Introduction: Not a technical article

In 1922, the US magazine *Radio Broadcast* published an article entitled “O Woe! Radio.” The article was introduced by the magazine’s editors as “a cry of despair, a burst of laughter, a tragic comedy and a sly, sound estimate of human character, all rolled into one” (Bourke 1922: 107). They promised that because the article presented “as accurate and entertaining a picture of the effects of radio in the home as we have seen” it would find its echo in “thousands of homes.” The article’s author, Alice Bourke, described the arrival of a birthday gift from her husband of a “radiophone” when during the forenoon the radio man and his assistants came. They had a heavy forty-foot mast with them, and immediately commenced adapting the landscape scheme of the far corner of my garden to their pedal extremities and the pole. They assured me that a good antenna was of the utmost importance.

At this point Bourke asked her readers not to “throw the magazine away until you get your money’s worth” certifying upon her “honor that this is not a technical article.” She then proceeded to outline all the visits from neighbors that the installation provoked, with the result that by 8.30 that evening “a passerby would have thought the Bourkes were holding a mass meeting”:

When my husband came home to dinner I was waiting in my pink organdie and new white pumps. With my very own hands I coaxed from the rubber-bunioned, carbolic-scented mahogany box the facts that Liberty bonds were going strong, and that it would be cooler tomorrow with variable winds.

We did not Fletcherize [i.e. chew slowly and carefully] dinner that evening. We impatiently awaited the eight o’clock concert. It was not to be. The thoughtful little people who had paid [us a] noontime visit had a rather neat little broadcasting system of their own.
At five minutes to eight, the Jones and Smith families presented themselves in complete editions on our front porch. It was quite a coincidence that both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones had believed I might like a little fresh lettuce!

Their remembrances made me very happy, but piqued my curiosity, inasmuch as we have such a large lettuce bed ourselves. Ah! How young I was then!

Despite Bourke being proficient at tuning the set, one of the male neighbors continually questioned her abilities:

I’ve tried a million odd times to justify my manipulation of the set during atmospheric disturbances, and have spoken to him so learnedly about “static” that a college professor would hang his head in shame, but does this doubting Thomas believe? His eyes say what his lips yearn to: “You can’t fool me. You gotta bum set, and don’t know how to work it!” (109)

Bourke ended the article with a sign of things to come:

Do not, I pray you, labor under the delusion that only my evenings are devoted to Public Service. Far from it. In the morning, just about the time I am beginning to wonder how in the name of Heaven John can poke such big holes in his socks, the door-bell rings, and one of my fellow Household Slaves enters. The Jacksonville Bazoo has inaugurated a woman’s hour from nine to ten. Would I please etc? I accommodate, but the ether does not. She goes home possessed of two eggs, a cup of my butter, and the belief that I wouldn’t let her hear Jacksonville because I did not want to be bothered with her. (109)

This beautifully written story of the interplay of social practices and technology, of the intersections of home and public, provides an insight into the moment of radio’s domestication during the early 1920s. The process of incorporating radio as a technology and a set of new practices of the circulation of information within the home as a social space was bound up with shifts in gender roles in profound and unpredictable ways. While the “radio-phone” that Bourke receives as her birthday gift is assumed to be a “masculine” technology, her adeptness at “switch[ing] the kazazzies around [to] produce entertainment” (108), as one of her husband’s friends from the “Elks club” describes it, produces a different, more open-ended construction of the medium.

Bourke would go on to have a career as a night-rounds police reporter on the Chicago Tribune during the 1920s and early 1930s. In 1930 she became known by her call sign W9DXX and thus described in ham radio speak as a “YL [i.e. female, from the morse-code friendly initials for ‘Young Lady’] 2-meter operator in the Illinois area” (Woodruff 1951: 4). After she resigned from the Tribune
around 1933 to take care of her husband during an extended illness ("How a YL Police Reporter Works" 1934), she became more active in ham radio and during the Second World War was trained in cryptography, becoming the only female radio operator in the US Army Reserve (Bien 1941; "Built by Amateur Radio Operator" 1940). While these new roles were yet to come, in 1922, when Bourke wrote about the interest that radio sparked with her neighbors, she was already implicated in the new intimate geographies of everyday life that domestic radio reception afforded. In the early 1920s, firm boundaries between collectively consumed publicly circulating information and the privacy of the modern home were changing, as Bourke so comically describes of her new radio-inflected household's routines.

