

**“THE WOMAN THAT WE ALL NEED”
Kate Bush in the eyes of American fans**

Bachelor's Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Populaarimusiikin fanittaminen on yksi jokapäiväisistä ilmiöistä länsimaaisessa kulttuurissa ja yhteiskunnassa. Kate Bush, brittiläinen muusikko, jonka ura on kestänyt yli kolme vuosikymmentä, on saavuttanut vankan fanipohjan ympäri maailmaa. Yhdysvaltalaisen Kate Bush -fanien ajatellaan kuitenkin olevan harvinaisia, sillä Bush ei ole saavuttanut Yhdysvalloissa musiikillisesti samanlaista asemaa kuten vaikkapa Euroopassa.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tuoda esiin Kate Bushin amerikkalaisia faneja, ja tutkia, kuinka he näkevät Kate Bushin artistina. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan Kate Bushin statusta osallistujien elämässä ja heidän emotionaalista suhtautumistaan Bushiin ja hänen musiikkiinsa. Tutkimus on luonteeltaan kvalitatiivinen ja aineiston analyysimenetelmänä käytetään sisällönanalyysia. Aineistona on kahdeksalta amerikkalaiselta Kate Bush -fanilta kerätyt narratiivit eli kertomukset. Osallistujia pyydettiin kirjoittamaan omasta Kate Bush -faniudesta omin sanoin etukäteen annettujen ohjeiden mukaan. Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että osallistujat määrittivät Bushin mm. suosikkiartistikseen tai artistiksi jota vasten muita muusikoita arvioidaan. Osallistujilla oli vahva emotionaalinen linkki Bushin musiikkiin, ja esimerkiksi kaksi osallistujaa kuvasi suhdettaan Bushiin pakkomielteeksi. Neljä osallistujaa kuvasi, kuinka Bush on vaikuttanut heidän henkilökohtaiseen elämäänsä ratkaisevalla tavalla. Yksi heistä koki Bushissa löytäneensä hyvän ystävän.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti, että amerikkalaiset Kate Bush -fanit näkevät kohteensa emotionaalisen intensiivisesti, ja että Bushin musiikki on vaikuttanut esimerkiksi osallistujien henkilökohtaisiin valintoihin. Jatkotutkimuksissa olisi oleellista tutkia Kate Bush -faneja ympäri maailmaa tai tutkia eroja Bushin fanien ja nykypäivän popmusiikin fanittajien välillä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Popular music fandom is an everyday phenomenon in Western cultures and societies. It is fairly easy to declare to be a fan of music one actively listens to. The list of best-selling music artists includes such performers as The Beatles, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson, and these artists still have solid fan bases, even though currently these performers' music is released in the form of posthumous productions or compilation albums. Being a fan is more than admiration or a positive reaction: it is an emotional connection one shares with his or her favoured musician, artist, or performer. Fandom can sometimes feel more intimate and personal than the relationships we share with our friends and family, and fans express their love and fascination towards their fan object in individual ways. In addition, fans view and interpret their chosen object of interest according to their personal preferences and needs.

Kate Bush (b. 1958), a musician and a best-selling recording artist from the UK, is an interesting choice of study because of her uniqueness as a musician and an artist. Kate Bush is synonymous with *auteur*, a French term that indicates artistic individuality and control over all elements of production, and this intriguing aspect of hers opens up a relevancy to study her fans and their interpretations of her as an artist. Kate Bush fans have been previously studied by Vroomen (2002), who has studied middle-aged female fans by focusing on, among other issues, their perception of Bush's performance of femininity. As Vroomen's study focused only on female fans of all nationalities, there is a need to consider also Kate Bush's male fans.

