so there is something in this communal theory of origin. Second, that a great many more songs begin in a different way if you can call it a beginning; that is they are adaptations, acclimatizations, parodies or older folk songs made in something the same way. Third, there are songs written by consciously literary chaps, middle class people

⁵¹NLA TRC 2539 Transcript Run Box 4.

often, and occasionally such printed songs or penned entertainment, popular songs may because of some quality in the music or words because of their striking a true note in popular experience, some such songs occasionally may be taken up, passed on from singer to singer until their origin is forgotten and they take on changes along the line, the pattern, the air of the true folk song just as much as the other two kinds.⁵²

His inability or unwillingness to inquire what role women played in the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music is voiced in an earlier lecture in 1954, at the beginning of the Australian folk revival: “In the last century women, or at least white women, could scarcely be considered as part of the bush-worker’s world, and this famine of females is reflected in their ballads.” Ward’s unwillingness to investigate Australian folk song outside the rigid boundaries of a small masculine world of bush-workers makes his pronouncement about the nature of folk song less convincing than Officer’s documentation of songs passing from one generation to the next. Ward pronounces, but does not prove by example, that a folk song’s “origins have nothing to do necessarily with its authenticity, which can be gauged only by the extent to which it is taken up, and recreated in the process of oral transmission by the people who sing it.”⁵³

Officer pursues the trail of transmission through the bloodlines of family transmission, tracing the origins of songs back to their beginnings for her informant, often as lullabies:

Hal Gye, the illustrator of C.J.Dennis’s “The Sentimental Bloke”, tells how his mother sang him an old rhyme which his mother had brought out from Scotland:

*“Johnny Smith, fellow fine,
Can you shoe the horse o’ mine?
Yes, indeed, and that I can,
Just as weel as any man.*

*First a bit upon the toe,
For to make the pony go,
Then a bit upon the heel
To make the pony go.”*

⁵² Ibid, p.25.

⁵³ Ibid.

Then she would shoe the soles of the baby's feet by slapping them with her hand, and then she would move them up and down to go -

"Trot weel

Trot weel!

All the way hame."

Mr Gye says has sung that song "down gullies and along roads, sung it to the hare, the rocks and the ranges." And his son in turn was put to sleep with it.⁵⁴

Collecting Trips with Norm and Pat O'Connor

Mary Jean's note that Mr Gye's song about Johnny Smith had been used as a lullaby is central to an understanding of her ideology concerning the collection of folk music. It is necessary to compare this with the philosophy of her co-interviewer, Norm O'Connor to fully grasp the differences between the two. Norm O'Connor states that his motivation for collecting was political: a mission to collect the un-written history of the unknown workers, "history which would have otherwise disappeared"⁵⁵, and he recorded interviews with the critical detachment of a social historian, but with an entrepreneurial interest in getting the fruits of his research: i.e. the social history, songs, tunes, yarns and poems, more widely known through publication:

N.O. One of our philosophies is that this material was not a personal thing. I wasn't interested in capitalising on the material, I was recording social history which belongs to the country...it would be of benefit to the country in later years...I recorded everything; the good, and the bad, so people could hear in the future...I felt it should be publicised...commercial publishing houses were not interested – it was too low key and amateurish. The only outlets were the Sydney Bush Music Club magazine, *Singabout* and then we published a lot in the Melbourne magazine *Australian Tradition*.⁵⁶

A more detailed explanation of the political motivation behind the Field Collecting is given in O'Connor's interview with Chris Sullivan:

⁵⁴ Mary Jean Officer, "Songs for the Children", Op.cit., p.21.

⁵⁵ Norm and Pat O'Connor, interview with Gwenda Beed Davey 4.9.89, NLA TRC 2502/2

⁵⁶ Ibid.

N.O. Because I had the tape recorder I was regarded as the one who did the collecting. So that's how I started. I knew nothing about it, but I think because I was a communist and was sort of sensitive to the – I was aware of social situations and social position with people, I was aware of other people's feelings. It enabled me to approach strangers and explain what I was after, not from a political point of view. I never discussed with these people my ideas about American culture. That was my reason for doing it, to offset the effects of American culture. But my reason for approaching people and asking them to sing songs was because I was interested in songs of the old days and how people live, not just songs, but how they live, and what sort of entertainment they had, and what were the things that they did....⁵⁷

Paramount in Mary Jean Officer's worldview was the sense of belonging to a community based on connection with the old lore of the land and the old songs and tunes that were handed down through generations. Where they had originated was of little importance, whether originally a song from the music hall or a ballad: it was the style of delivery adopted by singers such as Simon McDonald and Catherine Peatey that represented this connection with values transcending class and connecting the members of this community with each other, and through time. Underlying Officer's search for "songs relating to Australia and our most interesting past"⁵⁸ was the search for her own identity, which she did indeed find in her relationships with informants such as Catherine Peatey and Simon McDonald.

Simon McDonald's family came to Creswick during the gold rushes, and Simon lived nearly all his life in the district. His Scottish grandfather, John McDonald, married an Irish woman and along with his wife's parents, came to Australia. Simon's Irish great-grandfather had been a sailor, and many of Simon's songs learned from him have nautical themes. Simon's father, also called Simon McDonald was a fiddler and leader of a family dance band. A unique characteristic of Simon's musicianship was his ability to sing while playing the fiddle as accompaniment.

Catherine Peatey's parents were highly regarded as singers in the Warrnambool and Leongatha districts of southern Victoria. She learned most of her songs from her father and kept a manuscript book containing the words. Like many women, her songbook included

⁵⁷ Norm O'Connor, interviewed by Chris Sullivan, 26.11.84, NLA TRC 1720/1, p.11. Transcript

⁵⁸ Mary Jean Officer, *Victorian Bush Music Club Monthly*, August 1960, p.4 in O'Connor Collection Transcript Run NLA -TRC 2539, Box 9.

poems printed in the newspaper. One of these was *Where the Wattle Blossom Grows*, and this poem had been set to music “by Mrs Peatey and other members of the family.”⁵⁹

Contrasting with O’Connor’s political motivation to capture a record of un-Americanised Australian culture for the benefit of future generations, Officer’s motivation was more organic. As a collector, she was part of the line of transmission of this “powerful all-pervading knowledge acquired apart from formal education: knowledge gained from the environment.”⁶⁰ In this same lecture, Officer gives her own definition of Folklore, inclusive of folk music, as a river: ⁶¹

You’re standing on the shore, you’re not alone, you’ve got a couple of companions with you, and each of you look at the river with different eyes. Some might like the sound and the movement of the waters, some might like the grass and the leaves and the trees, some might feel the romance of the river; there’s all sorts of different ways of looking at it. Now, the water that flows by you has come from high up and it goes on into a future: to me folklore is like that: flowing in front of us now, it comes from the past and it goes on into the future, some of it, not all of it, some of it gets lost just like water gets evaporated or runs into a dam; you might decide to bathe in that river, you might just admire it, you’ve got the right to do with it what you want, and we all do different things.

An interesting contrast in perception of class and identity is noticeable in the interviews with Officer and the O’Connors. Norm O’Connor often refers to Officer’s “establishment” social background, whereas Officer never mentions class differences at all, and clearly saw herself as an integral part of the O’Connor interviewing team on their field excursions. The photographs of Officer with Simon McDonald, and her written and oral references to her collecting trips demonstrate no sense of social superiority, but rather a relaxed pleasure at being welcomed as a friend by the people she interviewed.

⁵⁹ Edgar Waters, *Traditional, Singers and Musicians in Victoria*, Wattle Record Notes, 1963, re-printed 2004.

⁶⁰ Kenneth and Mary Clarke. *Introducing Folklore*, quoted by Mary Jean Officer in a Lecture to the Folklore Council of Victoria, 1983. NLA TRC 4946/11 Side A

⁶¹ *What is Folklore* Lecture, TRC 4946/11-1, 16.7.1983

Norm O'Connor, talking to Gwenda Davey in her interview in 2000, describes Officer as:

Radical establishment I suppose—a bit of an individualist, but still very straight-laced and very conformist in a way...religion was very important.⁶²

and in the interview with Edgar Water's, O'Connor describes her as "very middle class aristocracy".⁶³

In comparison, he says of himself:

I was of course a left-winger...I didn't carry on like a wharfie, swearing, putting on a façade like a genuine worker...I suppose I was middle class...but my sympathies were towards the working class...⁶⁴

The contrasting social backgrounds of these folklore collectors were much less important, initially, than their mutual desire to record the songs and stories of willing informants. What is important and unique is the collaborative teamwork of their collecting, which involved not just two women and a man, but also the O'Connor's two sons and occasionally Mary Jean Officer's niece. This collaborative approach mirrors the role women take in numbers of field recordings, where the prime informant is the man, but his wife is constantly asked for support and for reminders about the words or the context of the song. Enthusiasm for the collecting trips was fuelled by a common reverence for the oral tradition as the means by which cultural identity is transmitted authentically. In fact, both Norm and Mary Jean concurred that "We soon learned never to use the word 'folklore' because nobody had ever heard of folklore, they knew absolutely nothing about it, so then we used to ask for old songs and then we got talking about the old days..."⁶⁵ The exchange of stories about Australia is part of how Mary Jean Officer described cultural identity and belonging.

⁶² Norm and Pat O'Connor, interviewed by Gwenda Beed Davey, 4.9.89, TRC 2502/3, p.2. of Summary.

⁶³ Norm and Pat O'Connor, interviewed by Edgar Waters, 8.2.2000, TRC 4577, Cassette 2 Side A, p 2 of Summary by Jennifer Gall.

⁶⁴ Norm and Pat O'Connor, interviewed by Gwenda Davey, 4.9.1989 TRC 2502, Cassette 2 Side A, p. 2-3 Summary by GBD

⁶⁵ Mary Jean Officer interviewed by Edgar Waters, 2.12.91 TRC 2762, Cassette 2 Side B, p.4 of Transcript.

She remarks to Edgar Waters in their interview, “I think that the idea of telling stories about your own land is essential.”, and in another part of the same interview: “stories just matter so much, having a past, and sharing roots.”⁶⁶

Likewise, Mary Jean was very concerned with the relationship between the lineage of the people she and the O’Connors’ collected, and the life stories they were telling.

Norm O’Connor recalls:

Jean Officer did all the notes and all the dates...all the follow up.... ‘And where did your father come from’, I can hear her cultured voice [saying]...⁶⁷

O’Connor elaborates that it was a two-way connection, as often the interviewee would know of Officer’s family through their pastoral activities and mutual acquaintances on the land:

N.O. But the advantage was that not all the people you interviewed were from the same background...Jean and I were almost in automatic mode; there was a natural understanding that we would assume control of the interviewing depending on the informant...often a starting point was that a squatter we were interviewing knew Jean’s family or knew of her—an instant rapport—then I would naturally step aside.⁶⁸

Pat O’Connor relates an explicit instance of this interviewing technique:

P.O. I’m thinking of interviewing two people in the Western District—one was a squatter who opposed the shearers in a shearers’ strike, another was a man who had been a shearer in that strike – Jean had rapport with the man who had trouble with the shearers – I had trouble with him so I kept quiet – the other man I had sympathy with and so you responded...

N.O. You can’t let your feelings influence you – they are all social history – it’s part of the society.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Norm and Pat O’Connor, Interviewed by Edgar Waters, Ibid., p.1.

⁶⁸ Gwenda Beed Davey, Ibid., Tape 3. p.3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The ability to record two sides of the story was unique during this era of collecting. As Norm O'Connor emphasizes in his interviews with Waters, Davey and Sullivan, the collecting was usually conducted as a team, or really as a family effort: Norm built the first tape recorder, then bought the second and often directed the interview, Pat looked after the children who always accompanied them, but also assisted in making friends with interviewees and putting them at their ease. Mary Jean often researched the contacts before approaching people, and during the interviews she acted as scribe. She often asked valuable additional questions to do with locating the songs in the chronology and lineage of the interviewee's family. O'Connor expressed regrets about the kind of material they might have missed out on by not spending time talking to people in pubs, where the family wasn't able to enter, and probably any bawdy/pornographic contributions would have been lost because of this. However, the recordings in the O'Connor collection are distinctive because of the strong bonds achieved through the family interviewing method. The three different personalities combined with Officer's meticulous documentation and the team's repeated visits to informants on many occasions yielded a collection of detailed field recordings.

Part of Officer's skill as an interviewer was based on her ability to listen critically and retain a story. This was partly because of her family traditions of story telling and partly because of a valuable lesson she learned when Norm had sent her off with a new tape recorder. The Grundig promptly spat tape all over the floor when she started to record, requiring her to conduct the interview without the machine, listening intently, a method she advocated for other collectors to "guard against meandering". This was the occasion of her first solo interview in Wonthaggi, in which she encountered "the terrific poverty of people and the hard lot of women."⁷⁰

In the documents I have examined concerning Mary Jean Officer there is no hint of a sense of social superiority or an attempt to exploit the music and folklore gathered from informants for personal gain or personal glory. What is reiterated in this material is Officer's powerful belief in the 'river' of Australian folklore in which she immersed herself and into which she invited others. It is no accident that she chose

⁷⁰ Mary Jean Officer, interview with Edgar Waters Op.cit.

the analogy of the river, with its powerful associations of re-birth, continuity and life-giving ability to animate the land. For these reasons, she is certainly a vital living link in the transmission of Australian folk music as it was experienced and collected by her and the O'Connors in Victoria in the early 1960s.

When Mary Jean Officer became Secretary of the Folklore Society, she became the prime contact for people offering names of prospective interviewees. An article in *The Age* newspaper, in August 1958 discusses Officer's collecting activities, and carries an appeal for further assistance from Victorians with information about folklore and folk music. Significantly, the first interview mentioned in the article is that of a ninety-year-old Tasmanian born woman including references to her life on the goldfields near Mt Lyell in a bag-tent home.⁷¹ In this interview, Mary Jean Officer had met the kind of woman she needed to activate her own sense of identity:

Her home was a bag tent divided down the middle with cretonne — to make separate sections for cooking and sleeping. Four gun-holes — one in each of the walls — were cut by her husband and he taught her to shoot as a means of self-protection. Tin cans were scattered around the tent so that no one could approach without making a noise. Their only water supply was the rainwater which collected in the sludge holes — the old mine workings — and this she had to carry by hand.

Officer recorded the interview in Wonthaggi, where the couple had moved after leaving Tasmania when the gold ran out at the turn of the century. Referring to the women she met elsewhere on these collecting trips, Officer told Waters,

In parts of Australian life, women are not very highly regarded, but in country districts they were enormously well thought of and the old pioneer women were treated with great reverence. It was exciting to come in on that sort of wavelength.⁷²

There is a marked difference to Norm O'Connor in the way she recounts her collecting experiences; when she recalls people like Simon McDonald, she speaks as if her life and his have become interlinked. O'Connor is no less admiring or detailed in his recollections, but there is always a discernible detachment from his

⁷¹ *The Age*, Saturday, August 9th, 1958.

⁷² Mary Jean Officer, interview with Edgar Waters, Op.cit., Tape 2 Side A.

observations. An illustration of this difference in collecting perception is found in the two versions of how Simon recalled the songs sung by his grandfather when he was a child:

N.O. (The Song described was Ginny of the Moor) Anyway, he sat, literally, for about two or three minutes with his head in his hand and his eyes shut and he started singing. He sung the song through completely and very nicely. At the end of it he explained that, apologized again for forgetting it and said, ‘How I remembered it then, I remember-I haven’t heard that song for 40 years. My grandfather used to have a job occasionally looking after the kids, and I can remember this day, winter, it was very cold and we had a big log fire going in the living room, and grandfather got all the kids in and got them seated around the fire and he used to entertain them, singing these songs. That was one song he sung and how I remember, I could picture him singing it.’ So from this almost photographic memory of his grandfather singing, he sung the complete song. I still to this day, am still mesmerized that anyone can recollect the words of a song so completely.⁷³

MJO. Then we went up to meet Simon McDonald. Norm had been up there in 1956. We went back in 1960-it was as if it was 5 minutes since we’d been there. I realised that country people have quite a different idea of time...Time and time again when Simmie was singing; he’d close his eyes and go back to the seat on the hearth where his father used to sing songs to the children. And night after night Simon the elder would sing these songs to the children, and as often happens in families only two or three were interested in the old days...so I think that Simmie sang the songs exactly as his father had learned them from, we think he was a John Gannon (Simmie’s great grandfather), born in Ireland who served in the fleet in the Napoleonic Wars-he certainly would have known lots of the sailors who had served in the Napoleonic wars. You felt time had telescoped. If you’re not literate, then events happened in your lifetime as well as in your father’s and grandfather’s lifetime...⁷⁴

Officer’s experience of transmission of the songs is quite distinct from O’Connor’s, who acknowledges the feat of memory, but does not feel drawn into the song through “time telescoping”. In fact in the excerpts Officer reads from her lost field-notebooks

⁷³ Chris Sullivan. Op.cit., Tape 1, p.4. of Transcript.