The domestication of radio in this period challenged existing understandings of the home as self-enclosed space, and by extension, women's role as self-evidently situated within it. Bourke herself was markedly enthusiastic about the new medium, against its disruptive effects on her family's domestic routines and the interruptions that her neighbors make on her and her husband's time for listening. Contra the discourses that heralded a pre-given, non-technical role for women within the home's incorporation of radio, Bourke, like many other women of the time, was actually an active agent in radio's domestication. Describing the pre-radio era of her life, she harks back to traditional gender values during that "happy period when we had a Home, and when the only tobacco ashes I was obliged to sweep from the roof of the piano belonged to the Boss." But in the next breath subverts these values in a parenthetical aside:

(I put that last line in because he may see this article some time. Of course I am the boss, but it shows a nice disposition on my part, and incidentally it is handy in many ways to let him think he is the Great Voice around this radio-devastated remainder of What Was.)

Writing at the cusp of the transformation of radio into a fixture within the modern home, Bourke was far from a passive recipient of radio as a technology and medium of public information. She was proud of her ability to use her hands and ears to "coax" signals from the "mahogany box."

The article ends with the visit of a "fellow Household Slave" in the shape of her neighbor, which heralds the arrival of more than an unwanted daytime visitor. This liminal stage of the first encounters with radio—when the nature of radio's connection to everyday life was still being negotiated and women were not yet clearly marked out as an audience—was coming to an end.
Gendered programming was about to actualize a new mediated space-time of individualized domestic reception. This form of reception was achieved by recuperating traditional gender roles from print media: parodied by Bourke in her neighbor’s interest in the *Jacksonville Bazoo*’s initiation of a “woman’s hour.”

**Making time for women**

The “woman’s hour” appeared in programming schedules as soon as radio became a broadcast medium and part of an industrial system. The use of radio for civilian purposes had been limited by national governments during the First World War (Baudino and Kittross 2015: 48), and up until the 1920s radio had mainly been a point-to-point form of communication between individual low-powered amateur radio operators (Johnson 1988: 12). The early 1920s is a key point in radio history, when regular programs began to be broadcast from a central point and could be heard on “receivers” (unlike ham radio, designed to be one way and unable to transmit) produced on a mass scale.¹

In the United States, the University of Wisconsin station WHA, whose license held had been converted from “experimental” to “educational” by the US Commerce Department in early 1922, may have been responsible for the first women’s program. WHA’s schedule included midday and evening educational broadcasts for “homemakers,” including an evening lecture by Miss A.L. Marlatt on “The Profession of Homemaking” in early June 1922 (Davidson 2006: 251, 373). The earliest mention of a women’s program in the pages of the US *Radio Digest* was in November 1923 when KGW, a commercial station based in Portland, Oregon, broadcast a woman’s program. Owned by the publisher of *The Oregonian* newspaper, its slogan using its call-sign initials to spell out “Keep Growing Wiser,” KGW carried a woman’s program every day from 3.30 to 4 p.m. except for Sunday. The program was KGW’s only daytime programming, apart from “weather” at 11.30 a.m., and was followed by a break in transmission until “markets, weather” at 7 p.m. (“Radio Broadcasting Stations” 1923). WHA’s sister station, KSAC, broadcasting under the Kansas State Agricultural College’s noncommercial “educational” license, started its *Housewives’ Half Hour* in February 1925 (Slotten 2009: 45). The same month, KOA, a commercial station owned by General Electric and based in Denver, Colorado, began broadcasting a “matinee for housewives” every weekday. In October, *Radio Digest*’s listings showed after more than three hours of “Rialto theater musicale,” the half-hour “matinee for housewives” was
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broadcast at 3.30 p.m., followed by “fashion” at 4 p.m. and “Herbert White and his Silver State Orchestra” at 6.30 p.m. (“Advance Programs for the Week” 1925).

