'This Woman's Work':

Kate Bush, Female Fans and Practices of Distinction

by

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List of Song Titles (in Appendix F)

List of illustrations (in Appendix G)

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[1] Figures 1, 3, 6 and 7 were taken from the video collection *The Whole Story* (Bush, 1986). Figure 2 was taken from *Q Magazine* (Black, 1999). Figure 4 was taken from the live video *Live at Hammersmith Odeon* (Bush, 1994). Figures 5 and 9 were taken from http://www.gaffa.org. Figures 8 and 10 were taken from http://www.katebush.pvr.pl. Figure 11 was taken from the art work for *The Red Shoes* (Bush, 1993).

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Declaration

Parts of this thesis have been presented, at various stages, to the post-graduate research forum at the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender. I am grateful to all my colleagues in the centre for their comments and advice which were given in a very friendly and supportive environment.

Embryonic versions of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have been presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-West Graduate Music Consortium in Madison, Wisconsin, 7 – 8 April 2000; the Women's Studies conference at University College Northampton, 17 June 2000; and the IASPM-UK conference at the University of Surrey, 7 – 9 July 2000. I would like to thank all conference attendants for their comments and suggestions.

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Summary

'This Woman's Work':
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This thesis proposes a broader understanding of the nature of women's investments in popular music. Through a case-study of a group of mostly mature, middle class, white and heterosexual female fans for the British performer Kate Bush (1958 -) this thesis asks questions about the way in which gender, age, class, race/ethnicity and sexuality circulate within the field of popular music fandom, a field which has traditionally privileged masculinity and youth.

The research is based on the questionnaire responses of forty-five self-selected Kate Bush fans. Sixteen of these women also participated in an interview, either by email or face-to-face. Through its use of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, distinction and habitus, this thesis then explains how and why these women draw on Kate Bush to distinguish themselves as serious fans or 'connoisseurs'. Their responses are complemented by analyses of Kate Bush's work and persona that serve to highlight both the 'progressive' nature of her achievements and the ambiguities in her visual presentation.

Studies of popular music consumption have tended to emphasise the notion of resistance to dominant culture, often by young, working class men. This has obscured the investments more mature and middle class women might have in popular music. This thesis shows that these investments are, instead of wholly conservative as is usually implied, both resistant and reactionary. In a similar way, these investments do not necessarily lead to powerful positions for the women (for instance, in a domestic context), but they do empower them to deal with the demands of work and relationships.

The women's claims to distinction as serious music lovers are often made at the expense of other fans, especially young girls, and as such reinforce existing notions of the undiscriminating and 'eroticised' female fan. At the same time, however, their claims to distinction on account of their 'feminine cultural capital', enabled by Kate Bush's blend of a 'masculine' musical virtuosity and a 'feminine' address, partly challenges the male domination of the popular music field. Furthermore, the women's articulation of popular music and a mature sensibility challenges the medium's youth ethos and offers an understanding of the way in which popular music retains its value for listeners through the long term.

Introduction

'Strange Phenomena':

Women and Popular Music

> Women are going to be the new Elvises. That's the only place for rock 'n' roll to go. The only people who can express anything new in rock are girls, and gays. (Deborah Harry, 1981, quoted in Kohut and Kohut, 1994: 77)

> I know it's a sexist thing to say, but women aren't as good at making music as men—like they're not as good as men at football. A girl in a dress with a guitar looks weird. Like a dog riding a bicycle. Very odd. Hard to get past it. It's okay on the radio, because you can't see them. Chrissie Hynde is an exception. Very few of them are exceptions. And if they don't have a guitar, they become the dumb girl in front of the band. I'm not a great fan of girls in pop. (Julie Burchill, journalist, in response to a request to be interviewed for *Never Mind the Bollocks*, London, 2 May 1994, in Raphael, 1995: xi)

Women and popular music. Women in rock. Girls in pop. Regardless of the label, the juxtaposition of women and popular music is seldom taken for granted and needs commenting upon in a way that men's involvement in popular music does not. Women involved in popular music are often seen, in the words of Kate Bush's song, as 'strange phenomena' (Bolton, 1987: 48). Thus the responses above are not simply the idiosyncratic views of two famous women, but reflect views that have long been prevalent. Burchill's response, in particular, is typical in an industry that marginalises women, and where the meanings of both music and image have traditionally been defined by men. In contrast, Harry's response suggests that for rock 'n' roll to be innovative, it needs to move beyond those male-defined meanings, something which, with the influx of female performers into the music mainstream in recent years, may have come closer to realisation.

I have received similarly varied responses to my research topic, all of which aim to define what women in popular music are or should be. For example, in the spring and summer of 1996, just prior to starting the research—at that point still tentatively aimed at the analysis of women's song lyrics—friends and colleagues often responded with 'oh, like Alanis Morissette!' Morissette, who had just scored a big hit with her 'debut' single 'You Oughta Know' (off the album *Jagged Little Pill*),[1] seemed to epitomise for many the typical female performer. In particular, with the spiteful lyrics of 'You Oughta Know', she seemed to fit the emerging 'angry young female' mould. Later, the most usual response to my topic was 'the Spice Girls!' After their debut single 'Wannabe' topped the charts in July 1996, the (then) five young women soon became icons for countless (pre)teenage girls who bought not only their debut album *Spice* in millions, but also their particular brand of feminism in the form of 'girl power'.[2]

These examples show not only how rapidly new performers follow one another, but also suggest something about how they (and by extension their fans) are valued. Although both Morissette and the Spice Girls conform to gender expectations by being vocalists—a conventional role for women in (popular) music—Morissette was generally seen as a more 'serious' artist while the Spice Girls were greeted with derision. This was due, in large part, to the genre in which each of these performers

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[1] Morissette had been a child and teen star in her native Canada. *Jagged Little Pill*, officially her third album release, was a marked departure from her earlier 'middle of the road' style. Morissette received four Grammy Awards that year, including those for best album and best rock song.

works and the audience their work is aimed at; while Morissette's work seems to fit a more 'masculine' rock idiom, the Spice Girls' pop is aimed at a predominantly female teen and pre-teen market.

These initial responses to my research topic also tie in with the status of popular music studies—still a relatively new discipline or 'interdiscipline'—both within and outside the academy. As many people feel both knowledgeable about popular music and comfortable talking about it, they are often quick to judge it an 'easy' and not sufficiently 'serious' subject for academic study; hence the sniggers about 'Spice Girl Studies'. My shift of focus onto a case study of Kate Bush and her female fans did little to alter this response. This thesis, then, is a contribution to the growing literature of academic popular music studies that has begun to challenge such attitudes.

My own investment in popular music has played an important part in the conception and development of this project. Ever since my teens and now in my twenties I have thought of myself as a music lover, even though I have never worn my allegiances on my sleeve by wearing the band T-shirts or being a member of a highly visible subculture. Both as a teenager and now as a more mature woman I have been a relatively 'invisible' and 'quiet' fan. Judging by the existing literature on popular music consumption, with its characteristic privileging of the spectacular and male youth, however, my own practices and participation in music culture would probably be considered irrelevant. Yet, I feel that this cannot be reconciled with the fact that I

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[2] The debut album sold more than 18 million copies world-wide. See J. Davies (1999) for an appraisal of their impact on young girls.

strongly believe that popular music has played a fundamental role in my life. My investments in and experience of popular music, then, clearly contradict some of the main preoccupations of and assumptions underpinning popular music studies.

My consumption of *Q Magazine* is illustrative in this respect and serves to highlight a paradox at the heart of the music industry. When, as part of this project, I requested information about its readership from its publisher, I was not surprised to discover that the magazine is targeted at men. However, what did surprise me was that in spite of this the magazine has a not inconsiderable 25% female readership (*Q Magazine*, 1998). It struck me as odd that a marketing department would ignore such a percentage and I wondered if this percentage of female readers would be higher if women were especially targeted as readers. As for myself, I have never felt excluded as a reader, save for the occasional sexist advertisement for hi-fi equipment. I strongly feel that the news, reviews and interviews are relevant to me and I suspect that the estimated 25%, too, feel that *Q Magazine* speaks to them.

However, if women were specifically addressed as *women* this would again suggest that women's investment in popular music requires explicit comment in the way that men's does not, just as it would draw attention to the (mostly negative) connotations of female fandom. As such, it is possible that women readers are happy to overlook the magazine's male address, or indeed might want to be counted in as 'one of the boys'. As I show in more detail later in this Introduction, this paradox lies at the heart of feminist work on 'women-in-rock'.

Partly in response to the reactions to my initial research plan and their underlying assumptions about female music consumers, as well as the literature in the fields of popular music and media studies, I shifted my focus from song lyrics to a case study of Kate Bush and her female fans. The choice of Kate Bush was partly inspired by my own interest in the artist. However, more importantly, Kate Bush is interesting, from a feminist perspective, because her achievements stand out in an industry which has traditionally been male-dominated. Kate Bush (1958 -) has been a commercially and critically successful performer since the late 1970s and has challenged certain stereotypical conceptions of the female performer. She has done so by writing and often producing her own material (which suggests she has a large measure of control over her work) and by presenting a complex performance of femininity that combines a musical virtuosity with an image that ranges from the hyper-feminine to the more androgynous. In fact, through her work and persona Kate Bush can be seen to negotiate the paradox of wanting to be 'one of the boys' and wanting to be recognised as a specifically female musician. She can be located within a (white) pop/rock mainstream where female virtuosity is rarely acknowledged, where 'youth' is often a requisite, and where commercial stakes are high.[3]

My choice of Kate Bush—who has not released any new CDs since *The Red Shoes* in 1993 (and is therefore unlikely to have picked up any new (younger) fans in recent years) and who has not toured since 1979—allowed me to look at a group of fans who are forced to find alternative means to celebrate their fandom and who do not fit

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[3] It is important to keep in mind that gender, as well as race, circulates differently in different popular music genres. A focus on country music or r 'n' b would, no doubt, have yielded different findings.

the mould of the traditionally young (teenage) fan. This defamiliarises the highly visible fan practices that are usually studied and opens up the field for new questions. For instance, it allowed me to examine, amongst other issues, how older age interacts with gender when women invest in a performer. Other artists, such as Madonna or the Spice Girls, would have allowed me to explore different and equally interesting issues.[4] However, Kate Bush's complex femininity and the fact that relatively mature women have not featured much in popular music research render this group of fans particularly significant as objects of research.

I. Thesis Statement

This thesis looks at female fandom through a case study of a group of 'mature' female Kate Bush fans. This is not a study of Kate Bush, nor does the study aim to make universal claims about female fans based on the particularities of women's responses to Kate Bush. Rather, this case study is used to ask questions about the way in which gender, age and class structure the field of popular music fandom; to a somewhat lesser extent it will also consider the further complexities of sexuality and race/ethnicity. How are women positioned as consumers in the music industry? How do they negotiate this position? Within this context, how do my respondents read Kate Bush and her work? Why do they, as mature women, continue to have a strong

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[4] See, for example, the work that has been done on Madonna. Both Schwichtenberg (1993) and hooks (1992) consider issues of race, while Bradby (1994) looks at the way in which young girls negotiate discourses of femininity through Madonna. A focus on the Spice Girls would have enabled me to

investment in her? How are investments in popular music carried through into adult life and how should such investments be read? Does the lack of any visible markers of fandom correlate to the intensity of the investment? These are some of the questions that this thesis hopes to answer.

There are many possible avenues into a study of women's investments in popular music. Whereas feminist audience research has not studied women's investment in popular music in any great detail (unlike, for instance, its considerable attention to soap opera), studies of female fandom have often been text-based and/or have focused predominantly on young girls. Subcultural theory, on the other hand, has looked in detail at the way in which the use of popular music and the display of style are embedded in everyday life, but has done so within fairly narrow boundaries drawn around masculinity, working class, youth and specific geographical location. My project is located across these approaches, drawing on and critically reassessing each of them in a study of fans who have been relatively neglected in all of them. I have found that Pierre Bourdieu's work on taste provides particularly useful tools through which to consider the women's practices. Through its use of Bourdieu's concepts of distinction and cultural capital, this thesis suggests that these women draw on Kate Bush in an attempt to distinguish themselves as serious fans or connoisseurs, often at the expense of other, mostly young, women.

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examine the role of feminism (in the guise of 'girl power') in the lives of young girls, as Dibben (1999) has done in a textual analysis of a Spice Girls video.

My analysis is based on qualitative questionnaires and interviews with fans (email based as well as face-to-face), and is complemented by textual analyses of a selection of Kate Bush songs and videos. In order to find these fans I placed advertisements in two music magazines, as well as on an email discussion list and a web site dedicated to Kate Bush, asking for fans to complete my questionnaire. I received responses from both women and men, and eventually forty-five women and three men completed the questionnaire. On the basis of these questionnaire responses I selected respondents for in-depth interviews in which I could explore some issues further.[5] The female respondents constituted a relatively homogeneous group and were predominantly between their late twenties and early thirties, with some in their late thirties and early forties, white, middle and lower middle class, and heterosexual. They constituted a markedly different 'group' from those that have been privileged in feminist studies of fandom as well as in the field of subcultural theory.

In the remainder of this introduction I shall outline the context of women in music in which my respondents' practices need to be located, further clarify my reasons for a focus on a case study of Kate Bush and her fans, and explain why a focus on older women fans constitutes a contribution to the field of popular music studies.

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[5] I also interviewed two men. I will refer to the men's responses where they are of particular comparative interest.

II. 'Women-in-Rock'

In this section I want to set the scene for my analysis by locating my respondents and Kate Bush within the general context of 'women-in-rock', and by considering the marginalised position of women in popular music, both as performers and as fans. I give this account of the position and strategies of female musicians and the representations of female fans not merely as context, but also because knowledge of these representations and strategies play a role in the way in which the female Kate Bush fans in this thesis represent themselves.

I draw here on both academic and journalistic sources since they frequently inform one another. While journalism occasionally draws on academic sources, the academic study of popular music is often influenced by coverage in the music media. Journalistic sources (such as McDonnell and Powers, 1995) are useful indicators of the ideas that circulate within the field of popular music; or, as Frith (1998) points out, the 'discursive languages that are available to us' are partly informed by music journalism (72; see also Lindberg et al., 2000, for an account of the relationship between the fields of rock criticism and academia). I use the academic sources to outline the existing state of the academic analysis of popular music, to locate my project within this body of work, and as resources for the development of the conceptual and methodological framework which structures this thesis.[6]

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[6] Chapter 1 contains a brief discussion of media coverage of Kate Bush.

As I noted earlier, since the mid-1990s there has not only been a wealth of new female talent, but also an influx of books dealing specifically with women and popular music.[7] For example, Gaar (1993) and Lucy O'Brien (1995) present 'herstories' of women working in the industry, both as performers and 'support personnel' (such as producers and managers). Whiteley (2000) presents a series of case studies of influential female performers within a feminist theoretical framework. Evans (1994), Raphael (1995), and Karen O'Brien (1995) explore the position of women in the industry through interviews with well-known female musicians. This is also the territory covered by Bayton (1998) whose focus, however, is on amateur and semi-professional female musicians. McDonnell and Powers (1995), through a collection of rock writing by female journalists, addresses both female journalists' and musicians' marginalisation. Reynolds and Press (1995) look at male musicians' representation of women and also assess the strategies female musicians employ to succeed in the industry.

However fascinating and necessary these studies are, the scarcity of work making an issue of *men* and popular music suggests that whereas men and masculinity are taken for granted, or seen as almost synonymous with rock, female musicians tend to be seen as women first and musicians second (a notable exception here is Whiteley, 1997, in which both masculinity and femininity are subject to scrutiny). Indeed, Clawson (1999) points out that the '"normality" of masculine musicianship' is rarely examined (99).

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[7] Early work in this area includes Kennealy-Morrison (1995; first published in 1970), Goddard, Pollock and Fudger (1977) and Steward and Garratt (1984).

At the same time as it affirms recognition of the marginalised presence of women in rock music, the lumping together of female musicians under the all-inclusive term 'women in rock' also robs each of them of their distinction, just as much as the labelling of women artists as 'helpless victims, dizzy sex queens, earth mother and femme fatales' does (Evans, 1994: vi). Gaar (1993) also considers the label misleading because 'it promotes a perceived musical similarity between performers based on the fact that they are women—a similarity that is, in reality, non-existent' (xv). It also presupposes the unity of the category 'women' and suggests a lack of differentiation between those women who are involved as producers and those who are involved as consumers. Green (1997) believes that the label turns femininity into 'a sales gimmick that replicates the fetishisation and marginalisation of women's compositions' historically (111). Indeed, the label 'women in rock' reminds us again of the paradox suggested by *Q Magazine*. However, on the positive side, it also enables discussion, and acknowledges at least some of women's achievements. I have retained the label 'women-in-rock' for this discussion, but want to emphasise my awareness of its complex nature; I use it, as Coates (1997a) suggests, strategically, 'as a way to designate rock as contested ground' whose masculinity could eventually be undermined (61).

The presupposition of the unity or, alternatively, of the fragmentation of the category 'women' is an important issue in the study of women and (popular) music. Joke Dame (1995) has characterised the development of feminist musicology in terms of the common postmodernist typology: equality, difference, and deconstruction.

Feminist musicologists concerned with equality have focused on the unearthing of

neglected female composers and on questions concerning women's ability to play,

compose and conduct (reference works such as Bowers and Tick, 1986, are

illustrative of this concern). Feminist musicologists concerned with difference, on the

other hand, have been involved with the identification of a specifically female

tradition as distinguished from the dominant male tradition, and with the construction

of an alternative canon of work by female artists (see for instance Cox, 1991, and

Solie, 1993). Finally, for deconstructionist musicologists 'sexual difference

represents alternative forms of positively valued otherness instead of the traditionally

negative notion of difference' (Dame, 110; see also McClary, 1991). An alternative

description maps these different stages onto the move from author to text, and from

text to reader/audience. Thus, 'within a framework of deconstruction, the emphasis

moves onto perception, to the listener, who—on the basis of post-structuralist and

recent semiotic insights—is no longer considered neutral but gendered and as such

increasingly treated as the determining factor in the production of meaning' (Dame,

1995: 111).

All three (schematic) approaches invite specific objections. Equality feminism may

lead to the adoption of precisely those values promoted by dominant society. In

contrast, Ruth Solie (1993) argues that 'claiming one's own difference may be a form

of resistance against subsumption into an undifferentiated universal subject' (6).

However, while the identification and appreciation of a specifically female musical

culture, or a feminine musical aesthetic as suggested by Cox (1991),[8] invokes the risk

of essentialism (even if this essentialism rests on cultural rather than physical

differences), it also emphasises the difference of women from men and potentially

neglects the differences *among* women. Furthermore, as Bourdieu points out, this

stance also rests on 'modes of thought that are the product of domination' (2001: 5).

Difference feminism 'does not escape a gentle form of essentialism in its concern to

enhance the value of female experience,' as 'this feminism forgets that the

"difference" only appears when one adopts the point of view of the dominant on the

dominated and that precisely that from which it seeks to differentiate itself (...) is the

product of a historical relation of differentiation' (Bourdieu, 2001: 63; see also Cox,

1991: 337). McClary (1991), looking at the 'discursive strategies of women

musicians' (18), has suggested that, although an increasing number of women have

become professional composers and do not necessarily draw attention to their gender

identity, 'they still face the problem of how to participate without unwittingly

reproducing the ideologies that inform various levels of those discourses' (19).

Deconstructionist or poststructural feminists, on the other hand, are in danger of

losing sight of their subject of analysis. Suggesting that the category 'woman' is

socially constructed, a fiction, some argue that only deconstruction can fully purge it

of its patriarchal meanings. However, while this has certain advantages, most notably

the '"free play" of a plurality of differences unhampered by any predetermined

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[8] Cox (1991) makes an initial attempt to theorise a musical *écriture feminine*: 'a music modeled on feminine writing would engage the listener in the musical moment rather than in the structure as a whole; would have a flexible, cyclical form; and would involve continuous repetition with variation, the cumulative growth of an idea' (334).

gender identity as formulated by either patriarchy or cultural feminism', as Alcoff

notes (1988: 418), such radical deconstruction notoriously problematises the

grounding of feminist politics and often leads all too quickly to 'postfeminist'

politics.

I shall now turn to a brief indication of the practices and strategies employed by

female musicians because these have an intimate connection, as we shall later see, to

the fan practices under scrutiny in this project.

III. Female Musicians

Drawing on the distinction between what she calls 'inherent' and 'delineated'

meanings,[9] Green (1997) provides a persuasive explanation for the marginalisation

and disparaging of women in music. She highlights the tendency, both within

everyday music consumption and professional music criticism and analysis, to read

issues arising from, for instance, the visual aspects of music (delineated meaning)

into the music itself (inherent meaning).

According to Green this has often led to the marginalisation of music performed or

composed by women: 'femininity is heard to somehow get inside the inherent

meanings of the music played' (1997: 74). The notion of 'display' in musical

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[9] Or what Giles and Shepherd (1990) call the 'powerful iconicities between meaning and musical texts' (17).

performance plays an important part in this process. Although display affords the performer some level of power (the power of the lure, the display of virtuosity), its close association with femininity means that the adverse effect is that the more a female singer displays her body the less likely she is to be taken seriously as a competent performer.

Inherent and delineated meanings assume different levels of importance in different styles of music: whereas in the classical music discourse delineations tend to be downplayed, in the popular music discourse they are usually highlighted. Indeed, the prominence of subcultural affiliations, musicians' looks, fashion, and so on, have sometimes lead critics to believe that popular music has little else to offer (hence the reluctance, on the part of many musicologists, to analyse popular music scores). However, *within* popular music genres the extent to which delineations are emphasised differs too, just as delineations have different implications for men and women (and for different groups of men and women). The association of women with pop, as the devalued half of the pop/rock dichotomy, rests on pop's association with image, or in Green's words, with pop's display delineations (see also Lewis, 1990).

Burdened by such discursive constructions, women have employed various strategies in order to establish their place in and cope with the demands of the music industry, some of which are explicitly concerned with the representation of the female body and subjectivity. In their study of the representational practices of both male and female musicians, Simon Reynolds and Joy Press (1995) address some of the strategies that women have employed. They identify the four, often overlapping

strategies that clearly echo Dame's typology: 'The first is a straightforward *can do* approach, as in "anything a man can do, a woman can do too"' (233; 'equality'); they cite Suzi Quatro, Joan Jett and L7 as examples. 'Another approach attempts to infuse rock with "feminine" qualities; rather than imitate men, it tries to imagine a female strength that's different but equivalent' (233; 'difference'); Janis Joplin, Lydia Lunch, Tracy Chapman, Nathalie Merchant, Sinead O'Connor and Queen Latifah are put forward as examples. 'A related strategy celebrates female imagery and iconography, but in a more provisional, postmodern way. Femininity is not a fixed set of characteristics for these artists, but rather a wardrobe of masks and poses to be assumed' (233; 'difference'/'deconstruction'). This approach plays on essentialist assumptions, and the risk involved, Reynolds and Press suggest, is that it can come dangerously close to reinforcing traditional conceptions. I shall return to this shortly. Finally, the fourth and final approach is concerned with 'the trauma of identity formation' where 'female gender is neither an essence not a strategic series of personae, but a painful tension between the two' (234; 'deconstruction'). This approach is identified in performers such as Patti Smith, Throwing Muses, Rickie Lee Jones and Mary Margaret O'Hara.

The infusion of rock with 'feminine' qualities or, in other words, the establishment of a feminine aesthetic in rock has been seen by some as a prerequisite to succeed in the music industry. In short, women should make their own specifically 'female' music, for example by establishing their own record labels and organising women-only gigs.

This strategy has taken a number of different forms, including 'women's music',[10]

punk[11] and Riot Girl[12], all of which were inspired by the women's liberation

movement/feminism.

Although these interventions may have drawn in higher numbers of female

performers, they have been limited in their success at changing masculine values in

the industry. Despite providing women with new opportunities and more visibility in

the industry, the strategies embraced by some of these musical movements may

instead be perceived as restricting. The sense of separatism that both 'women's

music' and Riot Girl suggest and their rejection of 'masculine' forms and techniques

ultimately rest on essentialist assumptions. For example, 'women's music' has been

predominantly associated with acoustic, folk-derived pop, suggesting a

correspondence between women and 'softer' types of music and thus, again,

suggesting an essentialist and unified conception of 'woman' (see Sutton's critique of

'women's music' for its 'limited, passive notion of femaleness' (1995: 376)).

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[10] 'Women's music' was partly inspired by the foundation, in 1975 by a group of women in Washington, D.C., of Olivia Records: 'a woman-owned-and-operated record company that helped crystallize the musical movement that came to be known as "women's music"' (Gaar, 1993: 124-5; see also Bayton, 1998).

[11] Although it remained, like the music industry at large, mostly a male phenomenon, punk's 'do-it-yourself' ethos encouraged many women to pick up instruments, while its rejection of conventional images of femininity allowed women to experiment with unusual or 'unfeminine' attire and voices (see Chambers, 1985; Bayton, 1998).

[12] The movement, or subculture, known as Riot Girl (or Riot Grrrl) carried through some of the values espoused by both punk and women's music. Initiated by a group of friends and musicians in Washington D.C. and Olympia, Washington in the early 1990s, it tried to 'aggressively coopt the values and rhetoric of punk ... in the name of feminism, or as they call it, "the revolution girl style now"' (White, 1995: 397). Like punk, Riot Girl—a blend of loud guitar rock and confrontational attitudes—encouraged young girls to pick up instruments and start their own bands (see also Green and Taormino, 1997, for a selection of Riot Girl writing).

Assumptions about what constitutes 'masculine' and 'feminine' in music are made on both a sonic and a lyrical level. For example, 'feminine' subjects such as childbearing and motherhood have often been seen as unsuitable subjects for pop/rock songs, as Greig suggests (1997: 169). Where women have entered the music industry as performers it has often been as vocalists (either solo, fronting a band, or as backing singers) rather than musicians, and their musicianship has often been limited to, for instance, the acoustic guitar or piano (see Bayton, 1997; Green, 1997). The singer-songwriter genre is a good example of this. Technology—in the form of studio and stage technology and electrical instruments—has often been seen as a masculine reserve. And as Bradby (1993a) has pointed out, women have been 'circumscribed by ideologies that do not generally allow women's performances to be "authentic" in the way that men's are' (156). Green (1997) suggests this depends on the affirmation or otherwise of femininity as it is understood within a patriarchal context. Returning to her notion of display delineations and their effect on inherent musical meaning, she identifies four ways in which singing affirms femininity: 'the self-possessed yet alluring concentration on the body, the association with nature, the appearance of sexual availability, and the symbolisation of maternal preoccupation' (29). Female instrumentalists, on the other hand, are less likely to affirm conventional femininity because the presence of an instrument draws attention away from the body and highlights the technological dimension of music making; as such they can be seen to pose a threat. In this scenario, composing poses the biggest threat to the status quo, as it is entirely removed from the realm of the physical and takes place in the 'masculine' realm of the cerebral.

Kate Bush has been quoted as saying that when she first emerged on the music scene there was a relative scarcity of other female performers in her genre, and that she felt that she was seen as just a sexy singer who was not taken seriously as a musician (Cook, 1982). However, as a vocalist, instrumentalist and songwriter, Kate Bush can be seen to negotiate and challenge some of these assumptions about women in popular music. While this thesis is not about Kate Bush herself, her work and persona as well as her position within the music industry need to be considered before turning to her fans. The next section, therefore, contains a brief introduction to some of Bush's defining musical and visual moments; further analysis of this material, in the light of the respondents' views and practices, will be presented in Chapter 5.

IV. Kate Bush

Introduced to her record company EMI by Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, Bush was launched onto the music scene in 1978 when she was only nineteen. Her debut single, 'Wuthering Heights', was released on 20 January 1978 and reached the top of the UK charts on 7 March, where it then stayed for four weeks. It was the first single written and performed by a British woman to reach number 1 in the UK. On 17 February of that year her debut album, *The Kick Inside*, was released; it reached number 3 in the album charts and went triple platinum. Many of her subsequent releases also reached the top ten and went either platinum or gold. (Her third release, *Never For Ever*, 1980, was the first album by a British woman to reach the top of the UK album

charts; see also Vermorel, 1983; Bolton, 1987; Cann and Mayes, 1988; Juby, 1988; and Kruse, 1994.)

It is important to view Kate Bush's achievements within the context of 1970s and 1980s pop/rock, that is, within the context of genres such as progressive rock, glam rock and punk, as well as the establishment of MTV and the rapid development of music video. The fans respond to her work and persona within the context of these other genres and performers, all of which suggest something about gender, age, class, sexuality and race/ethnicity. The complex relationship between Bush's work and these genres, as I shall suggest in Chapter 5, accounts for the way in which she is perceived as 'unique' and 'authentic'.

Progressive rock, which emerged in the late 1960s, was characterised by a strong emphasis on musical virtuosity, experimentation with non-rock types of music (including non Western and classical music), and increasingly long and complex song structures, all of which was aided by technological developments. It has been suggested that progressive rock marked the further masculinisation of rock (Reynolds and Press, 1995; Chambers, 1985). Glam rock, on the other hand, as Chambers (1985) suggests, 'appeared to propose a flight towards a sensationalist aesthetic of the "strange"' and could be seen as 'a sharp and mocking reply to the illusions of progressive rock' (128). Characterised by extravagant make-up and costumes, it had a generally more playful attitude than progressive rock. Chambers (1985) also suggests that the more sophisticated glam rockers, such as David Bowie, Roxy Music and Lou Reed, blurred the boundaries of male (hetero)sexuality. Finally, punk can be seen as

the antithesis to both these genres, as a rejection of musical virtuosity, a celebration

of the urban working classes, but also the highlighting of political issues such as

sexism and racism. However, what all these genres have in common, in spite of

rejections of a 'masculine' musical virtuosity and a questioning of male sexuality, is

that they remained overwhelmingly male.

A brief consideration of Kate Bush's most successful, or most 'iconic' visual

incarnations will illustrate her complex performance of femininity. She may be read

as moving across the positions identified by Reynolds and Press. Her image in the

late 1970s, illustrated by early publicity material such as the infamous 'leotard'

pictures (see Figure 2) and videos such as WUTHERING HEIGHTS and THE MAN WITH

THE CHILD IN HIS EYES (both 1978; see Figures 1 and 3), appears at first sight to

unambiguously promote Bush on the basis of her body and suggest that she

unambiguously invites the male gaze.[13] The persona presented in the song and video

'Babooshka' (1980), however, can be construed as both inviting the male gaze and

playing with/undermining it. While the lyrics tell of a woman's attempt to test her

husband's fidelity by sending him seductive love-letters and arranging a meeting

under the pseudonym Babooshka, the video shows Bush embodying both the wife,

dressed in black with a black veil, and the wife's alter ego, dressed more

provocatively. While the Babooshka persona can be read as straightforwardly sexy, as

inviting the male gaze, it can also be read as a woman's interpretation (and mocking)

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[13] The figures can be found in Appendix G. I have followed Andrew Goodwin's notation for video clips. Whereas album titles are indicated by italics and song titles by single quotation marks, videos will be indicated by small upper case letters. For example, the *Hounds of Love* album, the 'Hounds of Love' single, and the HOUNDS OF LOVE video.

of a male fantasy, a reading further aided by the fact that Babooshka's outfit is distinctly preposterous (see Figure 5).

By the time of her commercially and critically most successful album, *Hounds of Love*, Bush's image had become somewhat more androgynous, as illustrated by the videos for RUNNING UP THAT HILL and CLOUDBUSTING (both 1985; see Figures 7 and 8). Significantly, at the time she released *The Sensual World* Bush was quoted as saying about the earlier period that she was eager to prove herself as a woman 'in a man's world', that she wanted to do 'the things that men do', but that the new album was her most 'feminine' recording (Sutcliffe, 1989). The video for the album's title track (see Figure 10) shows Bush's return to a more conventional femininity, later continued with MOMENTS OF PLEASURE (1993).[14] Indeed, just like earlier videos such as THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES and SAT IN YOUR LAP (see Figure 6), with their use of and reference to ballet, THE SENSUAL WORLD (in which Bush dances in a long, red velvet dress against a forest backdrop) might be seen as invoking Lisa Lewis' notion of a 'female address' video rather than as directly addressing the male gaze.[15]

Reynolds and Press (1995) suggest that Kate Bush's work and persona are characterised by a celebration of 'female imagery and iconography' and include her in their third category of strategies employed by female artists (233):

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[14] A 1998 show of *Stars in Their Eyes* featured a contestant singing 'Wuthering Heights'. The image that was drawn upon, however, was that of 'The Sensual World', suggesting perhaps that this is one of Bush's most iconic images.

> There's another tradition in female pop that works within culture rather than seeking to transcend or escape it. Instead of stripping away layers to reveal an authentic self, it plays with cultural representations of femininity. For artists like Siouxsie Sioux, Madonna, Annie Lennox, Kate Bush and Grace Jones, masquerade becomes a way of provoking and confounding the male gaze. The traditionally feminine 'trivial pursuit' of fashion and self-adornment is reclaimed as a reinvention of the self. (...) These artists refuse to be tied down to any one identity. (1995: 289)

While Kate Bush's image manipulation is far less comprehensive than that of, for instance, Madonna, it can nevertheless be read in terms of masquerade. Bush's image can be seen to have developed from its early incarnation as (non-ironically) inviting the male gaze (in, for instance, WUTHERING HEIGHTS and THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES), to a more knowing manipulation of her image (as started with BABOOSHKA and continued in, amongst others, CLOUDBUSTING and RUNNING UP THAT HILL); in other words, it has moved from a more naïve femininity to a more knowing or ironic femininity. Use of the masquerade does not preclude authenticity—indeed, it might be read as a different kind of authenticity, perhaps a more postmodern, ironic authenticity'. My respondents, however, tended to read Kate Bush's performance as 'straight', that is, more often than not they would overlook the ambiguities in Bush's image to read her as authentic in a more traditional sense.

Kate Bush's perceived authenticity is further tied up with her musical virtuosity. This musical virtuosity is strongly embedded with both connotations and material relations of middle classness; her white, educated middle class background suggests both a

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[15] 'Female address' videos, according to Lewis, celebrate girls' and women's activities. I shall come back to this in Chapter 5.

familiarity with certain (high) cultural practices and the material comfort needed for those practices. Furthermore, her musical virtuosity also implies 'mastery', a quality of masculinity. It is on the basis of this virtuosity, this 'mastery' which challenges female stereotypes, that Bush can claim authenticity. However, authenticity has also been constructed through (fetishised) tropes of working class masculinity, so that Bush is therefore also outside a central discourse of musical authenticity, one that dominates popular representations of 'pop' and 'rock' as well as subcultural theory.

Not only does Kate Bush write all her own material and play a variety of instruments (most notably the piano and the Fairlight synthesiser), she often writes the arrangements for her songs and has, from her second album onwards, co-produced or produced her albums. And as Kruse (1994) and Juby (1988) point out, her impressive vocal range and unusual phrasing, her practice of multi-layering tracks, her extensive use of the Fairlight synthesiser, and pioneering use of the headset microphone have influenced artists as diverse as Cyndi Lauper, the Eurythmics, Madonna, Tori Amos, and Björk. Thus, as I explain in detail in Chapter 5, I believe that Kate Bush's appeal to her female fans lies not only in her feminine persona(s), as shown in her videos and other publicity material and in her lyrics, but also in her mastering of a musical virtuosity which is often mainly associated with male musicians and which was a particularly important element of progressive rock.

It is also in this respect that Kate Bush can be seen as challenging certain female stereotypes. Since she infuses her 'masculine' musical virtuosity with more 'feminine' elements she may also be seen as presenting a kind of 'feminised

virtuosity' which allows her fans to claim distinction for both Kate Bush and themselves and to dissociate themselves from the traditional image of the eroticised and disparaged female fan.

As mentioned above, when Kate Bush first emerged on the music scene she was nineteen, and early works such as 'The Man With the Child in His Eyes' (written when she was in her early teens) and the live performances in 1979 (with their often literal illustration, through dance and mime, of the songs' lyrics) highlight the youth of their creator. However, many respondents commented upon her later work (in particular *The Sensual World*, 1989, and *The Red Shoes*, 1993) as giving voice to more mature concerns, including the difficulty of sustaining relationships, the transient nature of life, and so on.

Since the main focus of this thesis is female fandom, and in particular the musical taste of mature women fans and the ways in which their early admiration for Kate Bush's music has stayed with them over time, rather than female musicianship, I shall include an extended discussion of this in Chapter 1. I now turn to a brief consideration of the theoretical resources that I have drawn upon in the course of this research.

V. Theoretical framework

This thesis draws particularly on the theoretical resources provided by subcultural theory, the literature on music in everyday life, and Bourdieu's work on taste. Subcultural theory, despite its limitations, has been the site where popular music and its central role in identity formation have been taken seriously; as such it constitutes an important resource for this thesis. It has also informed those theoretical developments and concepts that can help illuminate the investments of mature women fans; in particular the work on everyday culture and the idea of a proto-community (Willis, 1993; first published in 1990), as well as Bourdieu's concepts of (sub)cultural capital and distinction. Although Bourdieu's work has been mostly concerned with 'high' culture at the expense of popular culture and although gender has been less comprehensively theorised than class, his 'open' concepts nevertheless lend themselves to the analysis of popular music fandom and sexual or gender differences. I shall discuss these theoretical resources in detail in Chapter 2.

It would no doubt have been possible to frame a study of mature women fans within psychoanalytic theory, but Bourdieu's sociological approach does not sit very well with feminist psychoanalysis.[16] McNay points out that both Bourdieu and psychoanalytic theory privilege originary experiences, but while for Bourdieu the closure of the habitus is never absolute, feminist appropriations of psychoanalytic theory are hindered by the fact that this closure means that feminine positions are construed as 'invariable negativity' (2000: 43). Moreover, Bourdieu points to

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[16] Toril Moi is unusual in her composite 'appropriation' of both Bourdieu and Freud. But in her latest work of feminist theory (1999) the two are still left to lie side by side, as they do in her study of Simone de Beauvoir (1994) and her essay on Bourdieu (1995). They are used as resources but not integrated into a synthesis.

psychoanalytic theory's inability to 'account for the myriad of other social power relations (...) that are superincumbent and may run counter to sexual division' (McNay, 2000: 44). On the other hand, Bourdieu's concept of distinction is not directly concerned with the (unconscious) dimension of pleasure. However, rather than attempt a problematic synthesis, I have chosen to explore the materials of my study through the Bourdieuian frame, and I shall here, briefly, indicate my reasons for bracketing psychoanalytic theory.

Psychoanalytic theory is characterised by a primary orientation to the visual and lends itself well to an examination of the visual aspects of popular music (music video and the gaze), as well as the unconscious investments in music vis-à-vis identity. To simply transfer its concepts to matters of voice and hearing is problematic. Despite some attempts, there is as yet no entirely satisfactory aural equivalent to the widely used concept of the 'gaze'. For example, Taylor and Laing's analysis (1979), drawing on Mulvey's theorisation of the gaze to explain how girls are structurally excluded from the rock audience, remains on a visual and a textual level. Green (1997) and Pegley and Caputo (1994) introduce the notions of 'display' and the 'female ear' respectively. While Green's concept takes the role of music into consideration,[17]

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[17] While her discussion here is partly informed by Laura Mulvey's concept of the 'gaze' (1975, 1981), Green suggests that because of the camera's intervention in cinema there are important differences between 'display' and the 'gaze'. Whereas in cinema 'the camera intervenes between the displayer and the onlooker' and the woman on display has no control over the camera, in the live musical performance the music—over which the displayer *does* have control, intervenes: 'the displayer is in fact the immediate source of the music. Live musical performance therefore affords a special type of power to the performer which is denied to the passive object of the film camera: the power of control over the music' (1997: 26). Music video is both a filmic and a musical genre and, as such, deserves special attention. This is, however, outside the scope of this thesis.

Pegley and Caputo's is merely used to highlight the differences among women's experiences of music.

While the question of spectatorship in the psychoanalytic sense is a relevant one in terms of Kate Bush's visual performance (most notably her videos but also her other publicity material), it is not one that is central to this thesis, partly because many of the fans in this project were not primarily interested in the videos. While it is clear that psychoanalytically-informed approaches may have the potential for framing the analysis of the aural,[18] the emergent focus of this thesis, as it developed and took shape, suggested the advantages of using Bourdieu's sociological theory of culture as the major analytical frame, rather than attempting a problematic synthesis. Indeed, the choice of Bourdieu as the thesis' main theoretical framework enables the analysis of investments that take place on both conscious and unconscious (that is, deeply sedimented) levels.

A Bourdieuian approach, then, will allow me to draw on, bridge and address the critical absences within both subcultural theory and fan theory, and to theorise the specific questions at the heart of this project—questions of distinction as they are

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[18] For instance, Flinn (1992) points out that 'psychoanalytic critics have referred to the musical process as the means by which original plenitude and the lost maternal object are restored' (54), while Schwarz (1997) argues that 'the sonorous envelope' finds its origins in the womb, in the early stages of 'developing subjectivity' (7, 8). This emphasis on 'original plenitude' and the suggestion of maternal nurturing echo the function Radway assigns to romantic fiction. Radway (1991; first published in 1984) draws on psychoanalysis, but specifically on the 'object relations' approach of Nancy Chodorow (1978). She argues that romance reading serves as emotional sustenance, at least for her interviewees who did not feel sufficiently nurtured in their roles as wives and mothers. Reading romantic fiction allowed them to escape from their responsibilities 'into a fairy tale where a heroine's similar needs are adequately met' (Radway, 1991: 93).

made by a group of mature female fans and which involve issues, not only of gender and sexual difference, but also of age and class.

VI. Aims and Outline of the Thesis

To reiterate then, in this thesis I look at the ways in which female fans represent their fandom to themselves, to other fans, and to the world outside the fan community, through practices of distinction. These practices sometimes reinforce existing assumptions about fans—for instance, they reinforce the notion of the teenage girl fan as passive and indiscriminate—while at other times they challenge the privileging of youth and masculinity in the popular music field. These practices also play an important role in the way in which the women negotiate the demands of adulthood. By emphasising their mature sensibility, my respondents, as we shall see, attempt to disarticulate the link between popular music and youth, and to articulate instead a link between popular music and maturity. While their continued attachment to the music of their youth might be dismissed as an attempt to stave off 'social ageing', the women themselves represent their fandom as a resource for functioning in everyday life. It helps the women maintain a sense of self-worth, strive for independence and deal with the demands of intimate relationships and work. This claim will be examined in Chapters 4 and 6.

This thesis proposes a broader understanding of women's investments in popular music through a case study of the fan practices of a group of female Kate Bush fans.

The thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of feminist work on women and popular music, and in particular to the body of work attempting to account for women's fandom. Secondly, through a critique of existing studies of fandom and music consumption, this study argues for the recognition of a variety of different fandoms. By looking at a group of female fans who, mainly because of their age and class position, are seldom considered as legitimate objects of study, this thesis aims to propose new understandings of fandom. Finally, through an analysis that draws on the work of Bourdieu, this thesis also aims to say something about the social value of fandom.

The thesis has six chapters. The first two chapters set out the context in which audiences and popular music fans have been studied and outlines the theoretical framework within which I analyse the fans' responses and the rationale for this choice of theoretical framework. Chapter 3 is an account of the methods I used and the methodological issues that surfaced. The final three chapters analyse the questionnaire and interview data.

Chapter 1, named after the Kate Bush release which was the inspiration for the label adopted by some of her fans ('love-hounds'), starts with a brief consideration of Adorno and the history of studies on audienceship and fandom, before discussing the ways in which (women's) investments in the popular came to be seen as potentially resistant and empowering, rather than only corroborative of dominant culture. I then move on to consider the interdependence of 'audience' and 'fan', the specificity of music consumption, and the differences between fans and aficionados. Finally, I look

more closely at Kate Bush fandom. Drawing on a brief analysis of the media on Kate Bush, I shall suggest why the respondents in this study draw on practices of distinction that partly challenge existing conceptions of female fandom and partly reinforce them.

Chapter 2 starts with a consideration of subcultural theory, its (feminist) critics, and the as yet relatively modest body of literature on music and everyday life that provides an alternative to the work on subcultures. I consider this in conjunction with Paul Willis' concept of a 'proto-community', which has, I argue, the potential to include groups of popular music consumers that are not usually considered within a subcultural framework. In the latter half of this chapter I consider Bourdieu whose work I have adapted to explain the role of 'feminine cultural capital' in the field of popular music. This chapter is named after one of the songs on Kate Bush's latest release and suggests the emotional involvement in fandom and the potential for the formation of certain 'constellations' or cultural groupings.

I return to Bourdieu's concept of the field in Chapter 3 where I discuss methods and methodologies. I outline the development of the project, the use of questionnaires and interviews with fans, and the textual analysis involved. I also explain how I used the Internet and email as research tools. I conducted both face-to-face and email interviews, and this chapter contains a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of both methods. The use of a relatively new technology such as email, I argue, creates new localities or fields, which also have an effect on the power relations of the research process.

Chapter 4 is the first chapter in which I analyse my research data. Here I discuss how my respondents negotiated the meanings of the label fan, along with conventional fan practices such as collecting, membership of fan clubs and style imitation. I also look at the function of fan clubs and their electronic counterparts, email discussion lists and web sites. Furthermore, I look at those respondents who were (semi-professional) musicians themselves and who therefore saw themselves as having insider knowledge of the music industry and as being in an advantageous position for claiming distinction. This chapter also examines the extent to which the women's Kate Bush fandom could be translated into symbolic capital, for instance in the form of power within a domestic context.

In Chapter 5 I consider the debates around the concept of 'authenticity' and look at how the respondents constructed Kate Bush as authentic. A look at a selection of her songs suggests that Bush may indeed be read as such and that, through a combination of musical virtuosity, which is often depicted through metaphors of masculinity, and feminine address, Bush may be seen to project what I have called a 'feminised virtuosity'. In this chapter I also look at the way in which Kate Bush has informed the respondents' gendered identities, for example through what the women argue is a 'sensual' and 'tasteful' femininity. Such a reading, however, tends to overlook the ambiguities in Bush's visual presentation—she can be seen as both inviting and rejecting the male gaze. Furthermore, I show how the women project onto male fans an 'improper' interest in Kate Bush (because based on physical attraction). By doing this, the women try to dissociate themselves from the image of the eroticised female

fan who is inscribed in the ideology of romance, and thereby both challenge and reinforce certain assumptions about female fans.

In the final chapter I consider the issues of age, race/ethnicity and class. The age of many of the respondents set them apart from fans who are more usually looked at in studies of popular music fandom. I explain how my respondents were keen to distinguish themselves from younger listeners whom they saw as displaying indiscriminate taste and a group mentality. I show how, through their continuing investment in Kate Bush, the women reacted against popular music's association with youth by suggesting that their fandom is a meaningful resource for enabling maturity. I also show how Kate Bush can be seen as projecting either an English/British or Irish/Celtic identity which, through descriptions such as 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'English Rose', imply a certain kind of whiteness. Finally, Kate Bush presents a strong image of middle classness, which is reflected in the class identity of many of my respondents and which can be read as a kind of affirmation of their position in society.

I sincerely hope to get across to the reader the immense enjoyment the women found in their fandom. Although the distinctions which characterise fandom can sometimes be difficult—they can be hard 'work' (hence the title of this thesis, based on a song off Kate Bush's 1989 release *The Sensual World*)—they also provided the women with much pleasure, and I greatly enjoyed hearing their views. I am very grateful to all the women who took part in this research for sharing their pleasures (and occasionally displeasures) in Kate Bush with me.

Chapter 1

'Hounds of Love':

Popular Music, Audienceship and Fandom

> Dear Kate Bush,
> I hope you enjoyed my last letter. I'm disappointed you still haven't replied. (...) I'm sure you get loads of fan letters, but I want you to realise I'm different. I don't want to come across as sycophantic, because I know somebody as brilliant as you would hate that. I've been into you and your music since I was 11 years old. I remember exactly when and where I was when I first became aware of you. January 14th, 7 PM, Thursday evening, 1978, precisely (...). Yours faithfully, Greg. (Duff, 1998)

This is the fan in one of his worst incarnations: Greg writes letters to his favourite

performer, Kate Bush, several times a day; buys multiple copies of every release;

writes to pen friends around the world, but only about Kate Bush; edits a Kate Bush

fanzine ('*Bushwhacker*, because it's a thin line between love and Kate'); and

fantasises that his girlfriend is Kate Bush (Duff, 1998). When Radio 4 broadcast this

programme on Greg, the organisers of Homeground,[1] a long-standing Kate Bush fan

club in the UK, were approached by a journalist with the request for more

information about this man. The idea of the fan as obsessed and somewhat unhinged

appears so firmly lodged in the mainstream psyche that it came as a surprise to this

journalist that Greg's immoderate love for Kate Bush was in fact entirely fictitious, a

parody written and performed by Graham Duff.

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[1] Homeground is one of the longest running Kate Bush fan clubs (it was founded in 1982). It is run by Peter and Krystyna FitzGerald-Morris and David Cross who, due to bad experiences in the past, are extremely wary of the press. I shall come back to this in Chapter 3.

The idea of fans as lone fanatics has long lain at the root of writing on fandom. The negative characteristics associated with fandom, culminating in an inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy and a fervent desire to establish contact with the star, are all present in Greg's portrayal: his frequent letter writing, gathering of (often personal) information, and fantasies about being with the star all suggest a desire to break down the boundaries between the self and the object of adoration, making Duff's programme an extremely accurate parody of this idea.[2]

Although this particular fan is male, the parody nevertheless introduces many issues that are also pertinent to female fandom. In fact, the female fan is often thought to be even more 'excessive' in some respects, not only because her supposed sexual interest in male stars suggests an 'improper' interest or even a lack of interest in music, but also because her supposed 'passive' nature renders her more vulnerable to manipulation by the music industry. In this chapter I shall give a brief outline of the history of the term 'fan' and of the way in which scholarship on popular cultural fandom has shifted from seeing fans as passive and helpless in the face of manipulation to seeing fans as actively negotiating meanings and identities. After that I shall indicate how feminist scholars have addressed this issue and what some of the political motivations behind and problems accompanying this work are. Subsequently I shall outline the differences between fans and members of the wider audience and

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[2] As part of a presentation based on this research, I played the opening minutes of the sketch, containing the paragraph quoted above, at the IASPM-UK conference at the University of Surrey, 7 – 9 July 2000. A few people told me afterwards that they had thought initially that Greg was a real fan. One listener said that it was Greg's sense of humour which suggested it was a joke, suggesting that another one of the fan/fanatic's characteristics is to have no sense of humour.

between fans and 'high culture' aficionados, and the specificity of popular music consumption. I shall end this chapter with a consideration of media coverage of Kate Bush and her fans and how this has affected my respondents.

I. The History of Audienceship and Fandom

I.i. The Early Fan

The category of fan is one that has been continually subject to redefinition, over time and across cultures. Fandom, therefore, must be considered a contested, negotiated practice. The history of the term fan attests to this. The word 'fan' has its etymological roots in both 'fanatic' and 'fancy'. The former (from the Latin *fanaticus*, the roots of which, *fanum*, means temple) was originally associated with religion, as in 'possession by a deity or demon', and irrationality, as in 'unreasoning enthusiast' (*OED*). 'Fancy', on the other hand, has less pejorative connotations, as is attested by its usage to describe 'critical judgement in matters of art or elegance', 'capricious or arbitrary preference', or 'those who "fancy" a particular amusement or pursuit' (*OED*).

Kathryn Fuller (1996), in her study of early film fandom, dates the use of the term fan back to eighteenth century Britain where the term 'fancy' (later abbreviated to 'fan') was used to describe enthusiastic male sports spectators, while in nineteenth century USA the term fan came to describe male baseball supporters. At this point the term

was not yet used to describe women's fascination with celebrity or their perceived 'fanatical' interest in novel reading (Fuller, 1996). Ye (2001) shows how the meaning of the term fan and the discourse surrounding it gradually developed during the early days of cinema through readers' contributions to fan magazines. As such, 'fans were not just readers of the film texts, but co-producers of their own movie culture as well' (29).

Ye also shows that the usage of the term fan came to be explicitly feminised when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, film fan magazines constructed the typical fan as feminine, even if evidence—gained from fan letters written by both men and women—suggests otherwise. Stamp (2000), meanwhile, highlights an early twentieth century paradox which saw film exhibitors actively recruiting female patrons (whom they saw as capable of lending the new medium an air of respectability), but which saw the simultaneous circulation of the stereotype of the 'movie-struck girl' (who bears some resemblance to 'Greg').

I.ii. Adorno

Academic studies, however, long ignored popular culture and its consumers or else dismissed it as ideologically suspect. The key figure in the sociology of music to have propounded the latter view was Theodor Adorno and, as Middleton (1990) argues, 'anyone wanting to argue the importance of studying popular music has to absorb Adorno in order to go beyond him' (35). Adorno's work forms one of the most influential accounts of the passive, duped consumer. Like his colleagues in the

Frankfurt School, Adorno overemphasised the manipulative effects of mass culture, believing that its promotion of conformity depoliticised the working class and worked to maintain the dominant social order. Any attempts to escape the traps of the mass culture industry inevitably lead to deeper entrenchment. Or as Marcuse suggested, the products of the 'entertainment and information industry (...) promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood'; they promote '*one dimensional thought and behavior*' (1964, 12).

Where mass culture merely dupes people into acquiescence, art or high culture is thought to carry an implicit critique of capitalist society and as such to have the capacity to suggest alternatives to it. However, increasingly such 'authentic' or 'affirmative' culture is threatened by the processes of the culture industry, which, in its aim to maximise profits, attempts to turn it into a commodity too. Thus, only art that functions outside the confines of the culture industry is considered to have any radical potential; any other, tainted with the homogenising brush of the culture industry, inevitably leads to conformity as much as mass culture does.[3]

Adorno suggests that the culture industry operates in a fashion similar to that of industries producing other commodities; standardisation is common to both of them. Standardized popular music—its details unrelated and unnecessary to the overall structure or framework—is 'pre-digested' music and as such conditions its listeners'

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[3] An example here would be the presentation of classical music in 'bite-size' pieces, for instance on compilation albums. A recent feature on the BBC Radio 4 arts programme *Front Row* (2 November 2001), on the anniversary of the *Hooked on Classics* releases, suggests that this debate about the corruption of 'authentic' art is as yet far from settled. *Hooked on Classics*, devised by Electric Light

reflexes. It not only offers its listeners the distraction they need but also induces it in them. The counterpart to this, according to Adorno, is 'a regression of listening' (1991: 41), which means that listeners have lost not only 'the capacity for conscious perception of music' but also 'the possibility of such perception' (Adorno, 41). As a result listeners demand what they get anyway.

Pessimistic about the production side of popular music,[4] Adorno sees no redeeming qualities in the act of consumption either. Pseudo-individualisation—in the form of minute differences in details that are nevertheless irrelevant to the overall standardised framework—serves to give listeners the impression that what they listen to is *not* standardised or pre-digested. It does so by 'endowing cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardization itself' (1994: 308). As a result music is no longer heard *as music* or, as Adorno writes, 'the autonomy of music is replaced by a mere socio-psychological function' (311). In other words, music functions as 'social cement' with which 'psychical adjustment' can be achieved; this development encompasses the 'rhythmically obedient' type who likes to dance and the 'emotional' type for whom sentimental music provides a 'temporary release given to the awareness that one has missed fulfilment' (311 – 13). The latter, in particular, serves as a kind of prototype of the pathological fan. And according to Adorno, even those 'retarded listeners' who try to break away from these mechanisms of the culture industry only become more fully

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Orchestra member Louis Clark and performed by the Royal Philharmonic, presented selections from, amongst others, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, in easily recognisable and accessible form.

[4] Although, as Adorno suggests in 'Culture Industry Reconsidered', 'the expression "industry" is not to be taken too literally. It refers to the standardization of the thing itself—such as that of the Western,

ensnared in it. Their 'pseudo-activity', such as writing fan letters, merely works 'as

an advertisement for the wares they consume' (46).[5]

Adorno is highly sceptical of attempts to study the products of the culture industry.

The validation of their social function, he argues, causes such scholars to lose sight of

aesthetic quality. 'Because of its social role, disturbing questions about its quality,

about truth or untruth, and about the aesthetic niveau of the culture industry's

emissions are repressed, or at least excluded from the so-called sociology of

communications' (88). It is in this respect that Bourdieu—for whom the validation of

popular culture consumption does not necessarily alter its low position vis-à-vis

dominant culture—bears some traces of Adorno's bleak vision. I shall address in the

next chapter why Bourdieu's work nevertheless presents a useful resource for this

study.

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familiar to every movie-goer—and to the rationalization of distribution techniques, but not strictly to the production process' (1991: 87).

[5] Both Gendron (1986) and Middleton (1990), while admitting that standardisation and pseudo-individualisation in popular music hold true to a certain extent, believe that a closer look at the processes of cultural production would yield a far more varied picture than that of Adorno. As Middleton suggests, a 'production history' of popular music would give us a picture 'not of a monolithic bloc but of a constantly mutating organism made up of elements which are symbiotic and mutually contradictory *at the same time*' (38). Production works differently for culture than it does for other commodities. Gendron explains, for instance, that while vinyl discs can be produced in huge quantities, the music on the record cannot. 'One simply doesn't mass produce universals. (...) The assembly line is simply an inappropriate model for the production of texts-as-universals' (27 – 8). Adorno's extreme views can be partly accounted for by the historical and cultural context in which he wrote. During the 1930s and 1940s, when Adorno was writing, the popular music industry *was* fairly homogeneous and stable, so that his analysis makes some sense in this context. However, it fails to do so for time when the music industry is characterised by flux and a rapid succession of different genres. Furthermore, Adorno's analysis was indebted to the terms of a European, classical tradition that tends to privilege a particular mode of listening (harmony and melody, instead of timbre and connotation). As a result, according to Middleton, Adorno undervalues performance and focuses too much on composition, on the score. Furthermore, as Middleton notes, the misleading distinction between 'commercial manipulation' and 'avant-garde authenticity' can be found *within* popular musics as well (43); as such, it confirms the lasting influence of Adorno's work. But, as Middleton suggests, 'if

Adorno's legacy can also be found in those accounts that continue to see fans as 'fanatics' who are psychologically maladjusted and who, through fandom, will delude themselves into a false sense of security. As Jenson (1992) observes:

> Were I to call myself a fan, I would imply that I am emotionally engaged with unworthy cultural figures and forms, and that I was risking obsession, with dangerous consequences. I would imply that I was a psychologically incomplete person, trying to compensate for my inadequate life through the reflected glory of these figures and forms. (Jenson, 1992: 23)

As Jenson notes, much work on fandom has focused on the fan as 'potential fanatic', as displaying 'excessive, bordering on deranged, behavior' (1992: 9), engaged in 'as a form of psychological compensation' (Jenson, 1992: 16).[6] Similarly, Henry Jenkins (1992) suggests that the three common types of fan representation include the 'unbalanced' or 'psychotic' fan (which would include the stalker), the 'comic' fan, and the 'eroticized' fan (15). The former two tend to be seen as masculine, while 'the eroticized fan is almost always female' (Jenkins, 1992: 15).

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species of jazz and rock *are* accepted as potentially "authentic", this knocks a *theoretical* hole in the approach': 'avant-garde *commodities*' cannot exist in Adorno (43).

[6] I am primarily concerned with representations here. However, this is not to deny that there are fans whose behaviour may be genuinely 'excessive' and pose a risk to both the fans themselves and the objects of their fandom. The stalker would be an example of such a 'fan'. Following the incident in which former Beatle George Harrison was stabbed in his own home by an intruder, the April 2000 issue of *Q Magazine* featured an article on stalking. The most striking example of violent stalking involved a Björk fan in Florida who had sent a mail bomb to the singer's home in London before recording his own suicide on video. Stalking celebrities is usually linked to fandom, though David Giles suggests that this is not necessarily the case: "'fandom encourages people to be obsessive in terms of the time they spend on their idol, but it tends to be a group activity that's participatory (...) Stalking comes about as a result of a psychological problem that's probably not even directly related to the celebrity'" (David Giles, quoted in Grundy, 2000: 44). While Duff's fictitious Kate Bush fan, Greg, is perhaps first and foremost a funny character, his compulsive letter writing also suggests stalking.

1.iii. Redeeming the Fan and Her Music

> On the whole, the word 'fans', when applied to women, is derogatory. It is always assumed that they are attracted to a person for the 'wrong' reasons, that they are uncritical and stupid. As an audience, they are usually treated with contempt by both bands and record companies. (Garratt, 1994: 409)

> The girl under the covers and the one standing rapt in front of the stage are two of the most enduring manifestations of the feminine in pop, surfacing in songs, commentary, and common lore as both essence and enemy. Often these figures have been invoked as proof that women who love pop music must be hysterical, in need of the protection of parents and state, childish in their hero worship and whorish in their itch for the boys in the band. Think Beatlemania, groupies, Elvis fans. (Powers, 1995: 460)

The admission of popular cultural forms into the academic sphere is not without consequences for its scholars. Indeed, for academics who need to compete for distinction in the academic field an association with stigmatised cultural forms is potentially detrimental to their careers. Those who have, however, made a career out of the study of popular music and fandom have often done so on the basis of a prior investment in and familiarity with popular music. As such, while sharing with the Frankfurt School a view of high culture as supportive of capitalist ideology, they did not dismiss popular culture out of hand.

This 'redemption' of popular culture as a subject worthy of study can be found in the work of scholars such as Williams, Hoggart and Hall and Whannel and came to fruition in that of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which, for many years, set the terms of discussion of popular culture in terms of 'dominant', 'resistant' and 'subversive' meanings, readings and effects. Williams, for instance,

seeing culture as a 'way of life', highlighted the 'lived experience' of ordinary people (see *Culture and Society*, 1958a, *The Long Revolution*, 1961, and especially 'Culture Is Ordinary', 1958b), while Hoggart, valuing working class culture as positive and authentic, speaks of 'the rich full life' of 1930s working class culture (1957). However, Hoggart's identification of the corrosive effects of 'Americanisation' in 1950s culture and the ensuing decline in 'moral seriousness' suggests that certain elements of Adorno's critique were maintained in the distinction between popular culture and *commercial* culture. This distinction also characterised the work of Hall and Whannel (1964) who argued for the need to teach students to discriminate between different kinds of popular culture; for instance, in their eyes jazz was superior to the pop music of Adam Faith. They posited the idea of a 'popular art'—as constituting the best texts of a particular genre—that has risen above its 'mass culture' origins.

However, Hall and Whannel also looked at how young people use commercial entertainments to establish their sense of self, at how particular practices, including dress style, 'were used to express certain contemporary attitudes (...) for example, a strong current of social nonconformity and rebelliousness' (1964: 282). This work, in particular, came to full fruition in the subcultural work done in the CCCS.

The realisation that commercial or commodity culture need not necessarily serve the interests of capitalist ideology and may actually undermine its values, then, signalled a decisive shift away from Adorno. Instead of dismissing 'participation' in music or any other form of popular culture as mere 'pseudo-activity (for instance in the form

of dancing or writing fan letters), investments in popular culture are seen as ways of actively making individual meaning within a wider social context. Indeed, Frith (1998) suggests that one of the most common responses to Adorno and the rest of the Frankfurt school has been 'to look for the redeeming features of commodity culture in the act of consumption' (13).

However, the recognition of popular culture and of its *active* consumers as worthy of serious study did not immediately extend to all consumers. Young women fans, for instance, did not benefit much, since the active-passive dichotomy, insofar as it was retained, came to be mapped onto a gender dichotomy instead, with male products and male listeners positioned at the more active and female listeners at the passive end of the scale.

An article first published in 1978 by Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, 'Rock and Sexuality', received a great deal of critical attention at the time and has since informed many debates around popular music, gender, and consumption/fandom. Therefore it is worth pausing here to consider the article and some of the exchanges that ensued. Frith and McRobbie argued that as the popular music industry is largely male-run, men have been in control of the representation of women. The subject positions which are available in popular music, and which they illustrated by way of the categories 'cock rock' and 'teenybop music', tend to situate women as passive consumers. Whereas cock rock, an 'explicit, crude and aggressive expression of male sexuality', is primarily consumed by boys, teenybop, as performed by male stars and based on expressions of 'self-pity, vulnerability, and need', is almost exclusively

consumed by girls (Frith and McRobbie, 1994: 374, 375). Teenybop, the authors

argued, has traditionally addressed girls as objects of the ideology of romance, which

precludes their imagined participation as performers or producers within the music

industry, in contrast to boys who are invited to identify with the performer and to

become musicians, producers, or technicians themselves.

These categories of teenybop and cock rock are, of course, problematic reductions of

what is a very complex issue, as Frith himself suggested in his 'Afterthoughts' (1994;

first published in 1985) to the original article. First, 'teenybop' as a category

associated with the ideology of (heterosexual) romance is no longer entirely accurate,

if it ever was, especially since the increasing success of girl-groups, led by the Spice

Girls, has provided girls with their own figures of more active forms of identification,

as possible performers and producers.[7] However, the categories of cock rock and

teenybop and their accompanying behavioural patterns are common sense reference

points and as such have had serious implications for both performers and consumers.

Bayton (1998), for instance, suggests that the ideological constraints set up by such

common sense understandings have been just as important in preventing women from

becoming performers as have material constraints (including expensive equipment,

time, and parental restrictions on, for instance, going out).