⁷⁴ Interview with Edgar Waters, Op.cit.

in her interview with Edgar Waters,⁷⁵ there are many fine details of Simmie's wood-cutting activities, descriptions of his hut, the way he introduced songs on the fiddle, how to light a fire with dry bark, his pets, gold prospecting with his father, the names of all the mining gullies, stories like the tall tale about the Creswick races which they couldn't start until all the jockeys came down from the trees where they'd been deciding who was going to win, and tales about quirky song words and who he learned them from: all retold in a stream of consciousness outpouring, reproducing a sense of the man, alive in song and deed. The following passage illuminates the lines of transmission between Simmie and his mother, Esther Gannon and grandmother:

One day with Simon McDonald, - he began naming the flowers in the way that his mother called them...Penny Royal, a long leaf boiled for a cough cure, also a contraceptive; White Broom and White Early Nancy's and a White Heath Flower, Blackfellows' Bread. We used to sing him back his own songs: The Lost Sailor, Jones's Ale...

...Simmie began playing at the age of seven on the violin. His father's wife had one song, about a light in every country window. He used to wrap a rag around a stick; I remember one of my cousins used to do the same thing up around Jerilderie way. One of the most attractive songs we learned later on was *Old Tremone*, his father used to sing it as a knee bouncing song. Esther Gannon had just one song; *The Old Woman Visited the Moon*.

There are many vivid descriptions of Mary Jean Officer's collecting trips in her interview with Edgar Waters, and the listener can hear her refer to her black field-notes books and the thump on the floor as she rifles through them to reach the correct entry for the person she is talking about, checking dates and place-names.

Officer describes how interviewing techniques with the O'Connors evolved with each field recording they undertook, with an important reference to the fact that the music people performed was remembered not as folk music, but as "the old songs". Again, in the following recollection Norm, Pat and Mary Jean use singing to stimulate

⁷⁵ These black notebooks are referred to in this interview, and it is clearly audible when each volume is leafed through for information, or discarded in favour of another volume. They have never been located since Mary Jean Officer's death. They contained information not recorded on tape, taken down throughout the course of interviews, and other information from other sources about interviewees and associated folklore.

contributions. From an ethnographic viewpoint, such a decision needs to be evaluated in terms of how far this represented intervention in the process of spontaneous recollection and delivery. However, in the light of the definition of transmission as “that of a conscious giving and receiving relationship that celebrates not only the continuity of the gift, but perhaps more importantly, the continuity of the relationship that keeps such giving and taking alive.”⁷⁶, the interviewers’ participation in the performance can be viewed to a limited degree as part of the process of giving and receiving. The interview described was conducted with the Treasure family of Dargo and their friend Dave Phelan:

Norm suggested using a new technique, as we always took too long to get to the important material. We soon learned never to use the word ‘folklore’ because people nobody had ever heard of folklore, they knew absolutely nothing about it, so then we used to ask for old songs and then we got talking about the old days, ... (Norm said), “So what we’ll do is, we’ll tell them we’re interested in old songs and then immediately we’ll burst into a song” ... so we did, we walked through the door and met this wonderful man ... somehow we worked the conversation round to Botany Bay, whipped out our guitars, broke into song and then felt like complete idiots. In some trepidation, we waited for a report from Jack Treasure. He said, “Nice quiet people”.

The relationship endured, and it is significant that Officer and her friend and colleague, Maxine Romberg, were invited to be part of an important Dargo cattleman’s celebration:

M.J.O. The Dargo is a secret world, you can’t look down on it. The Treasures were originally on a trading route, of a sort, then moved to higher ground. There were four brothers, one injured in youth and died. Jack Treasure at age of three hit in eye with an axe ... we were asked up because they were going to have the first cattleman’s reunion. And all the women stayed away, Marcia Treasure was there and her daughter, — teams began rolling at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. Maxine and I had been asked along to start the singing, because the boys wanted to sing but they were a bit shy and they sort of had to get us to help get (the singing) going.

⁷⁶ Barry McDonald. ‘The Idea of Tradition Examined in the Light of Two Australian Musical Studies.’ *Op. cit.* p.22.

Later on Marcia and Maxine and I got a bit tired and went to bed, and suddenly Marcia's daughter Rita tore through the door and said 'They're just getting rough!' They all went to bed cracking their stock-whips and shouting.⁷⁷

Officer's notes about Catherine Peatey provide evidence of Mary Jean's meticulous eye and ear for detail about how the songs fitted into the larger family history of the informant. This extract illustrates Mary Jean's ability to see, or perhaps *receive* is a more accurate word, the details that characterized the intimate family relationships which illuminated the older woman's life:

Catherine Peatey... had a little book with all the words written down in it, (she began writing the words of her songs in her book in about 1907) and there was only one song she didn't use the book for and that was the *Old Bark Hut*. Her father used to sing her to sleep with it. She showed me one day, a wedding gown, and her sister had put up the hem in a series of French knots, an embroidery technique, which was a tremendous act of tender devotion...(and later in the interview), she showed me a singlet she'd worn, she was over 80 at the time, the first one she'd worn and it had holes in the back, it had been worn by so many babies, she *couldn't* throw it away, it was part of the woman.⁷⁸

The fact that her father had sung her to sleep with *The Old Bark Hut* made Catherine's version of the well-known song more valuable, because it had been given to her as a lullaby. Just as Catherine Peatey had written down the words of her father's songs because she believed that no-one else sang them and that they were special, Officer, when young, had compiled the long lists of her grandfather's exotic seafaring expressions. The difference was that Officer's family stories grew out of an old, distant world; Catherine Peatey's Australian songs sprang from old-world roots transplanted in the new. Wanting to be part of the folk revival enthusiasm, Catherine Peatey became an active member of the Folklore Society of Victoria. The fragility of such communities was proven by the eventual split in the Folklore Society, when Pat and Norm's communist allegiance became a contentious issue.

⁷⁷ Mary Jean Officer, Interview with Edgar Waters Op.cit. Cassette 2, Side A.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Examining the surviving field notes book written by Mary Jean Officer in the Norm O'Connor Collection reveals the breadth of her interviewing and the attention to detail, which she brought to each new field trip. There is a record of Officer assisting with roughly 55 field interviews, often yielding multiple reels of tape. Each interview is documented with the name of the informant, their address and date. The musical contributions are itemized and for each a note about the meaning. Variations on well-known texts are given, for example, "Mr. Aaron Briggs, a member of the Murray River Tribe, works for the Forestry provided a version of Stockman's Last Bed, — local names put in, he says he likes to make up own words..."⁷⁹ Underneath these entries follow details of who the song was learned from and their nationality, whether they gave or lent the FLSV any books, photos or music and if the informant became associated with the activities of the society, and how they had heard of the collecting project. All known family members were listed with further contacts suggested by the informant. There are references to local history publications and to family histories.

The variety of people interviewed is impressive: Aboriginal families, bush workers and cattle farmers, families of Danish, Irish, Scottish, English and Welsh descent, dance musicians and singers of songs ranging from ballads like "Henry My Son" sung by an 11 year old child in Mordialloc to children's nonsense songs such as "Johnny Smoker" collected from the Tyson family of Merrigum near Shepparton: there are many songs about the Kelly family, bushranger songs, songs from Minstrel shows, scores of yarns about local characters, poems and collections of hymns and church organ music.

The Split Within the Folklore Society of Victoria

The catalyst in the dissolution of the Folklore Society of Victoria was Pete Seeger's tour of Australia in 1963. He was brought to Australia by Peter Mann of Discurio record distributors in an effort to promote Folkways Records through a series of concerts throughout Australian folk clubs. Recordings of these concerts are held in

⁷⁹ Mary Jean Officer, FLSV, Collecting File, Box 4A Norm O'Connor Collection, NLA TRC 2539

the National Library, and his tour was clearly regarded as a visit from a minor deity.⁸⁰ However, after his return to the USA, he was accused of “Un-American Behaviour” on the basis of the strong left-wing support expressed for workers in his music. The tense atmosphere of McCarthyism permeated Australian society and politics and many members of the FLSV felt that once again they were under threat from imposed American ultra conservative ideology. They voted to send public messages of support to Seeger through the Peace Movement. Other members felt compromised by this action, and it must be remembered that at this time people lost jobs or failed to be appointed to positions if they were suspected of communist sympathies.⁸¹

Norm O’Connor describes the last meeting of the FLSV:

Mrs. Sayers was present – she said the Folklore Society shouldn’t associate with this sort of thing. It was pointed out that Pete Seeger was innocent, and Mrs. Sayers made her famous remark that ‘there was no smoke without fire’, and she moved that the society should disassociate itself from the matter. It was put to a vote; one section voted to dissociate; the other section said it was legitimate to support him.

G.D. The latter were in the majority?

N.O. Yes, the conservative establishment element

P.O. I don’t think Mary Jean voted with them

N.O. No, she was in a quandary

P.O. We felt we should tell her where we stood

N.C. We told her we were members of the Communist Party, she dropped us like a hot brick

⁸⁰ See Meredith TRC 4/5; QFF TRC2272/143; FLSV TRC 2539/4

⁸¹ Conversation with Edgar Waters, April 7th, 2005, in which he referred to his ASIO file from this era and documentation of his suspicious political activities.

P.O. No, it wasn't quite like that, she said she hoped it wouldn't make any difference to our associations through folklore, but there was a feeling of being uncomfortable, and it just faded out.

N.O. I felt sorry for her, although she was very establishment, she was an individualist-she could see both sides...she elected to stay with the establishment and they formed another organisation, the Folklore Council, it's still going.

Unfortunately there is no interview with Mary Jean Officer about the split. She became too unwell for Edgar Waters to complete his interview and discuss this era. However, what is apparent in the tapes that do exist is the genuine warmth and great enthusiasm in Officer's voice as she talks about the collecting trips with the O'Connor's. Rather than any dislike of Communism as an ideology, my feeling is that Officer couldn't understand commitment to any kind of extreme political ideology; neither the extreme conservatism of the Menzies government, nor the extreme left-wing camaraderie of the communists which would have threatened her belief in freedom of personal identity and the validity of lineage through connection to land ownership. My conversations and correspondence with her brother, revealed that she supported the Australian Labor Party and was a strong advocate for social justice. Dr Colin Officer remarked that it seemed extremely unfair that as a staunch Labor supporter in the later years of her life, Mary Jean had suffered life in Jeff Kennett's electorate and had died before he lost his seat.⁸²

The Folklore Council of Australia was founded in August, 1964, by Mary Jean Officer, Francis Ashburner, Margaret Ashburner, Rose Sayers, William Sayers and Barry Woods, to "collect, study and disseminate folklore and oral tradition, particularly matters pertaining to the Australian heritage but also the folklore and traditions of other countries; and to promote literary, musical and cultural research in this area."⁸³ With Rose Sayers, Officer produced *A Collection of Australian Folk Songs and Traditional Ballads* in 1966,⁸⁴ and she continued to participate energetically in the promotion of the study and performance of Australian folk music,

⁸² Telephone conversation of March 14th, 2005.

⁸³ *Oxford Companion to Folklore*, Melbourne. 1993, p.131.

⁸⁴ In Norm O'Connor's Papers, Op.Cit., Box 8.

taking up the concertina and performing in an ensemble with Shirley Jacobs, Jack Stringer, Alan Pope and John Graham.

Mary Jean Officer's outstanding achievement as a folklore collector is her understanding of the music and stories of her informants as part of the fabric of their lives. In her own life she made a major transition from her perception of herself as a displaced person to a sense of belonging within a folklore community, although she was constantly faced with the paradox of a strong attachment to the rural world of her childhood, while living in an urban environment. This was, however, the situation that some of her informants found themselves in, like Mrs Peatey, who had moved from Warrnambool to live in Brunswick. The collecting work of the Folklore Society rode the tide of rural-urban migration and in the course of so-doing documented the kind of transitions that have always been part of Australian folklore transmission, where workers and families have had to move between rural and urban environments to find work and as a result, carried their music and stories with them to share with different communities.

In fact, the interest in their field recordings continues. The original Wattle recording of Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians in Victoria, made from recordings by Officer and the O'Connors, was re-released in 2004 as a joint venture between Wattle Recordings, the Victorian Folk Music Club and National Library of Australia. Such is the nature of folk music transmission now that singers and musicians use these recordings as the primary source for learning the music of a vanished era. Or is it really such a new method of learning? There was a famous occasion recounted by Norm O'Connor in his interview with Chris Sullivan about a group of Folklore Society members, university students and academics who had been invited up to hear Simmie McDonald sing as mouthpiece of the pure tradition:

N.O. We got up there and the concert was all organized and started and Simmie didn't turn up. It was very worrying for a time; I thought the whole point of the thing was going to be a fizzer. People enjoyed themselves...but anyway, after interval, Simmie did turn up and he'd obviously been fortifying his courage in the local pub. He wasn't drunk but he'd had a fair bit to drink...After the interval we got him onto the stage and introduced him to the

people from Melbourne, and asked him to sing songs. The people who had heard these recordings of songs from the British Isles and also songs such as the Wild Colonial Boy and Old Man Kangaroo, thought it was going to be marvellous. Looking at it from Simmie's point of view, he was not so much concerned that he was in the folklore scene. His attitude was that he was entertaining people and they were interested in folk songs. Now the current folk song for Simmie at the time, was the "Ballad of Davey Crocket" That was the film by Walt Disney and the song from it was very popular, it was played on the radio and everything. Simmie's reasoning was that this would be the main folksong of the day, so he proceeded to sing this. The people were not really disappointed, because he sang with great gusto!⁸⁵

The achievement of the family collecting unit of Norm and Pat O'Connor, Mary Jean Officer and the assorted children who accompanied them was to locate and document a record of folk music and folklore that is quite unique in the record of Australian Folklore Research. It was Mary Jean Officer's careful field notes that add a greater value to the recordings than many other collections dating from this era. She had the ability to look beyond the present rendition of the musical item and find the stories that gave a context to the material she collected. Her determination to document the lineage of the performer and their song as one entity endows the recordings of the team with a unique value.

In keeping with the status of Georgiana McCrae and Sally Sloane, the contribution of Mary Jean Officer to the transmission and evolution of Australian folk music has not, prior to this study, been properly acknowledged. The title of 'The O'Connor Collection' hides the significance of her contribution to these field recordings. Officer, like Hilda Lane (who introduced John Meredith to folk music collecting) made a significant, contribution to the collection of Australian folk music. Their achievement has been obscured by their modesty and by the assertiveness of the men they helped.

⁸⁵ Chris Sullivan, Op.cit, p. 1/1/8 of Transcript.

CHAPTER SIX

SOUNDS IN TRANSLATION: REDEFINING THE TRADITION THROUGH CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

Rather than being mutually exclusive, creativity and representation of tradition are mutually dependent; they define each other by their balance and interaction. Philip Bohlman¹

The previous chapters of this thesis demonstrate how women musicians have been essential to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music, despite the perception promoted in publications to date, that this music is a masculine genre and that women had a sub-ordinate role in practising this art form. I have engaged this question in my case studies by examining how women learned and used folk songs in their daily lives. The repertoires of the women represented in my case studies demonstrate that the boundaries of art music, popular music and folk music were and are permeable in Australian society; that the piano was used as a bush/folk instrument; and that women had an active role in creating the bush songs that are often perceived as masculine compositions. Each of the women analysed possessed strength of personality that has ensured survival of records of their music and evidence of how their music was learned, used and preserved in relation to their life experiences. Through their informal interaction with other traditional musicians they fostered a deep sense of community not possible in an art music performance career. Since the time of early colonial society, women have used music that combined these genres, blending songs voicing sentiments of bush life with European song traditions through distinctively Australian celebrations such as tin-kettlings and kitchen teas.²

Folk music for these women was music sourced from a variety of origins that enabled them to voice important needs and desires, both private and shared with others. Their repertoires reflect the mind of each singer, revealed in analysis of the personal transcriptions of music and the sound recordings of their music. Georgiana McCrae

¹ Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana University Press, 1988, p.80.

² 'Tin-kettlings' occurred when members of a community would make a noisy visit to newly-weds on their wedding night; 'kitchen teas' are dances held in rural areas to celebrate an engagement.

noted significant dates on particular music scores to lock music and emotion together. For Sally Sloane, her songs and tunes reactivated memories of relationships and family folklore. In looking for Australian folk music amongst pioneering families in Victoria, Mary Jean Officer helped resolve identity conflict about her English education and the desire to belong to her country of birth. The music represents the lifetime creation of a personal Australian cultural identity, an identity that has influenced the transmission of their music into the future. The process involved building repertoires combining transplanted traditional songs and bush songs.

This chapter presents two case studies of contemporary Australian women folk musicians, Cathie O’Sullivan and myself. It discusses how transmission functions as a result of archival research using the written manuscripts and the sound recordings of selected singers. New versions of these songs demonstrate how tradition survives in contemporary Australia. The following analysis validates the continuation of the Australian tradition, revealed in the earlier case studies, with musical examples that blend folk songs handed down from one singer to another with art music and new music influences.

Section One, describes Cathie O’Sullivan’s reclamation of Australian women’s folk music hidden behind revival performance stereotypes.³ Her music demonstrates the evolution and transmission of Australian Folk Music in the context of archival source material recreated in new versions of old songs inspired by her conversations with elderly countrywomen while on tour with *The Larrikins*, and the need to make new music founded on a sense of Australian women’s identity.