Many early women’s programs in the United States were linked to the growing interest in radio from the advertising profession as a means to reach women as consumers (Wang 2006: 78–79). As Susan Smuylan has documented, Anna J. Peterson, “our radio mother,” broadcast menus and recipes for the People’s Gas Light and Coke Company on Chicago’s KYW in 1925 (Smuylan 1993: 305). From 1926, WHA broadcast the Homemakers Hour six mornings a week, through its title and timing effectively “denying the fact that many female farmers worked alongside men in physically demanding settings outside the farmhouse” (Valliant 2002: 80). By 1928, the program was WHA’s most popular broadcast and held its own against similar commercial programs such as NBC’s Women’s Magazine of the Air and CBS’s Radio Homemaker’s Club, the former initiated in the spring and the latter in the autumn of that year (Hilmes 1997: 149; Valliant 2002: 81).

The first programming for women on a nationally funded public service broadcaster began in the UK on May 2, 1923, the day after the opening of the BBC’s Savoy Hill studio that had included “Lord Birkenhead … inaugurating the 10 pm Men’s Hour, which had only a short life” (“Women’s and Household Talks” n.d. 1936–1938: 1). At 5 p.m. on May 2, HRH Princess Alice, Duchess of Athlon, delivered the BBC’s first afternoon talk for women, speaking on the “Adoption of Babies” and Lady Duff Gordon followed on “Fashions” (“Women’s and Household Talks” n.d. 1936–1938; see also Murphy 2014: 31). Later that year the first edition of “the official organ of the BBC,” the Radio Times, advertised that Women’s Hour from 2LO London on 1 October would comprise of “Ariel’s Society Gossip” and “Mrs C.S. Peel’s Kitchen Conversation,” also at 5 p.m. (“Women’s Hour” 1923).

In Australia, the 1929 “wireless programmes” listing in Melbourne’s Weekly Times advertised the Hattie Knight Talk on the commercial Australian Broadcasting Company station 3LO from 2.24 to 2.40 p.m. (“This Week’s Wireless Programmes” 1929), and Knight had a regular weekly afternoon talk one day a week during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Together with women’s sports enthusiast and physical education teacher Gwen Varley, Knight was also instrumental in organizing the Australian Broadcasting Company’s “Women’s Association” that first appeared on the Company’s stations in May 1929 (“Broadcasting Today” 1929) and continued on the Commission station for another six months until late 1932 (“Broadcasting Programmes for the Week” 1932). Originally founded
by Varley in 1928 as the 2BL Women’s Amateur Sports Association, the ABC Women’s Association programs mixed domestic instruction with reports on much more popular sports and social activities such as golf and tennis competitions and “motor picnics,” all coordinated via radio (Consandine 2006). After July 1932, when the Federal Government took over the Company stations and the Australian Broadcasting Company became the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), the Women’s Association broadcasts continued on Melbourne’s 3LO until November (“Broadcasting Stations: ‘A’ Class Stations” 1932), when they were replaced by various personality-based programs such as “A Chat with Jane” in April 1933 (“Broadcasting Programmes” 1933). Varley also moved to the local Sydney ABC station, 2FC, where from May 1933 until the mid-1930s she hosted sports and health broadcasts aimed at women (“Radio Session Had 14,000 Members” 1953). During 1934 Women’s Sessions reappeared on 3LO, and Hattie Knight continued to broadcast within them, with a regular talk entitled “Sidelights,” presumably a theater segment (“Listening In” 1934). By 1939 the Women’s Session on 2BL was fixed in the ABC’s national morning timetable, promoted for the new season in August of that year as around “a 40-minutes morning-tea ‘spread’ entirely for lady listeners” from 10.20 to 11 a.m.: “On Monday and Wednesday it is conducted by ‘Jane’ who is Mrs. Reg. Wykeham; on Tuesday it is in the hands of Noelle Brennan; and on Thursday of W. Burston,” W. Burston being music educator and concert pianist Winifred Burston, who by 1940 was given the whole of the Thursday edition for a “musical session” (“Highlights of the ABC: Morning Women’s Session” 1940).