Taylor and Laing (1979), in their response, criticised the article on a number of

points. To start with, they suggest that, based on the genre's narcissistic celebration of

male power where performers are 'both objectified and identified with, in the male

gaze', girls are *structurally* excluded from the cock rock audience (45). Similarly,

Clawson (1999) criticises Frith and McRobbie's stance (and by extension Bayton's)

for explaining women's absence from music making on the basis of 'the symbolic

barriers to feminine participation' (102). She sees the barriers as first and foremost

institutional, as typified by early band experiences. Women, she argues, find it more

difficult to be in bands, not because they have neither musical skills nor (female) role

models, but because the adolescent band is 'both socially and culturally, a formation

of masculine adolescence' (103).

Secondly, Taylor and Laing see cock rock and teenybop as oversimplifications that

do not take sufficient notice of the music itself but seem to be overly focused on

image and gesture (and constitute, as such, an instance of the confusion between

inherent and delineated meanings, as Green suggests). Furthermore, they argue that

Frith and McRobbie's stance suggests that there is something essential or natural

about sexuality that can be either expressed or repressed in popular music. Instead,

what is important is how certain representations are *constructed* differently in

different genres. Finally, Taylor and Laing see the notion of 'sex-role stereotype' as

rather static which thereby hinders the analysis of 'the constant generation of subject-

positions for the spectator/listener within music' (45). As Clawson points out, such a

stance also avoids studying consumption practices, as it assumes *a priori* knowledge

of them.

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[7] It also neglects the influence of earlier girl-groups in the 1950s and 1960s (see Greig, 1989).

Indeed, the passivity that is characteristically ascribed to girls and the assumption of the similarity of all girls' experiences have been particularly important focal points for feminist scholars. For instance, Pegley and Caputo (1994) suggest that the notion of difference employed here (women's difference from men) relies on the sameness of women. Instead, drawing on the concept of the gaze, they suggest that the 'female ear' is 'pluralistic' (299), that women 'articulate their differences differently' (300). The responses of their two informants (Pegley and Caputo themselves) not only suggested active fandom, but also highlighted the fact that musical experiences differ and develop over time. Fandom, for them, either functioned as entry into or alienation from a peer group, and both resisted conventional femininity (in the form of the rejection of idol worshipping) and conformed to it (through the identification with a 'feminine' singer-songwriter). Similarly, both Garratt (1994, first published in 1984) and Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs (1992) counter girls' ascribed passivity and suggest that fandom for teenage girls is an outlet for their developing sexuality, as well as an opportunity to become part of a community of fans. Garratt suggests that young girls are not necessarily primarily concerned with the stars they dream about. The reason girls become so excited about certain bands and artists is that these performers provide a 'safe focus for all that newly discovered sexual energy' when the girls reach puberty (Garratt, 1994: 401). With respect to the teenage fan collective, the infamous screaming mass at concerts, Ehrenreich *et al.* suggest that, through their behaviour, the young female fans can become the focus of attention themselves: 'the louder you screamed, the less likely anyone would forget the power of the fans. When the screams drowned out the music, as they invariably did, then it was the fans, and not the band, who were the show' (1992: 104).

Garratt (1994/1984) points out that it is a paradox at the heart of the music industry

that the most important group of consumers, young girls, is belittled by both the

performers and record companies who rely on them: 'The serious, thinking rock

audience they want is mainly male' (400). But if the young female fan is an enduring

stereotype, then the 'serious' male fan is another. A recent review of Bob Dylan's

latest release, *Love and Theft*, is illustrative of the different fan stereotypes in

circulation and is therefore worth quoting at length. Although it is very entertaining,

as is much journalistic writing on fans, this should not necessarily be seen as

undermining its 'common sense' ideas.

> Teenyboppers may make more noise, but no music-lover is as obsessed as the
> stoic rock fan. Usually middle-aged and always male, the stoic rock fan
> remains devoted to a singer or band now well past their sell-by date, but
> whose heyday coincided with his own formative life experiences. He has
> spent decades doggedly buying every album and bootleg, regardless of
> quality. In fact, the stoic fan always thinks the artist's worst records are his
> best, thus proving he understands the artist more deeply than everyone else. In
> terms of fixational behaviour, the pubescent howling with grief because H
> from Steps has left the building has nothing on the forty-something
> McCartney freak, steadfast in his belief that the 1992 b-side Big Boys
> Bickering is the equal on anything on Revolver. At least the Steps fan can
> blame their hormones. (Petridis, 2001: 15)

Petridis not only identifies fan obsession across age divides, but is also explicit about

the gender of the ageing stoic rock fan, while the teenybopper's gender, unusually,

remains implicit. But while this quote diverges from the standard view on fandom to

some extent, it is also typical in identifying the rock fan as 'always male'. As such, he

mocks an image that is also prevalent in subcultural theory.

While the feminist critiques outlined above may be necessary and timely interventions in the representation of fandom and may have gone some way in reclaiming female fandom, it is doubtful whether they pose an entirely effective challenge to the position of male fans as knowledgeable and 'serious'. If teenybop fandom can be read as active, it can also be argued that it does not actually change the structure of the music industry. If admiring rebellious male performers can make girls feel as though they are rebellious too, as Garratt suggests, this is not likely to actually inspire girls to become musicians themselves. Instead, 'they fantasize about having boyfriends who do it for them, projecting their desires yet again onto men' (Garratt, 1994: 403). A partial explanation for this is that many studies of female fans have continued to focus on a fairly narrow range of possible types of fandom.

To start with, many studies have tended to focus on female fans for male rather than female performers. As Lewis (1990) has noted, 'historically, the relatively small number of female performers has increased the difficulty of specifically addressing the female response to female stars' (156). Lewis' own study of MTV's 'female address' videos and Bradby's (1994) study of young Madonna fans, have been notable exceptions. Because of the emphasis on male performers, female fandom has often been seen as an outlet for heterosexual desire only. An exception here is Wise (1994; first published in 1984) who looks at her own investment, as a lesbian, in Elvis Presley and who saw him as a friend rather than the sex god male writers portrayed him as.

Furthermore, these feminist attempts to rescue female fandom from 'abjection' rarely extended to adult women. Many studies of female fandom have tended to focus on teenage, or even pre-teenage girls, partly because, as Rumsey and Little (1989) suggest, she is an important economic factor and her behaviour is so striking. Yet as soon as she grows up, she disappears; mature women's continuing involvement in popular music fandom is rarely acknowledged or studied. This is confirmed by McRobbie (1991) who, writing about women's magazines, notes that as the teenage girl grows older she slips out of the popular music market: 'as older teenagers and as "girlfriends" of male fans they nonetheless no longer signify as fans' (173). Thus, Rumsey and Little's (1989) question, 'what happens when we grow up and become a minority in the audience for "serious" music?' is generally left unanswered (244).[8]

Finally, women were not the only social category of consumers not to benefit from the recognition of popular culture consumption; it did not extend to (lower) middle class consumers either. Rita Felski (2000) has shown how this group of consumers has routinely been either ignored or seen as dully conformist, that to be lower middle class meant having a 'negative identity' (41). Furthermore, 'the lower middle class is often gendered female, associated with the triumph of suburban values and the symbolic castration of men' (43). Felski suggests that a consideration of the everyday, in particular its 'mundane, taken-for-granted, routine qualities' instead of

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[8] Vermorel and Vermorel (1985), however, includes accounts from mature female Barry Manilow fans, while Duffett (1998) points out that the Elvis fans in his study 'have moved beyond the stereotyped bedroom-bound teenager image. The original cohort is already entering middle age' (9); they have not 'grown out' of their fandom.

only its resistant features, may be one of the ways in which this antagonism towards the lower middle class may be overcome (1999/2000).

After this discussion of the 'redemption' of popular culture consumers, with special emphasis on the female music fan, I now want to turn to look at some of the political motivations underpinning this work as well as the problems that have accompanied it.

Liv. The Politics of Audience Research

Even if (young) female fans did not immediately benefit as much as her male counterparts from the shift towards the recognition of popular culture and its consumers as a legitimate area of study, feminist studies of popular culture quickly came to reclaim forms of popular culture associated with women (as either produced by, aimed at, or consumed by women, or a combination of these), and to show that female consumers, too, actively and creatively engage with their texts. In some cases this concern with the particularities of female culture and female fandom involved the idea of a separate women's culture. As indicated in the Introduction in relation to 'women's music', some feminists have drawn on the idea of a shared culture between women, which assumes, for instance, that all women at some point or other have been romance readers, and that to study it 'we' can get at some truth underlying the subjectivity and condition of 'woman'. Thus, Tasker (1991) suggests that 'the particular focus on those forms defined as feminine in one way or another and investigated by feminist criticism has tended to imply that only forms aimed at and focusing on women can be useful/interesting to women and/or feminism' (95).

However, such an assumption fails to take into consideration that some women do not enjoy so-called 'feminine' forms of culture such as soap opera or romantic fiction. In relation to this Schwichtenberg (1994) asks, 'are these women to be regarded as aberrant "feminine" readers or participants in "masculine" culture? Are they gender blenders, or do they fall outside male/female definitions altogether?' (171).

The acknowledgement of popular culture as equally valuable as 'high culture' also lead to the acknowledgement of the pleasures involved in its consumption, particularly within an everyday context. However, this enthusiasm for the active decoding and negotiation practices involved in consumption has in some cases lead to an uncritical celebration of all forms of popular consumption as meaningful and intrinsically counter-hegemonic or 'radical'. In its most extreme cases this leads to fully-fledged 'populism', a position most commonly associated with John Fiske, who suggests that popular culture needs to be understood in terms of productivity (including semiotic, enunciative and textual productivity) rather than simply reception (see Fiske, 1989, 1992; for a critique of populism see McGuigan, 1992; see also Walkerdine, 1997).

Stacey (1994a) posits the view that as 'an active female spectator of Hollywood stars' one may actually be 'colluding more deeply with patriarchal cinema than a passive spectator would be' (46). The activity and creativity of the female fans discussed in the previous section is a case in point. While, as I said, the recognition of their practices is an important step, the practices themselves sometimes see the girls conforming to traditional modes of femininity, and therefore do not necessarily result

in changes in the structure of the music industry. Active, then, does not necessarily mean resistant, just as it does not necessarily mean powerful. In a similar vein Joke Hermes (1997), in her study of women's magazines, argues that most recent audience studies are subject to 'the fallacy of meaningfulness' (148), that is, that the encounter between media texts and readers always produces meaning, because 'specific texts are lifted from the stream of daily life and media use, and given special status' and researchers have often focused on *fans*, the knowledgeable and articulate users of popular culture (Hermes, 1997: 148). In relation to such over-enthusiasm about popular culture's potential, Gendron (1986) suggests that, despite Adorno's extremity, his work provides a useful corrective to those reception studies that 'have tended to exaggerate the semantic creativity of the consuming subcultures' (36).

Where feminist cultural studies has looked for evidence of resistant/progressive readings, it has been resistance to gender hierarchies and definitions more than resistance to dominant culture in terms of class. It has looked for the so-called 'progressive' text 'with its proffered possibility of positioning the audience in new and radical ways' (Tasker, 1991: 90). This has often been accompanied by the sense that only some will be able to read such progressive texts 'properly', that is the feminists themselves, which means that women consumers are positioned as being in need of education. Radway's study of romance readers, for example, has been criticised for its patronising attitude towards the women readers (see Ang, 1996). However, at the same time the tendency to overstate claims of resistance and relevance that so marks malestream cultural studies appears to be less prominent

amongst feminist cultural scholars. Thus even if Radway's work may be considered patronising, at least she does not attribute infinite creativity and power to her readers.

I believe that these assumptions—about a shared women's culture, about what constitutes a 'feminine' text—and the interest in 'resistant' or 'progressive' readings may explain why popular music has received less attention from feminist researchers than other forms of popular culture. Where popular music has received considerable attention (most notably in studies of subcultures) girls and women have been mostly absent or else depicted as 'hangers-on' (see McRobbie and Garber, 1991, first published in 1976). As such, it may have seemed that popular music has nothing to say to women. Furthermore, it is possible that popular music has not only been perceived as the reserve of men, but that where girls or women have occupied an important role as consumers their investment in popular music and its stars has been seen to corroborate dominant culture. Moreover, as Kearney (1998) suggests in a study of Riot Girl, women's studies is often concerned with issues relating to adult women only. This implies that the female audience for popular music has been neglected in feminist audience studies, not just because it has been seen as a male leisure pursuit, but also because it has been seen as a youth activity.

II. The Distinctions between Audiences and Fans

II.i. Defining an Audience

> An audience is routinely defined in terms of its most obvious empirical
> manifestations, i.e. a collection of spectators, a group of individuals who are
> gathered together to attend a performance and 'receive' a message 'sent' by
> another. An audience would then be synonymous with the total sum of people
> that are part of it, pure and simple. (Ang, 1991: 33)

Ang's definition (which she herself rejects) suggests that it is relatively easy to

identify an audience for study—a group of people, gathered together in one location,

who consume their texts at the same time in one particular place. It is, as

Abercrombie and Longhurst call it, the 'simple audience' (1998). Indeed, initially it

appears relatively straightforward to pinpoint an audience for popular music. The

concert environment, for example, suggests a spatially bounded group of people who

consume their 'text' concurrently. However, this notion of the music audience is

complicated if, for example, radio is taken into consideration. While a 'mass

audience' for Radio 1 is still likely to listen at the same time (unless a programme is

taped for later listening), its modes of listening will be many and varied—someone

listening in the car on the way to work and someone hearing it piped into a shop are

likely to respond differently to the same music. Furthermore, the idea of 'a group of

individuals who are gathered together' does not allow for the lone listener who does

not convene with others (Abercrombie and Longhurst here speak of the 'diffused'

audience).

Just like the 'television audience' then—subject of a large number of studies (for

example Ang, 1985; Brown, 1990, 1994; D'Acci, 1994; Fiske, 1991; Jenkins, 1992;

Morley, 1980, 1986, 1995; Press, 1991; Seiter *et al.*, 1989)—the 'popular music

audience' is neither strictly boundaried nor straightforward to define. Popular music

has become so pervasive in our society that it has become almost impossible to find

people who are not part of its audience in one way or another. Even those who are not

part of a concert or radio audience are routinely exposed to popular music (as a

'captive audience'), for instance in public places such as supermarkets and shopping

malls. In fact, in most cases a specific audience is constructed by the researcher (Ang,

1991, 1996; Press, 1996; and Radway, 1991; Fowler, 1991) As Press (1996) suggests,

audiences 'are constructs that we in communication studies have created, abstracting

them out of their sociological context to help us study mass media and popular

culture reception, usually in a quantifiable, measurable, "scientific" way' (117).

II.ii. Defining a Fan

If an audience is potentially difficult to identify or construct, what about a fan? What

distinguishes a fan from the audience at large? What does a fan do that a more regular

audience member does not do? What characterises the relationship between the two?

Lewis (1992) suggests that fans constitute 'the most visible and identifiable of

audiences' because of the time, money and emotion they invest in their object of

passion (1), just as Fiske (1989) suggests that fan behaviour differs from audience

behaviour in degree rather than kind. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) believe that

in our 'media-drenched' society 'ordinary' audience members are not very different

from fans, and that they too increasingly display 'fan-like' qualities (122).[9] The

difference between the two, then, is not clear-cut and their relationship is perhaps best

seen in terms of interdependence.

For Cavicchi (1998), writing about Bruce Springsteen, the difference between a fan

and regular audience member is ambiguous too, since both are knowledgeable about

the star and eager to attend performances. Furthermore, the larger audience is

important to fans because they are concerned about the response to and commercial

success of Springsteen's work. Thus, while in theory fans and more regular audience

members are separate categories, 'being a fan from day to day nevertheless depends

on a complex and continuing relationship with nonfan audience members' (88).

Becker (1982), writing about the set-up of an 'art world', defined as consisting of 'all

the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works

which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art' (1982: 34),[10] also

highlights the interdependence of different groupings within an audience. He

identifies different levels of reception depending on the depth of knowledge of the

conventions of the art world in question. He identifies the 'occasional member of the

audience', the 'steady patron' and the 'semi-professional'. The steady patron, or 'the

serious listener of reader', is able to understand the art work better than 'well-

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[9] To illustrate this absence of clear-cut distinctions, they propose a continuum, 'consumer – fan – (sub) cultist – enthusiast – petty producer', where differences pertain to the level of organisation, productivity, (technical, analytic, and interpretative) skills, and object and intensity of investment, and which can but does not necessarily represent 'a possible career path' (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 141).

[10] Referring to 'art', Becker means not only 'high' art, but also that which is more usually associated with craft or popular culture.

socialized members of the society' because of his or her intimate knowledge of generic conventions and the development and history of the art world in question, and is likely to be more open to formal experimentation (Becker, 1982: 48). The 'semi-professional', on the other hand, has an even deeper understanding of the work produced within an art world because of his/her own artistic experience.[11] But despite these differences, all depend upon one another for the successful continuation of the art world.

Beyond this interdependence between fan and audience it is possible to pinpoint some distinctive fan characteristics. However, as I shall show in detail in Chapter 4, these characteristics do not necessarily pertain to all fans all the time. Indeed, it is important to recognise the fact that fandom develops over time and takes on different configurations depending on fans' changing social and economic circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, the category of fan is not a stable, unified one, but is perhaps best seen as contested and negotiated over time and across cultures, by both critics and fans themselves. Indeed fans, much more so than 'floating' audiences, can be characterised by a concern to define the terms of their investment, in an attempt to safeguard their reputation. Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) give an example of how *Star Trek* fans actively resisted their portrayal as 'Trekkies': 'The term "Trekkie" represented an identity imposed upon the group from the outside while "Trekker"

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[11] Some of my informants' responses suggest certain patterns that agree with Becker's notion of 'art worlds'. As I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, their redefinition of the label 'fan' was based on their identities as musicians and the notion that they have been 'on the other side of the line that separates performers and creators from consumers' (Becker, 1982: 54).

came to refer to the group's self-constructed and more affirmative identity' (15). Such

a reluctance to be ridiculed also explains the distrustful response of some Kate Bush

fans to journalists and academics (as illustrated by the response of the Homeground

fan club to my request for fans). And in a similar vein, as we shall see in Chapter 4,

my respondents were reluctant to accept the label fan unless it had been purged of its

connotations with, amongst other things, fanaticism and teenage girls.

Something else that distinguishes the fan from the 'social participant' is his or her

long-term, in-depth investment (both emotional and financial) in and loyalty to a

particular star/text. Rather than using their participation in popular culture only as a

means of socialisation (or 'social cement', as Adorno would put it), fans are more

deeply invested and loyal. And while it is by no means impossible to be a fan of more

than one text, one might perhaps characterise a fan as 'monogamous'. Such a deep

investment and loyalty can sometimes be a cause of friction between fans and more

casual audience members. Indeed, in their study of *Doctor Who* fans, Tulloch and

Jenkins (1995) suggest that the relationship between fans and what they call 'floating

voters'—those viewers who easily switch programmes, yet whose satisfaction and

loyalty are crucial for the continuation of a television series—can be a fraught one.[12]

Underlying this friction is the idea of a 'personal' relationship with the star/text, on

the basis of which fans assume they have a deeper and better understanding of the

work in question. This attitude characterised my respondents, whose construction of

male Kate Bush fandom as motivated by the 'wrong' reasons (that is, physical

attraction) was partly based on their belief that they, as women, were in a better position to understand and appreciate Bush's 'feminine' work.

Long-term investment and loyalty have consequences for the degree and extent of knowledge that fans have. Yet, as Cavicchi (1998) suggested, both fans and more regular audience members tend to be knowledgeable about a star. Therefore, what is important about this knowledge is the meaning that it has for the fan; in other words, it is how the fan uses her knowledge, the role it plays in her life, which distinguishes her from the audience member/consumer. Grossberg (1992b) offers a useful way of understanding this. He distinguishes between consumers and fans on the basis of the two groups' different sensibilities (he defines a 'sensibility' as 'a particular form of engagement or mode of operation', 54). While Grossberg sees both audience members and fans as active, the former are distinguished by what he calls a sensibility of pleasure and the latter by an 'affective sensibility' ('affect is closely tied to what we often describe as the feeling of life (...) Affect is what gives "color", "tone" or "texture" to our experiences', 57). Affect also directs our investments and produces 'mattering maps' that tell us 'where and how we can become absorbed—not into the self but into the world—as potential locations for our self-identifications, and with what intensities' (57). The investments that come out of this form part of an on-going process of making meaning and 'coping' with everyday life and can lead to empowerment. Empowerment, according to Grossberg, 'is an abstract possibility' and should not be seen as synonymous with either pleasure or resistance, 'although it is a

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[12] In his review of Dylan's *Love and Theft* Petridis also suggests that when Dylan's 'audience dwindled' following increasingly inconsistent performances, this was 'manna to stoic fans, whose

condition of the possibility of resistance' (1992b: 64). For fans this process of making meaning is often not limited to interpretation of texts, but can also extend to production in a wider sense, including style imitation, collecting and the production of new texts. This kind of (material) production can also result in empowerment; for instance, a collection of rare and valuable records can translate into actual economic power, while the creation of new texts could result in a profitable or critically acclaimed career for the fan.

I shall examine the possibility of empowerment for my respondents in detail in Chapter 4. There I will also consider the communal or more individual aspects of these women's fandom. There are conflicting accounts as to whether fandom should be seen as a more social or individual phenomenon. Jenkins, who, like Fiske, takes his cue from de Certeau's (1984) notion of poaching, emphasises the social aspect of fandom, arguing that it is a 'social process through which individual interpretations are shaped and reinforced through ongoing discussions with other readers' (1992: 45). Abercrombie and Longhurst, in contrast, see fans first and foremost as individuals who, even if they get into contact with others, are likely to do so only 'through the mechanism of mass-produced fannish literature (teenage magazines, for example), or through day-to-day contact with peers' (1998: 138). For Cavicchi, meanwhile, fandom is characterised by individuality within a more communal framework. Writing about the process of 'becoming-a-fan', Cavicchi suggests that the stories told about this constitute a significant part of fan discourse and often function

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devotion means little without the scepticism of others' (2001: 15).

as introductions between fans. Yet these stories 'purposefully serve[] to signify individual personality' (1998: 54).[13]

Both the lone fan and the fan as part of a larger crowd have been central figures in the myths surrounding fandom which have endowed both with fanatic and dangerous behaviour. However, what is at the heart of the differing perceptions of the individual or communal dimension of fandom outlined above is the level of awareness fans have of their own and other fans' practices and the significance of those other fans. Thus, Abercrombie and Longhurst's fan appears to be one who is relatively unaware of others with the same interests and pursues his or her interests alone. This also characterises many of the romance readers in Radway (1991), until that is her study enabled the women to come into contact with other readers. Other scholars, however, in addition to highlighting the interdependence of the fan and the wider audience, highlight the embeddedness of the individual fan within a larger (informal) network.

These different understandings of fandom, I believe, enable us to think about fandom within an everyday context and as it develops over time. As I mentioned earlier, fandom evolves following changing social and economic circumstances and is therefore likely to be lived differently by younger and more mature fans; distinct domestic and work situations have consequences for the resources (including time, money, and energy) available to spend on favourite texts. Radway's work on romance

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[13] 'Like religious converts and God, fans consider their relationships with Springsteen to be solitary. For example, the fans to whom I spoke consistently described *individual* transformations, something that happened while they were alone, even in those cases in which another fan was involved as a catalyst' (Cavicchi, 1998: 53).

reading, for instance, suggests that fandom can be characterised by furtiveness. Many

of her respondents would consume their romances at home, alone, and would often

keep their reading habits a secret from their husbands, so as not to create the

impression that they were neglecting their domestic tasks. In a related way, some of

my respondents pointed to conflicts with their partner over the control of 'sound-

space' in their home (who decides what to listen to and when), which could result in

the respondent saving her favourite music for solitary moments. Having children was

cited as having a similar effect, although for some respondents it was a cue to bring

favourite music into the public arena of the home for 'educational' purposes. The

nature of fandom, therefore, cannot be viewed separately from the life-cycle of fans

and the everyday context in which their fandom is lived.

The embeddedness of fandom in everyday life is a point that Cavicchi also takes up:

> Ordinary audience members are people who assume a temporary role before a
> stage to take a break from the hustle and bustle of their everyday lives and be
> entertained. Fans, however, are people whose role before a stage never ends; a
> concert is not a break from, but a continuing reaffirmation of, their everyday
> lives. (...) Fandom is really about moving *beyond* the musical event and
> continuing one's role as an audience member in everyday life. Fans'
> engagement with the music is not simply restricted to participation in musical
> events and also includes participation in situations and experiences that may
> be commonly characterised as 'nonmusical'. (95, 126)

To Cavicchi, then, fandom is characterised by an on-going involvement in popular

music on a day to day basis; in addition to the special, it also takes in the less

spectacular aspects of popular music. Similarly, Felski has argued for the

consideration of the 'mundane, taken-for-granted, routine qualities' of everyday life

as well as the more 'epiphanic moments' (1999/2000: 18, 29).[14] The view of fandom

as entirely spectacular or public would corroborate the view of fandom as something

that stands outside everyday life and hence as separate from mature life, as a means

of staving off 'social ageing'. Thus, in addition to experiences such as attending

concerts and trying to meet a star, everyday fandom is crucial for, amongst other

things, management of moods, relationships and aspirations. Grossberg's definition

of empowerment through fandom or affective investments is particularly useful in

this respect and will be taken up again in Chapter 4.

II.iii. The Specificity of Popular Music

Much of the work on audienceship has been done in relation to visual culture—

particularly on television.[15] Audience studies of popular music of the kind done on

television are less numerous. Instead, much of the work on music consumption has

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[14] Most audience studies take as their starting point an audience for one particular medium or one particular genre. According to Radway (1988) this means that these studies continue to see consumption practices as 'within the producer-product-receiver circuit' and do not allow the examination of the increasingly 'nomadic' character of contemporary subjectivity (363; see also Radway, 1995). Radway suggests we might understand the nature of this nomadic subjectivity in terms of the active 'articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation' of 'bits and pieces from several, often competing, discourses' (Radway, 1988: 364). How various cultural practices intersect and how popular culture is linked to, for example, one's working life can only be determined then through the examination of the whole of daily life. Or, as Ang (1996) argues, media consumption is embedded in everyday life to a far greater extent than has been assumed previously, and therefore requires a 'radical contextualism' (see also Press, 1996; Hermes, 1997). However, I would argue, since it would require an entire army of investigators, or an ethnographic team (as for instance Pierre Bourdieu has at his disposal), one can only *approach* such radical contextualism. Secondly, Bourdieu's notions of the habitus and field suggest that although subjects have the agency to change their positions in the various fields, their upwards or downward trajectories within these fields are circumscribed by forces which are not entirely in their control. Such trajectories depend on the acquisition of capital (and vice versa), and the acquisition and display of capital in turn depends partly on upbringing and education. Bourdieu's subject differs from the (postmodern) nomadic subject who seems unconstrained by her position in the 'field' and who sometimes appears to be free to make herself over at will.
[15] And much audience research draws on psychoanalytic tools of analysis. For a discussion of its limits, see the Introduction.

been done in the field of subcultures (where masculinity has not been an explicit issue), and surveys to establish consumption patterns. Therefore, the concepts that are available tend to be those of the spectator and the reader rather than the listener. What, then, is distinctive about the 'listener', in contrast to a reader or a spectator? In what way is the listener's relationship to her text different to that of the reader to her book, the spectator to the image on the screen? The differences between popular music consumption and that for other forms of popular culture/media depend on a complex set of issues. Not only are the forms of popular culture substantially different, they also differ in terms of their institutional and situational context and hence their resources for productivity.

For Ang (1996) the 'television institution' refers not only to the industry but also to the discursive system associated with television. A focus on the institutional context enables scholars to analyse the various ways in which television 'addresses and "interpellates" people as potential viewers' (22), In a related yet different way, the institutional context of popular music addresses and interpellates people as potential listeners; in other words, it calls on certain ideas of what a listener is supposed to be and do. My respondents' reaction to their interpellation as female fans proved to be a particularly crucial element of this thesis. In some ways their interpellation by the media, or by common sense ideas of fandom and women's involvement in popular music, was corroborated by the way in which they felt addressed by Kate Bush; it corroborated particular conventional ideas about femininity and sexuality, for instance.

The institutional context is closely connected to the situational one, as a medium's mode of address is informed by the context in which the product is likely to be consumed. The context of consumption has important implications for the meanings that may be generated. Television, for example, is usually consumed within a domestic context. Morley (1986) and Brunsdon (1986), for instance, have shown how power relations and the gendered division of labour in the home affect the way in which the medium is consumed, while Gray (1992) has shown this in her work on the use of VCRs in the home. Lull (1990) has identified 'structural' and 'relational' usage of television in the home. The former sees television as a means of structuring domestic time and as an accompaniment to doing household chores and other activities. Dorothy Hobson (1982), for instance, shows how her respondents would incorporate *Crossroads* into their lives by organising their other activities around it. Relational usage, on the other hand, sees television as a means of organising relations between family members. As such it can provide resources for displays of affection or dislike and for communication.[16] Television soaps, for instance, by virtue of their content and format, can be used to articulate everyday experiences, while romances, as Radway has shown, can be used as an escape or a release from those daily circumstances, as time out from one's family.

Popular music is consumed in both a domestic and a public context. The format of popular music, distinct from the continuity of daily soaps and the narrative closure of romances, means that its integration into everyday life is necessarily different too.

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[16] The emphasis on the family, however, is problematic because there are many varieties of families and domestic contexts, including single-parent families and one person households.

While not as specifically time-bound as soap operas and other television programmes (with the exception of popular music as transmitted via television and radio programmes), popular music can nevertheless be used to punctuate everyday domestic routines. Within a family or intimate relationship, however, popular music can occupy a very different position than television or reading. Popular music, as listened to on (often individually owned) radios or stereo systems, is far less a form of family entertainment than television is (or aims to be). Rather than as a resource for communication, it is often expressly used as a resource for avoiding communication; music (or 'noise') can be more explicitly used to exclude others, to create space for oneself by placing sonic boundaries to keep others at a distance. At the same time, however, it can be utilised to indicate to others that one is a particular listener and thus draw in like-minded people, or to irritate those who are not (for instance parents and neighbours).

Popular music within a public context again takes a variety of different forms and serves different social functions. To some extent, the public context is an extension of the domestic environment, in as far as here too it punctuates everyday life and can be used to both explore and make statements about oneself (not to mention the use of personal stereos that bring the private listening experience into a public context). DeNora (2000) shows how the use of music in the retail industry can suggest different ways of being to customers. The music, heard whilst trying on clothes, can prompt echoes of music in other contexts (such as discos), and hence enable the customer to try on different identities as well as clothes.

While my respondents showed interested in many forms of popular culture and media (including television, cinema and sports), their main investments were made in popular music generally and Kate Bush specifically. On-going relevance to their lives meant that where other investments had been (partially) abandoned Kate Bush's continued to be a soundtrack to their lives.

II.iv. Modes of Appreciation: Fans and Aficionados

As Cavicchi writes, 'it might be more useful to think about the *work*, rather than *worth*, of fandom, what it *does*, not what it *is*, for various people in particular historical and social moments' (9). However, while the above discussion has provided support for this stance, it does neglect the fact that for many fans issues of worth, how they are seen and see themselves in a cultural hierarchy, are crucial. If the distinction between fans and regular audience members pertains to differing levels of intensity and loyalty, and to the differing ways in which they use their knowledge, the distinction between fan and aficionado can be described in terms of manner of response. Whereas the former are invested in popular objects which are easily available, the latter are involved with objects of 'high' culture, and whereas the former are characterised by an emotional display, the latter are characterised by a cool and measured, and perhaps also a 'disembodied' response. The audience response, in contrast, is perhaps neither 'hot' nor 'cool' in this respect, but rather a temperate or intemperate enjoyment without a great degree of *investment*.

Nead (1996), writing about the female nude in art, has suggested that 'connoisseurship is a mastery of the viewing body; the triumph of the mind over the baser instincts' (238). To show restraint there where it is easiest to succumb to physical sensation is the best demonstration of cultural capital. Within this framework the popular mode of fandom is seen to involve a too close relationship to the object of admiration, lacking the detachment common to official modes of appreciation. However, as Jenson points out, in terms of actual practices and time and money spent on one's favourites, there is probably little difference between 'the Joyce scholar and the Barry Manilow fan' (1992: 21). Yet one is likely to be called an aficionado or connoisseur, where the other is called, disparagingly, a fan.

As Shuker (1998) suggests, people tend to respond to popular music 'in a physical way (e.g. singing along, clapping, foot tapping, dancing, "air guitar"); emotionally (e.g. romanticizing, letting the music "wash over you", becoming "lost in music"); and cognitively (e.g. stimulating thought, framing perceptions, processing information)' (57). These first two modes of response—physical and emotional—are probably the ones most typically associated with popular music. While one can picture a classical music lover swinging an imaginary baton or humming along to a favourite aria when listening alone in his or her home, one would not expect to find such behaviour at a classical concert (unless it was The Last Night of the Proms, of course, but even there the more 'serious' listener, seated on the balconies, is distinguished from the rowdier crowd directly in front of the stage). Adapting Nead's observation about the art connoisseur, the classical music 'fan' can be said to display a mastering of the *listening* body. Physical and emotional interaction, on the other

hand, foreground the possibility of bodily excess and the crossing of boundaries between 'self' and 'other', fan and star.[17] Practices such as membership of fan clubs, style imitation, and collecting, are ways in which popular fans are encouraged to believe that such (imaginary) intimacy can be achieved.

In Chapter 2 I shall say more about the way in which, despite the apparent difference between popular fandom and 'high' connoisseurship, the practices of distinction associated with the latter also characterise the former. In my discussion of these practices, informed by Bourdieu, I shall suggest that my respondents' 'cool' mode of appreciation is crucial to their self-perception and hence to their sense of self-respect and self-confidence. Now in the final section I want to address the distinctiveness of Kate Bush fans, by looking at some of the media coverage of Kate Bush and her fans which has, in turn, fed into fans' self-representations, their attempts at distinguishing themselves on the basis of their 'cool' mode of appreciation.

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[17] Greg, the fictional Kate Bush fan discussed at the beginning of this chapter, is a perfect illustration of the idea of the fan as too involved, too emotional, and potentially a danger to himself and others. He seems aware of this intense emotional investment when he says, 'I don't want you to think that I'm some sad lonely bloke whose life totally revolves around you. I do have a girlfriend' (Duff, 1998). This statement, however, is followed by Greg's admission that he fantasises that his girlfriend Kelly is Kate Bush: all the time, except when they have sex (which they do not have). Such an intense emotional involvement is seen as one of the main characteristics of popular as opposed to official modes of appreciation.

III. Reading Kate Bush Fandom

III.i. The Media on Kate Bush

Reports about Kate Bush and her fans in the press have been quite mixed. While most

interviews and reviews stress her precocious talent (and the fact that, by her mid-

teens, she had already written hundreds of songs), because of her secure middle class

background and her close family bond, her control over her work, slow pace of

working, wish for privacy and distrust of the media, her hippy-ish or uncool image,

and appearance and sex appeal, they tend to do so with varying degrees of admiration

or dislike. A few examples will illustrate this. 'If she is growing out of being "the

company's daughter", as one former EMI executive described her, she is showing no

signs of becoming any less her family's daughter' (Sutcliffe, 1980): 'The essence of

sensuality and childlike wonder or screeching wood nymph?' (Brown, 1989); 'A

shrewd business woman who has turned herself into a complete industry' and who

'has done her best to recreate the secure environment she grew up in—a total refuge

from the outside world' (Jones, 1990); 'A self-confessed power head, prone to control

freakery and studio-hermitdom' (Aizlewood, 1993); and 'This is English, suburban,

middle-class sexiness with a high mind' (Coleman, 1993). A parody on *Not the Nine*

O'Clock News (1980) poked fun at Bush's sexy image and her fans' motivations,[18]

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[18] To the melody of 'Them Heavy People', a song off her debut album, a Kate-look-a-like sang 'people bought my latest hits, 'cause they liked my latest tits, and they were trying hard to get inside my leotard'. The lines are a reference to Bush's early publicity material, the infamous 'leotard' pictures (see Figure 2, Appendix G).

while references to Kate Bush by comic Steve Coogan's character Alan Partridge, the sleazy Norwich Radio DJ, suggest that she is 'unhip'.[19]

Kate Bush's work, too, has been described in ambivalent terms. What is most striking here is the fact that later reports tend to be much more positive and tend to highlight the maturity and musical complexity of her work. Again, a few examples will illustrate this: 'Did you ever visit some distant relative for tea and cakes, and as a postscript have to sit through the "party piece" of their little girl, all rolling eyes and precocious gesturing? Kate Bush is a bit like that' (Robertson, 1979); 'Bush can't create anything more than a mood, a nostalgia for the resonance of art. She's like someone who flicks through the pages of a book, impatient for the pictures to come up. It has always been the way of art-rock' (Cook, 1986); '*The Sensual World* isn't much like the stuff they play on daytime Radio 1, though the title track received bags of airplay as a single. The album contains 10 songs—11 on the CD—and if it takes a while before you feel you know your way around it, it eventually dawns on you that it is magnificent' (Sweeting, 1989).

Without new releases, there has been relatively little media coverage of Kate Bush recently. But where she has been featured, reports have been mostly positive. Recent articles have included a Kate Bush retrospective in *Record Collector* (Blandford, 1999), and an account of 'The Grooming of Kate Bush' in *Q Magazine* (Black,

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[19] On *I'm Alan Partridge* (1999) Steve Coogan is shown singing 'Wuthering Heights'. On the live show *The Man Who Thinks He's It* (1998) he performs a Kate Bush medley, including 'Wow', 'Babooshka', 'Running Up That Hill', 'The Man With The Child In His Eyes', 'Don't Give Up', 'Them Heavy People' and 'Wuthering Heights' (later repeated for Red Nose Day in 1999).

1999). The former article, whilst largely appreciative of the work, questions Bush's meagre output, her decision not to tour, and expresses surprise at her fans' loyalty.[20]

Furthermore, *Q Magazine* recently presented her with a classic songwriter award (12th Annual *Q* Awards, 29 October 2001) and following her third place in *Q*'s poll on favourite female performers, an interviewer described her as 'rock's Stanley Kubrick' (Aizlewood, 2001: 92).[21]

III.ii. The Media on Kate Bush Fans

The quote from Blandford above suggests that, like Kate Bush in the early days, her fans are also regarded with a certain degree of ambivalence. Gurr (1980), writing in a review of *Never For Ever*, quips 'You don't have to be a neurotic, well-to-do airy-fairy dreamer to like Kate Bush but it probably helps', while Jane Solanas, writing in *New Musical Express*, sums up this ambivalence quite well:

> There is the school of thought that Kate Bush is for mums and dads. Freakily lovable. The ET of pop—something to laugh at when females impersonate her on TV by donning explosions of brown wig, making stabbing actions with their hands, all the while wailing like a cat-fight. And there's a school who believe Kate Bush is 'profoundly subversive,' like Fred Vermorel. (1983)

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[20] 'All this makes her enduring popularity something of a mystery. I can think of no other artist who sells so well, who has such ardent fans, yet who hasn't even granted us a live performance in twenty years' (Blandford, 1999: 69).

[21] 'As she chats to Q, she spurns the comparison (although delighted to hear it) that she is rock's Stanley Kubrick. Mystically reclusive; unwilling to surrender creative control in any aspect or march to any timetable but her own; wholly original in a genre which instinctively crushes originality; obsessively perfectionist. For both, the use of the word "genius" is not wholly hyperbole' (Aizlewood, 2001: 92).

Writing in 1985, however, she pronounces Bush as being 'at last HIP' (1985). Such

value judgements also characterise descriptions of Kate Bush fans as obsessive and

intense: 'obsessive, fascinated followers' (Shelley, 1985); '[Kate Bush's] fans are

among the most devoted in music' (Snow, 1990); 'Kate Bush's fans are legendary for

the intensity of their devotion' (Dern, 1994); 'despite the long periods out of the

spotlight, she has maintained a core following with a deep and unswerving loyalty'

(Sinclair, 1994); 'many of Kate's fans are so protective of her that even the tiniest

criticism seems to provoke a storm of controversy in Kateland' (Blandford,1999, 69).

Coleman (1993) goes as far as to intersperse his article on Bush with references to a

(fictional?) girl called Catherine who lives in the house where Kate Bush once lived

and who continues to receive mail for the singer. The letters are said to be

'increasingly weird and disturbing'.

On the basis of such media reporting, it is probably not surprising that Kate Bush fans

can be defensive about their favourite artist and their own status as fans. However,

the obsessiveness that is ascribed to fans is, crucially, rarely illustrated. These

accounts are also, for the most part, gendered masculine (with the exception of

'mums and dads' and 'suburban couples', in Solanas' account), as the repeated

references to Kate Bush's sexy image conjure up (heterosexual) male fans.[22]

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[22] This is nicely illustrated by Mick Wall's interview with Bush for *Kerrang!*, the heavy metal magazine: 'And it moved me in a way no other singing voice could; it was a delicious, indulgent moment of unspoilt pleasure, a caress that tickled me behind the ears and laid one finger on my groin' (1984).

III.iii. The Respondents

Most of my respondents, who were self-selected and self-identified Kate Bush fans, and who constituted a geographically dispersed collection of individuals, hailing not only from the UK, but also from other parts of Europe, North America, Australia and Asia, were rather invisible since they rarely gather and/or display their fandom publicly. My respondents, then, did not constitute a 'community' in the sense of Radway's 'Smithton' or in the sense of a subculture. Although some were members of a fan club and therefore saw themselves as part of a fan community, most had deliberately placed themselves outside such a community because they associated fan clubs with fanaticism and 'typical' fan practices. Yet this collection of Kate Bush fans can be viewed as a coherent 'group' because, first of all, the women's self-selection suggests that perhaps they see themselves as part of a kind of 'imagined' community (Anderson, 1991); secondly, they were quite homogeneous in terms of age, sexuality, class and race/ethnicity; and thirdly, the respondents' readings of Kate Bush and her work displayed many similarities (although it is important not to disregard their idiosyncracies), which were partly informed by the women's similar social backgrounds.

If the young female fan is disparaged and eroticised (despite attempts by feminists to reclaim this image), the mature female fan is thought not to exist, and the lower middle class has been consistently overlooked, then this leaves my respondents, most of whom were in their late twenties and thirties and were middle or lower middle class, in an awkward position. Since the mature female fan does not figure

prominently in the popular imagination, she is perhaps easily elided with the young female fan whose practices are not recognised as having distinction. If the mature female fan wishes to be acknowledged as a legitimate music lover, as a fan with cultural capital, she would need to occupy the position held by male fans from which she is excluded on account of her gender. Therefore, the women's representations of themselves as active listeners who are knowledgeable about good music, who are able to distinguish the 'authentic' from the 'manufactured', can be read as attempts at dissociating themselves from those subject positions into which female fans are usually slotted. However, their disarticulation of (mature) women fans and passivity or bad taste is accompanied by a rearticulation of precisely those qualities in others. Thus, the respondents do not challenge the derogation of the female fan, but rather their inclusion within that category.

It is difficult not to succumb to the temptation to find signs of resistant or progressive readings, especially in a male-dominated genre. When I first started this project I was particularly interested to rehabilitate the girl fan and to discover whether my respondents defined themselves as feminists and/or saw Kate Bush as a kind of feminist role model. I thought that Kate Bush's achievements within a male-dominated environment would lend themselves particularly well to such a reading (despite Kate Bush's own reservations about feminism). However, if my respondents' practices were to some degree informed by feminist ideas, this was far less straightforward than I had anticipated. In fact, I was taken aback by what I perceived as 'unfeminist' practices. My respondents' practices are evidence, then, of how

deeply ingrained some stereotypes are and suggest that researchers should not take

'resistant' readings for granted.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, then, I have briefly outlined the trajectory within studies of popular

culture from seeing the fan as passive and manipulated to support dominant ideology

(for instance in Adorno), to active, as involved in creating both meaning and identity.

This validation of popular culture and its consumers did not immediately extend to

female fans, but when it did teenage girls' investments in (male) teenybop music

were studied at the expense of the relationship between female fans and female

performers, more mature fans, and groups of (lower) middle class people. As popular

music is becoming more established, its original youthful audience is growing older.

Existing models of fandom, therefore, may no longer be able to explain how women

actually live their fandom over time.

In the second part of this chapter I have looked at the differences between fans and

members of the wider audience. While their relationship is characterised by a certain

degree of interdependence, the fan distinguishes herself through her concern with the

definitions of fandom, her long-term investment and loyalty, and the way in which

her knowledge functions as resources to deal with everyday life.

While investments in different popular cultural texts can be similarly (dis)empowering, popular music addresses itself to listeners in a specific way. A look at the media on Kate Bush suggested why some fans may be defensive about their fandom, and emphasise their 'cool' mode of appreciation at the expense of Others. The women's (lower) middle class habitus gives some credence to their appropriation of the processes of dominant culture, just as Bush's use of certain high cultural referents and the women's recognition of them does, yet this does not mean they actually receive the recognition they crave.

In the next chapter I set out the theoretical framework within which I examine these practices, drawing in particular on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and distinction. But before I do that I want to turn to the literature on subcultures where popular music consumption, as part of the wider notion of 'style', has been studied in considerable detail. However, like the music industry itself, subcultural theory has been largely a male affair; their studies have been characterised by a focus on male, working class youth cultures. What I want to do then is to look at some of the challenges to this body of work, as well as at some recent work in this field that can shed light on my respondents' practices.

Chapter 2

'Constellation of the Heart':

Women, Subcultural Formations, and the Quest for Distinction

> Laura V.: You mentioned a sense of catharsis that you find in both pop/rock and classical music. Could you say a bit more about this? (email interview, 23 July 1998)
> Florence: With the pop music of my youth, new wave and punk, there was a lot of content to provide catharsis. Much of what I liked articulated the feelings of people my age—not only were we changing into adults but there was a feeling that as a generation we didn't want to take on the values of our parents, that Britain itself had to change and accept that the old order was gone. Britain didn't have an empire, never would again, manufacturing jobs had evaporated, we were now a nation of many colors and faiths—but here we were in 1977 waving flags and celebrating the Queen's Jubilee and turning a blind eye to Apartheid. (interview, 25 July 1998)

In this quote, Florence, one of my interviewees, suggests that new wave and punk had the potential to articulate her own and her peers' feelings that were radically different from those of older generations. This view is borne out by much of the work done on popular music within the framework of subcultural theory. Studies such as those by Hebdige (1979) and Willis (1978) have emphasised the oppositional dimension of subcultural groupings that was expressed, in part, through the music around which these subcultures were based.

However, after explaining how her investment in genres such as new wave and punk resonated with her and her peers' feelings of disenchantment with contemporary society, Florence also indicated that listening to music by the likes of Kate Bush, Todd Rundgren and Steely Dan was related to other

'contradictions' in her life, in particular those of 'exploring adult relationships' and 'what will I do with my life? / what's it all about?' (email interview, 25 July 1998). This suggests not only that people often invest themselves simultaneously in a wide variety of different popular music genres, but also that they do not occupy either a singular standpoint or a uniformly resistant one vis-à-vis dominant culture. Florence's multiple investments suggests that she is both highly critical of aspects of existing cultural formations (the monarchy and residual ideas about Britain as a colonial power), yet in other respects attempts to find a place within them (through a heterosexual relationship and a career). These contradictory, but above all ongoing investments in popular music suggest that oppositional moments cannot be looked at without also taking into consideration more acquiescent ones.

In the previous chapter I noted that popular music has not been foremost on the agenda of feminist audience researchers. Whereas other media such as television (in particular soap opera) and romantic fiction have been more widely researched, women's engagement with popular music has not received the same degree of attention. In contrast, popular music consumption has received considerable attention within subcultural theory. However, traditionally subcultural studies have tended to look at consumption/fan practices quite narrowly, focusing predominantly on the music consumption and style of young and working class men, whose practices have been seen as 'spectacular' (that is, highly visible and public) and who have constituted very 'coherent' (that is, internally consistent and/or geographically specific) groupings. Women's participation in subcultures, or indeed women's own subcultures, have been largely overlooked partly because

subcultural theory has emphasised the (structural) opposition of subcultures to dominant culture and women have often been regarded as passively complicit with elements within dominant culture

However, despite the fact that it is a problematic area and has had a slender yield in terms of women and popular music, it is necessary to undertake a brief review of subcultural theory because it is the main arena in which popular music consumption and investments have been addressed. Furthermore, it has underpinned theoretical developments that provide both a basis for reconceptualising 'subcultures' and in so doing provide a useful framework in which to examine my group of respondents. To start with, subcultural theory, despite its emphasis on the 'spectacular', has validated the study of the consumption of and investment in popular music within an everyday context. Secondly, Paul Willis' notion of 'proto-community' (1993) challenges the traditional idea of a narrowly boundaried and cohesive subculture and potentially recognises previously neglected popular music consumers. Finally, the model of 'subcultural distinction', as theorised by Sarah Thornton (1995), enables the analysis of popular music consumption in terms of investedness and cultural capital without privileging 'resistance'.

In the first part of this chapter then, I discuss how 'subculture' has traditionally been theorised as a narrowly boundaried and unitary phenomenon. In practice, however, the boundaries between 'resistant' and 'conformist' practices and 'dominant' and 'subordinate' culture are often ambiguous and blurred, with people making multiple investments and engaging in contradictory practices.

Furthermore, the conventional boundaries of 'subculture'—class, masculinity, geographical location and 'resistance'—are both intrinsically problematic and exclusive. While they romanticise certain groups of people and patterns of behaviour as 'resistant' and ignore ways in which those very practices might be seen in other lights as highly conformist, they can also be seen to categorically exclude analogous practices and identifications by women, middle class people, and older people.

The association of subcultures with youth has had a number of unfortunate implications. The opposition between subcultural affiliations and 'social ageing' suggests, on the one hand, that subcultural affiliations are temporary and a mark of immaturity, and, on the other hand, that ageing is a process of increasing incorporation into dominant culture. Consequently, there is an assumption that subcultural affiliations cannot be entered into at any time of one's life, that they cannot be carried over into adult life, and that contradictory identifications/practices cannot be sustained. I want to suggest instead that such contradictory identifications/practices—the negotiation of resistance to and conformity with dominant culture—may be precisely what enables investments in popular music to be sustained in adult life.

Despite its problematic nature then, I shall look at the field of subcultural theory because it has identified practices of immediate relevance to my project and has informed other theoretical developments and bodies of work that are useful for my study. My theoretical resources, therefore, arise out of my critique of the limits of subcultural theory while at the same time they draw on its identification of those

practices and identifications that do have relevance for my project. These are, in particular, the work on everyday culture which moves away from the reproduction/resistance opposition to focus on non-spectacular but significant relationships between popular culture and social life, and which does not dismiss the practices of women, middle class people, or non-spectacular groups; Paul Willis' work on 'proto-communities', which enables me to recognise the continuities among my respondents without falling back on the narrowly boundaried social and/or geographical location specified in subcultural theory; and finally, Pierre Bourdieu's work, which also moves away from a reproduction/resistance dichotomy and which allows me to examine the practices of my respondents in relation to feminine/female cultural capital and distinction.

The second part of this chapter, then, focuses on Bourdieu's work as it has been drawn upon in this study. I shall argue that his concepts of *(cultural) capital, field* and *habitus* are useful analytical tools for explaining the way in which fans are located within social and historical networks. Until the recent publication of *Masculine Domination* (first published in French in 1998; translated in 2001), Bourdieu's sociology of everyday life has, like subcultural theory, strongly focused on class as determinant of people's position in society, often at the expense of gender. However, drawing on a number of feminist critiques, I have adapted his work and I shall propose the idea of 'feminine cultural capital' to account for the way in which women's investment in popular music can be understood in terms of a quest for distinction. The success of this quest, in terms of 'recognition' within the social field, may be variable (and dependent on the

recognition of popular music investments generally), but the *process* is very visible.

I. Subcultural Theory

I.i. Subcultural Theory and 'Resistance'

As briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter, there have been a number of problems with subcultural theory in its Birmingham CCCS form and with those studies deriving their impetus from it. To start with, many subcultural studies have been more preoccupied with style than with music. While they have almost invariably been concerned with music-based subcultures, style has often lent itself more readily to semiotic analysis (see Hebdige, 1979; see also Bennett, 2000, for a critique of this). Even Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), whose study is critical of many aspects of the CCCS framework, approached their respondents because they all 'looked strikingly different to other people in the street' (85). While this makes perfect sense for a study of subcultural *style*, it is problematic in as far as the subcultures under discussion are explicitly associated with particular popular music genres (including punk, goth and heavy metal). 'In our interviews, respondents consistently reported that it was their liking for a specific musical style that precipitated their interest in, and involvement with, the subculture with which that music was associated' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 140). Such an emphasis on style elides investment in style with investment in music, and while the two may be seen to overlap they should not be conflated.

Furthermore, subcultural theory is often overly reliant on theorists' interpretations and obscures the views of members themselves.[1] Widdicombe and Wooffitt, on the other hand, explore in depth how their respondents did not always confirm the identity that the authors imputed to them on the basis of style. Their respondents often resisted 'category ascription' and suggested that subcultural affiliation constituted only one facet of their identity. This highlights the danger of viewing subcultural affiliation as singular and all-encompassing and obscures the fact that the relevance of it may depend on, amongst other factors, social context.

As Sardiello (1998) suggests in his study of 'Deadhead' (Grateful Dead) subculture, 'many of the problems in studies of subcultural phenomena revolve around identifying what the boundaries are and how they are maintained, or modified, over time' (122). These boundaries, as it turns out, have frequently been drawn between male and female, working class and middle class, urban and suburban, coherent and loose, and so on, with the former of these binaries being privileged. Yet, contrary to what may be deduced from this, the definition of 'subculture' given by Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1998; first published in 1976) was sufficiently broad to encompass the experiences and practices of large sections of society:

> Sub-cultures, therefore, take shape around the distinctive activities and 'focal concerns' of groups. They can be loosely or tightly bounded. Some sub-cultures are merely loosely-defined strands or 'milieux' within the parent culture: they possess no distinctive 'world' of their own. Others develop a clear, coherent identity and structure. (...) When these tightly-

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[1] See Hebdige's famous admission in relation to his study of punk that 'it is highly unlikely (...) that the members of any of the subcultures described in this book would recognise themselves reflected here' (1979: 139).

defined groups are also distinguished by age and generation, we call them
'youth sub-cultures'. (Clarke *et al.*, 1998: 14)

However, the willingness to accept some groups and not others as subcultures has
often been dependent on elements other than 'distinctive activities and "focal
concerns"' (Clarke *et al.*, 1998: 14). Both Clarke *et al.*'s work and many
subsequent subcultural studies have tended to focus on very specific social groups
only, namely those with a 'clear, coherent identity and structure' and whose
members are young. Because of this narrow focus, subcultural scholars have often
failed to pay adequate attention to the complexity of subcultural practices, which
encompass both elements of resistance or opposition to dominant structures in
society and elements of conformity, as well as multiple and contradictory
investments and practices.

Sarah Thornton (1995) has pointed out that 'the Birmingham work ignored the
development of subcultures, considering them only when they were fully mediated
and ripe for critical interpretation' (152). As such, the definition of 'subculture' as
coherent and unitary, and in some sense finished, also potentially obscures the
diverse individual motivations people may have for joining such a group; it
obscures the diversities of membership experience and the ways in which
participation might have been formative of the subculture. Again Widdicombe
and Wooffitt, conducting their research on the punk subculture more than ten
years after it first emerged, identified a complex relationship between accepted
generalisations about the past meanings of punk and challenges to those
generalisations through reference to contemporary punks' own experiences and

perceived exceptions to the rule. They thereby challenged the idea that punk has

'*a unitary meaning*' (187).

Such references to individual experience also have important implications for

subcultural theory's emphasis on resistance. As the title of *Resistance Through*

Rituals suggests, its focus was firmly on the romanticised notion of 'resistance',

despite the fact that subcultures are positioned within a relationship to dominant

culture as well as the (dominated) 'parent' culture. To qualify as a subculture, a

group must be both identifiably different from its parent culture and have things in

common with it. Therefore Clarke *et al.* propose the analysis of a '*double*

articulation of youth sub-cultures', that is, the analysis of a subculture's

articulation to both its parent culture and to the dominant culture (1998: 15). As a

subculture belongs to a parent culture which, in a hegemonic process, reinforces

some elements of dominant culture, such a subculture, rather than being only

oppositional or resistant in relation to the dominant culture, is likely to do the

same as its 'parent' in some respects.[2]

Such complex, 'double articulations', however, are often neglected in studies of

youth subcultures where the concept of 'homology', used by both Hebdige (1979)

and Willis (1978) to explain the 'fit' between experience and music, has been

privileged. The concept of homology suggests that subcultures are, rather than

'lawless forms', highly ordered constructions: 'each part is organically related to

other parts and it is through the fit between them that the subcultural member

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[2] The metaphor of 'parent'/'child' also presupposes a generation gap, locating dominant culture
with 'older people' or adults and subcultures with young people or children. This implies
immaturity and the notion that ageing automatically implies conformity or entry into dominant
culture. I shall come back to this below.

makes sense of the world' (Hebdige, 1979: 113). Homology is a highly seductive notion, as it makes subcultures which are already coherent on account of members' age, gender, class and geographical location appear even more tightly structured, and allows scholars to analyse such groups in a neat, non-contradictory manner.

The non-contradictory characterisation of subculture and its narrow boundaries (drawn around class, masculinity, geographical location and 'resistance') are both intrinsically problematic and exclusive. While romanticising certain groups of people and patterns of behaviour as 'resistant', they ignore the ways in which those practices might also be seen as conformist. For instance, the way in which male members of a subculture may be viewed as rebelling against their subordinate class position does not imply a disinvestment in the gender inequalities of conventional masculinity. Furthermore, to credit music-based subcultures with resistance or opposition to dominant values is problematic because it is unlikely that all members of a particular subculture hail from the same class background and therefore have a similar relationship to bourgeois culture.[3] The conventional definition of subculture can also be seen to categorically exclude practices and identifications by women, middle class people, and older people. Too much emphasis on the way in which subcultural

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[3] The emphasis on resistance is also problematic because of the nature of the music industry from which subcultural formations take their materials. Considering the historical configuration of pop and rock music—its origins in the 1950s, when a new generation of teenagers distinguished themselves from their elders through consumption of goods aimed specifically at them—pop and rock have lent themselves particularly well to the articulation of difference and disenchantment, and perhaps even resistance. However, at the same time, most of the music available for appropriation has been made within the confines of a capitalist music industry whose prime aim is profit. As Lewis (1987) points out, popular music could be seen as 'a strong supporter of the status quo', either because musicians have received financial support from those in dominant positions in society, or else because music takes attention away from political issues (198). Similarly, Grossberg (1992a) sees rock fans as part of dominant culture since they do not necessarily pay

formations have been positioned in opposition to dominant culture has obscured

the differential access boys and girls have to these formations and has seen both

middle class and older people as complicit with dominant culture.

Walkerdine (1997) has criticised the work on working class culture by left cultural

studies scholars because, as she suggested, they always attempted to find 'signs of

something' (5; see also my earlier discussion in Chapter 1 on the development of

the study of popular culture). She suggests that when they countered the

descriptions of working class people as duped with descriptions of their creative

opposition, they merely substituted one distorted view with another:

> It has long seemed to me (...) that cultural studies was only interested in
> those aspects of cultural production which could be understood as
> subversive of and resistant to the status quo. Hence, working-class youth
> resisting through rituals, anti-school lads and safety-pinned punks all had
> their place. But this seems to me like nothing so much as the fascination
> for, and fetishization of, the Other. (Walkerdine, 1997: 19)

Walkerdine explains that she experienced working class culture very differently—

'I couldn't find in my history any of the exotic sub-cultural resistance that cultural

studies wanted to find'—and felt 'dully conformist' after reading such studies

(1997: 19, 20). Instead Walkerdine wants to write about the 'ordinary working

people, who have been coping and surviving, who are formed at the intersection

of these competing claims to truth, who are subjects formed in the complexities of

everyday practices' (1997: 21). She wants to understand the meanings of popular

culture for those people who cannot be seen as either 'romantic rebels' or

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attention to ideological questions. Popular music can be articulated to politically oppositional
views, but this is by no means a given.

'continually resisting audiences' and examine the 'seesaw of progressive and reactionary' (1997: 22).

Although I am researching the cultural practices of a group of women who are largely middle class, Walkerdine's critique of cultural studies' quest to locate resistance is nevertheless extremely pertinent. As I shall go on to examine in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, my respondents' practices are neither wholly conformist— although some (sub)cultural scholars might dismiss them as such on account of their middle class position—nor wholly resistant. Following Walkerdine, then, I want to look at the way in which my respondents' investments in Kate Bush are caught up in their attempts at coping with everyday demands. At times this will involve opposition to existing structures and discourses, at other times it will involve reinforcement.[4]

In the next two sections I shall look in more detail at the questions of women and 'social ageing' in relation to subcultures.

I.ii. Subcultural Theory and Women

In their pioneering article 'Girls and Subcultures' (1991; first published in 1976), McRobbie and Garber examined the relationship of girls to subcultures and asked

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[4] In relation to this it is also important to note the absence, or where they are present the derogation, of the (lower) middle class in studies of popular culture. Clarke et al. suggest that middle class subcultures, or counter-cultures, differ from working class ones in the sense that they try to subvert the dominant structure by finding alternatives to the way in which society is structured (e.g. family configuration, ways of living, and so on), rather than by negotiating their position within it. As such, middle class counter-cultures pose potentially a greater risk to the maintenance of dominant power structures. Yet despite this, they have seldom been studied in detail. Hebdige suggests that middle class subcultural resistance is both more articulate and more explicitly political, and therefore more easily read. I shall come back to this below.

questions concerning their different roles and the relationship between subcultures and mainstream culture. McRobbie and Garber suggest that girls organise their leisure time differently partly because their access to the 'street' is compromised. The idea of a 'spectacular' subculture, for example, suggests visibility both in the sense of being 'public' and having a style (of dress, hair, dance, etc.) which is noticeably different from that of the 'mainstream'. These two elements of the 'spectacular' are closely linked. As McRobbie points out, in its general meaning the notion of style is primarily linked to women (for example, make-up and dress), yet in most subcultural accounts, as it does in Hebdige's, it structurally excludes them (McRobbie, 1991: 73). McRobbie and Garber (1991) suggest that girls' cultures are not street cultures. As girls are not safe on the street they therefore do not have the same freedom to loiter there as their male contemporaries have.[5] It is for this reason, they suggest, that the activities which girls participate in are low risk and take place in the home, for instance through an investment in teenybop culture where girls can safely explore their developing sexuality. Girls' compromised presence on the street also means that they do not have the same freedom to dress in highly visible and possibly controversial ways as men have, as this might easily be constructed as too overtly sexual and connote sexual availability.

McRobbie and Garber describe girls' investment in teenybop culture as a 'mainstream and commercially-based subculture', with the proviso that these mainstream tastes should not necessarily be seen as 'reflective (...) of a kind of

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[5] This is not to say that young men are necessarily safe on the street. In fact, young men may be more likely to end up in Accident & Emergency wards after a night out. However, physical aggression is often seen as something through which young men can prove their masculinity and

cultural conservatism' (1991: 12 – 13). Indeed, they argue, rather than being merely passive, there are certain negotiative processes at work in hero worship. Similar to Garratt's (1994) and Ehrenreich *et al.*'s (1992) attempts to reclaim the activities of girl fans, McRobbie and Garber wish to claim such activities as possibly subcultural in their own right. However, in spite of this intervention, few studies have actually seen such girl cultures as subcultural. The associations of 'subculture' with male cultures often remain too strong. Lewis (1990), for example, views female fandom as fundamentally different from subcultures because of the implicit assumption that subcultures are male, their overarching focus on class as a determining factor, and their contempt for mainstream mass media. She does this in spite of some striking similarities between male subcultures and the Madonna and Cyndi Lauper fans she looked at.

Of course McRobbie and Garber's critique was of its time, as indeed were the studies they criticised. A look at more recent developments such as Riot Girl and the emergence of bands such as the Spice Girls may perhaps require a rethink about girls' position in or absence from subcultures.

According to Kearney (1998), McRobbie's and Garber's assertion about the possibility of girl-only cultures 'reads like a recipe for riot grrrl' (149). She suggests that Riot Grrrl is a departure from the way in which teenage girls have traditionally been perceived within the ideology of romance, as theorised by, for instance, McRobbie (1991) and Hudson (1984):

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establish control. This function of fighting and acting 'hard' is discussed by Joyce Canaan and Paul Willis in *Common Culture* (1993).

