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All the girls in town:

The missing women of Australian rock, cultural memory and coverage of the death of Chrissy Amphlett[1]

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Abstract

This article will use the cultural and media materials produced around the death of Chrissy Amphlett as a way of interrogating the fact that surprisingly few resources exist that document or commemorate the contribution of women to the rock music scene in Australia. As Amphlett is unusual in being a woman who has, even before her death, claimed a place in the Australian rock canon, examining materials that are designed to construct her legacy upon her passing will provide examples of how women in Australian rock are discussed. It will be demonstrated that Amphlett's gender is central to these discussions, and that she is used to both obscure the contributions of other women performers and to deny a need for women musicians to even be an object of discussion at all. These findings will be analysed using Aleida Assmann's concepts of functional and storage memory, and it will be argued that the lack of information that we have about past female rockers makes it harder for women in Australia to see this field as one they can participate in, and also makes the retention of memories about currently successful women musicians less likely.

Keywords: Australia; Chrissy Amphlett; cultural memory; gender

Rock music (particularly in the form of 'pub rock' embodied in bands such as AC/DC, Midnight Oil and Powderfinger) is often presented as a particularly 'Australian' form of music, one that has been used to signify certain aspects of Australian culture over the past forty years (Homan 2000). The very masculine nature of 'pub rock' and the lack of women in the ranks of its foremost historical figures suggest a

1. The author would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their feedback on this article, as well as Dr Ian Rogers who gave invaluable assistance in reviewing the existing literature on women in Australian music.

symbolic alignment between men and rock in the collective memory of Australian music. Examining how women are included or excluded from this area therefore has implications for understanding the cultural citizenship of Australian women, and for advancing knowledge on how cultural memory works. This article will use the specific cultural and media materials produced around the death of musician Chrissy Amphlett (1959–2013) as a way of interrogating the fact that surprisingly few resources exist that document or commemorate the contribution of women to the rock music scene in Australia.[2] Amphlett is an unusual case study because she claimed a place in the Australian rock canon even before her death. As such, examining materials that are designed to construct her legacy upon her passing will provide examples of how women in Australian rock are discussed. It will be demonstrated that Amphlett's gender is central to these discussions, and that she is used to both obscure the contributions of other women performers and to deny a need for women musicians to even be an object of discussion at all. These findings will be analysed using Aleida Assmann's (2011) concepts of functional and storage memory, and it will be argued that the lack of information that we have about past female rockers makes it harder for women in Australia to see this field as one they can participate in, and also makes the retention of memories about currently successful women musicians less likely. This leads to a situation where documenting information about these women should be an imperative for popular music scholars.

What do we know about women in Australian rock?

Examining the position of women in rock music is likely to lead to insights about equality between the sexes because of the way that different genres of music have been gendered. Pop music, for instance, is coded as feminine, and rock music as masculine. This then leads to not only a greater likelihood that men will perform rock and women pop, but different types of assessment of the music, with rock being seen as more serious and credible, and pop dismissed as disposable and not requiring talent (Cohen 1997; Leonard 2007). In this way, the gendering of music reinforces the wider social hierarchies between men and women. Interrogating whether and how women can be excluded from the areas of music coded as masculine—in this case rock—can lead to important insights about how gender functions more widely. If, in the following discussion, the line between 'rock' and other types of music blurs at times it is partly because of the difficulties in draw-

2. A comprehensive account of Amphlett's career and character is outside of the scope of this article. For readers interested in this area, I suggest her autobiography (Amphlett 2009) as an appropriate resource.

ing a perfect line between different genres of music and partly because, as will be demonstrated below, the lack of materials about women in rock in Australia is so limited that other related sources must be included as well to give as full a picture of the situation as possible.

The first thing that needs to be noted when thinking about women in Australian rock music, or of women in popular music in Australia more broadly, is that they have always been present and have always contributed to music-making in this country in a significant way. Dame Nellie Melba, although performing in a field (opera) outside the scope of that covered by this article, can be described as an Australian icon. In the 1970s, Helen Reddy's song 'I Am Woman' became an international anthem for the women's movement and continues to hold great significance for many Australian women today (Arrow 2007). Judith Durham and the Seekers also had success on the international stage, along with Olivia Newton John, Kylie Minogue and Tina Arena (although most of these performers would be classified as pop singers), and women also participate in music-making in huge numbers on a local and national scale.