The first women’s program in Canada appeared in 1935 with a Montreal-based production for women. Promoted by the national public broadcaster, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation’s (CRBC) Department of Public Relations described “For You, Madame” as a half-hour feature (“‘For You, Madame’ … ” 1935). During October 1935 CBRC’s program department was “busily putting the final touches” to the program and it was broadcast at 9 a.m. October 17 on the CRBC national network. Records of the program do not say whether the broadcast was in English or French, despite its use of “Madame” in the title. It started with “a sketch prepared by Miss Barre, in the nature of a Cavalcade of Womanhood, a tribute to their courage and achievement since the beginning of recorded time,” thereby addressing Canadian women within a unified national category across linguistic and geographic divides. A “brief message to the women of Canada” from Canada’s only woman Senator Mrs Cairine Wilson as part of the programme was also “eagerly anticipated.” These kinds of programs
came and went during the 1920s and early 1930s and were usually designed as one-off “talks” and “features.” When Elizabeth Long, whose work on the CBC is discussed in Chapter 4, joined the broadcaster’s newly created Talks and Public Affairs Department as assistant supervisor of *Women’s Interests* in 1938, the CBC “had only two programs directed to women listeners—‘The History of Dress’ and ‘Touring English Cathedrals’” (Taylor 1985: 64).

By the mid-1930s, formulated as daily programs, talks for women represented a new settling of the possibilities of radio into a structured set of expectations and programming policies. The BBC took up this approach early on when Mrs Ella Fitzgerald was appointed on April 5, 1923, as “Central Organiser, to undertake the provision of material for the *Children’s Hour* and to organise the *Women’s Hour* when it began.” The Women’s National Advisory Committee that she had set up in January 1924, however, advised at its second meeting that the “term *Women’s Hour* be abolished, although the talks given should deal mainly with topics which would particularly interest women” (“Women’s and Household Talks” n.d. 1936–1938: 1; see also Forster 2015: 180–181). So from March 1924, therefore, the “Women’s Hour” title was dropped, and the two 5 p.m. talks were incorporated into the afternoon concert, from 4 to 4.30 p.m. These talks were the template for later, more regular and enduring, incarnations of women’s programming on the BBC, and, as later chapters will show, the CBC and ABC also followed this model of factual spoken word programs for women.

Why this format was so favored raises other questions about the domestication of social power in the form of expert knowledge about the proper conduct of everyday life in modernity. Women’s programming as a series of talks by knowledgeable people on disparate topics linked together only by their general interest to women as the bearers of the responsibility for the modern home seems to have been such a “taken-for-granted” situation that very little comment is made on the suitability of this format in the production and listener research documents housed in written archives. Certainly a decisive factor would have been the relatively low cost and efficiency of production (see Chapter 5 for discussion of the “magazine” format at the postwar BBC), another was the paternalistic assumptions of public service programming in general, which aimed for cultural and moral instruction, especially in the Reithian dictum as it was taken up at the BBC and ABC. Yet another impetus was a form of market differentiation, in that commercial stations in Australia and Canada carried more radio plays and serials than radio talks (as discussed in the next chapter in the Australian case). Appearing at the intersection of these factors,
service talk format was a cornerstone of women's programming in public service broadcasting from the 1930s onwards, and many thousands of hours of such talks were produced within and across all three broadcasters.

Apart from these instructive and didactic modes of address, women's programming was differentiated from entertainment and news along another key dimension of radio's interweaving with everyday life: time. The scheduling and formats of programs from the 1930s onwards coalesced to code the "public" flow of time in the evenings as masculine. The women's programs examined in this book were all broadcast during weekday mornings or afternoons or at the latest, in the CBC's case, the early evening. Hilmes has identified a shift to ideas of broadcasting time as gendered in the early 1930s, observing of US commercial programming that "only after 1933 does a firm distinction between day and nighttime programming take hold; for example, until the middle 1930s, several women's serial drama shows aired in the evenings" (Hilmes 1999: 26). The period of the 1920s then was one of flux in categories of gendered radio time and space, as mediated everyday life took shape. Exploring these new formations of gender, time, and space and how they were settled into the cultural form of women's programming is the task of this book. A brief survey of recent radio historiography in the following section will help explain the gendered nature of this historical convergence of intimacy and publicity.