> Creating a new form of collective identification and political agency for
> female youth, riot grrrls seriously challenge the popular understanding of girls
> as boy-hungry mall rats and female youth cultures as 'bedroom cultures,'
> where boys are considered girls' primary fantasy/identification figures and
> romance and marriage are thought to be their only goals for the future. Indeed,
> riot grrrls have created a community where boys are not 'on the side' (...);
> they are removed from the equation altogether. (Kearney, 1998: 156-7)

However, Kearney chooses to look at the riot grrrl movement outside of the context of popular music, because it is precisely riot grrrl's musical output which has received attention in the media at the expense of its radical separatist politics. 'Studies of youth continue to privilege the more visible (and audible) components of youth culture' (Kearney, 1998: 162). Indeed, this may precisely be why Riot Grrrl received so much attention (see for instance Gottlieb and Wald, 1994; Leonard, 1997; Coates, 1997a). Riot Girl is, unlike the girls' culture McRobbie and Garber identify, a very public phenomenon; it is characterised, not only by a musical style inspired by punk rock, but also by the spectacular display of girls' bodies and slogans. The intense coverage Riot Girl received, therefore, reinforced some of the conventional understandings of subculture and was covered at the expense of other manifestations of girls' involvement in music. It also reinforced the notion of popular music as a youth activity, as Riot Girl not only saw itself as separate from men, but also from mature women.

The idea of girls' culture based on girls' investment in teenybop music returned in the late 1990s, albeit with the significant difference that many of the performers providing the fantasy material were now female. The phenomenal success of the Spice Girls has resulted in an increasing number of girl groups and singers.[6]

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[6] These include All Saints, B*Witched, Hepburn, Atomic Kitten, Lolly, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Billie Piper, Samantha Mumba, Daphne and Celeste, and many more, as well as mixed groups such as Steps, S Club 7 and Hearsay.

Although these have by no means replaced the traditional male teenybop stars discussed by Frith and McRobbie and McRobbie and Garber,[7] these girls and young women offer the expression of alternative desires for girls. These female singers (for they are invariably singers, they rarely play instruments and only sometimes (co-)write their own material) provide girls with both alternative objects of romantic desire as well as same-sex figures of identification. Moreover, the young female fans for these bands, like the generally somewhat older Riot Grrrls, can be identified by a distinct style, copied from the various band members. For example, all members of the Spice Girls sport their own particular style, enabling fans to adopt their favourite persona.

However, these girls' responses to their position in society—through consumption of a type of popular music which is commercially rather than critically successful—are seldom taken seriously and too often dismissed as conformist and mainstream (even though (pre-)teenage girls cannot be seen as unequivocally 'dominant' or 'privileged'). Their modes of consumption may be seen as remaining within a kind of female cultural ghetto.

I would suggest that the reason why bands such as the Spice Girls and their fans have not received the type of coverage given to the Riot Grrrls has been due in part to what Evans (2000) terms 'the potential for "girl power" to read as both liberating and oppressive' (1). Both Evans and Dibben (1999) argue that while advocating a kind of feminism in the form of 'girl power', stressing the

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[7] In the wake of the phenomenal success of Take That came acts such as Boyzone, 5ive, Westlife, Backstreet Boys, Rickie Martin, 'N Sync, Hanson, A1 and so on.

importance of girls' friendships,[8] and perhaps even posing a challenge to the (compulsory) heterosexuality signified by male teenyboppers (by inspiring passion in their girl fans), the Spice Girls also draw on conventional patriarchal images of femininity and sing about heterosexual relationships. As Dibben suggests, in the Spice Girls' discourse 'no single, unambiguous subject position is encouraged' (1999: 348), which makes them vulnerable to both criticism and praise. But whereas the Spice Girls can indeed be seen as drawing on both feminist and patriarchal images and as deliberately contradictory, many of the groups following in their footsteps are perhaps less conscious of this divide.

I.iii. Subcultural Theory and 'Social Ageing'

Just as the 'process by which subcultures crystallize' has seldom been subject to analysis (Thornton, 152), subcultural involvement has characteristically not been seen as something that can last. The focus on one moment of spectacular resistance which is then incorporated—either through adoption of its style by mainstream culture or by the young people growing up and giving up—precludes the possibility of an ongoing involvement in popular music and implies that ageing is a process of increasing incorporation into dominant culture. Weinstein (1991), for example, dismisses mature heavy metal fans as 'wistful emigrants' from the subculture they once belonged to (111). This is despite their continuing involvement in heavy metal.

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[8] The Spice Girls' film, *Spice World* (1997), offers a good example of the importance of girl friendships. The film centres around the five 'girls' (or young women) preparing for a concert at the Royal Albert Hall, whilst reminiscing about their humble beginnings as a band and pondering on their futures. In the end the girls nearly miss their concert because they are supporting a friend who is in hospital having a baby. The Spice Girls, it is suggested, put friendship above success. Apart from a budding romance between their manager and personal assistant, heterosexual

Instead I want to argue that a consideration of both resistance and conformity within subcultures allows us to think more positively about the potential for members of subcultures to continue to draw sustenance from their investments. Even if subcultures are seen as 'oppositional, in a structural sense' (Clarke *et al.*, 1998: 44), their analysis would be incomplete if not done in conjunction with their more acquiescent moments. Such a nuanced analysis then may give voice to the complex experiences of groups other than the ones usually favoured by subculturalists.

This is where my project differs from those who see the subcultural response, or indeed a strong investment in popular music, as only a temporary career and who are pessimistic about the potential for further development. Because the way in which people carry subcultural commitments into adult life has not been studied—other than seeing them, as does Thornton (1995), as a way of warding off 'social ageing'—it has been assumed that they cannot be combined with the adoption of adult responsibilities. In many ways my respondents' practices are similar to those of subcultural youths who are usually the subjects of studies such as these. But what sets them apart from these subcultural youths is the fact that this response is not a temporary one—one that will eventually prove inadequate or become incorporated—but rather one that is carried through into adult life. I would like to show how fandom for these women plays a role in the negotiations required in adult life.

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relationships are absent from the film. Their friend has been abandoned by the father of her child, so it is the girls' friendship which is shown to be more worthwhile and lasting.

Because of the limits to subcultural theory outlined above I have turned to developments arising out of it that allow me to reconceptualise 'subculture' in ways that are able to account for my respondents' practices of distinction. Recent work, highlighting active lifestyle consumer choices and hence self-constructed identity, on the one hand, and the role of popular music in everyday life, may provide useful ways forward. It is to these that I now turn.

II. Music in Everyday Life

The study of popular music's place in daily or everyday life,[9] a development that also came out of subcultural studies, provides a useful complementary approach to subcultural theory. While it has some similarities to subcultural theory—most notably in the emphasis on resistance in some studies—it is better suited to account for both the less spectacular aspects of everyday music use and the individual experience of music. As Charles Keil, editor of *My Music*, points out in his introduction, none of the interviewees in this work could 'easily be clustered into subcultures' since the way in which people relate to music is idiosyncratic; they create their own 'idioculture' (1). Such a view of musical taste and practice, according to Keil, counters people's tendency to 'think of the musical tastes of others in highly stereotyped ways that are based on layered prejudices or

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[9] The editors of *My Music* speak of the place of music in 'daily' life, while DeNora (2000), for instance, examines 'everyday' life. To all effects the two volumes examine the same phenomenon, yet it is worth noting that Grossberg (1992a) makes a distinction between 'daily' and 'everyday' life on the basis of people's relationship to necessity. He reserves the term 'daily life' for those for whom it is a struggle to provide life's bare essentials, whereas 'everyday life', in his view, suggests the availability of both time and money to invest in cultural activities.

prejudgements' (2). Furthermore, it also counters the tendency of cultural critics to find commonalities wherever they look.

More so than subcultural theory, the consideration of music in everyday life is capable of accounting for the way in which music is used as a resource for the construction of (individual) identity; or as DeNora (2000) puts it, how it provides 'material-cultural resources for feeling, being and doing' (129). DeNora suggests that 'in turning to different musics and the meaningful particles that "reflect" and register self-identity, that provide a template of self, individuals are also choosing music that produces self-images that are tenable, that seem doable, habitable' (DeNora, 2000, 73). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, writing on everyday culture and fandom does not necessarily over-emphasise the fans' everyday creativity and resistance, nor does it give the impression that fandom and everyday life are somehow mutually exclusive. The notion of listeners choosing music that allows them to take on 'tenable' self-images, then, enables the understanding of the on-going role of popular music fandom in maturing and settling down.

However, while the 'music in daily life' project provides fascinating vignettes of the way in which people incorporate music into their everyday lives and as such provides important ways of understanding the on-going role of music in individual people's lives, it does not adequately explain the commonalities and continuities between people's music use. DeNora (2000), on the other hand, does point toward the capacity of music to build communities and suggests that it can cultivate

A new and 'postmodern' form of communitas—a co-subjectivity where two or more individuals may come to exhibit similar modes of feeling and acting, constituted in relation to extra-personal parameters, such as those provided by musical materials. Such co-subjectivity differs in important ways from the more traditional (and modern) notion of 'inter-subjectivity', which presumes interpersonal dialogue and the collaborative production of meaning and cognition (...) co-subjectivity is the result of isolated *individually* reflexive alignments to an environment and its materials' (149 – 50).

This postmodern notion of co-subjectivity, however, is problematic in that it presupposes already constituted individuals and does not see the formation of the individual as a function of *practice* (which then produces a distinctive habitus). For Bourdieu on the other hand the individual is 'intersubjective', and not the self-made 'fragmented' or 'nomadic' subject of postmodern theory who then develops a co-subjectivity with others. It is for this reason that I want to suggest that a focus on the individual everyday use of music, combined with the potential for community formation as suggested by Willis' 'intersubjective' concept of 'proto-communities', provides a useful way of understanding my respondents' fandom.

III. Proto-communities

The notion, first broached by McRobbie and Garber, that mainstream girl cultures might be seen as subcultural in their own right, has significant implications. As Bennett (1999) suggests, if the category of subculture is opened up to the extent that all music and style based groupings are recognised as subcultures, then the category would lose its meaning. 'Thus, if we are to accept that there are both *mainstream* and *non-mainstream* subcultures, what are the differences between

them, and how do we go about determining such differences?' (Bennett, 1999: 604).[10]

One of the basic elements of a subculture—a sense of 'community'—be this local or 'translocal' and the reflexivity required to know that one is part of a larger group—is largely absent from my respondents' practices (with the exception of a small minority who are members of a fan club or mailing list and cherish this aspect of their fandom). Therefore, while some of subculture's analytical concepts might be retained, I would like to propose the concept of a 'proto-community', as theorised by Paul Willis (1993) as a more useful term.[11] While not based on the premise of a visible, locally specific and self-aware community, it does not preclude the possibility of one either.

Willis looks at the uses people make of the 'everyday,' the symbolic creativity found in the use of popular and everyday culture. This, he argues, is 'a necessary part' of life 'because it is an integral part of *necessary work*—that which has to be done every day, that which is not extra but essential to ensure the daily production and reproduction of human existence' (1993: 9). Willis also argues that the spectacular subculture may be a thing of the past, because in contrast to the subcultures of earlier decades nowadays 'all style and taste cultures, to some

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[10] Bennett (1999) rejects the term subculture as a useful analytical tool, as he sees collectivities that are based on shared musical and/or stylistic interests as fluid rather than fixed (599). 'Subculture', for Bennett, has become little more than a convenient catch-all term, and he proposes the term 'tribe' or *'tribus'* instead in order to convey the more temporary and heterogeneous character of contemporary sociality.

[11] *Common Culture* (1993; first published in 1990) is based on 'an enquiry into the cultural activities of young people' commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation and conducted in 1987 and 1988 (vii). The research for the project was conducted by Joyce Canaan, Graham Murdock, Janice Winship, Mica and Orson Nava, Simon Frith, Angela McRobbie and Kobena Mercer, but later written up and/or edited by Paul Willis and Simon Jones. The book's theoretical chapters constitute an extension of the article with which Willis initiated the project, 'Art or Culture?'

degree or another, express something of a general trend to find and make identity outside the realm of work' (16). Or as Muggleton (1997) suggests, while style has proliferated to such an extent since the 1980s that it has given '"active" consumers greater scope for their creative and aesthetic outlets' (173), this proliferation of styles has important repercussions for subcultural coherence. Previously only a few spectacular groups did so; now, according to Willis, we are all, to a greater or lesser extent, engaged in subcultural activity. To describe the loose groupings of people who engage in such leisure activities Willis uses the term 'proto-community.'

Proto-communities are not based on a fixed core of participants nor centred around pre-established rules; their origins and aims are different from those of 'organic' communities, less settled and more spontaneous. However, as Willis suggests

> [They] may sometimes have organic features in that they involve, for instance, direct communication around a 'consuming interest' (listening, dancing, talking) in certain types of music or in a variety of forms of producing music. They may arise in eclectic combinations of consumers who discover, incidentally, that they share a taste or interest as they meet in friendship, neighbourhood, school or workplace groups. (1993: 141)

As such, the concept is particularly suitable for describing the many ways in which fandom can be lived, especially when this fandom is centred around acts which are neither mainstream nor contemporary, and when it involves fans who are geographically dispersed and/or do not fit the profile of the youthful fan.

Willis further suggests that proto-communities may be 'serial': 'Metaphorically, a "serial community" is a spaced-out queue of people rather than a talking circle. The same person, or bits of them, may simultaneously be in several such "queues"' (1993: 141). My respondents, for instance, were mostly an unconnected 'group' of people who would not normally communicate with one another—their only bond a passion for Kate Bush. Yet despite their dispersed nature they have the potential to develop into 'a living circle of communication' or a 'sensuous community' (1993: 141). For example, my respondents may come across other fans when they access a web site dedicated to Kate Bush or when they subscribe to an email discussion list. These 'meetings' may lead to 'virtual' as well as 'real life' communities. As we shall see in the discussion of fan clubs, internet and email in Chapter 4, this may indeed happen. For instance, fans gather to celebrate Kate Bush's birthday in little groups around the world, and gay and lesbian fans may suddenly discover each other's presence on the Love-Hounds discussion list.

However, while Willis' belief that we are all involved in symbolic creativity opens up the field for research into other groups, his study does not do full justice to his insight, as it retains the focus on both working class and youth culture:

> We would claim that many of the processes which we discuss hold true as tendencies in middle-class experience too, though in different and more contradictory relation to and producing different effects from school, work, the family and inherited 'cultural capital', and are major cross-class cultural levelling forces. (Willis, 1993: 8)

Furthermore, he focussed on young people 'not because they are "different," locked into some biological stage that enforces its own social condition, but simply because they provide the best and most crucial examples of our argument'

(1993: 7). The teenage and early adult years are important, according to Willis, because it is during these years that people 'form symbolic moulds through which they understand themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives (1993: 7). Not only does this view ignore the fact that people continue to develop well into their adult lives (for instance, the majority of women who become mothers do so beyond their teenage and early adult years), but by doing this Willis misses the opportunity to assess what actually happens during 'the rest of their lives.' This focus on young people does not allow us to ascertain whether their symbolic activities are carried through to later years, or indeed whether the 'symbolic moulds' which are formed prove to be suitable to adulthood. DeNora's understanding of 'tenable', 'doable', 'habitable' self-images, on the other hand, suggests that some musics and styles are discarded as unsuitable, while others are retained (and modified) and new ones adopted that appear to articulate better with the demands of adulthood (including amongst other things a career, intimate relationships, and parenthood).

Yet despite Willis' continued focus on youth and working class culture, the concept of proto-community moves away from the conventional understanding of subculture and as such enables us to consider those groups of people who are not coherent enough to merit the label subculture but who do form a kind of loosely structured community on account of shared readings and social characteristics. As I shall show in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the extent to which my respondents do form 'sensuous communities' is limited, because many shy away from 'typical' fan activities on account of their associations with 'fanaticism', and tend not to bring their fandom into the public arena very much. Yet the women's investments in

Kate Bush and their readings of her work suggest an intensity which warrants serious consideration. Thinking of them as a 'proto-community' provides one way of doing so.[12]

In the second part of this chapter I shall look at how my respondents' readings are informed by their position in different 'fields', their amounts of 'capital' and their 'habitus'. I hope to show that their responses are not random, but are closely correlated with their position in both the field of popular music and the general social field. However, while the recognition of distinction depends on a mutually recognised hierarchy of tastes, the proliferation of cultural products makes it increasingly difficult for consumers to impress others with their tastes. If as Muggleton suggests, people can move between styles as they wish, and do not need to worry about getting it right, then the making of distinctions becomes increasingly difficult. If all styles are equally (un)fashionable or (un)acceptable, this would render everyone equally (un)distinguished, or as Muggleton points out, it becomes 'problematic to make strong comparisons with out-groups' (181).

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[12] A number of other terms have been used to describe either tightly or loosely defined groups of people who are involved in popular culture and popular music. A concept such as 'interpretive community' is useful in the sense that it allows for the explanation of practices by geographically and demographically dispersed groups. For example, it was employed by Radway (1991) to account for the reading practices of the women of 'Smithton'. An in-depth knowledge of the generic conventions of the Romance genre allowed them to give broadly similar readings.

An alternative concept, one that is increasingly drawn upon in popular music studies, is that of a 'scene'. Straw (1991) distinguishes a scene from 'older notions of a musical community', a community which is both more demographically stable and involved in 'an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms said to be rooted within a geographically specific heritage' (373). A scene, on the other hand, is a much looser formation, a 'cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization' (373). This is not to say that scenes are not locally specific, often they are, as a description such as the Seattle scene (home of Grunge and bands such as Nirvana and Soundgarden) suggests, yet the cultural knowledge associated with the music is often 'translocal'. I have not drawn upon this concept as it seems better suited to the study of musical production and less so to that of the productivity of consumption.

Whether or not my respondents' claims to distinction are recognised remains to be seen, yet their practices are very visible and require consideration.

IV. Bourdieu, Women, and the Field of Popular Music

The focus on resistance or rebellion has overshadowed, as we have seen, the involvement in popular music of groups of fans that are not male, working class and young, and therefore thought to be part of the 'mainstream'. However, the practices of the mature female Kate Bush fans I have looked at, who were mainly in their late twenties and thirties, largely middle or lower middle class, and predominantly white and heterosexual, are extremely contradictory; they both challenge and reinforce elements of dominant culture. As women engaging with the products of a cultural industry which has been (and remains) largely male-dominated—both in terms of production and consumption—they feel the need to challenge certain traditional images, for instance that of the indiscriminating or hysterical teenage girl fan and that of the male connoisseur. Kate Bush, as I shall explain in more detail in Chapter 5, enables them to do this as she can be seen as a virtuoso musician in a genre where women have historically had fairly limited roles. However, in order to challenge the conceptions that suggest that their involvement in popular music is 'wrong', and to establish themselves as the ones with distinguished taste, the women in turn rely on the deeply problematic practices of self-distinction at the expense of others. In so doing they reconstruct and appear to validate the sexist 'othering' categories they reject for themselves.

The desire to be seen as 'serious' listeners and the practices of distinction this entails will be the subject of the following sections. In order to examine these practices I shall draw on the work of Pierre Bourdieu whose concepts of *capital* (cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital), *field*, and *habitus* can explain— better than much subcultural theory—the contradictory nature of the way in which the women live their fandom. For these women, whose place in the field of popular music is in question by the very fact of their gender, it is extremely difficult to achieve distinction as specifically *female* fans. However, through the analysis of the gendered dimension of capital and the habitus I hope to argue that their partly 'masculinised habitus', in combination with the tactical employment of 'feminine cultural capital' (see Lovell, 2000; Skeggs, 1997), enables them to achieve at least some of this distinction.

IV.i. Pierre Bourdieu: Capital, Field and Habitus

One of the difficulties of accurately defining Bourdieu's concepts is that he has, on various occasions, given different definitions himself, arguing that his 'concepts have no definition other than systemic ones, and are designed to be *put to work empirically in systematic fashion'* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96).[13] His concepts of capital, field and habitus, then, can only be defined in relation to a particular situation. My aim in this section, and indeed in the remainder of this chapter, is therefore neither to give a comprehensive overview of Bourdieu's entire oeuvre nor to faithfully follow in Bourdieu's footsteps as far as the application of his concepts goes. Instead, it is to subject his concepts to critical

appropriation and to use them as tools in my analysis of fan practices (see Moi, 1995). It is my hope that this process will lead to a better understanding of these practices, while also shedding some light on Bourdieu's work.

Bourdieu identifies four different forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. The first of these, economic capital, is probably the most straightforward one and refers to the amount of wealth a person has (both inherited and current income). Cultural capital, the type of capital that is my primary concern here, refers to a person's cultural knowledge.[14] It exists in 'embodied, objectified, or institutionalized' forms (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119); in other words, it can be found in the way a person carries herself or displays her knowledge, in cultural objects (such as CDs), or in the form of (academic) qualifications. Social capital refers to the network of people one knows, one's connections. Finally, symbolic capital is the term for any of the other forms of capital as they are legitimated and can confer power on its bearer.

This legitimation can only occur within a specific *field* where the form of capital under consideration has currency. A field (not to be confused with the common-sense understanding of the term as an area of interest or study, or its ethnographic understanding of being 'in the field') can be described as a structured social space in which people occupy different positions (determined by their 'habitus' and their sum of different capitals) which are always in the process of being contested

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[13] For this discussion I have drawn extensively on Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). It is a particularly useful work because in his interviews with Wacquant Bourdieu does precisely what he is otherwise reluctant to do, that is define his concepts.

[14] Bourdieu suggests that 'to give the notion its full generality' cultural capital might be called '*informational capital*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119). This highlights the term's applicability beyond the strictly 'Cultural'. The use of economic metaphors, it must be noted, does

and redefined. The relative value of different types of capital varies for each different field, although there are some forms of capital—'the fundamental species of capital' (in other words, economic capital)—that are valid in all fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98). Bourdieu has used the analogy of a 'game' to explain his understanding of a field, explaining that all players invest in their game and agree on its importance.[15] Each player in the field, then, has a certain amount of capital (a combination of economic, cultural and social capital) and, depending on the legitimacy of this capital and her amount of symbolic capital or power, this determines her position in the field. However, this is not a constant, and the player can compete with the other players in the game to increase her capital, and thereby to improve her position.

This process, however, differs depending on the level of institutionalisation of the fields in question. The difference can be illustrated by reference to the classical music field on the one hand and the popular music field on the other. While players in the former usually require formal training and qualifications and must be appointed to their positions, those in the latter do not. Furthermore, a more formally institutionalised field such as the classical music field has a far more strongly established canon. The field of popular music, in contrast, is more informal, even if it has figures of authority (such as record company personnel,

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not suggest that money is the linchpin of the practices which are played out in the various fields, although it can play an important role.

[15] However, he emphasises that unlike a game, 'a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation', and that its 'rules' or 'regularities' are 'not explicit and codified' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98). He explains: 'we have *stakes* (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an *investment in the game, illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a "contract", that the game is worth playing, that it is "worth the candle," and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98).

critics and DJs) who can act as gatekeepers and whose function is similar to those in legitimate fields. The ways in which to improve one's position in such an uninstitutionalised field, then, are more difficult to identify.

An important determinant of an agent's position in a field and her chances of improving this position is the habitus. Bourdieu defines the habitus as 'a system of dispositions', as a set of unspoken, internalised rules which is formed over time through upbringing and education and which enables an agent to react to different situations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 135). The habitus, although deeply sedimented, is not constant and always in the process of changing to allow adaptation to new situations:

> Habitus is not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal! (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133)

However, Bourdieu also suggests that people are likely to find themselves in situations that agree with their previously formed habitus.

The concepts of capital, field and habitus are deeply intertwined. A field, according to Bourdieu, is a 'relatively autonomous social microcosm[ ]' with its own internal logic, of which there are many in 'highly differentiated societies' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97). The identification of such fields, and their inter-relationships, is difficult. Indeed, this is precisely the issue which is *always at stake in the field itself* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 100). The actions of the players in any given field determine what is at stake in that field and which forms

of capital can bestow symbolic power. People are always players in various fields, in each of which they are likely to have different amounts of capital and therefore occupy different positions.

A field, then, has its own internal logic whereby only certain (combinations of) capitals are legitimate currency. However, it is not only important to have the right kind of capital in a field; it is just as important, if not more so, to be able to display this capital in a proper manner. This is where the habitus comes in. The acquisition of capital—whether it was acquired, gradually, within a family context, taught at school, or self-taught—matters a great deal, as this is reflected in the manner in which it is displayed. 'The acquisition of cultural competence is inseparable from insensible acquisition of a "sense" for sound cultural investment' (Bourdieu, 1998: 85). For instance, someone who has grown up listening to jazz and who therefore has an intimate knowledge of and familiarity with its many different styles is likely to display this knowledge in a confident manner (in contrast to someone who has acquired this knowledge relatively late in life and might be self-conscious about it). Someone who has the right capital but is seen to be trying too hard to either attain or display it is unlikely to receive the recognition she strives for. As Bourdieu suggests, cultural capital must be displayed with 'ease' if it is to be converted into symbolic capital; distinction should appear natural.

In *Distinction* (1998) Bourdieu is concerned with describing the way in which the dominant classes exert symbolic violence over the dominated classes. He identifies a social and cultural hierarchy in which the tastes of the dominant

appear *naturally* more refined and distinguished than those of the dominated.

Music, he argues, lends itself particularly well to the making of distinctions:

> Nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music (...). Music is the 'pure' art par excellence. It says nothing and has *nothing to say*. Music represents the most radical and most absolute form of the negation of the world, and especially the social world, which the bourgeois ethos tends to demand of all forms of art. (Bourdieu, 1998: 18-19)

Bourdieu refers to so-called 'legitimate' music here (of which he cites Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* as a prime example). He suggests that 'legitimate' art calls for its own mode of perception, its own disposition or habitus. This 'aesthetic disposition' appreciates form over function, appears disinterested rather than involved and is closely linked to the absence of economic necessity. Its 'pure' taste contrasts to 'popular' taste which seeks a 'continuity between art and life, and which implies the subordination of form to function' (1998: 32). Whereas the aesthetic disposition affirms its distance from the world through a 'pure' disinterested contemplation of art works, the popular aesthetic rather seeks to use them for something. It is the aesthetic disposition, or legitimate taste, which is perceived as naturally distinguished.

In the sections that follow I shall assess the advantages and disadvantages of an application of these concepts to the study of popular music fandom. I shall consider the relationship between different fields, the significance of players' different capitals, and whether or not Bourdieu posits a single dominant hierarchy which precludes the pursuit of alternative distinctions.

IV.ii. The Limits of a Bourdieuian Framework

The problem with *Distinction* (1998) and many of his other works, is that Bourdieu appears overly concerned with issues of class, at the expense of, for instance, gender and race. Just as subcultural theory has tended to privilege class relations, Bourdieu sees class as the main classifier. Therefore, analysing the female audience for popular music using Bourdieu's analytical tools is problematic because until the publication of 'La Domination Masculine' (1990a) and the book by the same name (first published in French in 1998; translation published in 2001) he had written relatively little on gender. Although he argues that gender domination is 'the paradigmatic form of symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 170), this is mostly a formal acknowledgement. As McCall (1992) points out, Bourdieu's uptake by feminists has been limited, partly because he can be said to 'reproduce sexist dichotomies' (852).

Moreover, popular culture has, at best, an ambiguous status in Bourdieu's analysis. Because his focus is so firmly on 'legitimate' taste, or 'official' culture, he fails to study popular culture in as much detail as 'official' culture and denies popular culture's potential to challenge cultural and social hierarchies. However, this does not mean that Bourdieu himself values 'high' culture above popular culture. According to him, such distinctions are continually made by people, for instance in the way in which users of so-called 'legitimate' language use the idea of the 'popular' to distinguish themselves from others who are deemed to be less worthy. The 'symbolic aggression' or the dichotomy 'high' versus 'low',

therefore, already exists at an objective level, and does not come into existence through analysis. Ignoring it does not change the situation (Bourdieu, 1994).

There are overlaps between the work of Bourdieu and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and Wacquant points to their 'early and cooperative relations' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 81). Willis' study of working class 'lads' in *Learning to Labour*, for instance, owes a debt to Bourdieu's work, as he argues that his lads intuitively 'know' that what they can expect from their education is 'elitist exclusion of the mass through spurious recourse to merit' (1977: 128); their resistance, however, only grants them a temporary victory.[16]

However, Bourdieu and these cultural studies scholars differ crucially in their perception of popular culture's potential as a critique of existing power relations. Shiach (1993) suggests that in this respect Bourdieu presents a problem for the discipline of cultural studies:

> Bourdieu's analyses have served to disturb the capacity of 'cultural studies' to represent itself as the space of a political critique. Instead of theorizing cultural analysis as a site of resistance to social and cultural hierarchies, Bourdieu tends rather to stress the ways in which it participates in mechanisms of distinction. His analyses serve to specify the terms of our enclosure rather than to offer us any escape. (Shiach, 1993: 219)

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[16] 'It is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power we may say that there is an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism. However, this damnation is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance' (Willis, 1977: 3).

Popular culture, which in the interdiscipline of cultural studies has been seen as a site where dominant power relations may be challenged, is seen by Bourdieu as 'simply another manifestation of the struggle for distinction within the intellectual field' (Shiach, 1993: 219). While left cultural studies has promoted the idea of discrimination within popular culture—something which might be achieved through education, as discussed in Chapter 1—Bourdieu sees education as the tool which teaches people to distinguish themselves from others, in other words, as a tool for the (re)production of hierarchies. According to Shiach, while Bourdieu may value the popular insofar as it is removed from the realm where only distinction matters, he nevertheless does not grant it the potential for challenging dominant cultural and social hierarchies (1993: 219). Shiach particularly condemns his entirely negative view of women's exclusion from men's games. Doing this, she argues, 'Bourdieu loses any chance of exploring the potential of excluded groups for resistance' (Shiach, 1993: 221).

On the other hand, Garnham (1993) suggests that 'in *Distinction* there is an attempt, perhaps not fully acknowledged, to validate popular culture, find sources of authenticity and popular resistance, and thus a base for opposition to the prevailing social order below the level of discourse' (181). For instance, Bourdieu suggests that 'the art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living' (1998: 179); enjoyment of food and drink by men is not tempered by, for instance, dieting or the ethic of slimness. Bourdieu thus has an ambivalent view as to what the popular might achieve. In fact, he has suggested that the practices of resistance that are so important to cultural studies may be far more contradictory in their

effects than is usually admitted. For instance, he suggests that when those who are

dominated seek to distinguish themselves through affirming that which marks

them as 'vulgar', then one cannot really speak of resistance.[17] And similarly,

when the dominated adopt the opposite of that which marks them as vulgar, this

cannot simply be seen as submission. Bourdieu admits that this is an 'insoluble

contradiction: this contradiction, which is inscribed into the very logic of

symbolic domination, is something those who talk about "popular culture" won't

admit. Resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating' (1994:

155).

As I mentioned above, although the habitus is an *'open system of dispositions'*,

Bourdieu suggests that people are likely to encounter circumstances which agree

with their habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). It is in the concept of

habitus, then, that Bourdieu's pessimism may be located. If a person's habitus can

be said to 'select' the circumstances she is likely to encounter and to predispose

her to react in a particular way, then this suggests the difficulty of engendering

change. Although the habitus continues to develop this is always dependent on its

prior configuration. 'From that follows an inevitable priority of originary

experiences and consequently a *relative* closure of the system of dispositions that

constitute habitus' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). Bourdieu also suggests

that the habitus can be somewhat 'behind the times':

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[17] Jenkins (1992) offers a far more optimistic view here. Speaking of television fans' strong
investments, he argues that such investments can be seen as 'a conscious repudiation of high
culture or at least of the traditional boundaries between high culture and popular culture' (18). The
fact that fans are often highly intelligent and articulate, he suggests, makes their behaviour
potentially more threatening.

> It is true that even when the real family has changed, the inertia of habitus, and of *law*, tends to perpetuate the dominant model of family structure and, by the same token, of legitimate sexuality—heterosexual and oriented towards reproduction—in relation to which socialization and with it the transmission of the traditional principles of division were tacitly organized; but the appearance of new types of family, such as 'composite' families, and the public visibility of new (particularly homosexual) models of sexuality help to break the *doxa* and expand the space of what is possible in terms of sexuality. (Bourdieu, 2001, 89)

In this light, 'pre-reflexive' aspects of gender identity cast doubt on the possibility of radical transformation; or as Lois McNay (2000) puts it, the habitus is 'a layer of embodied experience that is not immediately amenable to self-fashioning' (41). While gender conventions may be consciously monitored and challenged in certain parts of one's life, they may be reinforced in others despite a desire for change.

An issue on which Bourdieu and subcultural theorists are broadly in agreement is the social position of young people. Bourdieu sees the young as having not yet accepted their fate; they resist 'social ageing' by not yet settling down, by refusing to take up their position in society (1998: 110):

> Social ageing is nothing other than the slow renunciation or disinvestment (socially assisted and encouraged) which leads agents to adjust their aspirations to their objective chances, to espouse their condition, become what they are and make do with that they have, even if this entails deceiving themselves as to what they are and what they have, with collective complicity, and accepting bereavement of all the 'lateral possibles' they have abandoned along the way. (Bourdieu, 1998: 110-11)

'Bourgeois adolescents', for instance, 'express their distance from the bourgeois world which they cannot really appropriate by a refusal of complicity whose most refined expression is a propensity towards aesthetics and aestheticism' (Bourdieu,

1998: 55). Similarly, Thornton (1995) points out that this is the function of subcultures. However, Bourdieu's concept of the habitus suggests that even if the young have not yet accepted their fate, it is nevertheless waiting for them and eventually they will take up their position in the field. Just like the subcultural theorists, Bourdieu sees young people as irrevocably caught up in the 'game'.

A final limit to Bourdieu's analysis is his lack of attention to the media in *Distinction*, a criticism which Thornton has also aimed at subcultural theory. Thornton points out how the media are instrumental in supplying subcultures with the material through which they understand themselves. The music press, for instance, can be seen as both constructing and documenting subcultures (Thornton, 1995). According to Garnham (1993) this inattention to the media leaves Bourdieu's project 'vulnerable' (187) as 'in the UK at least, the link between class and patterns of consumption across all program types is very weak to nonexistent' (188). The media also play an important part in the formation of the habitus, as I shall show later on.

IV.iii. Adapting Bourdieu

Despite the limitations outlined above, Bourdieu's framework can be extremely valuable for the analysis of popular music fandom. Despite the fact that he is, at best, ambiguous about popular culture and appears to posit a single dominant hierarchy which renders the distinctions which are made in 'restricted' fields insignificant,[18] his 'open' concepts—which find their true value in empirical

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[18] The particular forms of capital which circulate within a 'restricted' field often have little value outside it. Skeggs (1997) for instance, writing about working class women's investments in a

application— do lend themselves to applications other than his own, as Thornton (1995) has shown in her study of club cultures.

Thornton criticises the work done on youth subcultures as having 'over-politicized their leisure and at the same time ignored the subtle relations of power at play within them' (1995: 14). She suggests that whereas 'high' culture is generally studied in terms of its 'aesthetic values, hierarchies and canons', popular culture tends to be studied as a 'way of life', and the aesthetic judgements which take place in it 'are rarely charted systematically as ranked standards' (Thornton, 1995: 8). The processes of discrimination and social distinction that Bourdieu identifies in dominant culture can also be found in popular culture. Or as Fiske suggests, they are processes which also take place 'within and between fans' (1992: 36-37), not only between fans and aficionados, or consumers of 'high' cultural texts; some fans, in their consumption of popular culture, echo official modes of appreciation.[19] Thornton proposes, adapting Bourdieu, the concept of '*sub*cultural capital'. Just like cultural capital, Thornton argues, subcultural capital emphasises the importance of its 'second nature' and may be converted into economic capital.

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particular kind of 'caring' femininity, suggest that this femininity may have little value beyond their careers as carers or their chances on the marriage market. On the other hand, restricted fields can also exclude those with official cultural capital. Bourdieu gives the example of the working men's pub where any signs of dominant culture are dismissed as pretentious.

[19] 'Fan culture is a form of popular culture that echoes many of the institutions of official culture, although in popular form and under popular control (...) Fandom offers ways of filling cultural lack and provides the social prestige and self-esteem that go with cultural capital' (Fiske, 1992: 33). He also argues that those who have had the opportunity to develop a habitus similar to those developed by 'official' culture are more likely to employ official aesthetic criteria and modes of consumption than others. In this scenario, 'older fans, male fans, and more highly educated fans' are more likely to employ official criteria than those who are 'younger, female and (...) less educated' (Fiske, 1992: 36).

Although Thornton does not address the issue of habitus in any depth and she somewhat over-simplifies issues of class,[20] her study is nevertheless extremely valuable in suggesting how popular distinctions are made. I believe that in view of the changing position of popular culture in society this is an important development. To automatically place popular culture in a structurally oppositional relationship to 'high' or 'official' culture is problematic because of its increasing prevalence; for generations brought up on popular culture, it is arguably *the* form of culture. For example, McRobbie (1991) recalls how the 'high culture' she was taught at school and university was foreign to the culture in which she grew up, where certain popular or even subcultural forms were much more legitimate. In certain contexts, knowledge of and familiarity with popular culture can be more useful than 'high' culture.

Bourdieu's conceptual tools, then, allow the analysis of popular culture to be more than an analysis of 'a way of life'; it allows the analysis of the hierarchies *within* popular culture and the acknowledgement of the aesthetic choices that are made here. Moreover, the concepts of habitus and field reveal that what appears to be individual taste is actually located within a larger social context. 'To speak of habitus is to assert that the individual, and even the personal, the subjective, is social, collective. Habitus is a socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 126; see also Richard Jenkins, 1992; Fowler, 1998). In fact, despite critics' misrecognition of the habitus as determinist it is not an entirely closed system, and does offer a positive understanding of agency. A Bourdieuian framework enables an analysis of my respondents' relationship to popular music as one that is

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[20] She suggests that 'class is wilfully obfuscated by subcultural distinctions', yet her examples seem to suggest otherwise (Thornton, 1995: 12). I shall come back to this issue in Chapter 6.

simultaneously socially located, yet actively negotiated. Bourdieu's understanding of an 'habitual self' that, unlike the 'fragmented selves' of postmodern theory, exhibits continuities over time and tends to change in relatively predictable ways, suggests a relatively coherent self, yet not one without agency; or, as McNay puts it, 'the self has unity but it is the dynamic unity of progress in time' (2000: 19). Thus the fact that my respondents have continued to invest in Kate Bush may be considered in terms of the idea of a relatively coherent self that emerges and develops over time. As such it is not something that can be dismissed as a sign of immaturity or a refusal or deferral of 'social ageing'.

Furthermore, as I pointed out above, unlike that of some cultural studies scholars, Bourdieu's scepticism about popular culture is partly based on its ambiguous effects. The resistance that some cultural populists consider an integral part of popular culture should, according to Bourdieu, not be taken for granted. The dichotomy submission-resistance, as Wacquant suggests, 'prevents us from adequately understanding practices and situations that are often defined by their intrinsically double, skewed nature' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 23).

In summary, Bourdieu's work enables the analysis of those aspects of fandom which affect the individual within a larger social framework, in contrast to those studies which tend to see fandom, not only as a pathological disorder, but also as idiosyncratic, while at the same time it enables the analysis of individual experience, unlike much subcultural work. Moreover, a Bourdieuian framework allows us to take seriously the aesthetic choices made by fans while not over-

emphasising any elements of resistance. Next I shall look more closely at such

fans and the field in which they seek distinction as players.

IV.iv. Femininity as Cultural Capital

With the publication of 'La Domination masculine' (1990a) and his book of the

same title (2001), Bourdieu has started to pay more attention to issues of gender

difference and domination. He draws heavily on the work he did in Algeria on the

Kabyle tribe where gender differences were particularly marked and expressed,

not only through a strict division of labour, but also through different physical

postures (bodily hexis). In fact, Bourdieu sees the Kabyle as the clearest example

of gender oppression. Just as masculinity in popular music (particularly rock) is

seldom made an issue of, unlike 'women-in-rock', masculine domination is taken

for granted here.

> The division between the sexes appears to be 'in the order of things' (...)
> The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses
> with justification: the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has
> no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it. The social
> order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the
> masculine domination on which it is founded. (2001, 8 – 9)

As Moi points out, a wholly doxic society will see women share the habitus that

oppresses them. Moi finds Bourdieu particularly useful for feminist purposes

because he looks at both 'high' and 'mundane' aspects of everyday life, which is

attractive to feminists who wish to 'undo or overcome the traditional

individual/social or private/public divide' (1995: 191).

Moi has addressed the extent to which gender can be considered a form of currency. The habitus is gendered, but because gender does not operate in its own field—it is part of the general social field—she argues that 'there is no such thing as pure "gender capital"' (Moi, 1995: 207). The value of gender, therefore, is variable and dependent on the field in which it is employed. In most cases this means that femaleness is valued negatively in relation to maleness. However, she adds that 'in some contexts, "femaleness" may even be converted from a liability to an advantage (compare Skeggs' example of women in the caring profession). In general, the impact of femaleness as negative capital may be assumed to decline in direct proportion to the amount of other forms of symbolic capital amassed' (Moi, 1995: 209).

Whereas Moi seems cautious in seeing femaleness or femininity as cultural capital, McCall (1992), Skeggs (1997) and Lovell (2000) have been more positive about this. Emphasising the embodied dimension of cultural capital, the dispositions of both mind and body, McCall concludes that 'certain types of dispositions are themselves forms of capital' (1992: 843). However, McCall suggests that the extent to which one can capitalize on feminine cultural capital— the extent to which it can be turned into symbolic capital—is limited; a point echoed by Skeggs and Lovell. As Lovell suggests, 'femininity (or rather femininities—there is no singular form which crosses class and "race"), may itself be viewed as a form of cultural capital, one which is legitimate currency only for women'.[21] As a form of capital it can only be capitalised upon in restricted fields.

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[21] This quote is taken from an earlier, unpublished version of Lovell (2000); it was not used in the published paper.

Or as Skeggs suggests, 'femininity can be used socially in tactical rather than strategic ways' and it is 'more likely to operate as halts on losses' (Skeggs, 1997: 10, 116). Bourdieu himself recognises the key role women play in the display and transmission of family and class cultural capital within a domestic context (2001). Furthermore, he suggests that women's increased access to higher education and well-paid jobs has given the dominant class a new mode of reproducing class privileges (1996).

I want to turn now to the question of how all this works in the field of popular music. This raises questions such as, how is this field different from other fields? What logic underlies this field, or, what are the particular forms of cultural capital that have currency in this field? Who has the power to legitimate these forms of capital? And how can women employ what may be called their 'feminine cultural capital'?

Popular music can be seen as a 'restricted' field; its cultural capital—musical skill, knowledge of bands and styles, CD collection, and so on—has only a limited currency outside this field. The habitus that fits the popular music field is, like any habitus, formed through education and upbringing. Yet popular music is less likely to be taught through formal education than through informal routes; it is not part of the school curriculum in the way that dominant culture (for example, highbrow literature) is and therefore cannot be traded in very easily for symbolic capital through accreditation.[22] Popular music is more likely to be passed on

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[22] However, as Green (1997) suggests, teachers do include popular music in their classes. The result of this is, paradoxically, that it ceases to be perceived as popular: 'the mere fact that music is in the curriculum affects pupils' judgements of its style, such that any music which the teacher requires them to study is taken to be classical. Popular music, contrastingly, is *by definition* music

through one's peers and through repeated exposure to the music media, including

the press, radio and television, which tend to position the feminine as outsiders to

the musical field. As for upbringing, Bayton (1998) has pointed to the importance

of musical families as a factor in how girls become musicians, and this counts

equally for their consumption of popular music. Although much musical

knowledge is in theory equally accessible to both boys and girls, girls are more

likely to find themselves excluded from the type of knowledge which can only be

gleaned from 'boys' networks', such as the knowledge needed to form bands (see

also Clawson, 1999).[23] Similar to more formally institutionalised fields, popular

music has its own figures of authority who can confer 'legitimacy', such as the

music press who often try to 'prescribe' certain music tastes (see Toynbee, 1993;

Negus, 1992; Frith, 1998), as well as its own canon of recognised 'classics' (see

Regev, forthcoming).

Although the field of popular music has its own logic, its own currency, it is not

entirely independent of other fields; the marginalization of women in this field can

be seen to echo that within society at large. As shown in the Introduction, women,

both as producers and consumers, have traditionally occupied a marginalised

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which the teacher does not require them to study, and, in the minds of many pupils, as soon as the
teacher does make this requirement, the music will cease to be popular. Some of the most salient
characteristics of much popular music are its spirit of rebellion, its sexual innuendoes and its
rejection of authority, a rejection in which education forms a very central target' (146-47).
[23] Knowledge of 'legitimate' music and performance skills have traditionally been valued very
highly in girls and women. Phyllis Weliver, for instance, explains how in Victorian society,
women's (and especially unmarried daughters') performance within their own social circle 'visibly
and audibly demonstrated a man's respectable social standing and financial well-being to those
who shared the same cultural capital' and also functioned to attract husbands (33). But while
pieces played tended to be relatively 'sophisticated' (concert hall repertoire rather than music hall)
virtuosity in ladies was frowned upon because 'difficult' pieces were not understood by their
audiences and because 'being too technical [was] equated with being unlady-like' (36). Virtuosity
and musical genius, and figures such as composers and conductors, therefore, have on the whole
been gendered masculine (see also Battersby, 1989). Women's relative ease of access to validation
in the field of 'legitimate' music, then, must be offset against their marginalisation in the field of
popular music.

position in certain genres of popular music; in other words, their cultural capital has been limited. For instance, Walser (1993) has pointed out that musical virtuosity is a quality that is almost exclusively associated with men, citing its Latin root *vir*, meaning man, and *virtú*, meaning virtue (75-6).[24] That is not to say that women have no capital in this field. A performer such as Madonna has economic and symbolic capital matched by few men. Furthermore, female performers can often draw on the considerable cultural capital that their appearance affords them. However, as Green (1997) suggests, while such bodily display affords the performer some level of power (symbolic capital), it is often the case that the more a female singer displays her body the less likely she is to be taken seriously as a competent performer. Also, the embodied cultural capital of, for instance, female (backing) vocalists, dancers and groupies, can often be seen to increase the capital of those (men) they support. For instance, the 'natural' female voice can add emotional depth to a song,[25] dancers enliven an act's stage presence, while groupies can enhance the raunchy image and perceived popularity of a male band. Female fans, meanwhile, as I explained in Chapter 1, have little capital as they are often perceived to engage with popular music and its stars in the 'wrong' way. They are often aligned with the 'mainstream' which for some suggests that the mere presence of female fans has a devaluing effect.[26]

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[24] Fowler, too, suggests that the masculine is associated with positive qualities on account of 'virtue's' derivation from *vir* (1997: 4).

[25] Frith (1981) has pointed out that 'the female voice in Anglo-American pop has usually stood for intimacy and artlessness—this is the link which has given women access to pop (they have been excluded from most other productive roles). We hear women as better able than men to articulate emotion because femininity is defined in emotional terms. (...) The conventions of female pop singing have both reflected and shaped the idea of femininity as something decorative and wistful, secret and available, addressed, by its very nature, at men' (28; see also Bradby, 1993a).

[26] Rumsey and Little (1989) point out that 'when the concerts of a rock band whose audience is mainly male begin to attract more than a certain minority proportion of women, the original audience tends to desert: the group's got bland, they've "sold out", they're producing "cocktail

In this male-dominated field, then, a feminine habitus seems relatively useless. Or, as McCall suggests, 'the ontological complicity between habitus and field breaks down: *fit* no longer explains the relationship between positions and dispositions' (McCall, 1992: 850). This suggests that a woman wishing to achieve distinction in the field of popular music has a better chance of doing so through recourse to a masculine habitus; in other words, she has to become 'one of the boys'.[27] I want to suggest the possibility of my respondents having developed, in part, a masculine habitus, but that they also employ their feminine cultural capital. The feminine in music (as in other cultural and social fields) is often associated with nature, emotion, and sensuality/looking sexy, and it is on these qualities that the respondents draw when claiming their distinction as female fans. For instance, they invoke their shared womanhood with Kate Bush—the idea that because they are women they have a more direct access to the emotions expressed by Kate Bush which men are thought to find more difficult to understand. Moreover, they can relate to what they see as Kate Bush's 'sensual', yet 'tasteful' femininity (and which they see as contrasting to the more overtly 'sexy' image of someone like Madonna).[28] As I argue in detail in Chapter 5, the women are able to draw on this feminine cultural capital because Kate Bush offers the feminine as cultural capital.

Bourdieu observes that 'those [games] that are called serious are reserved for men' who are socialised to take them seriously; from an early age men are

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music" (a field of performance associated with women—Sade is the latest example). So male-identified women move on too' (242).

[27] A good fictional example of this is Marie LaSalle, one of the characters in Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*. He portrays his male characters (not without irony) as 'serious' fans with a love for 'authentic' music. The women in the novel are mostly indifferent to music or else they like the 'wrong' kind. And if they display tastes similar to the men, they can be said to be masculinised, to be 'one of the boys', like Marie LaSalle.

[28] Compare Skeggs (1997) who points out that the working class women in her research were keen to distance themselves from overt displays of sexuality.

prepared for the *libido dominandi* (2001, 75). This socialisation process may have unpleasant side effects for the men, something which Bourdieu terms the '*noblesse oblige*' syndrome and illustrates with reference to Mrs Ramsay's laughter at her husband's pretensions in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*; it is a tactic aimed at revealing the sometimes ridiculous nature of male games. Thus, an additional way in which my respondents seek distinction is by trying to devalue the capital associated with men in the field. Indeed, my respondents suggest that male consumers tend to take the game too seriously, for instance by being overly analytical or anxious about 'getting it right'. But such tactics, Bourdieu suggests, are rooted in a dominated mindset:

> The symbolic strategies that women use against men, such as those of magic, remain dominated because the apparatus of symbols and mythic operators that they implement and the ends they pursue (...) are rooted in the androcentric view in the name of which they are dominated. (2001, 32)

Similarly, Moi suggests that this tactic can be two-edged; whereas women's laughter can be seen as 'an excellent instrument of critique', it can also be interpreted as a frivolous act, which shows the women to be ignorant (Moi, 1995: 202).

Although my respondents' 'critique' appears not to go hand in hand with a tacit admission that the games they play are not serious or worthwhile,[29] what is the likelihood that the women, even if they possess the requisite knowledge, can ever be *legitimate* players in the field of popular music? Can they capitalise on their

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[29] Compare for instance Thornton who suggests that 'if girls opt out of the game of "hipness", they will often defend their tastes (particularly their taste for pop music) with expressions like "It's crap but I like it". In so doing, they acknowledge the subcultural hierarchy and accept their lowly position within it' (1995: 13).

tastes and translate their cultural capital into economic or symbolic capital? And do the women's practices have any implications for the structure of the field? In contrast to the field of classical music, the field of popular music, as well as those of other forms of popular culture and subcultures, by virtue of their relative novelty, may be seen as less 'fixed' than the fields of dominant culture. Partly on account of its highly commercial nature and global reach the field of popular music may be seen as more volatile and subject to frequent change. The creation and marketing of popular music involve large sums of money, and in order to ensure a continuing profit record companies are always on the look-out for the 'next big thing'. The continual quest for novelty, then, would suggest that hierarchies within the popular music field are relatively open. However, popular music is probably also becoming increasingly important in comparison to, for instance, classical music.[30] This suggests that there is much at stake in the 'fixing' of the values in this field, in particular for female performers and fans.

IV.v. The Convertibility of Cultural Capital

Since most of the respondents in this study are mature, white, largely middle class, and have embarked on professional and/or family careers they do have some cultural capital outside of this 'restricted' field of popular music, this raises

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[30] Longhurst and Savage speak of '"new cultural intermediaries" as the bearers of a distinct new form of consumer culture. These new groups, located in new sorts of service jobs, are held to be distinctive in rejecting established forms of high cultural practice and subjecting new forms of consumer practice to forms of cultural distinction. Rather than cultural distinction being based around the classic terrain of high culture (notably through the appreciation of classical music, "great art" etc), it might be based around the right sorts of exotic holiday destination, new vegetarian cuisine, or hiking gear' (1996: 279). Ray Mescallado, writing about comic books, points out that 'popular culture has reached a point where much of its enjoyment is predicated on *prior knowledge* of popular culture (...) As a culture, we no longer need to quote Shakespeare or Proust to be considered a part of the culturati—but it's a definite asset to know who Sherwood

the questions why, if they are able to draw on 'official' cultural capital, the women choose to invest themselves in popular music, and why, if they have little chance of winning this game, they agree it is worth playing and continue to compete. If for women distinction remains harder to achieve because their femaleness (which is often automatically aligned with femininity) marks them as outsiders in the field, and if the women can never pass as 'one of the boys', that is, if their cultural capital is never fully legitimated, then what do the women get out of their investment in popular music, their Kate Bush fandom? What can popular culture give them that 'official' culture cannot?

On the one hand, the proliferation of cultural products and cultural groupings suggests that it may be increasingly difficult to be recognised for one's distinguished taste and to capitalise upon one's popular cultural capital (that is, to turn it into economic or symbolic capital). It has often been claimed that class differences are becoming less and less distinct and that we are all middle class now. While evidence for this may be hard to come by, an ever-increasing choice of consumer items means that being recognised for one's distinguished taste becomes more difficult too. As Warde, Martens and Olsen (1999) suggest, 'one of the problems with intensification of variety is precisely that it puts a severe strain on the capacity of codes of consumption to communicate social membership' (120 – 21; see also Muggleton, 1997). The variety of cultural products now available and the different uses to which they can be put places great strain on the

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Schwartz is, or Robert Crumb, or Bret Easton Ellis. An increasingly pseudo-egalitarian society creates increasingly pseudo-egalitarian cultural capital' (1998: 6). See also Regev (forthcoming).

possibility for mutual recognition and means that it is more difficult to impress others with one's cultural knowledge.[31]

On the other hand, the increasing acceptance of popular culture as *the* form of culture suggests that the possibilities for capitalising upon one's popular cultural capital may be seen to increase accordingly. Regev (forthcoming), for instance, suggests that late modernity is 'characterized by a constant growth in number and sophistication of actors in the market of collective identities' (11). This necessitates more styles and genres that these collective actors can draw on for claims to distinction and legitimacy; it is to popular culture, including popular music, film and television, that these new collective actors have turned as a means to distinguish themselves from earlier collectivities. And as what he calls 'pop/rock' becomes increasingly institutionalised (which involves, among other things, the creation and preservation of a canon, institution of prizes, and so on), it appears that popular music is receiving considerable official recognition. Following Laermans (1992), therefore, I would suggest that the present situation could be characterised as 'polyhierarchical but still "centered"' (256).[32]

With respect to the potential for 'convertibility' of popular cultural or subcultural capital, both Thornton (1995) and Straw (1997b) point to the example of DJs

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[31] Warde *et al.* (1999) suggest that 'omnivorousness', the appreciation of a wide range of cultural practices and genres, may be a strategy to cope with this. It enables people to transform cultural into social capital.

[32] Laermans argues that while dominant culture, as promoted by the educational system, still holds considerable symbolic power, other relatively autonomous fields are constructing their own hierarchies and canons. 'It remains to be seen if, in the long run, this change will have particular consequences for the "cultural centre" and the general struggle over legitimate culture' (1992: 259).

converting their music collections and knowledge into economic capital,[33] while Straw also suggests that male rock connoisseurship can function to exclude women. For my respondents, however, cultural capital is less likely to be converted into economic capital (it is for few fans, unless they become journalists, DJs or musicians themselves) than it is into (limited) power within a domestic context and a sense of self-worth and confidence. As Longhurst and Savage (1996) argue, 'consumption practices should be placed in the context of both individual as well as social dynamics' (293). Certain consumption practices may be perceived as consistent with a particular conception of the self and, as such, possess a reassuring quality. This view then recognises that claims to distinction can be made without an external audience, as it were. My respondents' cultural capital, in line with DeNora's notion of 'tenable' self-images, is best seen as a function of self-image, notably one that can be sustained over a longer period of time.[34] Whether or not their claims to distinction win recognition, it is important to acknowledge the rewards in terms of self-confidence and a sense of worth in the negotiations of daily life that this investment may yield.

However, as I said earlier, (lower) middle class groups have not been given the same degree of attention as their working class counterparts. While the latter have been valorised for their 'resistance', the former have often been seen as passively complicit with dominant culture. And, as Felski (2000) points out, in contrast to

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[33] Straw points out that DJs tend to be careful about discussing their music and craft with others, in order to preserve their connoisseur status.

[34] However, it is important to note the difference between what people *say* and what they *do*. I shall come back to this in the data chapters where it emerges that my respondents' practices displayed traces of what they rejected in discourse. 'Discourse is the privileged site for the affirmation of difference, because the desire for self-distinction is more easily accomplished by affirmations of principle than by a real practice, because the logic of cultural borrowing means that the external forms and the superficial appearance of behaviour are easier to communicate than its deeper underlying attitudes' (Bourdieu, 1965/1990b, 63; see also DeNora, 2000).

the perceived 'virility' of the working class, the lower middle class is often feminised. Bourdieu can be placed in this tradition in which the *petite bourgeoisie* is an object of scorn and castigated for its reactionary thinking. As such, he reserves his severest criticism for middle-brow culture. Photography, for instance, he terms a 'minor art' and a 'poor man's aestheticism' (1990b: 64 – 5), arguing that it merely acts as a kind of substitute, for instance in the form of accessible versions of avant-garde experiments, for those higher arts that remain inaccessible to certain sections of the middle classes, in particular the *petite bourgeoisie* or lower middle class. However, more than a feature of cultural products themselves, 'middle-brow' describes a certain relationship to culture. Bourdieu's contempt for the *petite bourgeoisie* can be seen in his pronouncement that when the lower middle class appropriates legitimate culture it loses its distinguishing features.

Bourdieu, then, would almost certainly dismiss the women in my study, along with their musical taste, as *petit bourgeois* and not grant them the distinction they seek; Bush's 'in-between' position, her accessible versions of 'high' cultural reference points, would not convince Bourdieu. This position casts further doubt on the use of Bourdieu for this study. Felski (2000), however, with some reference to Bourdieu, calls for a more sympathetic focus on the lower middle class within the context of the 'everyday' and 'habitual'. I want to see my study, too, as part of this project of taking the (lower) middle class more seriously instead of deriding them in the manner familiar to cultural studies.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the ways in which the extensive literature on subcultures is not only characterised by a male, youth and working class bias, but also by a marked emphasis on resistance or opposition to dominant cultures. This narrow focus, I have shown, is one of the reasons why girls and women have been virtually absent from this body of work, why middle class groups have seldom been considered, and why subcultures have not been seen as a viable option for adult investment. Yet despite these shortcomings, I have looked at this body of work because it is the area in which popular music consumption and investment has received considerable attention and because it has informed the development of those theoretical approaches which have been useful for the study of my respondents.

Subcultural practices, then, should be seen as neither unitary nor uniformly resistant. While women as well as middle class and older people have often been seen as passively complicit with dominant culture, their investments and identifications should instead be seen as incorporating both complicit and resistant moments. Indeed, a consideration of such complex and contradictory practices would enable us to see subcultural affiliations and investments in popular music as ongoing. Rather than as a means to ward off 'social ageing', it can then be seen as a resource—offering 'tenable' self-images and possible empowerment—for dealing with the demands of everyday life, including work and relationships.

Whereas subcultural theory has strongly focused on the commonalities between members of subcultures, some of the work on music and everyday life has focused more on the individual investments that people make. On the other hand, Willis' concept of 'proto-community', premised on the notion of increasing 'stylisation', privileges neither commonalities nor idiosyncracies, but instead allows us to see how communal bonds may be forged between people who do not conform to the conventional definition of subculture. While these people may not share the same geographical space, they may, in Bourdieu's sense, share the same social space.

As outlined, a Bourdieuian framework has limits for the analysis of female popular music fans. Bourdieu often privileges class relations at the expense of gender, he is ambiguous about the status of popular culture, dismissive of the 'middle-brow', his concept of the habitus seems to limit the potential for structural change, and he pays little attention to the media, one of the main sites where popular music is 'learnt'. However, his concepts are, as Bourdieu himself argues, deliberately left open and invite adaptation. Furthermore, his work enables the analysis of the individual within a larger framework without succumbing to either a completely subjectivist or objectivist bias. And finally, Bourdieu's work problematises the dichotomy resistance/submission.

Drawing on Bourdieu's work, then, I have proposed the idea of 'feminine cultural capital' which, within a largely male-dominated field, might explain how my respondents' investment in popular music can be understood in terms of a quest for distinction. However, the extent to which a player's capital is recognised in any particular field depends on the field's level of institutionalisation. The field of

popular music is less formally institutionalised than that of, for instance, classical music (and other 'high' arts) and as such less fixed. However, recent work that takes its impetus from Bourdieu has suggested that popular culture may be in the process of becoming more 'legitimate' and that a familiarity with popular culture may in certain circumstances be more useful than a familiarity with 'high' culture. Although the extent to which my respondents' claims to distinction and their deployment of 'feminine cultural capital' are recognised remains unclear, it is important to acknowledge the rewards in terms of the enjoyment and emotional support that this investment may yield.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I look at the women's practices within the framework set out above. But before looking at the questionnaire and interview data, I shall look more closely at the methods used in this study. Doing this, I want to pay further attention to Bourdieu's notion of the field. It is possible to distinguish three different but overlapping uses of the term field in this thesis (the common sense understanding of the term, as in a particular subject or area of interest, its ethnographic understanding (being 'in the field'), and Bourdieu's concept, as discussed above). The latter two different but overlapping uses of the term are important in the next chapter where I examine, in addition to the advantages and disadvantages of the methods used, my own position vis-à-vis my respondents as both an academic and someone who is also heavily invested in popular music.

Chapter 3

Methods and Methodology

The most common question I get asked when I tell people that I am doing research on a group of Kate Bush fans is whether or not I am one myself. Fellow academics, friends and acquaintances, as well as the women who participated in the research, have all been equally curious to know how I am invested in this project. This chapter will go some way in explaining how my investment in Kate Bush—I was a fan in my mid-teens—affected the research. As I already mentioned in the Introduction, my own investments as a woman in popular music, which are often very contradictory, have also played a major part in the shaping of the project; and vice versa, my own conceptions have been shaped and/or sharpened by the project.

Having been interested in popular music since childhood, I first started buying records in my early teens. Of course these were the 'wrong' records—according to my older brother who, naturally, had 'impeccable' taste. Now, many years later I feel very ambivalent about those early favourites. Knowing what I know about the traditional portrayal of teenage girl fans, and remembering my immense enjoyment of those songs and performers, I feel I should celebrate that era of fandom. And yet, my brother's influence often prevails.

Reading *High Fidelity* (1996), Nick Hornby's best seller, I identified immediately with the protagonist Rob and his male friends. They might be men and they might

be losers most of the time, but at least they are *passionate* about music, in contrast to their (ex)girlfriends. But then I have also long been drawn to female performers and feel angry when they are overlooked in top hundreds 'of-all-time' (see also Whiteley, 2000).

In this chapter my aim is twofold. I want to start by sketching the way in which this project evolved from a study of women's song lyrics to a study of female Kate Bush fans and their practices of distinction. To this end I will indicate how the existing literatures in the areas of feminist audience research and subcultural theory shaped my project and led to the formation of my research questions. I will explain, referring back to the Introduction, why I chose Kate Bush as the subject of my case study, how I gained access to fans, how and why I used a combination of questionnaires and interviews to gather my data, and how I analysed the resulting data.

My second aim is to assess the advantages and disadvantages of these methods of data collection as well as the relationship between the respondents and myself. This will involve a comparison between email and face-to-face interviews, and a consideration of the combination of empirical data and textual analysis of songs and videos. I shall look at the relationship between researcher and researched through feminist accounts of reflexivity and Bourdieu's concept of the 'field'. I shall look at how the differences between my respondents and myself shaped the power relations between us, and to what extent I was involved, through the interview process itself, in legitimating their claims to distinction.

I. The Development of the Project

I originally intended to explore the representation of and by women in the lyrics of female singer-songwriters, from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, in the context of the development of second-wave feminism. I wanted to address questions of self-image and engagement with feminist ideas. In addition to the analysis of lyrics, the project was also to include analysis of music, image, performance and reception (by both press and audience). However, existing literature in the field of 'women and popular music' pointed to a lack of analysis of the oft-disparaged female audience.

I then became interested in questions of form and content, how women respond to sexism in music, and the extent to which an overt feminist message has any impact on female listeners. I wondered about the role of female (or feminist) role models in popular music. As I discussed in Chapter 1, female fans have often been portrayed as passive consumers or hysterical crowds, images which are repudiated by, for instance, Twersky (1995) and Garratt (1994) who argue that girl fans actively engage with their favourite music and stars, using the music to make sense of their lives. However, realising that much of the literature in this area deals with the way in which teenage girls relate to male stars, I turned to the extensive literature in the area of feminist audience studies.

In this 'interdiscipline' I found much that could shed light on my questions as to how popular music and its female performers might inform women's gendered

identities. The work of, for instance, Radway (1991) on romance literature and Stacey (1994a) on cinema, provided possible avenues for exploration. As mentioned previously, feminist audience research has not dealt with popular music to any great extent, so the issue of gender and identity as constructed through popular music fills a gap in this literature. The issues that I became interested in included the relationship between female fans and female performers; the complex relation between music and (feminist) lyrics; and finally, whether the performers in question function as role models for their women fans. I intended to study these issues by looking at the experiences of female fans through questionnaires and/or interviews, and by analysing lyrics, music, image and live performance.