The present study is concerned with exploring the interpretation processes of a group of U.S. (henceforth American) Kate Bush fans, both male and female. The reason for rendering American fans significant as objects of study is based on Kate Bush's low commercial success in the USA. Based on this, I propose that American fans can offer interesting viewpoints concerning Kate Bush fandom as a whole. By analysing personal narratives of eight American Kate Bush fans, I will examine what kind of status Kate Bush has in the participants' lives and what kind of emotional connection the participants have with Kate Bush. The title of the present study is based on a lyric line of Bush's song 'Ken'.¹ As Bush

¹ We look to the left and to the right/We need help but nobody's in sight/Where is the man that we all need?/Well, tell him he's to come and rescue me. "Ken" (Bush, 1990, track 02)

sings in her song about a man that we all need, I propose that to her fans Kate Bush is the woman that they need. In the following sections, I will discuss the theoretical background of the present study, introduce the reader to the methods of the study, and, in the last two chapters, present and discuss the results.

2 BEHIND THE SCENES OF POPULAR MUSIC FANDOM

Popular music fandom is part of mass media fandom. Being a fan of musical artists Kate Bush, Britney Spears, Billy Joel, the comedy duo Martin and Lewis, or even the long-running soap opera “The Days of Our Lives” is to be a media fan. Media fandom is special in the sense that it differs from high culture appreciation (such as architecture, fine arts and classical music) and thus gives media fans a special place in our Western society. Usually deemed as deranged and irrational, media fandom is, in fact, an important part of our everyday lives, culture and society, in that it gives us valuable information on, among other issues, affection, relationships, values, class and gender. (Duffett 2013:2-3; Jenson 2001:9.) This section focuses on the theoretical implications of media fandom, and sheds light on terms *fan* and *fandom*, introduces the reader to previous Kate Bush studies relating to fandom, and includes a paragraph of Kate Bush’s artistic position in the United States of America.

2.1 Media fan and fandom

2.1.1 Defining media fan and fandom

Media scholarship, including fandom research and fan studies, is interested in studying and analysing explicit and implicit aspects of media fandom. According to Duffett (2013:2-3) fandom has always been an elusive area to study, posing challenging and complex questions to researchers, inspiring new thoughts and theories about social and personal identities in the context of media culture. Fandom research is a broad, multi-disciplinary body of scholarship, whereas fan studies (stemming from cultural studies) is a narrower area, and currently attracts more attention than fandom research. Jenson (2001:27) has observed that fan studies regards media fandom as a positive phenomenon and a positive

force in our culture and society, and stresses that fan studies is mainly concerned with questions related to fan communities and practices, both individual and communal. Both Duffett (2013:3) and Jenson (2001:27) maintain that the result of studying fandom is an increased understanding of ourselves as cultural creatures and a heightened awareness of the ways we work inside culture and create and engage in cultural relationships.

Before defining what media fan and fandom are, it is important to state what media fandom is not. Media fandom is not part of so called highbrow culture, as media fandom is strictly seen as the subculture of popular culture. The division between the appreciators (or, as Jenson (2001:20) puts it, *aficionados*) of classical music, fine arts and poetry (in other words, high culture), and people who love pop music and soap operas (popular culture) is a relevant one, and inspires questions about cultural hierarchy, power, social class and the position of media fans in our culture and Western society. As Hills (2002:xii), Jenson (2001:9-20) and Harris (1998:5) have pointed out, media fans have usually been seen as vulgar, tasteless, crazy and socially dysfunctional when compared with appreciators of high culture, and this has also been the stance in academic studies concerning fandom. In Jenson's (2001:27) findings, media fandom is nowadays beginning to be seen in a more positive light, and media fans are receiving scholarly attention as an intriguing and academically valuable group of people.

Duffett (2013:2) defines media fandom as the recognition of an emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture, such as a recording artist or a performer, for example Michael Jackson. The relationship, or connection, is seen as positive, deep and intimate by the fan, and involves a highly emotional stance towards the fan object, based on a process of identifying and investing. Duffett (2013:157) underscores, however, that the fan and the fan interest do not share a mutual recognition of connection, neither in quality nor in intensity, as the fan is not strictly in love with the object of interest, or vice versa, but with the pleasures and possibilities that he or she (or *it*, if the object of interest is, for example, a TV show) can offer to the fan via media. Duffett (2013:167) infers that the fan object is an intimate stranger, as fandom is not a matter of a real relationship where both sides would be investing an equal amount of time and energy and affection into the relationship, but strictly a one-sided continuum of emotion projected to the fan interest.