Despite their presence, there are surprisingly few materials that document or examine the experiences or detail the contributions of this group of women, and far fewer again when the focus is on rock music. In terms of work produced for a general audience, there are many histories, memoirs and bibliographies about the Australian music scene, but women are marginalized in these—mostly playing the roles of wives and girlfriends—and in some cases are completely absent (for example, see Engleheart 2010; Eliezer 2007). Taken as a whole, these works present a picture of an overwhelmingly masculine field. The exceptions here are books on specific women—for example, an autobiography of Amphlett (2009)—but these are few in number. The limited work that does focus on women in Australian rock includes an episode of the 2003 ABC documentary series 'Love is in the Air', which looks at pop music (apparently this episode was included after the extremely male-centric nature of an earlier documentary series on Australian rock, 'Long Way to the Top', was noted), and a documentary and workbook produced for students by ex-Go Betweens drummer Lindy Morrison, both from over a decade ago.

More recently, there has been *Rock Chicks: Women in Australian Music*, an important exhibition based at the Melbourne Arts Centre, and associated book (Barrand 2010), which documented the participation of women in Australian rock music and made an initial foray into claiming space for women performers who have been given little space in conventional histories. This exhibition and book demonstrated clearly that women *have* been present (such as XL Capris, Nitocris, Sara McLeod, Suze DeMarchi, Adalita and so on), and active, in Australian music far beyond the standard four or five names that tend to be included in music his-

tories in a somewhat tokenistic manner. The work of Barrand and other researchers on the exhibition concentrated on a wide range of genres (not simply the rock music of the title) and brought together artefacts (including instruments and costumes) and documents that presented for the first time a picture of the rich contributions of women in this area. The struggles that many of these women have faced in being included, accepted and taken seriously in the industry were also foregrounded in sections of the exhibition.

In terms of work that has been done from an academic perspective, there is again very little material in existence. The various edited collections that have been produced on Australian music neglect gender as a significant or sustained category of analysis (see, for example, Homan and Mitchell 2008). The exception to this is Hayward's *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism* (1992), which includes a chapter that, while acknowledging the gender imbalance in Australian music scenes, concentrates on women as audience members rather than performers (Johnson 1992). There are a number of articles written on Kylie Minogue (for example, see Barron 2008; Bonner and McKay 2006; Chapman *et al.* 2005), many of which are simply about the impact that the breast cancer disclosure had on health outcomes for other women—that is, they are about her position as a celebrity and object of gossip rather than her music. Other scholarship has included certain groups of women who might be considered marginalized within Australian society for various reasons. For example, the participation of Indigenous women in music-making, including in popular forms of music such as hip-hop, has been well explored (for example, see Barney 2007; Gibson 1998), and work can also be found on migrant women and music (for example, see Harrison 2010). In a similar vein, Jon Stratton (2008) has written about Australian female artists Renee Geyer and Marcia Hines, and while gender is not ignored in his consideration of their careers, the main emphasis in his analysis is on racial aspects of their identity. Some work also exists on masculinity and its centrality to the construction of Australian rock (Young 2004). However, the participation of women who might be considered more 'mainstream', or how women participate in urban rock-based music-making (the most significant music sector in Australia), has been left mostly unexamined. This means we have very little sense of the extent to which women participate in rock scenes, either now or in the past, or the barriers or pathways that affect their ability to be a part of music-making in this area. There is some evidence, though, that suggests women are not as strongly represented as they could be. For example, in June 2011 over 80 per cent of the most-played songs on Australian radio were by male artists (AIR 2011) and in the same year only 20 per cent of the songwriters registered with the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA) were female (http://artfacts.australiacouncil.gov.au/).

This also needs to be considered in a context where studies undertaken in other Western countries have demonstrated that significant barriers have existed for women in three important areas. First, it has been found that their participation in the full range of music-making activities has been restricted. Participation in music-making is gendered from an early age, creating an ongoing difference in the participation rates of males and females, and the value accorded to music produced is also highly gendered (Bayton 1997). Studies have shown that the homosocial nature of local rock music scenes works to exclude women (Bayton 2006; Smith 2010), and women are still not as commercially successful as men in this area (Lafrance *et al.* 2011). Accounts from prominent female Australian musicians, where they discuss the barriers they have encountered in a male-dominated industry, show that such effects are at work in this country (Vincent 2013).