In the spirit of the partnership model of “working *with* tradition” discussed by Ian Russell,⁴ Section Two examines my own research and recording of selected Australian women’s folk songs as a method of understanding how folk songs function when they are sung in a domestic context rather than as a stage performance;

³ Cathie O’Sullivan, now Cathie Summerhayes, Lecturer in Film Studies, School of Humanities, Australian National University. First established as a folk music performer through her touring and recording with *The Larrikens* in the 1980s, she made her first solo album *Artesian Waters* in 1982, and proceeded to record three more albums which explored the blend of traditional musical ideas with jazz, rock and free improvisation to create new Australian music.

⁴ Ian Russell, *Working with Tradition: Towards a Partnership Model of Fieldwork*, *Folklore* 117, April 2006, pp.15-32.

understanding the process of interaction of the singer with the text and song structure, and identifying the factors influencing the transition of music from archival sources into a contemporary context.

This analysis establishes that Australian women's folk music, as a living tradition, is best understood through personal involvement in performance of the songs that belong to traditional singers. Helen Myers, John Blacking and Gerhard Kubick are a few of the many scholars who have espoused theories of interconnectedness and participation of the researcher in their fieldwork. To reiterate Leslie Shepherd's extrapolation: "It is true that informed and accurate scholarship is essential in ballad study, but it must be brought to life by actual experience of the folk tradition...active participation in singing and dancing adds a dimension to academic study."⁵

Artesian Waters: Finding Sources for Australian Women's Folk Music

Sydney-born musician Cathie O'Sullivan (Fig.38) represents the evolution of Australian women's folk music through her emergence as a solo performer from the predominantly male group, *The Larrikins*. Her settings of the poetry of John Shaw-Neilson and Banjo Paterson conform to the established Australian bush music tradition while employing a distinctively feminine performance style in these items.⁶ For example, O'Sullivan's arrangement of Shaw-Neilson's *Love's Coming* is set for soprano in the key of E major. (Sound Example 16) The delivery is contemplative and confessional, accompanied by harp, and this delicate composition is unlike any song recorded by an Australian male folk performer. These settings of poems, linked to the evidence of other bush song parodies written by women, like *The Stockman's Last Bed* and *Waltzing Matilda*, reinforce the question of how many other 'masculine' bush songs were composed by women. Like those of other women analysed in this thesis, O'Sullivan's repertoire reflects the process of reconciling European and Australian cultural values. Traditional Irish songs such as *She Moved through the Fair* are balanced by her setting of Banjo Paterson's poem about battling the drought, *Artesian*

⁵ Leslie Shepherd, *The Broadside Ballad, A Study in Origins and Meaning*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1962, pp.36-37.

⁶ 'The first thing that the typical bushman does with a piece of verse is to set it to some tune slumbering in his brain...' A.G. Stephens, *The Bulletin*, 1901, in Nancy Keesing's Preface to *Old Bush Songs*, Angus & Robertson, 1981, p.viii.

Waters. O'Sullivan's role in the transmission of women's songs is represented in her arrangements of archival material.

O'Sullivan has had a distinguished career as a folk musician and as a composer and a performer of Australian new music. Her solo albums are *Artesian Waters* (1980), *High Places* (1984), *Summerhaze* (1987), *Sweetheart* (1989) *Inside Dry Waters* (1994) and *Dark Pleasures and Angels* (1996). In the 1970s she performed in Sydney playing folk music of the British Isles, and later, with *The Larrikins*, performing Australian folk music. The founder of *The Larrikins*, Warren Fahey, describes the band:

I formed *The Larrikins* back in 1971 with the expressed intention of having a group of singers and musicians who could perform Australian traditional material that I wanted to introduce back to the community. It was never intended to be a 'super group' in the style of *The Bushwackers* and I was determined it wasn't going to be a bush band.⁷

The Larrikins were popular recording artists and performers in the 1970s and early 1980s, and played a significant role in promoting Australian traditional music to a wide audience throughout regional and urban Australia. Playing with the Larrikins, O'Sullivan experienced a broad spectrum of Australian music, preparatory to creating her own compositions. Her involvement with *The Larrikins*' version of Australian folk music prompted exploration of the relationships between men and women with each other and with the landscape they inhabit. The effects of space and isolation on human interactions are a constant theme in her compositions: textural and textual spaciousness are notable features of her developing musical style. Her arrangements have a minimum of technical effects and her voice has an intimacy, starkness and occasionally a vulnerability that remains distinctive in twentieth century recordings of Australian folk and new music. The influence of folk music performance on the way her music has evolved is a relevant model for my inquiry into the role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. O'Sullivan's musical development demonstrates that the alternative to continuing an unvaried tradition is to compose new music that draws inspiration from the existing repertoire.

⁷ Warren Fahey, Australian Folklore Unit Web Site, <http://warrenfahey.com/larrikins.html>



Fig. 38. Cathie O'Sullivan, Australia Day 1984.

In the course of touring in rural areas as a folk musician, she was informed by elderly women in the audience that women sang the bush songs as frequently as men 'in the old days'.⁸ For O'Sullivan this vindicated her intuition about women having a much

⁸ Cathie O'Sullivan interviewed by Jennifer Gall, 17 May, 1995, NLA TRC 2446 Transcription, p.39.

stronger role in performing folk songs than the bush band model current in Australia since the revival of the 1950s suggested.

In her childhood home, music was influenced by “sing-alongs” around the piano of sentimental Irish songs like *The Rose of Tralee*,⁹ and a musical education involving 12 years of Australian Music Examinations Board piano examinations from which she graduated with a scholarship to attend the Conservatorium of NSW in Sydney.¹⁰ In fact, she rejected the scholarship and took the non-institutional path in her music career, performing first with John O’Sullivan¹¹, Roger Hargraves¹² and Graham McDonald¹³ in a folk rock band in Sydney in the 1970s. Her conversation describes how many musicians of this era found their way to Australian traditional music after being influenced by recordings from the English and Irish folk revival, and written texts of Anglophone folk songs.

[W]e were taking over Steeleye Span and Fairport Convention with a vengeance.... I went right through the Benjamin Britten Appalachian collection of music...of songs...and I started solo singing then, and hearing myself sing, and becoming familiar with what my voice sounded like, for better or worse.¹⁴

A formative influence in her early music was the Australian tour of Alan Stivell in 1976. Stivell’s tour made a significant impact on many Australian folk musicians as he toured country regions and the capital cities, introducing Celtic harp with a rock band to back him, and a repertoire of songs sung in exotic Breton and related Gaelic languages. Describing the importance of Stivell to the music climate of the time, the critic Bruce Elder wrote, “If there is a single saviour of Celtic music, Alan Stivell is probably it.”¹⁵ Stivell’s father had revived interest in the harp and was a manufacturer of these instruments. At the age of nine he was given a harp and studied with both his

⁹ Ibid. p.14.

¹⁰ Ibid. p 2.

¹¹ Known as Joss, O’Sullivan’s husband at this time.

¹² Bathurst folk musician, surgeon and entrepreneur, Roger now runs the Bathurst Folk Club. <http://www.bathurstfolkclub.org.au/>

¹³ Audio Archive Officer at the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Luthier, Critic and Australian folk music expert.

¹⁴ Cathie O’Sullivan interviewed by Jennifer Gall, Op.cit., p.19.

¹⁵ Bruce Elder is a journalist, writer and commentator employed by the Sydney Morning Herald. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Elder for further information.

Bruce Elder, All Music Guide, Celtic Fusion Artist Biographies, *Alan Stivell*, CNET Networks, <http://www.mp3.com/genre/800/subgenre.html>

father and a concert harpist, Miss D. Megevand, “freely mixing classical repertory and arrangements of Breton, English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh folk material.”¹⁶ Stivell was unique because he was *of* the tradition, part of a lineage as the son of a traditional harp maker, and he was dedicated to a fusion of his ancestral inheritance with electric music. Other folk rock bands like Steeleye Span had acquired their traditional allegiances through research and personal taste. As O’Sullivan noted, Stivell’s concerts demonstrated that there were other ways of performing folk music than the acoustic bush band ensemble. Here was music that was melodically sophisticated and thematically complex; might there be Australian music that offered the same performance potential? This question inspired bands like the *Bushwackers*, *Red Gum*, and *Sirocco* to explore their own versions of electric folk music, with further inspiration coming from the recordings of, and concert tours by Jethro Tull and English folk rock bands like *Steeleye Span*, *Pentangle* and *Fairport Convention*. For O’Sullivan, a gentler kind of new arrangement appealed in the form of the harp to accompany the songs she found through John Meredith’s and Warren Fahey’s recordings and by setting Australian poetry of Shaw Neilson, Paterson and Lawson to her own melodies.

After meeting with Alan Stivell during his Australian tour in 1976, O’Sullivan commissioned her first harp from Sydney harp maker Frank O’Gallagher, and in 1979 was asked by Jacko Kevans¹⁷ and Warren Fahey to play with *The Larrikins*¹⁸, going “off into the wilds of Victoria and Western Australia with the harp and was doing some very basic accompaniments.”¹⁹ The harp had immediate popularity with the audiences, and helped encourage a different more introspective image of Australian music in comparison with the existing high-energy male stereotype. However, the touring repertoire was founded on the dominance of masculine performance material. From this time on, O’Sullivan became determined to find Australian versions of songs that talked about women’s experiences:

¹⁶ Ibid. Also, personal letter and Press Release Biography of Alan Stivell from Philips Record Company, 1978.

¹⁷ School teacher and piano accordion player.

¹⁸ Warren Fahey, Dave de Hugard, Liora Claff, Jack Fallis, Ned Alexander, Paddy McLaughlin, Tony Sutton were involved at various times in the band’s life.

¹⁹ Cathie O’Sullivan interviewed by Jennifer Gall, Op.cit, p.23.

I wanted to make a point, I guess, that there was Australian material, and Australian version, because we're another great English speaking country...and that there was a tradition of those old pieces from the western world, that had come into Australia, and were there, so I was very keen on that... *Barbry Allan*'s there, what I did for that [arrangement of *Barbry Allan*] was to find some extra verses in Benjamin Britten's Appalachian Collection to add to that. And I also altered some of the words, and I felt quite free in doing that, because I very much didn't want the tradition to be a stultified museum style tradition, I was very much in favour of it being alive and growing, and I saw myself as being part of it. And so I felt quite free to add and alter.

The importance of transplanted songs like *Barbry Allan* as a means of expressing a woman's emotions as distinct from the bush songs she also performed reflects O'Sullivan's growing awareness of the dual streams of local and imported songs in the traditional Australian repertoire.

It was at the time when I was beginning to play and perform, and I remember the bulk of what was around that was recorded and accessible ways very masculine, and often very boring, and this was a shining light, really, to find something like this, [*Barbry Allan*] which was very beautiful, and very distinctive. Yes, a breath of fresh air, really.²⁰

The dominance of males in the band was characteristic of this era. Her description, below, of the men as "guardians of the tradition" is significant, encapsulating the claim of male 'ownership' projected in performances of bush music in the 1970s and 1980s. In the following section of interview text, O'Sullivan asserts the woman singer's right to sing work songs, interpreted by revival bush bands as the property of the male musicians. Cathie O'Sullivan's claim is vindicated by the many field recordings of women singing "male" work songs as their own work music or as lullabies.

It was a challenge to find material, because I was playing with four men ...Ian White, who is a very fine performer, and Jacko Kevans...Pete Hobson...Declan Affley and Dave de Hugard was in that line-up over the years...²¹

²⁰ Ibid, pp.37-38.

²¹ Ian White – at this time a Canberra based vocalist and banjo player also an anthropologist; Jacko Kevans – a piano accordion player and school teacher. Pete Hobson – a Canberra musician and

But they were all very strong male performers, and kind of, guardians of the tradition, as it were, all ten years older than me, and I was lucky to get a look in really, with any of their material...it was men's material, man's scene, –“there weren't any women in the bush”, it was that kind of thing.... I was relegated the women's songs, I mean I was allowed to sing the female part of the *Banks of the Condamine* type stuff, and I was allowed to sing *The Union Boy*, ...but other than that, it had to be the female songs, which I resented. I decided a woman could easily sing some of these pieces. I think I was allowed *Springtime It Brings on the Shearing*, at different times. That was a challenge for me, not only to present, as you say, beautiful music, which people just weren't aware was in the Australian tradition, but also to try and introduce the idea that women could sing some of the other music, and put, if you like, a gentler light on some of the work songs.

The test was to keep a sound and subject matter that were distinctively Australian, while creating music representing a different aesthetic to that of the bush band.

The Song of Artesian Waters, the Banjo Paterson poem, was a direct result of trying to get something which wasn't feminine, into the female repertoire.... what's really nice now is that people like Warren and Dave...are interested in performing the gentler material, the whole thing has changed, its not just the bushwhacker and bullocky stuff.²²

In fact, Cathie O'Sullivan's own touring provided evidence of her instinctive belief that women had equal claim to bush work songs.

[T]he last tour I did with the boys...[in] New South Wales, we were in southern New South Wales, and we'd get old ladies in the audience who were just outraged that the men were singing the shearing songs. And they'd come up and say, “didn't you know there were women shearers?” And, you know, “You write it down!” “Cathie come here!” There was a whole awareness level within just the ordinary people in these

founding member of Franklin B. Paverty and the Canberra Ceilidh Band; Declan Affley – A Sydney musician of Irish and Welsh heritage; Dave de Hugar – Musician and folk music collector, his two classic records are *Freedom on the Wallaby* (1983) and *Magpie in the Wattle* (1985) both Larrikin releases.

²² *Artesian Waters*, title track of the album issued by Larrikin, LRF-047, 1982.

towns after all the collectors had gone through...that the women were very under-represented.²³

O'Sullivan discovered field recordings of Australian folk music through the men she was performing with in Sydney, some of whom were collectors:

Who would've given me that book? [John Meredith's *Folksongs of Australia*] I can't remember how I came across that material originally. I really can't think whether it was Jos or Roger, or Graham.... But certainly Jacko and Warren would've also encouraged me to look at the Australian material, at that stage I think.²⁴

Her first solo album, *Artesian Waters*, took Meredith's collected music and translated the songs and tunes into a new, subtler, Australian sound. The tracks were *Planxty Dermot Dowd*, *Green Bushes**, *The Lost Sailor**, *Song of Artesian Water*, *The Halting March*, *Barbry Allen**, *Molly Baun Lavery**,²⁵ *The Teams*, *The Miner*, *Cliffs of Moher*, *Norfolk Whalers*, *Old Copper Plate*, and *Love's Coming*. O'Sullivan's version of Sally Sloane's *Green Bushes* adds a harp accompaniment to the song, imposing a 3/4 rhythmic structure, which alters the character of the song. However, the vocal line retains flexibility. O'Sullivan's setting of *Artesian Waters* translates into music her determination to sing songs about bush themes usually claimed as 'masculine'. In setting Paterson's poem to music, she captures the monotony of the drilling search for water and her mesmerising melody evokes the heat and thirst of both land and people. (Sound Example 17)

In time, her need to be regarded as a serious musician led O'Sullivan to carry out her own research in the pursuit of making Australian music that embraced traditions of the indigenous residents and the traditions of her own cultural background. *High Places* captures this cultural exchange as it includes the innovative use of Nipper Kapirrigi's voice recorded at Deaf Adder Gorge, Northern Territory intoning "his appeal to the *mimi*, the spirits, that nothing would happen to us, and to me."²⁶ In exchange, Nipper wanted to record O'Sullivan singing on tape, as "he was very taken

²³ Cathie O'Sullivan, Op.cit., p.39.

²⁴ Ibid. pp.30-31.

²⁵ The songs marked * are from Sally Sloane's repertoire.

²⁶ Cathie O'Sullivan, op.cit. p.51.

with the harp [and] saw it as a traditional instrument and a gesture from one culture to another.”²⁷ There is an echo of Georgiana McCrae’s musical exchanges with the Bunnerong people in the 1840s and O’Sullivan’s experiences in Deaf Adder Gorge. While the context is different, the gestures of exchange between musical traditions are similar.

The 1986 record *Summerhaze* represents a further evolution of O’Sullivan’s synthesis of traditional themes and new music. The album blended the new compositions: *Cameron Quartermain*, *Loving One*, *Manhire Poems*, *Inland Born*, *Sunny*, *O’Waters and Silly Winds* with the traditional *Ships are Sailing* (reel), *Cruel Sister* (song) and *Maids of Mitchelltown* (reel). *Summerhaze* embodies the interaction of core traditional music and the need to find voice for new musical expression about essential cultural values as theorized by Philip Bohlman:

The dialectic between canonic core and boundary accounts for both the stability necessary if a folk music tradition is to have meaning for a community and the changeability required to withstand, encourage, or transform influences outside the community.²⁸

Cameron Quatermain is the seminal track in its exploration of the gender roles associated with the cultural myths in the song lyrics. It uses the characteristic folk verse and chorus format, yet melodically and rhythmically it is of the twentieth century. The instrumental arrangement of the chorus, in particular the melodic line of the flute, fuses jazz and folk influences, creating a musical tension that reinforces the emotional conflict expressed in the words. (Sound Example 18)

When I found you riding next to me I could hear the rain in your name
Cameron Quartermain
When I found you lying next to me I could feel the pain in your name *Cameron*
Quartermain
You came riding with pain in your heart, tears in your heart, rain in your eyes empty
arms.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 50-51

²⁸ Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana, 1988, p.31.