Writing radio histories

A set of important works have revisited the debates around the introduction of radio into the home and the particular stakes that women had in negotiating its arrival. Johnson's groundbreaking work on women and Australian radio has shown how commercial stations in Australia recognized "the housewife as a specific object of interest" (Johnson 1981: 169) for advertisers who wished to place radio programming in the background of domestic work and, further, how the informality of radio presentation style was the "result of a long period of development partially characterised by a struggle between the Australian Broadcasting Commission and its commercial rivals to capture the interest of the steadily growing radio audiences" from 1923 onwards (Johnson 1983: 43). In 1988 Johnson published her important book *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio*, which described the rise of the intimate, informal radio voice and the way that broadcasters developed techniques to produce
this voice at the same time as listeners learnt “how to be listeners” (Johnson 1988: 70). Gill’s PhD thesis *Ideology and Popular Radio: A Discourse Analytic Examination of Disc Jockeys’ Talk* built on Johnson’s work to look at how the feminization of the radio audience and the integration of radio into the pattern of women’s domestic lives were central to the capture of time and space in the home (Gill 1991: 133). By the mid-1990s, the contours of a new body of sociological work on women’s relationship to radio were emerging, with Leman’s book chapter on class and gender in BBC wartime programming for women (1996), based on her 1983 MPhil thesis at the University of Kent, and in the same year, Lacey’s magisterial *Feminine Frequencies* (1996). In the following decade, other work such as MacLennan’s analyses of Canadian radio has shown how broadcast schedules of the 1930s attempted to interface with and shape listener habits (2001, 2008, 2013). Recent work incorporating sound studies approaches with radio histories of political cultures, such as Birdsall’s *Nazi Soundscapes* (2012) and Razlogova’s *The Listener’s Voice*, has been groundbreaking for the ways in which it has shown that listeners actively negotiated “forms of sound perception and social order” (Razlogova 2011: 5). Wijfjes (2015), Valliant (2013), and Scales (2016) have investigated national and transnational histories of broadcasting that tell us much about the politics of radio in the twentieth century and the problematic of maintaining public-private divides in such technological complexity. Hayes (2012) and Robertson (2013) have shown how racial and gender categories have intersected, and been kept apart, in US radio serials and the BBC’s “Empire Service,” respectively. While radio offered new connections between the temporality of the home and expanded the scope of the public sphere, this work reminds us that new media are not always opened equally to new subjects and new ways of speaking, and power relations frame all technological change.

The (gendered) democratization of everyday life

As Kate Lacey has written, the promise of radio in Weimar Germany was coincidental with an opening up of the public sphere to new groups, including women, and creating a new sense of time and space for the home within broadcast networks (Lacey 1996: 17–55). Whether radio was seen as site for a new set of women’s agencies within modern life or as threat to the stability of the home depended on ideological battles over to what extent the new medium
would and could either overturn or reinforce “the public-private divide in female experience” (Lacey 1996: 38–39). As Moores has argued, a set of “wider social transformations put the mother at the centre of the privatized family” while the discourse of radio sought to “re-position … [her] at the centre of the broadcasting audience” (1988: 34). Radio became both a conservative touchstone and a sign of a radical moment in the 1930s, as the medium was brought from the gendered space of the amateur experimenter’s “radio shack” and into the family living room (Haring 2003, 2008).