I.i. Kate Bush

I had originally intended to undertake textual analysis of the lyrics of a number of female singer-songwriters, one of whom was Kate Bush. However, as I started to (re-)engage with Kate Bush's work and as I started to consider the question of audience, the realisation grew that hers was a distinctive group of fans. Kate Bush was interesting, from a feminist perspective, because she has challenged traditional representations of female performers through her virtuoso musicianship, her image and her position in between 'high' and 'popular' culture. Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier, my focus was also influenced by my own investment in Kate Bush when younger.

Faced with the task of generating a sample of fans and investigating their tastes and practices I opted, instead of moving from a group of women to their tastes in music (which were likely to be extremely varied), to focus on one performer and her fans. Although this may seem to give a fairly narrow focus to the thesis, I believe the narrowness is compensated for by the concentration it permits on the processes of fandom. Indeed, what had initially appeared to be drawbacks—Kate Bush has not released any new material in recent years and no longer performs live—eventually provided me with a key aspect of the study. It meant that her fans were 'older' women, which enabled me to consider the question of how age interacts with gender when women invest in a performer; how fandom develops over a period of time; and what kinds of alternative means for celebrating fandom are available to fans who do not fit the mould of the traditionally young (teenage) fan.

In the next sections I will explain how I gathered my data, using a combination of questionnaires and interviews, how I gained access to my informants, and how I analysed the data.

I.ii. The Questionnaire

In order to gain the kind of information needed to make sense of Kate Bush fan practices, I decided to use both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. As it emerged, the questionnaire allowed me to address specific questions, while it was also sufficiently open for other important issues to surface. The interviews were then used to follow up on and explore these issues in more depth. This

qualitative method enabled me to unveil the complexity of certain fan practices rather than focus only on resistant readings.

Indeed, while the questions were meant to explore particular aspects of fandom, my initial ideas were refuted by the women's responses. My development of the range of concepts in use in this thesis and the manner of their use were therefore grounded in these responses. Glaser and Strauss's concept of 'grounded theory' (1967) refers to theory that is grounded in empirical data. However, as they admit themselves, we always set out with the beginnings of a conceptual framework. Following Bourdieu, then, I would suggest that one's conceptual tools need to be adapted to the field in which they are applied so that they can then organise the data and our initial perspective on them. In turn, these tools will need to be 'fine-tuned' in response the data collection and analysis.

Glaser and Strauss also speak of 'theoretical saturation', reached when new empirical data yield no further information. However, empirical research undertaken by an individual, unresourced graduate student has its pragmatics as well as its methodological and theoretical aspects (see for instance Andermahr *et al.*, 1997: 135). Since theoretical saturation is by definition an indeterminate process, the limits of time and resources do not always correspond neatly to the dimensions of 'theoretical sampling'. Therefore I cannot pretend that my study provides an ideal theoretical sample; it is possible that more might have been added, such as a sample of male fans. However, I do not think there was any superfluous matter in the information that was generated, while the pragmatics of student research would not have permitted any substantial additions to my sample.

The questionnaire, which features both multiple choice and open-ended questions, has three main sections.[1] Section A has questions about the women's general interest in popular culture and popular music, which allowed me to evaluate their interest in Kate Bush in a broader cultural context or to evaluate how the role of music ties in with their appreciation of other forms of culture. Within this framework I then continued to explore, in more detail, Kate Bush's role in my respondents' lives in Section B, the main part of the questionnaire. Finally, Section C asks for some personal details, and asks respondents to indicate whether they would want to be interviewed at a later stage.

After conducting an informal pilot amongst friends and colleagues, the questionnaire was ready to be tried on a small sample of fans. The Internet proved to be indispensable in my attempt to gain access to these fans. There are numerous web sites devoted to Kate Bush, which provided me not only with information, but also with the details of the *Love-Hounds* mailing list.[2] I subscribed to this email discussion list and contacted my first respondents.[3] Having sent a short message asking for women to participate in my research on Kate Bush fans, eight women responded.[4] Five women completed the questionnaire, and on the basis of their enthusiastic responses and helpful suggestions, I made a few more

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[1] See Appendix A.

[2] See Appendix E for a selection of Kate Bush resources including web sites and discussion lists. In recent years, as the use of Internet technologies has become more widespread, the number of such resources has increased considerably. Many new web sites, email lists and chat rooms have been set up in the past few years.

[3] Later in this chapter I will assess the use of email and Internet as research tools. The use of these technologies is likely to influence the social make-up of the sample of respondents.

[4] Four men responded too, but they did not return the questionnaire, despite assurances of interest on my part.

alterations. I decided to include the second set of pilot responses in the study, as I felt that this pilot questionnaire was sufficiently similar to the final one.

The final questionnaire included a few new questions. In order to get a better idea of my respondents' musical practices (beyond their Kate Bush fandom) Section A came to include question 10 ('Do you sing or play a musical instrument? If yes, which one' and 'How did you get to be involved in music activity?'). This new question was grounded in Becker's study of 'art worlds' (1982) which attaches particular significance to the position of the knowledgeable amateur as well as in the awareness of the important role played by the family in music appreciation and participation. The remaining additions were included on the basis of the responses to the pilot interviews. These were A14 ('Does music play an important role in other kinds of culture that you enjoy?'), B22 ('Do you think Kate Bush appeals more to women or to men?') and B23 ('Do you like the way Kate Bush looks?'). I also indicated that it was possible to include other favourite female performers in the answers wherever relevant. Finally, Section C, which asks for personal details, came to include questions about class, race/ethnicity and sexuality. It was extremely encouraging to find that many of my respondents at this stage were keen to participate in an interview about their fandom.

I.iii. Access to the Audience

The pilot completed and encouraged by the initial responses, I advertised in two music magazines, *Q Magazine* and *Mojo*.[5] The decision to advertise in these two magazines was another decision rooted in 'the pragmatics of student research', but

had unanticipated and positive consequences. Originally, I had planned to advertise in a number of women's magazines as well, including *Cosmopolitan* and *Woman's Weekly*. However, these did not publish my request, and, lacking the funds to take out 'proper' advertisements, I opted for small ads in the music magazines. In addition to this, I had planned to advertise in the long-standing Kate Bush fan magazine *Homeground*. However, as the magazine editors declined upon seeing the advertisement, citing bad experiences in the past with people wanting to write about fans who then tried to ridicule them, I had to forego the opportunity to recruit informants through this channel.[6] After having successfully recruited respondents for the pilot by e-mail, I sent another request to the *Love-Hounds* mailing list, and placed a small ad on a German web site devoted to Kate Bush, *Irgendwo in der Tiefe*, which contained an advertisement section.[7]

The response to the small ads in the magazines was good, with requests for the questionnaire coming in, not only from the UK, but also from mainland European countries, the USA and Canada. In total I received 33 requests for a questionnaire and 29 were eventually completed and returned to me, which makes for a 88% response rate of those who expressed interest.[8] This high rate can be explained by the questionnaire's subject, and by the fact that the respondents had opted to participate in the study. It indicates an eagerness to talk about Kate Bush,

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[5] See Appendix B.

[6] One of the editors wrote me an email to explain their decision: 'Quite frankly we're a bit dubious about placing the advertisement you requested. Kate Bush fans have been caught out before by journalists and TV companies apparently doing serious research into fans, and then being held up in public virtually as people in need of psychiatric assistance. So unfortunately we must decline to assist. Sorry about that. Our fanzine is really for the assistance of Kate Bush fans and the discussion of her work' (Peter FitzGerald-Morris, personal communication). The Newsletter published by the official fan club, the Kate Bush Club, is not published on a very regular basis, which is why I did not pursue this avenue.

[7] The ads were placed in the autumn of 1997; most of the questionnaires were completed at this time as well.

something that also came across in the letters accompanying the women's requests for a questionnaire. This very positive response vindicated my decision to risk the narrow focus on Kate Bush fans. These were clearly women for whom music played a key role in their lives and whose 'investment' in Kate Bush's music was intense and lasting. Fandom is often defined in terms of level of intensity, so it is interesting that this particular group of women, who in their quest for 'distinction' refused to be labelled 'fan', nevertheless matched the intensity of the younger women/younger selves that are associated with fandom.

A further 19 fans responded to requests on the *Love-Hounds* mailing list and the advertisement on the web site *Irgendwo in der Tiefe*. Of these, 8 eventually completed and returned the questionnaire, a response rate of 42%.[9] That the response rate for the email questionnaires was almost half that of the paper questionnaires may be explained by its novelty and technical obstacles. The use of email in surveys (as well as interviewing) is a relatively recent phenomenon, one which many people are not yet familiar with. Lacking the tangibility of a paper questionnaire, with accompanying letter on headed notepaper, an email questionnaire may suffer from want of credentials.[10]

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[8] This number includes one male respondent.

[9] Again, this number includes one male respondent. With the response rate of 42% for my pilot, this makes an average of 42% for the email questionnaires.

[10] Furthermore, I sent the questionnaire as an attachment to an email message in which I explained the purpose of the research, the structure of the questionnaire, and pointed out that, should there be any problems accessing the document, the respondent could let me know and I would re-send the attachment in a different format. (See Appendix B for the letter I sent to the mailing list.) Indeed, a number of fans indicated that they could not open or convert the document to a format their computer could read, after which I either re-sent the document or dispatched a paper copy. The relatively high number of questionnaires which were never returned may therefore also be attributed to this technical obstacle (or, possibly, to the questionnaire's length).

In addition to recruiting fans through adverts, I also personally requested some fans to participate. These were women I encountered during the course of the research and who, upon hearing about my project, professed to be fans. One of these women passed on questionnaires to her best friend and brother. This added 5 female fans (and one male fan) to make up a total of 45 female and 3 male respondents.

I.iv. A Sample of Opportunity

My sample of fans is a fairly homogeneous one. Of the 45 female respondents, the majority were in the 25-34 age group (31) and described themselves as White/European (31) and heterosexual (34). More than half described themselves as middle or lower middle class (23).[11] It is likely that Kate Bush has a majority fan base among women (and men) who are in their late twenties and thirties, considering the fact that she first emerged on the music scene in the late 1970s, and who are white.

Save for those women whom I personally asked to participate in the research, my respondents were entirely self-selected. This, of course, has implications for the social make-up of the sample, just like the choice to recruit through the music magazines, email discussion list and web site. Had I been interested in a more general perception of Kate Bush, a different method of identifying female (and male) listeners might have been more suitable. Similarly, had I been able to

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[11] The pilot questionnaire, completed by 5 women, did not contain the questions about race/ethnicity, sexuality and class. In addition, one woman did not fill in her personal details.

advertise in women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, it is possible that I would have received a very different response.

It is difficult and perhaps futile to speculate how the sample might have differed from the current one had I advertised elsewhere. However, a number of issues stand out. Because both *Q* and *Mojo* are aimed predominantly at men, those women who read the magazine and responded to my request are likely to be more than just 'casual' music listeners.[12] In addition, *Q* and *Mojo* have a readership that is older than the average music consumer is often perceived to be. This may have been reflected in the high number of responses from women in their late twenties and early thirties (although of course this group was in their teens when Kate Bush was at her most successful in the late 1970s and early to mid 1980s). Like *Q* and *Mojo*, email newsgroups and the Internet have a particular readership as well. Access to these technologies, either at home, educational institution or work, is as yet limited. My respondents, therefore, were probably biased 'in terms of age, income, gender and race' (Selwyn and Robson, 1998: 1). Finally, had I been able to advertise in the fan magazine *Homeground*, my sample is likely to have been very different, especially with regard to the respondents' views on the label 'fan' and 'typical' fan activities.

My sample of respondents may be called a 'sample of opportunity', a term used by Ann Phoenix (1991). She suggests, commenting on the frequent exclusion of

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[12] Both *Q* and *Mojo* are glossy monthly magazines, with *Q* concentrating mostly on current pop and rock acts, whereas *Mojo*, which features separate reviews of specialist genres such as folk, soul, dance, and country, has a more historical focus. *Mojo* has a much more modest circulation than *Q* (it is less than a third of *Q*'s). Both *Q* and *Mojo* are aimed predominantly at men. For instance, *Q* tells its advertisers that it provides 'an extremely effective way of targeting upmarket men' (Q, 1998). It purports to have a 25% female readership to a 75% male one. In terms of age, almost a third of its readers (31%) are thought to be in the 25-34 age group.

black people from social research samples, that 'researchers frequently study samples that live conveniently near their university departments, or that are visiting the university for some purpose' (120). Such a sample, she argues, is unlikely to be representative so that generalising from these data becomes difficult. While my sample did not fit this pattern, the notion of a sample of opportunity remains relevant as it may also be used to describe the serendipitous effects of the method used to find respondents. In my case this meant that I gained access to respondents despite the lack of co-operation from, for instance, the Homeground fan club, and that these women's responses ultimately helped shape the direction of the research in a very positive way.

As for the sole focus on women in this project, Maynard and Purvis (1994) point out that the focus on gender within feminist research has been understood in different ways:

> Some have argued that it entails a preeminent concern with women alone, and given their previous neglect this was especially important early on in feminist work. Others have suggested that 'gender' implies women's relationship to men and that this also needs to be included, although examined from a woman's perspective, in any enquiry involved in understanding how women's experiences in a male world are structured. (15).

Or, as Sandra Harding (1987) points out, 'one distinctive feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences' (7). There has been a long tradition of feminist research focusing on women and I see this study as part of this tradition. While we are no longer in the early days of feminist work, research in certain areas of popular culture and music has focused predominantly on male cultures. Thus, my study provides a challenge

to both the exclusion of focus on women in the context of music cultures as well as to the problematic ways in which female fans have been studied; it allows me to explore how my respondents negotiate gender politics in the field of popular music.[13] I do not think it is invalid to consider, in its own right, the ways in which female fans constitute their gendered practices of distinction in this (or any) field. These practices point to the complex relationship they have with men in the field—not only male fans of Kate Bush but also the men who (continue to) have considerable influence over musical discourses.

This study is not intended as a comparison between men and women fans. However, considering the fact that a few men did participate in the research, their responses will be looked at where relevant, especially in relation to some of the claims about male fandom that pervaded the responses by female participants. The small number of male respondents, however, means that these data cannot be employed for the purpose of 'triangulation' or proving the 'truth' or 'falsity' of female perceptions of male fandom in relation to Kate Bush. Rather, these data provide an interesting counterpoint that suggests further questions about the ways in which fandom is differentially articulated through gendered practices of distinction.

I.v. Analysis

Analysis does not start once data collection has finished; rather it is a continuous process that gets underway as soon as the research project is conceived. As

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[13] See also Tia DeNora's study of music in everyday life in which she focuses, as she says, 'on women—as opposed to women and men—because it was concerned with redressing the gender

Huberman and Miles suggest, 'the design of qualitative studies can in a real sense be seen as analytic' (1998: 184). Thus, both my decision to focus on female Kate Bush fans and the design of my questionnaire had important consequences for the kinds of data collected and analysed. In this section I shall explain how I analysed the data yielded by both questionnaire and interviews.

Inspired by work on women romance readers and cinema spectators (Radway, 1991; Stacey, 1994a), the questionnaire was designed with the view of finding out what influence Kate Bush had on her female fans' identity; if and to what extent Kate Bush served as a role model for these fans; what role fandom played in the women's lives; and so on. Its questions can thus be seen as providing the study with a number of categories for understanding these women's investments in Kate Bush. Indeed, the questions suggest a particular understanding of fandom. Literature on fandom tends to highlight its associated activities, such as concert going, membership of fan clubs, and style imitation. While I could not explore the former because Kate Bush has not toured since the early days of her career, my understanding of fandom very much encompassed the other activities. Indeed, explorations of girls' fandom have seen style imitation as an important but often undervalued means of expression for girls (see, for instance, Lewis, 1990, on Madonna and Cyndi Lauper look-a-likes). As such, I was interested in enabling my respondents to reclaim such activities. As I was also interested to see if and how Kate Bush functioned as (feminist) role model, I thus started the research with a distinct political aim.

imbalance characteristic of cultural studies of music and social life'(2000, 48).

The questionnaire had been designed to minimise negative value judgements about fandom (indeed, a questionnaire which asks fans to explain their interest in a particular artist may be seen as explicitly suggesting a positive view of fandom) and I took care to do the same in my covering letter and personal letters accompanying the questionnaire. By early December 1997, 39 out of the 45 questionnaires had been completed; the remaining 6 came in over the next few months. In contrast to the initial letters in which respondents requested their copy of the questionnaire and in which many appeared to 'prove their credentials' as fans by emphasising their longstanding commitment to Kate Bush, initial evaluation of the questionnaire responses suggested a much more complex process of negotiation. Question 3 in Section B, for example, in many ways a key question, elicited unexpected answers.[14]

Coding of the responses to question 3 suggested that there were three different conceptions of fandom: positive, negative, and ambivalent. The positive responses mentioned respect for the privacy of the artist, loyalty, admiration/active interest, and responsibility/care. The negative responses identified no respect for the privacy of the artist, obsession/fanaticism, dependence, possessiveness, being uncritical, and association with youth. Finally, the ambivalent traits included flaunting one's appreciation, only one artist/religion, imitation/strong influence/more than just music, impatience, and collecting. The ambivalent traits were either not (explicitly or implicitly) valued one way or the other, or they were sometimes seen as positive and sometimes as negative, depending on their intensity, the manner in which the trait was displayed, and the label that the

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[14] It asks: a) 'Do you consider yourself: a Kate Bush fan; someone who likes Kate Bush a lot; someone who likes Kate Bush, but not excessively; someone who does not like Kate Bush

respondents had accepted for themselves. Thus, flaunting one's appreciation would be seen to signal either pride in liking Kate Bush or fanaticism, while imitation was credited as a positive trait if it entailed emulation of Kate Bush's idiosyncratic style of work or her unique musical vision, but negative if it merely meant dressing like her or if it was seen to somehow eclipse her music. Impatience for a new release signalled, on the one hand, a loyal commitment to the artist, and on the other hand a dissatisfaction with Bush's (slow) work rate and hence disloyalty. Similarly, fandom's focus on one artist and collecting was seen to signal loyalty or a too narrow, uncritical and dependent relationship.

With more than half the respondents describing themselves as liking Kate Bush a lot (I use the term 'admirers' for them and shall say more about this in Chapter 4), rather than as fans, my initial notion was that these women simply had less strong investments than those who *did* accept the label fan. The fact that many of these admirers were also uninterested in the activities addressed in questions 5 – 7 (membership of fan club(s), writing to Kate Bush, and collecting) seemed to bear this out. It would be fair to say that someone with a mild interest in Kate Bush would not join a fan club and would view those who do with suspicion. However, on the whole this division between extremely committed and more casual fans could not be so easily mapped onto the two choices. The questionnaire had also been designed to take into consideration that some respondents' investment in Kate Bush had waned and that they were no longer heavily invested in her work, or had lost interest altogether. Question 4—'If you were a fan, but not any more, why is this so?'—was included with this in mind. With very few exceptions, however, respondents tended to give answers such as 'N/A' or indicate that

nowadays they might listen a little less only because of a lack of new material and less available time.

So if these divergent understandings of fandom cannot be explained by respondents' differing levels of interest, then what explains them? In terms of actively following Kate Bush's career, knowledge of her work, relevance to respondents' lives, and duration of investment there appeared no difference in intensity of investment for both 'fans' and 'admirers'. Similarly, respondents' different ages, social/ethnic backgrounds, and educational levels did not seem to account for their acceptance or rejection of the label fan or their positive/negative evaluation of it.

Thus, the important issues which emerged in the questionnaires involved the redefinition of the label 'fan', the emphasis placed on the good taste which is achieved 'naturally' when growing up/older, and the attempts made by the women to distinguish themselves from other fans. These issues suggested an analytical framework drawing on subcultural theory and the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Having read Sarah Thornton's *Club Cultures* (1995), in which she shows how young people involved in dance or rave cultures attempt to distinguish themselves from other users of popular culture, I realised how the concepts of distinction and (sub)cultural capital might illuminate my respondents' practices. While I realised that the focus in the subcultures literature is on more visible and cohesive groups whose investments are often portrayed as uniformly resistant, I suspected that it might nevertheless provide a useful approach to the study of a very different group.

As for the potential for universally applicable findings, I would suggest that the research is less about the particular ways in which my respondents engage with Kate Bush and her work than it is about the ways in which their practices of distinction are articulated by gender, age, class and race/ethnicity. Within the field of popular music fandom issues such as gender and age have often been articulated to specific modes of consumption. This has given rise to, for instance, the stereotypical teenage girl fan, or the link between rock and youth, which my respondents' practices of distinction can be seen to partly challenge and partly re-inscribe. My respondents' views and practices suggest the need for a reconceptualisation of fandom that takes more account of its development over time.

I.vi. The Interviews

Of the 45 female respondents, more than two-thirds (34) indicated that they would like to participate in an interview at a later stage. Half of these (17) preferred the interview to be done by email, while a relatively small number preferred a home (3) or telephone interview (6); some did not indicate a special preference (8). The high number of fans who indicated e-mail as their preferred method is not insignificant, and this will be discussed later. The decision to include the option of an email interview was made after discovering the substantial number of web sites devoted to Bush and the existence of the mailing list *Love-Hounds.*

The use of interviews as a tool of social research is perhaps open to the criticism that it is 'artificial'. But, as Widdicombe and Wooffitt suggest, 'while interviews, however informal, are unlikely to be common features of everyday life, and therefore they are not mundane, (...) they nevertheless function to elicit the kinds of discursive practices which are a feature of everyday communication' (1995: 211). Indeed, the interview, while not 'mundane', provides a particular context for what Goffman terms 'the presentation of the self' (1969). Self-representation *is* mundane and therefore the interview *is* not altogether different in kind from more spontaneous interactional representations. However, as Buckingham (1993) suggests, in his work on children's talk about television, people are likely to give the responses they think the interviewer expects from them. In the children's case this sometimes manifested itself in critical, 'adult' responses to, for instance, television violence. At other times, however, the children would respond in a manner they considered more appropriate in front of their peers. Neither response here can be seen as more valid or more 'true' than the other, but they suggest the importance of taking the context in which the interview took place into account (see also Silverman, 2001). I shall say more about the context of my research later, in particular about how the interviewees and myself were located in social space and how this informed the processes of 'distinction'. At this point, however, I want to stress that no tools of social research allow unmediated access to 'social reality'. Just as we cannot 'read' the presentation of the self in everyday life 'straight', so too the presentation of the self in the research interview requires interpretation. However, as I shall discuss shortly, the particular character of email interviews meant that interviewees could view themselves and their practices

within the context of their everyday routines; therefore these interview were

perhaps a little more mundane.

The particular nature of Kate Bush fandom made it difficult to undertake

ethnographic research in the anthropological sense of the word. Since Kate Bush

does not tour fans do not have the opportunity to congregate at concerts; as such

there is no 'Kate Bush field'. There is, however, a virtual place where fans gather,

namely the email discussion list *Love-Hounds*. While I recruited respondents

through messages to this list, this research is not based on detailed observation of

this fan medium. Not only was my participation in discussions minimal (most of

the time I 'lurked'), very few of my respondents were actively involved in this

practice. The community on the email list, therefore, had little to do with my

sample of respondents, many of whom suggested they saw this practice as too

caught up in 'fan behaviour'.[15] Those who responded to my messages to the list

were mostly 'lurkers' themselves, having subscribed to the list in order to get

information on Kate Bush. Thus I have used the list predominantly as an example

of the way in which dispersed fans of an artist who is not currently visible can

nevertheless form a community. It suggests that there are different ways both of

practising fandom and of constituting more or less visible fan 'communities'.

Time constraints did not allow me to interview all the respondents who had

expressed interest. I therefore selected interviewees on the basis of their

questionnaires, and eventually interviewed 12 women by email and a further 4

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[15] A small majority of the subscribers to the email list appear to be male. Moreover, many of them seemed to be based in the US, which highlights the significance of location for fandom.

face-to-face.[16] In the case of each interviewee, I felt that their questionnaire answers merited further attention, either because they seemed representative of the other respondents in terms of age, ethnicity and responses, or because they appeared to diverge from the pattern which I had observed after an initial analysis of the questionnaire data.[17] Thus, the interviewees as a whole are not entirely representative of the group of respondents, particularly with respect to national identity and ethnicity.

Having decided not to use Internet Relay Chat (IRC),[18] but email only, I sent each interviewee a number of questions at a time for them to respond to in their own time, unless they preferred a different method (no-one did). I usually sent between three to five questions at a time, depending on the complexity of the questions, and the length of previous answers. This worked quite well and enabled me to follow up on answers already given as well as to open up new lines of inquiry. Although I had prepared some questions in advance of the interview, as a follow-up to the answers given in the questionnaire, the course of each interview usually required me to adapt these and to add several more, as new lines of enquiry were opened and discussions took unexpected turns.

Partly because of the method used, sending questions and answers back and forth, interviews often lasted up to two weeks or longer; sometimes it took interviewees several days to respond. For example, some of them had access to email at their

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[16] 2 men were interviewed by email as well.

[17] See interviewee profiles in Appendix C. Interviews took place during the summer and autumn of 1998.

[18] This is a programme which allows users to 'talk' to one another in real time. It requires both users to be logged onto their computers at the same time. Since I wanted to interview fans in other parts of the world, including the USA and Singapore, this might have been somewhat difficult to arrange.

workplace only, and therefore relied on 'quiet periods' at work, and some indicated that they wanted to give a particular question some more thought. For example, Krys wrote in response to my first set of questions:

> Sorry it has taken a few days to reply. I have printed off your questions and will give them some proper thought before sending the replies to you—after all, since you have kindly asked me to do these 'extras' I think they warrant some time and attention. (Krys, email interview, 19 July 1998)

In fact, most interviews lasted longer than anticipated, partly because e-mail interviews *can* last longer, without causing too much strain on both interviewer and interviewee. In order to keep within reasonable time limits, I conducted several interviews simultaneously. I was able to do so because each interview, due to the interviewees' particular interests and writing style, took on a character of its own, thereby reducing the potential for confusion on my part. A quick glance over previous exchanges would immediately remind me of the interviewee's particular interests, which stage of the interview we were at, and what the main lines of inquiry were.

Having done 12 email interviews, I decided to do only a few 'traditional' interviews. These would allow those respondents without access to email to voice their views, and could also act as a comparison (in terms of method) to the email interviews. I conducted 4 face-to-face interviews, all of which lasted for approximately one to one-and-a-half hours, and were conducted at my home (Angela), the respondent's home (Michelle), the respondent's workplace (Amel), and a café (Virginia). Apart from the café, which was fairly noisy, these proved to be places where the interviewees, as well as myself, felt comfortable. As with the

email interviews, these face-to-face interviews were semi-structured and I adapted and added on to my original questions as required. Questions asked included fairly open ones such as 'can you tell me about when you first became a fan?' and 'could you tell me again why you like Kate Bush?' to start with and became more specific as the interviews progressed.

In the next section I will examine the differences between email and face-to-face interviewing and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these research tools. In addition, I want to reflect on the relationship between the respondents and myself.

II. Email and Face-to-Face Interviews: A Comparison

The use of email as an academic research tool, although increasing, remains fairly new and unusual. So far, the method has been mainly employed for quantitative research, in the form of electronic questionnaires, but also, if to a lesser extent, for interviews and focus groups (Selwyn and Robson, 1998). As I explained earlier, I used email for the distribution of my questionnaires, although the number distributed was fairly low in comparison with the number of paper copies. Instead, email took on a more important role as an interviewing tool. I will here consider the advantages and disadvantages of interviewing by email as compared to face-to-face interviewing.

To start with, email offers access to interviewees world-wide (at least to those who have access to computers)[19] without having to travel long distances and incurring excessive costs. I was able, therefore, to communicate with fans from mainland Europe, North America, and South-East Asia, something which greatly benefited the research. It enabled me to address the issue of national identity in more detail than might have been possible otherwise. The easy accessibility of these interviewees proved to be a bonus not only for the interview itself, but also for follow-up contact. After the interviews had been completed, email greatly facilitated the process of seeking further clarification where this was necessary, and of keeping the interviewees informed of the project's progress.[20] In contrast, the face-to-face interviews were all conducted in the UK.

Selwyn and Robson point out that email's 'friendliness' to respondents is a major advantage (1998). Indeed, this and the fact that email can be seen as a 'safe' form of communication, was one of the decisive factors that led me to employ it as a research tool. When discussing personal and potentially painful subjects, or when respondents are shy, email can be seen to offer the necessary distance and therefore safety. Indeed, some of my respondents pointed out that communication by e-mail made it easier for them to talk about certain topics. For example, Florence, an English fan now living in the US, reflects in response to my question 'what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of an interview by email?' (email interview, 25 November 1998): 'e-mail allowed me to be more candid than I would have in person ... e-mail being somewhat impersonal, you

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[19] Thach (1995), for instance, argues that the use of email for surveys limits the demographics of the sample 'to those people who have access to online networks' (28) and that this needs to be taken into account when designing the research.

can be frank in your answers, perhaps more revealing and go on and on as long as you like' (email interview, 29 November 1998). In contrast, face-to-face interviews may be perceived as far less safe, yet I did not get the impression, during these interviews, that the women were withholding information. Agreeing to an interview and meeting a stranger (in the case of Michelle even inviting that stranger into her own home) is potentially risky. On the other hand, knowing whom you are talking to, instead of sending responses off into cyber-space, might reassure the interviewee and lend the interview a legitimacy that an email interview might lack.

Email interviews can also be seen as less intrusive than 'regular' interviews. Because of the way in which they were conducted (the interviewees and I sent questions and answers back and forth on a daily basis), the email interviews became almost a part of everyday life. Perhaps they ceased to be 'special' in the way that face-to-face interviews are, which often need to be arranged a long time in advance and for which both researcher and researched need to prepare and set aside a morning or afternoon. Like email interviews, face-to-face interviews ask the informant to view herself and her practices more closely, but outside of her normal everyday routines. In contrast, an email interview can be conducted alongside other daily practices, or indeed be incorporated into what already is a daily practice for many, and is therefore more easily incorporated into one's daily routines. For example, for Amba, an English fan who wrote to me while she was at work—doing a job she did not enjoy—the interview became an enjoyable part of her day: 'I am sorry this is ending, I have enjoyed it so much. It really livens up

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[20] In the next chapter I will look more closely at the way in which email and Internet can enable users, who might not otherwise get into contact with each other, to form new 'communities'.

my day' (email interview, 12 August 1998). For a researcher wishing to study fandom and music consumption, both clearly taking place within a wider socio-cultural context, this aspect of the research process is a significant one. Moreover, with the proliferation of music newsgroups and discussion lists, web sites where music can be downloaded or CDs purchased, email and the Internet are becoming increasingly important sites for music consumption and fandom. As such, interviewing fans by email fits well into this development.

Having the data already transcribed is a further advantage of email interviewing, as it ensures accuracy, where face-to-face interviews often suffer from transcribing errors. However, in addition to these clear advantages, the email interviews also presented a number of potential drawbacks. Email can of course enable respondents to pretend to be someone they are not; for example, a man can try to pass as a women. Yet, not only do I believe that this did not happen in my case, I also believe that this would be very difficult to successfully maintain for an extended period of time.

One thing that concerned me was whether I was asking the right kinds of questions in the right way. I was worried that by asking inappropriate or irrelevant questions I might offend, bore or confuse, and thereby alienate my interviewees. Furthermore, it was difficult to assess how many questions to ask at any one time. Realising that writing letters is very time-consuming (and some of my respondents had access to email only at their workplace), I did not want to ask too many questions during each session, for fear of receiving very short answers, or no answers at all. But on the other hand, I did not want to ask too few questions,

with the result that either the interviewee would become bored, or the interviews would carry on for an indefinite time. In each interview I had to carefully estimate what the best method would be. Encouraging interviewees to be as digressive as possible required the careful phrasing of questions and firm yet tactful probing where necessary. Also, each set of questions had to be carefully tailored to each specific respondent. The interviewees themselves showed a strong awareness of these dynamics of interaction and commented on their own answers: 'Hope this hasn't been too long and or dense!' (Florence, email interview, 2 August 1998) and 'well, as you can see, Laura, you have unleashed a monster. I am not sure how helpful my answers are to your research but I am enjoying myself immensely' (Laura C., email interview, 29 June 1998).

These concerns, although never simple, are perhaps easier to deal with in a face-to-face interview where the interviewer can rely on 'tacit communication', including tone of voice, facial expression, and gestures to assess the situation. Of course these forms of communication may be difficult to interpret, but they do give both interviewer and interviewee something to go by. The absence of such tacit communication when emailing requires careful consideration. The use of emoticons such as ☺ and ☹, or UPPER-CASE letters, is one of the more obvious ways to compensate for a lack of non-verbal markers. Although useful, as well as livening up the screen, it remains a fairly primitive means of expression compared to the options available in face-to-face contact.

I ended each email interview by asking the interviewee whether she had ever participated in a project like this before, whether she had been interviewed by

email before, and how she had experienced the project. Laura C., one of my

American interviewees, felt that the lack of personal contact had led to some

misunderstandings. In the following exchange she refers back to an earlier

discussion on feminism during which I had misunderstood something she had

written:

> Laura V.: How did you experience being interviewed by email? Have you
> ever done anything like this before? (email interview, 2 July 1998)
> Laura C.: I have never been interviewed by email before and liked it on
> the one hand and disliked it on the other—it is almost like addressing a
> diary or something because it is me & machine. BUT! The downside is
> that, like with the feminism question, I read your response several days
> later & wondered what I had typed to make you draw such a conclusion ...
> lack of eye-contact, non-verbals, and tone of voice lead to
> miscommunication a bit, I think and face-to-face, I would have sensed the
> confusion and been able to explain more clearly. (email interview, 2 July
> 1998)

Indeed, whereas in a face-to-face interview it is often enough to say 'what exactly

...?' or to look puzzled to indicate a lack of understanding and ask for

clarification, when emailing, which may involve considerable time lapses,

interpretations or indeed misinterpretations may easily extend over several

exchanges. This may, in part, be a result of imprecise use of language, as email

messages are often composed with less precision than letters. On the other hand,

the time involved in an email interview may mean that misunderstandings such as

the one above have a better chance of being rectified. Face-to-face interviews, in

contrast, allow for less reflexivity and are more dependent on prior preparation

and on-the-spot improvisation from both interviewee and interviewer.

Tracey Crane, in her work on female-to-male transsexuals, sees the e-mail

interview as a 'written conversation', which can come close to the 'ideal' research

process in which data collection and analysis constantly inform one another, because both researcher and researched have time to reflect on their questions and answers (1996: 32). Indeed, before responding to my interviewees I had ample opportunity to reflect on my data and the next set of questions. Equally, my interviewees had time to think through and carefully phrase their answers to me. As I pointed out above, depending on how the interview progressed, I adapted and added to my original questions. Also, my email interviewees expressed concern about the length and specificity of their replies and sometimes indicated that they would think about a question some more and get back to me later. For example, Nathalie, a German fan, wrote after responding to my first set of questions: 'I'll stop at this point, because I am not quite sure how long the answers should be and if you like to have them on a more abstract level or maybe something more in detail' (email interview, 10 August 1998). Florence noted: 'I could come back to a question, re-think something, review what I'd written and change things' (email interview, 29 November 1998). To some extent this reduces the contradictions that often characterise face-to-face answers. Of course such careful reflection and revision may result in a lack of spontaneity, for example in the form of 'stilted' answers, and end up giving a misleading picture. But it is perhaps an error to assume that what is 'spontaneous' is necessarily more 'authentic' than a more considered response.

Although the style of writing potentially hinders an email interview, as we have just seen, it may also prove the key to a successful one. Discursive styles among my interviewees differed considerably. Whereas some interviewees quite freely 'rambled on' in long, detailed emails, thereby creating the impression of a

conversation, others gave more concise answers as they would in a more formal questionnaire. Because writing styles are, just as conversational styles, markers of personality (and cultural capital), they helped, in combination with the information gathered from the questionnaires, to obtain a picture of the interviewees. This was slightly more complicated in the case of those respondents who were not writing in their native tongue and sometimes indicated difficulties expressing themselves in English. Some of them answered my questions in a more 'questionnaire-like' manner because of this, and did not digress as much as others who were more familiar with expressing themselves in English.

In summary, interviewing by email proved to be largely beneficial. Email's world-wide reach and low cost (after having gained access to a computer), friendliness and safety, and potential for reflexivity all contributed to render the interviewing process very pleasurable, a sentiment which was echoed by my interviewees. Lack of personal contact and non-verbal communication caused some confusion, although this was minimised by careful attention to writing style and, to a lesser extent, the use of 'emoticons'. In the end, I felt the advantages of email interviewing outweighed its disadvantages. While the sample generated remains a 'sample of opportunity', it is a broader one, extending across national boundaries. Moreover, given the clear preference for email as an interview method, it is unlikely that I would have had the same high number of potential interviewees if this option had not been included. The inclusion of a number of face-to-face interviews enabled me to compare and contrast the two methods, as well as to include the voices of some women who either had no access to email or preferred a face-to-face meeting. While face-to-face interviews have some

drawbacks in that they may be more intrusive and potentially less safe, these are

offset by the liveliness of a face-to-face meeting, rather than a computer screen.[21]

III. 'In the Field': Power and Legitimation

Just as the email interview may be less obtrusive than its face-to-face counterpart,

so too the role of the interviewer may be somewhat less obtrusive. Unlike face-to-

face interviews, in which the interviewer tends to have greater control, email

allows respondents to take the lead role in the interviewing process, which may be

a step toward diminishing unequal power relations between researcher and

researched. For instance, Selwyn and Robson highlight email's 'potential for

asynchronous communication', which means that informants need not respond to

questions as and when the researcher asks them, but can instead respond when

they have the time or feel disposed to do so (1998: 2). Whereas 'asynchronous

communication' increases the risk of interviews dragging on indefinitely, it also

greatly reduces the sense that the researcher is in sole control of the process. For

instance, it allowed my interviewees to leave e-mails for several days if they were

too busy to respond immediately, or to answer questions in a different order,

sometimes postponing an answer if it required more thought.

Reflexivity has been an important aspect of the feminist research process. As

Maynard and Purvis (1994) point out, reflexivity can mean both the exploration

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[21] I decided not to include any telephone interviews for two reasons. First of all, the email and face-to-face interviews gave me sufficient data to work with. Secondly, I think that while telephone conversations have some of the advantages of a face-to-face interview (such as tone of

and critique of the process of data collection and analysis and their underlying theoretical assumptions and the examination of the researcher's own position within the research (16), while Harding (1987) has suggested that feminist analysis 'insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research' (9). Reflexivity, therefore, includes not only a consideration of the researcher's 'intellectual autobiography' or 'the processes by which "understanding" and "conclusions" are reached' (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 189), but also the relationship between the researcher and researched and the roles of emotion and power in this relationship. As Davies (1999) points out, 'at one level there is the question of various status differences and how these affect interactions. But the more personal and individualistic dynamics are also significant' (102). While the researcher forms opinions on the women she researches, they in turn will perceive her in a particular light. It is important, therefore, to think carefully about this relationship and the effect it may have on the information which is being collected and interpreted. It involves, amongst other things, the issue of 'rapport'. While some feminists have argued that it is important for the researcher to be emotionally invested in the research and to feel empathy for the women she researches, others believe that such rapport is not a necessity. What is more important, I believe, is to foster an atmosphere of trust by informing research subjects of one's background and objectives.

However, regardless of the researcher's intentions to democratise the research process and minimise inequality, power relations remain an integral part of all

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voice, spontaneity), they lack others (such as gestures) and also lack the email interview's potential for reflexivity.

research situations that depend on the participation of informants. Feminist researchers, especially, have been keen to redress the effects of unequal power relations in research. Ann Oakley (1995), in an early discussion which was first published in 1981, urges the interviewer 'to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship' (41), and to pursue a non-hierarchical, non-exploitative relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which might lead to the researcher being seen as more than just a 'data gatherer' (47). Judith Stacey (1988), however, is sceptical about this attitude and wonders 'whether the appearance of greater respect for and equality with research subjects in the ethnographic approach masks a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation' (22).

In addition to these more personal dynamics, reflexivity also pertains to broader 'disciplinary' relationships. In Chapter 2 I discussed the concept of the 'field', as theorised by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu defines the field as a relational social space, the structure of which is determined by the position of agents within it. Whereas for Bourdieu a field exists objectively, independent of the researcher's gaze, for social scientists a field comes into being through the research process, as the researcher fixes his or her gaze on a group of people or an institution. In this project the two concepts of the field meet.[22]

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[22] However, it must be noted here that there is no 'field' as such in the anthropological or ethnographic sense of the word. Kate Bush fans do not gather often, for instance at concerts, for the reasons discussed earlier (notable exceptions are 'Katemas', when fans gather in small groups to celebrate Kate Bush's birthday, and conventions to mark the release of a new album). Therefore, an ethnographic study, such as those by Cohen (1991) and Finnegan (1989), would have been more difficult.

In addition to studying the general social field and other, more specialised institutional fields (such as the artistic field, the economic field, and so on), Bourdieu has analysed the academic field (Bourdieu, 1988, 1994). In his plea for a 'reflexive sociology' Bourdieu argues for an analysis of the position the researcher occupies in the intellectual field, as well as the disposition (habitus) which accompanies this position. This entails looking at the researcher's position in the academic field, his or her position in relation to others in this field, and the position of the discipline in relation to other disciplines. These positions influence the way in which research is carried out, including choice of subject and point of view.[23]

Burgess (1984), adhering to an anthropological understanding of the field, says about the relationship between the researcher and subject of study:

> [It is] the relationship between the sociological training of researchers and their personal experiences in a social setting that may help to generate a research problem and a programme of research. For sociologists studying their own societies may have experience of particular roles and sociological settings that can be utilised in their own research. (32)

While the respondents and I were both part of this 'research field' which had come into being through my project—the boundaries of which were drawn by the decision I had taken to choose a particular case study (Kate Bush), and to include some people (female fans) and to exclude others (male fans)—we also shared 'social space' in Bourdieu's sense: both in terms of 'the general social field' and the more specific field of popular music fandom. In turn, we each belonged to

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[23] Brubaker (1992) suggests that the 'scientific habitus (...) differs from other habituses in its reflexivity, in including a disposition to monitor its own productions and to grasp and make explicit its own principles of production' (225).

other specialised fields in which we did not share membership—'the academic field' being one of them

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have suggested that

> Where identities have to be created or established, much thought must be given by the ethnographer to 'impression management'. Impressions that pose an obstacle to access must be avoided or countered as far as possible, while those that facilitate it must be encouraged. (83)

I found that sharing an investment in Kate Bush (and other performers) with my respondents inspired confidence in them and diminished the distance that might otherwise exist between researcher and researched by virtue of the researcher's membership of the academic field, which has high standing within dominant or 'legitimate' culture. I was able to empathise with the respondents, and to bring personal experiences and insights to the research. Although it is not necessary 'to be one to know one', I found that in this case it was helpful.[24] However, while doing the research, I also became aware that, being very familiar with Kate Bush's work, I took some aspects of both her music and her image for granted.[25]

Many respondents expressed their 'fan credentials' when requesting a copy of the questionnaire, indicating that they had been 'fans' for many years. Some would also inquire after the nature of the research.[26] In some cases respondents already

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[24] However, as I mentioned earlier, while I managed to establish my credentials as a (former) Kate Bush fan with the respondents, the fan magazine's editors remained suspicious of my motives.

[25] This includes, for instance, Kate Bush's whiteness. I shall discuss this in detail in Chapter 6.

[26] Another interesting strand in some of the initial letters, as well as initial interview exchanges, is the expression of interest in and solidarity with my academic background. Thus Brenda writes, 'if it all is a bit too much (I hope not) you can always write to me. I know what a task this study must be, I did a thesis on juvenile delinquency years ago and I can remember clearly that it was a bit (!) more than I had thought' (letter, 3 April 1998). 'Just finished my master's thesis, so anything to aid a fellow academic in training...' (Leslie, initial email message, 20 June 1997). Similarly, some

distanced themselves from the label fan in their first communication. Helen K.,

for instance, writes 'I was intrigued by your request for female Kate Bush fans in

"Mojo" magazine. I've been an admirer of Kate Bush for many years, and would

love to participate in your research' (letter, 20 September 1997). While the term

admirer here may not necessarily signal a distancing from the label fan and its

associations, the responses in her questionnaire express this much more strongly:

'[a fan] makes me think of someone rather obsessive' (Helen K., questionnaire).

In other cases, respondents initially accept the label, albeit qualified, only to reject

it later on in the questionnaire. For instance, Florence writes, 'I'd like to get

involved in your Kate Bush study. I'm a fan but not a "fanatic"' (letter, 17

November 1997).

Since these letters constituted the first point of direct contact between the

respondents and me, they, and my responses to them, were also instrumental in

establishing a productive relationship. The following is taken from a letter in

response to my advertisement in *Q Magazine*. In it Brenda first expresses surprise

at a project of this nature and then goes on to explain her longstanding interest in

Kate Bush and to ask for further clarification about the project.[27]

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of the respondents immediately signalled their positions as both fan and musician. Thus Virginia writes, 'I'd be delighted to complete your questionnaire re: Kate Bush. As a recording artist myself, I'm considering a 'Bush' cover in the near future' (letter, n.d. [approx. September 1997]) and Heather R., 'I saw your posting about your research project on the Kate Bush newsgroup. I would be interested in taking your questionnaire and hearing more about your project. I am also a singer/songwriter/keyboardist and have been a long time fan of Kate' (Heather R., initial email message, 22 June 1997). These communications tell us more about the different positions occupied by the respondents in the field and the different fields in which they claim competence and legitimacy. While many of the respondents signalled their credentials as bona fide Kate Bush fans and at the same time tried to ascertain my own position in the field, those respondents who identified themselves as not only fans but also musicians could be seen to occupy a position characterised by a special kind of cultural capital—first-hand knowledge of the music-making process.

[27] Brenda's request arrived several months after most of the other questionnaires had been completed, and a few months before the first interviews took place. Brenda was a Belgian 'fan' who recognised the pejorative qualities often associated with this label and subsequently tried to

> I had some questions myself. Why this study and why women fans? Many
> may think Kate Bush fans are mostly male but I think that this is not so. In
> the beginning Kate was somewhat of a sex symbol to the male fans but a
> real fan saw beyond that image that was forced upon Kate by the media.
> Still I think only a Kate fan would make a social study about Kate, but if
> I'm mistaken I think it will be interesting to see the result. (letter, 2 March
> 1998)

In response to Brenda's letter, I sent her the questionnaire and a letter in which I

explained to her what the study would be about and how I was invested in the

subject myself. I aimed to present myself as non-judgmental, yet encouraging:

> The reason I chose Kate Bush for this study is that, first of all, I'm a long-
> time admirer. Secondly, she's been an extremely important artist,
> influencing many of today's female artists. I'm hoping to gain new
> insights into the way in which women relate to music and how Kate forms
> a part of their lives. To me Kate Bush fans are anything but weird! (letter,
> 9 March 1998)

Brenda enclosed a second letter with her completed questionnaire and in response

to the explanation about my own 'fan status' she writes, 'I was very pleased to

hear from you and to find out more about your study. It's good to know you are an

admirer of Kate Bush yourself, but I didn't think otherwise' (letter, 3 April 1998).

Having at this point established my own credentials—both as a (former) Kate

Bush fan and as a researcher— I was able to draw on this at the start of the

subsequent interviews. I believe that identifying myself as a fan/admirer to a large

extent facilitated the contact between the respondents and myself. Initial questions

about my status as a fan were often followed by other questions on Kate Bush,

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present herself as neither 'possessive' nor 'obsessive' (more about this issue in Chapter 4). She
was 36 at the time of the letter and questionnaire and was working as a legal counsellor. She was
not interviewed.

other music and my work, as well as largely unrelated matters, such as holiday

plans, and made the interview in many cases an informal and friendly affair.

However, since on average nine months passed between the questionnaire and the

interview, in some cases respondents had forgotten some of this information and

asked for further clarification or reminders. For instance, in the following extract,

Babs remembers (incorrectly) what my research interests are. In this light her

statement 'I still am a big fan of Kate' suggests that the notion of obsessive

fandom is not problematic for her:

> Laura V.: You may remember completing my questionnaire on Kate Bush
> last autumn. At the time you expressed an interest in being interviewed. If
> you're still interested, I would like to follow up on the questionnaire with
> an interview now and elaborate on some of the issues that you raised. If
> you'd like to take part, please let me know and we could conduct the
> interview in a number of email sessions. (email interview, 22 June 1998)
> Babs: Hi Laura – I'd be happy to help out – nearly forgotten all about the
> questionnaire! Remind me again of the main idea behind your thesis – was
> it gender or why people become obsessive about artists? It was both if I
> remember correctly. I still am a big fan of Kate. (email interview, 24 June
> 1998)

In my response, therefore, I felt it necessary to neither discourage the notion of

obsession, nor to give Babs the idea that this was the central point of my work so

as not to manipulate her answers one way or the other; I wanted my information

to remain relatively neutral:

> A quick reminder—indeed, my thesis deals with both gender and why
> people are fans, how they express this, what their relationship with the star
> is like, etc. In particular, I'm looking at the way in which this works for
> female fans and female artists (email interview, 24 June 1998).

Babs continued to express interest in the project as well as in myself as both

researcher and Kate Bush fan/admirer. The following exchange shows how Babs

may be trying to assess what kind of person I am and if I might have any

information on new Kate Bush material:

> Babs: As for Kate – there seem to be murmurings of an album this year
> but even the web has little info!! Do you know anything?
> What other music do you like and are you at all like me about it? How old
> are you? What are you planning to do with your degree? And where are
> you from? A few questions for you for a change!! (email interview, 26
> June 1998)
> Laura V.: As for your questions, according to Kate's record company a
> record is not very likely this year, but apparently she is working on
> material, and a release may be scheduled for next year. This is what I've
> picked up from the mailing list. I guess we need to be patient for a while
> longer!
> I'm currently listening to lots of other female artists such as Fiona Apple,
> Sarah McLachlan, Beth Orton and Jewel, and one of my favourite albums
> is Jeff Buckley's Grace—can't get enough of it. Like you I'm always
> trying to discover new things and spend a lot of time on music. (email
> interview, 28 June 1998)
> Babs: Hello Laura – many thanks for the info on Kate. I must say, all the
> talk of Gilmour and an album was beginning to be a bit remote as time
> passed. I am personally so used to waiting that I don't really mind. As
> long as she's happy and since she reaches 40 this year I guess there'll be
> lots to think about!! Your taste in music is interesting – I have been
> meaning to try the Jeff Buckley album and probably will now. (email
> interview, 3 July 1998)

Exchanges such as these enabled Babs to get to know something about me and

thereby to dispel any uneasiness she may have felt at answering a stranger's

questions. Since 'fan' is a stigmatised identity in some contexts, her questions

may have been directed at me with the aim of placing me in the social field, and in

the 'subfield' of popular music, and checking my credentials and perspective on

fandom. In addition, the 'mutual recognition' in the above exchanges between

myself and Brenda and Babs can also be read as examples of a 'proto-

community'. The respondents in my research were for the most part

geographically dispersed and did not meet many others to share their fandom. Yet

encounters such as these suggest a potential for the establishment of a proto-

community.

At the start of my interview with Lynne, too, I was conscious of having to

carefully balance my roles as a researcher and a Kate Bush fan/admirer. Shortly

after telling me about first discovering Kate Bush and how she has remained

important, Lynne worries that she may come across as too involved and says,

laughing, 'you're wanting to get your jacket and leave' (interview, 25 August

1998). Lynne seemed very conscious of the impression she gave and expressed a

concern with coming across as 'someone who's becoming a little too obsessed

with her, a little bit fanatic' (interview, 25 August 1998); she continued to say:

> I don't walk around flaunting it all the time, I mean, I'm indulging in this
> interview, because I have a chance to speak about her, but I wouldn't go
> out this afternoon for lunch and start bringing in Kate, you know. No, not
> at all... [silence]. (interview, 25 August 1998)

In order to counteract my potentially silencing effect on Lynne, I needed to

reassure her that she would not be judged and that I shared her interest in Kate

Bush. I was able to do so by telling her about my experience with web sites

devoted to Kate Bush. Lynne became very enthusiastic when I told her about the

wealth of information on the Internet:

> Laura V.: There are many fans who set up their own web sites. I think
> there is an official web site, from the record company...
> Lynn: is that [inaudible]?
> Laura V.: I don't know... but there are some pretty big web sites, and some
> are very small, we're talking about one or two pages.

> Lynn: oh really? There's pictures and videos and stuff? Interviews with Kate?
>
> Laura V.: I know there's this one large web site, it's called Gaffa Web, and they've got extracts from the magazines, from Homeground, some have music clips and pictures...
>
> Lynn: WOW! I'm definitely going to research that, because I haven't got enough stuff on her at all. (interview, 25 August 1998)

Having thus established my cultural capital, the contact between myself and the women was facilitated and this helped to destabilise, to a large degree, the hierarchy which often characterises the relationship between researcher and researched (unless one is 'interviewing up'). In the field of popular music fandom the respondents and I occupied broadly similar positions; or in other words, we had similar amounts of cultural capital in this field. Although I was sometimes consulted as an 'expert' on Kate Bush, mostly the exchanges between me and the respondents could be characterised as conversations between 'fans'.

However, my position as a doctoral student in a women's studies centre, seeking to account for the world of music fandom, and asking questions the fans would not necessarily ask themselves, marked me as different from the women. As an academic researcher in a particular research situation I had specific academic capital, which set me apart from the respondents. My possession of fan cultural capital, then, may have given me some 'street cred' and may have compensated for the potential silencing effects of the cultural capital I have as an academic. However, the respondents may have viewed this institutionally sanctioned capital as providing me with a certain kind of power: the power to legitimate their claims to distinction. Indeed, an academic study of popular music fandom suggests a recognition that is not often extended to fans, especially when they are female. Therefore, one of the reasons why the women were keen to participate in the

research may have been not only that it provided them with a welcome chance to talk about Kate Bush, but that they saw it as a chance to have their claims to distinction legitimated. This suggests that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is perhaps best characterised as one of interdependence; not only does the quality of the interviewee's responses help to lend recognition to the interviewer, the interview can do the same for the interviewee. Thus the interviewee is never without power: If she feels she does not gain anything from the process she has the power to withhold information or to withdraw from the process altogether.

As discussed previously, feminist work on popular music has highlighted the continuing male domination of the music industry, for instance through the fact that the 'gatekeepers' or 'cultural intermediaries'—those who decide what gets heard and promoted—are predominantly male (see for instance Bayton, 1998; Whiteley, 2000; McLeod, 2001). This also has significant effects on the consumption of popular music—for instance, on decisions as to which tastes are sanctioned or even visible.[28] If the gendered nature of consumption practices in popular music means that women have little opportunity to influence opinion polls, to be seen as 'connoisseurs' and thereby to achieve distinction, it is perhaps not surprising that it made my respondents keen to adhere to the ideology of rock and to challenge certain stereotypical images.

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[28] For instance, Sheila Whiteley (2000) has suggested that women's different patterns of music consumption (she cites examples of women taping compilations and buying less music when they reach their twenties) mean that their tastes are less visible: 'The effect of not buying records and CDs has resulted overall in women listening to a boyfriend or husband's record collection, in vicariously experiencing the power of music through their men. This, in turn, has also had a significant effect on the rating of women artists in music press polls and, more disturbingly, in the critical evaluation of top artists across the last thirty years of popular music history' (5).

An important aim of feminist research has traditionally been that of transformation, of bringing about change in the lives of the women it researches. As Humm (1989) writes, feminists agree that 'feminist methodology must be *for* women, that it should be useful in improving the daily lives of a diversity of women' (136; see also Maynard and Purvis, 1994). However, the extent and kind of change which researchers can bring about varies depending on the area in which they work. Bourdieu's work is useful for looking at how relationships within and between academic disciplines influence the production and legitimation of knowledge.

Bourdieu's idea of a 'reflexive sociology'—now applied to the study of popular music—raises questions about the position of popular music studies within the academic field (both within music departments and departments such as cultural and media studies, sociology, women's studies, etc.); the main concerns of popular music scholars—how these multiple relationships have influenced *what* is being studied and how this is done (what methods are favoured, which stars singled out for analysis, and which genres deemed worthy of study), and whether these relationships have constructed a certain popular music canon; the subject's prestige within academia; and finally, the relationship between popular music studies and the music industry and media.

In this light the extent to which I can extend legitimation to my respondents, as a doctoral student in a women's studies centre doing research on popular music, seems limited. As Skeggs asks, 'if, as researchers, we are in a position to contribute to knowledge normalization, does this mean we also have the power to

legitimate?' (1997: 37). Women's studies remains on the margins of many academic institutions, while popular music is a relatively new area of academic investigation and may therefore lack the prestige attached to some other disciplines. The legitimation which I can extend to the respondents, therefore, may remain local; in other words, my contribution may not travel far beyond the 'subfield' of (feminist) popular music studies and offer the women little apart from enjoyment and temporary empowerment. This is particularly so because it is doubtful whether the identification of certain dominant ideologies within the popular music industry can bring about any actual change in that industry. Although my respondents' practices both reinforced and challenged the structure of the popular music field—they reinforced notions of the undiscriminating and 'eroticised' female fan, while their claims to distinction on account of their 'feminine cultural capital' challenged the male domination of the popular music field—these practices are relatively small-scale and invisible and are therefore unlikely to have any significant impact on the music industry, and indeed on the standing of the individual herself in terms of success in converting this form of cultural capital into more widely recognised 'symbolic capital'.

The limited legitimation available to the respondents contrasts with what the research means to me. In addition to having enjoyed the contact with the women, the research also represents a stage in my academic career. This is something which worries me, bearing in mind Stacey's concern that the appearance of respect and equality 'masks a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation' (1988: 22). Moreover, the establishment of a friendly and reciprocal research atmosphere cannot mask the fact that, ultimately, I did have considerable control

over the research process. Not only would I initiate interviews, I would remind interviewees to respond after long gaps, steer interviews towards an end when I felt I had gathered sufficient data, and analyse this data.

IV. Textual Research

In addition to offering my interpretations of the women's responses (which can be found in Chapters 4, 5 and 6), I have complemented them with textual analyses. In this final section I shall consider the selection and analysis of this material, and its integration with the interview and questionnaire data.

The textual analyses aim to provide a context for the understanding of the questionnaire and interview material. The texts chosen for analysis are those songs, albums and visuals which were described by the respondents as meaningful, those which best illustrate my respondents' claims (for instance, their claims to Kate Bush's authenticity and to their shared womanhood), and those which are significant in the development of Kate Bush's career. 'Wuthering Heights', Kate Bush's first hit single, is one of the texts that will be discussed in Chapter 5, and fits all these categories. It is meaningful to many women because it was their first introduction to Kate Bush; its release at a time when few female performers were doing comparable things allows respondents to use terms such as 'authentic' and 'unique'; and finally, the song firmly placed Bush on the popular music map. By having chosen the texts for discussion on this basis I hope to have

minimised the disjunction between respondents' views and my own interpretations.

This is not a musicological analysis of Kate Bush's work. With the exception of some fans who are trained musicians themselves, few of the fans who participated in this project actually explained their interest in Bush using musicological terminology. The emphasis in musicology has traditionally been on the musical text (e.g. analysis of the music score), rather than on consumption. Cohen (1993), for instance, has noted how 'lyrical and musical texts may be deconstructed and their "meaning" asserted, but the important question "meaning for whom?" is often neglected' (126). Therefore, while trying not to neglect the specifically musical aspects of Kate Bush's appeal, my analysis is informed by the respondents' views and will focus on those elements which they are most comfortable talking about, including lyrical and visual content. I want to prevent the analyses overwhelming my respondents' views.[29]

Other sources I have drawn on include web sites, the email discussion list *Love-Hounds*, and the fan magazine *Homeground*. The interviews and reviews found on some of the web sites—many of which were first printed in music magazines or fanzines—provided me with information on Kate Bush, her work and reception by the press; the easy availability of this material on the web greatly aided the research. *Love-Hounds* and *Homeground* both furnished me with fans' opinions and insights, and provided some comparison with the questionnaire and interview data. Again, although extremely interesting, I have deliberately kept the use of

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[29] Walser's (1993) study of heavy metal fans, for instance, while extremely fascinating, suffers from the drowning out of the fans' voices by musicological analysis.

this material to a minimum so as not to overwhelm the respondents' views, particularly since the fans using these media constitute very distinct groups.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, then, I have traced the development of my project. I have discussed the way in which I carried out the research—how I developed the questionnaire, gained access to a sample of fans via music magazines, a Kate Bush discussion list and a web site, conducted the interviews and analysed the data. The interviews were done using two different methods, email and face-to-face, each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. I have argued that what makes email interviews especially valuable is that they may be seen to reduce to some degree the unequal power relations that often characterise the research process. Moreover, they can be fairly easily incorporated into everyday life since for many people email is already a daily practice.

The subject of this research, Kate Bush fandom, also contributed to the friendly atmosphere of the interviews. As a (former) Kate Bush fan I occupied a position in the field of popular music fandom similar to that of the women. Our exchanges, therefore, often felt as exchanges between 'fans' with similar amounts of cultural capital (both to me, and judging by the feedback I received, also to the women). However, this contrasted somewhat with the different amount of cultural capital I have as an academic researcher and my position as someone who might legitimate the women's claims to distinction as fans.

In the following three chapters I shall look at the information yielded by the questionnaires and interviews. In the next chapter I shall consider the women's ambivalence about the label 'fan' and the practices often associated with fandom. In Chapter 5 I turn to the women's claims to distinction based on their construction of Kate Bush as authentic and as presenting a 'sensual' femininity. Finally, in Chapter 6 I shall look at the ways in which age, race/ethnicity and class interact with gender to enable claims to distinction.

As for the presentation of the questionnaire and interview material, I have corrected minor mistakes in the email transcripts (such as typing errors and punctuation), but have left grammatical errors intact so as not to interfere with the quotes too much. In the case of face-to-face interview transcriptions, I have included commas and full stops where I felt they 'naturally' occurred in the conversation to make the quotes easier to read. I have indicated longer pauses with ... and omissions with (...). Where respondents had the same first name I have added the first initial of their last name (for example Heather D. and Heather R.). I have done the same for myself (Laura V.) and one of the interviewees (Laura C.). I have indicated whether the quotes are from letters, questionnaires, or email/face-to-face interviews, and I have included precise dates for the quotes taken from the letters and interviews.

Chapter 4

'I'm not really interested in fan behaviour':

Negotiating the Meanings of Fandom

> Laura V.: From what you say about fan clubs and mailing lists I gather
> that you are not really interested in what others have to say about Kate.
> Can you say a bit more about this? (email interview, 11 November 1998)
> Alex : I'm not really interested in fan behaviour, because ... Well, why
> would I be? Without sounding too snotty, isn't it more teenage girls who
> get together and talk about how gorgeous Ronan is? (email interview, 25
> November 1998)

As Henry Jenkins (1992) suggests, because of the negative associations with
fandom it can be 'highly uncomfortable to speak publicly as a fan or to identify
yourself even privately with fan cultural practices' (19). The common perception
of fans as obsessive or excessive, comic, or eroticised means that few people take
up the label fan without at least some unease. Indeed, many of my respondents
were highly ambivalent about being 'fans' and the activities that are typically
associated with fandom. Almost half of them rejected the label 'fan' outright; the
others, while accepting it, were eager to purge it of its negative connotations.
Indeed, the respondents can be seen as having internalised the notion of the fan as
'Other', as a threat to the dominant aesthetic (which promotes restraint, distance,
and 'pure' contemplation). As such, they wish to be seen within this 'official'
aesthetic; in other words, as *not* out of control and *not* excessive. Thus where
Jenkins (1992), for example, sees the television fans of his research as perhaps
consciously repudiating high culture and its modes of appreciation, my
respondents, while engaging with a popular text, try to do so through a more
'legitimate' mode of appreciation.

In Chapter 1 I suggested that what distinguishes fans from more regular audience members is their concern with defining the terms of fandom, their long-term investment and sense of loyalty, and the way in which they use their knowledge in their everyday lives. I also discussed the different views on whether fandom should be seen as a more individual or communal phenomenon. In this chapter, then, I examine how my respondents attempted to define their investments in Kate Bush, which fan practices they engage in and which not, and how these practices are complexly gendered. I also show how these practices, and their negotiation within a domestic and professional context, contribute to the women's self-identities as distinguished listeners, or 'connoisseurs' and may lead to some degree of empowerment. The 'typical' fan characteristics/activities I shall look at include listening, collecting, membership of fan clubs (both 'real' and 'virtual'), producing Kate Bush inspired art (in this case, music), and processes of identification.[1]

I. Fans or Fanatics?

Of the 45 women who completed the questionnaire, only 25 actually describe themselves as *fans*. Although the advertisements specifically asked for Kate Bush *fans*, nearly half (20) of the women who responded prefer to describe themselves as liking Bush a lot (see part 2, question 3, second option). For the sake of brevity

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[1] As I mentioned earlier, I was unable to look at the activity of concert-going, as Kate Bush stopped touring after her first and only European tour in 1979. None of my respondents attended any of these rare concerts, but it is interesting to speculate on how they might have seized upon such an experience in order to claim distinction within the fan community.

I will refer to those who do not accept the label fan as *admirers*, a somewhat less controversial label which was suggested by some of the respondents. Thus *fan*, as a term derived from *fanatic*, continues to have negative connotations for some people.