*Eyes the green of fox you sang 'go well', words dreams and wishes deep below,
Even then we heard, "no".
There was never any hope for us, well anyway so they said Timings wrong,
something's always wrong -*

*They came riding across the moors, terror in their eyes, streaming hair, side by side
They came riding with pain in their hearts, tears in their eyes, pain in their eyes,
empty arms.*

*Now I wake alone in dreaming hills, water gliding through the air, even now I hear
you call my name
Such a tired old song and sadder story hope this is the last time friend
I play the broken hearted lover to this strong and silent man.*

*They came riding with pain in their heart, tears in their eyes, rain in their hard,
empty arms.*

*When I found you riding next to me I could hear the rain in your name, Cameron
Quartermain²⁹*

O'Sullivan describes the process of writing this song as an expression of her perception of how men and women relate. It is a woman's view of the situations in which Henry Lawson placed his female characters in his stories and represents the evolution of O'Sullivan's exploration of Australian folk music into a new musical genre.

Its got a lot of my own life experience in it, but I chose, once again, metaphor, allegory, whatever to explore the themes. And the direct influence is a man called Cameron Quartermain.... I was looking at the films of [Kim McKenzie]... I was looking at the footage which he had shot up in the Gulf of Carpentaria and...there was this crew of rough riding stockmen, who were after wild cattle, red cattle, and they were just riding through bush, through sapling country in floppy hats, and just ordinary shoes, not, you know, great riding boots, and they were riding very fast, and

²⁹ Transcription by J. Gall of *Cameron Quartermain*, from the 1986 album *Summerhaze*, released by Larriken, LRF-183.

it just reminded me of all the Kelly stories, and Sidney Nolan paintings and I was just stunned that this image was coming from the 1980s, and I'd thought it belonged back in the 1880s. So that was really exciting, and if you like, it's a tribute to that whole era.³⁰

Composing the song represented a deconstruction of Ward's Australian Legend to recreate a sense of the real partnerships and the tensions between men and women pioneers. O'Sullivan recreates a symbolic dialogue about separation, isolation and mutual need that provided the foundations of Australian settlement:

I play on the fact of the whole Australian myth; you know, male, mateship, sentimental-myth of the great outback. It was meant to be a tribute to that whole kind of conversation between men and women, along sentimental, romantic lines, – yeah, and just knowing how women play into that experience as much as men do. In a way it was a little meditation on that whole world.³¹

The theme of interdependence of men and women in the Australian bush is central to *Cameron Quartermain*, and in a sense, this is the tension that underpins all O'Sullivan's versions of the traditional Australian material on her recordings. The tempo changes create an uneasy strain between the dialogue in the verses and the rhythmic drive of the chorus, representing the relationship she documents in the song. Her understanding of this male/female dynamic stems from her own career as a novice performer with established "guardians of the tradition"³² and the encouragement from elderly women to sing 'male' work songs. These factors contribute to the way in which her music defies the categories and labels preferred by record companies, arts agencies and entrepreneurs. O'Sullivan has created new music that is truly evocative of the Australian landscape she comes from with strong, audible links to the folk music canon. O'Sullivan explains her identity:

I'm half English, half Irish...and so I had a very strong kind of personal history sense which would mean that would be an expression of what I do.... For better or worse, I've got a very strong sense of what is in me, and what *is* me.³³

³⁰ Cathie O'Sullivan, Op.cit. p. 60.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p.38

³³ Ibid., p. 57.

Her music is an amalgam of this English and Irish heritage, blended with a respect and knowledge of indigenous culture and an ability to create new music out of these materials by drawing on classical, jazz, rock, popular and folk instrumentation and arrangements. O'Sullivan's style of arranging an album draws much from the ideas of communality associated with traditional folk music. Rather than using a written score, she talks in terms of making music with people using knowledge based on collaboration:

It's almost a spatial thing, in a way, it's a mixture of words and melody, and then an idea of chords, and relation of notes to each other, I guess, and perhaps instruments...But after that, I'll take it to people, and I'm often quite excited to see what they want to do with it...The more I play with these people, I have an idea of what they can do, and of the range, not only of the instruments, but of the people... so in a funny way, each piece will be almost written for the people you know...³⁴

The informality of O'Sullivan's approach to arranging her music, in the sense that there are no fixed scores, supports the fresh sparseness of her sound and conjures images of the spacious landscapes, which inform her compositions. If, as Alan Lomax writes, "the first function of ...folk music is ...voicing the particular quality of the land and the life of its people", Cathie O'Sullivan's arrangements of transplanted songs, her settings of Australian poems and her own compositions reflect this definition in their ability to evoke the restless tensions of white men and women seeking a sense of indigenous belonging.

The Process of Sounds in Translation: From Folk-Music-as-Function to Folk-Music-as-Art

A key question in my examination of Australian folk music is why are songs about women, and songs expressing women's feelings (love songs, lullabies and women's work songs), apparently missing from the published record of Australian folk music? As a performer, I shared Cathie O'Sullivan's frustration at the apparently limited range of possibilities for singing Australian songs that had something to do with women. Examination of archival sources provides the answers, revealing transplanted

³⁴ Ibid., p.11.

songs that have become Australian versions, and disregarded as performance material by revival bands; the everyday use of “male” songs like *The Old Bark Hut*, that were sung as lullabies; and parodies penned by women like the *Stockman’s Last Bed*. Archival research also reveals that collectors did not ask specifically for women’s music because they were looking primarily for bush workers’ songs. Women were themselves self-effacing and diffident about coming forward with music they considered too trivial to be of interest, or taking a role that obscured their husband’s role as primary informant. Scholars like Roger Covell and Percy Jones were reluctant to classify songs transplanted from a European cultural background as Australian folk songs, despite the distinctive variations that represent the transition of the song into an Australian cultural context. Revival performers often did not recognise the role women had in composing or contributing to Australian bush songs and also their part in preserving those homegrown songs as accompaniment to domestic tasks. Singing a song like *The Old Bark Hut* as a lullaby with no accompaniment, rather than the popular rollicking bush band version, completely alters the sound, mood and meaning of the song.

As a folk musician conducting analyses of a tradition of which I am part, I have adopted a performance approach to analysing the music of the women in my case studies. This background has influenced my support for interconnected or partnership models of fieldwork like those of Kubrick,³⁵ Russell,³⁶ Stock³⁷ and Finnegan.³⁸ Both Leslie Shepherd in the 1960s and more recently, Jonathan Stock advocate experiential research as critical to an understanding of folk music study. Stock writes:

[T]he researcher has the responsibility of living among the researched; living as far as possible as one of the researched; taking full part in their musical lives; and gradually

³⁵ Gerhard Kubrick, ‘Interconnectedness in Ethnomusicological Research’, *Ethnomusicology*, Vol.44, No.1. Winter, 2000, pp.1-14.

³⁶ Ian Russell, ‘Working with traditions: Towards a Partnership Model of Fieldwork’, Op.cit.

³⁷ Jonathan Stock, *Is Ethnomusicology Relevant to the Study of British Folk Music? Some Thoughts and Key references*, Mustrad, <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/ethnomus.htm>

³⁸ Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town*, New England, Wesleyan University Press, 2007.

coming to understand, typically through personal engagement in performance, what music really means in that particular society.³⁹

Learning to sing the songs from repeated listening to the field recordings provides experience for the researcher of how the form and phrasing of a particular version release meaning in the narrative for the singer. This investigative technique offers a key to at least partially unlocking how and why the original singers used the songs:

Essential to most music are the emotions evoked through its production, appreciation and performance as well as a set of aesthetic ideas that govern these.⁴⁰

Having learned selected songs from the women in my case studies, I wanted to take the next step in the transmission process, and record versions of the songs to demonstrate an interpretation of what these songs meant to the original singers. Performance of folk song is central to my scholarly analysis, and I concur with Philip Bohlman's view that "rather than being mutually exclusive, creativity and representation of tradition are mutually dependent; they define each other by their balance and interaction."⁴¹ In my settings of these songs I am demonstrating my understanding of how the tradition of Australian women's folk music has evolved to accommodate new methods of transmission using recording technology, both as the archival source for learning specific songs and as the means of offering performances to a wide audience.

My approach to arranging material from the field recordings was informed by the biographical research about the women in my case studies. An extension of Shepherd's directive about active learning of ballads (See above p.245) was my decision to listen critically to the background sounds in field recordings and treat them as an integral part of the information to be gleaned from listening to archival tapes and singing the songs. Howard Becker has theorized this approach as "art worlds"– the

³⁹ Jonathan Stock, *Is Ethnomusicology Relevant to the Study of British Folk Music? Some Thoughts and Key references*, Mustrad, <http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/ethnomus.htm> ; see also Ian Russell, 'Working with Tradition: Towards a Partnership Model of Fieldwork', *Folklore*, Op.cit., pp.15-32.

⁴⁰ Anthony Seeger, 'The Illusion of the Tangible: Music and its Recordings', *Communities and Memories: a Global Perspective*, third international conference of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* programme, National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 20th February 2008.

⁴¹ Philip Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Indiana, 1988, p.80.

notion that every factor that contributes to the making of an artwork is part of the end-product.⁴² The sound world created by domestic noises and captured on the field tapes is thus an essential part of my research and performance. These background sounds have provided important clues about the domestic world that shapes the way in which women used, and still use, their music. They have been translated into the arrangements of selected folk songs to emphasise the symbolism in the songs. For example, the drone of insects is often heard in the background of field recordings. The swarm of bees heard in the *segué* between Tracks 1 and 2, *A Bhanarach dhonn a Chruidh* and *As Sylvie was Walking* signifies the transition of these women's songs from the old world to the new. In the English and Celtic folklore of the women who brought this music to Australia, bees represent messengers and the bee swarm has a very Australian sound evocative of hot summers in which loud insect drones accompany most activities. A Welsh legend links bees to women's wisdom, telling that when Eve decided to "take the hard path of self-knowledge and Adam followed her, the bees fell from Paradise as well."⁴³ Bees are the messengers between heaven and earth, representing temporal and eternal life and are used as a symbol of resurrection on tombs.⁴⁴ The women who migrated to Australia were in a sense re-born in the way they had to learn to respond to reversed seasonal rhythms and a lifestyle physically removed from their families and cultural networks. The sound of bees is an appropriate representation of the function of folk music as a way of mediating between day-to-day concerns and a generational time-scale represented by tradition. Technical effects support the symbolic nature of the sound art and capture something of my era, a record of the "state of the art" (of sound art technology) to pass on through electronic sounds in translation.

The domestic sounds of dishes, clocks chiming, and flies droning are a common accompaniment to the music on field recordings. These noises prompted me to recreate sounds from my own memories – the sound of pinking shears cutting out fabric on a dining table was one example – to integrate my performances of the songs into my domestic world. Careful listening also provided clues about how women

⁴² Howard Becker, "Art Worlds and Social Types," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 19 (July, 1976) pp. 703-18.

⁴³ Claire Nahmad, *Magical Animals, Folklore and Legends from a Yorkshire Wise Woman*, Pavillion, London, 1996, p.38.

⁴⁴ Jack Tresidder (General Editor) *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols in Myth, Art and Literature*, Duncan Baird, London, 2004, p.65.

pitched the starting notes of their songs from familiarity with the resonance of the room and how ambient domestic noise provides a musical accompaniment for songs. Where O'Sullivan takes women's music into the public arena by using arrangements and accompaniments that relate to a broad audience, my arrangements attempt to bring the listener into the domestic environment.

I spent many hours in my kitchen with a Digital Audio Tape machine and a Sennheiser MKH40 microphone recording the noises that make that particular sound world and listening back to them. Saucepans simmering, the click of the stove thermostat, the sound of scrubbing vegetables, and the drone of the fridge, are examples of these sounds. As my familiarity with the ambient sounds of the kitchen increased, so did my ability to accurately pitch the correct starting note by ear for songs I was learning from the field recordings; I was experiencing how a relationship is built between established patterns of work related sounds and ambient noises with music made in this defined location. Singing these songs blended with the daily rituals of cooking and cleaning. It became clear that participation in the oral tradition is partly about learning the songs or the tunes by ear and also partly about relating them to sound reference points in one's own environment and time, and this knowledge facilitated translation of the songs into a new recording.

How Authenticity and Creativity Interact in a Contemporary Australian Environment

Folk musicians participating in folk revivals since the 1920s have been motivated to maintain the original field recording performance style of solo singer or small ensemble, but make the music more palatable for a world audience by introducing distinctive accompaniments and by arranging the item for distribution primarily by means of a commercial sound recording. This process is demonstrated in the following two Australian versions of the song *Green Bushes*. Sally Sloane sings the traditional version and Cathie O'Sullivan performs the arrangement. (Sound Examples 14 & 19 respectively.) Inevitably, the contemporary treatment draws the music away from the kind of performance practice of Sally Sloane. Folk musicians who perform outside their domestic environment want to embrace the communality of folk music represented by the original item, but they also seek remuneration and

artistic recognition from a world audience of listeners with other musical allegiances as well as folk. To reach this wider audience, compromises in traditional performance practice codes must be made. Most contemporary folk singers seek a balance between authenticity and creativity in a new folk song arrangement and the ability of a folk singer to maintain the integrity of the song is considered central to the performance by many collectors and folk musicians. How this integration is effected is a source of contention within the folk music scene. English folk music collector and performer, Shirley Collins recently criticised the dislocation of the current generation of professional folk musicians from the cultural context of their source material:

They've got talent, they've got ability, they've got facility with the voices they've got. They've got facility with their instruments. But I don't think they have a profound understanding of the music they play... They want to make it sound attractive - and instantly attractive. But they don't seem to know how to get to the heart of it. It's shallow and it's superficial to me. And I don't quite see how that's going to be avoided.⁴⁵

Bertrand Bronson also laments the effect of professionalism on folk music when it means that the professional folk singer is trying to expand her/his audience at the expense of the variety of their repertoire:

A singer who has his livelihood to gain through the medium can never consider the song as an end. He must attract and hold the attention of many people; and inevitably he must become aware of those particular aspects of his songs and of his performance that arouse the liveliest and most immediate response in the majority of his listeners. Inevitably, he will come to emphasize these elements of repertory and of style: so that, the longer he sings, and the greater his success as an entertainer, the farther from genuine folk singing will be his performance. Of all deleterious influences on folk-song, the most corrosive and deadly is the consciousness of audience appeal.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Shirley Collins, in Britta Sweers, 'Ghosts of Voices: English folk-(rock) musicians and the transmission of traditional music', in *Folk Song Tradition, Revival and Re-Creation*, Edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson, the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004, p.140.

⁴⁶ B. H. Bronson, 'On the Union of words and music in the Child Ballads' in R.P. Elbourne, 'The Question of Definition', *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol.7. 1975, pp.9-29.

Bronson, writing in the 1970s, described the tyranny of playing to please a paying audience. An alternative for contemporary folk musicians is to perform their music through the exposure and sale of recordings of their music. The internet has facilitated the growth of independent music making in general, and in particular, provided a perfect environment for the sale and showcasing of folk music, to a great extent relieving “the most corrosive and deadly (influence of) the consciousness of audience appeal.”⁴⁷

As well as the effect of manipulating performance material for commercial gain, ideology was a powerful force in determining the repertoire and bush band performance style of revival musicians. There have been many critical comments about the supposedly simplistic and derivative nature of Australian folk music from scholars and critics particularly in the years since the folk revival of the 1950s.

Describing Australian bush music, Roger Covell writes:

For a number of reasons the tunes represented in the standard collections of Australian traditional songs often have an eroded quality, a slack-jawed gumminess which suggests that they might have lost several teeth in the course of their lives. If we compare a tune collected in Australia with its appearance in another country we shall find in most cases that it has gathered a greater number of repeated notes and a general flattening out of interesting or unusual intervals, together with a more ‘Victorian’ attitude to cadence and modulation.⁴⁸

Returning to the earliest sources for music in Australia reveals a much richer source of music than this observation implies. It was the performance repertoire of early bush bands — the *interpretation* of the field recordings, by popular recording bands like the *Bushwhackers*, and the *Rambleers* — that promoted the narrow stereotype of bush music performed mainly by males singing about male itinerate rural labourers. Collectors such as John Meredith were also significant performers of bush music in the 1950s, and his part in presenting collected material played by a bush band with guitar and percussion has had a lasting impact on performance practice in relation to Australian folk music. Meredith and the O’Connors in Victoria, were committed to

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Roger Covell, *Australia’s Music: Themes of a New Society*, Sun Books, 1967, p.41.

promoting ‘authentic’, working class Australian culture. While the performance costumes and repertoire of the 1950s bush bands were considered by many as authentic, their music was as much an interpretation of the original field recordings—the translation of sounds to meet current political agendas — as were the performances of the new *Bushwackers* Bush Band of the 1970s with their electrified instruments and rock influences.

The singer Barbara Lysiak, a singer in the *Rambleers*, recalls that the main influence on the group was the American band *The Weavers* and Alan Lomax’s *The People’s Song Book* of 1948,⁴⁹ which is ironic, given that many of the active members of the folk music scene of the time were outspokenly opposed to the Americanisation of Australian culture. Lysiak and most of the members of the folk revival bands as well as the significant collectors (with the notable exception of Mary Jean Officer) were communists. These two strong influences — commercial recordings of American folk music and the communist commitment to seek out, publicise and promote participation in authentic Australian music — determined the repertoire and public image of Australian folk music as it was performed in the 1950s and 1960s. The lingering influence of the folk revival is the persistent guitar accompaniments that are heard in all but a very few bands or ensembles performing traditional Australian music today. Archival research established that the performance practice of guitar accompaniments did not exist in field recordings. Unrelieved use of this instrumentation imposes a rigid rhythmic framework on the material that also limits the possibilities for exploring interesting tonalities suggested by the unaccompanied melodies.