One could argue that fandom has two dimensions that constitute its cornerstones: that of the inner and that of the outer. From this it logically follows that the outer dimension expresses and strengthens the inner dimension, and vice versa. Duffett (2103:2-18) views the outer dimension as participation in practices that indicate fandom, such as buying and collecting records, watching every episode of a particular soap opera on TV, going to the movies to see a particular actor on the silver screen, designing personal scrap books around the preferred fan object and so on. Duffett (2013:30-31) establishes that the inner perspective is concerned with the emotional link that exists between a fan and the object of interest, and the whole existence and construction of an identity that is based on that emotional link. Each individual's fandom is always multidimensional, and practices concerning both the inner and the outer dimension are based on each fan's personal preferences.

2.1.2 Media fans as readers

Grossberg (2001:52) professes that both the outer dimension of fandom and that of the inner are synonymous with reading, and describes a fan as a reader and an interpreter of different texts that celebrities, musicians, actors and other mediated elements produce. Jenkins (1992:284) has also emphasised fandom's uniqueness in its ability to "celebrate exceptional readings." Duffett (2013:54) remarks that a musician's produced text can be, for example, his or her public image (whether natural or created, depending on the artist and the genre), a song, a live performance, a tour, a song lyric, an album cover, or anything else produced connected with that particular musician. In other words, fandom is a reading process whereby the fan is through involvement in the fan object's world making meaning of the various texts that the chosen object of interest produces.

As Duffett (2013:178-179) and Vroomen (2002:35) have highlighted, a fan reads and rereads his or her chosen object of interest and continually interprets the fan object and what the fan object produces in relation to his or her own life and also in relation to mass media culture, and actively negotiates meanings and identities whenever a shift in text occurs. Frith (1996:121) has brought to attention that popular music becomes useful in the audience's (the fans) ability to read and interpret it in relation to itself, not in relation to the artist who performs the music. A new meaning and a new interpretation become relevant and valid

when the performer or one part of his or her texts changes, and that is when the audience and every individual in the audience changes as well, and immediately a new process of meaning negotiation begins. Fans are always part of a process of reading and rereading, and a new interpretation takes place whenever the fan interest professes a change in one of his or her texts.

The difference between a fan and a non-fan or even a regular reader is best seen in intensity and quality. A fan is preoccupied with thoughts and actions related to the fan object, and constructs his or her identity or existence around the chosen fan interest. For example, a *regular* reader of Elvis Presley might, for instance, listen to his albums once, and then not pay any attention to him or his music, whereas a true Elvis fan would listen to his albums repeatedly, search information on him on the web, discuss him with other Elvis fans, collect magazines that feature him and decorate bedroom walls with pictures and posters of Elvis (the outer dimension), and *feel* and understand, whether consciously or unconsciously, that (s)he has a connection with Elvis and that, somehow, this connection is, if you will, larger than life (the inner dimension). (Duffett 2013:26.) In other words, a fan's inner and outer dimensions of fandom are always more intense, immediate and heart-felt than those of somebody who is not a fan and is not engaged in fannish practices.

Both Duffett (2013:19,79) and Grossberg (2001:52-53) accentuate that besides having different reading practices from a non-fan, a fan is also, as a reader, fundamentally different from another fan: there are no two identical fandoms or ways of reading, even if the object of fandom was the same. Fans can, at the same time, have similar practices concerning the outer dimension, but this does not mean that, for example, their inner dimensions were similar. Likewise their interpretations and negotiations of meaning can vary, not just in relation to one another, but also in relation to themselves as individuals. The interpretations depend largely on who is doing the reading, the context where the reading is done, and the purpose the reading serves in each fan's personal life.