Second, women do not have access to equal and unbiased representation in music journalism, as there is a tendency in the music media for all female artists to be reduced to their gender, to be associated with denigrated forms of music such as 'pop' (Leonard 2007). More attention is paid to the appearance and 'sex appeal' of women performers while for men the focus is on their skills as musicians (Davies 2001; Hatton and Trautner 2011). While prominent music publications frequently announce the 'arrival' of women into rock music, they fail to maintain their coverage of women or include women in commemorative or retrospective coverage (Strong 2011). Finally, the musical legacy of women is not maintained in cultural history and collective memory. It is well-established that women's contributions to society, whether in creative fields or elsewhere, are not remembered or celebrated in the same ways that men's are. In rock music, women performers do not easily maintain a presence in historical accounts and the rock 'canon' (von Appen and Doehring 2006; Strong 2010). This has recently been demonstrated again in the Australian context, where a poll on the 'Greatest 100 songs of the last 20 years' held by national radio station triple j, which attracted almost a million votes, resulted in a list with only one Australian woman in it (Julia Stone) and a few others from other countries (Ford 2013).

Using cultural memory to understand popular culture

Having established that women are unlikely to be able to participate equally in rock music scenes in Australia, and that the contribution they have made in the past has not been well documented or analysed, I will turn to a consideration of theories of cultural memory as a way of interrogating this. Cultural memory involves the constitution and representation of the past in the present through the use of cultural items. These items include a wide variety of sources, from songs,

images, media reports, films and film clips, and everyday conversation, through to official characterizations of the nation documented in archives. Cultural memory is also produced through the 'collective cultural experiences' and practices associated with these (Bennett 2010: 247). The increasingly mediated nature of Western society has meant not only that the possibilities for storage, retrieval and engagement with the past have increased, but that new avenues open up for individuals and groups (from the local through to the national and trans-national level) to use the past to construct identities (van Dijck 2007). While some academics have argued that this increases people's abilities to create individualized lifestyles less influenced by constricting identity categories such as class, ethnicity and gender (Bennett 2010), other work has shown women being disadvantaged by the way the past is constructed and used (Hirsch and Smith 2002). The way we use the past leads to the inclusion or exclusion of songs by, images of, and discussions about, women musicians in a range of social interactions. This has consequences for women's ability to construct identities that give them access to the full range of benefits associated with popular music, and affects the chances that others will allow them access to such roles.

A specific way of thinking about the different ways that cultural memory can be constructed is found in the work of Aleida Assman (2011), who discusses the concepts of functional and storage memory. She defines these in the following ways:

> Storage memory contains what is unusable, obsolete, or dated; it has no vital ties to the present and no bearing on identity formation. We may also say that it holds in store a repertoire of missed opportunities, alternative options, and unused materials. Functional memory, on the other hand, consists of vital recollections that emerge from a process of selection, connection, and meaningful configuration... In functional memory, unstructured, unconnected fragments are invested with perspective and relevance; they enter into connections, configurations, compositions of *meaning*—a quality that is totally absent from storage memory (Assmann 2011: 127).

In other words, Assmann is making a distinction between knowledge that we have about the past that works to give meaning to our experiences in the present (functional memory), and that which does not (storage memory). These concepts give more scope for the malleability and fluidity of memory than many other approaches taken to memory, in that anything in the realm of 'storage' memory can potentially be reintegrated into functional memory. Indeed, some level of exchange between them is necessary in a society where change and creativity are possible. This is what can be seen occurring, for example, when groups or nations rediscover or reconnect with their 'roots' or heritage (imagined or otherwise).

Using these concepts to understand how women are constructed as being part of rock music-making in Australia is particularly useful because of the complex and rich connections between music and memory. We are currently witnessing a shift in the way popular music is regarded. It is increasingly recognized that popular music is an important marker of national and local identity, as well as helping to create and maintain individual and group identities over time (Connell and Gibson 2003). Popular music is being included in discourses on heritage, and used as shorthand to evoke a shared understanding of the past. This could be seen, for example, in the central place that popular music held in the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2012 Olympics in London.[3] This recognition is leading to greater institutionalization of popular music history (through museums, archives and the like) and the 'memory boom' in the cultural industries is also leading to the repackaging (and reselling) of the musical past (Roberts 2014). In other words, as popular music is being reconfigured as an important and legitimate way of invoking the past to create identity, debates about what music should be used in this context and to what end create opportunities for memories in 'storage' to become functional once again, and also for the repositories of storage memory to be increased and valued more.