My arrangements focus on the thematic essence of the songs that I have selected from archival sources, and incorporate my knowledge of the original item and its singer. My aim was to demonstrate my research findings about the way in which women’s music linked the domestic performance space with the imaginative, (Sound Example 19) illustrates the link between Sally Sloane’s housework, washing the dishes and her singing); therapeutic and creative singing processes. I also wanted to maintain a sense of the core life issues for each of the original singers: for Georgiana it was cultural

⁴⁹ Barbara Lysiak interviewed by Keith McKenry, 2003, NLA TRC 4994.

dislocation; for Sally Sloane it was her family upheavals; Mary Jean Officer cultivated friendship with Catherine Peatey out of need to belong and be useful in her community; and the Grey sisters wrote about the daily risks of colonial life in the *Stockman's Last Bed*. Respect for the tradition of which I am a part was a core motivation for the way I approached the selected songs.

The Process of Sounds in Translation

To investigate my thesis topic, it was necessary to learn songs from the repertoires of the women in my case studies to understand how each selected song worked for a singer – what it offers emotionally through the narrative structure and melodic construction. Also, to examine the decision-making process behind what evidence of earlier singers or use of the song it is important to preserve in the transmission of the song into a new version. By ‘learning’ the songs, I mean noting:

1. Textual phrasing marks in the case of Georgiana’s manuscripts, which indicate the breathing patterns of the original singer, and all tempo and expression marks;
2. Instructions about keyboard phrasing;
3. Breathing patterns of singers in their field recordings;
4. The sequence of songs in field recordings and what questions or conversations with the collector elicited them;
5. Pitch and its relationship to ambient noise in field recordings, and
6. Interaction of background domestic sounds with performance of the song

Through engaging the layers of meaning in the song, a singer can make it her own. What is an apparently random choice of songs from different cultural origins is a repertoire constructed through a lifetime of relationships, and this is something I have tried to uncover in my case studies. The power, ‘authority’ or ‘blás’ of a singer can be measured by the influence they exert on the subsequent generation of musicians.⁵⁰ Folk music, perhaps more than any other music, is closely related to the activities of everyday life and it is often learned from people who have great significance for the

⁵⁰ The process is determined by the operation of tradition, see Introduction. See also the discussion of blás at p.168 of Sally Sloane Chapter.

learner, either through personal relationship or musical inspiration. What often occurs in the process of transmission from one musician to another is a translation of memories, stories and other associations, not just simply the text and notes of a song.

The other part of the learning process involves the song taking charge of the singer. As Sean-nos singer, Michael O’Cahan⁵¹ explained, when a traditional song is learned, the musician reaches a stage where the song is now so familiar and part of one’s psyche that “the song sings you”. At this point, the singer often experiences a sensation of connection with a lineage of singers and a transcendence of ordinary physical boundaries: “... we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.”⁵² Folk songs can behave as “a channel” symbolizing “access to their singers in the past”,⁵³ but they also create access to singers in the future. Indeed, “Folk song aesthetics include the phenomena of continuity and variation (or stability and change), which permit a differentiation from mass-market popular songs which always carry within them inherent reference to a well-defined commercial model.”⁵⁴ The capacity to make a unique interpretation of a familiar song that has been created by other singers rather than a recording company — the interaction of the individual artist with a lineage of music — has inspiring creative possibilities.

In selecting the songs to arrange and perform, I have been influenced by two main considerations:

1. The ability of the original item to illustrate the connection between the song and the singer in the power of the original field recording performance or the striking melody of the manuscript;
2. The possibilities I saw in these items for reinterpretation to convey the impact of the narrative by careful consideration of the use of accompaniment. I did not want to dilute the narrative by using conventional ‘folk’ accompaniments on instruments like the guitar. I wanted to use the piano in some arrangements,

⁵¹ Personal conversation: 1998.

⁵² Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch from the Past’ in *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings by Virginia Woolf*, Edited by Jeanne Schulkind, University Press Sussex, London, 1976, p.72.

⁵³ David Atkinson, ‘Revival, Genuine or Spurious’, in *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival, and Re-creation* / edited by Ian Russell and David Atkinson. Aberdeen: The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, 2004, p.156.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

which for many women was a bush instrument, dragged into extremely remote locations. Acknowledgement of the song's lineage was my intention.

The instrumental arrangements were arrived at aurally and through improvisation around the melody. None of the music for these settings was notated.

Analysis of the Recordings

The following section discusses how research and performance interact to increase understanding of the original function of the song, and to provide the catalyst for informed reinterpretation of the tradition.⁵⁵ Firstly, I will discuss the process of arranging *A Bhannarach dhonn a chruidh*, exploring the function of repetition, phrasing and distinctive melodic features from the repertoire of Georgiana McCrae.

*1. The auburn haired bonny Fey, Mild as e'er milked Kye,
Sprightly and winsome ay, Sweetest and rarest.
So charming, so artless, She first won my heart from me:
O may she kindest be as she is fairest!
And woes me my bonny Fey, mild as e'er milked Kye,
Sprightly and winsome ay sweetest and rarest.*

*2. Her song at the hearing gay, Music on blooming spray
Singing at break o' day, Ne'er could come near it
To list the sweet lay of love, Silence would lull the grove
What yearnings my heart did pour, Ravished to hear it!
And woes me my bonny Fey etc*

*3. O soon may my bonny Fey, Mild as e'er milked Kye
Sprightly and winsome ay, Sweetest and rarest!
All leal? as she's lovely, be Blessed as she blesses me
Heart and hand yielding free, Happiest as fairest!*

⁵⁵ While the research, arrangements and performances are all my original ideas, the technical studio overdubbing and treatment of my pre-recorded field noises were recorded and mixed by Ian Blake, who also provided the harp accompaniment for *The Stockman's Last Bed* and the harp improvisation with the fiddle on *A Bhannarach Dhonn a Chruidh*.

*4. A Bhannarach dhonn a' chruidh
Chaoin a' chruidh, dhonn a' chruidh,
Cuachag an fhàsaich. Cailin deas donn a' chruidh.*

And lo's me my bony day, milder at'er milled kye, o' sprightly / wisdoms ay waster & wair!
 The song at the bony day
 Speak an' bannin' they
 stripin' at head a' day
 They wad some war it
 To list the woad day of love
 O' since, would talk the spore
 What gairney ye hae that spore
 Keen'd to hear it!
 And lo's me my bony day lo
 I don't see my bony day
 Speak an' bannin' they
 stripin' at head a' day
 They wad some war it
 To list the woad day of love
 O' since, would talk the spore
 What gairney ye hae that spore
 Keen'd to hear it!
 And lo's me my bony day lo
 A' bannin' them a' bannin'
 Speak an' bannin', them a' bannin',
 Crachay an' spairnick.
 Crutin' them them a' bannin',

Fig. 39. A Bhannarach Dhonn A Chruidh illustrating the sequence of distinctive intervals. The last two lines are reversed in comparison with the Gaelic text from *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Edited by Rev. A. MacDonald and Rev. A. MacDonald, Northern Counties Newspaper and Printing and Publishing Company Limited, Inverness, 1924, pp. 234-237.

A Bhanarach dhonn a chruidh has possibly the oldest origins of any song that I have discovered in the music manuscripts of Georgiana McCrae.⁵⁷ Georgiana notated the song in her music manuscript book while living at Gordon Castle as the Manuscript carries this title and is dated 1829 when she lived there. This music book also contains a number of songs, which are dated and correspond with written journal entries for 1827-1829. It was a significant time for Georgiana emotionally, (as has been discussed in the case study Chapter Three). In September 1830 she had her last highland vacation with her father before marrying Andrew McCrae, the husband approved by her stepmother. She left for Australia in 1839, with her husband and children.

In the light of these circumstances, *A Bhanarach dhonn a chruidh* represents an important connection with the Scottish heritage Georgiana was so proud of. Georgiana quite possibly had learned and notated this song from a singer visiting or living near Gordon Castle, as there is no attribution given for the published source of the item in her hand, (this is unusual) and I have found no harmonized published version of the song in my archival research. Georgiana translated *A Bhanarach* into the performance model associated with Georgiana's class; a song with a piano accompaniment. The significance of the song lies in several distinctive characteristics in comparison with the other items in the book. (These other items include a selection of classical vocal pieces in various European languages for solo voice, duo and trio; pieces for solo piano and Scottish folk songs arranged for piano and voice.) The distinctive features of *A Bhanarach dhonn Chruidh* are the style of the piano accompaniment, the tonality of the air and the translation used for the lyrics that retain the chorus in the original Gaelic. As Alasdair Shearer points out:

“I noticed that the song contains a number of Irish Gaelic words (cailin (Ir)=caileag (Sc)=girl. This would indicate that it is quite an old song.”⁵⁸

Mary Cameron Mackellar's description of the song in *The Sheiling: Its Traditions and Songs*, February 8, 1888,⁵⁹ provokes inquiry when considered against the melancholy melody, -

⁵⁷ Georgiana McCrae, Music Manuscript SLV MS12018, Op.cit.

⁵⁸ Email communication from Alasdair Shearer, Gaelic Translation: webmaster@ozgaelic.org, 6.2.06

They all carried heavy burdens on their way to the sheiling. The men carried the heaviest things, but even the children had their loads, which they carried tightly, veritably wearing the yoke in their youth; and the women went on their way, spinning their distaffs or knitting their stockings, happy in being surrounded by their beloved ones. And what bard would not sing of the Highland maiden voicing her Gaelic lilts, light hearted and free from care-barefooted, perhaps, treading the heather as if it were a carpet of velvet-

“A Bhanarach dhonn a’ chruidh,
Chaoin a’ chruidh, dhonn a’ chruidh,
Cailinn deas donn a’ chruidh,
Cuachag na-h-airdh.”

This highly romanticized description of the life of a highland milkmaid is contradicted by the air itself, which is beautiful, but far from carefree; in fact, it sounds quite the reverse, with the dissonant E natural on the word “bonny” preceding the word “fey” and ending with the ‘unrequited’ falling fifth from F an octave above middle C to A (fifth above middle C) descending to the tonic of G minor as the last melody note. (Fig.39)

Georgiana’s harmonization of the piano accompaniment, probably her own invention,⁶⁰ was intended to facilitate improvisation for the pianist of the early 19th century. It offers the modern pianist the same opportunity. Georgiana’s version of this song, allows a contemporary pianist to play in the fingerprints of the original musician, while inviting them to add their own signature through extemporization.

The air is extremely old. The contemporary Scottish Fiddler, Bonnie Rideout claims the air originated on the Isle of Skye⁶¹, however the version in Patrick MacDonald’s *Collection of Highland Vocal Airs of 1784* is identified as an air from Perthshire. A harmonized version is published in Captain Simon Fraser’s, *The Airs and Melodies*

⁵⁹ Digitized text in The Clan Cameron Archives, <http://www.clan-cameron.org/archives.html> p.4

⁶⁰ On her notation of “Song noted down from the singing of an old highland woman, fragment 1829. The working-out of her harmonisation is clear. Kath Campbell of Edinburgh University points out that this was the common process for collectors of songs to translate them immediately into a more formal setting. (Personal conversation ICTM conference, Sheffield, July 2005.)

⁶¹ Album notes on the CD *Kindred Spirits*, 1996, Maggie’s Music Label.

Peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland and the Isles, first published in 1815, revised 1874. Joseph MacDonald, (whose collection was published posthumously by his brother Patrick) describes the significance of this and other Scots music to an immigrant like himself in Calcutta, and the same sentiments would have resonated with Georgiana McCrae living as a pioneer in Victoria:

What would I give now, far from the theatre of those delightful scenes, for one night of my old beloved society, to sing those favourite, simple, primitive airs along with me...O! That I had been more at pains, to gather those admirable remains of our ancient Highland music, before I left my native country... to shew, that our poor remote corner, even without the advantages of learning and cultivation abounded in works of taste and genius.

The arrangement of *A Bhanarach*, (Sound Example 20) returns to the air without the shape imposed by words to establish the core of the piece. This process of unravelling the layers of words and piano accompaniment, then reassembling the piece to include harp and violin, explores the different ways in which the air behaves. First it is examined as a more introspective piano air that extemporizes using the vocal line, gradually developing into an improvisation with harp and fiddle. In this way, the potential of the tune to be played by one musician or shared between two or more others is realized. The harp also underlines the antiquity of the melody.⁶² By “bringing the tune to life” through performance as Shepherd proposes, it is possible to experience the ‘heart of the song’: meaning the connections to a tradition and the flexibility of the tradition to accommodate change through improvisation.⁶³

The Preface to Patrick MacDonald’s *Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* contains evocative and informative notes about how originally the slow plaintive tunes were

sung by the natives in a wild, artless, and irregular manner. Chiefly occupied with the sentiment and expression of the music, they dwell upon the long and pathetic notes,

⁶² “The airs... are valuable, as probably being the most genuine remains of the ancient harp-music of the Highlands.” Ed. Patrick MacDonald, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*, Reprint of the 1784 edition, Norwood Editions, 1973, p.3.

⁶³ Leslie Shepherd, Op.cit.

while they hurry over the inferior and connecting notes, in such a manner as to render it exceedingly difficult for a hearer to trace the measure of them.⁶⁴

The pulse of my arrangement of *A Bhanarach* observes MacDonald's direction to avoid "the strict observance of measure."⁶⁵ The recording included was based on several long sessions of improvisation around the fundamental air. MacDonald also provides interesting advice about the appropriate use of accompaniment for these airs:

As their fundamental harmonies are often ambiguous, and even the keys are sometimes obscurely marked, or imperfectly established, the proper accompaniment is not so clearly indicated as it commonly is, in the regular music of the moderns: ...It seemed therefore, the safest course, to publish a simple melody, and leave it to masters, or others, who might wish to perform particular airs, to frame an accompaniment, agreeably to their own taste and fancy.⁶⁶

The variations noted in the various field transcriptions of these airs inspired the Editor to encourage his readers to adopt a performance approach of "returning to nature"⁶⁷ and follow their instincts rather than a dogmatic adherence to notation: "It is left to performers, either to take them as they are, or to fashion them according to their own taste or system."⁶⁸ Georgiana's notation of the song may have been loosely based on the air as printed in MacDonald or Fraser's music anthologies, which she could have found in the Gordon Castle Library. However, MacDonald's version is only eight bars in length, is in A minor, (Georgiana's is in G minor) and is significantly different, as is Fraser's tune with its piano accompaniment and melodic differences. What I think is more likely, is that she transcribed her own version from a performance she heard, as the shorter version and indifferent translation suggests her attempts at recording a song from an authentic source. The words she includes with her version consist of only three verses in comparison with the version printed in *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, which has fourteen verses and shares a similar chorus with Georgiana's version. The translation she supplies is awkward and suggests the work of someone inexperienced in translating Gaelic into English.

⁶⁴ Ed. Patrick MacDonald, Op.cit., p.2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.6.

Breathing patterns and pronunciation are preserved accurately in sound recordings of bygone singers but a manuscript only comes to life when someone sings it. The word patterns, phrasing marks and punctuation provided a guide for this performance. In my version, I wanted to convey the notion that when an individual sings a folk song she or he reproduces the sounds made by many other musicians before them, simultaneously creating a new performance and making a new imprint that may influence future performances. Simply lilting the air without English or Gaelic words reinforced the idea of lineage. I transposed the piece into D minor to suit my own vocal range and maintained the pulse of her transcription. This is a *moderato* $\frac{3}{4}$ tempo suggesting a contemplative singing style rather than MacDonald's version with a straighter feel determined by the dominating crotchet pattern; or Fraser's version which has a constant $\frac{3}{8}$ measure, supported by consistent, unrelieved triplets in the bass of the piano accompaniment.

At the time Georgiana made these notations, the only certainty about the future was her marriage and departure from her Highland home and father. Both nostalgic longing for her lost home and reaffirmation of her Scottish lineage are heard in the music, and voiced in the words '*What yearnings my heart did pour*'.

As Sylvie Was Walking

This song was first noted in Australia by Tilly Aston, (a blind poet and philanthropist) June 27th, 1911 from the singing of her mother, Mrs. Aston, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne. (Fig. 40.)

When sending me the song in 1911, Miss Aston wrote that she had taken it down from the singing of her mother, then in her eightieth year, who was born near Coleford, Gloucestershire, England, and who had learnt it from her uncle, also of Gloucestershire. Mrs. Aston went to Australia after her marriage in 1855.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ W Percy Merrick's note in *the Journal of English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 1. p.52.

The song printed in the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*⁷⁰ was a conflation of versions from Mrs. Aston, Mrs. Hann of Stoke Abbot and Mrs. Russell of Upwey. (Fig. 41)⁷¹ (See Figures over page)

⁷⁰ *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs, from the Journal of the Folk Song Society and the Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* / Selected and edited by R. Vaughan Williams & A. L. Lloyd, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1959, p.14.