Duffett (2013:79) remarks, however, that it is important to understand that a community of fans can perform similar interpretations of its chosen fan object. Each fan, through his or her reading, enacts the community's shared concerns, and this can result in similar readings and perceptions within the community. For example, in Lowe's (2004) article on Britney

Spears' female tween fans, two colliding interpretations on Britney are being made based on her songs: when discussing Britney's image, the interviewed fans declare that she is professing a too overtly sexualised image that the younger fans largely disapprove of and find disturbing. On the other hand, when Britney's song 'Sometimes' is being discussed, the same fans declare that they enjoy Britney's enactment of a different kind of image in this particular song when compared with her other songs (for example '...Baby One More Time'). In other words, the interpretations of Britney and her image get a different colouring depending on, first of all, the interpreters (in this case female tween fans of Britney) and, secondly, the context of interpretation (Britney's songs). These different interpretations do not, however, change the fans' emotional stance towards Britney Spears, and they still, despite resisting some issues relating to her image, remain her loyal fans. Thus, fans can build similar interpretations of their chosen fan interest, both positive and negative. Negative interpretations do not, however, diminish the quality of the fandom or decrease the fan object's value in the fans' lives.

In conclusion, being a fan is the recognition of a deep, heart-felt connection with a fan interest. The connection is highly emotional and is based on personal processes of identifying and investing. Each individual has his or her personal fandom, and expresses fandom in distinctive ways. As a reader, a fan is constantly interpreting his or her chosen fan interest in relation to his or her own life and also in relation to the surrounding media culture. Together fans are part of a community of readers, and their interpretations of their fan object can be highly similar and based on similar wishes, desires, and needs. The next section introduces the reader to Kate Bush fandom studies and Bush's artistic position in the USA.

2.2 Kate Bush fandom and Bush's artistic position in the USA

Kate Bush fandom has been previously studied by Vroomen (2002), who has studied Kate Bush fandom and practices of distinction among middle-aged female fans, offering a new perspective in understanding women's investments in popular music. Vroomen focused, among other issues, on the fans' perception of Bush's performance of femininity, and the importance of Bush's music in the participants' lives. Vroomen found out that female fans

view Bush as a feminine singer and performer, and that her music is of great importance to the participants in terms of self-image and self-confidence.

Kruse (1988) has studied reasons for Bush's almost non-existent popularity in the United States. Kate Bush became known to the UK audience in 1978 when her first single, 'Wuthering Heights' (written and composed by her when she was 18 years old) was released under EMI Records. Thomson (2010:93-94) and Kruse (1988:452) report that the single was a huge success in the UK as it maintained its number 1 position in the charts for four consecutive weeks. By the end of 1978 Kate Bush, having released two records (*The Kick Inside* and *Lionheart*) during the same year, was known all over the UK and Europe, and even had some success in Japan, but remained unknown to the American audience until 1985, when her first single from her fifth studio album, *Hounds of Love*, was released. Thomson (2010:204-205) and Kruse (1988:454) illustrate that 'Running Up That Hill' was the first song by Bush to reach the American radio waves, seven years after the release of her first single, and peaked at no. 13 in the *Billboard* charts of Dance Club Songs, and the album reached the thirtieth position on the *Billboard* album chart. Kruse (1988:454) identifies that since 1985, Bush has occasionally succeeded in the U.S. charts but has yet to achieve the kind of artistic position in the U.S. she enjoys in the UK and Europe.