Paddy Scannell’s phenomenological work on broadcasting’s transformation of speech and hearing explains that by their openness to a diverse set of social actors, radio and television have brought about new public textures of listening and speaking (1979, 1995, 1996). Scannell (1979), together with Cardiff (1980), has identified very clearly how radio in the 1930s changed notions of issues of public relevance. Which topics could be talked about and how they were to be discussed were recast when radio configured new subjects for discussion across classed and gendered boundaries in the first few decades of radio (1979). Scannell also focuses on new formations of public and private in what he terms “the democratization of everyday” life (1989: 136). Interestingly, to illustrate this process he draws on an example of a woman talking in 1934, while her husband was out of work during the Depression, on the BBC National program’s *Time to Spare* about her attitude toward pregnancy and the lack of availability of birth control (Scannell 1980: 19–21). Scannell gives a lengthy quote from a talk in this series by Mrs Pallis, the wife of an unemployed ship’s riveter. Mrs Pallis’s fifteen-minute unscripted and unedited talk as part of this series was reprinted on the front page of the BBC magazine *The Listener*.

Scannell highlights to what extent inviting working-class people to speak about their life experiences extended “radio’s social range” (1980: 24):

Nothing is more interesting, and nothing more elusive, than the domain of the “merely talkable about” and its historical development in broadcasting. When it started up in the 1920s, there was so much that could not be talked about in public, or at least not in front of women, children and servants. In a class-divided society like Britain one of the things that had, in the novel context of mass democracy, to be claimed and asserted, was the entitlement of all to have opinions, to have them heard and to hear those of others. Here is a woman from Sunderland, whose husband is out of work, talking on radio in 1934 of her feelings when she finds she is pregnant again: “I know I’ve cried when I knew I had to have another baby, not for myself, but for what they have to be brought
into—no work, no means, no jobs for them. But it means expense to avoid them. I know all about the avoidance part, but I haven’t the means to carry it out. It costs money … I think we ought to have information from somewhere given to us. It’s ignorance on some people’s part; or, for people like myself who know, we haven’t got the money.” (The Listener, May 16, 1934: 812 quoted in Scannell 1989: 144, emphasis mine)

In the magazine, Pallis’s talk, transcribed from her radio broadcast, is followed, as it was on the air, by a brief postscript given by “A Doctor,” whom Scannell describes as a “suitably official person [employed] to point out the moral of [the speaker’s] tale” (Scannell 1980: 20). Eventually, and despite the clear public relevance of this testimony, this first-person narrative of a woman speaking about reproductive rights, as well as other testimonials in this series, resulted in debates in parliament on the availability of birth control advice and the family’s access to other forms of support, as well as listener complaints, and finally extensive political pressure on the BBC to halt the broadcasts (Scannell 1980: 22). Some thirty years before the cultural form of second-wave feminist programming existed, the representation of personal experience in a public medium was a contentious issue.

David Cardiff’s early and important work on the cultural form of the BBC radio talk, developed together with Scannell, invites us to consider the role of the women who worked in radio in understanding these new possibilities of the medium. Cardiff argues that “in encouraging listeners to become ‘citizens of the world,’” BBC’s first director of talks Hilda Matheson (see also Murphy 2014: 35) “fostered the art of the spoken word as a means of domesticating the public utterance, as an attempt to soften and naturalise the intrusion of national figures into the fireside world of the family” (Cardiff 1980: 31). This potential is highlighted in Matheson’s own words, reflecting on the oral bias of the medium of radio, that “broadcasting is clearly rediscovering the spoken language, the impermanent but living tongue, as distinct from the permanent but silent print” (Matheson quoted in Cardiff 1980: 31). Elizabeth Long, CBC’s supervisor of Women’s Interests from 1938 until the 1950s and appointed to the role because of her experience as a newspaper women’s editor, attributes the discovery of the central importance of voice and address in forming the sound and style of women’s programming to an incident in late 1938, when, after formal testing of their microphone manner, two future CBC women’s talks presenters, Mattie Rotenberg and Margaret MacKenzie, believing that the audition was over, interviewed each other about their families:
We were all fascinated. The women had suddenly come to life. Their voices, their language had changed. Somehow any two women meeting on any remote jungle path, or on a frozen Arctic shore might pause to exchange the same information in that same warm voice … I never knew whether Donald Buchanan [CBC's Supervisor of Public Affairs Programming] scheduled the two speakers in his political forum, but that day I learned that woman-to-woman language was wanted for women's radio programs. (Long quoted in Graham 2014: 150)

It was this rediscovery of the power of the ordinary and of orality that was to energize women’s programming and its relationship with its audience, as later chapters will show.