⁷¹ The additional material incorporated into the Penguin text breaks down as follows: Verse 1: Mrs. Aston, Verse 2: Mrs. Aston (edited)
Verse 3, line 1: Mrs. Aston
Verse 3, line 2: Mrs. Aston (edited)
Verse 3, lines 3 and 4: Mrs. Hann (from her first verse)
Verse 4: Mrs. Hann (from her third verse, slightly edited)
Verse 5: Mrs. Russell (her first verse)
Verse 6: Mrs. Russell (her second verse)

Verse 7 is quite another matter, and comes, not from any of the three ladies mentioned, but from a set collected by Sabine Baring Gould from James Parsons of Lew Down, Devonshire, in October 1888; the editors have rewritten it to fit the pattern of *Sylvie*. Mr. Parsons sang it thus:

I'll spread my sail of silver,
I'll steer toward the sun,
And thou, false love, will weep for me,
And thou, false love, will weep for me,
For me when I'm gone.

Malcom Douglas,
26 May 02 - 10:39 AM Mudcat Digital Tradition
<http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=17057#717545>

TWO ENGLISH FOLK SONGS

SYLVIA.

Noted by TILLY ASTON,
June 27th, 1911.

Sung by Mrs. ASTON, Moonee Ponds
Melbourne, Australia.



As Syl - vie was walk - ing down by the riv - er - side, And look - ing so



sad - ly up - on its swift tide, And look - ing so sad - ly... and



look - ing so sad - ly... And look - ing so sad - ly up - on its swift tide...

- 2 She thought on the lover that left her in pride ;
On the banks of the meadow she sat down and cried,
On the banks of the meadow, on the banks of the meadow,
On the banks of the meadow she sat down and cried.
- 3 And there she sat crying, when her young man came by,
And he said, " My dear jewel, what makes you to cry ? "
And she said, " I am vexed, love, and troubled in mind,
Through an unconstant lover who proved so unkind. "
- 4 " Come, dig me a grave that is long, wide, and deep,
That I may lay down there and take a long sleep,
And strew it with laurels, and strew it with laurels,
And strew it with laurels and posies so sweet. "

Fig. 40. Mrs Aston's version.

AS SYLVIE WAS WALKING

Sung by Mrs Aston, Moonee Ponds, Vic., Australia (T.A. 1911)



As Syl - vie was walk - ing down by the riv - er - side (2),
And look - ing so sad - ly, - and look - ing so sad - ly, - And
look - ing so sad - ly up - on its swift tide,

As Sylvie was walking down by the riverside,
As Sylvie was walking down by the riverside,
And looking so sadly, and looking so sadly,
And looking so sadly upon its swift tide,

She thought on the lover that left her in pride,
She thought on the lover that left her in pride,
On the banks of the meadow, on the banks of the meadow
On the banks of the meadow she sat down and cried.

And as she sat weeping, a young man came by,
And as she sat weeping, a young man came by.
'What ails you, my jewel, what ails you, my jewel,
What ails you, my jewel and makes you to cry?'

'I once had a sweetheart and now I have none.
I once had a sweetheart and now I have none.
He's a-gone and he's leaved me, he's a-gone, he's deceived me,
He's a-gone and he's leaved me in sorrow to mourn.

'One night in sweet slumber, I dream that I see,
One night in sweet slumber, I dream that I see,
My own dearest true love, my own dearest true love,
My own dearest true love come smiling to me.

'But when I awoke and I found it not so,
But when I awoke and I found it not so,
Mine eyes were like fountains, mine eyes were like fountains,
Mine eyes were like fountains where the water doth flow.

'I'll spread sail of silver and I'll steer towards the sun,
I'll spread sail of silver and I'll steer towards the sun,
And my false love will weep, and my false love will weep,
And my false love will weep for me after I'm gone.'

Fig. 41. The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs version.

In my initial research for this dissertation, I came across Tilly Aston's book *The Woolinappers : or, some tales from the by-ways of Methodism*, in which she gave a description of hearing her mother's repertoire that she feared was lost forever because she had not learned it.⁷² However, I subsequently discovered in the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* "Notes" that the song *As Sylvie Was Walking*, was sent to the English folk song collector W.P. Merrick by Tilly Aston through the international circle of Braille correspondents he had established as his sight began to fail. The song had returned, full circle, to England where it originated. Merrick records that the song *Sylvia* was:

sent to [m]e by a blind Australian teacher of singing, as learnt and noted from her mother, a native of Gloucestershire ... I have had it transcribed from the Braille type in which it was written.⁷³

The relevant page from the *Journal of English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 1, shows Merrick's transcription reproduced above. It is a much shorter four-verse version than that printed in the *Penguin Book of English Folksongs*, perhaps due to Mrs Aston's age at the time the song was notated. (Fig. 41)

The appeal of learning and arranging this song was initially the melody with the hypnotic repetitive rhythmic structure. In singing the song, the tune became mesmerising and suggested that the original song included more than the three verses recorded by Tilly Aston to reach a resolution. The original key suited my vocal range, and on sitting at the piano with the song, an accompaniment evolved formed from a repeated motif based around **LH: CGA/ RH: CDG** as an anchor, moving to the interrogative character of the chord **LH: DGA/RH: CDF#**.

⁷² Tilly Aston, *Woolinappers : or, some tales from the by-ways of Methodism*, Spectator, Melbourne, 1905, p.8.

⁷³ In a typed letter to Lucy Broadwood (dated 3 October 1911), Broadwood Collection, held at the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House in London. The item reference is LEB/5/339, electronic communication from Malcom Douglas, 6.9.05

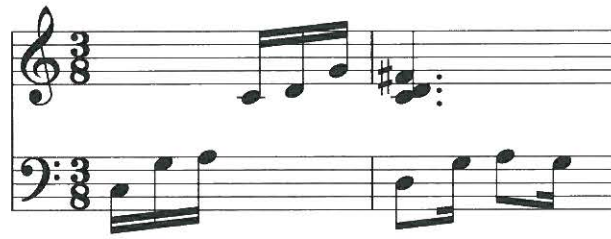


Fig. 42. The accompaniment to *Sylvie*.

As familiarity with the song increased, the therapeutic ability of the song to uncover, state and explore a problem (the protagonist’s desertion by an unfaithful lover) was activated. The river is symbolic of the transformation through grief, which in the final verse seven supplied from a version transcribed by James Parsons of Lew Down, Devon in 1888,⁷⁴ offers a satisfying transition from the suggestion of drowning in sorrow to embarking as a triumphant vessel steering towards new beginnings: “*I’ll spread my sail of silver and I’ll steer towards the sun.*”

In the four versions Merrick conflated, the tone of the song remains despairing, but the repetition of the first and third lines of each verse offers a systematic purging of seven aspects of grief:

Verse 1- Female Protagonist removing to a place of isolation

Verse 2- Female Protagonist reflecting on source of anguish

Verse 3- Female Protagonist is approached by male who questions her about her grief, addressing her as “my jewel”

Verse 4- Female Protagonist answers that her lover has deceived and left her

Verse 5- Female Protagonist recounts her dream of reconciliation

Verse 6- Female Protagonist *awakes* and realises that the parting is real

Verse 7- Female Protagonist decides to move on and the lover will eventually be sorry that she has gone.

Sylvie describes the process of realisation and reawakening through grieving. Sylvie wanders, contemplating her situation and the language is beautiful: the “swift tide”, the “banks of the meadow”, “what ails you *my jewel*”, “sweet slumber”, “eyes like fountains”, “sails of silver”. In any of the documented versions of *Sylvie*, the

⁷⁴Noted by Sabine Baring Gould, in James Reeves, *The Everlasting Circle*, Heinemann, 1960, cited by Malcolm Douglas, Mudcat Café Traditional Music Thread, 26.5.02

tenderness of the male who asks, “what ails you my jewel” is the turning point towards realisation and healing for the protagonist. Tilly Aston’s version ends with the request to dig her grave, the symbolic death of the old Sylvie, with laurels for purification and protection⁷⁵, sweet posies for the true heart.

This construction occurs often in the songs favoured by the singers I have researched. Rather than sing as a distraction from loss, grief and loneliness, women used these songs to embrace the emotion, presumably recovering a sense of control through the process of committing the emotion to the musical confines of bar lines, tempo and pitch. The language of music, with its capacity for subtly not possible in speech and written communication, became the means of expressing the personal problems of many women.

The arrangement of *Sylvie* begins with introductory sustained fiddle harmonics above the piano chords based around A minor tonality, resolving to the riff described above, suggesting the alternating ripples of anxiety and equanimity as the song progresses and the singer explores the emotional problem. As is the case in *A Bhanarach dhonn a Chruidh*, the piano accompaniment is flexible, responding to the movement of the vocal line instead of remaining rigid. The fiddle was introduced to add a voice other than mine: to translate the meaning of the song from the particular and into the general listening context.

Discovering and learning *Sylvie* in association with Tilly Aston’s memoirs restored music I thought had been lost forever. *Sylvie* was part of the Aston’s family life and part of their cultural connection linking Australia with England. The song still functions in this way. (Sound Example 21)

⁷⁵ Jack Tresidder, General Editor, *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols in Myth, Art and Literature*, Duncan Baird Publishers, London, 2004, p. 283.

Green Bushes



As I went a walk-ing one mor-ning in spring, to hear the birds
whis-tle and the night-ing gale sing. I spied a fair dam-sel so sweet-ly sang
she, down by the green bush-es where she thinks to meet me.

Fig. 43. *Green Bushes*

Sung by Sally Sloane

The origins of the song and the relationship between the narrative of the song and Sally Sloane's life have been discussed in the Case Study in Chapter Three. My interest in recording *Green Bushes* is in relating these connections between Sally's life and the narrative to a new arrangement of the song; what James Porter describes as "understanding the musical process in formation, from the inside as well as the outside."⁷⁶ Like *Sylvie*, the song explores the problem of an unfaithful lover, however, the narrative is more convoluted and is suggestive of connections with older ballad sources in the imagery and alternating of narrators' voices.

The narrative of *Green Bushes* allows the symbols to create a link between mythology and mediaeval culture and of these continuing influences in the folk stream:

If the life symbols were not present the song would have disappeared long ago. The literal reading of the ballad plots often conceals an older and deeper flow of images which should be re-examined as a sequence of pictures, in much the same way as dream or visionary sequences appear to the inner eye.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ James Porter, 'Jeannie Robertson's "My Son David": A Conceptual Performance Model', *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol 89. January-March 1976, No. 351, p.9.

⁷⁷ Bob Stewart, Stewart: 1977, *Where is St George, Pagan Imagery in English Folksong*. Moonraker, Bradford - on - Avon. 1977, pp. 27 & 46.

In Sally's version, remnants of past singers remain in the distinctive phrasing and her pronunciation. One word (Verse 7: "false heart-*id*") (Sound Example 14) reproduces Jack Archer's cockney accent. The influences from other singers in the lineage of the song remain as anonymous imprints.

The five different versions recorded suggested the importance of the song in Sally's memory. So familiar is she with the words that singer and song have the one meaning,⁷⁸ the rhythmic pulse of her performance matches a resting heartbeat, communicating a contemplative mood. Ambiguity in the narrative and the added dimensions of the symbolism are intriguing. The 'choir' that introduces my version of the song is there partly to acknowledge the anonymous influence of past singers on the song and partly influenced by my interpretation of the symbolism in the song: the nightingale as the embodiment of the spirit of a loved one and the colour green representing supernatural presences.⁷⁹ Having my vocal performance translated through contemporary digital technology into a wax cylinder recording highlights the transitory nature of any performance. For the duration of *Green Bushes*, whether it is Grainger's *Passacaglia* or a live performance, there is an interaction between the old version and the new, the past and the present and implicit in this is the transition of the song into the future.

The introduction to *Green Bushes* is constructed from melodic fragments treated in various ways: the song begins with a fragment of the melody time stretched in Digital Performer, (sound-art soft-ware) the process repeated several times so that artifacts of the processing generate a warbling drone, combined with another melodic fragment that has been subjected to 'Thonk', a deliberately uncontrollable granular synthesis program.⁸⁰ The idea was to convey through sound art, the notion that a folk song performance coalesces out of fragments of many other songs sung by many other

⁷⁸ This philosophy is expanded by Virginia Woolf: "...Behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. 'A Sketch of the Past' in *Moments of Being*. London, Hogarth, 1985, p.72.

⁷⁹ Lowry Charles Wimberly, *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads*, Dover, New York, 1965, p.242.

⁸⁰ Ian Blake, Personal communication, (2006)

voices at different times, past present and future: indeed, through the action of sounds in translation. Following this fragmented introduction, more disciplined voices emerge as another layer of electronic manipulation treats a small part of the melody with a stereo 'ping pong' delay leading to a 'choral' layer constructed from the first line reversed and pitch and format shifted to a fourth and octave below the original. These are edited in detail to create the suggestion of an unknown but Gaelic sounding language with the illusion of being heard from a distance.⁸¹ Again, the desired sound image was that of vanished voices from singers past, with a hint of Irish influence as documented in the sources for *Green Bushes*, all converging as the song reassembles itself in the present. The original performance of the song proceeds: the drone and delay layer continues, fading slowly.

The song settles into an apparently straightforward unaccompanied ballad performance, but a band pass filter is being slowly applied along with samples of record surface noise, electrical hum and the odd scratch. There is a slow transition to the sound of a wax cylinder recording, fading into scratches and static, ending with the merest hint of granular ghosts....⁸²

In the treatment of *Green Bushes*, my interpretation explores the connection between the past and the present by choosing an accompaniment created by using repeated vocal samples of the original performance as texture and rhythm. I am also exploring the idea of supernatural symbolic elements from an earlier version inhabiting the song, represented by fractured voices. The vocal line echoes Sally's phrasing, her nuances and her remnant of Jack Archer's English accent. Sally's distinctive upward vocal portamento to the top E an octave above middle C and the downward swoop a fourth to the B below accentuates the inner core couplet of each verse leading to the melodic and textual resolution in the last line of the stanza, and this I have replicated in my performance. I have maintained Sally's pronunciation of 'there' in the line 'But when he came there and found she was gone,' because it emphasises, rhythmically, the critical moment, which almost sounds—'the-re'—like a wrinkle in time when the original lover arrives at the *Green Bushes*. Reproducing several elements of Sally's vocal style adds a further dimension to the process of transmission: my voice

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid.

translating Sally's, as she translates Jack's who translates his source singer, who are all translating the narrative of the lover's triangle told and retold in the unending cycle of *Green Bushes*.

My version of the song acknowledges the lineage of the oral tradition by including explicit references to the version of *Green Bushes* I learned from Sally Sloane. For reasons that have been suggested above, the song was important to Sally to learn and to continue singing throughout her life. Sally's version appeals to me because of the personal links to significant people and because it offers audible links to the older variants through Jack Archer from whom she learned the song. Porter's Conceptual Performance model offers a framework for investigating the interaction of *Green Bushes* with Sally's life experiences and facilitating understanding "of the musical process in formation, from the inside as well as the outside."⁸³ This is the sense of lineage that I have tried to capture in my recording through the use of sound art and a performance that reflects the nuances of Sally's unaccompanied version. (Sound Example 22)

The Stockman's Last Bed

Be you stock-man or no, to my sto-ry give ear, A - las for poor Jack, no
 more shall we hear The crack of his stock-whip, his steed's live-ly trot, His
 clear 'Go a-head boys!' his jing-ling quart pot. For we laid him where wat - tles their
 sweet fra-grance shed, Where the tall gum trees sha-dow the stock-man's last bed.

Fig. 44. *The Stockman's Last Bed*⁸⁴

⁸³ James Porter, 'Jeannie Robertson's "My Son David": A Conceptual Performance Model', *Op.cit.*, p.9.

⁸⁴ Fennel Harrison recorded by Norm O'Connor and Mary Jean Officer NLA TRC 2539/63

The Stockman's Last Bed was popularized through its appearance in *The Burl Ives Folio of Australian Folk Songs*.⁸⁵ This was in fact a collection of hand-written notations made by Melbourne scholar Dr Percy Jones from singers of old bush songs, and offered to the American singer when he visited Australia in search of original folk songs to add to his repertoire. The collection was later lost in a bushfire which destroyed Jones's house in the 1960s.⁸⁶ Many versions of *The Stockman's Last Bed* exist in the field recordings in the Oral History and Folklore section of the National Library of Australia, notably Fennel Harrison recorded by Norm O'Connor and Mary Jean Officer (TRC 2539/63). A strong claim for authorship of the song, by Bessy and Maria Grey is made in the Journal of Annabella Boswell in an entry for 1846:

Colonel Grey had brought both his daughters to stay with us...After dinner the sisters sang to us very sweetly. Maria sang a perfect second, though she did not know a note of music...Bessy wrote some pretty poems, not without merit, and together they composed a parody on what was then a very favourite song, "The Last Whistle"- which they called "The Stockman's Last Bed". I here give a copy of it.