Yet despite this difference in self-identification, the intensity of interest in Kate Bush, as demonstrated in my interviews, was comparable for both 'fans' and 'admirers.' This suggests that those respondents who were unwilling to call themselves fans felt it would send out the wrong signals and therefore not confer any distinction on them in the general social field. Identifying oneself as a fan is acceptable within certain circumstances—for example, in the company of like-minded people, within the field of fandom—where being a self-identified fan with extensive knowledge of Kate Bush can be seen as a mark of cultural capital. A further reason why some respondents may have felt uncomfortable at embracing the label fan is that media has often mocked Kate Bush and her fans. As discussed in Chapter 1, Bush has been described as a precocious and securely middle class 'control freak' with a superficial interest in 'art', while her fans have been deemed obsessed, over-protective and too loyal (especially considering the lack of new material recently). Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995), in their study of subcultural affiliations, noted that their respondents often resisted 'category ascription' since being a 'punk', for example, constituted only one facet of their identity. For my respondents, too, 'fandom' constituted a particular aspect of their identities which had to be negotiated in relation to their identities as partners, mothers, the respondents' relationship to general social field, and so on.

As my starting point for this research was to take fan behaviour seriously, by examining what fans really do and think and to thereby perhaps help establish a more positive image of fans, I was somewhat surprised to find the negative views echoed by many of the respondents, both fans and admirers; I had not set out to examine practices of distinction. As I noted above, whereas those who chose to describe themselves as liking Kate Bush a lot, tended to portray fans in the traditionally negative way, the self-identified fans attempted to redefine fandom in more positive tones. Respondents associated fandom with positive, negative and ambivalent traits.[2]

The following is a typical response to question 3c ('What do you think characterises a fan?') by a respondent who does not describe herself as a fan:

> It makes me think of someone rather obsessive, who almost wants to 'possess' their fave artist + is blind to any weakness (i.e. a poor album) in their artist. Unhealthy to be <u>that</u> obsessive, I think. (Helen, questionnaire)

For Helen, who did not belong to any fan clubs, the label fan is entirely negative; obsession and the urge to 'possess' render this category uninhabitable for her. The following response from Linda to the same question, on the other hand, suggests that the category could be—and in essence is—an inhabitable one. Yet its associations (fostered, as suggested by the reference to the film *Misery*, by the media) lead Linda, who was a member of the Homeground fan club, to ultimately reject it:

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[2] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the positive responses referred to respect for the privacy of the artist, loyalty, admiration/active interest, and responsibility/care. The negative responses, on the other hand, mentioned no respect for the privacy of the artist, obsession/fanaticism, dependence, possessiveness, being uncritical, and an association with youth. Finally, the

I don't like labels. The word 'fan' has taken on rather sinister connotations recently—people rifling through dustbins, 'Misery', being an anorak! That's not me. [A fan is] primarily, someone who has an appreciation of an artist's work, and finds it interesting and/or joyful. But language is symbolic and changing, and maybe 'fan' now means something more. Is a fan uncritical? (Linda, questionnaire)

The following responses are from women who did call themselves fans:

You're a fan if you like an artist better than others, you want to know as much as possible about the artist. Some fans can be possessive or obsessive but I think you have to respect the artist, his [sic] privacy, his choices. (Brenda, questionnaire)

Laura V.: In your questionnaire you mentioned that in addition to dedication, selflessness and understanding, there are also negative aspects about fans. Could you say a bit more about that? (email interview, 15 July 1998)
Krys: There is a tendency among some fans to want to own or possess the artist; they are literally prepared to buy everything the artist does and follow them everywhere. Sometimes they can be very pushy and will always get to the front of a show, or push themselves onto the artist if they manage to meet them. They tend not to allow any criticism of the artist, and seem to hold them sacred. They seem to demand a lot from the artist and do not see them as normal people but almost as deities. They can become so obsessed that nothing else in life seems to matter. I have noticed that some of these fans tend to find it very difficult to form relationships with their peers (...) I would say that I do not have these characteristics; having been on the fringes of the music world myself as a performer/writer I have been surprised at the attention even unknown people can get, as I have had briefly, and I can only imagine how much bigger this is for someone well known. I respect that Kate and others like her are people who need their sleep, their privacy, their own own and that they have a difficult life in many ways, trying to write music that will be well received. They do not need people constantly demanding from them, so I make every effort not to hassle Kate at any public event and I do not ask her for autographs etc. I see her as a peer, not a goddess. (email interview, 15 September 1998)

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ambivalent traits included flaunting one's appreciation, only one artist/religion, imitation/strong influence/more than just music, impatience, and collecting.

Brenda and Krys, acknowledging the existence of a 'wrong' type of fandom, proceed to dissociate themselves from it. Krys, who, as she says, has been on the fringes of the recording industry herself as a performer/writer, earlier explained that she herself engages in 'typical' fan practices such as collecting and membership of fan clubs. Yet, unlike 'them' who are possessive, spend excessive amounts of money, invade the artist's privacy, worship her, and have difficulties forming 'normal' relationships with peers, both Krys and Brenda recognise the boundaries separating fan and star; they do not want to 'merge' with their object of appreciation. These two responses, then, suggest the co-existence of two types of fandom—an 'excessive' one and a 'respectable' one (associated with aficionados).[3]

Andrea's response, on the other hand, while hinting at the fact that some might appreciate an artist's work on account of her persona, clearly separates fans from fanatics. Doing this, she purges the category of fan from the fanatic, rendering it an inhabitable category.

> A fan (as opposed to fanatic) is someone who respects the artist's work and appreciates it for what it is, not necessarily for who made it. (Andrea, questionnaire)

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[3] Two of the three male respondents considered themselves 'fans' and highlighted their 'obsession'. Yannis, a Greek fan in his early thirties, wrote 'I listen to Kate Bush continuously for 18 years, again and again, I have all her albums and videos, I have books and music scores and a poster in my room'; a fan, according to him, is characterised by 'obsession' (questionnaire). Michael, a German fan in his late twenties, wrote 'I am obsessed by her, by her music, by her lyrics, by her making of videos. She escorts me since 1991 permanently, and I find in her work—well—relief, home, comfort and joy!' (questionnaire, 3b). He later tempers this statement somewhat by saying 'well, a real fan tries to collect everything of her/his object of obsession (this is a point I DON'T!). A fan maybe is more critical of the artist she/he admires, concerning the quality of the work (e.g. a new album)' (questionnaire, 3c).

A number of respondents explained how, when they were younger, the boundary

between fan and star was more easily crossed. Krys and Brenda explain again:

> When I was young I felt more confident if I thought I looked like her.
> Nowadays I don't much care. (Krys, questionnaire, answer to question 23
> on Kate Bush's appearance)

> I have only started collecting about 10 years ago. It was at a time in my
> life when I was feeling bad and depressed. Kate's music was a great
> comfort to me and I saw her as a friend. I often sat down and surrounded
> myself with her records as if that would reduce the distance between us. I
> started collecting things and I still do so today. I see it as collecting art.
> (Brenda, questionnaire, answer to question 7 about collecting)

Both Krys and Brenda describe themselves as fans and at the same time display a

reluctance to be seen as *too* emotionally dependent. Krys does so by explaining

that her desire to resemble Kate Bush belongs to the past. While such an intense,

nurturing investment may be more acceptable in the young (they will 'grow out of

it'), it is suggested that it may be less so in mature women. Brenda, on the other

hand, rationalises her collecting and the comfort it brings by describing it as

'collecting *art*' which evokes the idea of official aesthetics with its emphasis on

'pure' contemplation and the appreciation of form over function. While Brenda

does not purport to do this, her reference to art can nevertheless be seen as

limiting the extent of her 'transgression'; her quote thus highlights the

ambivalence between experiencing what could be called a 'personal relationship'

with Kate Bush and a more impersonal, detached appreciation of her work.

In his study of Bruce Springsteen fandom, Cavicchi points out that when fans talk

about their 'relationship' to Springsteen they do not actually know or delude

themselves that they know Springsteen. To non-fans, however, such a notion of a

'relationship with someone known only through the media connotes abnormality and even danger' (Cavicchi, 1998: 55). My respondents shared this view about fandom's abnormality and danger to some degree, as their accounts of their 'relationship' to Kate Bush display a certain degree of ambivalence. On the one hand they draw sustenance from their Kate Bush fandom/admiration, while on the other they are anxious to downplay any sense of 'delusion'.[4]

Krys's and Brenda's accounts anticipated the discussion of the activities which are generally thought to be typical of fandom, and to which I will now turn. Many respondents either did not engage in such activities or else represented them in such a light as to support their claims to distinction. While this might suggest that the respondents' practices are too far removed from what normally constitutes fandom—is it legitimate to speak of fandom if the women distance themselves from accepted notions of fandom and are no longer or never were deeply involved in certain fan activities?—I want to argue that fandom does not necessarily equate with fan activities. What is emphasised by the respondents is a particular intensity of feeling, which goes over and beyond fan practices. They share a deep

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[4] Just as Michael readily accepted the label fan and described himself as obsessed, he seems to feel little unease talking about his affinity with Kate Bush in the following exchange:

Laura V.: In your questionnaire you pointed out that you're interested in personal details about Kate in order to find out what kind of person she REALLY is. Could you elaborate on this? (email interview, 14 July 1998)

Michael: Yes, that is the question I waited for ☺
And I think it's an important question for me!
In Kate's lyrics there are many references to things in my 'inner soul'. E.g. the line 'Warm and soothing, that's how I remember home', 'Mother stands for comfort', the complete lyrics of 'Never be mine' and—very important for me—'Under the ivy'. I guess there are the same moods in her and in me—that's for me the reason why her works touch me SO deep! That must be the reason! I don't want to know details of her life (e.g. boyfriends, family, whatever), just want to get to know her, so sit with her and talk to her... I think I have the ability to feel whether a person thinks the same as I do.... My picture of her is: well, she is like me in some sense. She is a person without affectation, like 'Diva behaviour', loves nature, peace, romantic and gloomy moods (remember she stated that she wrote 'Wuthering Heights' in face of the full moon shining in the garden! That's what I love too!). (email interview, 17 July 1998)
See Appendix G for lyrics to 'Mother Stands for Comfort' and 'Never Be Mine'.

commitment to Kate Bush, regardless of whether they accept the label fan or not, and a belief that she and her music matter. Moreover, to many this commitment is an integral part of their everyday lives; it is the 'soundtrack' to their growing up and growing older and their continuing navigation through life.

II. Listening

'Rereading,' as Jenkins points out, 'is central to the fan's aesthetic pleasure' (1992: 69). It is through the repeated encounter with a text that a fan comes to define his or her relationship to that text. The experience of popular music is of course particularly dependent on repetition. Fans acquire their specific fan knowledge through repeated listening to the primary texts as well as reading secondary texts (such as interviews and magazine articles). This knowledge can also be obtained through contact with other fans and fan clubs. This 'extra-textual information', although it is likely to have little value outside the fan community, functions as capital within the field of fandom (Lewis, 1990: 156). Fans are likely to have a more in-depth knowledge of their favourite popular cultural texts than an academic, yet 'their expertise in the minutiae of popular culture is usually deemed inconsequential, their fan knowledge regarded as "trivia"' (Lewis, 1990: 158). However, as Lewis argues,

> This is not to say that fans lose out on an affective authoritative practice by avoiding 'legitimate' routes of knowledge acquisition and production— quite the contrary. The construction of authority in the popular realm functions as an act of empowerment precisely because it establishes an alternative field of validation. (1990: 158)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Bourdieu is sceptical about the efficacy of such an 'alternative field of validation' and sees it as merely further confirmation of popular culture's subordinated position within the general social field. However, I believe that even if popular music investments do not yield considerable economic or symbolic capital, they *are* significant in terms of the pleasures and empowerment they afford. One would expect, then, that fans' primary activity would be frequent listening to favourite recordings. However, as Diana suggests, listening 'night and day' is not necessarily a definitive fan characteristic:

> I may spend a few months without listening to her albums, but when I 'catch up' with her music she's always there, sounding as fresh as 20 years ago. I like her though I do not flaunt my admiration for her. Fans are supposed to listen to their favourite artist night and day. That's not my case. I'd rather listen to Wuthering Heights once in a month than Lionheart three times a week. (Diana, questionnaire, answer to question 3 about why she considers herself an 'admirer')

Nearly two-thirds (27) of both the self-identified fans and admirers indicated that they no longer listen to Kate Bush as much as they used to. This paradox may be explained in part by the fact that many have been long-term fans or admirers, and since Kate Bush has not released any new material since *The Red Shoes* in 1993 they are all extremely familiar with her material; it is 'committed to memory' as Sandra puts it (questionnaire). Diana's response also suggests that, by limiting her intake of Kate Bush and carefully selecting her favourite pieces (the *Lionheart* album is often cited as the least favourite amongst fans and admirers), the music is kept special; its rarity increases its impact. 'Flaunting' one's admiration by playing the music round the clock might be seen as 'unhip' in both the fan and the wider social circles.

Sandra, a fan, explains (in response to question 19 about when she listens to Kate Bush and whether or not she listened more when she was younger):

> I don't listen to her music a great deal of the time any more although the tunes and lyrics are committed to memory!
> Sometimes I have an urge to listen to a particular song but I have listened to her songs so many times over the years, often it's enough to just play them over in my head rather than listen. (Sandra, questionnaire)

For many respondents who indicated listening less, the material now functions as an affirmation or reminder of Kate Bush's talent, as well as a reminder of what the women themselves can achieve; it also functions as a means to deal with the demands of daily life. In what follows, therefore, I want to look at some of the ways in which listening to Kate Bush had to be negotiated in the women's lives. In many cases the women encountered constraints in the form of lack of time and/or money and family commitments.[5] Thus living arrangements and partnerships often affect listening habits, and listening to music can function to negotiate space in a relationship.

To Lynne, who was in her late twenties and in a relationship, but lived alone, listening to Kate Bush sometimes functioned as a means to shut someone out of her life. Earlier in the interview she had explained how listening to Kate Bush helped her deal with a recent turbulent spell in her current relationship: 'I just came up here one night and listened to every single album, from start to finish, and god knows how many hours later, all the lights up and absorbed all of her stuff. And it just...I felt as though I could cope. It's amazing, it really is'

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[5] This lack of time also came through in the interviews. Some of those respondents who relied on email/Internet at their work place, for instance, had to carefully choose the times they could talk to me about their fandom; sometimes it would take a long time before they were able to respond.

(interview, 25 August 1998). In the following extract she shows how this used to

alienate a former boyfriend:

> Laura V.: have people, like your family, and your boyfriend, ever had
> difficulties with this [your fandom]?
> Lynne: oh, that's a good question ...
> Laura V.: I can imagine that they're jealous, or ...
> Lynne: ... An ex-boyfriend was jealous of how, when I got sad, I wouldn't
> indulge in it with him, I would go and drink or listen to Kate and dance
> around my room until it's completely gone. I'd be sort of singing out of
> tune at the top of my voice, like Cloudbusting or whatever, and then walk
> back in the room and I'd feel great and I could see that he was like numb.
> (interview, 25 August 1998)

Many respondents indicated listening to Kate Bush when alone or at a time (for

instance in the evening or late at night) when they can give sufficient attention to

the music. In response to question 19, Maria writes that she usually listens to Kate

Bush 'late at night or Sunday mornings' and that she used to listen more when she

was younger: 'not because of age, but because now I live with my boyfriend who

prefers dance music, so I save my softer stuff for when he's not around!'

(questionnaire). Elsewhere in her questionnaire, Maria indicated being a feminist

and, in addition to Kate Bush, liking female artists such as Debbie Harry, Tori

Amos and Justine Frischmann (of Elastica) because 'they are all strong women,

fronting their own bands and writing their own material' (answer to 29b). Both

this and the following extract from Amel say something about the negotation of

music tastes within a domestic context and suggest that, despite the women's

admiration for Kate Bush's independence and strength and their feminist beliefs,

they were not always able to translate this into powerful positions in their own

lives.

Amel points out that now that she is older (she was in her late twenties at the time of the interview) she no longer feels as strong a need for the music's emotional sustenance as she did when she was an adolescent, but when she does she needs to be by herself.

> Laura V.: Did you try and persuade your partner to like Kate Bush?
> Amel: Yeah, I have often ... he liked, he quite likes Kate Bush, he likes some things, but he is ... no way is he even vaguely a fan and he would never ... he didn't own anything by Kate Bush before he met me. No I don't try and convince him, but we do have a few arguments actually over who gets to play their own music. (...)
> The thing actually is that in a way he does win a lot, because I don't actually like to listen to it with him around. It doesn't work, it's not something I ... especially Kate Bush, I mean ... Kate Bush I don't actually play with him around very much, because ... I don't know. I need to be on my own, and I need to be sort of thinking, you know, it makes me kind of dream, and I can't do that with someone in the room. At all! (...)
> It's an excuse for my space and this is my time, my space and I need, as a teenager I needed that a lot, my own space where you, I don't know what you do, but ... you know, that thing. With music, you can do a lot with music, and I still—I don't need that very much now, I don't do it very often, but Kate, if I do it it's with Kate Bush. Kate Bush is what I'll put on. If I have time. (Interview, 27 October 1998)

Significantly, Amel uses Kate Bush to recapture her independent identity, to distance herself, to a certain extent, from her male partner. When she needs emotional sustenance, it is Kate Bush who can provide it—when she is by herself and if time allows. However, at the same time, this extract suggests some degree of powerlessness on Amel's part within the relationship. Her partner, who has a larger music collection and who likes the Beatles and Britpop, tends to be the one who decides what music is played at home and in the car. Because he is the one who keeps up with new developments, Amel suggests, she gives in to her partner's wishes and relinquishes control of the domestic sound space. However,

in response to my question whether she would also play the Throwing Muses, her other favourites, to create her own space, Amel explains

> No, the Throwing Muses I put on when he is around. It's more, Throwing Muses is more, it's a bit more angry. It's a specific mood where ... it's not exactly about that space where you need ... where you can dream. It's too aggressive I think. But Kate Bush she is, and Kate Bush is what I'll put on when I'm alone in the house. And I've got some time. (interview, 27 October 1998)

The above quotes suggest something about the relational aspects of different types of music. Amel reserves the more quiet, 'dreamy' music for moments when she is by herself and chooses to play the more aggressive, or perhaps more 'outgoing' music for moments when she and her partner are together. Thus, when it comes to negotiating her music tastes in her partnership Amel knows which music works best for which particular needs and situations.

Heather D.'s responses also exhibited conflicting emotions and practices. Heather was in her early thirties at the time of the interview and married. Originally from the UK, she and her husband had relocated to the US three years prior to the research after he had taken up a job in California. Heather was now a student and financially dependent on her husband which was a cause of frustration. She identified as a feminist ('feminism = female empowerment', questionnaire), and repeatedly referred to Kate Bush's independence, but regretted her own lack of it. Her favourite Kate Bush lyrics are the lyrics to 'The Sensual World':

> I get the feeling that the lyrics are about the sexual power that women have over men. It's so rare to hear about sexuality from a woman's point of view. You always hear about male sexuality in the form of porn, media,

etc. ('how to satisfy your man' articles in magazines) so it is refreshing to hear about female sexuality in Kate's lyrics (Heather D., questionnaire)

In our interview, I followed up on this issue:

> Laura V.: The fact that Kate sings about female experiences seems very important to you and you expressed disappointment at hearing that she's not a feminist. Could you elaborate on this? (email interview, 12 August 1998)
>
> Heather D.: I was a little surprised when she said in an interview that she wasn't a feminist because I thought she would be. It's a little disappointing to hear her saying she is not a feminist but I would feel different if she said she was antifeminist, which I don't think she is. She has always said that she wouldn't be where she is today without the support of men. (...) I have always had the impression that she has always been surrounded by men, very few women. My impression of Kate is that she is 'pro-female' not anti-feminist. There aren't many female songwriters that have the same independence/autonomy that Kate has. She produces her own albums, has her own recording studio, is quite wealthy and has the clout to attract 'names' to help with recording.
>
> This may be the 90s but there are still a lot of women who are dependent on a man's support to get somewhere, me included. I am financially dependent on my husband, which I am not happy about but I have to deal with it. (email interview, 14 August 1998)

This financial dependence, however, did not prevent her from investing in Kate Bush, both emotionally and financially (she was an avid collector), and from playing the music at home. It is indeed a paradox that her husband's money enables Heather to make these investments in someone who inspires her to strive for a sense of independence. Thus while Heather is unable to follow Kate Bush's example to the extent that she would like, she nevertheless draws considerable inspiration from it.[6] (I shall return to the issues of inspiration and aspiration below.)

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[6] Duffett's (1998) work on Elvis fans points to an interesting inversion of the idea that a star's power can rub off on the fan. He suggests that fans can gain power from Elvis's lack of it.

Although Heather's financial dependence did not prevent her from collecting, one

of the reasons why some of the respondents engage in fewer fan activities is a lack

of time and financial resources. Neither Krys nor Amba in the following extracts

had any children, though Krys lived with a partner.

> Laura V.: You explained that the 'typical' Kate fan is 'probably still
> mostly male'. Why do you think this is the case? (email interview, 26
> October 1998)
> Krys: (...) When women have children they have an identity as mother,
> and are probably too busy to spend as much time as they once did being
> dedicated fans. (email interview, 28 October 1998)

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you mentioned that women tend to spend
> less money on music and have 'different spending priorities'. What do
> these consist of? (email interview, 4 August 1998)
> Amba: I think once women have their own children, they tend to spend
> their money on them. Also, women spend more money on personal
> grooming, etc. than men do (...) It doesn't mean that they relate less well
> to music, or that it becomes less important, just that there are other
> demands in their lives. (email interview, 5 August 1998)

Amba suggests that mature women may have different spending priorities which,

compared to men and younger women, limit their involvement in fan activities

and render them less visible. This may be one of the reasons why, as a group,

more mature women have not featured much in studies of popular music

consumption and subcultures to the extent that younger people, in particular

young men, have. The fact that the respondents nevertheless continue to invest

themselves in Kate Bush is therefore all the more significant. It is the reason, I

believe, why it is important that these women's experiences are looked at.

Laura C. indicated that she and her friends are all in their late 30s and 40s (she

was in her early forties herself) and therefore do not have much time to spend on

music. In spite of this, her Kate Bush fandom played a central role in her life. Indeed, her musical tastes within the household appeared quite dominant and were certainly central in establishing her position in a family that included two step-children, a two-year-old son, and her husband.

> Laura V.: How old are your children? What kind of music do they listen to? Do you ever listen or talk about music with them? (email interview, 24 June 1998)
>
> Laura C.: I have two stepchildren for whom I have been the only 'Mom for 10 years—they are a 20 year old girl and a 16 year old boy. I also have a 2 year old son with my husband. My step-daughter definitely benefited from living with me—my husband's tastes run Top 40 with a strange affinity for the Moody Blues! And the kids' biological mother likes country & western (which I hate). So ... my step daughter came to me loving New Kids On the Block (sort of a Hanson pre-cursor). I like many things, all of which I deem 'quality'. I know trivia about artists and songs from long ago, like Carole King, Gerry Goffin, etc in the Brill Building in the early 60s just churning out hit after hit. She liked that kind of stuff from me and asked questions and stuff. We talk a lot about artists & intent and interpretation. The result: she has CDs of everyone from the Chieftains to Aretha Franklin to the Kinks (she loves Preservation Act 2). An openness to lots of different music and a somewhat discriminating ear are my gifts to her. My step-son, on the other hand, likes everything that the majority of other kids his age at school seem to like. And he can tell you that—'I dunno why I like it—everybody has this CD'. Still he shows promise—left alone over the summer, he has started picking out CDs from my collection and seems to be addicted to Patti Smith's Gone Again at the moment. (email interview, 26 June 1998)

While country music appears to have little to do with liking New Kids On the Block, Laura's linking of the two enables her to carve out a particular role within the household. For Laura Kate Bush and her other favourite music provided a means for establishing a relationship with her stepchildren and, significantly, for distinguishing herself from their biological mother. As such, Laura takes upon herself the role of a musical 'educator'; or as Bourdieu would say, she takes on a role typical to women, namely the display and transmission, and thereby preservation, of family cultural capital (or class position).

Some women's relationship to Kate Bush and her music focused not only on their identities as partners or mothers but also on their professional identities. Later in this chapter I look at the ways in which (semi)professional musicians relate to Kate Bush, but here I would like to look briefly at a response by Florence, a British woman who was in her mid-thirties at the time of the research, lived in the US, and worked as a radio DJ. She was not married, but lived with her partner. Earlier she had explained how Kate Bush (as well as other artists such as Steely Dan and Todd Rundgren) articulated certain emotions for her as she grew up (see start of Chapter 2). In the following extract she explains how she related to Kate Bush's latest release *The Red Shoes*:

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you indicated thinking that The Red Shoes is great. What do you like about this album? (email interview, 4 august 1998)
> Florence: My enjoyment of The Red Shoes has a lot to do with being at a rock station that actually played the disc! It did not receive much attention overall in the US, except for the Prince connection. I could shamelessly plug her back catalog. At 91X we played Rubberband Girl in medium rotation when it first came out, and Eat the Music in light rotation I think. We had a 'block' format from Friday afternoon until Saturday night where we played three in a row from the same artist. Incredibly (seeing as San Diego is the US's 6th largest city and 11th largest media market of 200), we could pick our own tracks so a block of Kate Bush with the current in-rotation song and two other picks from her entire singles back catalog was heavenly!! I also enjoyed the collaborations she chose, with Eric Clapton playing, doing the Prince thing, Gary Brooker and Nigel Kennedy on there. Overall I don't think the entire album is as strong as Hounds of Love or Dreaming, but its strength comes from her maturity as an artist. Perhaps people didn't like it because she seemed to step out of 'Kate's private World' a little more—and visit Prince of all people. 'You're the One' is about the most suburban Kate's got I think—it's a long way away from celtic fiddles and banjos. On the other hand Song of Solomon is as luscious as she can be—sensual is the right word I think. (email interview, 9 August 1998)

Florence's relationship to Kate Bush played an important role in her identity as a radio DJ, and it was here rather than within a domestic context that her tastes caused conflicts. She explained that while she and her partner have different tastes they also share a musical 'framework', so they experience no real conflicts over who gets to play what. However, at the radio stations where she had worked and the one she was working at the time, Florence had to balance the demands of station policies against her own tastes. She ended one of our interview sessions by sharing a memory: 'I've just remembered I played Hammer Horror at Halloween on 91X in San Diego probably in 1993—and got a good ticking off for it by the program director who had never heard it before and hated it!' (email interview, 13 July 1998).

The above examples show how the respondents negotiated time, space and money to invest in Kate Bush. Whereas for some of the women their admiration for Kate Bush's autonomy and power did not straightforwardly translate into their own powerful positions, others were more successful in drawing on their fandom to strengthen their position within their families or to reinforce their professional identities. Some of the conflicts that characterise my respondents' everyday lives also characterised those of Janice Radway's romance readers. The women in her study used their reading as an 'escape' from their daily routines of housework and care for their family, so they could 'vicariously attend to their own requirements as independent individuals who require emotional sustenance and solicitude' (Radway, 1991: 93).

The women's partners would sometimes object to their wives' reading habits, not because they were reading romances, but simply because the act of reading would absorb them so thoroughly. It was through recourse to the educational aspects of the romances—the historical facts, geographical locations and so on—that the women could convince their husbands of the value of romance reading and to overcome some of their own feelings of guilt. The women's insistence on their 'reading for instruction' (112), however, is not likely to be given 'official' recognition. Bourdieu would certainly see the women's claims merely as confirmation of their subordinated position within the general social field. Indeed, their claims to distinction depended largely on their partners and children's lack of knowledge of what counts as legitimate cultural capital and their ignorance of the low status of romance reading in the field of reading generally. Yet in spite of this lack of 'official' recognition, the women managed to translate their reading practices into both a degree of power within the family and 'time out' for themselves. As Radway suggests, the romances 'provided these readers with an opportunity to "teach" skeptical family members and thus to assume temporarily a position of relative power' (Radway, 1991: 112).

Although in some cases Kate Bush fandom also involved withdrawal from partners (for instance in the case of Lynne), my respondents' negotiations with families were different in some respects. Similar to the Smithton women few of my respondents would take their fandom into the public arena, but in many cases they would not even bring it into the public arena of the home. Amel, for instance, would not share her listening experiences with her husband and would relinquish control of the home's 'sound space' to him. Some of the respondents, then, were

'private listeners' whose claims to distinction appear to be made as much for themselves as for anyone else. One explanation for this may be that few of my respondents were full-time housewives like Radway's romance readers and are therefore less dependent on their partners for recognition.

III. Collecting

Collecting is an activity often thought to go hand in hand with music fandom. It is not surprising, therefore, considering the responses discussed above, that some of the respondents did not engage in this activity and displayed an ambivalent attitude towards it. However, for those who did it was also seen as a means through which to establish one's cultural capital in the fan community. Whilst approximately two-thirds of the self-identified fans said they collected (17), only about half of the admirers (11) did so. I shall start this section by looking at what constitutes a collection before looking specifically at collecting within the field of popular music, the different types of collecting and how they are gendered. I shall then look at a selection of responses from both collectors and non-collectors.

Both Baudrillard (1994) and Pearce (1992) suggest that what makes a collection a *collection*, rather than simply an accumulation of objects, lies in the difference between objects for use and 'objects held as part of a sequence' (Pearce, 1992: 48). The latter constitute a collection. The exclusion of functional objects marks collecting as something separate from everyday life, as something that is reminiscent of Bourdieu's distinction between the 'pure' and 'popular' aesthetics.

Indeed, referring to Bourdieu's notion of the 'aesthetic disposition', Pearce suggests that collecting is a 'ritual activity which is carried out for its own sake' (1992: 50). As such, it marks the collector, not as unworldly and unable to communicate with his or her peers, but rather as someone who puts the aesthetic disposition into action.

Collecting, in particular collecting 'rarities', is often highly appreciated within the field of popular music fandom where a large and impeccable record collection (especially vinyl) is seen as a sign of discriminate taste and in-depth knowledge; in other words, as a mark of connoisseurship and cultural capital. Those who do not collect, or who collect the 'wrong' items, may be dismissed as 'mere' fans. A distinction may be made here between 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' collecting. Whereas 'inclusive' collecting suggests mass-produced items (for instance regular releases as well as memorabilia such as t-shirts and pictures), 'exclusive' collecting centres on rare or selected items which are not easily available and which may be fairly expensive.

Pearce (1992) makes an alternative distinction and identifies three different modes of collecting: the 'souvenir', 'fetishistic' and 'systematic' modes (69). The first of these refer mainly to 'memorabilia' which are important to the collector for their evocation of memories of past events. Fetishistic collecting, Pearce argues, is characterised by the collector's possessive attitude towards his or her objects which play a 'crucial role in defining the personality of the collector' (Pearce,

1992: 84).[7] The fetishistic collector aims to collect as many 'samples' as possible

(Pearce, 1992: 81). The 'systematic collector', on the other hand, aims to collect

'examples' which each have a unique place within a series and are meant to

complete a set (Pearce, 1992: 81). This suggests that 'exclusive' fan collecting

may be seen to fit the model of 'systematic' collecting, which in turn suggests a

'high' art model (it evokes the art museum, which, of course, characterises the

ultimate in pure contemplation).

Such discriminating collecting is often seen as a masculine pastime. Indeed, as

Straw (1997a) points out, 'record collecting, within Anglo-American cultures at

least, is among the more predictably male-dominated of music-related practices'

(4).[8] Why this should be so is unclear, according to Straw, as there are conflicting

images of record collections 'as both public displays of power/knowledge and

private refuges from the sexual or social world' (1997a: 4). Referring to *High*

Fidelity, Nick Hornby's novel about a thirty-something male collector and record

shop owner, Straw argues that its ending suggests that collecting and indulging in

obscure music tastes is incompatible with an adult life of responsibilities and

mature sexual relationships. However, record collecting is also seen as conferring

hipness, particularly when done in a 'controlled' manner.[9] It provides other

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[7] Pearce points out that the sexual dimension of the term fetish, as used in psychoanalytic theory and considered most common in men, is not necessarily a part of collecting, but it does give a good indication of the passion which is often involved in collecting (1992: 82).
[8] See also Shuker (2001): 'Record collecting is a male-dominated practice. My opportunity sample of 21 collectors included only three women, and none of their collecting was on the scale or number of the men. For male collectors, the social role of collecting appears to be a significant part of masculinity'.
[9] As Straw suggests, referring to science fiction fans, 'a familiarity with the symbolic universe of science fiction is a long-term necessity for a subcultural career within fandom, but this familiarity must be signalled in ways which do not show the marks of contrived effort' (1997a: 9). In Bourdieu's words, one's cultural capital, whether subcultural or 'official' is as much a matter of display as it is of quantity; it requires 'ease'.

stances that offer distinction to the collector and cast him as an 'authentic' music

lover, including

> The connoisseurship which furnishes historical depth to musical practice
> itself, and through which canons and terms of judgement take shape.
> Record collecting also converges with those anti-consumerist ethics which
> tie the collector's investment in the obscure to the bohemian's refusal of
> the blatantly commercial. Finally, with growing frequency, images of the
> collector circulate which cast him as adventurous hunter, seeking out
> examples of the forgotten or the illicit. (Straw, 1997a: 10)

For women, however, this is different, as their access to the type of cultural

capital found in musical knowledge and record collections has historically been

limited. Not only have women not had access to the 'boys' clubs' where the

connoisseur's knowledge is passed on (see Clawson, 1999), they have also often

been associated with mainstream, commercial pop which is in turn associated with

'inclusive' collections that centre around items such as posters and memorabilia

and which carry far less value. Because collecting is a largely male-dominated

activity, what constitutes a 'proper' collection will also be largely defined by men.

Thus if women do not collect, say, rare vinyl, or frequent specialist record shops,

they cannot be said to 'collect' in the male-defined sense of the term. The

practices of those women who did invest in collections, therefore, could be seen

as deliberate attempts to be taken seriously within the male connoisseur's field.[10]

The following exchange with Heather D., a fan who enjoys collecting, clearly fits

the 'connoisseur' model of collecting:

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[10] Some respondents ridiculed men's interest in collecting; I shall say more about this in Chapter 5.
However, none of my male respondents suggested they were 'completists'. They indicated having
the regular releases, some books and some sheet music.

> Laura V.: You explained that you enjoy collecting, finding and buying things. Could you explain what it is about collecting that appeals to you? Do you collecting anything else besides Kate Bush items? (email interview, 22 July 1998)
>
> Heather D.: What I enjoy about collecting is finding rare items that are hard to find. You find a copy of something knowing full well that only so many copies were pressed up and it is something that other Kate fans would kill you for. (email interview, 27 July 1998)

Heather emphasises the rarity of the records she collects as well as the status they have within the fan community. Possession of these items would mark her as someone with the right kind of capital. A similar sentiment can be found in Babs' response. She started collecting when she met her current partner who is also a Kate Bush fan. Unlike some of the other respondents, Babs did not experience any conflicts in her relationship because of her fandom. While she and her partner occasionally differed in the extent to which they invested (both financially and emotionally) in their favourites, their relationship was, to a significant degree, based on their shared interest in Kate Bush and other favourite artists. Babs' incentive to start collecting—her partner's 'perfect collection'—is a good example of how fans compete with one another for distinction in the field of fandom:

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you indicated that you're more of a fan now than you used to be and that you've started collecting. Could you say a bit more about this? (email interview, 29 June 1998)
>
> Babs: (...) [My partner] has a perfect collection of vinyl and I felt bad that my records were in poor condition so I bought a really good record deck and have been gradually buying back favourite albums. I have spent at least £2000 on Kate—the most expensive item being a Japanese CD compilation worth £500. My collection consists of singles, albums, box sets, magazines, photos, posters and books and I suppose it became addictive—I had to get the rare stuff to make it special. (email interview, 3 July 1998)

The following response from Linda suggests a dissociation from 'inclusive' collecting. Although she does not only focus on 'rarities', her collecting is selective:

> I collect her songs—albums, B-sides, live tracks, demos, rarities, etc. I'm not into multi-formatting—photographs, TV interviews + shows, etc. I really love the music. (Linda, questionnaire)

Linda excludes from her collection those items that are not directly related to Kate Bush's music. In contrast, Brenda's collection, consisting of 'albums, different recordings, photos, interviews, special editions, box sets', could be seen as more 'inclusive'. Bearing in mind what Brenda said about her collection, it could also be seen as an example of 'fetishistic' collecting, whereby the objects collected play a part in the formation and expression of the collector's identity. As mentioned previously, Brenda's explanation—'today I see it as collecting art'— suggests that she sees such a practice as somewhat disreputable, as indeed the majority of my respondents may have done.

The main reason cited for not collecting was that it is the *music* that matters. This emphasis on music may be in part a rejection of the feminised or 'teenybop' mode of 'inclusive' collecting. For example, Nathalie, who identified as a fan, wrote:

> [I don't collect] because a lot of things are too far away from what moves me while listening to her music (e.g. posters or CDs that are released in a different country with a different front cover—I'm interested just to see that there is a difference, but I don't need to own these things). (Nathalie, questionnaire, response to question 7 on collecting)

For many others the idea of collecting explicitly evoked the 'inclusive' collecting

of memorabilia. Heather R., a fan, explained:

> I don't know [about collecting]. The music is enough for me, I don't care
> for a coffee mug of her likeness or other things of that nature. (Heather R.,
> questionnaire, response to question 7)

On the other hand, Maria, an admirer, rejects collecting because of the expense it

involves, a sentiment that was not very common among the respondents. In fact,

among collectors such as Babs, spending large amounts of money is seen as a

mark of distinction.

> Once you start collecting, it's never-ending, very expensive, and the items
> are rarely looked at or played (especially with the records. I'd rather spend
> my money on other music than the same record with 20 different sleeves!).
> (Maria, questionnaire)

Maria's response is a reminder of the financial constraints on (female) fans (as

suggested by Krys and Amba above). It also suggests that collecting is an activity

that is embedded in the economic capital of class or even in the disposable income

of young fans. Yet Maria does not acknowledge the fact that the cultural capital of

which collecting may be a sign can also be converted into economic capital. She

positions herself outside the fan community—she is not a member of any fan

clubs, for instance, and despite a long-standing commitment to Kate Bush's music

does not call herself a fan—where the cultural capital embodied in fan objects

would not be recognised. This clearly suggests that the engagement in fan

practices such as collecting depends on the respondents' positioning towards, first

of all, the label fan which may—with its associations of excess—render such fan

practices unacceptable. Secondly, it depends on whether they seek to claim

distinction for themselves in the field of popular music fandom (or more specifically within the Kate Bush fan community) or within the general social field. Since in the latter such fan activities have little or no currency, the respondents may seek to represent their fandom/admiration in terms more amenable to this field, while still receiving pleasure and support from their investment in Kate Bush.[11]

IV. Fan Clubs and Their Electronic Counterparts

The role of a fan club may vary depending on the artist represented and the club's organisation. However, generally fan clubs aim to generate or maintain interest in an artist, provide fans with information and a communicative network, and perhaps create the illusion of a bond between the artist and the fans. In those instances where the artist is not mainstream and not widely known or available to many people, fan clubs are especially crucial. Similarly, as is the case with Kate Bush, if the artist no longer regularly releases new material and does not do live performances, fan clubs are important for enabling geographically and socially dispersed fans to establish and maintain a supportive network. Homeground, one of the major UK-based Kate Bush fan clubs, has had relatively little new material to report on in recent years, but the editors of its magazine have managed to fill this gap with retrospectives of Kate Bush's career and appraisals of her concert tour in 1979 in recent issues. The magazine also features updates on new Kate Bush resources (for instance on the Internet).

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[11] However, some collectors' items are of course recognised in the general social field. This happens, I would suggest, when artists are of such stature that their relevance transcends the more

Internet sites, chat rooms and email discussion lists may provide services similar
to more 'conventional' fan clubs and can be seen to supplement or in some cases
supplant their role. These new technologies not only provide fans with further
opportunities to live their fandom, but also enable new fan communities to form
and develop. I will discuss the latter in relation to Paul Willis' notion of a 'proto-
community.'

In this section I look at how fan clubs and their electronic counterparts can
provide fans with a forum in which they can live their fandom which may then
lead to a (virtual) community. I will refer to Homeground, although this is not
intended as a comprehensive analysis of this organisation. Throughout the
research I subscribed to its magazine and some of my observations are based on
my experiences as a reader. Similarly, I will not undertake an in-depth analysis of
any Kate Bush web sites or email discussion lists. I subscribed to the Love-
Hounds mailing list for approximately two years. During this period I
occasionally posted messages (including a call for respondents), but most of the
time I 'lurked,' that is, I read other people's contributions without contributing
myself. As only a small number of my respondents were long-term subscribers
and/or regular contributors to this list at the time of my research, this account will
not be an in-depth account of their or my own experiences with this list. Rather, I
want to look at how it can provide fans who are, for the most part, unknown to
each other, with a virtual place to 'meet' and form on-line alliances, be they

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restricted field of popular music. Elvis Presley and the Beatles come to mind here.

friendships or aversions. I will illustrate my argument with some typical discussions.[12]

IV.i. Fan clubs

Amongst my respondents fan club membership was not widespread. Only 16 out of 45 respondents indicated belonging to one or more clubs, while only 9 said they subscribed to any email lists.[13] Respondents would often indicate that their fan club membership and use of electronic fora were predominantly for the sake of obtaining information (for instance about imminent record releases, tours, etc.) rather than anything else as they, as well as those respondents who did not belong to any fan clubs, would see them as too 'fannish.' However, in addition to such 'self-imposed' constraints, fan club membership may also depend on material constraints (most notably the lack of time to invest in a fan community). Only a small minority of respondents valued conventional and 'virtual' fan clubs for the way in which they provide a community for dispersed fans. Significantly, these respondents tended to be the ones who were least troubled by the label fan. I want to suggest that being part of a (virtual) community made it easier for them to publicly identify themselves as fans than for those outside it.

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[12] See appendix E for a selection of Kate Bush resources.
[13] Of course this is partly due to the fact that I was unable to advertise in the fan club magazine *Homeground*. Had the respondents been predominantly recruited through this magazine, the responses would have been very different.

Amba, a fan who is a member of the Kate Bush Club, suggests that, as do live concerts, a fan club has the potential to establish and maintain contact between star and fans, but believes that the KBC does not fulfil this brief: [14]

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you indicate being a member of the KBC. Can you say a bit more about this? Do the fan club and mailing list fulfil your expectations? (email interview, 19 July 1998)
> Amba: I think the fan club is a penpal service. The updates which you can request through SAE just contain penpal requests and news about fans who are getting married. Occasionally you might get a snippet of KB as well. I don't really correspond as I don't want a penpal, I only joined it to get news of her and her work. In that respect it's very frustrating to be a member! But it's the only news service available. The Gaffa website, through impressively comprehensive doesn't give news of her as far as I know. (email interview, 20 July 1998)

Although she focuses almost exclusively on obtaining 'news', she later elaborates that she likes the idea of the fan club being run by Kate Bush and her family and therefore having a personal touch. For Amba a fan club should be about the relationship between star and fan, something which many of the others dissociate themselves from, and she regrets the fact that the connection between artist and fan is severed by Kate Bush's withdrawal from this process ('It's almost as though she has decided to distance herself as much as possible from her fame', email interview, 10 August 1998).

As Marjorie Kibby (2000) suggests, a fan club, or its electronic counterparts, is one of the ways in which a symbolic link between star and fan is maintained. 'When recording technology disrupted the physical line between performer and fan, symbolic links were developed to maintain a sense of commonality between performer and listener, and create a community among fans' (Kibby, 2000: 92).

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[14] The Kate Bush Club, or KBC, is the official fan club and is run by Kate Bush and her family. In

Rebecca, however, suggests that such a sense of commonality may induce a sense

of dependence. Although deeply involved in fan practices, such as writing to other

fans, Rebecca's response acknowledges the danger inherent in such practices—the

risk of a too close dependence on Kate Bush—and she is careful to point out that

she recognises this risk and is not that type of fan:

> [I like] meeting like-minded people. I have about 7 penfriends and have
> attended two conventions. I subscribed to the Homeground fanzine for
> about 5 years. In the end I found it all too sycophantic. I appreciate that an
> artist can greatly influence your life but I found some of the stories too
> 'disturbing'. Some were along the lines of 'I was about to commit suicide,
> when I heard a Kate Bush song and decided to live.' Is it right to depend
> that much on someone who is able to make great records, she could decide
> to give it up and then what would they do? (Rebecca, questionnaire)[15]

The socially unacceptable nature of such a close dependence and its association

with 'obsessive' or 'sycophantic' fans may be one of the reasons why so many

respondents reject fan club membership. Both fans and admirers explain that it

does not aid understanding of the music, that it is indulgent, and associate it with

groups they wish to distance themselves from, particularly young girls. This is

illustrated by the following exchange with Alex, who identifies as a fan.

> Laura V.: You've pointed out that you're not a member of any Kate Bush
> fan clubs and that you don't subscribe to any email discussion lists or
> anything. Have you ever thought of doing so? (email interview, 22
> October 1998)
> Alex: I'm not a member of any Kate Bush fan clubs—why would I be? So
> I can get my free 'signed' photo and badge?? No thanks. Same goes for
> email discussions about the relative merits of Never Forever [sic]. Can't be
> arsed, frankly. (email interview, 10 November 1998)

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between new releases it is less active than Homeground in providing information.

[15] Compare Krys's response about obsessive fans earlier.

This response suggests that Alex 'sees through' fan club activities. Her second response, however, the one quoted at the start of this Chapter ('isn't it more teenage girls who get together and talk about how gorgeous Ronan is?'), links such activities explicitly to teenage girls. Alex is eager to dissociate herself from this group of fans whom are seen as undiscriminating, passive, and as wrongly concerned with good looks.[16]

Some of the fans and admirers who are members of a fan club tend to emphasise their wish to obtain more *information*, for example about new releases, and similarly dissociate themselves from those aspects of fan clubs that suggest lack of critical distance. In order to be recognised as knowledgeable and distinguished, one can only engage in those practices that enable the fan or admirer to display a proper distance. The emphasis on information, which may enhance one's appreciation of music and lyrics, and the dissociation from a 'personal' relationship with the star are typical of the 'dominant aesthetic'. The following responses, from a fan and an admirer respectively, both members of Homeground, are representative of this:

I do it just to get info on how she is, when the next album is due, etc. (Babs, questionnaire)

I like to be up to date with news of any releases. (Linda, questionnaire)

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[16] I return to this issue in more detail in Chapter 6, where I look at the way in which the respondents distinguish themselves from younger listeners.

The idea of Kate Bush distancing herself from her fame, and from her fans, could be regarded as essential in this respect. Just as Kate Bush's reputation as a performer in part relies on her fans giving her the 'right' kind of recognition, so her fans/admirers can draw on Kate Bush's 'rarity'.[17] One group which is perhaps best able to give her this 'right' kind of recognition consists of (semi)professional musicians. Virginia, for example, argues that as a musician herself she knows more about how the music industry operates and what kind of experiences artists might have, whereas other fans would need to turn to fan clubs for precisely that kind of information. I come back to this discussion in the next section.

IV.ii. Electronic 'Fan Clubs'

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the use of email as a research tool created a new 'field' (in the ethnographic sense of the word) by bringing together geographically dispersed respondents who might not have been brought together through any other means. In the same way, I would suggest, email discussion lists can provide fans with a sense of community, between themselves and between themselves and Kate Bush, similar to 'conventional' fan clubs. As such many respondents saw these electronic 'fan clubs' as too 'fannish' as well.[18]

Virtual fan communities, where they form, will be bound by certain demographics, as access to this technology remains limited. But for those who

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[17] This may also be the rationale behind artists refusing to give interviews, or giving them only sparingly. Doing this is one method of maintaining a sense of 'mystique.'
[18] The same could be said for so-called 'chat rooms' where users log on at the same time and send messages which are instantly accessible to other users. I did not study any chat rooms (I did not come across any when commencing the research), so the following observations will be based on my experiences with the Love-Hounds mailing list only.

have access, the Internet provides quick and cheap ways of obtaining a wide variety of information, while email discussion lists allow users from across the world to communicate.

However, electronic communication may also be very ephemeral, as fans access web sites sporadically, or dip in and out of discussions on a mailing list, sometimes anonymously, without any long-term commitment. The virtual 'meeting' of fans on discussion lists can take place under the guise of pseudonyms and need never be consummated through 'real life' encounters. Although the transient and anonymous nature of these new technologies seems to undermine their potential for the establishment of any long-standing communities, their speed and cheapness suggests otherwise. For example, in comparison with the time it takes for information to be published in a fan magazine, the immediacy of 'chatting' and emailing allows for more interactions in a shorter time-span. This could not only be beneficial to the formation of lasting relationships, it could even lead to the establishment of a small but relatively stable core of communicators. Furthermore, the more transient and anonymous nature of these technologies may also be more appealing to those who are less likely to become involved in more conventional modes of communication, either because they do not wish to or because self-imposed and material constraints prevent them from doing so.

The following quote from Heather D., who is also a member of the KBC (for its 'regular, truthful updates', questionnaire), gives a good indication of the Love-Hounds list's potential; it provides information, support, and enables contributors to engage in other fan practices such as collecting:

Laura V.: When you chat with others through rec.music.gaffa what do you tend to talk about? (email interview, 29 July 1998)

Heather D.: I used to chat quite a bit with other 'lovehounds' when I first discovered rec.music.gaffa.[19] I always answered questions that people had about Kate. 'What's her fan club address', 'when is her birthday', 'where was she born', that sort of stuff. I still regularly 'lurk' on the group but rarely post these days. Most of the lovehounds are American, therefore most of them know little about her because of her cult status in the USA. Sometimes, the conversation does get a little petty, I usually keep away from any 'flaming' or negativity. Some fans get a little frustrated because Kate hasn't released an album since 1993 and their testiness shows in their posts. Others want to discuss the meaning of songs. I see the newsgroup as a 'support group', albeit I don't see it as a major influence on me. I find it better to just let the music 'do all the talking'. I occasionally buy things from the people who advertise there. You are more likely to pick up some real rarities, especially from people who know what it is they are selling. (email interview, 11 August 1998)

Heather's response suggests that the list, with its global reach and diversity, gives rise not just to one community on the basis of a shared interest but rather to a number of co-existing ones; thus the broader fan community houses a subgroup of collectors. Two exchanges on the list further illustrate this. One thread on the list centred on the ages of Kate Bush fans. The initial post was as follows:

Since I'm new on this list, and not very familiar with what other Kate fans are like, I'm wondering about how old you people are. I'm not asking you all to post your age, but it would be nice to get some hints. As a 21 year old I have a feeling everyone's older than me. Is this true? Is there anybody younger? (post to Love-Hounds mailing list, 16 June 1998).

It provoked a flood of responses from subscribers, mostly 'older' ones, who all posted their ages (or hinted at it):

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[19] Rec.music.gaffa is the same as the Love-Hounds mailing list; it only comes in a different format.

> I am thirty. Hounds of Love was popular when I was just starting college. I think a lot of Kate fans started about that time. (post to Love-Hounds mailing list, 19 June 1998)

> > By the way, possibly I'm the oldest of the list. I'm 41.
> No you're not the oldest! I'll just leave it at that. (posts to the Love-Hounds mailing list, 20 June 1998)

Not only does this suggest that being an older and, by implication long-term, fan is something to be proud of (it may confer distinction), but these exchanges momentarily united those contributors who belonged to either the younger or newer fans, or the older and more established fans. Something similar happened when the topic of sexual preference was broached. It generated a particularly supportive exchange between contributors who came out as gay or lesbian Kate Bush fans.

> Yeah, count me in as one happy homosexual! I used to be under the impression that, here in the USA at least, all male KaTe fans were gay. I don't believe that vicious stereotype anymore though <grin> (...)
> Any gay LoveHound out there can feel free to write to me (or even you homosexually-challenged LoveHounds too, for that matter!). (post to Love-Hounds mailing list, 6 November 1998)

> From a fellow lesbian/queer/goose/gay/sapphist. I have considered myself to be gay for the last 5 years at least, and have also been into (!) kate for some yrs. (...) I live in Devon England, and would love to hear from any gay women out there and promise to reply to anyone who gets in touch. (post to Love-Hounds mailing list, 8 November 1998)

Within the general mailing list community these gay and lesbian contributors constitute a small subgroup based around two mutual interests. Moreover, the invitations to correspondence suggest that the 'virtual' or 'on-line' community has the potential to further develop into a 'real life' or 'off-line' one. Indeed, it suggests that subscribers can be seen as a proto-community.

The events surrounding Kate Bush's birthday on 29 July illustrate the viability of such a development. The email list is especially valuable around this time when contributors world-wide call on fans to join gatherings known as 'Katemas.' While some of these gatherings are one-off events, others have now become somewhat of a tradition. For instance, the Katemas organised by the Homeground fan club in Glastonbury already had a ten-year history when I attended in 1998. It brought together some thirty-odd men and women, their ages ranging from their late twenties to their early forties, and some of whom had travelled from continental Europe. But regardless of their numbers and tradition, these meetings demonstrate the influence and potential of email, both on- and off-line.

Women's experiences of the Internet and related technologies have been widely discussed in recent years. The main questions here are whether women's experiences with these new technologies echo both their marginalised position in society and their experiences with other technologies, or whether women are at a particular advantage in this area. It has been suggested that although 'the computer has no inherent gender bias', the culture which surrounds it is experienced by many women as male (Turkle, 1988: 41; see also Wakeford, 1997; Morse, 1997). Metaphors of the web as a frontier, for instance, are likely to evoke visions of a fundamentally male territory recalling women's historically fraught relationship to technology. Thus Spender (1995) has suggested that it is vital that women learn to familiarise themselves with the Internet and its related technologies early so as not to disadvantage themselves (see also Turkle, 1988),

while Smith and Balka (1988) see computer literacy as an important tool of empowerment.

It has been suggested by some that the Internet allows both men and women to transcend their gender, for example by pretending to be a member of the opposite sex when emailing or 'chatting' (so-called 'computer cross-dressing') (Spender, 1995: 244). Furthermore, the anonymous nature of Internet and email use has potentially liberating effects, so that in theory women need not suffer sexual harrassment on-line. However, as communication can be anonymous, abusive and/or offensive messages may increase too, as a result of which some may opt out of participating, or else feel prevented from doing so by others' aggression or 'flaming'.[20] For example, some of my respondents pointed out that they had unsubscribed from the Love-Hounds list and other lists because of what they considered immoderate or aggressive behaviour, or irrelevant and lengthy discussions.

Coates's (1997b) experiences of a discussion list on rock music were characterised by a sharp division between male and female contributors, which was consolidated in 'masculine' and 'feminine' standpoints, with the former possessing the highest amount of cultural capital (83). This 'masculine' standpoint was characterised by a particularly authoritative style of writing that tended to preclude further discussion. For women to be heard on the list, Coates explains, they had to 'temporarily assume the expert position normally held by men in the formation' (1997b: 83). Indeed, becoming 'one of the boys' is often seen as the

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[20] Flaming is defined as 'the expression of strong negative emotion,' 'use of derogatory, obscene, or inappropriate language' or 'personal insults' (Herring, 1994; see also Kibby, 2000).

only way of gaining entrance into a traditionally male world such as popular music. Because the field of popular music has traditionally not valued feminine cultural capital very highly, the extent to which women can draw on it to gain distinction is limited.

The Love-Hounds mailing list on which I lurked for several years seems to have a small majority of male subscribers.[21] Although this seemed to affect the topics chosen for discussion at times—for instance, some discussions centred around the male subscribers' sexual interest in Kate Bush and other female artists—I felt that this did not silence or marginalise the female subscribers. An example illustrates this. One male subscriber initiated a discussion with a question about which female artist subscribers would prefer to be with on a desert island. This 'male gaze' appeared to cause no unease among the female subscribers—indeed, some participated themselves and gave their own opinions—but often their contributions to this and similar threads would consist of gentle rebukes not just to the men's choices but also to their preoccupation with such questions. It suggests that this sexualised gaze on Kate Bush and other female artists is an example of the 'wrong' kind of interest, despite the fact that the women may tolerate it and even participate in it. I come back to the women's construction of men's fandom in Chapter 5.

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[21] Of course this is difficult to determine. My estimate is based on the contributors—I can't speak for the 'lurkers'—but some of these contributors use nicknames which could be either men's or women's.

V. The musician as fan

> Laura V.: You wrote that you're a member of some fan clubs. Do you
> know many other fans? How would you characterise them? (email
> interview, 15 July 1998)
> Krys: (...) I think that in the case of Kate Bush fans many seem to be
> artistic people—they draw or write music or poetry—and it is probably
> this artistic streak in them that makes Kate's music appealing, she is a very
> creative artist and so other creative people are drawn to her. I have
> swapped musical tapes (my own) with other Kate fans. I think that Kate's
> own general creativity—she can draw and she dances as well as sings and
> plays—encourage[s] the artistic natures of many of her fans. (email
> interview, 15 September 1998)

> She inspired me to start singing and writing my own songs. I usually
> describe my own music in this way: 'if you like Kate Bush, etc. you will
> probably like my music too. (Heather R., questionnaire, answer to question
> 21 about talking to others about Kate Bush)

Fandom, in addition to comprising an intense engagement with already existing

texts, can also inspire the production of new texts. Many respondents indicated

being involved in one or several types of creative activity in their leisure time—

including writing prose and poetry, painting, drawing, or making music—while

some had creative professions such as graphic design. These women often

suggested that they were inspired by Kate Bush to be creative and saw her as a

role model in this respect. For instance, Bianca, who was in her early thirties,

wrote in response to question 19c, 'She is still my favourite female singer. I never

get bored listening to her music. Her music helps me to relax, and is an inspiration

when I'm writing' (questionnaire), while Lisa, a thirty-year-old freelance

illustrator, writes in response to question 3, 'she's some kind of archetype for me.

I'm an artist and if I could manage to fit as much personality + integrity into my

work I'd be well pleased' (questionnaire).

Earlier I indicated that my respondents could not always follow Kate Bush's example in terms of independence and abilities, indeed, that their fandom was one aspect of an identity that also involved family and career commitments. I indicated, for instance, how Kate Bush fandom functioned in Florence's identity as a radio DJ. In this section I shall look at those respondents who described themselves as semi-professional or professional musicians and who comprised a kind of sub-group of fans/admirers. Although they do not constitute a 'group' as such—they never gather for instance—their responses display a number of common tendencies. They suggest that their familiarity with the creative process and their insider knowledge of the music industry set them apart from other fans. Although all respondents occupy the same 'art world' as Kate Bush, the 'musician-fans', as I shall call them, display a different level of reception.

For this analysis I am drawing on the views of five musicians: Krys and Heather R., who both described themselves as fans, and Emma, Virginia and Dagmar who are admirers.[22] They all had recordings of their music which I obtained during the course of the research. Dagmar described her music as progressive rock, while the others could be categorised as sing-songwriters.

As shown earlier, the respondents tend to redefine the label 'fan' which is, I would argue, an indication that they live their fandom actively. The respondents' involvement in music challenges not only the near-exclusive depiction of music fans and subcultures as young, male and working class but also that of the female fan as passive. The musician-fans do this perhaps to an even larger extent than the others. They differ, however, in the sense that their definition of the label fan

centred around their identities as musicians. Although they did not all dissociate themselves from 'typical' fan practices to the same degree—Krys, for instance calls herself a fan and is a member of several fan clubs and email discussion groups—they did tend to draw on their specialist knowledge in order to position themselves as more knowledgeable about Kate Bush than the other, 'ordinary' fans. Their experiences as musicians, they argue, give them a greater insight into the music industry and Kate Bush's experiences and artistic choices. They have been, as Howard Becker (1982) suggests, 'on the other side of the line that separates performers and creators from consumers' (54).

Although I do not claim to give a conclusive account of the relationship between semi-professional artist/fan and artist—for this my data would not suffice—the women's responses do suggest certain patterns which agree with Becker's notion of an 'art world', which, as previously discussed, he defines as consisting of 'all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art' (1982: 34). Within such 'art worlds' we find different audience groupings whose knowledge of the art world's conventions varies: the 'occasional member of the audience,' the 'steady patron,' and the 'semi-professional' (Becker, 1982). Fans are like 'steady patrons' in that they are the ones who are likely to know much about the background of Kate Bush's work and know where to place it historically.

The musician-fans and the other respondents, whilst occupying the same art-world, compete for distinction in different but overlapping fields. Whilst competing for distinction in the field of popular music fandom, the musician-fans

also compete for distinction as performers in the field of production. I would argue that distinction as musicians benefits their position as 'connoisseurs'. Because of their more intimate familiarity with the music world (which they share with Kate Bush, even if they do not attain the same level of virtuosity and success) they can draw on professional knowledge to claim distinction over the other respondents.

The musician-fans do not only look to Kate Bush for inspiration for their own work—as Heather R., quoted above, explains—they also base their assessment of her work and persona on their own experiences, thereby lending these assessments a distinctive weight. As I pointed out above, the relationship between Kate Bush and her fans can be a mutually beneficial one. While the fans' claims to distinction are more likely to be legitimated if Kate Bush is seen as an authentic or virtuoso musician, Kate Bush's reputation as an artist depends partly on her fans giving her the 'right' kind of recognition. The 'musician-fans', then, may be capable of giving her just that kind of recognition, and in the process they may establish themselves as fans or admirers with cultural capital which is readily converted into symbolic capital.

As mentioned above, Virginia feels no need to join a fan club. Fan clubs can be seen as supplying the fan with information or gossip that is not readily available to them elsewhere, but Virginia suggests that as a musician she already has access to that type of information:

> Laura V.: Have you ever been a member of a Kate Bush fan club, or looked at a web site or anything?

> Virginia: oh web site, I did, yeah, when the Internet first became popular, a few years ago I remember getting some information about her from it. ...
> I don't ... now. It was just talking about how she was currently doing some collaborations, that she was working, the various people she was working with. That was it, really.
> Laura V.: You never felt the need to
> Virginia: Not really.
> Laura V.: speak with other fans and
> Virginia: No, not really
> Laura V.: get to know them?
> Virginia: I would always relish that, you know, if somebody sat down and said oh I am completely crazy about Kate Bush, I'd be quite happy to while away hours with them and it would be the same with one or two other artists as well. But no, but I guess that's because I feel a bit less far removed from that world because I'm involved in the music business myself. It's like you know, I'm a bit closer to that anyway and understand some things a bit better than somebody who may have nothing to do with the music business and think oh yeah I'd like to join the fan club you know. Do you know what I mean?
> Laura V.: Yeah. Do you see yourself as a musician ...
> Virginia: Yeah
> Laura V.: ...rather than a fan?
> Virginia: yeah, maybe, yeah, yeah! (interview, 27 October 1998)

Membership of a fan club can also enable fans to feel closer to their favourite artist. Here Virginia suggests that by virtue of being a semi-professional musician, and therefore being in the same field of popular music performance as Kate Bush, she has already achieved some of that closeness. Moreover, this may be seen as a closeness of the 'right' kind, as Krys suggests, 'I see her as a peer, not a goddess' (email interview, 15 September 1998).

One of the ways in which the musician-fan might represent this closeness, or 'peer' relationship, to Kate Bush is by inserting herself into a musical narrative, that is, by situating her work within a genre and comparing and contrasting herself to Kate Bush and other musicians. Both Dagmar and Virginia were adept at doing this. For example, when asked about the distinction she had earlier made between 'feminine' and 'masculine' styles of music, Dagmar not only displays her musical

knowledge by casually dropping terminology such as 'fitting a middle eight' into

the conversation, but she also proffers her own work as an example:

> Laura V.: Could you give some examples of artists (both female and male)
> who write solely in the 'female-effusive-spontaneous' style? Or particular
> songs written in this style? (email interview, 13 July 1998)
> Dagmar: Most folk artists spring to mind here (...) And all of Peter
> Hammill's songs in C major—just sitting down at the piano and following
> a tune and, sensibly enough, not adding any tricky arrangements to it (...)
> On 'ferric' those songs that wrote themselves spontaneously were 'Great
> Wooden Horse' (I fought that one, but it came out anyway), 'No Orpheus'
> (the arrangement is [a friend's], and brilliant too), and 'To Not Wake Up'.
> Everything else involved a small amount of construction, say, fitting a
> middle eight consciously or devising a multi-tracked intro like that of
> 'Picture Me & The Waterman'. (email interview, 17 July 1998)

Thus, in addition to perhaps having a better understanding of Kate Bush's work,

the musician-fans may also have the musicological knowledge to convey this. By

being able to explain their interest in Kate Bush in technical terms they are less

likely to draw upon her persona or her image to explain this interest. Taste in

popular music is particularly hard to explain and often relies on impressionistic

terms. Reference to an artist's image or personal details is one way of

circumventing this; magazines, for example, rely on this a great deal.