These trends have created a moment where women can potentially be meaningfully written into the story of Australian popular music in a way that incorporates their past and present contributions and creates a framework that facilitates their ongoing—and equal—participation in this field. As Assmann (2011: 124) notes, all that is required is for a 'small segment' to be 'assembled and preserved in cultural archives, and it is possible for historical knowledge to reclaim some of these disembodied relics and abandoned materials and perhaps even reconnect them with the functional dimension of cultural memory'. This idea also makes the preservation of knowledge about women's participation in culture more urgent (and the dearth of work in this area in relation to Australian musicians to date more damning) as it presents the possibility of a meaningful reintegration of their contribution (although the strategies for actually doing this may not be entirely clear). For something to be reintegrated into functional memory, *something* must have been retained; if even the 'small segment' Assman refers to is missing then aspects of the past may be lost forever.

At the same time, we also need to maintain an awareness of the ways in which memory can be used to shore up social hierarchies. Assmann (2011: 128) argues

3. These ceremonies, while dominated by male artists, contained some women performers including the Spice Girls at the closing ceremony. The Sydney Olympics' opening ceremony in 2000 also included some women, and the star of the show was a young girl, Nikki Webster. In both examples, the women artists were known as 'pop' singers or performed pop-style songs or ballads.

that functional memory serves to legitimize official and political memory, to delegitimize 'any unofficial remembrance that might present itself as a critically subversive functional memory', and to create a sense of distinction, that is, to give the group to which it belongs a sense of how they differ from other groups. In saying this, she is touching on the way that there is never only one way of representing the past, and different groups within society will, presumably, have their own functional memories that will at times be at odds with official discourses. There is considerable work in memory studies on this notion of multiple memories and processes of contestation in relation to these (Cohen 2013), which this article will not be contributing to in depth. The discourses being analysed here are by no means the only way of constructing the memory of Chrissy Amphlett, but they occupy a privileged position in being disseminated through mass media and also in that they work within well-established narratives and rituals relating to death. In this way they will be treated as a form of functional memory that performs the three tasks outlined by Assmann in a way that will be unlikely to challenge social structures such as conventional gender roles or common-sense notions of 'Australianness'. If giving women greater prominence in cultural memory could be seen as a way of normalizing and increasing their participation in rock music, understanding how they are currently framed and how this might contribute to their exclusion is a fundamental starting point. So, having established the theoretical and contextual background, I will now turn to an examination of the materials relating to Amphlett's death.

Chrissy Amphlett, gender and rock

Chrissy Amphlett, lead singer of the commercially and critically successful band the Divinyls, died on April 21, 2013 from breast cancer, which was exacerbated by multiple sclerosis. She was fifty-three years old. Her death has resulted in the production of materials (for example, obituaries, online tributes) that speak to the questions asked in this article about the inclusion of women in the performance of rock music in Australia, and in the way it is captured in historical accounts and collective and cultural memory. The Divinyls first came to prominence in the early 1980s, with songs such as 'Boys in Town' and 'Pleasure and Pain' reaching high positions in the Australian music charts. Amphlett attracted attention for her aggressive on-stage performances. Her image was sexualized, but in a way that was not stereotypically feminine. Combined with her projected 'wild' behaviour and the hard style of music her band performed, this enabled a strong image that certainly stood in contrast to most successful female Australian musicians at the time. The Divinyls later achieved international success with the song 'I Touch Myself' in 1990, although at this point in the band's life Amphlett's

image was somewhat more in line with conventional 'sexy' performances. Given the controversial nature of the hit the band was still seen as pushing boundaries. The popularity of the Divinyls, the persistence of their best-known songs in Australian radio and music television playlists, and successful comeback tours in the late 2000s meant that Amphlett's death was covered extensively in the Australian media. This included commentary from many significant figures in Australian popular culture, with people such as Jimmy Barnes, Russell Crowe and venerated Australian pop music critic Molly Meldrum publically expressing sorrow at her passing. This was not limited to figures in entertainment. The then Prime Minister Julia Gillard described Amphlett's death as 'a really sad loss' on national television, while the Federal Arts Minister Tony Burke described her as 'one of the all-time greats of Australian live music' (*The Age* 2013).