Kruse (1988:454-456) offers three reasons for Bush's limited commercial success in the USA. Bush's inability to reach widespread recognition in the USA is, according to Kruse, mostly due to her English image and accent. Bush sings using her native accent and employs a fundamentally British image in her songs and performances, which is in stark contrast with the image of American singers and performers. Kruse also maintains that in terms of music genre, Bush is difficult to place under any label and does not fit with the American pop mainstream. Opportunities to see Kate Bush live have also been limited in the USA, as her first tour in 1979 was performed only to European audiences and her second tour in 2014 was held in London. In fact, Kate Bush has performed live in the USA only once, appearing as a guest on *Saturday Night Live* in 1978.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Aims and research questions

The present study investigates Kate Bush fandom in the lives of U.S. Kate Bush fans. By analysing personal narratives from eight American Kate Bush fans I will bring attention to personal fandoms and personal ways of viewing Kate Bush. The purpose of the present study is to explore Kate Bush's status in the participants' lives and investigate the emotional link the participants feel they have with Kate Bush and her music. The goal of the present study is to increase our understanding on popular music fandom generally, and our understanding on Kate Bush fandom specifically, through a consideration of American fans and their interpretations and perceptions of Kate Bush as an artist.

The present study is a qualitative one, aimed at finding out how Kate Bush is viewed in the eyes of American fans. There are two research questions, presented as follows:

- 1) What kind of status does Kate Bush have in the participants' lives?
- 2) What kind of emotional connection do the participants have with Kate Bush?

The following sections introduce the reader to the data collecting methods, data and participants, and, finally, to methods of analysis.

3.2 Data collecting methods

The data for the present study was collected by asking Katebushnews.com visitors to write their own personal Kate Bush fandom stories, that is, their self-portraits (narratives) of how they describe themselves as Kate Bush fans and their experience on being a Kate Bush fan. Self-portrait is a participant's own depiction of his or her own personal life, written in first person singular, directed by the participant's perceptions and experiences (Kalaja 2011:119). Katebushnews.com is a website run by Seán Twomey since 1998, and remains the most popular unofficial Kate Bush news website. Therefore, this website was chosen to reach as many Kate Bush fans as possible. I contacted Mr. Twomey via email, asking for permission to post my advertisement on his Kate Bush website. The permission was given, and so I sent

out a link for the instructions, and the ad was posted on the website and on its respective Facebook site (see Appendix B).

In the instructions I gave participants guidelines on how to proceed with their story but the guidelines were not meant as direct questions to which I expected answers. The main point of the guidelines was to help the participants set the story in context, that is, in the context of fandom, and help them think about their own personal Kate Bush fandom and how it is represented in their personal lives. The participants were also asked to fill out a form of consent (see Appendix A).

What I essentially was looking for was not the number of posters Kate Bush fans have on their walls, or how many of her albums each participant owns, even though these questions were represented in the instructions indirectly. What I essentially am looking for goes beyond materialistic possessions and collecting merchandise, and focuses more on the emotional links or impact the participants have with Kate Bush and her artwork and their overall perception of Kate Bush as an artist. This aspect was represented in the instructions in the final phrase: "Do not be afraid to be emotional: if you love Kate, let it show!" even though I could have and should have emphasised this aspect more than the questions related to owning Kate Bush items. The data collecting method, however, succeeded in achieving relevant and interesting data, as the participants took artistic liberties with their texts.

Kalaja (2011:119) and Hirsjärvi et al. (2009:218-219) inform that as a data collecting method, narratives and self-portraits have the potential of offering valuable information about the participants' emotions and experiences, without specific questions posed by the researcher hindering the flow of thought. On the other hand, narratives can offer limited perspectives, as participants do not always cover all possible points of view relating to their experience, and the description of personal experience can be very limited and one-sided.

3.3 Data and participants

18 responses (self-portraits) were received via email, from 10 male and 8 female candidates. The majority of the responses came from the USA (5 male, 3 female) and the Netherlands (3

male, 1 female). The remaining 6 responses arrived from the UK (2 male, 1 female), Poland, Brazil and Norway (0 male, 1 female in each).

The age of the respondents varied between 21 and 61. The age distribution of the male respondents was 43-61 (5 in their forties, 4 in their fifties, and one in his sixties), and of the female respondents 21-55 (one in her twenties, 3 in their thirties, 1 in her forties, and 3 in their fifties).