Virginia, too, displays an in-depth knowledge of her art world as she appraises the

competition, her own skills and the importance of a hit single:

> Virginia: there's a great song at the moment by Jennifer Paige, you know,
> I mean it's a great pop song, I think it is. I wouldn't buy the album, I don't
> want to know what's going on in her head, it's just like a very, very
> successfully, well-produced, well-executed pop record.
> Laura V.: so you admire it on a professional level?
> Virginia: yeah, yeah. And a lot of people that I know who are normally ...
> think a lot deeper about their music, are into albums that are more ... just
> deeper and require some thought, they like it too, and they are buying it,

> and I'm thinking well, that's interesting, you know, just because it's so, it's so good for what it is, it's a perfect example of a really good pop song, really kooky, really .... I don't write many pop songs like that. I've only written a handful of songs that, two of which the music ... and the rest could definitely be singles. I had one on Radio 1 for about a fortnight and they got requests and everything, so it went down really, really well. So I thought, yeah I can do that then. You know, on the whole my songs are a lot more introspective. And they are album songs, so ... but unfortunately it helps to have that first single or ... that kind of gets people's attention. (interview, 27 October 1998)

In this response Virginia tries to assert her artistic integrity, both as a consumer and as a performer. She admires Jennifer Paige's hit song ('Crush', a hit in 1998) and points out that others, whom she describes as knowledgeable, also like it, thereby adding weight to her own opinion. In addition she suggests that, despite being capable of writing such commercially successful pop songs, she aims to stick to her own, more introspective and less commercially viable brand of music—a stance through which she aims to demonstrate her integrity and hence distinction.

Another good example of the distinct appreciation of musician-fans comes from Emma who explains that she does not like all of Kate Bush's work.

> I think because she likes experimenting so much sometimes she does things that are actually rubbish. But I do like hearing it all. (Emma, questionnaire, answer to question 14 about Bush's work as a producer)

Her response supports Becker's suggestion that the semi-professionals in an art world provide a kind of sounding board for an artist's new or experimental work because they are likely to be more open and understanding; as Becker suggests, they are able to respond to the work with 'a fuller understanding of what has been attempted and how even a failure might be interesting' (1982: 54).

The importance of 'peer' support for musicians is also suggested by the crucial role musical families play, first in introducing children to music and forming a musical habitus, and later in encouraging them to persevere. This is evident in Kate Bush's own development: her parents were both musical and one of her older brothers is a multi-instrumentalist. Kate Bush's musical habitus can also be seen as closely linked to a middle class habitus. Kate Bush's musical virtuosity, for instance, cannot be separated from her middle class position, which, both materially and culturally, enabled her to start playing the piano at a young age. Both Virginia and Emma explained that support from their families had been extremely important to them, but Virginia explains that although her parents have been very supportive, they will never fully understand the world she is in:

> My dad + grandads are musicians. We always had guitars + pianos around + my dad was really encouraging. (Emma, questionnaire, answer to question 10 about involvement in musical activity)

> Laura V.: They [your parents] encouraged you to write your own stuff and make music?
> Virginia: Yeah, totally, they are not musicians, but they've been brought up on good music, my dad's a big classical music fan. I say classical music, but he just adores music. He's very musical in his head and plays a little bit of piano. Yeah, both very passionate, my family, very encouraging, very supportive. More than I could have ever imagined that they might be, but again, that's been difficult because the world that I'm in is a world that they don't know. It is difficult to explain to people what is going on. (interview, 27 October 1998)

VI. Processes of Identification

The musician-fans' productivity further challenges the representation of female

fans as passive and rarely involved in music making. However, creativity in girls

has more often been associated with the copying of looks or the imitation of style.

Lewis (1990) has even called style imitation 'the preferred mode of female fan

expression' (163). Although it is not an exclusively female practice, Lewis

suggests that it may be more common among female fans. She suggests that 'for

women, appearance is a fundamental means of constructing female identity and

identifications' (1990: 165). From an early age girls are encouraged to dress up

and to cultivate knowledge of fashion. Lewis, therefore, argues that 'style

imitation activates a cultivated female arena of knowledge' (1990: 168), which

contrasts with the type of knowledge boys bring to bear on popular music.

Steward and Garratt (1984) suggest that 'boys talk about the music, they swap

information and show off their knowledge (or pretended knowledge) about

instruments and equipment' (110). Such practices have historically been

recognised as having the highest amount of cultural capital, but, as Lewis argues,

the Madonna 'wanna-bes' and Cyndi Lauper 'dress-alikes' use their specifically

feminine culture in order to be seen and claim for themselves some of the power

and authority usually reserved for boys (1990: 164). In other words, these girls

can be seen as using their feminine cultural capital.

> The style imitators push through the symbolic discourse of female culture
> for the recognition that boys receive. They demand access to male
> privileges of money, power, and authority (which they find embodied in
> celebrities), but at the same time, they refuse to dispose of the expressive
> forms provided by female culture. (Lewis, 1990: 171)

Most of the respondents indicated liking Kate Bush's appearance, in particular her

long reddish-brown hair and brown eyes, but only a third (15) indicated that at

one point in time they had modelled themselves on her. Only 3 respondents said

they disliked her appearance and cited its 'contrived' nature and obvious appeal to

men as the reasons. Amel was one of the respondents who tried to look like Kate

Bush when she was younger:

> Amel: I think partly it's her looks.
> Laura V.: Did you try to look like her?
> Amel: Yes [laughs]
> Laura V.: Well, you actually do look like her...
> Amel: [laughs]
> Laura V.: ... your face. But did you also dress...
> Amel: oh yes definitely, oh god
> Laura V.: and dance?
> Amel: mmm, yes, I mean I was obsessed with trying to get my hair red, which was a big mistake. I would dye it, henna it all the time, yes I did. Funny with the dress, because I don't actually know how she dresses. Well, I do know how she dresses a bit, but we only, we don't see her very much, so we only see her when she's dressing up, when she's performing or she's being interviewed. I don't know what she really dresses like normally. No idea, but at the same time I think I know, I think I know the style. I don't know what she wears, but it doesn't really matter. I know what suits her style, and it's sort of ... I used to wear loads of sort of velvets and dark red, you know, browns and greens, it was all that kind of ... I didn't actually copy exactly her clothes at all, I mean, you know, they were performance clothes, but it was the feel of it that I copied, absolutely.
> (interview, 27 October 1998)

She then goes on to say that 'those kind of things when you identify with looks,

they ... I think they happen then and they happen less now (interview, 27 October

1998). Amel was the only respondent who pointed out that she used to call herself

a fan, but does this no longer because activities such as this one ceased to be an

important factor in her appreciation of Kate Bush. As such she explicitly links fan

activities to the intensity of appreciation. In this she differs significantly from the

other respondents who suggest that such activities or the cessation of them are

unrelated to their level of appreciation. The other respondents did, however,

recognise the importance of copying looks for young fans. Krys, for example,

who explained that, as an insecure teenager, she tried to look like Kate Bush,

writes in response to my question about women artists functioning as role models:

> If there is a famous pop star who looks good girls like to copy. I suppose
> it's because they feel they are taking on that famous person's identity in a
> way, which makes them attractive in their own minds to others. Probably
> they will find their own way of expressing themselves eventually but
> while they feel unsure they can dress/style their hair like the person they
> admire, and feel good about the way they look. (...) The music is now the
> most important thing for me, not the image. (email interview, 30 October
> 1998)

Copying a performer's dress or hairstyle, then, can be a very empowering

experience during certain stages of one's life. However, for many of the women a

fascination with and attempt to copy looks is associated with teenagers (although

not in an entirely negative way, as Krys's response suggests), as it often is in the

literature on fans, and is therefore something they want to dissociate themselves

from.

Style imitation, however, is only one aspect of identification. In her work on the

female cinema audience Jackie Stacey (1994a, 1994b) has looked more closely at

the different processes that can be grouped under this term. To start with, she has

addressed the way in which questions of identification and desire have been seen

as distinct in psychoanalytic film theory because of its focus on sexual difference

rather than the differences *within* femininities. 'Identification has been seen as the

feminine counterpoint to masculine desire in feminist criticisms of popular

narrative cinema' (Stacey, 1994a: 134). Instead, Stacey suggests, the female gaze

involves both identification and desire. With this in mind, the respondents' rejection of the male gaze, as we shall see in Chapter 5, becomes even more problematic as it involves a disavowal of aspects of their own gaze.

The ways of thinking that Stacey identifies as characteristic of psychoanalytic film theory are also typical of some of the work on popular music consumption. Frith and McRobbie (1978/1994), for instance, focused on girls' desire for male (teenybop) performers and their exclusion from active identification with (cock rock) performers on the basis of its assumed aggressive sexuality. They addressed neither the possibility of different kinds of sexuality for women, nor the possibility of women's desire for or identification with female performers. Furthermore, those works that have considered the question of women's relationship to female performers have also been underpinned by essentialist assumptions about what such a relationship could consist of and about what constitutes 'woman'. My own thinking about women's investments, for instance, was strongly informed by the idea of Kate Bush as a feminist role model— something that was certainly not uniformly pertinent.

Stacey distinguishes between processes of identification that take place on a fantasy level and those that extend to practice (that is, those that depend on the participation of others and lead to an actual transformation in the identity of the spectator), or between processes that take place inside and outside of the cinema. The former include 'devotion', 'adoration' and 'worship' in which the star, who is very obviously different from the spectator, is placed at the centre of the relationship. It also includes processes of 'transcendence' and 'aspiration and

inspiration' in which there is less of a clear-cut distinction between star and spectator and in which the latter's identity takes on a more central role. Those processes of identification that extend to practice include 'pretending', 'resembling', 'imitating' and 'copying' (1994a).

Although there are elements of all of the above in my respondents' practices, 'aspiration and inspiration' were particularly important processes for them. However, Stacey sees these as expressions of 'unfulfillable desire or pleasurable fantasy', in contrast to copying which actually 'transforms the spectators' physical appearance' (1994a: 167). While Stacey recognises that both cinematic and extra-cinematic processes involve fantasy, in my view she does not sufficiently recognise the importance of aspiration and inspiration—which not only involve a desire to look like the favourite star but often also a desire to have her confidence and abilities—as first steps to changes in practice and empowerment.

As I indicated above, with reference to exchanges with Maria, Amel and Heather D., the respondents' admiration for Kate Bush's musical ability and for her position in the music industry (her control over her work and her artistic freedom) did not necessarily translate into powerful, independent positions for the women themselves. However, this did not mean that Kate Bush had little or no effect on their lives, as the following exchange with Amel shows.

> Laura V.: You were telling me that you started dancing because of Kate Bush...
> Amel: Yes, it was because of her. I've also wanted to do ballet, but I couldn't do ballet, and I was forced to do piano instead, which is very Kate Bush actually, but anyway, didn't suit me. I'm talented enough to do piano properly, so I always wanted, I always liked dance anyway. But then when

> I did discover Kate Bush when I was sixteen, fifteen, then again I really just thought, right that's it, I've got to do some dance and I went and I dragged myself to ballet classes and through seeing her the way she performed I got interested in mime, I went to mime artists, then I went to mime classes, found mime classes which aren't that easy to find, and from there I discovered the London contemporary dance school, and I just went into contemporary dance and I've done it since. (interview, 27 October 1998)

As demonstrated at the start of this chapter, the fact that Amel by and large yielded control over the sound space in the shared spaces of the home to her husband suggested a certain degree of powerlessness on her part. This quote, however, suggests that her emotional investments did translate into actual achievements, into what was, for a time, a semi-professional career as a dancer. Along with earlier exchanges, this quote from Amel also alerts us to the changing character of fandom over the years. Amel's attempts to look like Bush, her decision to start dancing and her use of Kate Bush to create her own space all point to the different resources that fandom can offer and to the need to see fandom as a process rather than a neatly boundaried phenomenon. I will say more about the development of the respondents' fandom in Chapter 6.

Kate Bush's inspirational effect, however, was not always as straightforward as in the case of Amel or that of the so-called musician-fans. In some cases, the effects were much less tangible. In response to question 25 about whether or not she sees Bush as a pop icon, Linda writes:

> Kate Bush has produced great work. She lives life on her own terms, talents, abilities and money. Her lyrics and interviews suggest she is an intelligent humanitarian. It's really refreshing that Kate's story is not one of greed and male exploitation, as so many famous women seem to have those elements surrounding them. Instead it's been a triumph. Obviously this is commendable and something for all of us to strive for.

> But this is the irony. I like Kate because she wants to be herself—she does not try to emulate anyone, so why should we follow her?
> Right now we are living with this notion of 'girl power'. But it's no good being told we have girl power because that's a manipulation and control in itself. Kate Bush isn't about that, which is precisely what makes her so fantastic and—yes—inspiring. It's not the image of what she is that counts, it's what she does.
> When you listen to Kate Bush, you learn something: 1) she is unique; 2) if you want to be like her, you have to be yourself. (questionnaire)

Linda was in her mid twenties at the time of the questionnaire, single, and unemployed due to a chronic illness. Unfortunately she did not elaborate on how she tries to strive for a 'life on her own terms', nor on whether she had achieved anything of the sort (she did not want to be interviewed). However, a similar sentiment can be found in the following exchanges with Jane. Jane was in her late twenties at the time of the interview, worked as a music researcher for a magazine, and was single and without children. She had been a Kate Bush fan since her teens and indicated that 'because she's been around for a long time now, and I've maintained an interest in her, her career is like a chronology for my life too' (email interview, 13 November 1998).

> Laura V.: You explained that Kate and her music relate to your life because you grew up with her music—could you elaborate on this? (email interview, 16 October 1998)
> Jane: She first came to prominence, as I said, when I was a young child. I used to watch Top of the Pops regularly, so saw her on that a lot from '78 onward. She seemed to appear in the media frequently in those years, so she was definitely a 'presence' of my youth.
> However, when I seriously got into her music in 1982 – 83, it was at the start of my adolescence. I suppose she did, as I think I said in the questionnaire, inform my idea of what I wanted to be like. Not necessarily physically, but because Kate's independent, creative, original … she has autonomy and does things her own way (…)
> Of course, as I've grown up, she's continued to make records, so in that way she's always been there in my life. I think the qualities she possesses that I mentioned above are still there too, and I like the fact that in that way, she hasn't changed—she's a constant, unlike other groups I've liked

that have split up or altered beyond recognition. (email interview, 23 October 1998)

I went on to ask Jane how Kate Bush had informed her identity:

> Laura V.: You indicated that Kate used to inform your idea of what you wanted to be like—have you tried to emulate her? (email interview, 23 October 1998)
>
> Jane: This is a good question! I think, to be honest, that I haven't so much emulated Kate as held her as an ideal in my mind. But I've never thought—for example—'I'll try and create music like her'. It's more her attitude that I think is admirable, e.g. her refusal to play the 'sex kitten' card or to jump on musical bandwagons. However, I can't honestly say that I've ever done something in an effort to be like her. It's more that I like to hold her in my mind as an ideal because the fact that she's there means that someone hasn't compromised even when other artists have, or I have to compromise in my life (Jane, email interview, 12 November 1998).

In Chapter 1 I introduced Grossberg's distinction between audiences and fans—his notion that fans differ from more regular audience member on the basis of their 'affective sensibility', which tell them what sorts of investments are likely to offer returns. Grossberg sees these investments, which can lead to empowerment, as an integral part of everyday life:

> 'Empowerment refers to the generation of energy and passion, to the construction of possibility. Unlike the consumer, the fan's investment of energy into certain practices always returns some interest on the investment through the variety of empowering relations: in the form of the further production of energy (...); by placing the fan in a position from which he or she feels a certain control over his or her life (...); or by making fans feel that they are alive (...). In all of these cases, fans are empowered in the sense that they are now capable of going on, of continuing to struggle to make a difference' (Grossberg, 1992b: 64 – 5).

Empowerment, according to Grossberg, can lead to resistance, but this is not a given. Indeed, Grossberg acknowledges the potential for popular cultural

investments to make a difference in the lives of fans, he takes neither resistance nor conformity (or being resigned to one's fate) for granted. Rather, he sees fan investments as steps to further investments and negotiations. In this light, I believe, the processes of aspiration and inspiration become more than merely 'unfulfillable desire or pleasurable fantasy' (Stacey, 1994a: 167). While Jane did not elaborate on her compromises, her response does demonstrate the forward-moving force of her fandom, which entails the *possibility* of empowerment and change but the belief that it is worth attempting to live life without compromises. I shall have more to say about (the absence) of resistance and conformity in Chapter 6 where I look more closely at the role of age in fandom.

VII. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how my respondents, who were heterogeneous in terms of 'community affiliation', negotiated the meanings commonly attached to fandom. By and large those who responded to the adverts on the email list and web site—two media specifically devoted to Kate Bush—were more open to activities typically associated with fandom and were less reluctant to accept the (redefined) label fan. It appeared that because of their membership of a larger fan community they found it less problematic to identify themselves as fans than those outside such a community. If this means that their investment in Kate Bush is more intense on the level of time (and to some, money) spent, it does not necessarily mean a deeper emotional involvement.

While some fan activities, most notably collecting, can lend the fan distinction within the fan community, the extent to which they do so within the general social field is limited. The respondents, therefore, carefully weighed up the potential of capital returns on such activities. They would highlight those elements of their fandom which may be most readily brought into alignment with the standards of the general social field, and would selectively let go or moderate those elements which do not. Many respondents have a position to maintain in the general social field on account of their middle class position, maturity and education—they have a 'stake' in the general social field.

I believe the findings in this chapter would have been very different had I not used a qualitative method of inquiry. This method enabled me to discover what really lies behind the rejection of fan practices. Whereas such a rejection might lead one to conclude that these women are not really fans, or that these women are 'resistant' (in the sense that their rejection can be read as a rejection of consumerism, for instance), talking/writing to the fans suggests that it is a rejection of a certain *type* of fandom and fan practices, in many cases one which is associated with teenage girls. However, it is important to remember that while many of the respondents were not particularly interested in being part of a fan community, they nevertheless displayed an eagerness to talk to me and engage in what could be called 'fan talk'. As I suggested in Chapter 3, one of the reasons for this may be that because of my dual status as a (former) Kate Bush fan and as a researcher (a representative of 'dominant' culture) I was seen as having the capacity to confer distinction on them.

This eagerness to talk can also be seen as an example of 'proto-community', other examples of which were suggested by exchanges on the Love-Hounds mailing list. However, other than that my respondents did not bring their fandom into the public arena very much or even into the public arena of the home, as suggested by my discussion of the ways in which the respondents negotiated different demands. They were, in some ways, private listeners whose claims to distinction were made to fit a particular conception of their selves. My respondents' cultural capital, therefore, in line with DeNora's notion of 'tenable' self-images, is best seen as a function of self-image, notably one that can be sustained over a longer period of time.

Some women rejected or redefined the label fan and fan practices because of their associations with teenage girls, as Alex's quote at the beginning of this chapter suggested. The feminine has traditionally had little cultural capital in the field of popular music. However, Kate Bush has often highlighted her own feminine identity as well as cultural practices which are considered 'typically' feminine (such as ballet), but has at the same time achieved a prominent position in the music industry. She can, therefore, be seen to offer the feminine as cultural capital. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

'She is a feminine woman and not ashamed of it':

Kate Bush, Femininity and Authenticity

In the previous chapter I considered the ways in which many respondents—both self-identified fans and admirers—tried to dissociate themselves from the image of the (female) fan as obsessive, possessive or lacking discrimination in order to be perceived as distinguished listeners. I also looked at whether or not their fandom could be seen as empowering and at how it functioned within their negotiation of different identities (including that of partner, mother and musician). In this chapter I shall look more closely at how the women interpret Kate Bush's work and how this informs their identities as women and their position in the field of popular music fandom.

I want to show here that the respondents' construction of Kate Bush's performance and persona as authentic owes more to the traditional rock discourse understanding of the term than it does to the postmodern, ironic interpretation through which performers such as Madonna and the Spice Girls are often understood. Kate Bush certainly allows such a reading. Her musical expertise as well as attitude towards music-making sit comfortably with claims to the kind of authenticity usually referred to in rock discourse, and which has often been gendered masculine. Furthermore, I shall show how Kate Bush has infused the 'masculine' field of popular music with more 'feminine' elements to produce what might be called a 'feminised virtuosity'.

Such a feminised virtuosity, in turn, allows her female fans and admirers to claim

a special relationship to her. The women claim, for instance, that they have a

deeper understanding of Kate Bush's work on the basis of their shared

womanhood and subsequently discredit men's fandom for Kate Bush by

suggesting that theirs is the 'wrong' appreciation. In this way the women attempt

to set themselves up as distinctive listeners. However, Bush also allows a reading

that sits less well with the respondents' claims; indeed, she can be read as both

inviting and rejecting the male gaze. The respondents' views of Bush's image as

'sensual' and 'tasteful' rather than overtly sexual tend to overlook these

ambiguities in Bush's visual presentation, especially during the early years of her

career.

I. Kate Bush, Authenticity and 'Feminised Virtuosity'

I.i. Kate Bush's Authenticity

> Laura V.: You pointed out that you think Kate is 'real' rather than 'manufactured', that she is 'authentic'—could you explain what you mean by this? (email interview, 10 July 1998)
>
> Florence: Kate Bush has a genuine musical ability and lyrical skill. This would be distinguished from artists and groups on the one end of things are completely manufactured (the Spice Girls), or from someone like Madonna, who has little innate talent but seems to have achieved success through savvy and sheer will power. I don't believe that Kate Bush has ever 'calculated' what would be a good marketing move and then created music or image around it. This is, what makes her, in my view, authentic, she has bona fide skills in music and vocal ability and, like a good writer, draws you into her worldview. (email interview, 13 July 1998)

In this section I want to look at how my respondents construct Kate Bush as authentic, and how this authenticity is, in turn, reflected back onto them as fans or admirers. When asked how they would categorise Kate Bush's music in terms of genre, most of the respondents said that Kate Bush cannot be pigeonholed; she is 'unique'. However, when probed further, they would describe her work either as pop or rock, as well as 'progressive', 'avant-garde' and 'experimental'. For example:

> You can't really categorise/pigeonhole a Kate Bush fan. They don't look a certain way, i.e. a punk would look 'punk'. I would describe her music as art rock/progressive rock. (Heather D., questionnaire, answer to question 3 on what characterises a fan)

> Laura: How would you describe Kate Bush's music, in terms of genre?
> Amel: Kate Bush is broadly in pop music, but more especially in progressive pop, as in ... avant-garde pop, experimental... (interview, 27 October 1998)

These descriptions stress the perceived innovative dimension of Kate Bush's music. If her music can be classified as pop, as Amel suggests, then this is no 'formula' pop:

> Laura V.: what do you mean by experimental?
> Amel: She's an innovator in terms of the music, the voice, the production, the unique stylisation of the whole concept, everything.... She doesn't just reproduce pop songs, she creates ... it's new and different each time. (interview, 27 October 1998)

Kate Bush is also considered to be in control of her career and is thought not to aim specifically for commercial success, as argued by Brenda; Lynne even suggests that Kate Bush's disregard for commercial gain extends to a lack of consideration for her fans:

> What makes her unique is she is a 'complete' artist, her ingenuity is without boundaries, she's innovating. She won't compromise her art for commercial reasons. You never feel bought. Some say she is self-indulgent but does that not make an honest piece of art? She is a perfectionist. (Brenda, questionnaire, answer to question 2 about how Kate Bush differs from other performers)

> Laura V.: do you think that... what opinion do you think that Kate has of her fans? Do you think that she views them as ... you know...
> Lynne: ...I honestly can't imagine, I mean, how would she see her fans? She probably sees them as all important, but I don't think that she aims to please. I don't think that she aims to keep her fans happy. I think that she hopes that they'll love her music, she dearly hopes that they'll love her music, but I think that what she does she writes for herself, a cathartic, spiritual experience. (...) Whereas someone like the Spice Girls—and I'm not putting them down, because it's a slack example—but they will think, mmm, our fans are important because they are bringing the money in, so we'd better churn out more stuff that they are going to like. So I think she has a very high regard for her fans, but hopes they'll like the music, rather than tries to make it ...'. (interview, 25 August 1998)

Whereas Amba, who was quoted in the previous chapter as saying that Kate Bush ought to be more forthcoming to her fans with information and fan club participation, condemned Kate Bush's 'distance' from her fans, Lynne constructs this as a sign of Bush's authenticity. Indeed, many of the respondents interpreted Bush's low profile as an extension of her artistic vision. In this light, although touring/live performance is often seen as the preferred promotional tool within the rock discourse, Bush's choice not to do so may be interpreted as rendering her almost *more* authentic, as it enables her to focus her attention exclusively on recording; it can be said to keep her 'mystique' alive.

Thus, Kate Bush is thought to be innovative, in control of her career, and to use her image as a support for her music rather than for its own sake or to increase her chances of commercial success, as the following quote from Nathalie suggests:

> She is somehow more 'individual'—both in her presentation and her music. To make clear what I mean: in comparison to Madonna, for example, KB is more substantial—I don't feel that she is changing her outer appearance just to be shocking or up-to-date, it stresses more those things she tries to express with her songs. It seems to me that the way she presents herself is more connected with the music and the lyrics. (Nathalie, questionnaire, answer to question 2 about how Kate Bush differs from other performers)

Maria, who stresses that Kate Bush is not a 'manufactured bimbo', gives these characteristics an explicitly gendered dimension:

> [I appreciate] the fact that she is not a manufactured bimbo, that she writes, produces, acts and dances, that she is in control of what she wants to do, and can take 5 years to record an album, and that she started so young in a band. (Maria, questionnaire, answer to question 2c)

In the subsequent section I shall look at the debates on authenticity. Despite the recognition of the existence of different kinds of authenticity, the common sense understanding of the term usually values 'masculine' rock at the expense of 'feminine' pop.

I.ii. The Debates around Authenticity

Fans and critics alike draw on the ideology of authenticity to account for taste. They usually do so to exclude certain genres as inferior (because too commercial), or to exclude certain responses to music as inappropriate; in other words, 'authenticity' is used to validate certain taste patterns at the expense of others, and to thereby construct and safeguard hierarchies within popular music. It will not

come as a surprise, therefore, that authenticity is a somewhat controversial

concept in popular music studies. For example, during the summer of 1999 a

heated debate took place on the email list of the International Association for the

Study of Popular Music (IASPM) on the role of authenticity in popular music

studies. Although it was generally agreed that audiences are often deeply

concerned with authenticity, some considered the concept too vague and

subjective and wondered whether scholars should engage with it at all.

Indeed, authenticity cannot be objectively found in any particular genre or style of

performance. As Winkler (1999) suggested, in a contribution to the discussion on

the iaspm-list, authenticity may be seen as a 'covenant' between artist and fan:

> 'Authenticity' is a genuine issue in the study of popular music, because
> fans and audiences are always searching for it. We need to believe that the
> music we love is 'real.' But authenticity is not anything that we will find
> objectively existing in the work of an artist, or define through musical or
> other criteria. Rather it is a kind of covenant that audiences make with the
> music (or the human being they imagine behind the music). (message to
> the iasmp-list, 4 September 1999)

According to Winkler this prompts the question, not which musics are authentic

or inauthentic, but rather 'how authenticity is constructed? In a particular style,

what are the signifiers of authenticity?' (iaspm-list, 4 September 1999).

In their study of the influence of art schools on British music making, Frith and

Horne (1987) point out that in the 1960s British musicians with an art school

background started to draw on the Romantic notion of authenticity in order to

reconcile the opposition between art and commerce in popular music; as a result,

'pop became rock' (56). Within a North American context, Grossberg (1992a)

suggests that 'rock appropriated an older middle-class obsession with "authenticity" as a way of responding to the absence of its own authentic past (and future)' (206). Both accounts of authenticity, while differing in their emphasis, see the origins of the term's application in the Romantic period when art became a matter of creation rather than mimesis. It is also since this period, as Charles Taylor (1991) suggests, that 'the artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, as agent of original self-definition' (62). According to Taylor, 'authenticity points us towards a more responsible form of life. It allows us to live (potentially) a fuller and more differentiated life, because more fully appropriated as our own' (74). Thus while musicians draw on the idea of authenticity in order to be seen as creative and to transcend commercialism, for fans and audiences it functions, in turn, as an example of how a unique identity may be created.

Frith and Horne explain that musicians have employed different strategies to deal with the challenge of being an artist in a commercial setting. While some musicians only adopted the Romantic idea of authenticity, others also embraced artifice:

> When the art school blues bands became pop stars they were, then, glamorized, despite themselves, turned into personalities in the pages of *Rave* or *NME*. They did experience a gulf between what they 'really' were, artists, and what they were presented as being, pop boys. The progressive rockers responded by becoming as unglamorous as possible (which meant, in practice, developing new forms of 'serious' entertainment, a new genre or rock 'criticism'), but the Pop Art pop stars became fascinated with their own 'image' (the term which replaced 'personality' in the language of marketing). Once more the 'authenticity' of pop art meant a concern for its artificiality, and the audience was divided into the true fans who could see through an act, and the mass consumers, who couldn't. (Frith and Horne, 149-51)

Winkler's definition of authenticity as a covenant suggests that any genre can be authentic, so long as it conforms to the expectations set up between listeners and artists. Yet despite this and Frith and Horne's recognition of different expressions of authenticity, the terms 'pop' and 'rock' have often been seen as synonymous with 'artifice' and 'authenticity'. Furthermore, as Frith and Horne suggest, 'the boundary lines between pop and rock became boundaries of gender' (1987: 92) which had major consequences for both female performers and female fans. As Lewis (1990) comments, in the late 1960s, with the advent of progressive rock, a divide was erected between rock and pop that effectively 'relegated' female performers to the category of pop and devalued them as artists (32). Fans of pop music could be judged incapable of appreciating aesthetic complexity' (Lewis, 1990: 32). Women, within their 'musical niche' of pop, could be portrayed as subject to industrial manipulation and commercialism, and as lacking creative control (Lewis, 1990: 63).[1]

Frith and Horne suggest that after punk, which they see as the culmination of the art school Romanticism of the 1960s blues bands and the artifice of Pop art pop, popular music entered a postmodern phase. The postmodern sensibility, Grossberg (1992a) argues, has greatly altered the relationship between rock and authenticity and 'defines a logic of "ironic nihilism" or "authentic inauthenticity"' (224). Within this logic, he argues, investments in particular styles or images have ceased to necessarily be meaningful or make a difference. Grossberg distinguishes

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[1] The idea of authenticity has also been a major factor in subcultural theory. The focus on male, working class, and 'spectacular' youth subcultures, at the expense of less visible and more mainstream girl cultures, has aided the notion of authentic culture as masculine culture. As Thornton has suggested: 'Even among youth cultures, there is a double articulation of the lowly and the feminine: disparaged *other* cultures are characterized as feminine *and* girls' cultures are devalued as imitative and passive. Authentic culture is, by contrast, depicted in gender-free or masculine terms *and* remains the prerogative of boys' (1995: 105).

between different varieties of authentic inauthenticity—ironic, sentimental, hyperreal and grotesque—of which the ironic variant is the most pervasive strategy. 'It celebrates the fragmentary, the contradictory, the temporary. (...) [It] celebrates its own investment in the image precisely because it is self-consciously taken as an image, no more and no less' (227 – 8).

For Grossberg the authentic inauthenticity of postmodern popular music means that rock's ability to function as a site of investment has diminished; postmodernity marks the inability of people to commit, believe in the future, or invest in difference. Rock has become 'a site of temporary investment, without the power to restructure everyday life' (237). This article shows Grossberg in a far more pessimistic mode than in his work on the fan's affective sensibility (1992b), a pessimism that is not borne out by my respondents' practices. Feminist scholars, however, have been more optimistic about the possibilities of postmodern authenticity, in which the play with image—as it did for the earlier Pop art musicians described by Frith and Horne—takes on a central role. They have seen the advent of this 'new' kind of authenticity as a timely intervention in the masculine rock discourse, which allows female pop performers to be recognised as artistic creators, and which recognises feminine cultures as worthy of attention. Furthermore, the subject positions offered are seen as enabling (female) fans to make meaningful investments.

Lewis, for instance, points out that the rock discourse and its attendant ideology of authenticity was undermined to some extent by the advent of MTV in the early 1980s. She argues that MTV helped 'blur the lines of distinction between rock and

pop' and 'provided an opportunity for commercially inspired music to be redefined as artistic and worthy, and for fandom to be rearticulated as authentic cultural response' (1990: 72). She discusses this in relation to 'female address videos' made by, amongst others, Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, Pat Benatar and Tina Turner. The fact that Madonna's image is so clearly constructed does not necessarily mean that it is inauthentic: 'Revealing image to be a construction does not entirely disable the capacity of image to function as a personal statement of the musician's subjectivity. Symbolic practices can yield authentic expressions' (Lewis, 1990: 104). Similarly, Mary Harron (1990) suggests that a performance such as Madonna's, who is explicitly concerned with her image and can be said to visibly monitor it, may be *more* authentic than those of rock performers who tend to play down the importance of their image, since this does not mean they have none. Writing about Bruce Springsteen and Madonna, Harron suggests that of the two Springsteen may be the less authentic one, as his image of a working man is quite clearly at odds with his status as a multi-million selling star: 'the more he tries to detach his image from that sales process, the more artificial his image becomes' (1990: 213).[2] Madonna, on the other hand, 'with her unabashed artificiality and calculation', may actually present a more sincere version of herself.

As Whiteley (2000) points out, MTV and promotional videos generally 'demanded a heightened and glossy sexuality from their stars', while also enabling an 'ironic commentary' on traditional representations of femininity (15).

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[2] Frith (1988) writes 'The recurring term used in discussions of Springsteen, by fans, by critics, by fans-as-critics, is "authenticity". What is meant by this is not that Springsteen is authentic in a direct way—is simply expressing himself—but that he represents "authenticity". This is why he

She suggests that whether an artist such as Madonna challenges or reinforces patriarchal representations of femininity depends largely on whether her performance is read as ironic. If one does not acknowledge this irony then Madonna seems to merely confirm the patriarchal definition (see also Reynolds and Press, 1995).

The 'covenant' between my respondents and Kate Bush, then, appears to owe much to the traditional, Romantic notion of authenticity and less to the more postmodern one identified by feminist scholars such as Lewis and Whiteley. While Reynolds and Press include Kate Bush in their 'third strategy', in which female musicians 'celebrate[] female imagery and iconography' in a 'provisional, postmodern way' (233), my respondents tend to read Bush's performance of femininity in a rather 'straight' way which appears to leave little room for ambiguities. Kate Bush's musical skill and approach to music-making certainly allow a reading of authenticity that draws on the traditional understanding of the term. A look at her work, starting with early releases such as 'Wuthering Heights' and *The Kick Inside* (both 1978), will show this. These early releases set the tone for Kate Bush's later work, in particular her critically acclaimed fourth and fifth albums, *The Dreaming* (1982) and *Hounds of Love* (1985). At this point I want to limit the discussion to the music and lyrics; later in this chapter I shall look more closely at the question of 'authenticity' and its links to questions of feminine cultural capital with respect to the visual elements of Bush's work.

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has become so important. He stands for the core values of rock and roll even as those values become harder and harder to sustain' (97).

I.iii. 'This Woman's Work'—The Music and Lyrics

Kate Bush has been quoted as saying: 'I think most people tend to think of me as the weird "Wuthering Heights" singer—that is definitely the image that's stuck with most people, which I find extraordinary because it's ... so long ago' (Sutherland, 1989). Released in January 1978, Kate Bush's debut single 'Wuthering Heights' catapulted her onto the music scene. It reached number one in the singles chart, attained gold status, and remains her most successful single to date.[3] Based on Emily Brontë's romantic novel, part of the song's appeal may have been the stark contrast it provided to the disco acts and punk bands of the time. For instance, Frith wrote in a review that it was 'not a normal number 1 but a natural, and with all the advantages of surprise' (1978b), while Kruse (1994) suggests that Bush's music might be read as 'a reaction against the one-dimensional angst and unorchestrated discord of punk' (455). Andrea, who was in her mid teens when she first heard Kate Bush, writes that the song is 'teenage talent at its best. It was everyone's introduction to this genius and my first viewing of it on TOTP (not the video) had me in tears. Totally and unbelievably brilliant' (questionnaire, answer to question 11 about favourite song), and Lucy, who became a fan in her mid teens, that 'it was the first and the best—pure essence of Kate! (questionnaire, answer to question 11).

Centring on the tempestuous relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff, 'Wuthering Heights' finds Bush taking on the persona of Cathy who, after death, returns to haunt her former lover and soulmate. Its lyrics evoke the Yorkshire

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[3] These figures are based on UK sales, as indicated by the EMI publication *Kate Bush Complete* (1987), edited by Cecil Bolton.

landscape—'the wiley windy moors'—and the ghostly state Cathy is now in—'it

gets lonely on the other side from you' (Bolton, 1987: 54).[4] As Losseff (1999)

points out, in addition to its lyrics, it is Bush's vocal quality, in particular her

timbre, which is important in setting the song's mood. By singing almost entirely

within the 'middle' and 'head' (high) registers, and avoiding the chest register

('representing perhaps a groundedness in the corporeal'), Bush manages to

convey a ghostly mood, an image of the spirit world (Losseff, 1999: 230). Losseff

goes on to say that in 'Wuthering Heights' such unusual aspects were set against

'more conventional frameworks of harmony, phrase-length and vocal range'

(1999: 239). In other words, not only did 'Wuthering Heights' suggest that Kate

Bush was very skilled in conventional song-writing, the song's unconventional

subject matter and technical idiosyncracies also suggested that she was able to

bring something new to an established form.

The album from which 'Wuthering Heights' was taken, *The Kick Inside*, further

reinforced such marks of originality and unconventionality. Released in February

1978, it reached number three in the album charts and attained triple platinum

status.[5] Although her musical role on this album is restricted to vocals, piano, and

some arrangements, both its vocal range and its lyrical scope anticipate her later

work. Backed by a fairly conventional band, Bush's vocals are musically the most

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[4] The lyrics I quote have been taken from *Kate Bush Complete*, edited by Bolton (1987), which contains the lyrics and music of Bush's work from 1978 to 1986. Lyrics from later albums have been taken from http://www.gaffa.org. See Appendix F for a selection of lyrics that were particularly meaningful to respondents.

[5] Although seemingly an overnight success, Kate Bush's debut single and album were the outcome of years of writing and preparation. She had started writing songs in her early teens and was only fourteen when she produced demo tapes containing more than sixty compositions. David Gilmour, of Pink Floyd, was impressed by her work and helped finance a three song professional demo which eventually led to a contract with EMI. Considering her youth EMI then allowed her some time to mature and refine her work. She employed this time by taking dance and mime classes

remarkable about this release. In addition to her take on Brontë's novel, the lyrics

range from a celebration of woman's strength ('Room for the Life'), to incest

('The Kick Inside'), period pains ('Strange Phenomena'), and personal

development and philosophy ('Them Heavy People'). Respondents often

comment on the surprising aspects of this early work that introduced Bush to

many of them.

> What I find interesting is that in the very early days of her career ('The
> Kick Inside'), which was released when she was about 19/20, a lot of the
> lyrics were very sexually explicit and yet in the media she was portrayed
> as a 'child woman'. A lot of music critics don't pass comment on these
> sexually explicit lyrics, maybe they don't notice/read them. (Heather D.,
> questionnaire, answer to question 16 about favourite lyrics)

> The Kick Inside, Hounds of Love + The Sensual World. Musically and
> lyrically are simply brilliant. The songs hypnotize you. They are like
> books. Each song is like a chapter. When you read a book, each chapter is
> different, and so are her songs in those albums. She mixes love, sadness,
> sex, family. The music flows gently and involves you in a very sensual
> atmosphere. The Sensual World is for me a concept album, along with
> Hounds of Love. (Diana, questionnaire, answer to question 11a about
> favourite albums)

Bush's vocal and lyrical skills were more fully realised on her later releases, in

particular on *The Dreaming* (1982) and *Hounds of Love* (1985). Bush began to

experiment with global folk musics, often resulting in unusual rhythms, and

started to make extensive use of the Fairlight synthesiser.[6] For instance, 'Night of

the Swallow', on the fourth album, *The Dreaming* (1982), features an Irish jig and

traditional Irish instruments such as the uillean pipes, while 'The Dreaming',

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which came to be an important aspect of her performance. The first album was eventually recorded in August 1977.

[6] The Fairlight is a programmable synthesiser which enables the player to sample a wide variety of sounds. As Kruse (1994) suggests, 'by moving beyond pre-set and artificial synthesiser sounds, Bush discovered new ways to sample a variety of natural resonances in order to deepen the structure of her music' (456). One example of this is the sound of breaking glass on 'Babooshka' (on the 1980 album *Never For Ever*).

which deals with the Australian Aborigines' concept of 'dreamtime', features a digeridu. Subjects here include the questioning of the nature of knowledge in 'Sat in Your Lap', and a plea for personal space on 'Get Out of My House'. About the lyrics of the latter, which recall the negotiations over space discussed in the previous chapter, Nathalie writes: 'it is a very powerful song and it helped me a lot of times when I felt negatively overwhelmed by someone. I used to sing & scream along with her and it enabled me to get relief from my feelings of hurt or disappointment' (questionnaire, response to question 11; see Appendix F for lyrics). Bush's vocals, which she had started to use more as an instrument and which are frequently manipulated and distorted, further reinforce the variety of these subjects and musical traditions.

In addition, Bush steadily gained near-total control over both her musical output and her image, something that the respondents cited as an important element in their appreciation. Whereas on her second and third albums (*Lionheart*, 1978, and *Never For Ever*, 1980) she was credited as assistant producer and co-producer respectively, her fourth and subsequent albums were entirely self-produced.

Hounds of Love was released in 1985, eight years after her surprising debut, and is considered by many to be her best effort. It is praised for its originality, variety and emotional power. For instance, Heather D. says that Kate Bush 'put a lot of effort and passion into making *Hounds of Love*. A lot of KB fans mention it as their favourite album' (questionnaire, answer to question 11), while Linda writes that 'it is an extraordinary work to imagine let alone pull off. Everything is in the right place at the right time, and it is "pure" music—art for art's sake, music for

its own sake. At the same time it is selfless' (questionnaire, answer to question

11). The album consists of two parts; five 'conventional' songs and a mini

concept album called *The Ninth Wave*, which deals with the fear of death, death

itself and rebirth. The two halves of the album are closely integrated with the

songs on the first half anticipating *The Ninth Wave*. For instance, the thematic

concerns of 'Running Up That Hill' and 'Hounds of Love', their exploration of

the confusions surrounding gender relations, and the promise of unconditional

love and succour in 'Mother Stands for Comfort', also characterise the concept

side. Once again, the Fairlight synthesiser plays an important role, as does the

drum machine, which gives the album a heavier sound than predecessors.

Bush's work, in particular her subject matter (including literary adaptations) and

her musical structures (the concept album, global folk musics), place her within a

progressive rock genre, traditionally dominated by male musicians. They also

establish her as an 'auteur', a concept that, like authenticity, is often gendered

masculine (see also Kruse, 1994). Progressive rock's pervasive masculinity and its

emphasis on musical virtuosity may well have been on Kate Bush's mind when

she was quoted as saying, in a statement which echoes a common sentiment in the

music industry, 'I just think that I identify more with male musicians than female

musicians because I tend to think of female musicians as ... ah ... females'

(quoted in Gaar, 1993: 236). In more recent years, however, she seems to have

changed her mind about this somewhat and was quoted as saying about her 1989

album *The Sensual World*:

> This is definitely my most personal, honest album ... and I think it's my
> most feminine album, in that I feel maybe I'm not trying to prove

> something in terms of a woman in a man's world ... On *The Dreaming* and *Hounds of Love*, particularly from a production standpoint, I wanted to get a lot more weight and power, which I felt was a very male attitude. In some cases it worked very well, but ... perhaps this time I felt braver as a woman, not trying to do the things that men do in music. (Sutcliffe: 1989)

In a similar vein, the respondents, despite their construction of Kate Bush as authentic within such a 'masculine' progressive rock context, also repeatedly highlight Bush's articulation of specifically female experiences. In the second part of this chapter, therefore, I shall address Kate Bush's performance of femininity in more detail, drawing on analysis of both songs and visuals.

II. Kate Bush's Performance of Femininity

II.i. Kate Bush's 'Feminised Virtuosity'

In this section I want to suggest that Bush's musical and technical expertise, both of which can be seen as 'masculine' characteristics in the field of popular music, are also imbued with what can be described as 'feminine' characteristics. Not only does she often write about women's experiences (as some respondents point out, sometimes addressing 'taboo' subjects such as women's desire), visually Bush often draws on images associated with girls and women, in particular ballet (a staple of girls' comics).

'Running Up That Hill' was the first single released off *Hounds of Love* (1985); it reached number 3 in the British charts and became Bush's best-selling single since her debut. It was one of the respondents' favourite songs, while the video,

too, was liked by many and can be seen, in addition to those for 'Wuthering Heights, 'Babooshka' and 'The Sensual World', as one of Bush's defining visuals. Krys describes 'Running Up That Hill as 'sensual and powerful' (questionnaire, answer to question 11), while Leslie sees it as an 'intelligently crafted song whose lyrics have personal significance for me' (...) [it] relates experiences I can identify with (grief, longing, frustration, alienation, etc.). KB is quite good at tapping into the emotional nuances of being' (questionnaire, answer to question 11). And Brenda explains that she likes the video 'for the choreography between Kate and her male partner that is so intimate, the 2 bodies intertwine and become almost one. This is one of Kate's strongest points, her body expression (questionnaire, answer to question 11).

The song is one of many that the respondents appreciated for their emotional 'truth' and relevance to their lives and it deals with the pain (involuntarily) inflicted by both partners in a relationship. The speaker expresses this hurt: 'You don't want to hurt me, but see how deep the bullet lies' and pleads with her partner to 'tell me we both matter don't we' (Bolton, 1987: 46; all subsequent quotations from this song are from p. 46). If this ostensibly places the speaker in a passive role, she is also the one who is resolved to change the situation so that 'you and me won't be unhappy'. However, the solution suggested by Bush, 'a deal with God' which would enable a gender exchange or a transgender empathy, is an imaginary one, and acknowledges both the desire that such a deal can deliver the relationship from its gendered misunderstandings and a recognition of its impossibility.

> And if I only could
> I'd make a deal with God
> And I'd get him to swap our places
> Be running up that road
> Be running up that hill
> With no problems.
>
> ♭

Despite the fact that the final two lines—'If only I could, be running up that hill'—sound as though there is a possibility that the swap could happen (Bush's voice is distorted to sound more masculine than that of her male backing vocalist), the lyrics combine both a hopeful and pessimistic understanding of gender politics and the future of heterosexual relations. The video, which features a dance routine between Bush and a male dancer in an indistinct setting, complements this ambivalence. While the identical grey dress of both dancers points to the possibility of mutual understanding and the blurring of gender roles (see Figure 7), their dance, expressing an emotional range from tenderness to aggression, to some extent undermines this. The video's extras, dressed in similar grey costumes and wearing masks of either Bush's face or that of her dance partner, further highlight the confusion and tensions underlying gendered relations. The masks appear to play with the idea that gender is a role that is put on and off at will, but also point to the deception implicit in such role playing, and perhaps its ultimate lack of credibility.[7]

Bush's latest two releases, *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes*, released in 1989 and 1993 respectively, continued to explore world musics and witnessed

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[7] *Hounds of Love*'s title track explores similar themes and sees Bush/the speaker expressing similarly ambivalent emotions. The song starts off with Bush admitting both her childhood fears ('afraid of what might be') and her adult fear of love ('and now hounds of love are hunting'), but ends with an ostensibly firm and joyful assertion ('do you know what I really need? I need love love love love') (Bolton, 1987: 35). However, like 'Running Up That Hill', the lines imply both optimism and a simultaneous recognition that her lover does not acknowledge her needs.

Bush increasing her collaborations with other artists; the former album, for instance, is noted for its collaboration with the traditional Bulgarian singers Trio Bulgarka, while the latter features collaborations with Nigel Kennedy and Prince. Furthermore, many of the songs further develop the lyrical concerns of *Hounds of Love*, with songs addressing intimate relationships, parental relationships, the death of a parent, and so on. Many respondents, especially those in their thirties and forties, felt that the lyrics to songs such as 'Never Be Mine', 'The Fog' (both 1989), 'You're the One' and 'Moments of Pleasure' (both 1993) articulated experiences that were familiar to them as, for instance, partners and mothers.

> Laura V.: Can you say a bit more about favourite lyrics? (email interview, 2 July 1998)
> Babs: 'The Fog' (my favourite Kate song ever) seems to be about fatherly love but I also relate it to my current relationship—the idea of love being big enough is I think relevant to all forms of love, eg is my love for my son big enough to withstand all the teenage hassles!!! (email interview, 8 July 1998)

> 'You're the One' (from The Red Shoes). This is a very emotional song; the words are simple though, so accurate and typical for modern relationships where there is no communication. So often pride gets in the way. Kate has put those emotions so accurately into words. The woman just wants to hear one word, 'Stay'. I think Kate wants to say if you have problems talk them over, forget your pride and don't wait until it's too late (Brenda, questionnaire, answer to question 16)

'The Sensual World', too, was often cited as a particularly meaningful song. In Chapter 4 I already quoted Heather D. saying that she appreciated hearing about 'sexuality from a woman's point of view' (questionnaire), and in the following quotes, Sandra and Maria, appreciate the song's 'sensual female-ness':

> The Sensual World—I really like the feel of the song + video, Kate's clothes—the atmosphere it purveys, the sensual female-ness of it, sense of

Pre-Raphaelitism. (Sandra, questionnaire, answer to question 11b about favourite song)

It's sexy without being sluttish. It is what the tile says, very sensual and erotic. (Maria, questionnaire, answer to question 16)

The song is based on Molly Bloom's soliloquy in the last chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922/1982). Having been refused permission by Joyce's estate to use the original text, Bush was forced to rewrite the lyrics (indeed, one might say that Bush has colonised the original text).[8] While the soliloquy itself, which recounts a woman's experience of a marriage, is interesting in the light of what the women say about independence and the negotiation of domestic space, its style of writing highlights the difficulty of understanding 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. For instance, French feminists such as Cixous and Kristeva see Joyce's style of writing as an example of *écriture féminine*; indeed, the style of writing associated with *écriture féminine* is usually identified in male authors. Yes, as Battersby (1989) has pointed out, the conception of femininity employed by Cixous values 'that which is resistant to conscious analysis, ecstatic, fluid, egoless, apparently incoherent and "hysterical"' and is a type of femininity that, when drawn upon by women, is usually disparaged (145; see also Marks and Courtivron, 1981). Cixous' is a line of thinking informed by the Romantic aesthetic that privileges the feminine as a characteristic of genius, but at the expense of women; only male artists can be 'feminine' geniuses. The fact that Bush is female, is thought to express 'feminine' issues, and has pretension to

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[8] Bush stays very close to Joyce's lines, as suggested by the last lines of *Ulysses*: 'then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes' (1982: 704; first published 1922). See Appendix F for Bush's lyrics.

'high art' makes it particularly difficult to understand her in terms of conventional

understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.

The following respondents appear to pick up on this notion by suggesting that

femininity is often seen as incompatible with creativity and control. But Kate

Bush, they argue, has shown that it is possible to successfully combine these

characteristics.

> [She has shown] that it's okay to be a woman and creative and in control
> and be full of personality and still feminine. (Lisa, questionnaire, answer
> to question on how Kate Bush differs from other performers)

> She places importance in her creativity. She is a feminine woman and not
> ashamed of it. (Helen, questionnaire, answer to question on how Kate
> Bush differs from other performers)

Songs such as 'The Sensual World' and the others mentioned above, the romance

narrative of Brontë's novel as well as the frequent use of dance/ballet in

'Wuthering Heights', 'The Man With the Child in His Eyes', 'Running Up That

Hill' and more recently in 'The Red Shoes' (culminating in a feature length video

The Line, the Cross, and the Curve, 1993, a take on the 'red shoes' fairy tale) all

suggest a particularly feminine sensibility. Amel, for instance, suggests that Kate

Bush's early videos and 'Wuthering Heights' are like a little girl's fantasy:

> Amel: Things like the videos of 'Wow' and of 'Wuthering Heights' ...
> they are so naïve and they are so sort of exactly what you fantasise as a
> little girl kind of videos that they are just so honest. (...)
> Laura V.: Why do you say they are like a little girl's fantasy? Is that girl
> rather than boy?
> Amel: oh ... I think ... I'm not sure, because I'm not a man, but I think so,
> it's like, something tells me yeah, that yes there is something that's
> particularly female about her. It's a little girl's fantasy because when I read

> Wuthering Heights I was a little girl and I was completely spooked by it
> and maybe that's partly why I was ... just completely clicked with Kate
> Bush stuff, because I did identify with it exactly like that, I had read it and
> I had been spooked and I had thought Cathy was really weird, I was in
> love with Heathcliff, all those things, and then Kate Bush turns up with
> this song, and ....(interview, 27 October 1998)

As such it could be seen as an example of what Lewis (1990) has called the

'female address video'. Lewis distinguishes between 'access signs' and 'discovery

signs'. Whereas the former refer to 'those in which the privileged experiences of

boys and men are visually appropriated', the latter 'refer to and celebrate

distinctly female modes of cultural expression and experience' (Lewis, 1990:

109). 'These signs', according to Lewis, 'attempt to compensate for the

devaluation and trivialisation of female-cultural experiences by presenting images

of activities that are shared by girls alone' (1990: 109). Dance, and particularly

ballet—a staple of girls' romantic stories—can be read as one of those activities

(see also McRobbie, 1984).[9]

Combined with those elements commonly associated with (progressive) rock—

musical virtuosity and authenticity—such reference to elements of female culture

suggests a kind of 'feminisation' of this discourse, a 'feminised virtuosity' so to

speak. The video SAT IN YOUR LAP is another interesting example of this. The

song, taken from her first entirely self-produced and fairly experimental album

The Dreaming (1982), is dominated by the heavy sounds of a drum machine and

as such presents a marked contrast with Bush's pink tutu in the video (see Figure

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[9] Sutcliffe (1980) writes: 'This is how the readers of teeny girl's magazine *Look In* were told to
think about Kate Bush: "To every young girl working hard at dance classes and learning music, the
story of Kate Bush's rise to fame must seem like the ultimate fairy story. Few may look as striking
as Kate, and it's unlikely that many have her incredible vocal range, but her rise to acclaim gives
us all a model to aspire to—showing just how much sheer hard work is involved in reaching the
top."'

6).[10] Bush's considerable economic success and critical acclaim means that she

has been able to capitalise on her 'feminine cultural capital' and has been able to

claim some of that distinction which is often so elusive for female performers.

II.ii. Feminine Cultural Capital

> I can accept that people might find my image sensual [she says in that little-girl lost voice that makes men want to rush to her side]. But I'm certainly no sex symbol. Why should the way I look have any bearing on the way I sound? I was 14 when I started composing and singing seriously, and I never gave image a thought. (Kate Bush, quoted in Diliberto, 1990)

As I suggested earlier, the respondents perceived Kate Bush as innovative, in

control and as using her image to support the music and lyrics. Some respondents

lent this perception a gendered dimension by suggesting that Bush is not a

'manufactured bimbo'. Indeed, those female performers who were perceived as

'manufactured bimbos' or who were thought to present themselves as 'sex

objects' were repeatedly singled out for criticism. For instance, Laura C. and Lucy

suggest that Kate Bush has not resorted to the 'sex object' or 'bimbo'

performance of femininity:

> She never sets herself up as some sort of sex object (à la Madonna), but presents herself as intelligent, thoughtful—yet she is still attractive and feminine. (Laura C., questionnaire, answer to question 26 about why she sees Kate Bush as a role model for women)

> She is beautiful without being a 'bimbo', strong without being a 'bitch' and makes eccentricity valid, she makes many varied aspects of womanhood attractive. (Lucy, questionnaire, answer to question 26)

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[10] As I pointed out in Chapter 2, the linguistic root of virtuosity is 'vir', meaning 'man'. Kate Bush's engagement with technology—both in her extensive use of the Fairlight and her role as a producer—can be interpreted as a mastering of this masculine field. As Lucy O'Brien (1995) and Gaar (1993) point out, there are still relatively few female producers.

Instead, Kate Bush's femininity, the respondents argue, is more 'tasteful', or more

'sensual', as the responses to songs such as 'The Sensual World' suggested, as

well as the following exchange with Heather D.:

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you repeatedly compared Kate to other
> female performers, including the Spice Girls whom you condemn for
> being 'pop tarts', and others who are 'sex objects'. I think that Kate often
> looks very sexy too, for example in her videos—how do you feel about
> Kate's sexy image? (email interview, 17 August 1998)
> Heather D.: In the early days, especially in her videos and promotional
> photos, she did have a fairly sexy image. Her early sexy image doesn't
> bother me, it was all tastefully done. She admitted that she was rather
> naïve then and didn't have much control over her image then. The director
> of her early videos was a man and her early promotional photos were done
> by Gered Mankowitz who was responsible for the infamous pink leotard
> shot that ended up plastered all over billboards and the London buses.
> These days, there is a lot more control of her image and her career and
> that's probably why she's lasted so long in the music business. (email
> interview, 3 September 1998)

While Kate Bush herself, as I just suggested, has been able to translate her

feminine cultural capital into economic and symbolic capital, the respondents are

not always able to do so to quite the same extent. However, while they may be

unable to convert cultural into economic capital, Bush's feminisation of virtuosity

and authenticity enables the respondents to believe that they, as women,

understand her better and respond to her work in the 'right' way. Furthermore,

their fandom does enable them to lay claim to some degree of power and self-

confidence within their domestic and professional lives. And Bush's visual

presentation—as someone who is seen as not too sexy—may be read by the

respondents as something which is not too far removed from what they can achieve and maintain in their own lives.[11]

In the previous chapter I briefly discussed Norma Coates's (1997b) experiences of an email discussion list on rock music. She suggested that one could only be heard on this list by drawing on 'masculine cultural capital': by adopting a 'masculine' standpoint characterised by an authoritative style of writing, interspersed with a plethora of facts. Although she did not use the term, 'feminine cultural capital' would then be characterised by a more open and 'safe' discussion, fewer 'facts', and as a splinter group from the original list demonstrated, more references to everyday life. 'Clitlist offers a seamless landscape for shared experience: intellectual, emotional, sociological' (Gaines, quoted in Coates, 1997b: 88). It was suggested, however, in a response to the rock list, that through its repeated reference to everyday events, this splinter group of dissatisfied female subscribers reinforced traditional gender roles.

As my discussion of *écriture féminine* earlier suggested, it is difficult to say with any certainty when the adoption of 'feminine' characteristics can be seen as progressive or when it, once again, reinforces traditional gender roles, relies on the idea of 'woman' as a unified category (as sharing the same experiences and interests), and confines women to a kind of cultural ghetto. The same applies to my respondents' reading of Kate Bush's femininity. While their suggestion that Bush is both feminine *and* creative attempts to open up a space in which female

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[11] Barbara Bradby (1994) has pointed out that it may be problematic to copy a style if this is not accompanied by any of the other elements of an artist's performance. For instance, the young Madonna fans in her study could not entirely achieve Madonna's empowered look, as they could

creators can be positively valued, their perception of Bush's image as 'sensual' appears to reinforce an association with a 'softer' sexuality.

II.iii. 'This Woman's Work'—Visual Capital

Whereas Whiteley (2000) has suggested that Madonna's use of patriarchal representations of femininity, including the virgin/whore dichotomy, may be read as 'ironic' and therefore as a challenge to those representations, and Lewis (1990) that her videos may be seen as ushering in a new kind of authenticity, my respondents would persistently read such foregrounding of image as inauthentic. However, my respondents' view of Bush's image as 'sensual' and 'tasteful' rather than overtly sexual (as inviting the male gaze) overlook the ambiguities in some of her visuals, as Heather's quote earlier suggested. Bush also allows a reading that sits less well with the respondents' claims to distinction on the basis of their shared womanhood. She can, especially during the early years of her career, also be read as simultaneously inviting and rejecting the male gaze.

Videos can tell us much about the image an artist wishes to convey. As the function of a music video is to promote both song and performer(s), this is especially important for a new performer, when a first impression may have a lasting influence on how he or she will be perceived and promoted subsequently. Goodwin suggests that the promotional videos for those bands that want to be perceived as *musicians* rather than *characters* are likely to emphasise the band members' musical virtuosity, or replace the band members' images with

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not reproduce the songs to accompany their outfits and thereby make them look more than just 'tarty'.

'"artistic" images that often plunder the visual arts' (1993: 113); there will be little attempt at characterisation in these videos. A look at Kate Bush's first promotional video, therefore, may shed some light on the possible ways in which she can be read.

As Goodwin has suggested, the relationship between a video and a song can be one of 'illustration', 'amplification' (introducing new meanings to the song) or 'disjuncture' (contradicting the song's apparent meanings), or through a combination of these three modes (1993: 86). WUTHERING HEIGHTS shows Kate Bush, dressed in a white gown, illustrating the song's lyrical content and evoking its mood through a dance and mime routine. For instance, 'while I needed to possess you' is accompanied by Bush's hands making a grabbing movement as if to catch hold of Heathcliff, and during the chorus's 'let me in-a-your-window' Bush places her hands on an imagined window pane (see Figure 1). In addition there are frequent close-ups of Bush's expressive face, emphasising her eyes and mouth, which illustrate Cathy's intensely emotional state.

But more than illustrating the song, showing us Kate Bush as Cathy, the video establishes Kate Bush as a new singer. It is in this respect that the video may be seen as somewhat ambiguous in relation to the respondents' claims to authenticity and musical virtuosity. While WUTHERING HEIGHTS is based around the piano and ends with a long guitar solo, instruments are conspicuous by their absence; the song focuses exclusively on Bush as a singer and dancer. In fact, she is rarely depicted as a musician (other than a singer) in any of her videos, despite the fact that she plays piano and synthesiser and writes her own music. In those videos

where she is shown with an instrument, as in BABOOSHKA in which she holds a double bass, it serves as a prop rather than an instrument.

Similar to its predecessor, no instruments are shown in THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES, the video for Bush's second single. Instead the video consists for the most part of close-ups of Bush's face and of her upper body swaying to and fro. With its opening and closing shots of Bush lying on the floor, its diffuse lighting and soft pink and blue background, the video suggests that what we hear and see is a dream vision or a fantasy. Indeed, both the lyrics and Bush's pink ballet clothes can be read as a young girl's fantasy, a staple of girls' comics (see also the exchange with Amel, quoted earlier, about the appeal of 'Wuthering Heights' for young girls). However, at the same time, the soft-focus image and Bush's winsome address to the camera quite clearly suggest an appeal to the male voyeuristic gaze (see Figure 3), as do early publicity photos such as the infamous 'leotard' pictures used for her first publicity campaign (see Figure 2).

Later videos, such as BABOOSHKA and RUNNING UP THAT HILL have continued in this vein, showing Bush as a singer and dancer, and emphasising her face and (dancing) body. As I suggested in the Introduction, BABOOSHKA (see figure 5) especially, can be read as simultaneously inviting the male gaze and rejecting it. The song tells the story of a woman who wants to test her husband's fidelity by writing him letters signed 'Babooshka' and arranging a mystery date. The lyrics shift between the woman's perspective and that of the husband. The video, while not a direct illustration of the lyrics, shows a similar shift in perspective as it shows Bush acting out two personas: one who tells the story, the other who

'enacts' it. The former shows Bush as a veiled woman clad in black, while the song's chorus—'All yours, Babooshka, Babooshka, Babooshka, ya ya'—is sung by Bush in her 'Babooshka' guise; the image is reminiscent of the sexualised 'sci-fi babe' typical of covers of pulp science fiction paperbacks and has also been described as 'panto porn' (*Artist Profiles*, 2001). The 'Babooshka' figure, then, can be read as a male fantasy figure (in which case the song and video invite the male gaze), but also as the brainchild of a wife who wants to mock such male fantasy figures.

The strong focus on Kate Bush as a singer, dancer or character in many of her videos—the focus on her face and body—seems at odds with Kate Bush the innovative 'auteur' and raises the question why, if she writes her own material and plays instruments in addition to vocals, these videos so unambiguously focus on Bush's persona. There are several answers to this question. First of all, in keeping with the respondents' construction of Bush as authentic, it is possible to read this emphasis on Bush's face and body as more than just a promotion of Bush as a female body and an invitation of the male gaze; it can also be read as contributing to the perception of Bush as authentic. Considering the striking quality of Bush's voice, it is not surprising that this is stressed in a video such as WUTHERING HEIGHTS by frequent close-ups of her face. Goodwin (1993) has pointed out that the centrality of the voice in much popular music is echoed in music video by an emphasis on the singer's face (which has its counterpart in live performance, where singers or soloists are highlighted with spotlights). The voice is also often considered as the instrument which most directly conveys emotion. The early videos' focus on Bush's face, therefore, can be read as highlighting the unusual

quality of her voice as well as the intensity of her material, and as such as establishing her as a virtuoso singer.