Given what has been discussed above in terms of the lack of representation of women in Australian rock music, and the difficulties that women encounter in maintaining a presence in histories and collective memories of music, the fact that Amphlett's death was considered worthy of prominent reporting is itself noteworthy. Amphlett's claim to a legitimate place in the cultural memory of Australian rock was, however, already being firmly established before her death. The contribution of her band had already been acknowledged in a number of forums. For example, the Divinyls have been inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame (Amphlett is one of only ten women in a list of seventy-two artists in this Hall: see http://www.aria.com.au/pages/hall-of-fame.htm) and in early 2013, prior to her death, she was voted ninth in a list of Australia's best 100 singers, as determined in a poll of high-profile musicians (Adams 2013a). Three-quarters of those on the final list were men. In this way, Amphlett was already being granted space in some of the official and public repositories of cultural memory. This has continued since her death, with Melbourne City Council voting to name a laneway in the city after Amphlett after receiving a petition with over 7,000 signatures on it asking for this act of commemoration to take place (Strong 2014), and with 'I Touch Myself' being used, at Amphlett's request, as part of a breast cancer awareness campaign (http://itouchmyself.org/).

Amphlett's death received significant coverage in Australia, and to a lesser extent internationally. The materials being analysed here are drawn mainly from online editions of mainstream Australian news outlets, with some material from related blogs and 'memorial sites'. Some of these follow a more formal obituary type format, while others are news articles, often with embedded multi-media components (mainly Divinyls' music videos). The materials that are produced when someone dies do not, of course, simply revisit that person's achievements or life, but actively reconfigure their memory, usually in a manner that has political

connotations. Fowler (2004: 148), for instance, has noted that 'obituaries reveal and actively shape "how societies remember": indeed, in doing so, they parallel the school history textbook in shaping a whole generation's stock of knowledge'. Obituaries reflect the perspective of dominant groups in society and tend to present individualistic values as preferable (Fowler 2005).[4] Studies on obituaries have found that women are less likely to be the object of obituaries than men (Eid 2002; Fowler 2004), and when the death of female musicians is covered their gender often becomes the central feature around which what is written pivots (Hearsum 2015). The discussions around Amphlett's death in these materials reveal information about women in Australian rock music, mainly because so much of what was said about her after her passing focused in some way or another on the fact that she was a woman, and to a lesser extent that she was Australian. What we see emerging are examples of functional cultural memory and the way they help create and stabilize certain ways of thinking about national identity, and also the legitimizing role that they play.

What an examination of the materials around Amphlett reveals is that her gender is central to almost everything that is written about her. For example, news articles make claims like 'Chrissy Amphlett will remain forever etched in the collective memory of Australian music fans as our greatest female rock frontwoman' (McCabe 2013)—a particularly illustrative quote because of the way it manages to emphasize her gender *twice* in a completely redundant way. Claims that Amplett was the 'first', the 'greatest' and the 'most successful' rock frontwoman (or 'rock chick' [Adams 2013b] or 'rock goddess' [Sharp 2013]) are also prevalent.

This focus on Amphlett's gender is problematic in a number of ways, many of which connect back to the issues that researchers have noted in the manner journalists discuss female musicians (as mentioned above). Davies (2001) notes a number of strategies that journalists use to police women's participation in music-making, including focusing on their bodies and sexuality, treating women artists as though they are interchangeable, and denying women's authenticity as performers (an important quality that often makes the difference between music being taken seriously or being dismissed). All of these strategies can be seen emerging in the coverage of Amphlett's death. Amphlett's sexuality and body are central to descriptions of her. For example, McCabe describes the way 'She knew the power that schoolgirl tunic and an insolent pout would wield, adding further mystery by hiding her eyes behind a heavy fringe' (McCabe 2013). It is undeniable

4. It is worth noting that the more interactive obituaries become the more likely it is that other ways of thinking about the dead, or 'counter-memories' (Misztal 2003), will be presented in a way that could complicate the construction of meaning.

that Amphlett was well aware of the way sexuality can be used as a selling point for a band, and that she deliberately played on this as part of her image. However, references to her appearance are more prevalent than, or emphasized more than, descriptions of her musical ability or voice, when those are mentioned at all:

> Ms. Amphlett's singing voice—Jon Pareles of *The New York Times* called it 'one of the most distinctive voices in rock'—was only part of her appeal. She was also renowned for her raunchy, high-energy performances and her stage outfits, most famously a school uniform and fishnet stockings (*New York Times* 2013).