It was interesting to notice that the majority of the responses for the present study arrived from the USA, even though Kate Bush has not succeeded there commercially as well as in the UK and Europe. This shows the fervour and dedication of U.S. based fans which further supports choosing them as objects of study. Thus, the present study will examine only the self-portraits of the respondents that come from the USA. As mentioned above, 8 responses arrived from the U.S., 5 from male and 3 from female candidates. The age distribution between the male candidates is 45-56, and between female respondents 30-55. The participants have chosen to use their own names which are: Scott (age 45), Rick (47), Doug (51), Jamie (52), Dall (56), Cecilee (30), Meredith (43), and Lisa (55).

3.4 Methods of analysis

To analyse Kate Bush narratives in the light of popular music fandom, I use content analysis (see Appendix C). Content analysis allows me to conceptualise the answers and compile a theory behind American Kate Bush fans and their personal ways of viewing their fan object. All in all, my orientation will be abductive reasoning, meaning that I will not lean on previous research, but I will use previous research as a bridge to create new thoughts. Content analysis is a method that allows the analysis to go beyond the text and see what the person behind the text feels, thinks and does. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2013:96-97,104.)

I began my analysis process, which had five phases, by first *going through the data* (all in all 24 pages in A4 size) and *indexing everything that was tangent to my topic and research questions*. I collected the most relevant parts and reduced the data. *Reducing the data*, the third step in the whole process, means that I took the original expressions and gave them a word or a phrase as a title that best described the original expression. After this I *clustered the data*: I

took all the reduced expressions and created clusters. A cluster is a title given to the reduced expression. After creating the clusters, I started *the process of data abstraction*, which had three steps. First, I collected the clusters that seemed connected in one way or another and created labels out of them. One label can, for example, include three clusters. Labels are then given titles, and I call these titles themes. For this study I have two themes, because I have two research questions, and the themes and the questions are identical. Finally, when these themes are connected, we get a connection, and the connection is called, in this case, Kate Bush in the eyes of American fans.

4 KATE BUSH IN THE EYES OF AMERICAN FANS

The present study aimed to find answers to two research questions concerning American Kate Bush fans and their interpretations of Kate Bush as an artist. The questions were as follows: What kind of status does Kate Bush have in the participants' lives? What kind of emotional connection do the participants have with Kate Bush? In this section, I will present the results and the major findings of the study under two sub-sections.

4.1 "Kate's the One": Kate Bush's status

Kate Bush's artistic status is largely prioritised over other musical performers in the participants' lives. Table 1 below shows the results of the fans' interpretations of Bush's status and the rationale behind their perceptions. Four fans out of the eight expressed a stark contrast between how they feel about Kate Bush's music and other performers' music. Two fans directly stated that Kate Bush is their favourite performer, and one participant expressed her protectiveness of Bush's status as an original artist in the music world. One participant wrote that Kate Bush is the singer and writer all other musical acts are measured against, and can, therefore, be seen as a yardstick when it comes to the participant's musical preferences.

Table 1. *Kate Bush's status in the fans' lives.*

Kate Bush's status	Rationale	Frequency
A yardstick	Standard for enjoyable music	1 x male
A favourite performer	Love Relatability	2 x male
An original artist	Admiration	1 x female

In the example below, Rick (age 47) announces that he loves searching for new music but feels, emphasising the subjectivity of loving music, that he will never find a singer that would be more enjoyable than Kate Bush.

Example 1. Rick, age 47:

I love searching for new music, over the years no matter how many new bands I discover I feel that Kate is the singer and writer that all others are measured against. [---] I know that often music and movies we love the most deeply are cemented when we are young. I know a love of music is a subjective thing, without quantitative measure so it is unlikely I will ever find a singer that I enjoy more than Kate.