*Whether stockman or not, for a moment give ear,
 Poor Jack's breathed his last, and no more shall we hear
 The crack of his whip or his steed's lively trot,
 His clear go-ahead and his jingling quart-pot.
 He rests where the wattles their sweet fragrance shed.
 And tall gum-trees shadow the stockman's last bed.* Etc (There follows the transcription of three more verses)⁸⁷

In an entry in *The Big Book of Australian Folk Songs*, Ron Edwards offers three other claims to authorship for this song, but the dates of each of these compositions, while presumably earlier than the date of the source they acknowledge, are later than the journal entry by Annabella Boswell. The other claims are: the version in *The Queenslander's New Colonial Camp Fire Song Book* of 1865; George Moran, nominated in the *Bulletin* in 1885 as author and the surveyor Thomas Townsend,

⁸⁵ See also Burl Ives: *Australian Folk Songs*, LP 1958, (Decca).

⁸⁶ Keith McKenry 1987, Op.cit.

⁸⁷ *Annabella Boswell's Journal: An Account of Early Port Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981, 118-119; and consult 'The Stockman's Last Bed and Miss Maria Grey', Ian Turner, *Tradition* magazine, No17. September 1968, pp. 17-19 for a detailed discussion with reader's letters.

acknowledged in an “unmarked newspaper cutting” thought to be from *The Queenslander* of about 1895.⁸⁸ Conflicting with Boswell’s description of the song’s origins, a Victorian correspondent, “C.W.” wrote to the 6 October edition of the *Queenslander*, describing *The Stockman’s Last Bed*: “Occasionally you will hear it sung in the drawing room, though more often it is one of the great songs of the drover’s camp, sung by some stalwart Australian youth with his clear, pleasant voice.”⁸⁹

The “true” author of the parody will probably never be proven, however, there are many examples of women who have had a primary role in the creation and transmission of bush songs that have become so thoroughly enmeshed in the Australian tradition that these women cease to be acknowledged. Two good examples of this are the children’s round, *Kookaburra*, written by Marion Sinclair in 1934 and *Waltzing Matilda* c 1895.⁹⁰ Both *Waltzing Matilda* and the *Stockman’s Last Bed* were recreated as a result of educated middle class women adapting melodies to make new, easily remembered and readily shared Australian folk songs. These songs quickly entered the Australian folk music “canon” through oral transmission. Alongside the claims made in the *Queenslander* that the *Stockman’s Last Bed* is a song of the drover’s camp, the same correspondent describes its use as a lullaby: “It is one of the favourite songs in our house, even to the baby boy of four, who asks “Mother” to sing the story of “Poor Jack” as the little chap prepares to curl up to sleep for the night.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ron Edwards, *The Big Book of Australian Folk Song*, Rigby Ltd., Sydney, 1976, p. 348.

⁸⁹ Philip Butterss, *Australian Ballads the Social Function of Popular Culture*, University of Sydney PhD, 1991, p.63.

⁹⁰ There is a convincing argument substantiated by letters and music manuscripts held in the National Library of Australia, that Christina Macpherson, a squatter’s daughter, heard the tune *Thou Bonnie Woods of Craigilee*, played by a brass band at the Warrnambool Steeplechase in April 1894 and learned the tune by ear. The piece was originally a Robert Tannahill poem written in 1805, set to music by James Barr in 1818. Thomas Bulch arranged the piece for brass band in 1893. In 1895, Christina strummed the tune on an Autoharp to entertain her family and friends at Dagworth station in Northern Queensland. When asked to sing the words, she replied that she did not know any. Banjo Paterson was present as a guest, and he wrote the words on the spot. This melody has been called “the popular tune”. *Waltzing Matilda* quickly became a folk song through word of mouth, sung by bush-workers, squatters, the occasional classical singer and now at official events and informal venues, across the length and breadth of Australia. There are also “Cloncurry” and “Buderim” versions of the song. Debate continues amongst folklorists about whether the authentic source of the tune pre-dates the James Barr melody adapted by Christina’s recollection of the Bulch Band version, but Macpherson’s role in the creation of the version most widely known today through Paterson’s publication is indisputable. Jennifer Gall.& Robyn Holmes, <http://www.nla.gov.au/epubs/waltzingmatilda/1-Orig-CraigieLea.html>

⁹¹ Philip Butterss, PhD thesis, 1991 op.cit, p.63.

Bearing in mind the song's use as a lullaby, I wanted to retain the intimacy and simplicity of the setting for *The Stockman's Last Bed*. And to this end this track is simply voice accompanied by nylon-strung three-octave diatonically tuned lap harp tuned with a major 3rd in one octave, minor in another: this dictates the range of accompaniment or forces the omission of the 3rd degree of scale, encouraging harmonic ambiguity. A link of imagination between the internal world of lullabies and the external world of the lonely stockman is created with the inclusion of a treated sound sample of chain rattling as a farm gate opens. Technically, to translate this idea into a sound "image", the sound sample of the chains were convolved with another signal (using *Tom Erbe's Soundhack* software): the chains and the line '...and the tall gum trees shadow the Stockman's last bed' are 'mixed' so the chains take on a 'vocal' quality with a repeated delay effect. By taking a recognizable rural sound (the chains) and combining the raw sound with the vocal mix I am trying to convey the power of associations between environmental sounds and memories evoked through references in the song's words; thus developing the potential of folk music to "reverberate between the past and the present".⁹²

I was uneasy with the major tonality of the song as it had been transcribed by Jones and included in the *Ives Folio of Australian Folk Songs*, and certainly in the way it was performed for Ives's LP. There seemed very little freedom left in the published version of a melody that has been travelling through the oral tradition for so many years, and this meant decreased capacity to convey the narrative. Returning to the field recordings, I found that while the core tonality remains in a major key, the absence of an imposed accompaniment leaves the melody with greater freedom and refreshing tonal ambiguity. I decided to bend the melody out of its predictable major direction by introducing movement through the Dorian mode and an occasional sharpened 7th into the melodic minor, then returning to the major for the chorus. This arrangement fits the mood of the words and communicates the story sympathetically without sentimentality. (Sound Example 23)

⁹² David P. Coplan, in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, op.cit., p.45.

The Female Rambling Sailor

The image shows a musical score for the song 'The Female Rambling Sailor'. It consists of four staves of music in a single system, all written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The melody is simple and folk-like, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and dotted notes. The lyrics are: 'Come all you mai - dens far and near, come lis - ten to my dit - ty. It was in Graves-end there lived a maid she was both young and pret - ty Her true love he was pressed a - way and drown - ded in a fo - reign strand which caused this fair maid for to say I'll be a ramb - ling sai - lor.'

Fig. 45. *The Female Rambling Sailor*

Sung by Catherine Peatey, recorded by Norm O'Connor and Bob Michell 1959.

Song protagonists dressed in male attire are free to move in the world with a male's appearance swagger and boldness, while retaining a woman's sensitivities. "She is a polyvalent heroine who has it both ways – "female" and "male".⁹³ Folklorist, Mark Gregory has listed 120 female warrior ballads.⁹⁴ At least 14 recorded versions have been made by singers since the field recording was aired on the Wattle⁹⁵ release in 1963, including two by Bob Dylan recorded live at his concerts in Sydney and Melbourne in 1992.⁹⁶ The Bodleian Ballad Index provides details of the 1867 Broadside⁹⁷ and the National Library of Scotland *Word on the Street* collection of digitised Broadside also has a version in the date range of 1860-1880.⁹⁸ There are many minor changes to the words in the version Catherine Peatey learned from her father and notated in an exercise book, but the quaintest one is in the first line of the last verse. In the broadside it reads, "*On the river Thames she was known well*", and

⁹³ Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.2.

⁹⁴ Mark Gregory's Australian Folk Song Site: <http://folkstream.com/reviews/frs/ballads.html>

⁹⁵ *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians in Victoria*, 1963, Wattle Archive Series No 2.

⁹⁶ Compilation CD *The Female Rambling Sailor versions*, from Mark Gregory.

⁹⁷ <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm>

⁹⁸ <http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/results.cfm>

in the Peatey field recording this is pronounced “*Thames*”, with ‘Th’ sounding as it does in ‘the’.⁹⁹ This quirk of pronunciation suggests that the song had been in Australia, in the Peatey family’s repertoire, long enough for the pronunciation of the Thames to slip into vernacular guesswork. Catherine Peatey’s rendering of *The Female Rambling Sailor* is the only field recording of this song.

The key to learning the Female Rambling Sailor was memorising the 13 verses, in relation to the lines: “from stem to stern she freely went” which is a sentiment repeated three times with slight variations. These repetitions intersect the linear flow of the narrative and make it more difficult to memorise than a song with a purely sequential narrative. However, it was in the process of memorising the pattern of these lines that I realised the critical importance of the repetition in reinforcing the incredulity of the narrator that the female sailor, so proficient at running the rigging, could have slipped and fallen. The repeated lines represent an essential step in revealing the narrator’s grief, building tension approaching the moment when the unbelievable accident occurs. Of course, the song could be used by any singer to relieve the loss of a loved one, or for any other kind of death or life-transforming experience. The figure of the Female Rambling Sailor is a highly resilient character who will not be barred by gender from pursuing her journey. She is cool and fearless in the face of enemies or foul weather and charms her companion sailors with her wit. “The sea it was her heart’s delight” because the sea is always changing, high tide and low, fluctuating currents, storms and calms, determining her course on her secret quest for heart’s ease after the death of her lover. In the manner of great ballads the imagery allows the song to function on many levels. The line “Her body’s anchored in the ground” extends the image of her character to represent death as the end of her quest for peace which she cannot attain in the world without her true love. The voyage of her life is over this time, but it will begin again with the next singing of the song.

⁹⁹ In the Wattle recording notes this is transcribed as “On the river Fame” *Australian Traditional Singers and Musicians in Victoria*, 1963, p.16 reprinted 2004, p.49.



Female Rambling Sailor.

Come all you people far and near,
 And listen to my ditty.
 At Gravesend lived a maiden fair,
 Who was both young and pretty,
 Her love he was press'd away,
 And drown'd in a foreign sea,
 Which caus'd this maiden for to say,
 I'll be a female sailor.
 This maiden she was resolv'd to go
 Across the foaming ocean,
 She was resolv'd to let them know,
 How she can gain promotion,
 With jacket blue and trousers white,
 Just like a sailor neat and tight,
 The sea it was the heart's delight
 Of the rambling female sailor.
 Like a sailor true she went on board,
 All for to do her duty,
 She was always ready at a call,
 This maid the queen of beauty.
 When in a calm this damsel young
 Would charm the sailors with her tongue
 As she walk'd the decks and sweetly sung,
 The rambling female sailor.
 When in the storm upon the sea,
 She was ready at her station,
 Her mind as calm as calm could be,
 She loved her occupation,
 From stem to stern she'd boldly go,
 She braved all dangers, feared no foe,
 But soon you'll hear the overthrow
 Of the rambling female sailor.

This maiden gay did a wager lay
 She would go aloft with any,
 And up aloft she straight did go,
 Where times she had been many.
 This maiden bold, oh! sad to tell,
 She missed her hold and down she fell,
 And calmly bid this world farewell.
 Did the female sailor told,
 This maiden gay did fade away,
 Just like a drooping willow,
 Which made the sailors sigh and say,
 Farewell, young faithful Willy.
 When her snow-white breasts in sight came,
 She proved to be a female frame,
 And Rebecca Young it was the name
 Of the rambling female sailor.
 May willows wave all round her grave,
 And round it laurels planted;
 May roses sweet grow at the feet
 Of one who was undaunted.
 May a marble stone be inscribed upon,
 Near here lies one so lately gone,
 A maiden fair as sun shone on—
 The rambling female sailor.
 So all young men and maidens around,
 Come listen to my story,
 Her body is anchored to the ground,
 Let's hope her soul's in glory.
 On the river Thames she was known well—
 Few sailors could with her excel—
 The tear let fall as the tale you tell
 Of the rambling female sailor.

Fig. 46. The broadside version of The Female Rambling Sailor.
 Probable period of publication: 1860-1880 National Library of
 Scotland: L.C.Fol.70(147)

Catherine Peatey sang the *Female Rambling Sailor* for the collectors, Norm O'Connor and Bob Michell, in her own home. I wanted to project a sense of the domestic performance environment in the arrangement of my version of the song. In particular, I wanted to suggest the way sound acts on and in the imagination of a singer to create a space spanning temporal and metaphysical planes simultaneously. For example, when one sings *The Female Rambling Sailor*, one may do so in the present, while engaged in the reality of that space; but imagination will also animate the narrative and the exploits of the Female Rambling Sailor. The song's imagery, combined with the ascending melodic line, activates definite emotional responses to passages such as " *May the willows wave around her grave and around the laurels planted, May the roses sweet grow out the feet of the one who wasn't daunted.* "

At the beginning of the track creaking and slapping sounds are meant to evoke the rhythms of a sailing ship, created out of overlapping interactions of rope and wood. The nautical flavour was manufactured from the sound of my viola and shoulder rest creaking as I positioned it to play the introduction to the song - a way of linking temporal and imaginary spaces. A fragment of this recorded sound was looped against a similarly manufactured loop of the viola solo. Underlying each of these layers and continued throughout the song is another loop of bass guitar notes creating a drone pattern with longer wavelength, simulating the ocean waves on which the song is founded. Reinforcing the undulations of the sea in the narrative is the vocal range of the piece from G below middle C to C an octave above middle C and the melody rises and falls evocatively. The ending of the song is a kind of funereal chant made from samples of the vocal track reversed and looped. Under this layer is a manipulated sound sample of pinking shears cutting fabric on a large wooden table. This sound is one of my earliest childhood memories of my mother making our clothes, and I recreated the sound and recorded it on my own dining room table. As pure sound, the bite of the metal teeth into organic fibres is quite sinister, and the cutting generates a rhythmic pattern with intriguing irregularities. This was the perfect noise to link the everyday domestic reality with the narrative of the *Female Rambling Sailor*. Like the song, the scissors are part of a process of transformation.

Learning the *Female Rambling Sailor* revealed the power of this ballad to transport the singer through the process of change. It is a ballad of revelation and triumph with the sailor “*calmly bid[ding] the world farewell*”. Rebecca Young in effect takes on the identity of her lost sailor lover with her disguise, and like him dies at sea. In the end their deaths at sea are mirrored, creating one of the most affecting love stories found in Australia’s folk song heritage. (Sound Example 24)

Conclusion

Performance of folk music involves a synthesis of personal interpretation and communal traditions. Performance is the way in which folk music survives, as it offers the opportunity of collaboration with other musicians and communication with an audience. In addition, it offers the means of obtaining information about a singer from the past through reproducing the songs they sang, informed by their recordings or their manuscripts. Visual artists study and reproduce the drawings of an old master, for a while reactivating the creativity of that artist in the motion of her/his pencil reproducing the subject before them. Similarly the folk singer regains a sense, of the singer whose sounds they are reproducing. By listening to the field recordings for the complete sound picture of the now-vanished performance environment — by absorbing breathing patterns, phrasing, stylistic nuances and ornaments of the field recording or the manuscript markings — the contemporary singer absorbs the sense of the previous singer and partakes in the life of the song. From this state, the new version of the song can emerge.

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how research and performance interact to increase understanding of the original function of a folk song, and to provide the catalyst for informed reinterpretation of the tradition as new versions of women’s Australian folk songs. This process has revealed that the songs selected functioned not only as entertainment, but as powerful means of dealing with the deeper challenges of life, reaffirming cultural links with the old world and combating the loneliness of remote rural areas. Singing these songs in the Australian environment enabled women to gradually create a new identity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis, *Redefining the Tradition*, asserts that the existing definition of Australian folk music is inadequate. The use of the term ‘folk’ in much of the existing literature refers to a concept of Australian Anglophone music founded on convict songs and the ideal of the masculine bush-worker musician. It ignores the interaction of written music and oral traditions across class distinctions, and it downplays the importance of folk music made in urban environments. Most significantly, the standard definition neglects the role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. The evidence of the many hours of women folk musicians’ field recordings stored in archives such as the National Library of Australia’s Oral History and Folklore Collection needs to be accorded its rightful place in the scholarly analysis of Australian music. Rather than remain hidden behind the names of male collectors, these women must be heard and studied in their own right. The following chapter is a recapitulation of the major themes discussed in this thesis. Areas for further research arising from my thesis findings are identified.

In their efforts to find and preserve a national folk music of the kind identified by Ward in *The Australian Legend*, revival collectors initially promoted their idea of authentic bush music in opposition to the rich mixture of musics that women and men actually listened to, learned, performed, sang and danced to as part of their daily lives. The songs describing a masculine world of shearing, droving and bushranging are only part of the Australian folk music canon. As stated in my adaptation of Charles Seeger’s theoretical model in the thesis introduction, Australian folk culture is the creation of interweaving bundles of traditions and the interaction of different musical idioms. Women’s folk music is a distinctive and powerful element in the creation of Australian cultural identity, and should be promoted in national information resources such as the Commonwealth Government’s official ‘culture portal’.¹

¹ The Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal page for Australian Folk Music: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/music/folk/> and Bush Songs and Music: <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/music/bush/>

To demonstrate the significance of Australian women's folk music, I have written about the way in which women from different social backgrounds, spanning the history of European settlement in Australia, learned, used and shared their music as a means of overcoming cultural dislocation through social interaction. The analysis of their lives and music portrays the historical role of women in the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. Each of the women documented in the case studies chose the music they collected and/or sang because they felt a connection that was deeper than the physical act of the performance. The music held associations with influential people and past events through "acoustic illusions, melodic rhythmic patterns that are not played as such, but are programmed to arise in the listener's mind as perceptual units."² By continually translating traditional Anglophone items into an Australian performance context, and absorbing popular and art music to meet the needs of their present, women kept alive a repertoire of folk material that met their practical and spiritual needs. Women also contributed compositions to the repertoire of the Australian bush music, such as *The Stockman's Last Bed*, that documented rural occupations.