The 'schoolgirl outfit and fishnet stockings' combination mentioned here is presented as a central facet to her appeal in many articles. Even this, however, is not necessarily framed as a unique quality, and instead invites comparison to male performers; for example, Adams (2013b) claims that 'Inspired by Angus Young, Amphlett would prowl on stages dressed in a school uniform'. This type of comparison is also noted by Davies as a further way that women are reduced to their gender. In Amphlett's case, the nature of her illnesses that led to her death, often discussed in detail, also allow for more emphasis to be placed on her body than on her musical accomplishments.

In regards to authenticity, emphasis is placed on the positive personal qualities Amphlett possessed, the way her 'normalness' and 'niceness' offstage are in contrast to her on-stage performances. The description of this as a 'persona'— in combination with discussions of Amphlett's work in musicals, stage productions and the film *Monkey Grip* in 1982—serves to frame her more as an 'actor' than an 'artist'. Quotes from well-respected (male) players in the Australian music industry to this effect reinforce this impression:

> It was just odd to see Chrissy Amphlett from the Divinyls in my kitchen, making tea. Because she had that wild persona. I remember once I said to her 'Chrissy, you had this amazing persona with the Divinyls, you used to frighten the hell out of me. How can you go from that to playing Judy Garland in *The Boy From Oz*?' And she said 'They're the same character Molly' (Meldrum 2013).

> She knew what she was doing and she played it like all rock performers would do, with a certain theatricity [*sic*] (Glen A. Baker, quoted in *The Age* 2013).

In addition to this, a number of articles also note that some of the Divinyls' best known songs were not written by Amphlett (for example, see Stafford 2013). This way of framing Amphlett detracts from understandings of her as an autonomous, equal contributor to her band.

With regards to the way female performers are treated as a homogenous group, a number of articles such as 'From Adalita to Stonefield, Chrissy Amphlett's Influence Runs Deep' (*FasterLouder* 2013) invited comment from other Australian female performers on Amphlett's passing and credited her with being a role

model for them, regardless of the extent to which they could reasonably be seen as belonging to the same musical tradition. The Australian rock band Stonefield, for example, plays music and projects an image that is clearly strongly influenced by 1960s and 70s classic rock. The *FasterLouder* article, and others (such as Adams 2013b), also quote Kate Ceberano, a pop/soul/jazz singer and contemporary of Amphlett. While also probably being a reflection of the relatively small number of recognizable female artists to draw from for comment in Australia, referencing other female artists in this way groups a variety of diverse artists together because of their gender. The *FasterLouder* article also contains quotes from male artists but the majority of those quoted are female, and the title makes it clear that this is the emphasis of the article.

Furthermore, claims that Amphlett is the first Australian female rocker serve not only to reinforce the strangeness of her presence in the rock scene, but to erase the contributions of earlier female performers in the genre, relegating them to storage memory if not to being forgotten altogether. While the input of women into Australian popular music prior to the 1980s had mainly been in pop, folk and jazz, there were also bands such as Stiletto, XL Capris and Wendy and the Rockets that featured female members and played a harder style of music (Barrand 2010). Amphlett was not the first Australian woman to front a rock band, nor was she the first to have commercial and chart success. The claims that she was the first are worth unpacking in terms of what they do to the memory of those who came before her, and how this might also reinforce the idea of women in rock as a novelty. This has consequences in terms of the availability of storage memory, remembering that Assmann sees the existence of information about the past as being vital to potential changes in the future, even if currently it does not play an important role in people's identities. This is where the lack of academic and historical work on women in Australian rock becomes significant, as without such work shoring up the storage memory of other women who have contributed, claims about Amphlett being 'the first' could stand unchallenged. Amphlett's death could have been an opportunity to discuss the other female rockers who were her contemporaries, giving them an opportunity for incorporation into the functional memory of Australian rock on a wider scale, but this did not occur.