Yet the assumption of what women were interested in and how the programs should convey content often placed the institution and individual programmers at odds, particularly at the more conservative ABC. Catherine King, the popular host of the ABC Perth's Women's Session from 1944 until 1976, as part of an fiftieth anniversary program for the station in 1982 told a story on air of how she evaded the more stringent edicts about what could be discussed on her program. ABC Headquarters in Sydney was more able to control content on stations in other capital cities such as Melbourne and Brisbane, which fell within the same time zone, but ABC Perth, two hours behind the Eastern states and several days away by rail, was less easily brought into the fold. Unlike the east coast version of the program, which King characterized as “supposed to be on lovely topics like ‘how to breastfeed’ and suitable topics for women like ‘dresses’ and ‘cooking,’” her program followed in the tradition established by figures such as Irene Greenwood in the late 1930s and early 1940s (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) to ensure the public relevance of the Session. King strongly resisted such domestic fare and made clear to the station as a whole and her audience that she had a very different vision for the program (Lewis 1979). King explains to the interviewer how she negotiated attempts to limit her program to a narrowly defined set of “women’s interests,” with the cooperation of her station manager, Conrad Charlton:4

I remember a disc that came from Sydney, “How to Make the Better Biscuit.” Well, I didn't care about making my biscuits better, and also how to make a little suit out of your husband’s shirt-tails. In fact they sent those over from Sydney and I was supposed to use them. And I took them into Mr Charlton and said “If Sydney wants me to do this, I don't want to be associated with it, but you can put them on two days and I’ll do the other three days, because I won't have a bar of this in the Women's Session.”
So he said … “Give me the memo,” and the memo said three days [of the daily session per week] is ample for Mrs King to arrange.

I said “What will you do with it?” and he said “Put it in the urgent basket.”

Then … I said “What will you do with the discs?” and he said “I’ll break them.”

And that was the end of any suggestion … that was just so utterly against the conceptions I had. (King 1982)

This account of a collaboration between a woman producer and host and her station manager to resist centralized control of her program signals the extent of the reach of the ABC’s gender ideology, but not total acquiescence. King’s program philosophy in the mid-1940s reconfigured taken-for-granted divisions between public and private, as well as what could be considered a women’s issue. When asked in the same interview about problems she encountered, King reflected that “they finally defeated me over international news” (King 1982), referring to a battle she had with the ABC station manager who followed Charlton over the inclusion of international news within her program. The next chapter will explore why international content was so problematic for the ABC and the controversy surrounding one particular broadcaster, Irene Greenwood, who preceded King on the ABC’s Perth station.

Conclusion

Media studies and media histories in particular have described the changing modes of presentation on radio and their gendered histories and effectively questioned the valence of public-private divide (Badenoch 2005: 590–591; Loviglio 2005: xv; Smulyan 1993: 300). The gendering of the new medium of radio within existing notions of the home as the domain of national family was also given new meaning and import through the rhetorical expansion of family of empire (as seen in the Queen’s speech at the beginning of the last chapter). Thus, radio was able to engender a peculiar kind of intimacy. The medium, through its domestic reception and daytime address to women, neither “publicized” private space nor created new forms of publics, but shifted the relations between public, private, and intimate. The intimate and confessional mode of radio was on a continuum with the bourgeois public sphere that was connected by Habermas to the personalized, literate cultures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet, as the examples discussed in this chapter illustrate, radio for women within public service broadcasting became the site of a new, excessive imaginary of
gender, one in which women were not addressed as the privatized, excluded other of the terms “bourgeois” and “hommes” but were now indeterminately positioned as connected to other places in a simultaneously intimate and public space: the broadcast relation of listener, institution, and host. The broadcast (and now networked) public sphere is increasingly accessible and personalized and thus takes on the “traits of a secondary realm of intimacy” (Calhoun 1992: 24; Habermas 1989: 172), yet as long and continued feminist work has shown, the “personal” is not necessarily equivalent to the private, and this disjuncture is a powerful political space from which coalitions and solidarities can emerge and also intervene.