Revival collectors tended to present the results of their field recording expeditions by listing the items a particular musician contributed and documenting the provenance of the song in relation to the Anglophone song tradition. In-depth published analysis of individual singers is rare, with the exception of Hugh Anderson's biography of Simon McDonald.³ Ron Edwards's impressive list of publications provides a vast corpus of material, but the focus has been on amassing the songs for use rather than providing ethnographic details of how the songs were used in the lives of his informants. The earliest field recordings of traditional singers preserve little in the way of how singers committed their songs to memory, and how and where they performed the song. The significance of each song for the singer is often not discussed at length. In these recordings the collector's choice of items shapes the results published rather than the singer presenting and explaining their repertoire.

² Gerhard Kubik, 'Interconnectedness in Ethnomusicological Research', in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol.44, No.1 (Winter, 2000), p.1.

³ Hugh Anderson, *Time Out of Mind: The Story of Simon McDonald*, Red Rooster, Ascot Vale, 1987. Chris Sullivan's CD notes for the releases of his Charlie Batchelor and Dooley Chapman tapes represent the basis for future books.

In writing this thesis I have used a different analytical model. I have focused on how individual women musicians perceived, made, collected and performed their music, using their manuscripts and field recordings as the starting point — making them the centre of their repertoire rather than placing at the centre, the collector or commentator who recorded their music. My research has focused on finding methods to unlock some of the secrets about how these women remembered their music, and what motivated them to collect or learn certain items. The Australian ‘sound’, as it is heard in field tapes, is often stark, reflective of the rawness of life and the practical, well-used quality of the songs. Scholars like Covell, who are deterred by the “slack-jawed gumminess” of Australian folk song, have allowed conventional aesthetics to prevent an understanding of the deeper significance of field performances in the context of the singers’ lives.⁴

The desire to understand these performance processes, given the lack of documentation accompanying the field recordings, precipitated my own re-creation of the songs in the sound recordings attached. Learning songs from field recordings directs the singer to breathe where the original singer breathed in accordance with the tempo, to structure the ballad narrative in the same manner as a particular version belonging to that woman and to experience the sound of words pronounced distinctively. Playing from a hand-written manuscript offers similar opportunities to explore aspects of the musical identity of the scribe by following phrasing, dynamic and tempo directives. This kind of analysis is fundamental to understanding how traditional music operated for the musicians who are the subject of inquiry, and enables the researcher to avoid mistaking the field recording for the real musical performance. As Anthony Seeger writes, “ideas, meanings, values, and aesthetics are lost in existing forms of recording”, and it is through re-creation of selected songs that I have explored and experienced some of the intangible aspects of field soundtracks.⁵

Is there a consistent theme running through Australian women’s folk music? A strong spirit of defiance towards oppressive authority is the outstanding feature of the

⁴ Roger Covell, *Australia's Music: Themes of a New Society*, Sun Books, 1967, p.41.

⁵ Anthony Seeger, ‘The Illusion of the Tangible: Music and its Recordings’, *Communities and Memories: a Global Perspective*, Third International conference of the UNESCO *Memory of the World* programme, National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 20th February 2008.

fragments of songs sung by convict women surviving in documents from this era. This defiant stance defines the singers as independent voices above the tide of popular entertainment. Humorous and irreverent parody was employed early in Australian musical history to assist the transition of melodies and songs from one side of the world to the other, and this strand of women's folk music remains strong in the songs of contemporary performers such as Dale Dengate and Judy Small. The thread of defiance is identifiable in the bushranger ballads performed by Sally Sloane and is heard in the Jacobite songs that were family favourites in Georgiana McCrae's repertoire. However, contiguous with this strand are the ballads preserving traditional narratives linking the new world to the old, such as *Green Bushes* and *The Female Rambling Sailor*. These songs demonstrate reverence for a tradition leading back to earlier generations of singers through symbolic narratives that offer the singer a diachronic/synchronic identity.

While isolation was a major influence on the nature of women's folk music practice and their willingness to engage musicians passing by, community was no less a force. Pioneering women of the Northern Rivers region of NSW established networks for the exchange of repertoire through district and church choirs, social dances, and house parties. The importance of the piano to the women referred to in this thesis indicates that there is much work to be done in documenting the role of this instrument in the evolution of Australian folk music. In my investigations in the Richmond River Historical Society, four early nineteenth century pianos were identified in the museum's collection. One of these, 'the Wilson piano',⁶ was brought up river to Lismore from Ballina on a schooner in 1845. Another is a Broadwood square piano brought to the region about 1830.⁷ Each of these instruments offers the prospect of discovering more about musical traditions in the pioneering era through the documents and music, now housed in the museum, belonging to the families who owned the pianos. Initial investigation suggests that it was primarily women who used these particular instruments. The opportunity to study the interconnectivity of such a wealth of documented music history in a discrete region is a rare and exciting possibility.

⁶ It is a Collard & Collard of London piano: RRHS No 2004 - 94

⁷ Brought to Australia by Mr Alexander Lyle Patison for his granddaughter, Mrs John McPherson of Oakbank. RRHS - 1955-612-0.

Often present in archival recordings or documents is the sense that women adopted male as well as female personas to survive in frontier conditions. This duality is reflected in their repertoires. For example, ‘masculine’ songs of sheep shearing and mustering were sung and composed by women to depict the bond of partnership between men and women who were working together to settle the land. The Grey sister’s song *The Stockman’s Last Bed*⁸ and Christina McPherson’s collaboration with Paterson in writing *Waltzing Matilda* demonstrate the way in which women embraced masculine imagery to create music about life in a frontier environment.⁹ The field recordings of Sally Sloane’s repertoire provide evidence of this concept in performances of songs like *The Springtime it brings on the Shearing*.

The transition of Australian women’s folk music from an imported product to an expression of homegrown culture was dependent, in some cases, on the interaction of music-as-art with music-as-a-survival-skill. Georgiana McCrae first learned her repertoire primarily as an artistic achievement. However, her life brought experiences that changed her priorities so that her music became a means of expressing her identity and communicating with other musicians to establish cultural links. By sharing her repertoire rather than always performing it for a detached audience, Georgiana crossed a line into the territory of communal music making, where transmission of repertoire between participants was almost inevitable. Tracing the sources for selected items in her anthologies provides information about Georgiana the folk music collector. Performance of her repertoire opens a new level of recognition about the possible meaning and value of this music to her as she experienced the transition from the old to the new world. In the manuscript collections of Australian libraries and regional historical societies, further research will reveal inter-related collections of hand-copied music and personal papers belonging to pioneer women from many different backgrounds. Such discoveries offer a means of contradicting the mistaken opinion of many historians and folklorists that women have not participated in the creation of Australian folk music.

⁸ *Stockman’s Last Bed*, composed by Anna and Maria Grey, see *Annabella Boswell’s Journal; An Account of Early Port Macquarie*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981, pp.118-9.

⁹ Jennifer Gall and Robyn Holmes, *Who’ll Come A-Waltzing Matilda with Me*, <http://www.nla.gov.au/epubs/waltzingmatilda/1-Origins.html> (accessed 5.2.08)

Sally Sloane had no conflict about her cultural identity. Her repertoire is the record of her many relationships with other musicians throughout her life, including her mother and grandmother, and it was learned purely through a process of oral transmission. This is not to say she could not captivate an audience. As I have stated, she is one of the finest traditional singers recorded in Australia. Sally had absorbed her music so thoroughly that the boundary between her and the characters in her songs sometimes becomes blurred, so much so that often she is there with them in the narrative and continues discussing them as if they were flesh and blood after the song is sung. In this manner her version of *Ben Hall* is sung with the conviction of a traditional ballad singer where she and the characters are linked in the singing of the song. Contrastingly she sings the bush songs in her repertoire, and conveys the sense that she has assumed a detached masculine persona in singing a song like *The Springtime it Brings on the Shearing*. It is time that a collection of Sally Sloane's songs was re-issued as a CD with scholarly notes describing the significance of her impressive repertoire to the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. Such a publication would provide the opportunity to present her music using an analytical approach such as Porter's conceptual performance model,¹⁰ describing her repertoire in terms of the way in which she remembered and performed it.

As a collector in the folk revival, Mary Jean Officer found the means to feel that she belonged in the country of her birth. Her activities helped her to discover a series of friendships and a wealth of music and stories that enabled her to recover and appreciate the traditions preserved in her own family. She represents a class of Australians who in the 1950s still referred to England as home, struggling to understand the conventions of the country they were living in. By becoming a member of the community represented by the Folklore Society of Victoria, Mary Jean found, learned and published the music she collected with Pat and Norm O'Connor to expand these musical networks. She hoped to include more people, who, like herself, were uncertain of how to belong, and contribute to, a sense of Australian-ness. Her collecting methodology built on her genuine delight at meeting people like Catherine Peatey and the respectful curiosity about all the musicians she interviewed. Mary Jean

¹⁰ James Porter, *Jeannie Robertson's My Son David: A Conceptual Performance Model*, Op.cit.

Officer's extensive field notes, Norm O'Connor's photographic slide collection and the documentation accompanying the O'Connor collection held in the NLA deserve further scholarly attention. There is need for the publication of selected field recordings on CD with extensive notes to make this outstanding resource available. Such a publication would compliment the existing books and CDs promoting the Meredith Collection.

In Cathie O'Sullivan's case study the relationship between music as cultural expression and music as art resurfaces more explicitly. Like Georgiana McCrae, Cathie gained her musical expertise through formal musical training. She discovered folk music through performance friendships and realized, like Georgiana, that the genre held possibilities for musical partnerships and also for developing her own distinct voice. Like Georgiana, she looked to archival records for authentic folk material. She was vindicated in her decision to sing 'male' bush songs by encouragement from elderly women she met on tour assuring her that bush songs were equally women's songs. Of course the distinction is that Cathie O'Sullivan's performances and recordings were made as commercial ventures, underlining the fact that folk music blurs boundaries defining performance as well as repertoire.

My own performance research has been motivated by a desire to renounce the strongly rhythmic instrumental accompaniments popularized in the revival. Singing selected items unaccompanied reveals how the structure, phrasing, language and tonality of the songs work together to communicate the narrative on an outward performance level and at a subtle symbolic level. In re-creating these songs I have investigated the potential of this music to evoke feeling and to activate a process of emotional transformation in the singer. For example, the song *Sylvie* provides an exploration of loss and reaches a resolution, which is experienced with each performance of the song. The shape of the melody and the sentiments of the text have determined the accompaniment to this song.

As a musician I have used my own musical examples as well as language to communicate the way in which Australian women's folk songs hold intangible meanings. To this end, I have made the arrangements of the songs appended in the

accompanying CD to interpret what I hear as the meaning of the song from my study of biographical documents and from listening to the earlier versions of these items.

There is so much that is unsaid, unwritten and unknown about Australian women folk musicians, but in the time it takes to sing a song belonging to one of these women, we are able to share a melodic path that once linked their thoughts, emotions and musical skill. To do so is indeed “crucial to the reapplication of memory and the creation and re-creation of the emotional qualities of experience in the maintenance of a living tradition.”¹¹

This thesis has re-positioned Australian women musicians at the heart of the evolution and transmission of Australian folk music. It analyses their music by acknowledging them as the architects of their repertoires and examines how they learned, performed and passed on their music. In re-defining the tradition of Australian folk music, I have broadened the definition to acknowledge the operation of folk music across class distinctions and musical genres and challenged the foundation of the masculine Australian legend on which the definition was originally formulated. Music does indeed have “unique powers as an agent of ideology”¹² and to ignore women’s folk music is to preserve a false view of history in which women’s role in Australian cultural evolution is denied.

My research has merely touched the surface of the wealth of archival sound recordings held in institutions, primarily in the Oral History and Folklore Collection of the National Library of Australia and The National Film and Sound Archive. The case studies have necessarily been limited to focus on the methodological approach of assessing a singer’s repertoire in relation to their lives. I have looked for patterns of significance linking biographical events and the textual and musical language of the songs chosen. The many hours of women’s music field recordings held in national and regional archives represent the basis of further extensive research. As more scholars utilise this valuable resource, Australian archival institutions must publicly acknowledge, in their collection development policies, the women contributors whose tape recordings they house. Cataloguing systems will hopefully be developed, like

¹¹ David P. Coplan, *The Meaning of Tradition*, Op.cit., p.45.

¹² Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, OUP, 1988, p. 132.

those at the Irish Traditional Music Archive, to afford both men and women musicians' equal status with the collectors who have recorded them.¹³

Academic institutions also have a duty to encourage serious study of home-grown Australian music traditions and teach the songs made by both men and women as part of our folk music heritage. As Wim van Zanten noted so forcefully in his Keynote address at the 2008 UNESCO Memory of the World conference:

The role of women in passing on cultural knowledge is still underestimated. This is partially due to the fact that we lack data. It is also due to ideologies that only include gender equality to a limited extent.¹⁴

Australian folk music is not simply the transportation ballads and bush songs depicting the male worker's world so frequently promoted as the authentic, national voice. It is crucial that scholarship recognizes the folk music practised by women since white settlement, because this music voices their identity where there is often little other documentation. In acknowledging this truth, scholars will be encouraged to document the contribution of generations of women to Australian artistic life with greater depth and accuracy.

¹³ <http://www.itma.ie/>

¹⁴ Wim van Zanten, *Audiovisual documentation and its role in the transmission of knowledge*. Memory of the World Conference, Keynote Speech at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, NLA, 19.2.08. <http://www.amw.org.au/mow2008/mow/speakerPapers/van%20ZantenPaper.pdf>

APPENDIX ONE

1. The broadside version of *Wait Till the Clouds Roll By*, published between 1880 and 1900. The National Library of Scotland, RB.m.143(032)
<http://www.nls.uk/resources/pdf/74414563.pdf> p.300
2. The sheet music version of *Wait Till the Clouds Roll By*, Fulmer, H. J., Wood, J. T., Advertiser Newspapers Ltd. 187?-188? NLA Music Australia:
<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/doview/nla.mus-an6001196-p> p.302

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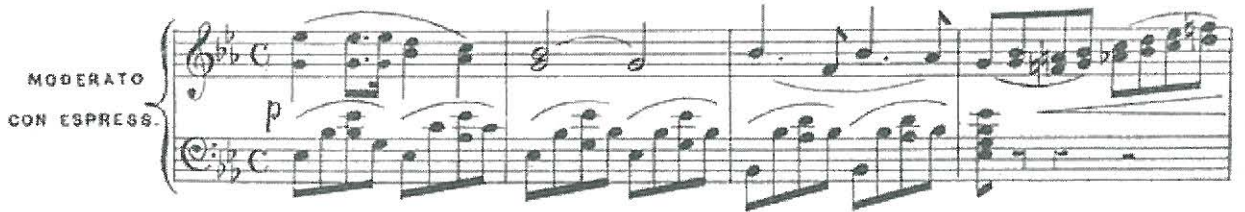
WAIT TILL THE CLOUDS ROLL BY.

SONG AND CHORUS.

Words by J. T. WOOD.

Music by H. J. FULMER.

MODERATO
CON ESPRESS.



Jen - ny, my own true loved one, I'm go - ing far from thee,



Out on the bound - ing hil - - lows, Out on the dark blue sea!



How I will miss you, my dar - ling, There when the storm is raging high.



rall:

Jen - ny, my own true loved one, Wait till the clouds roll by.....

colla voce.

CHORUS.

SOPRANO. *p* Wait till the clouds roll by, Jenny, Wait till the clouds roll by;

ALTO. *f* Wait till the clouds roll by, Jenny. *p* Wait till the clouds roll by;

TENOR. *f* Wait till the clouds roll by, Jenny. *p* Wait till the clouds roll by;

BASS. *f* Wait till the clouds roll by, Jenny. *p* Wait till the clouds roll by;

PIANO. *f* *p*

rall:

Jen - ny, my own true loved one, Wait till the clouds roll by.....

rall:

Jen - ny, my own true loved one, Wait till the clouds roll by.....

rall:

Jen - ny, my own true loved one, Wait till the clouds roll by.....

rall:

Jen - ny, my own true loved one, Wait till the clouds roll by.....

colla voce.

Jen - ny, when far from thee, love, I'm on the o - - cean deep,

Will you then dream of me, love, Will you your pro - mise keep?

And will I come to you, dar - - ling? Take cou - rage, dear, and never sigh

Gladness will fol - - low sor - - row, Wait till the clouds roll by.

rall:

colla voce.

Jen - ny, I'll keep your i - - - mage With - in my heart so true!

Each thought of mine for - - ev - - er Still, love, shall be of you;

Dry, then, your teardrops, my dar - - ling, Soon will the night of sorrow fly;

rall:
Cheer up, and don't be lone - - ly, Wait till the clouds roll by
colla voce.

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NLA =National Library of Australia

SLV =Library of Victoria

SSS=School of Scottish Studies (Edinburgh University)

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