In a more general sense, what we see in the comments made about Amphlett's gender is a construction of gender inequality as being a thing of the past, when what we know about women in rock music in Australia suggests this is not the case. Statements such as 'Chrissy Amphlett blasted the door open for women who didn't want to be demure' (Stafford 2013) and 'With her force of character and vocal strength she paved the way for strong, sexy, outspoken women' (from an official statement by Amphlett's partner Charlie Drayton, quoted in many articles)

in news reports, coupled with online comments (taken from the *Herald Sun*'s tributes page at legacy.com) from fans such as:

> You gave young girls and women another option for their identities. You gave us permission to be strong, opinionated women when back in the 80s it wasn't always this way. Despite the pressures of an industry that requires women to conform to a stereo-type to succeed, you stayed true to yourself and managed to succeed (Michelle M., May 10, 2013).
>
> You were an inspiration Chrissy, in a time when women didn't necessarily have a 'voice', you taught us to be assertive and have our own strength. You will be sadly missed and never forgotten, especially here in Oz (Kerrie, May 12, 2013).

The above quotes present a picture of a problematic and sexist past that has been overcome and left behind, mainly due to the efforts of individuals such as Amphlett who pushed the boundaries in terms of what was acceptable. These ideas can also be connected to debates about post-feminism and the construction of the neoliberal subject (McRobbie 2009). The suggestion is that one woman has 'made it', proving it is possible for women to succeed, so if other women do not then their failure can be attributed to personal shortcomings and is the responsibility of the individual rather than anything systematic. Such thinking, combined with the way the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, which can de-emphasize the importance of 'old' identity markers such as gender, can make it very difficult to see where structural inequalities still exist, and again makes having a full understanding of what is happening in this area of pressing concern.

This can be seen playing out in the only mainstream media article about Amphlett's death that concentrated on the continued lack of women in Australian rock (Sams 2013). The author, Christine Sams, asked:

> Where are the feisty and compelling women fronting rock bands? The out-there performers who won't fit into a box but want to break out and create something of their own?... There's no doubt the talent is out there but why isn't it reaching the mainstream? We shouldn't have to scratch our heads thinking about who has made a local impact, let alone having international success to the level of Chrissy Amphlett.

Tellingly, though, the author of the piece above did not ask any questions about the structural factors that might be at work in keeping women out of the rock spotlight, but instead concluded that: 'Maybe more female performers need to dig deep themselves, challenge the norm, play with stereotypes and surprise the hell out of everyone.'

This places the onus onto individual women to make the difference, and as such we see that in the memorializing of Amphlett even voices that are asking questions about women's equality rather than using Amphlett to demonstrate it as a *fait accompli* can still be working to legitimize the status quo.

Conclusion

Analysing the materials created around the death of Chrissy Amphlett presents some examples of how cultural memory comes to take particular forms, and how functional memory performs the functions (legitimization, delegitimization and distinction) that Assmann attributes to it. The tributes and obituaries devoted to Amphlett perform legitimizing functions in that they speak to a unity of Australian culture with the claims they make about what is seen as valuable and worth remembering, and to the fulfilment of the promise of equality. A past where women were not able to participate in rock is seen to be erased by the incorporation of Amphlett into the canon of Australian rock. The grief displayed at her death and the way she is framed as having removed barriers for women legitimize the idea that Australia is a fair country, where discrimination does not occur on the basis of gender and anyone who is willing to do the right things will succeed. This also then becomes part of the Australian identity that these discourses play a part in forming (that is, it helps to create a sense of distinction). At the same time, however, the way she is discussed still emphasizes the strangeness of her gender and reinforces the tactics that have long been used in journalism to sideline women performers. In this way, questions that might be asked about whether and how women continue to be excluded from full participation in music-making are delegitimized. The idea that women might have a place in rock is further delegitimized by the use of Amphlett to erase the women that came before her. They become part of the 'missed opportunities [and] alternative options' that are held in storage memory (Assmann 2011).

The incorporation of Chrissy Amphlett into the Australian rock canon, and the admiration and respect that were apparent in the writing that marked her death, undoubtedly demonstrate a positive moment in the fight to see women achieve equal status in the field of popular culture. The emphasis that I have placed in this article on continuing inequalities should not undermine the contribution that she has made. Indeed, I hope it increases her contribution, as what has been said about her is so valuable as a way of helping us to think about what we do not know about other women in this area, and considering this may eventually lead to more pathways for women to take into music-making in the future.

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