The emphasis on Bush's voice and persona can also be read as a strategy for maximising her appeal. Even though punk had already widened the scope for female performers by the time Bush emerged on the popular music scene, roles for female singers remained somewhat limited. Furthermore, Kate Bush seemed to fit in no obvious mould: she was neither a disco nor punk singer, nor the sexy front for an all-male band, nor was she a singer-songwriter like Joni Mitchell or Carole King. Since female performers' appearance—a form of embodied cultural capital—may provide an entry into the field as well as recognition, the best way to market a performer such as Bush in the late 1970s may have been to market her as a sexy singer. And as Green (1997) has pointed out, the presence of instruments is likely to draw attention away from the body and highlight the technological dimension of music making; as such it poses a threat to a conventional femininity that is confirmed by singing.[12] Dibben (1999) has suggested, writing about the appeal of the Spice Girls who promote the idea of 'girl power' whilst dressing in sexy clothing and ostensibly inviting the male gaze, that

> From the perspective of commercial and economic viability this tactic of appropriating the signs of patriarchal ideologies has obvious advantages: the traditional signs of femininity are invoked in such a way that popularity is ensured both with a heterosexual male audience, by offering voyeuristic pleasure, and with a female audience, by offering a

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[12] In an otherwise positive review of *The Kick Inside*, a reviewer in *Spare Rib* asks in relation to Bush's style of singing: 'A passing thought—could this child/woman style be what was so attractive to the male power structure that creates air play and chart success?' (Isherwood, 1978: 39). This quote adds an aural dimension to the concept of the male gaze.

representation of empowerment which simultaneously retains the patriarchal notions of female desirability. (350) [13]

As I suggested in the Introduction, Bush's image can be understood through theories of the masquerade. On this view the emphasis on her face and body can be interpreted as a means to deflect attention from her mastery of the field, from her musical virtuosity (see Heath, 1986; Riviere, 1986). Her visual presentation can be read in terms of (non-ironically) inviting the male gaze and as a more knowing manipulation of her image, or what I've called a more naïve and a more knowing or ironic femininity.

Bush herself, however, has been quoted as saying:

> When I was first happening, the only other female on the level I was being promoted at was Blondie. We were both being promoted on the basis of being female bodies as well as singers. I wasn't looked at as being a female singer-songwriter. People weren't even generally aware that I wrote my own songs or played the piano until maybe a year or so after that. The media just promoted me as a female body. It's like I've had to prove that I'm an artist inside a female body. The idea of the body as a vehicle is ... just one of those things. But I'm someone who talks about music and songs. (Cook: 1982)

Kate Bush's refusal to view her female body as a vehicle for her art—'I'm someone who talks about music and songs'—acknowledges the risk involved in relying on this strategy, and this quote suggests that Bush, just like the respondents, reads the presentation of a sexy image 'straight'. It suggests that by not drawing attention to one's (feminine) image it may be possible to gain recognition in the 'masculine' field of popular music without necessarily

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[13] Leach (2001) makes a similar point about the Spice Girls' construction of authenticity. 'This polysemous presentation of authenticity enables listeners who see and enjoy the contradictions in

becoming either 'one of the boys' or, as one of the respondents called it, a 'pop tart' (Heather D., questionnaire).

II.iv. The Male Gaze

> A man I once knew had the leotard picture on his wall which he worshipped. He didn't have any records of hers. That made me smile. (Linda, questionnaire, answer to question 22 about Kate Bush's appeal to men and women)

As we have seen in the previous sections, the respondents construct Bush as authentic, in the traditional rock discourse understanding of the term, and claim a special relationship to her on the basis of their shared womanhood. Indeed, Kate Bush can be read as offering her female fans and admirers a subject position which suggests that femininity—as found in certain dress styles or lyrical expression—is compatible with creativity, control and strength. However, the respondents' views of Bush's image as 'sensual' and 'tasteful' rather than overtly sexual and inviting the male gaze overlook the ambiguities, whether deliberate or not, in some of her visuals. This oversight, however, is implied by the respondents' tendency to position male fans as appreciating Bush for the 'wrong' reasons.

My request to the respondents to describe a 'typical' Kate Bush fan, often yielded the richest material on both their own self-images and their construction of others. For instance, before offering her thoughts on Bush's authenticity, Florence, who was in her mid thirties at the time of the interview, explains:

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these markers to understand that the opposition between commercialism and authenticity is itself a commercially constructed one' (162).

> Laura V.: How would you describe a 'typical' Kate Bush fan? (email interview, 10 July 1998)
> Florence: As unkind as it sounds I imagine many Kate Bush fans are 35-40 men who fantasize about her when she was on Top of the Pops doing 'Breathing' or 'Wow'. The boys I was in sixth form with perhaps. But mainly I would guess that current fans are women, probably about my age, who have followed her career from the 'Man with the Child in his Eyes' era, or who 'came on board' with the success of Hounds of Love and then explored her back catalog. People like me in that perhaps they are female, mid-thirties, college-educated, like books. (email interview, 13 July 1998)

Florence, who believes that Kate Bush appeals specifically to women because she is not a 'stereotypical "woman" artist' (questionnaire, answer to question 22), makes a clear distinction between men who fantasise about Kate Bush and those fans, women, who are thought to appreciate Bush 'properly'. Significantly, she also associates them with college education and books, suggesting that this appreciation may be above all an intellectual appreciation and a class distinction. By positioning male fans as drawn to Bush for the 'wrong' reasons, for her physical appearance rather than her music/lyrics, the women attempt to escape their own positioning as 'passive' or 'manipulated' fans.

In connection to this, some respondents suggested that gay male fans are more likely to fully appreciate Bush than heterosexual male fans. Dagmar, for instance, said that 'she's too strange and strong for the average man' (questionnaire, answer to question 22), adding that one of her male friends who also likes Bush is gay. Gay male fans are thought, like women, to have a good insight into the female psyche.[14]

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[14] This is a view echoed by one of the male interviewees, Michael, who describes himself as gay. He believes that both male and female fans respond equally well to Kate Bush's 'unusual way of making music', and that male fans might learn from the lyrics:

This condemnation of the male gaze is problematic as it reinforces the idea that identification and desire are necessarily mutually exclusive (see Stacey, 1994b), and as such the women's rejection of the male gaze involves a disavowal of aspects of their own female gaze. Thus, few respondents acknowledged the possibility of desire on the part of female fans and those who did would almost invariably see this as a lesbian issue only.[15] One who did so was Belle, who was one of two lesbian respondents:

> Male friends who are FANS tend to like Kate from a physical point of view more than her music, she has also written a huge amount of songs relating to sex, don't get me wrong they love her music but they love her body too!! Female friends tend to concentrate on the music. I'm gay but I don't find her sexually attractive, it's the music. (Belle, questionnaire, answer to question 22 about Kate Bush's appeal to men and women)[16]

However, forms of identification may also involve elements of desire and this need not be limited to a lesbian desire to be with Kate Bush. For instance, identification can involve the desire to be *like* Bush. Exchanges quoted in this and the previous chapter suggest that the respondents' partial disavowal of, amongst

Laura V.: What is it about Kate, do you think, that appeals to both genders? (email interview, 22 July 1998)

Michael: 'Maybe there is a kind of sexual attraction to (straight) male fans, I don't know (a straight friend of mine told me that fact about Kate—I never noticed before). I think the appeal to both genders have the same sources than my attraction to her—the unusual way of making music (beside any mainstream). And maybe the male fans are more sensitive to the female experiences that they appreciate the things they learn from the lyrics, etc. (but in my case I found not too much real female-only experiences—or I feel more common with those...)' (email interview, 27 July 1998). Another gay male fan, Joseph, described heterosexual men's attraction to Kate Bush as 'conventional and mundane' (questionnaire, answer to question 22).

[15] While adoration of a male (teenybop) star can be seen as immature, Stacey (1994a) gives an example which suggests that being devoted to a woman star is 'immature and lacking the seriousness of adult, heterosexual love' (138).

[16] Compare Duffett (1998) who, in his research on Elvis Presley, notes how when 'questionnaire respondents were asked about Elvis's clothes, voice and looks, men majored more on his voice, women on his looks', but the men 'also said that *comparatively*, he was the best looking man, better than others' (61). Heterosexual male fans may find it difficult to admit that they are fans of male stars. Yet at the same time he found that many male fans, given the choice, would prefer to be *with* Elvis rather than be *like* him.

other things, the significance of Bush's appearance was based on their concern to

be seen as serious listeners; however, they certainly viewed Bush as someone with

desirable qualities, including independence and 'sensuality'.

However, not only were male Kate Bush fans, specifically, criticised for their

voyeuristic gaze, male music fans generally were thought to relate to music

differently:

> As always the men are both more ambitious + more insecure—need to
> read magazines to check they bought the right record, need to hear all the
> Rolling Stones' albums to have an opinion. Girls don't CARE less, they
> are just less anxious about it! (Emma, questionnaire, answer to question 8
> about time and money spent on music)

This quote recalls the observation made by Amba, quoted in the previous chapter,

that women often have less disposable income compared to men and might

therefore not be able to afford to buy as many magazines and CDs as men. But

this quote also suggests that women do not need to. By being less anxious about

doing things right, women fans could be seen as having that which, according to

Bourdieu, is a marker of distinction: the ease with which cultural capital is

displayed which suggests it has become 'second nature'. In other words, what

Emma suggests here is that male fans are seen to be trying too hard.

This is not to say that male fans really do appreciate Bush only on the basis of her

looks. While Bush's visual presentation certainly invokes, as Dibben puts it, 'the

traditional signs of femininity' which ensure popularity with heterosexual male

fans (1999: 350), it would be naïve to think that Bush's continuing success has

rested on this basis only. The responses from my three male interviewees indicate

that their appreciation, like that of the women, has multiple facets; and they, too, indicate that they appreciate Bush's expression of so-called women's experiences.[17] The women's construction of male fandom may be more usefully read in terms of Bourdieu's idea of 'women's laughter' (1990a, 2001). It is a tactic aimed at revealing the sometimes ridiculous nature of male games. However, as Moi suggests, this tactic can be seen as both an 'instrument of critique' and as a frivolous display of ignorance (1995: 202). I would suggest that my respondents' 'laughter'—in the form of their practices of distinction at the expense of male fans—might be seen as a (partial) challenge to the structure of the field, aimed at highlighting women's investments, rather than as merely frivolous. However, I do believe it is only a partial challenge because the women's claims to Bush's authenticity (and themselves as authentic or connoisseurs) are informed by masculine ideas; or as Bourdieu would say, they have their origins in a dominated frame of mind. Furthermore, the women's practices also involve confirmation of the stereotype of the infatuated teenage girl fan (as I shall show in more detail in Chapter 6).

III. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the respondents construct Kate Bush as authentic and that the concept of authenticity they draw upon is one that ostensibly owes more to a 'masculine' understanding of the term than to the

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[17] For instance, Yannis, a Greek respondent in his early thirties who indicated that he mainly listens to female singers, wrote in a letter accompanying his request for a questionnaire, 'I love Kate Bush means, I love Artemis, Diana and Hecate. I love the moon. I love the feminine way of

postmodern one. However, as I have shown, Kate Bush's work is infused with elements of 'girl' culture. Her use of dance and her presentation of herself as a 'romantic heroine', for example in 'Wuthering Heights' (1978) and later in 'The Sensual World' (1989), suggest an infusion of feminine elements into what is often described through metaphors of masculinity. I have suggested, therefore, that Kate Bush can be seen as embodying a kind of 'feminised virtuosity'.

Kate Bush herself has managed to convert this feminine cultural capital into economic and symbolic capital: she continues to sell despite not having had any new releases or hit singles recently and is probably receiving more critical acclaim now than she was previously.[18] But by offering the feminine as cultural capital, Kate Bush has also provided her female fans with the opportunity to claim distinction. However, the feminine cultural capital offered by Bush and its employment by my respondents can perhaps only be seen as a partial challenge to the existing structure of the field of popular music, not least because it often relies on rather conventional ideas of what constitutes femininity. However, the women's tactics do offer a sense of personal satisfaction and emotional support which may suggest that there is some truth in Bourdieu's words, that 'resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating' (1994: 155).

As I noted earlier, readings of Kate Bush's work depend very much on the context in which she emerged. Similarly, her femininity cannot be considered without a consideration of age, ethnicity and class. As Skeggs (1997) has suggested,

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thinking and acting. I love Kate Bush means, I love quality, style and perfection' (17 October 1997).
[18] In fact, her record company EMI has recently started re-issuing her material, which is another sign of her ongoing success.

femininity is lived very differently by women from different classes, ages and

ethnic origins. In the next chapter, then, I will undertake this consideration.

Chapter 6

'White middle class rural Anglican, slightly standing-stones-y':

Kate Bush and Issues of Age, Race/Ethnicity and Class

In the previous two chapters I showed that the feminine cultural capital which Bush has successfully translated into critical acclaim and financial rewards does not automatically translate into power for the respondents. The women's Kate Bush fandom needed to be negotiated with other demands in their lives, including their roles as partners, mothers and professional musicians, so that in some cases the independence and strength they admire in Bush was only partially converted into power in their own lives.

In this chapter I want to look at the ways in which issues of age, race/ethnicity and class intersect with that of gender in the respondents' reading of Kate Bush as authentic and powerful and themselves as distinguished fans or admirers. My female respondents were predominantly white, middle and lower middle class, and between their late twenties and early forties. This set them apart, not only from the subjects usually looked at in subcultural studies, but also from the young girls frequently studied in feminist critiques of this oeuvre. In the first section, then, I shall explore the respondents' attitude towards young music listeners. I shall also address how Kate Bush fandom functioned at periods of transition and how it subsequently continued to be meaningful in the negotiation of different and sometimes conflicting demands in the respondents' lives. Despite my original intention to address 'race', the respondents and I were both, by and large, blind to Kate Bush's whiteness. However, the respondents' descriptions of Bush as either

British/English or Irish/Celtic suggest that she embodies a range of white ethnicities. I shall address these issues in the second section. The final section is concerned with the issue of class, in particular with the position of Kate Bush's middle class habitus in the pop/rock field and its articulation with the respondents' social positions, as well as the 'convertibility' of the respondents' cultural capital and claims to distinction.

I. Leaving Smash Hits Land: Popular Music, Fandom and Age

As I noted earlier, popular music has traditionally been and continues to be seen as a form of youth culture. As Frith suggested in an early study (1978a), music is used to separate 'the young from the old, to identify a place or occasion or time as youth's property' (48). And Thornton (1995) has noted that

> One of the main ways in which youth carve out virtual, and claim actual, space is by *filling* it with *their* music. Walls of sound are used to block out the clatter of family and flatmates, to seclude the private space of the bedroom with records and radio and even to isolate 'head space' with personal stereos like the Walkman. (Thornton, 1995: 19-20)

As I explained in Chapter 2, involvement in a subculture has been seen as a way for young people to delay adult responsibilities, as a way of resisting 'social ageing' (see Thornton, 1995; Bourdieu, 1998). Implicit in this view is that eventually these young people will have to take up the roles for which they have prepared and let go of their 'extreme' involvement in music and style. This is also why, as Willis and Hebdige argue, subcultures are ultimately destined to dissolve.

Maturity and an intense involvement in a subculture and its popular music are thought to be mutually exclusive.

As Thornton has shown, subcultures' function to delay social ageing makes it very attractive for people to remain within a subculture and to remain forever 'young'. This confirms the notion that 'youth', rather than denoting a certain physical age, has come to mean a particular state of mind or style. For example, Weinstein (1991) argues that sometime during the 1960s 'beyond and indeed in place of its use in referring to a biological or a social group, "youth" became a cultural signifier, referring to a style and a spirit' (108).[1] However, despite this notion of youth as a 'cultural signifier', studies of popular music consumption often remain primarily concerned with people who are also young in age. Weinstein notes how adult audiences are rarely studied, partly because young people ('high school and college students') are more easily available for research. However, despite evidence of continuing investments, she dismisses the older heavy metal fans in her study as 'wistful emigrants', living away from the subculture they were once a part of (111). It appears, then, that the 'older' fan either remains within his or her subculture to live an extended 'youth' or is dismissed as a reluctant exile who is not interesting as a subject for study. It is a view that seems indebted to the idea of youth and adulthood as two distinct stages—youth as a neatly marked off period of resistance to adult society (whilst simultaneously a preparation for it) and adulthood as the taking on of career and

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[1] See also Iain Chambers who writes: 'the industrial reorganisation for consumer production meant that there was a perpetual announcement of the birth of the new and the necessary passing away of yesterday's model, style and fashion. It was "youth", which subsequent experience has shown to be more a floating symbol denoting "modernity"—today's people, tomorrow's world—rather than a particular stage of physical life, that promised the requisite succession of present "moments", that perpetual "NOW"' (1985: 16).

family responsibilities. My respondents' views, as well as changes in both society and the music industry, suggest that, even if the role and expression of fandom change, popular music does continue to matter to such older fans.

Not only has popular music 'grown up', changes in the way in which music is marketed and the role of new technological developments have important consequences for the audience for popular music. The music industry is continually seeking to reach a maximum number of consumers for its products and therefore tries to attract both younger and older audiences.[2] Advances in technology have introduced new ways of recording, storing and transmitting music, which influence both the access to and sales of music. Thus the introduction of the CD in the early 1980s had a large impact on the sales of reissued older albums, while more recent developments such as MP3 may be causing a decline in CD sales.[3]

Thus, the audience for both pop and rock is now, more than ever before, a very heterogeneous group. Of my respondents, 7 were aged 18-25, while 31 were aged 25-35, and 6 were older than 35 (one respondent did not fill in her personal

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[2] Top of the Pops 2, which occasionally features Kate Bush, is a good example of the way in which different segments of the music market are catered for. While Top of the Pops itself continues to be a chart-oriented show, aimed at a young audience, its sister programme aims to please 'yesterday's audience', as it were. Furthermore, pre-teens are increasingly targeted as potential record-buyers; a band such as the Spice Girls has an audience which consists largely (though not exclusively) of pre-teens.

[3] Figures suggest that younger people are buying fewer records now than they used to partly because music can be downloaded from the internet. 'Rock suffers as youngsters turn backs on music' ran a headline in Variety: 'The continuing dropoff in the purchases by 15-24 year-olds, once the mainstay of the market, is being attributed to several factors. The survey, which tracks 3,051 music buyers who are contacted monthly, suggests the decline in this key demographic could be partially linked to the rise of the Internet, where free music and the Web's role as an entertainment center for teens and Gen X'ers, are impacting record buying habits. (...) Consumers over 30 were the only age demographic to show any growth in 1998. Those 35 and older accounted for 39% of the unit purchased in 1998 compared to 34% 10 years ago. In 1998, 12% of

details). The following quote from Babs, who was around forty at the time of the interview, suggests how deeply ingrained the association between popular music and youth is. Babs had been a fan since 1978 (her college days), and her interest was renewed when she met her current partner in the early 1990s. I asked Babs whether she had ever experienced any unease about her continuing investments. She explains how her peers reacted to her becoming a Spice Girls fan:

> Laura V.: From your questionnaire I gather that you've listened to music your whole life and that you continue to explore new music—have you ever felt a tension between your age and music interests? (24 June 1998)
> Babs: I have always kept an ear out for new music but it's only really the last few years that I've actually bought stuff and gone to new concerts. Specifically Oasis, Babybird and most recently the [Spice] Girls. I would say it's only the Girls where I've felt (unsurprisingly!) an age hassle. People at work find it very amusing/worrying and are very quick to insult them 'they can't sing' being guaranteed to send me into a huge lecture on judging without knowledge or training in whatever you're having a go at. I work in a secondary school and one of my girls lent me a very cool pair of enormous Geri [Halliwell], fairly subtle blue platforms—I loved them and felt so different in them—other half thought they were great but couldn't see me wearing them regularly so we got into the age thing then and I felt it. Do I think 'sod it' and wear them anyway or do I give in to what's right and proper for my age? So currently I find myself in regular arguments with people (only adults) about the talents of the Spice Girls and the appropriateness of someone my age liking them. I accuse them of being dull and trapped in the adult mentality of sticking with what's safe and known to be OK within the social circle. I think liking the Spice Girls is probably extreme in terms of age difference. (email interview, 26 June 1998)

Like many other respondents Babs tries to negotiate the question of 'what's right and proper' at a particular age. Yet unlike them she appears to confirm the association of popular music with youth (as a style or spirit), either because she does not want or is unable to articulate a link between popular music and adulthood; she thus equates an 'adult mentality' with a conservative outlook on

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all purchases were made by those 50 and older, double what it was 10 years ago' (quoted on the iaspm mailing list, 23 March 1999).

life. Many other respondents, however, did articulate such a link. Despite the fact

that some cited marriage, family and job as having curtailed the time and money

previously spent on music (see Chapter 4), their responses also suggest that Kate

Bush has continued to be the soundtrack to their lives. Rather than displaying 'a

refusal of complicity' with dominant culture (Thornton, 1995: 102), they aim to

develop a 'worldview' in which growing up and growing older and fandom can

co-exist.[4] As Emma, a respondent in her late twenties, explains:

> I buy tons more records now + have broader taste. I had no sense of
> historical past, I was just in *Smash Hits* land. I don't think I ever used to
> buy records, I just used to tape things I liked off the radio or nick my dad's
> records. I'm much more aware of the corporate nature of pop music
> now—it's such an industry. I think then I naïvely thought it was all a good
> laugh. I didn't realise then, that for lots of grown-ups it represented youth
> in quite an anxiety-making way—that many people I know now feel they
> either should give it up + listen to jazz now they're grown-up, or have to
> battle against the encroaching tide, + be forever young. They don't have a
> worldview in which they can be adult <u>and</u> like pop music. (Emma,
> questionnaire, answer to question 7 about changing music tastes)

For Emma, one of the 'musician-fans', the change in music tastes coincided with

her development as a musician, and now, as she is trying to establish her career as

a professional musician, Kate Bush's example remains important. It also informed

aspects other than her musicianship, as she pondered on the difficulties of

combining motherhood with an artistic career.[5] My adult respondents, then,

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[4] Thornton makes the following observation about age and club cultures: 'Age, the dependence of childhood and the accountabilities of adulthood are also signalled by the mainstreams. The recurrent trope of the handbag is something associated with mature womanhood or with pretending to be grown-up. It is definitely not a sartorial sign of youth culture, nor a form of objectified subcultural capital, but rather a symbol of the social and financial shackles of the housewife. The distinction between the authentic original and the hanger-on is also partly about age—the connoisseur deplores the naïve and belated enthusiasm of the younger raver or, conversely, the younger participant castigates the tired passions of the older one for holding on to a passé culture' (1995: 101).

[5] 'The only thing is this question of why she doesn't have children—I don't know why that should <u>stop</u> someone being a role model—I don't think it does. I just think it's very interesting that it seems almost like for a woman to give herself to art kids go out the window (Joni Mitchell, Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, George Eliot) + that if they <u>do</u> have kids (Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton,

suggest that their fandom or admiration for Kate Bush continues to play an important part in their lives—in their continuing development and in getting by and enjoying everyday life. Kate Bush's work, and perhaps particularly her later work, facilitates this process as it is thought to give voice to adult experiences and emotions.

However, the women's 'natural' and 'proper' response to good music did not happen overnight; the respondents did not always display such 'impeccable' taste. Many explained how, as teenage girls, they were physically attracted to a star and listened to the 'wrong' music. Their attempts to dissociate themselves from this type of behaviour, I believe, lie behind their rejection of the label fan and fan activities. Alex's explanation, quoted earlier, that she is not interested in 'fan behaviour' because she believes it is about teenage girls chatting about boybands, illustrates this attitude, as does the following quote from Brenda, who was in her mid thirties at the time of the research and who had earlier emphasised that 'I do not idolize Kate but admiration is well in place here' (letter, 3 March 1998).

> As a young girl music was more about charts and idols. I liked an artist because he looked good. I bought magazines for the pictures that were in rather than for the articles on music; the artists I liked changed frequently. (Brenda, questionnaire, answer to question 7 about changing music tastes)

The way in which the respondents account for the change in their musical tastes and practices hinges on what they perceive are different levels of discrimination and sophistication. Just as the women reject performers whom they consider to be 'manufactured' or 'inauthentic', and project onto male fans an 'improper'

Daphne DuMaurier) it can often be a very ambiguous relationship at best, and neglectful at worst' (Emma, questionnaire, answer to question 26 about Kate Bush functioning as a role model).

appreciation of Bush, they dismiss young listeners as well as their own younger selves on account of a perceived lack of discrimination and sophistication. Thus, young listeners' tastes are thought to be informed by peer pressure or what is 'hip' amongst friends; they are thought to be unable to discriminate between 'manufactured' and 'authentic' acts; they are not attuned to lyrical refinement and musical complexity, in part because a performer's image is considered more important than his (or her) music and lyrics; they read magazines such as *Smash Hits*, often because of a crush on a male star whose pictures are in these magazines; and, as discussed in Chapter 4, young listeners are thought to be more likely to copy a performer's style. Of course, doing this the respondents not only challenge the link between popular music and youth but also reinforce some stereotypical ideas about young women and music fandom, something which I had originally set out to dispel.

In the move from teenage tastes and practices to adult ones, Kate Bush occupied a kind of transitional position. For many respondents she was one of the first performers to suggest a different kind of listening experience—she embodied the move from a 'superficial' to a more 'mature' (that is, 'discriminating' and 'sophisticated') appreciation. The following quotes from Nathalie and Alex, in their early to mid twenties, capture this moment of transition.

> Laura V.: Could you explain when you first started liking Kate Bush and why? (email interview, 24 July 1998)
> Nathalie: The first change in taste took place when I saw the video to 'Running Up That Hill', because it touched me immediately. I think that I discovered by then, that there are other different criteria to judge music by. I still liked all the other artists I already mentioned to you, but I got somehow aware of the fact that I enjoyed them for different reasons or on different levels. (...)

I somehow felt that it ['Running Up That Hill'] touched me more seriously and deeply than the other songs or artists and it happened by chance. (...)
I think that this change in taste happened very slowly and different kinds of taste within myself persisted on parallel levels. (email interview, 10 August 1998)

Laura V.: Could you tell me about when you first started liking Kate Bush? (email interview, 20 October 1998)
Alex: When I was 13/14 (early adolescence) I was just getting out of Duran Duran/any other teeny band of the time, and into 'proper' music. The first band I discovered was the Doors, and Kate Bush was the first singer. Admittedly I was trying to get into whatever was cool with the older crowd, but while the Rolling Stones and the Beatles were in this category, Kate Bush was never anywhere close.
I first heard Kate Bush when I was 13. I was round at some friends of my parents and bored. So I played with their CD collection and came across the Best of Kate Bush. I'd heard of the book, Wuthering Heights, so I thought I'd see what the song was like. I played it on repeat all night. I'd never heard anything that moved me like that. It was a story—not like anything else that was number one at that time (1988). She had the most amazing voice and didn't sing about 'emotional experiences'—at least, not in the general sense of the term.
I bought the Best of just after that, and then The Kick Inside and Never Forever. (...)
Even now she's my favourite artist. And now I'm sitting here at my PC, wearing Agnes B in my loft conversion in EC2, and yes, my mobile just rang. I should be into Fatboy Slim or the Beastie Boys or whatever. And I am, but none of them ever moved me, ever made me read a novel in the way she did. In a way you could say she changed my life. As a result of her, I read Wuthering Heights. As a result of that, I studied English at University. As a result of that, I'm a journalist...It's not easy to say why I like her stuff so much. But I do. (email interview, 20 October 1998)

As the two exchanges quoted above suggest, for many of the women Kate Bush was an important presence during their adolescence, an important period of transition. This, however, does not necessarily mean that their current investment is merely one of nostalgia or 'residual loyalty', as Bradby (1993b) suggests in relation to a group of lesbian women's response to music that marked their 'coming out' period (161). Alex's response certainly suggests that she does not listen to Kate Bush for nostalgic reasons only. Highlighting the lack of fit between her urban lifestyle and her fandom, she almost signals a reluctance to continue to

invest in Kate Bush. Her reference to Bush's lack of kudos with certain crowds

and expression of wonder at why she is a fan suggest that she is a fan in spite of

herself, compelled by reasons she cannot quite understand.

In their early to mid twenties, Nathalie and Alex were two of the youngest

respondents; as such it is difficult to assess if and how Kate Bush will continue to

be meaningful to them beyond their early adulthood. It would be particularly

interesting to see if Alex, like some of the older respondents, will come to feel a

correspondence between her fandom and her lifestyle. Heather D. and Krys, in

their early and mid thirties respectively, who had both been fans since the late

1970s, illustrate this further development of fandom.

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you indicated hearing 'Wuthering
> Heights' when you were eighteen and being 'hooked'. What did you listen
> to before then and how come you got hooked? (email interview, 2 July
> 1998)
> Krys: I was into the equivalent of Boyzone, i.e. the Bay City Rollers, prior
> to that The Osmonds and David Cassidy. I don't think I had developed
> enough emotionally to really look closely at the lyrics of a song, so the
> superficial lyrics of love songs appealed to me, as I think they still do to
> teenagers today, despite the fact that a lot of teenagers are superficially
> more sophisticated now than my group was! I did, however, write my own
> poetry and this was something very separate from the music I liked. I think
> I did not make a connection at that time between my own feelings and
> ideas, which were still embryonic, and those of the pop stars to whose
> music I listened. However, this changed when I first heard Kate. Maybe
> her music was so strong it changed me, or maybe I was at a time of
> maturing so the music came along at the right time and appealed to me.
> From the first I was intrigued by her lyrics and the beauty and passion of
> her music. (...) As Kate's music developed and matured, I was doing the
> same, so I was lucky enough to grow 'with' her. (email interview, 15
> September 1998)

Krys then goes on to describe her 'adult' response to music:

> Laura V.: From what you're telling me I gather that you are still very much involved in pop music and still keen to discover new bands and artists—perhaps even more so than when you were younger? (email interview, 4 November 1998)
>
> Krys: Absolutely! But the people I have been discovering are not strictly mainstream and have been introduced to me by friends. For example, Marillion—who have been around since the early 1980s; Happy Rhodes—who is an American singer/songwriter and has a small cult following in the States, and, to a lesser extent, in the UK—and I've 'rediscovered' Madonna. From what I observe, the TV shows like Top of the Pops show us that chart music is very much aimed at the teenage and sub-teenage market and I tend to find a lot of the music shallow, unemotional and definitely not something that moves me. There does seem to be a lot of gimmicky stuff too—but then I watch re-runs of TOTP from the 1970s and the formula has hardly changed! There are exceptions, but I don't get as excited by a lot of the current stuff in the way I used to. Maybe music is a bit like wine—when you first taste it you tend to drink any old plonk, as you grow older (more sophisticated?) you start to appreciate the subtle difference that separates a cheap wine from a quality vintage. I hope this doesn't sound too pompous an analogy, it's not meant to be. (email interview, 30 November 1998)

The terms Krys uses to describe current chart music—'shallow', 'unemotional' and 'gimmicky'—all suggest that this type of music is unsophisticated, as are its fans or listeners, while her description of the move from 'cheap wine' to a 'quality vintage' suggests the logical outcome of growing older and having had a long acquaintance and familiarity with a wide variety of music. Krys feels that Bush not only marked the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, but that she has also accompanied the process of subsequent development. This took concrete shape in, amongst other things, Krys's own music making.

As quoted extensively in Chapter 4, Heather D. saw Bush as strong and independent and tried to draw sustenance from this for her own life which, she felt, lacked such independence to a certain extent. In this respect Heather can be contrasted to Amel who, like Heather, first became a fan in her teens. But whereas Heather has continued to invest strongly, Amel no longer considers herself as

much a fan. Part of this hinges on the two women's perception of Bush as a (feminist) role model. Bush had been a pivotal presence during Amel's adolescence and had inspired her appearance and interest in dance. During her college years, however, the Throwing Muses proved to be more pertinent: the music provided a means for contact with other students (as it does in her current relationship with her husband), and she felt that the band had a stronger, more explicitly feminist image.

The young people who are dismissed by my respondents are a fairly undifferentiated group. It is often unclear from the women's responses whether these young people are only the very young—young teens and pre-teens, as is suggested by the strong reaction against girl fans for male bands—or whether the women's criticism extends to older teenagers as well. Their own tastes changed at various ages and 'good' and 'bad' tastes often co-existed for a long time. Furthermore, their views are based on the common sense notion of young people as especially vulnerable to manipulation. Nava (1992), writing about young people's response to television commercials, has commented on the common sense understanding of 'undereducated undiscriminating and undisciplined young people who are addicted to TV and who mindlessly imbibe the advertisers' messages along with the materialist values of the consumer society' (172-73). Advertisers themselves, however, hold a very different view and address young people as highly skilled at decoding advertising messages. My respondents, many of whom first discovered Kate Bush in their teens, conveniently overlook this and reinforce the view of the young as gullible and undiscriminating when claiming distinction for their own mature sensibility.

Christina Williams's study of young people and popular music (2001) provides a useful point of comparison here. The small group of fifteen-year-olds she interviewed all considered music to be an important part of their lives, yet 'framed its significance in terms of its practical use in their daily routines rather than in terms of identification or self-construction' (Williams, 2001: 228). They were 'ordinary' listeners, not fans, and did not express any strong preferences for a particular style of music. However, their engagement with popular music was accompanied by a critical media awareness: their responses suggested an awareness of pop processes, a wariness of hype and an adherence to the conventional, common sense pop versus rock discourse which constructs rock as the more honest and authentic of the two. Like my respondents, Williams' young people sought to distinguish themselves from those younger than themselves:

> The teenagers that I talked to explicitly dismissed, and seemed anxious to deny, any suggestion that they might identify with or be influenced by popular music or artists, but they claimed that *other people*, particularly younger people, might be influenced. The implication was that they themselves could somehow *see through* the whole pop process and were too sophisticated in their media knowledge to be so naïve as to be influenced by, or to identify with, something as manufactured and unimportant as pop music. (Williams, 2001: 234)

Williams' article, then, suggests that my respondents are not unique in seeking to distinguish themselves from those who are younger, but that this is a process that, with modifications, occurs at all age levels. However, what makes my respondents' practices noteworthy is, first of all, the fact that they engage in them at all in a field where they are generally thought not to exist. This may have made it especially imperative for them to claim distinction and to thereby carve out their

own space. Furthermore, the women's critique of teenage girls' tastes sits somewhat uneasily with the feminist beliefs that were strongly expressed by some of my respondents'.

Many respondents, especially those in their thirties and forties, appreciate Kate Bush's later work (including *The Sensual World*, 1989, and *The Red Shoes*, 1993) for its complexity. For instance, Amba suggests that 'it has become more adult and "layered" in music & meaning' (questionnaire), while Laura C. argues, in response to the discussion on age on the Love-Hounds email list, 'something like 'You're the Only One I Want' with its Procol Harum organ track & lyrical allusions and topic about a long term relationship's break-up—that is a 30's/40's age group song!' (email interview, 26 June 1998).

Florence feels that Kate Bush's work is particularly good at expressing adult relationship issues. As quoted at the start of Chapter 2, Florence suggested that much of the music she listened to in her youth, such as new wave and punk, provided an outlet for frustrations which she felt were common to her peers, and were a means to come to terms with certain contradictions. However, different types of music solved different contradictions: 'contradictions of different values than parents—listening to the Clash/Specials/Elvis Costello/Jam' and 'contradictions of exploring adult relationships—buying discs of Kate Bush, Todd Rundgren' (email interview, 25 July 1998). Whereas some of these issues have now been resolved, as Florence points out, Kate Bush's music continues to be relevant to her life:

> Laura V.: You mentioned a sense of catharsis that you find in both pop/rock and classical music. Could you say a bit more about this? Catharsis with respect to what kind of feelings, for instance? (email interview, 17 July 1998)
>
> Florence: The function that some pop/rock had is still relevant, and Kate Bush's discs fall into that category. Her explorations of relationships and situations offer articulation of things that I have experienced or dwell on in my adult life. She seems to tap into areas that produce some powerful feelings ... isolation, connecting with family and partners, the place of spirituality, how we can articulate desire, appreciating our history, how we can work through these 'relationship' things! She seems to be able to connect to the inevitable melancholy side of life. 'This Woman's Work' is a song I defy a teenager to understand—it just tears your heart out—without seeing the video. Without getting pseudo-psychological I suspect her vocal technique has a part in all this. What some people find to be yelling and screaming—to me is sort of 'primal scream' in lots of her songs—it works for me. Just recently I've been revisiting The Red Shoes, and trying hard to live more 'in the present' and found that Moments of Pleasure is a perfect articulation of that sentiment. (email interview, 25 July 1998)

'Moments of Pleasure' emphasises the necessity to appreciate every given moment with loved ones, in spite of difficulties, because it is uncertain how much time is at our disposal (see Appendix F for lyrics). The song ends with brief calls to loved ones who have passed away and thus also suggests the importance of remembrance. For Florence this song was particularly meaningful because at the time of the research she was trying to come to terms with the death of her father. Having passed away when she was in her early twenties she expressed concern about not having properly appreciated her relationship with him and 'forgetting my dad or not honoring him sufficiently in some way' (email interview, 9 August 1998). So just as The Red Shoes figured strongly in Florence's career as a radio DJ, it also marked a further stage in her understanding of her relationship with her father and, by extension, with other family members.

The following exchange with Angela also suggests how her fandom has developed to provide resources for the negotiation of relationships and conflicting demands. Earlier Angela had explained that when she first discovered Bush, together with a good friend, 'I remember wailing it ['Wuthering Heights'] on top of a bus, once when we were going around, and everybody gave us ... looks (....) We just screamed along to the lyrics, we just played the music loud, we just went "yeah, yeah, yeah" and never articulated ourselves [laughs]' (interview, 7 August 1998). At that time then, Angela's fandom functioned primarily as a resource for friendship and distinctions from less well informed peers and was not yet seen as something that could inform particular choices. At the time of the interview Angela was approximately thirty, in a relationship with a European student, completing a postgraduate degree in the UK and preparing to return to Singapore to resume her career as a law advisor.

> Laura V.: You mentioned in the questionnaire that you like 'Love and Anger'...
> Angela: oh yeah, yeah, yeah! That one was, that one I think I wouldn't have liked it that much as a teenager, but now, as time .... because it's just where she goes 'take away the love and the anger, and the little piece of rope holding us together' or something. It's like, it's so real, sometimes apart from this kind of conflicting emotions, take away everything, what do you have in human relations, you know, do you have anything? No, but yet again, sometimes you feel like you don't want to love a person too much, or hate a person too much, because it's just too stressful. But then if you don't have that, you also have nothing, you know, then everything isn't ... so that is what I feel, is what struck me. And of the other lyrics I was talking about, Mother Stands for Comfort is so eerie, because it's so true in the Asian culture where especially vis-à-vis the sons, I don't know whether they just favour the sons so much, they just cover up everything or do anything for the sons. And, I don't know...because we find it so unfair sometimes, but at the same time we pamper our brothers, we pamper our boyfriends and we pamper our husbands, so that kind of thing. And some, and I don't know eventually if I do become a mother or my friends or ... become mothers, they just sort of act out or slip into this role again where they just become so protective, and it's more for the sons, I was thinking, then for anything else, than the mother shielding the

daughter, but more for the sons, because in the Asian culture ... yet, they do favour the sons a lot. (interview, 7 August 1998; see Appendix F for lyrics to 'Mother Stands For Comfort')

This exchange shows not only how Bush's lyrics can be seen to articulate experiences that have their origins in a non Western society, but also how Angela uses them to speculate on the future and to negotiate the conflicting demands on her as a Singaporean woman graduate: family loyalty, marriage and motherhood on the one hand, and autonomy and a professional career on the other.

Kate Bush is, arguably, a household name for a certain generation, at least in the UK.[6] However, now that she is no longer in the public eye to the same extent as she was in the 1970s and 1980s, it might be more difficult for Kate Bush to be a transitional figure for fans. As Amba points out, referring to the release of 'The Sensual World' in 1989, 'I remember reading a letter from a teenager in a pop mag when "The Sensual World" single came out asking who she was and why (older) people were getting excited' (Amba, observation made during email interview, 23 July 1998). Kate Bush's crossover appeal to both younger and older audiences, therefore, seems limited. Whether or not the respondents' claims to distinction on account of their mature sensibility can be successful, then, is open to question.

Within the framework of a Kate Bush fan community, in which an in-depth knowledge of and familiarity with Kate Bush's work is valued, respondents are most likely to be granted the distinction they claim. Long-term fans, for example

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[6] This is also what has enabled comedians, such as Steve Coogan (in his Alan Partridge guise), to parody her. If it were not for her wide-spread fame in the UK and her somewhat extravagant persona, these parodies would not be successful.

those who have been fans or admirers since the late 1970s and perhaps attended

one of her rare concerts, may be seen as particularly knowledgeable and

distinguished within the fan community.[7] Those outside the immediate Kate Bush

fan community, however, rely more heavily on the music media. Magazines such

as the weekly *NME*, which tends to focus on contemporary and 'indie' acts is, I

believe, more likely to ridicule and/or dismiss both Kate Bush and her fans. In

contrast, magazines such as *Q* and *Mojo*, which are generally quite sympathetic

towards established acts and which are aimed at a slightly older market, are most

likely to grant my respondents distinction. Indeed, in recent years the sparse

coverage in these publications has been mostly positive about Bush's work (see

Chapter 1 for a discussion). As someone who is no longer in the limelight and

who has a mature audience Kate Bush is similarly at home on Radio 2, which

caters to a more adult audience, and on the aforementioned *Top of the Pops 2*. In

fact, 'adult' listeners are reasonably well catered for by the music industry, yet

seldom seriously considered in academic studies.

However, on the basis of the responses quoted here and in previous chapters, I

want to argue that the respondents find in Kate Bush's work articulations of issues

that are relevant to their lives and also attribute strength and self-confidence to

their investments, *regardless* of the public validations of their claims to

distinction. Earlier I suggested that these investments should not be read as merely

nostalgic revisitings of the music that accompanied certain particularly significant

transitional moments (such as that from childhood to adolescence or adolescence

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[7] Recent issues of the Kate Bush fan magazine *Homeground* (Fitzgerald-Morris *et al.*, 1999, 2000) were devoted to a retrospective of her 1979 tour of Europe and featured recollections from fans who continue to cherish the memory (see also Sardiello, 1998, for a similar point about long-term Grateful Dead fans).

to early adulthood), but that they have continued to be meaningful resources for everyday life. As such, the women's investments should not be read as attempts to stave off social ageing—the function that Thornton, for instance, attributes to subcultural involvement.

For Bourdieu, social ageing is a process whereby people 'come to accept what they are and make do with what they have' (1998: 110 – 11). This process of accepting one's fate provides a marked contrast to the claims of resistance put forward for some forms of working class culture by left cultural studies. Many of my respondents, both by virtue of their maturity and their class position, were far removed from those groups usually studied by left cultural studies. And on the evidence of what they say, they do not offer any strong evidence of resistance either against growing up (social ageing), nor against dominant social norms. In other words, their investments in Kate Bush entail neither a pessimistic resignation nor any over-optimistic sense that they are challenging the world and the ageing process. Instead, the respondents use the resources offered by their Kate Bush fandom to function in everyday life. Their fandom, then, helps enable maturity in the sense that it enables the respondents to maintain a sense of self-worth and strength which in turn enables them to deal with the demands of work and intimate relationships. Kate Bush provides a soundtrack to the respondents' lives, but one which leads neither to spectacular resistance nor necessarily to what Babs called 'being dull and trapped' (email interview, 26 June 1998).

II. 'Oh England My Lionheart': Kate Bush's Performance of Multiple Ethnicities

In this section I want to look at the way in which issues of race, ethnicity and nationality intersect with gender to inform my respondents' fandom. If my questionnaire respondents constitute a fairly representative sample, then it would be fair to conclude that the majority of Kate Bush's fans and admirers are white. However, as I pointed out in Chapter 3, my sample of interviewees contained a larger percentage of non-white and non-UK fans and admirers than the sample of questionnaire respondents, partly because I was intent on exploring issues of race and nationality. Yet in spite of this intention, I by and large failed to query my white respondents about their relationship to Bush's whiteness. Thus there was a blindness to Kate Bush's whiteness, which was not only manifest in my respondents but also in myself, the researcher.

As Ruth Frankenberg (1993) and Richard Dyer (1997) have suggested, 'whiteness' is usually invisible because it is the norm in western society and as such is thought not to need referencing. To be white, they point out, appears to be un-raced; race is associated with non-white people only. Frankenberg offers a critique of studies of race which focus solely on non-white peoples, while Dyer suggests that in those cases where whiteness is analysed, it is usually 'white ethnicity' which is the object of study. Dyer argues that 'this always means an identity based on cultural origins' including Britishness, which is merely one particular form of white ethnicity and the examination of which 'tends to lead away from a consideration of whiteness itself' (1997: 4).

My own and the respondents' blindness to Kate Bush's whiteness reinforces Frankenberg's and Dyer's observations that race is often seen as something which concerns non-white people only. Few respondents saw Kate Bush as raced. In the questionnaire only seven respondents described her as 'white' (usually as 'white middle class' in response to the question whether 'Kate Bush projects certain notions of class or race/ethnicity'), while one described her as being 'typically western in looks'. My look at Kate Bush's ethnicity, then, initially missed the markers of her whiteness. However, while Kate Bush's whiteness was seldom directly commented upon, their descriptions of her national/ethnic identity such as 'English rose', 'Celtic' or 'very English/Anglo-Saxon/olde worlde fairae' (Monique, questionnaire) implied whiteness. In the following analysis, therefore, I hope to show how Kate Bush evokes a range of white ethnicities, including (olde) English, British and Celtic, what these mean to the respondents, and how these multiple ethnicities invite slippage between, for instance, English and British, or Irish and Celtic.

In the following quote Amel, who describes herself as half European/half North African, comments on Bush's whiteness towards the end of the interview:

> Amel: I'll tell you one thing, I am quite sad about Kate Bush that I don't, some of the photographs I like, some of them I really don't like. And I don't like her thing about, like in the tour, when the video that goes with that era, they have, she chose two dancers and they were both black and then in one, very recently, I think it was in *The Red Shoes*, there was a kind of fold-up picture, fold-up poster, in which she was in the arms of this black guy, and she was really really white, and he is ... I really don't like. There is something about her and the way she picks black men that I really don't like at all. I find it a bit ... it's a bit like those Athena posters with ... sort of a black man holding a white baby. So naff, I find it so naff!

> Laura V.: What do you think she is trying to evoke?
> Amel: I don't know, I think she's trying to be ... I don't know. It's not politics. She's trying to be really right on in her, that 70s way, in which you just underline things. You know, maybe she's trying to use a black person in her photographs because they're not, they're often not used. Which is good, but then the way she does it is just to emphasise the race and her looks and the photograph was awful, and she's like this [shows how Kate Bush looks in the photograph], she's got her back, she's lying, she's falling back and he's holding, and it's really female-male black on white, it's just so, uuuhhhh. Can't stand it! I think it's just a really really old-fashioned interpretation of masculinity and blackness that just really bothers me. (interview, 27 October 1998)

Amel's response suggests that without the black contrast provided by the dancers and the black man in the photograph she mentions (see Figure 11), this whiteness may not have been noticed; indeed, it may have been invisible. Amel's argument that the photograph is an 'old-fashioned interpretation of masculinity and blackness' suggests that race remains a black rather than a white issue. While the absence of comments on Bush's whiteness may suggest that her race/ethnicity was only a relatively minor issue in the respondents' fandom, it is interesting to examine why this is the case.

Kate Bush's whiteness may have been largely unnoticed or unmentioned because she works within a genre of pop and rock where white performers constitute a majority. In this context their whiteness is taken for granted and becomes invisible.[8] As Philip Tagg (1989) explains, echoing points made by Frankenberg and Dyer, unlike 'black music' the term 'white music' is seldom used because we live in a world dominated by white people (286). Similarly, Keri McClean (1999) points out that the development of progressive rock in the 1960s was not

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[8] Indeed, it is generally only the racial identity of performers in the 'wrong' genre that is commented upon. This includes non-white performers in certain 'white' genres of pop and rock (for instance, singer-songwriter Tracy Chapman and Skin of heavy rock band Skunk Anansie) and white singers with a 'black' sound (so-called 'blue-eyed soul singers').

associated with any social or political issues, unlike that of rhythm and blues

which was tied to the black freedom struggle. This set up whiteness as a category

which was neither seen nor examined and allowed the music's aesthetic qualities

to be foregrounded. 'As a result, the development of rock is seldom regarded as a

result of a specific racialisation process' (McClean, 1999: 45). And Gilroy (1993)

has pointed out how blackness is often associated with authenticity and 'hipness',

based on an essentialist assumption about black people's closeness to nature.

Both Monique and Angela, who describe themselves as Chinese Singaporeans,

explain how much they liked British and German performers as teenagers and

disliked Singaporean or Chinese ones, as this exchange with Monique testifies.

> Laura V.: What kind of music/films/books were played, watched and
> appreciated in your family or circle of friends as you grew up? (email
> interview, 3 December 1998)
>
> Monique: Nothing special in the local context. I didn't see all that many
> movies as my family weren't really keen about movies—I still am no great
> fan (I dislike the thought of being trapped into starting something I have to
> finish). No theatre. Plenty of pop music though—the radio, swapping tapes
> with friends ... I tended towards the English and European stuff during the
> 1980s (although Europe = Germany I suppose, Alphaville, Falco), instead
> of the US rubbish on the radio (eek! Michael Jackson! REO Speedwagon!)
> (...) While I loved the usual pop suspects of Howard Jones, Nik Kershaw,
> Human League, Naked Eyes, OMD etc., I was also into the likes of Art of
> Noise, Blancmange, Fiat Lux, Associates, Kissing the Pink, Kraftwerk and
> their ilk. Perhaps this second group of bands were really popular in the UK
> in the mid-80s, but trust me they were quite esoteric in Singapore at the
> time. Of course there was the juvenile snob value in being 'into' someone
> who wasn't Journey. Sad actually as everyone else thought you were
> insane even as I looked down on them. (email interview, 10 December
> 1998)

Their musical preferences constitute a certain style of western pop/rock that is

marked by a large majority of white performers, in which Kate Bush's whiteness

is inconspicuous and therefore never articulated. However, if Monique and

Angela did not explicitly comment on Kate Bush's whiteness, they did note her Englishness which, as that of other favourite performers, set her apart from both native Singaporean/Chinese performers and the American performers which were popular when the two women grew up. Having access to such British/English acts provided them with a means to distinguish themselves from their peers, although the exchange also shows the tenuous nature of claims to distinction—as she suggests, Monique's claims were not always recognised by her peers.

Less than a third of all respondents (13) commented on Kate Bush's national/ethnic identity, although some of the women who had not originally commented on it later did so in their interviews. For the non-UK respondents especially, Kate Bush represented a foreign and/or desired identity, which could be attained through knowledge of the English language or English customs, and which could provide them with a means to distinguish themselves from their peers. As Amel, for whom Kate Bush's British identity was very important, explains:

> Laura V.: Do you identify as a British or as a French person?
> Amel: Well, I don't know. I think now probably British, but I mean I'm very French and my parents are extremely French, and I went to a French school for 12 years—I didn't do A Levels. So I'm both, I'm really in-between and I say, let's say, my background is more French and now I'm more British, because I've been here so long. I still say ... I still ... I'll tell you what, in a way, actually, then when I was a teenager, then I was in a French school, in such a French environment, I wanted to identify with something British. I didn't like the French stuff.
> Laura V.: oh?
> Amel: I didn't like all that.
> Laura V.: The French school, was that ...
> Amel: In London, it was a French school in London. And I wanted to be more British, so of course I identified with Kate Bush, definitely. (interview, 27 October 1998)

Later on Amel explains that through her knowledge of English/British language and culture she was able to occupy a position of 'expert' in the Kate Bush field:

> Laura V.: and later on you met other Kate Bush fans—did you find that you had other things in common apart from...
>
> Amel: we did actually, that's true. One in particular, I had, a French girl, and we got on very very well. We were introduced because we were both Kate Bush fans, through another, a mutual friend, and I went to stay with her and we hit it off really well and it was, Kate Bush was out main topic of conversation. And she also, after I went to try dance, she also tried dance in France. She, the main thing was that she didn't understand the lyrics very well, so I would, I mean I really loved that position of having to, being the translator [laughs] and I could .... I wasn't just the expert with the language, I was the expert in the sense that what Kate Bush ... explain what Kate Bush is in England, you know, what kind of background does she come from, all those kinds of things. They were things, they are difficult to understand if you're not British in a way, or if you don't know Britain well. I think I was in that way, I was informing her about that sort of things. And her name was Sophie and we had a lot in common in terms of literature and other music. (interview, 27 October 1998)

Kate Bush herself has been quoted as saying: 'everything I do is very English and I think that's one reason I've broken through to a lot of countries. The English vibe is very appealing' (quoted in Vermorel, 1983: 92).[9] Yet the meaning of being British or English in popular music depends on the style of Britishness/Englishness that is performed and indeed on the geographical context from which it is observed. Just as whiteness is often 'invisible' in western society, being a British or English (or North American) performer within an Anglo-American musical context can render one's ethnicity largely invisible or at least

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[9] At the time of her first album, her producer Terry Slater explained her success by saying that 'Kate is a real English girl, she's from the roots of Great Britain. It's not a gimmick or produced. She's the first really English girl singer for a long time' (quoted in Vermorel, 1983: 92; note once again the slippage between 'English' and 'British'). Vermorel (1983) himself celebrates her Englishness: 'As English as Delius—as sweet and erotic (and her "Delius" is almost aphrodisiac). As Vaughan Williams' fulsomely mellow pastorales. Because she's partly rooted like them in the nostalgic gentlemanly vision of English folk defined by Victorian collectors and interpreted from Percy Grainger to Ewan MacColl. A slightly preachy, frail and cosy tradition.

unremarkable. Alternatively, certain distinct styles of Britishness/Englishness can help a performer stand out from the mass of Anglo-American performers.

In the following response Amel explains that Bush's Britishness is evident in her determination to express herself and her indifference to commercial success. Rather than being 'middle of the road' and French, Kate Bush is 'whacky' and British. In other words, Amel links Britishness and authenticity, which is how she was able, at least for herself, to claim some of that Britishness and distinguish herself from her peers at the French school she attended.

> Laura V.: you were saying that Kate Bush is very British—could you say a bit more about that?
> Amel: odd, because she's liked in other places too, but she's British. I don't know why she's so British—because she's very specific I think, she's very ... because she draws from her own experience, she's not somebody who—I don't think she's doing anything for a commercial reason, or at least she wasn't and she's doing things because she wants to express herself and if she's expressing herself then she's expressing, because if she is, and she's so, she's in a very British context, quite a classical sort of suburban type with lots of Irish influence and she really uses that, that is part of her and I think she expresses that in her music, I think that's why she's British. I think also because she's a bit whacky, she's British.
> Laura V.: an English eccentric?
> Amel: yeah, she definitely thrives on that. And I think that's how she identifies, how she puts herself across to other people. So I think that's very British. She's not, she's just not middle of the road. I think a lot of pop music in France is, it certainly was then, absolutely deadly boring. But it's nothing to do with expressing yourself, just trying to make money, bloody awful. On that level she is really British. (interview, 27 October 1998)

While other respondents also pick up on the idea of Bush as an English or British eccentric who pursues her own authentic vision, she is also frequently described in terms associated with an older, more 'traditional' Englishness, one which draws

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But not exactly. For she's also an Irish rose. Which gives her distance and keenness to cut through

on a mythological heritage. Indeed, of the 13 women who commented on Kate

Bush's ethnicity most did so in these terms.

> I think she's very English, as in Anglo-Saxon with all the olde worlde and
> fairae connotations. Knights of the Round Table. Stonehenge. Burning
> Witches. That sort of thing. I don't see her as being modern at all.
> (Monique, questionnaire, answer to question 24 about class and/or race
> connotations)

> She's an English rose. (Sandra; Rebecca, questionnaire, answers to
> question 24)

> She is extraordinarily English + vicarage + her lyrics verge on nightmare
> school girly, early on, but she pulls it off. And then later on she's just so
> <u>empowered</u> + individual + pursues all these different visions in different
> records.
> Vicar's daughters! White middle class rural Anglican, slightly standing-
> stones-y. Educated to read bit of poetry. (Emma, questionnaire, answers to
> questions 2 and 24 respectively)

In addition to the reference to her Englishness, references to 'school girly',

'vicar's daughters' and 'bit of poetry' imply a class position that is associated

with middle-brow culture. Thus Emma's suggestion that Bush 'pulls if off' and is

'<u>empowered</u> + individual' redeems what would otherwise be an extremely

disparaging description.

In the same way as she performs a particular kind of Englishness, Kate Bush may

be seen as performing an Irishness which conjures up a Celtic heritage. Some

respondents described her as Irish or Celtic or as having British/Irish roots.[10] It is

an Irishness/Celticity that is primarily based on her music and persona, rather than

her nationality (although her mother was Irish), and is apparent, for instance, in

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British complacency and go beyond her culture. Into madness. To reach genius' (94).

her looks: 'she's got those kind of Irish looks that are really classical. Beauty,

Irish beauty, that kind of looks' (Amel, interview, 27 October 1998), and 'her

dark hair/eyes and fair skin' (Krys, email interview, 31 October 1998). Here again

we find a conflation between national and ethnic identity, as 'Irish looks' are

probably conflated with 'Celtic looks', since not all Irish people share a race or

ethnicity, or look a particular way.

Just as Amel had argued earlier in relation to Britishness, Krys, who describes

herself as Celtic, argues that this Irish/Celtic identity suggests creativity and

authenticity:[11]

> Laura V.: In the questionnaire you described yourself as Celtic. What does
> it mean to you to be Celtic? (email interview, 17 September 1998)
> Krys: Having an identity with the ancient and artistic peoples of the UK.
> My mother is part Scottish, my father is Welsh. I love the beauty of
> Welsh, Irish and Scottish traditional music. I think Celtic people tend to be
> very romantic in the way of feeling close to nature, they are passionate
> about beauty in music and art. Also very loyal to their heritage. (28
> October 1998)
> Laura V.: You also explained that Kate inspired you to listen to more
> Celtic music. Has this had any influence on the way you perceive
> yourself? (email interview, 17 September 1998)
> Krys: That is a very interesting question. It's quite difficult to answer! I
> think I always felt 'different', music stirred me more than it appeared to
> affect other children, when I was young. So when I started hearing celtic
> music it was like recognising something that felt familiar but that had not,
> until I learned about the origins of the music, had a name or explanation.
> (28 October 1998)
> Laura V.: in your previous email you explained what it means to you to be
> Celtic. Could you also explain how Kate is Celtic? (email interview, 30
> October 1998)
> Krys: I think the press picked up quite early on that Kate's mother was
> Irish. Her dark hair/eyes and fair skin certainly make her very Celtic
> looking. I don't think she particularly expressed anything Celtic until the
> 3rd album with the beautiful and passionate 'Night of the Swallow', with

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[10] Unfortunately, I did not receive any responses from Irish fans, so that I cannot assess whether they perceived Kate Bush as Irish or Celtic, and if so, what this means to them.
[11] Malcolm Chapman (1994) argues that music provides people with a quick and relatively easy access to Celtic culture, in contrast to learning Gaelic, for example.

the Uillean pipes. She seems to have brought quite a poetic feel to many of her song lyrics, which is rather Celtic. The fey image of her in the early days, the allusions to her being 'elf like' have helped to create an other-worldly image around Kate, something almost mystical, which again is very much connected in the minds of many people with fairy tales and Celtic mystery. Her demeanour, especially when you meet her, is almost detached from the situation she finds herself in, again very fey and magical. (email interview, 31 October 1998)

McLaughlin and McLoone (2000) have commented on the fact that the Irish have

often been seen as 'naturally' musically gifted. The essentialist notions that

underpin such notions of 'Irishness' (as found in traditional Irish folk, for

instance) can be seen as 'ideologically conservative and analytically restrictive'

(2000: 182). However, within a global popular music discourse, they suggest,

such essentialist notions can also be called upon to alleviate the threat of global

culture and to mark out one's cultural difference. Weinstein (1991) makes a

similar observation, noting that the heavy metal audience is predominantly white

and that it draws on Anglo-Saxon and Nordic mythological symbols. These

symbols, however, are less a mark of race than they are of a particular ethnic

tradition which enables many heavy metal fans, who appear non-ethnic on

account of their whiteness, to claim ethnic belonging. In other words, reference to

a particular national or ethnic identity can function, on the one hand, to restrict the

meanings of that particular identity, and, on the other, to draw sustenance from it

in the face of a homogenising global culture.

Within a British/English context a look at the Britpop scene of the mid-1990s can

illustrate this point. While the Britpop scene can be seen as an attempt, on the part

of both bands and music press, to counter the popularity of American bands and to

boost the British music industry, it also presented a rather conservative

Englishness. As Jessica Berens (1996) argues in an article on Blur, it signalled an acceptance of a peculiarly English style of living, neither deviant nor luxurious, exciting nor dangerous, but instead rather ordinary.[12] Tony Mitchell (1996), on the other hand, is more critical, suggesting that 'the Beatles pastiche' of groups such as Blur, Oasis, Suede and the Boo Radleys seems 'like a narrow form of introspective pop nationalism and nostalgia' (19). The Englishness espoused by these groups excludes non-white and non-pop/rock acts, is a predominantly male (or 'laddish') affair, and recycles notions of a working class identity.[13] Furthermore, the slippage between Englishness and the Britishness implied by the label Britpop suggests that the former is representative of the latter, thereby effectively rendering it normative and excluding other British nationalities.[14]

Kate Bush's performance of Irishness/Celticity sets her apart, as does the English heritage association, from the mainstream of Anglo-American performers and as such allows fans and admirers to claim her as 'different'.[15] Yet, descriptions such as 'Anglo-Saxon', 'English rose' and 'Celtic not only render Bush's English/British or Celtic identity more visible within an Anglo-American music

[12] 'The Devil's Music has taken a strange turn of late. It's become chipper; it's become cheeky-chappy; cockney-sparrer, fan-Phil Daniels-tastic. It is telling us of Mother's Pride and bingo and bank holidays and bringing itself on shamelessly with Solina organ and Wurlitzer arrangements that recall skating rinks and seaside amusement arcades (...).
Now, somewhere along the line, the rebel yell has turned into a rowdy song in the back of the school bus and announced that it will never carry a piece or go out in a body bag. It is very white and it doesn't smell of teen spirit—it smells like Tommy Steele. You have seen the future of rock 'n' roll: its cultural gamut stretches from Quadrophenia to The Smiths to skatewear shops in Camden. It does not want to see any more Barratt homes or polluted rivers. It does not wish to be a mad axe hero. It is wearing black-framed spectacles and living next door' (Berens, 1996: 411).
[13] The title of Berens' article, 'White, Southern & Middle Class', highlights the notion of Blur 'performing' working classness.
[14] However, shortly after Britpop's heyday, Wales and Welshness became fashionable, helped by bands such as the Manic Street Preachers, the Stereophonics, and Catatonia. Cerys Matthews, vocalist of Catatonia, is noted for her strong Welsh accent and has sung in Welsh on occasions.
[15] In contrast, Kruse (1994) argues that Bush's Englishness, which is expressed by her English accent and the emphasis on her British heritage, accounts for her lack of wide-spread popularity in the USA.

scene, they also imply fairness or whiteness and a particular kind of femininity and class position. Like Blur *et al.*, Kate Bush can be seen to present a nostalgic kind of nationality/ethnicity that draws on essentialist notions. Her performance of 'Oh England My Lionheart' at the Hammersmith Odeon (as part of her 1979 concert tour) is a good example of this (see Figure 4). The song, taken from her second album *Lionheart* (1978)—itself a reference to English history—looks at England from the perspective of a dying pilot shortly after the end of World War II. He describes the country—which is regaining its peace—as a 'garden', an 'orchard' in which he would want to be with his 'English Rose'. Kate Bush expresses the precariousness of a cultural heritage that was very nearly lost through her extremely high-pitched vocals, while the song's lyrics read like a guide to England's heritage—'London Bridge', the 'ravens' in the Tower, 'Shakespeare' (Bolton, 1987: 42) and exude a strong nostalgia for the past.

As shown in the previous chapter, many women described Bush's femininity as one that is sensual and tasteful rather than overtly sexual, while Bush herself has tried to dissociate herself from the sexy image through which she was promoted during the early stages of her career. Skeggs (1994) has pointed out how black female performers are often associated with sexuality and that 'from this position within the sexual Black women have historically been constructed as objects of male fantasy' (110), while bell hooks (1992) argues that black women cannot claim the sexual agency that Madonna can claim because they have already been labelled as 'fallen' women. '[Black women] have always known that the socially constructed image of innocent white womanhood relies on the continued production of the racist/sexist myth that black women are not innocent and never

can be' (hooks, 1992: 159-60). Kate Bush's (olde) English and 'fair' image has connotations of innocence and therefore already suggest a certain distance from the overtly sexual.

Similarly, her Irish/Celtic image, which can be described as 'fey', suggests a particular femininity and has very different connotations from that of male performers such as Shane MacGowan or U2. Her image can be compared to that of the Irish musician Enya. Although the two musicians work in different genres (Enya's work is usually categorised as 'new age'), they share an interest in classical and folk musics and in electronics. Like Bush Enya does not tour and tends to spend years in the studio working with synthesisers and samplers and perfecting the many layers of sound that make up her music.[16] Enya is often labelled 'Celtic siren' and 'ethereal', and her public image, reinforced by carefully posed publicity stills is, much like Bush's, that of a media-shy, fragile studio hermit. The labels attached to both artists and the 'romantic' and 'mysterious' associations of their music deflect attention away from the quite considerable technological expertise that both possess. For both artists, then, their image as well as their use of traditional Irish and other folk elements can be read as reinforcing a conventional femininity.[17]

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[16] Their backgrounds are quite similar too in that both come from musical families (in the early 1980s Enya was a member of the band Clannad which then consisted of three of her siblings and two uncles). Enya's rise to fame was as meteoric as Bush's when 'Orinoco Flow' reached the top of the charts in 1988. Enya, however, has been far more successful than Bush in large markets such as the US.

[17] See Chapter 5 for my discussion of Bush's perceived authenticity and what I called her 'feminised virtuosity'—this discussion highlights the ambivalence of Bush's visual presentation.

III. The 'chattering classes': Kate Bush and Class

Kate Bush's performance of a particular kind of (olde) English/British or Irish/Celtic persona not only suggests a particular kind of femininity, but also a particular class position. In this section therefore I shall examine the markers of this middle class identity, its position within the field of popular music and relationship to authenticity, and its role in the women's identities and claims to distinction.

Nearly half of the respondents (20), both middle class and working class, associated Kate Bush with a ('comfortable' or 'upper') middle class background. The following exchange with Jane, who describes herself as middle class and White/European, suggests that this middle classness comes through in Bush's subject matter and the complexity of her songs (note that Jane here only comments on the class dimension of this question, and ignores the race dimension).

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you indicated that you associate Bush with a white middle class. How, do you think, does this come across in her work? (email interview, 13 November 1998)
> Jane: I think it comes through in the subject matter of her songs. Her lyrics cover a wide range of subjects, but anybody who writes songs like 'Delius' or 'Them Heavy People' (i.e. songs about composers, choreographers, philosophers, etc) tends to be marked down as—for want of a better phrase—a member of the 'chattering classes'. I think it's also because her music is quite complicated in its arrangement and structure. This contrasts with the 'get a band together, learn 3 chords and bang out songs' approach to music that was certainly the fashion when she first emerged, and to a certain extent still is. However, having read books and articles on Kate, I don't know how much my knowledge of her background might affect my perception of her music. It's also because, as I think I said previously, she never allied herself with the conventional

rock 'scene', where being working class (or at least claiming to be) is credible. (email interview, 20 November 1998)

As Jane suggests, certain forms of popular music—'the conventional rock "scene"'—espouse a working class ethos or at least a working class 'pose'. The relationship between music and class is, of course, far from straightforward, and the equation between a certain musical style and a class position problematic, yet working class cultures have frequently been read as more 'authentic' and as having an 'edge'. Thornton's observation that middle class youths often try to pass for working class during their clubbing days, for instance, suggests that working classness may be perceived as more 'hip'.[18]

The media have often commented upon and criticised Kate Bush's middle class identity. For example, Frith (1978b) has drawn attention to Kate Bush's difference from punk performers such as 'Poly Styrene or Ariana of the Slits' and wonders 'why isn't she a punk?', while Sutcliffe (1980) explains her lack of 'credibility' by reference to her close family bond and a class background which is conspicuous within a punk context.[19] Within a tradition that actively defines itself

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[18] Locher (1998), looking at the industrial-hardcore/industrial metal genre, suggests that the main reason why this genre failed to generate a subculture is because of its performers' age and class characteristics. He argues that because the music requires a high financial input (expensive electronic instruments) its performers are predominantly in their early twenties and middle class which alienated young fans of both the working and middle classes. 'This may have caused a double-bind situation: younger fans do not identify strongly with bands that they cannot emulate, the middle- and upper-class youth find no glamour in associating themselves with a middle-class movement, and the lower-class youths find it too expensive to emulate (...) If the driving force behind most youth subcultures is to forge an identity outside of ascribed (parental) positions (Brake, 1985), then what is the point of joining one that confirms and even highlights one's middle class, middle-American status (Locher, 1998: 112-13).

[19] 'Clearly it's an uncommon closeness which is a source of strength and reassurance to her even though she's a much more confident person now than when she first faced up to those heavy business people at 16. No outsider can pretend to analyse that blood chemistry, but the impression created certainly hasn't helped her "credibility" (a pretty elitist expression in itself when you think about it).

Artists are supposed to suffer. It's always been true. Punk emphasized the point the year before Kate was so carefully launched and there are no visible signs that she meets the standard required. "I'm always presented as this middle-class girl whose father is a doctor", she complained and

against 'bourgeois' culture, then, Bush's middle class identity cannot confer distinction upon either herself or her fans and admirers; in this context she lacks 'street cred'.

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However, just as musicians often assume a working class pose, which is then perceived by audiences as genuine, so too does Kate Bush perform a certain style of middle classness. Her authenticity lies in the respondents' perception that the Kate Bush she performs corresponds with the 'real' Kate Bush; she thus stakes her claims to 'authenticity' in terms of her genuineness. Furthermore, I believe it is Kate Bush's middle classness that may have allowed her to transcend her pigeonholing as a female artist. As I suggested earlier, she has been able to develop her virtuoso musicianship, her 'mastery' of technology, because of a middle class habitus that enabled her to play music at an early age. Hence, while she may perform a rather conservative femininity visually, in terms of musical skill Kate Bush may be read as more resistant to existing discourses of femininity. As such, Kate Bush's middle class persona can be seen as perhaps more resistant than some working class personas.

The following exchange with Amba suggests what Bush's 'genuineness' entails:

> Laura V.: In your questionnaire you commented that you associate Kate with a white middle class background. How do you think that this shows in her music/lyrics/videos? What effect does this have on your interpretation of her work, considering the fact that you're from an Indian background? (email interview, 20 July 1998)
> Amba: I think her background shows in the videos and subjects she chooses to sing about. They are generally quite cultured and educated. She isn't interested in showing herself dancing in an expensive car in designer

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described how both her father and her Irish mother came from ordinary country families, no wealth at all...' (Sutcliffe, 1980).

clothes on an exotic beach. She doesn't need to show money, but can explore intellectual / political interests and use her videos in a more complex and artistic way. I think anyone who had read the books she had and enjoys films can be interested in her work. I don't think background & culture really matters. (email interview, 20 July 1998)

Like Jane, Amba sees Bush's middle classness as a matter of cultural rather than economic capital. She also suggests that Kate Bush is comfortable with herself, or that, to use Bourdieu's term, she displays her cultural capital with 'ease'. Bush's oft-mentioned suburban roots are relevant here. Suburbia, however, has multiple connotations. On the one hand it suggests comfort, both materially and culturally, while on the other it has connotations of middle-brow culture. I shall address the former first.

Vermorel, one of Bush's biographers, has said that 'she wears her culture like her clothes: loose and comfortable. She fits' (1983: 94). Such a 'fit' can be said to characterise my respondents as well. When asked to describe a typical Kate Bush fan, many interviewees—in addition to highlighting a typical 'male gaze'— suggested that a typical (female) fan would most likely be interested in, as Laura C. put it, 'literature and philosophy and spirituality' and would not be 'addicted to "popular" mass-marketed culture' (email interview, 29 June 1998). While by no means all of them shared Bush's financial comfort, the women's responses suggested a considerable degree of comfort with their lives. Saying this, I do not wish to underestimate or indeed deny any of the women's problems. Rather, I want to highlight, once more, that the women's fandom offers them resources that enable them to function in everyday life without pessimistically resigning themselves to their social situations or indeed without any strong resistance against dominant social norms.

Just as they see Kate Bush as an artistic role model, someone who encourages them to express themselves and to try and attain an 'authentic' and independent self, the respondents see in Bush's middle class identity an affirmation of their own class identity. For instance, for Laura C., who described herself as middle class and whose account of her family I quoted in Chapter 4, her fandom appeared to fit very well with her identities as mother, partner, and professional. She was very concerned with 'displaying' and 'conserving' her family cultural capital. While this appeal to and affirmation of the self-image of middle class women ostensibly excludes working class fans, responses from working class fans suggest that Kate Bush may be perceived as middle class, but not as threatening or 'out of reach': [she is] 'artistic middle class, I suppose, but removed from real hierarchical ideas + notions' (Lisa, questionnaire, answer to question 24); 'middle class, but she never wears a sign around her neck stating her class' (Helen, questionnaire, answer to question 24).

The second connotation of suburbia, as I suggested, is that of middle-brow culture. While Bush's claims to cultural distinction, through her references to literature, composers and philosophers and so on, may be viewed as 'pretentious' and 'out of place' in the field of popular music (after all, 'prog rock' is often mocked in the media), it is similarly doubtful whether they would be recognised within the dominant field where her display of cultural capital might be seen as too obvious.[20] Her work may therefore be understood in terms of the middle-

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[20] As I mentioned before, the fields of popular culture and dominant culture are no longer rigidly divided. Not only have the modes of appreciation favoured by the dominant culture found their way into popular music fandom, but popular music is fast becoming increasingly important outside its 'restricted' field. Popular performers, therefore, might transcend their position in the popular

brow, usually associated with the (lower) middle class. However, as I first

introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, the lower middle class is usually depicted by

academics as conformist (see Felski, 2000). Bourdieu, too, has been particularly

dismissive of the *petite bourgeoisie* and their taste for 'middle-brow' culture.

Hence, I suggested, he would be unlikely to recognise the particular taste patterns

of my respondents. However, as I have suggested, the women's investments

should be seen, first and foremost, as functions of their self-image rather than as a

means to attain a better position in the wider social world. Regardless of

Bourdieu's 'approval', then, these practices are meaningful and need to be taken

seriously.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the roles of age, race/ethnicity and class in

fandom and the processes of distinction. I have shown how my respondents

distinguish themselves on account of their maturity which, they argue, has lent

them a level of discrimination and sophistication which young listeners are

thought not to have. I have also considered Kate Bush's multiple white ethnicities.

While this was not something I looked at in detail when conducting the

questionnaires and interviews—I have confessed to being 'blind' to whiteness—

subsequent analysis showed that Kate Bush's performance of an Englishness or

Celticity that draws on a traditional heritage (and which may be more common to

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field to be recognised in the dominant field, but whether Kate Bush can do so seems doubtful.
Perhaps Madonna, especially since the critical acclaim for *Ray of Light*, could be seen as doing so.
Not only is she without doubt one of the most widely known performers, she has also successfully
transcended her early image of someone who appeared just a one-hit wonder.

folk performers) is perceived to distinguish her from other performers in the field of pop/rock. In addition, it signals a particular kind of femininity that further reinforces the ambiguities of Bush's image (as both inviting and rejecting the male gaze) as discussed in Chapter 5. I ended the chapter with a discussion of the respondents' views on Kate Bush's middle class persona. While a middle class persona in popular music can be read as lacking 'street cred', the women nevertheless read it as being 'authentic' and, more importantly, as confirming their own social position.

Just as Kate Bush 'fits', my respondents' position in society can be characterised as relatively comfortable. In other words, they do not see themselves as outside of or resisting dominant or 'bourgeois' society, but neither do they, as Bourdieu puts it, 'accept[ ] bereavement of all the "lateral possibles" they have abandoned along the way' (1998: 11); that is, they do not quietly slip into resignation. Instead, they continue to invest in Kate Bush, finding in her the resources they need to make sense of their experiences. In Grossberg's (1992b) words, they are 'empowered in the sense that they are now capable of going on, of continuing to struggle to make a difference' (165).

Conclusion

> Face it, the major artistic statement, the grand overall concept with the
> gatefold sleeve and the lyric sheet and the quasi-mystical design, is a
> Man's Thing, whereas girls excel at tree-minute bursts of pop glory.
> They—y'know, birds, like—may be able to go on longer in the sack, but
> they just can't sustain it on vinyl/CD. (Lester, 2000: 6)

This statement from Paul Lester appeared in the September 2000 issue of *Top*, a

Tower Records publication. It was dedicated to 'girls!girls!girls!', featured Kylie

'feline groovy?' Minogue on its front cover, and confirmed, yet again, many

assumptions about women in popular music. While Lester may have a point when

he deplores the new crop of girl groups such as Thunderbugs and Girl Thing who

are 'being sold to us by a bunch of blokes' and who are mere Spice Girls

'copykittens' (2000: 6), his outright dismissal of women's artistic expression

seems nothing less than an old platitude. 'Women don't record popular LPs',

Lester claims (2000: 6), which may be true if by popularity he means the support

of male journalists and DJs, yet clearly untrue on the evidence of commercial

success and fan base. Lester's statement may be seen as an act of defensive

hegemony in an industry that has many major female musicians. Furthermore, the

'copykittens' he deplores do not actually undermine the quite considerable

economic and cultural power that performers such as the Spice Girls, Britney

Spears and Kylie Minogue wield in the music industry. With successful albums to

their name and increasingly iconic status, these women are likely to sustain it for a

while longer (something which Minogue has already proven).

While Lester's article may be dismissed as a somewhat polemical piece in a promotional magazine, a contemporary incident suggests it is not just a random example. A Radio 4 news bulletin, reporting the death of Paula Yates, described the TV presenter as a former groupie who managed to catch not one, but two musicians. Yates was, of course, more than a celebrity wife and girlfriend, successful in her own right and had a career quite separate from those of her partners. One of my aims in this thesis was precisely to counter such clichés about female fans as over-sexualised, as groupies, or as not interested in music at all. While the reclaiming of women's fandom took a somewhat different shape than I had originally anticipated—for example, my respondents actually reinforced many existing assumptions about the passivity and lack of discrimination of young girl fans—my research has suggested that a broader understanding of fandom is needed to account for the investments women have in popular music.

Throughout this thesis I have used a case study of female Kate Bush fans to ask questions about the nature of fandom. Using this case study presented some difficulties. For example, I failed to persuade the Homeground fan club of my respectable motives, while Kate Bush's decision not to tour meant that I was unable to examine practices such as concert going. Furthermore, looking at the fans of someone like Kate Bush, who is not seen as particularly 'trendy' (at least not at the moment), rendered my project somewhat 'unfashionable'. The mature Kate Bush fans and admirers in this research are much less 'conspicuous' than members of certain subcultures; they do not have a particular look that makes them immediately identifiable as Kate Bush fans. This lack of visibility is, I would argue, one of the reasons why these fans would not normally 'qualify' for

analysis in the way that more 'spectacular' subcultures have done. However, the ways in which these fans and admirers draw on their fandom to navigate their daily lives, even if in a less spectacular and less overtly or straightforwardly oppositional way, should be taken seriously. The case study, then, enabled me to consider fandom from a new perspective, that of relatively mature women—a group of music consumers who are seldom regarded as serious players in this field.

As I explained, the division that has long marked dominant culture and popular culture and in which the fan of popular culture is disparaged at the expense of the aficionado of 'official' or 'high' culture, also marks popular culture itself. As Thornton (1995) puts it, 'the traditional divide between virile high art and feminized low entertainment is replayed within popular culture itself' (104). Within this context the female fan is often cast as unsophisticated and undiscriminating opposite the male 'connoisseur'. My respondents recognise these dichotomies between official and popular culture and within popular culture and negotiate with both to be recognised as bearers of cultural capital, as distinguished listeners. I have shown that many of my respondents either reject or redefine the label fan because of its negative associations, while doing the same for fan activities. While in some cases the women did not engage in such activities because of the time and money involved, often they were seen as too 'fannish' and not in line with the women's self-image.

The rejection of both the label fan and its associated activities was not related to the intensity of the women's investments, as deduced from their responses. While

such a rejection would perhaps suggest a conclusion that popular music no longer has any real significance for these women—hence the absence of mature women in accounts of fandom—an in-depth look at the reasons behind this rejection or partial acceptance reveals the opposite. Therefore, I have suggested an understanding of fandom which does not necessarily equate with fan practices such as membership of fan clubs, collecting or style imitation; a form of fandom which may be relatively invisible, but which nevertheless continues to play an important role in these women's lives. Such an understanding of fandom—as continuously developing and accommodating the changing social circumstances of fans—puts these women's practices on the map.

One of the reasons why fans or admirers such as my respondents have not been considered suitable subjects for study is related to their position in society. As I have shown, analysis of the way in which subordinated groups of people—the young, the working class, women—respond to popular culture has often focused on their more resistant moments. Thus, feminist audience researchers have not only tried to reclaim 'women's genres' they have also tried to show how women read 'against the grain'. Similarly, subcultural studies have consistently highlighted the 'resistance through rituals' which pits spectacular youth cultures against a monolithic dominant culture. This field appears to have little room for a group of women who, on account of their gender, maturity and class, would seem wholly complicit with dominant culture. I have shown, however, that my respondents' practices cannot be seen as either wholly complicit with dominant discourses or wholly resistant to them.

As Bourdieu has noted, 'resistance may be alienating and submission may be liberating' (1994: 155). This dual process of resistance and submission, or the 'seesaw of progressive and reactionary' as Walkerdine terms it (1997: 22), can only be properly analysed through qualitative research. Indeed, my research revealed that while some practices posed a challenge to dominant discourses, others were simultaneously progressive and reactionary. For instance, my respondents' continued investment in popular music generally, and Kate Bush specifically, undermines conventional ideas about the audience for popular music. Their attempts at disarticulating rock and youth and articulating instead rock and maturity suggest a resistance to dominant ideas in the music field. However, while the women's refusal to take up the position of the 'eroticised' fan may be seen as resistant in one sense, it may be labelled reactionary in the sense that they then place other fans in this category.

Using Bourdieu's concepts of (cultural) capital, distinction and habitus has enabled me to explore both sides—resistant and conservative—of my respondents' practices. While Bourdieu has not written extensively on the way in which gender is implicated in cultural preferences, his work proved to be open to adaptation and allowed me to theorise the idea of feminine cultural capital. I have explained that in the field of popular music femininity can only be capitalised upon in particular ways. Concepts such as virtuosity and authenticity are usually implicitly gendered masculine, and seen as the reserve of male musicians. Kate Bush, partly on account of her middle class habitus, has been able to resist being pigeonholed as a stereotypical female performer and has 'mastered' the field. In addition, Kate Bush can be seen as having combined such virtuosity with

elements usually associated with 'female' culture (such as dance, romantic literature) and lyrics which often address topics directly affecting women (such as childbirth, menstruation, and so on). I have used the phrase 'feminine virtuosity' to describe this.

This feminine virtuosity, I have argued, is what enables my respondents to claim distinction for themselves as female fans, and to represent themselves as the bearers of cultural capital at the expense of men who are portrayed as being fans for the 'wrong' reasons. My analysis of a selection of videos/images, however, shows that Bush's visual presentation of femininity is much more ambiguous than the women seem to acknowledge. Her simultaneous invitation and rejection of the male gaze, for instance, renders their assumptions somewhat untenable

One of the most significant issues to emerge in this thesis has been the women's negotiation of 'social ageing', a process which Bourdieu defines as a 'slow renunciation or disinvestment' that leads people to accept who or what they are and to accept 'bereavement of all the "lateral possibles" they have abandoned along the way' (Bourdieu, 1998a: 110). Thornton (1995) has argued that one of the main functions of involvement in a subculture is to defer social ageing and to hold on to a relatively unburdened life of youth. The articulation of popular music and youth is heavily indebted to a view in which social ageing, or growing older and accepting adult responsibilities, is seen as something which must be avoided for as long as possible. In contrast, I have shown how my respondents did not see social ageing in this negative light. For them growing up and growing older was neither something entirely undesirable against which they offered resistance nor

was it something they fatalistically resigned themselves to. Rather, the women's

chosen 'soundtrack', their continuing investment in Kate Bush, should be read as

offering them the resources that enable maturity. Their investment and practices

of distinction afford them a feeling of self-confidence and self-worth that helps

enable maturity in the sense of the ability to deal with the demands of

relationships and work without either seriously challenging them (for instance,

challenging the institution of marriage, or heterosexuality) or succumbing to them.

I believe this has important implications for future research in the field of fandom.

Now that both popular music and the generation which first articulated rock and

youth have grown up and popular music has come to have an ever-increasing

presence in people's lives—it is hard to think of anyone in the West growing up

without constant exposure to and in-depth knowledge of popular music—it is no

longer feasible to continue to ignore the uses made of popular music by more

mature people. Even if these are not obviously resistant or spectacular, or if the

music they draw on is not trendy or shocking in any way, it is important to know

how music signifies, in complex ways, for these people. The women's practices,

then, suggest new ways of thinking about the social categories of listener/fan and

the forms of music that have this capacity to retain their value for their listeners

through the long term.

My respondents, on account of their maturity and class, cannot be seen as the

disenfranchised youth common to many subcultural studies, nor as the socially

vulnerable identified by Jenson (1992) who are most likely to fall prey to the

alienating forces of modern society. Indeed, the women's middle and lower

middle class habitus lends some credence to their appropriation of high cultural modes of appreciation, just as their understanding of Kate Bush's references to examples of high culture does. Kate Bush, with her references to 'high' culture and success in the popular charts, can be seen as a liminal figure in both the general social field and the field of popular music. However, it may be this 'in-between-ness' that makes it difficult for the respondents to successfully claim distinction in either field. While she is undoubtedly a popular artist, whose work has been both critically and commercially successful, comments on her work and persona in the press often suggest that she does not quite *fit*. Her references to literary and other 'high' cultural subjects are seen as somewhat 'pretentious' or 'out of place'. On the other hand, Kate Bush does not quite fit into the dominant cultural field where obvious references to, for example, literary figures, may be seen to undermine claims to distinction. As I have suggested, both Kate Bush and her fans have middle-brow associations, and it is the middle-brow that tends to be disparaged by high culture aficionados as well as academics intent on identifying moments of resistance in working class culture. However, as I have argued, the women's practices of distinction should perhaps primarily be seen as a function of their self-image, which render their legitimation relatively independent of the responses of others.

Despite the fact that many of my respondents were 'individual' listeners, some did appreciate the more communal aspects of fandom. Indeed, even those women who did not belong to organised fan communities seemed, on the evidence of their eagerness to talk, to cherish the 'proto-community' that the research situation brought about. Furthermore, some of the respondents may have seen me, because

of my 'in-between' position, as being in a position to confer on them the credibility and respectability they desire. As a (former) Kate Bush fan, I shared with the women a position in the field of popular music fandom. As such I was not necessarily seen as an 'expert' (although the women would sometimes ask me if I knew whether a new release was imminent, or ask me about the interpretation of a song), but rather as a fellow fan or admirer. On the other hand, as a researcher I also occupied a position in the academic field which put me in a position from where I might be able to legitimise the women's claims to a certain extent.

While the subject of this thesis, popular music fandom, played an important role in reducing the unequal power which is often a part of empirical research, my method of interviewing also played a part in this. I conducted most of the interviews by email. One of the most valuable consequences of this method of interviewing was, I strongly feel, the fact that it enabled my interviewees—some of whom might not have been interested in an interview via the more conventional face-to-face method—to be more forthcoming and to also take more control of the interview situation. They would often ask me questions about my own investment in Kate Bush, who my favourite artists were, why I was interested in doing this research, and so on.

I believe that email as a research tool in the study of popular music consumption is destined to take on a more important role, considering the fact that both email and the internet are becoming increasingly prevalent in this field. The proliferation of web sites, chat rooms and email discussion lists dedicated to favourite genres or performers, collectors' web sites, on-line record shops, and

sites from which to download new music has implications for the future of popular music consumption. Not only is this a question of whether or not fans should be allowed to have relatively cheap (or in some cases free) access to music, but also of how it influences the way in which we listen to music. This technology may affect the way in which we invest economically, but it may also affect emotional investments. Do we cease to view the artists behind our downloaded files as special? Will CDs become the new vinyl, that is, the new collector's item? What consequences does it have for the gendered, raced and classed consumption of music? And will there be a marked age divide between those who buy CDs and those who download?

*   *   *

While there is still no trace of a new Kate Bush album—a new release is anticipated for 2002—the music industry has not stood still during the five years of this project. Alanis Morissette released the follow-up to her million-selling debut album, *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie* (1998) to mixed reviews and low sales. While the success of her debut album gave a boost to other female performers, the disappointing performance of its successor appeared to fill (male) critics with glee. The Spice Girls, on the other hand, went from strength to strength. Confounding critics by surviving the dismissal of their manager and the departure of Geri 'Ginger Spice' Halliwell, the four remaining 'girls' combined the group's life with successful solo careers (although, following the failure of their third album release to match their earlier sales figures, the band now appears to be on the brink of collapse).

Even a cursory look at media coverage shows us the immense cultural impact of female performers. During the past five or six years the Spice Girls and their young female fans have generated an astonishing amount of press coverage, in which ridicule often goes hand in hand with a certain measure of respect. The higher visibility, generally, of female musicians, aided by the numerous histories and analyses of 'women-in-rock' published in the last ten years, suggests that the field is not impervious to women's advances. While the article by Lester quoted at the start of this conclusion reiterated and valued the old 'serious rock' cliché, a recent article in *The Guardian* offered the view that 'it's now the manufactured teen pop and R&B bands who make the most interesting music' (Phillips, 2001, 11). Citing, amongst others, the Spice Girls and Britney Spears, Phillips described them as cleverly acknowledging pop's manipulations and putting forward 'complex sexual politics' (11).

In July 2000 Kate Bush let her fans know, through a fan club News Letter, that she had become a mother. She announced that she is 'very happy and proud to have such a beautiful son, Bertie—he is absolutely gorgeous ... I am having great fun being a Mum as well as working on a new album' (Twomey, 2000). I believe this resonates extremely well with some of my respondents' sentiments. For instance, Emma, one of the 'musician-fans', several times expressed her concerns about the (im)possibility to combine a musical career with motherhood,[1] while Laura C.'s fandom clearly informed her relationship with her (step)children. While motherhood is only one possible marker of adult femininity, Kate Bush's

decision to combine motherhood and musicianship seems to tie in well with the respondents' resolve to combine their adult responsibilities with investments in popular music. Such investments may change over time, as spending priorities or the time available change, yet their existence is testimony to the importance of popular music in the lives of women.

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[1] 'The only thing is this question of why she doesn't have children (...) I just think it's very interesting that it seems almost like for a woman to give herself to art kids go out the window' (questionnaire).

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Section A: Music and Leisure

This first section is about your general consumption of music and other forms of culture, such as literature and film. I am especially interested in what role music plays in your life and how it fits in with your other interests.

1a) What music genres do you usually listen to? (Please tick as many boxes as you like)

❏ pop/rock
❏ soul
❏ rap
❏ dance
❏ jazz
❏ classical
❏ folk
❏ country
❏ other, namely

b) Do you prefer pop/rock?　　　❏ Yes　❏ No

c) Why (not)?

2a) When did you start listening to popular music?

b) Who are your favourite bands and performers?

c) How did you find out about them?

3a) Do you read music magazines?　　　❏ Yes　❏ No

b) If yes, which ones?

c) Which parts of these music magazines do you find particularly interesting (for instance,

reviews, pictures, interviews) and for what reason?

4a) Do you read music books?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) If yes, what kind (for example; artists' autobiographies, music histories, music criticism)?

c) Why do you read them?

5a) How much time do you spend, on average, on music each week (including playing music, listening to music, reading books and magazines, going to concerts, and so on)?

b) How much money do you spend, on average, on music each month? (including CDs/tapes, magazines, books, concerts, fan club subscription, etc.)

6a) Do you go to concerts?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) How often do you go?

7a) Do you find that the answers to questions 1-6 are considerably different now than they would have been when you were an adolescent?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) Can you elaborate on this (for example, can you tell me about your favourites then, or the magazines you used to read, and so on)? If your answer is longer, please continue on a separate sheet.

8a) If you're female, do you find that your male friends spend more time and money on music; e.g. that they go to concerts more often, or buy more CDs?   ❑ Yes ❑ No   ❑ No difference

b) Can you explain this?

9a) If you're male, do you find that your female friends spend more time and money on music; e.g. that they go to concerts more often, or buy more CDs?   ❑ Yes ❑ No   ❑ No difference

b) Can you explain this?

10a) Do you sing or play a musical instrument?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) If yes, which one(s)?

c) How did you get to be involved in music activity?

11a) What other forms of culture/entertainment/leisure activities do you enjoy? (Please tick as

many as you like)

- ❑ literature
- ❑ film
- ❑ television
- ❑ theatre
- ❑ sports
- ❑ other, namely

b) Can you be more specific? (e.g. if you like literature, say what genres or authors; if you like

film, what type of film, and so on)

12a) How do you usually spend you leisure time

b) In comparison with your other interests, how important is music?

❑ Very important   ❑ Important   ❑ Not so important

c) On average, do you spend more or less time on music than on other forms of culture?

- ❑ Considerably more
- ❑ More
- ❑ Equal
- ❑ Less
- ❑ Considerably less

13) What influences the way you choose to spend your leisure time (for instance, what makes you

decide to listen to music rather than see a film, or go to a concert rather than read a book)?

14) How important is the role of music in other forms of culture you like (for instance, music in

films)?

15) If there is anything I left out, but that you would like to discuss, please do so here.

Section B: Kate Bush

This section focuses on your interest in Kate Bush. I am especially eager to know why you like Kate Bush and how she has influenced your way of life and perceptions. If there are any questions that you would like to answer in relation to another performer, please do so, but indicate this.

1a) When/how did you first hear about Kate Bush?

b) Where did you first hear/see her?

      ❑ radio
      ❑ television
      ❑ magazine
      ❑ record
      ❑ concert
      ❑ other, namely

c) How old were you then?

2a) Did you like her immediately? ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) What struck you about her?

c) How is Kate Bush different from other performers?

3a) Do you consider yourself:

      ❑ a Kate Bush fan
      ❑ someone who likes Kate Bush a lot
      ❑ someone who likes Kate Bush, but not excessively
      ❑ someone who does not like Kate Bush anymore

b) Why?

c) What do you think characterises a fan?

4) If you were a fan, but not any more, why is this so?

5a) Are, or were, you a member of any Kate Bush fan clubs? ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) If yes, which one(s)?

c) Do you subscribe to any Kate Bush mailing lists? ❑ Yes ❑ No

d) If yes, which one(s)?

e) What do you enjoy about belonging to a fan club or subscribing to a mailing list?

6a) Did you ever write to Kate Bush?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) Why (not)?

   c) What kind of response, if any, did you get?

7a) Do you collect anything related to Kate Bush?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) If yes, what do you collect and why?

   c) If no, why not?

8a) How much do you know about Kate Bush's personal life?

       ❑ very much   ❑ much   ❑ a little   ❑ nothing

   b) What kind of personal details are you mostly interested in?

   c) Do you think it is important to know personal details:

       ❑ to understand the lyrics better
       ❑ to understand what motivates Kate Bush
       ❑ it is just interesting
       ❑ it is not important
       ❑ other, namely

   d) Can you explain this?

9a) Has Kate Bush inspired you to listen to other kinds of music (for instance, Irish or Bulgarian

   folk music), or to pick up an instrument?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) If yes, what?

   c) If no, why not?

10a) How do you rate the following features in relation to Kate Bush?

	Very important	Important	Not so important	Irrelevant
music	❑	❑	❑	❑
lyrics	❑	❑	❑	❑
dance	❑	❑	❑	❑
video	❑	❑	❑	❑
image/looks	❑	❑	❑	❑
rolemodel	❑	❑	❑	❑
chart success	❑	❑	❑	❑

   b) Alternatively, could you place them in order of significance?

11a) Which is/are your favourite Kate Bush album(s) and why?

b) Which is/are your favourite Kate Bush song(s) and why?

c) Which is/are your favourite Kate Bush video(s) and why?

12a) What do you like most about Kate Bush's music?

    ❑ Piano
    ❑ Synthesiser
    ❑ 'Unusual' instruments
    ❑ Voice
    ❑ Folk elements
    ❑ Other, namely

b) Can you explain this?

13a) On the whole, do you prefer Kate Bush's

    ❑ early work (1977-1980)
    ❑ middle period (1982-1985)
    ❑ later work (1989-)
    ❑ no difference

b) Why is this so?

14a) Do you like Kate Bush's work as a producer?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) On the whole, do you like her musical development?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

c) Why (not)?

15a) Do you read or listen carefully to Kate Bush's lyrics?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

b) Do you like her lyrics?   ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Indifferent

c) What do you like most about these lyrics?

d) Do you try to interpret them?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

e) If yes, what are your experiences with this? (e.g. do you find them difficult, obscure, etc.?)

16a) Which is your favourite Kate Bush lyric?

b) Why?

c) What do you think it is about?

17a) Do you find that Kate Bush and her music/lyrics relate to your life? ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) Can you explain this?

   c) Do the characters in her songs relate to you at all? ❑ Yes ❑ No

   d) Why (not)?

18a) On the whole, do you like Kate Bush's videos? ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) How important are these videos for your appreciation of her?

       ❑ Very important   ❑ Important   ❑ Not so important   ❑ Irrelevant

   c) Can you explain this?

19a) When do you usually listen to Kate Bush's music?

   b) Did you listen more when you were younger? ❑ Yes ❑ No

   c) Can you tell me why (not)?

20) How does Kate Bush's music make you feel (e.g. happy, relaxed, annoyed, etc.)?

21a) Do you have friends who are Kate Bush fans too?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) Do you talk to them, or to anyone else, about her?   ❑ Yes, with

                                                ❑ No

   c) If yes, what do you discuss?

22a) Do you think Kate Bush appeals more to women or to men?

       ❑ Women   ❑ Men   ❑ No difference

   b) What reasons do you think that men/women have for liking Kate Bush?

23a) Do you like the way Kate Bush looks?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b) What do you like in particular?

   c) Do you think you have modeled yourself in any way after Kate Bush?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

   d) If yes, how does this manifest itself (e.g. do you try to dress or move like her)?

24a) Do you think that Kate Bush projects certain notions of class or race/ethnicity? In other

words, do you associate her with a particular class or ethnic group?   ❑ Yes, with

                                                                ❑ No

25a) Would you consider Kate Bush to be a pop icon?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

    b) What does this mean, according to you?

26a) Do you see Kate Bush as a role model for women?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

    b) Why (not)?

27a) Do you identify with Kate Bush?   ❑ Yes ❑ No

    b) Can you explain this?

28a) Do you consider yourself to be a feminist, or do you have feminist ideas? ❑ Yes ❑ No

    b) What does feminism mean to you?

29a) Are there any other female performers you particularly like?

       ❑ yes, namely

       ❑ no

    b) If yes, why do you like them? Are they like Kate Bush in any sense?

30) If there is anything I left out, but that you would like to discuss, please do so here.

Section C: Personal Information

This final section asks some personal details about you. Of course this, and all other information disclosed in this questionnaire, will be treated in strict confidence.

1) sex: ❑ female   ❑ male

2) age group: à

       ❑ under 18
       ❑ 18-25
       ❑ 25-35
       ❑ 35-45
       ❑ 45 and older

3) marital status

4) children

5) education

6) occupation

7) country

how would you describe yourself in terms of

       8) sexuality (e.g. heterosexual, lesbian, etc.)

       9) social background (e.g. working class, middle class, etc.)

       10) race/ethnicity (e.g. African-American, White-European, etc.)

11) how did you get this questionnaire?

Please indicate whether or not you would be willing to be interviewed, at a later stage, about your fandom:

       ❑ Yes   ❑ No

If yes, would you like this to be

       ❑ by e-mail   ❑ at home   ❑ by telephone

If yes, please give your

       name
       address
       telephone
       e-mail

(This is for contact purposes only and will not be used otherwise.)

Appendix B

Advertisements

Advertisement in Mojo *magazine:*

Female Kate Bush fans:

Wanted for PhD research. What does Kate Bush mean to you? For a detailed questionnaire write with your name and address to: Laura Vroomen, Gender Studies, Social Studies Building, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.

Advertisement in *Q Magazine*:

Kate Bush fans (female) wanted for PhD research. For detailed questionnaire write: Laura Vroomen, Gender Studies Department, Social Studies Building, Warwick University, Coventry CV4 7AL.

Message on the *Irgendwo in der Tiefe* web site:

Kate Bush fans (female) needed for PhD research. Are you a KB fan and willing to explain why, then write or e-mail for a detailed questionnaire to: Laura Vroomen, Gender Studies Department, Social Studies Building, Warwick University, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. E-mail: wsrbb@csv.warwick.ac.uk

Message to the *Love-Hounds* mailing list:

> Hello everyone,

> You may remember me from an earlier message. I'm currently doing research at the University of Warwick (UK) into the female audience for pop music, as I'm interested in how women respond to pop music and its performers. Within this framework I'm focusing on the audience for Kate Bush. I would love to hear from all you women who are, or used to be, Kate Bush fans!

> For this purpose I've designed a questionnaire which I've sent as an attachment to this message. If you'd like to answer the questions, the best thing to do is to retrieve and save the attachment, add your answers to it, and then send it back to me. If you have any problems retrieving the questionnaire, or if you'd prefer to have a paper copy, you can send me your name and address and I'll send one as soon as possible.

> The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A focuses on popular music and culture in general; Section B focuses on your interest in Kate Bush; and finally, Section C asks for some personal details. There are both multiple choice and open questions, so you can either tick the appropriate boxes or give a more detailed answer in the space provided. If you feel that a question is irrelevant to you, or if for some reason you don't want to answer a particular question, please feel free to leave it blank.

> Of course, all the information you disclose will remain confidential. Thank you very much for your help!

> Yours sincerely, Laura Vroomen

Appendix C

Interviewee Profiles

I interviewed sixteen women in total. Nine interviewees described themselves as fans, while seven could be described as 'admirers'. Four women were in their early to mid twenties, five in their late twenties, five in their thirties, and two in their early forties. All but two women, who described themselves as lesbian or bisexual, described themselves as heterosexual. The number of women who described themselves as other than White/European was proportionally higher for the interviews as compared with the questionnaires, with women describing themselves as Asian/Chinese (twice), Indian, half-Bermudian, mixed White/European/North-African, and Celtic. Nine interviewees were British (two of which lived in the US at the time), two were Singaporean, two German, one Belgian, one French (but living in the UK), and one American. Three of the interviewees were musicians (see the 'musician-fan' profiles for Dagmar, Krys, and Virginia). Unless stated otherwise, the interviews were conducted by email.

Alex responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine* and was interviewed in the autumn of 1998. She was in her early twenties at the time and worked as a journalist for a men's magazine. She suggested that 'Wuthering Heights', which she first heard in her early teens, may have inspired her to study English Literature at university, which in turn led to her current job. Alex described herself as mixed race (half Bermudian), but felt that this was largely irrelevant to her fandom. She considered

herself to be a fan, even though she no longer listened very much and thought that Kate Bush's more recent material is not as good as the early work. She also suggested that it was never 'cool' to like Kate Bush and felt a contradiction between her current lifestyle and Kate Bush fandom.

Amba responded to the message posted on the Love-Hounds mailing list. At the time of the interview during the summer of 1998 Amba was in her late twenties and was working as a museum curator. She described herself as Indian, but felt that this has little influence on her musical taste or her relationship to Kate Bush's work. She liked elements of Indian culture, such as traditional dress and Indian cuisine, but described her music tastes as predominantly British and Irish. Amba considered herself a fan and subscribed to the Kate Bush Club and the email discussion list.

I met **Amel** at a workshop for doctoral students and after telling her about my research discovered that she liked Kate Bush. I personally requested her to complete the questionnaire, after which we did a face-to-face interview in October 1998. She was in her late twenties at the time, worked as a research assistant and part-time lecturer, and was married with no children. Of French/North African parentage, Amel was resident in the UK where she grew up and went to a French school. As a teenager Amel became involved in contemporary dance and also tried to look like Bush by dying her hair and wearing similar clothes. She no longer considered herself to be a fan, because she had ceased to be involved in fan activities; however, she continued to listen, particularly when needing time for herself.

I met **Angela** at Warwick University where she was an overseas visiting student studying for a Master's degree in International Law. After discovering her interest in Kate Bush I personally requested her to complete the questionnaire and take part in a face-to-face interview in August 1998. She was in her early thirties at the time, described herself as an Asian-Chinese living in Singapore, where she used to work as a legal officer for the government. Growing up in Singapore, she had been more interested in British music than American or local bands. She had liked Kate Bush since her teens and shared her interest with both her sisters and best friend Monique (see below). She did not consider herself a fan, because she was not involved in fan activities. However, she found Bush's lyrics often relevant to her life in Singapore.

Babs responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine*. At the time of the interview during the summer of 1998 she was around 40, living with her partner (who shares her enthusiasm for Kate Bush) and 13-year-old son who thinks she is a 'really cool mum'. She considered herself a fan and a collector and was a member of the Homeground fan club. Babs had an immense interest in music and continued to discover new bands and artists, and commented on the fact that this is fairly unique among her peers who have by and large given up on popular music. In between completing the questionnaire and taking part in the interview she had also become a Spice Girls fan

Dagmar responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine* and was interviewed during the summer of 1998. She was in her mid twenties at the time and about to qualify as a teacher and to start research on Peter Hammill, a progressive musician. She was also a musician herself—originally trained as a classical musician, but now involved in progressive music. She did not consider herself a fan, partly because of her musicianship and because she believed in her own abilities. She had only been interested in Kate Bush for a few years, since her early twenties. Dagmar was one of several German respondents.

Florence responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine*. She is English, but has been living in the US since 1990. She was in her mid-thirties at the time of the interview during the summer and autumn of 1998 and worked as an assistant manager at a classical/jazz radio station in Kansas. She had worked as a radio disc jockey for many years, originally at a rock station, and although she was still interested in pop/rock music, she was beginning to appreciate classical and jazz as well. Florence had a Master's Degree in Radio and Television from San Diego State University. She did not consider herself a 'fan' because she did not 'idolise' Bush, but had strong personal and professional associations with the music.

Heather D. responded after reading my message to the Love-Hounds mailing list and was interviewed during the summer and autumn of 1998. She was in her early thirties at the time, British, but living in California where her husband had been working as a computer programmer for the past three years. Subscribing to the mailing list, she was aware of her 'insider' knowledge as an English woman, because most people on the list are American and therefore know relatively little

about Kate Bush. She considered herself a fan and a collector, and she was a member of the Kate Bush Club. Heather valued women's independence and strove for it in her own life and was therefore disappointed to discover that Kate Bush is hostile towards feminism.

Jane responded to the small ad in *Mojo* and was interviewed during the autumn of 1998. She was in her late twenties at the time and worked as a music researcher. Jane did not consider herself to be a fan, because she did not own all of Kate Bush's records, and did not follow her 'religiously'. She argued that her appreciation of Bush was something 'entirely private' and was therefore not a member of any fan clubs. Having known the music since an early age, she saw Kate Bush's career as almost 'a chronology of my life'. She also saw Bush as a strong role model, as someone who 'hasn't compromised', even if she was not necessarily able to translate this into her own life.

Krys responded to the message on the Irgendwo in der Tiefe website and was interview during the summer and autumn of 1998. Krys was in her late thirties at the time, and described herself as half Welsh/half Scottish and Celtic. Krys also used to be a singer-songwriter (she composed vocal melodies). She considered herself a Kate Bush fan, was a member of the Kate Bush Club, Homeground and Irgendwo in der Tiefe, and used to subscribe to the Love-Hounds mailing list. Krys was eighteen when she first discovered Kate Bush, which marked a turning-point in her music tastes. When she was younger she used to try and look like Bush, but now said to be happy to be herself. She was also a fan of Happy Rhodes, Tori Amos and Marillion.

Laura C. responded to the message on the Love-Hounds mailing list and was interview during the summer of 1998. She was in her early forties at the time, living in Illinois and married with a 2-year-old son and two step-children whose music tastes were of great concern to her. She worked as a counsellor at a University which made her aware of young students' interests and concerns, as well as of her own age to which she repeatedly referred. She considered herself a fan, because she liked almost all of Kate Bush's work, but was not a member of any fan clubs and only subscribed to the Love-Hounds list for information on a new release. She first discovered Kate Bush in her early twenties, and now especially appreciated the later albums because they are 'lyrically refined'.

Lynne responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine*, and we did a face-to-face interview at her home in London in August 1998. Lynne was in her late twenties at the time and was trying to establish a career as an actor/director. Lynne vigorously rejected the label fan, as well as any affiliation with a fan club, because she said she was not a 'follower' of anything or anyone. She had liked Kate Bush since she was nine, was very interested in Kate Bush's lyrics, but often felt she did not fully understand them. She was also concerned about sounding a bit 'mad' about her interest in Kate Bush.

I sent **Monique** a questionnaire after Angela told me that her best friend was a 'typical' fan. I interviewed her during the autumn of 1998. At the time she was in her early thirties and worked for the Singaporean government. Like Angela, she had been particularly interested in British pop music as well as German electronic

music during her adolescence. She considered herself a fan and used to be a collector. Although, like Angela, she found Bush's work relevant within a Singaporean context, she did not like her appearance and videos.

Nathalie responded to the message on the Irgendwo in der Tiefe web site; she was interviewed during the summer of 1998. At the time Nathalie was a student in her mid twenties. She described herself as bisexual. Nathalie considered herself a fan, because most of the songs touch her in one way or another, yet she did not belong to any fan clubs. She had liked Kate Bush since her teens, but used to listen more and identified strongly when she was younger. Because English was not her native tongue, being German, she experienced difficulties with the lyrics, but enjoyed figuring them out. She greatly enjoyed the dance element of Bush's work, and liked to recreate choreographies in her mind.

Vanessa responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine* and was interviewed during the summer of 1998. She was in her early twenties and studying to be a librarian in Brussels, Belgium, her native country. One of the youngest respondents, Vanessa was both a fan of Kate Bush and the Manic Street Preachers, because they are a strong influence on, for example, her reading. She was a member of various fan clubs—the Kate Bush Club, Homeground, and In the Morning Fog, and liked to collect as well. She once met Kate Bush at a film festival in Brussels and cherished the memory.

Virginia responded to the small ad in *Q Magazine*, after which we met for a face-to-face interview in London in October 1998. Virginia did a degree in music, and had been working on a career as a singer-songwriter since. She was the only interviewee who described herself as lesbian. She did not consider herself to be a fan and was not really interested in fan behaviour, partly because of her musicianship. At the time of our interview she was in her late twenties, looking for a new manager, and hoping to get a new record contract.

Appendix D

Musician-Fan Profiles

Five respondents, of whom I also interviewed three, described themselves as musicians. All five had made recordings, which I obtained during the research. Their practices of distinction are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

During the course of our interview during the summer of 1998 **Dagmar's** CD, which she had recorded at home, was pressed; she advertised for it on web sites dedicated to Peter Hammill and to progressive music. When I contacted her again approximately a year and a half later for some follow-up questions, she had just released a second CD. Dagmar described her music as follows:

> Laura V.: How would you describe your own music? (email interview, 25 June 1998)
> Dagmar: My own music: intense, quirky, vague singer-songwriter stuff. Piano skills rather rude, voice courtesy of thyroid treatment, very loud. Imagine a cross between Tori Amos and Peter Hammill. From the outside world, I've had all sorts of comments ranging from 'really accessible' via 'Progressive' to 'utterly weird'. (email interview, 27 June 1998)

She described her admiration for Kate Bush as follows:

> Laura V.: Could you say a bit more about the way in which you identify with Kate? (email interview, 25 June 1998)
> Dagmar: Identification with KT is mostly of the admiring sort—I see her as a woman who has gone her own way despite being discovered and touted by an 'old man' of the business. I don't think she ever put popularity above inspiration, and that's what I admire in her. (email interview, 27 June 1998)

Of the five musician-fans **Emma** was probably the only one whose music career could be classified as entirely professional. In 1998 she released her debut CD through a major record company (Warner Music UK) and enjoyed moderate critical success; reviewers frequently made comparisons with Kate Bush, Tori Amos, and Joni Mitchell.

Emma saw Kate Bush as a role model and also identified with her 'because of her control of her career even when very young—because of her domestic setting of recording' (questionnaire). She was particularly concerned about Kate Bush (as well as other female artists) not having any children at the time of the research and wondered whether this should prevent someone being a role model for her.

Heather R. had just issued a CD at the time of the research. She had her own web site through which I purchased my copy and which included reviews of the CD and live performances.[1] She described herself as a 'singer/songwriter/keyboardist' and her music as 'if you like Kate Bush, etc. you will probably like my music too (...) My own music doesn't sound like her, but I have been told my voice does' (questionnaire). A review for her CD *Just in Time*, as reproduced on her web site, ran as follows: 'She mentioned Kate Bush and Jane Siberry as major influences on her music, and indeed, [she] is firmly within this difficult-to-define genre—a branch of rock music pretty much invented by Bush and plied solely by women'. Heather R. called herself a fan because 'I have all of her albums, she has been an enormous influence on my own music, and I think she is just wonderful'

(questionnaire). However, she rejected other fan practices, such as collecting anything other than the albums. She identified with Bush 'in the sense that I would like to be able to do what I love—my music—and to make a living from that which I love. To be respected by my peers and audience, and to have the time to devote to my music as she does' (questionnaire).

At the time of our interview during the summer and autumn of 1998 **Krys** was no longer working on her music career, but after I expressed an interest she taped the record she once made. Krys believed that musically she had been more influenced by Tori Amos than Kate:

> Laura V.: Could you tell me a bit more about your own music, your writing and performing? Has Kate been a big influence in this respect? (email interview, 17 September 1998)
>
> Krys: As mentioned earlier, it was actually Tori who inspired me to finally get out there and write! However, Kate was a less direct influence. I have been told by a number of people, both friends and people in record companies, that they can hear similarities to Kate's own style of music— whether this is in the layered high backing vocals, or the lyrics I do not know. I don't think that, purely musically, there is too much Kate influence. (email interview, 28 October 1998)

Krys called herself a fan and was a member of a number of fan clubs, yet she also distanced herself from certain fan practices and characteristics. She believed that some sort of creativity is common among Kate Bush fans.

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[1] http://www.freecloud.com/heather/reviews.html#heather

Virginia did a music degree at University and has since worked on establishing a career as a singer-songwriter. She had once had a recording contract and released a CD, but the company had gone bankrupt a few years prior to the research. She taped the CD for me when I indicated liking her 'role models'. On the day of our interview she had had a meeting with a prospective manager. About any similarities with Kate Bush she said:

> Laura V.: What kind of music do you write?
> Virginia: I suppose actually, it stems from folk, Celtic, but I've often been compared—oh, I hate comparisons, they are dreadful!—but I've often been compared to Kate Bush in that my songs are quite unusual, they are quite ... not terribly accessible, sort of, on first hearing.
> Laura V.: Is that because of the music or the lyrics"
> Virginia: Structure, I think, yeah, (...) I'm nothing like her certainly the way I sound and everything, nothing like her at all, but I guess just in the sense that I do, like, everything ... singing, and I play ... and in the structure of the songs. And they're not always immediate, you know, slightly enigmatic. (interview, 27 October 1998)

Virginia was eager to distance herself from activities that she construed as too 'fannish'. However, she liked to read music books (autobiographies and histories) 'so I can relate to them as an artist myself + constantly broaden my perspectives' and wanted to find out about 'people who may buy/sell/criticize/market etc. my work' (questionnaire).

Appendix E

A Selection of Kate Bush Resources

Fan Clubs

The Kate Bush Club (KBC): This is the official fan club run by Kate Bush's family and friends since 1978. It periodically publishes Club Newsletters which often contain some material written by Bush herself.

Homeground: This is the fan club run by Krys and Peter FitzGerald-Morris and David Cross since 1982. They also edit the fan magazine *Homeground* which is currently published approximately twice a year.

Web Sites

http://www.gaffa.org This is probably the most extensive Kate Bush site and recommended by the Homeground fan club. It features selections from the Love-Hounds mailing list archives, a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), reviews and articles from magazines, interviews from television and radio appearances, a picture gallery, lyrics, and much more.

http://www.innerlight.demon.co.uk/ This site features information on fan gatherings in the UK (the so-called 'Katemas' gatherings which take place on or around the time of Kate Bush's birthday), and has reviews and pictures from past events.

http://www.clubi.ie/twomey/katebush.htm A fairly large site, also recommended by the Homeground fan club. It features a news update, a retrospective, pictures, and will soon feature information about artists Kate Bush has collaborated with.

http://itsnova.mach.uni-karlsruhe.de/~meiswink/katebush/ This is the *Irgendwo in der Tiefe* web site. It is affiliated to a German fan club. It features, in both English and German, news, messages/small ads from fans, lyrics, and pictures.

http://www.cogsci.ed.ac.uk/~rjc/hyper_cloud/cloudbusting.html *Cloudbusting—Kate Bush In Her Own Words.* This is an archive of Kate Bush interviews, categorised by subject.

Discussion Groups

The *Love-Hounds* mailing list and the usenet newsgroup rec.music.gaffa (these are different versions of the same resource). Discussion is not limited to Kate Bush alone, but also includes artists who have worked with her or who have been influenced by or compared with her.

There are several other discussion sites of varying sizes and aims, many of which have been established in the past few years. *Homeground* no. 65 identifies twelve, including *Gaffa*, a fairly popular one, and *The Window* which describes itself as 'for gay lesbian and bi fans, and allies' (quoted in FitzGerald-Morris, 2000: 7).

Appendix F

A Selection of Kate Bush Songs

'Wuthering Heights'

Out on the wiley windy moors
We'd roll and fall in green
You had a temper like my jealousy
Too hot too greedy
How could you leave me?
When I need to posses you
I hated you I loved you too

Bad dreams in the night
They told me I was going to lose the fight
Leave behind my wuthering wuthering
Wuthering Heights

Heathcliff it's me Cathy come home
I'm so cold let me in-a-your window

Oh it gets dark it gets lonely
On the other side from you
I pine a lot I find the lot
Falls through without you
I'm coming back love cruel Heathcliff
My one dream my only master

I long I roam in the night
I'm coming back to his side to put it right
I'm coming home to wuthering wuthering
Wuthering Heights

Heathcliff it's me Cathy come home
I'm so cold let me in-a-your window

Oh let me have it let me grab your soul away
Oh let me have it let me grab your soul away
You know it's me Cathy

Heathcliff it's me Cathy come home
I'm so cold let me in-a-your window

(Bush, 1978; reprinted in Bolton, 54)

'Babooshka'

She wanted to test her husband
She knew exactly what to do
A pseudonym to fool him
She couldn't have made a worse move
She sent him scented letters
And he received them with a strange delight
Just like his wife
But how she was before the tears
But how she was before the years flew by
And how she was when she was beautiful
She signed the letter

All yours Babooshka Babooshka Babooshka—ya-ya

She wanted to take it futher
So she arranged a place to go
To see if he
Would fall for her incognito
And when he laid eyes on her
He got the feeling they had met before
Uncanny how she
Reminds him of his little lady
Capacity to give him all he needs
Just like his wife before she freezed on him
Just like his wife when she was beautiful
He shouted out I'm

All yours Babooshka Babooshka Babooshka—ya-ya

(Bush, 1980; reprinted in Bolton, 27)

'Get Out of My House'

When you left the door was (slamming)
You paused in the doorway
As though a thought stole you away
I watch the world pull you away
(lock it)
So I run into the hall
(lock it)
Into the corridor
There's a door in the house (slamming)
I hear the lift descending
I hear it hit the landing
See the hackles on the cat (standing)
With my key (I lock it)
With my key (I lock it up)
With my key (I lock it)
With my key (I lock it up)

I am the concierge chez moi honey
Won't letcha in for love nor money
My home my joy
I'm barred and bolted and I
Won't letcha in

(Get out of my house)
No strangers feet
Will enter me
I wash the panes
I clean the stains away
This house is as old as I am
This house knows all I have done
They come with their weather hanging
around them
But can't knock my door down
With my key (I lock it)
With my key (I lock it)

This house is full of m-m-my mess
This house is full of m-m-mistakes
This house is full of m-m-madness
This house is full of full of full of full of
fight

With my keeper I (clean up)
With my keeper I (clean it all up)
With my keeper I (clean up)
With my keeper I (clean it all up)

I am the concierge chez moi honey
Won't letcha in for love nor money
My home my joy I'm barred and bolted
and I
Won't letcha in

(Get out of my house)
No strangers feet
Will enter me
I wash the panes
I clean the stains away
Woman let me in
Let me bring in the memories
Woman let me in
Let me bring in the Devil Dreams
I will not let you in
Don't you bring back the reveries
I turn into a bird
Carry further than the word is heard
Woman let me in
I turn into the wind
I blow you a cold kiss
Stronger than the song's hit
I will not let you in
I face towards the wind
I change into the Mule
'Hee-Haw'
'Hee-Haw'

(Bush, 1982; reprinted in Bolton, 34)

'All the Love'

The first time I died
Was in the arms of good friends of mine
They kiss me with tears
They hadn't been near me for years
Say why do it now
When I won't be around I'm going out?
'We needed you to love us too we wait for your move'
Only tragedy allows the release
Of love and grief never normally seen
I didn't want to let them see me weep
I didn't want to let them see me weak
But I know I have shown
That I stand at the gates alone
'I needed you to love me too I wait for your move'

All the love all the love all the love we could have given
All the love all the love all the love you should have given
All the love all the love all the love
The next time I dedicate my life's work
To the friends I make
I give them what they want to hear
They think I'm up to something weird
And up rears the head of fear in me
So now when they ring I get my machine to let them in

'I needed you to love me too I wait for your move'
All the love all the love all the love we could have given
All the love all the love all the love you should have given
All the love all the love all the love
'We needed you to love us too we wait for your move'

(Bush, 1982, reprinted in Bolton, 26)

'Mother Stands For Comfort'

She knows that I've been doing something wrong
But she won't say anything
She thinks that I was with my friends yesterday
But she won't mind me lying
Mmh because

Mother stands for comfort
Mother will hide the murderer

It breaks the case fear escapes and takes possession
Just like a crowd rioting inside—
Make me do this make me do that make me do this
Make me do that—
Am I the cat that takes the bird?
To her the hunted not the hunter

Mother stands for comfort
Mother will hide the murderer
Mother hides the madman
Mother will stay Mum

(Bush, 1985; reprinted in Bolton, 40)

'The Sensual World'

Mmh, yes,

Then I'd taken the kiss of seedcake back from his mouth
Going deep South, go down, mmh, yes,
Took six big wheels and rolled our bodies
Off of Howth Head and into the flesh, mmh, yes,

He said I was a flower of the mountain, yes,
But now I've powers o'er a woman's body, yes.

Stepping out of the page into the sensual world.
Stepping out ...

To where the water and the earth caress
And the down of a peach says mmh, yes,
Do I look for those millionaires
Like a Machiavellian girl would
When I could wear a sunset? Mmh, yes.

And how we'd wished to live in the sensual world
You don't need words—just one kiss, then another.

Stepping out of the page into the sensual world
Stepping out, off the page, into the sensual world.

And then our arrows of desire rewrite the speech, mmh, yes,
And then he whispered would I, mmh, yes,
Be safe, mmh, yes, from mountain flowers?
And at first with the charm around him, mmh, yes,
He loosened it so if it slipped between my breasts
He rescue it, mmh, yes,
And his spark took life in my hand and, mmh, yes,
I said, mmh, yes,
But not yet, mmh, yes,
Mmh, yes.

(Bush, 1989; reprinted on http://www.gaffa.org)

'Never Be Mine'

I look at you and see
My life that might have been:
Your face just ghostly in the smoke.
They're setting fire to the cornfields
As you're taking me home.
The smell of burning fields
Will now mean you and here.

This is where I want to be.
This is what I need.
This is where I want to be.
This is what I need.
This is where I want to be,
But I know that this will never be mine.

Ooh, the thrill and the hurting.
The thrill and the hurting.
I know that this will never be mine.

I want you as the dream,
Not the reality.
That clumsy goodbye-kiss could fool me,
But I'm looking back over my shoulder
At you, happy without me.

This is where I want to be.
This is what I need.
This is where I want to be.
This is what I need.
This is where I want to be,
But I know that this will never be mine.

Ooh, the thrill and the hurting.
Will never be mine.
The thrill and the hurting,
It will never be mine.
It can never be.
The thrill and the hurting
Will never be mine.

(Bush, 1993; reprinted on http://www.gaffa.org)

'Moments of Pleasure'

Some moments that I've had
Some moments of pleasure

I think about us lying
Lying on a beach somewhere
I think about us diving
Diving off a rock, into another moment

The case of George the Wipe
Oh God I can't stop laughing
This sense of humour of mine
It isn't funny at all
Oh but we sit up all night
Talking about it

Just being alive
It can really hurt
And these moments given
Are a gift from time

On a balcony in New York
It's just started to snow
He meets us at the lift
Like Douglas Fairbanks
Waving his walking stick
But he isn't well at all
The buildings of New York
Look just like mountains through the snow

Just being alive
It can really hurt
And these moments given
Are a gift from time
Just let us try
To give these moments back
To those we love
To those who will survive

And I can hear my mother saying
'Every old sock meets an old shoe'
Isn't that a great saying?
'Every old sock meets an old shoe'
Here come the Hills of Time

Hey there Maureen,
Hey there Bubba,
Dancing down the aisle of a plane,
'S Murph, playing his guitar refrain,
Hey there Teddy,
Spinning in the chair at Abbey Road,
Hey there Michael,
Do you really love me?
Hey there Bill,
Could you turn the lights up?

(Bush, 1993; reprinted on http://www.gaffa.org)

Appendix G

A Selection of Kate Bush Images

Figure 1: Kate Bush in WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Gered Mankowitz's
promotional photo of
Kate Bush: it stopped
the traffic. Literally.
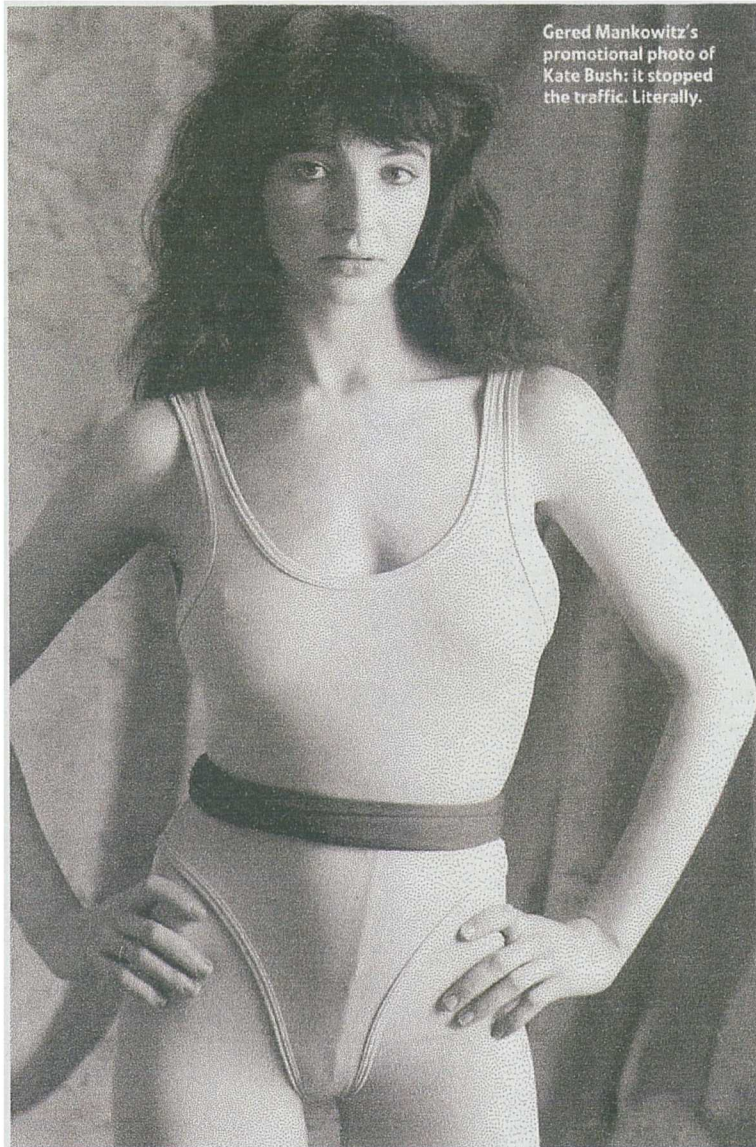
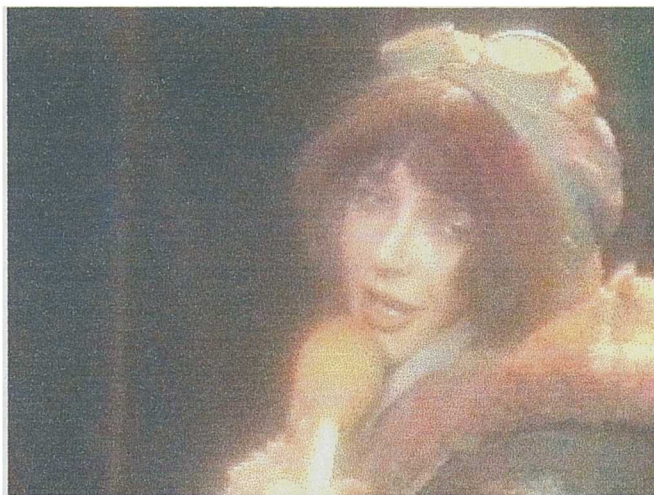Figure 2: Kate Bush in one of the infamous 'leotard' pictures

Figure 3: Kate Bush in THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES

Figure 4: Kate Bush performing 'Oh England My Lionheart'
at the Hammersmith Odeon

Figure 5: Kate Bush in BABOOSHKA

Figure 6: Kate Bush in SAT IN YOUR LAP

Figure 7: Kate Bush and male dancer in RUNNING UP THAT HILL

Figure 8: Kate Bush, dressed as a young boy, in CLOUDBUSTING

Figure 9: Kate Bush on the art work for
The Sensual World

Figure 10: Kate Bush in THE
SENSUAL WORLD

Figure 11: Kate Bush and black model on the art work for *The Red Shoes*

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