In the first example, Rick emphasises Kate Bush's status in his life when it comes to prioritising performers. To him, Kate Bush is the yardstick all other performers are measured against. He evaluates new music based on his opinion about Bush's music, and so far has not found a singer or a band that would be on par with his standards when it comes to enjoyable music. In this sense, Bush remains his most cherished singer. Below is an example of a male fan who favours Kate Bush over other musical artists and makes a clear division between Bush and other performers.

Example 2. Jamie, 52:

I left that day knowing that I had finally found a musical artist who spoke directly to me like no other artist has ever done, and that I had been initiated into something that was and still is very precious to me. On that day, I began a claim to Kate Bush as my favorite musical artist, a claim that would sit alone and apart from all of the other musical artists that I like very much. The "like" I have for other artists and the "love" I feel for Kate's music are really pretty far apart.

In the second example above, Jamie (age 52) declares that Bush is his favourite musical artist, and makes a clear division between Kate Bush whom he loves and other artists he likes. It is important to notice the choice of words: the word *like* is meant to describe the emotional link he shares with other artists, and *love* is solely meant to describe what he feels towards Kate Bush's music. *Love* is a strong word, and is loaded with multiple meanings. In the example it is accentuated with the phrase "The 'like' [---] and the 'love' [---] are really pretty far apart." This shows that the participant has placed Kate Bush mentally and emotionally in a different place than his other favoured artists. Kate Bush is, in other words, esteemed over other fan interests, and the feeling is so strong that it is described as love and the fandom itself is described as being precious to the participant. The feelings of love and preciousness are based on Bush's exceptional ability, in Jamie's mind, to speak directly to Jamie in ways other artists cannot.

In the third example, Doug (51) proclaims that he bases Bush's status as his favourite musical performer on relatability. Doug enunciates that it is rare for him to encounter a musical act that he can relate to in terms of thoughts and emotions. Bush, in his opinion, succeeds in this.

Example 3. Doug, 51.

In the years since, I have always considered Kate my favorite musical performer. She has continued to make music that is totally hers and yet, at the same time, music and lyrics that I can relate to. Rarely does a musical act come along where I have felt "Hey, I feel/think that way, too!"

With Bush, Doug feels that both her music and her lyrics are something he can relate to, and expresses the rarity of such an experience. He states that Bush's music is unique and *totally hers* but at the same time also accessible to him as a listener and a fan. This strong relatability affects Doug's choice naming Bush his favourite musical performer.

In the fourth example, Cecilee (30) insists that she admires Bush on the account of her originality. She also states that even though her personal musical tastes have changed over the years, her interest in Bush's music has not changed and will not change.

Example 4. Cecilee, 30.

Kate also has no other equal, and that is something else that I admire about Kate. I can't think of any other pop singers who would sound like her. Even when other singers are compared to her, it is only

because Kate and that other singer are slightly kooky, do something outside the mainstream, and/or they are female and British (especially in the case of another favorite group of mine, Florence and the Machine, who gets a *lot* of Kate Bush comparisons) [---] Since her [Bush's] music has been in my life for almost ten years, much has changed as far as my musical tastes go. I have grown out of some artists and fallen in love with others. But no matter what, her music always remains. I cannot imagine not having her music in my life.

Cecilee does not directly state that Bush is her favourite artist, but establishes her admiration for her and bases it on Bush's originality as a musician. She defends Bush's uniqueness and does not accept any comparisons that are being made of her and renders them irrelevant. Cecilee is eager to protect Bush's status in the music world, as she sees that there are no other artists that would be on par with Bush's original sound. Cecilee also wants to protect Bush's status in her personal life, and articulates that Bush's music will always remain in her life, even though her musical tastes might change. Her admiration for Bush is not based on a fleeting interest in a singer or a band but on a much stronger idea: Bush is a musical constant in Cecilee's life, and will always maintain that special status.

4.2 "All the Love": Emotional link with Kate Bush

In this section I will focus on describing and analysing the participants' emotional links they feel they have with Kate Bush and her music. An emotional link, in this case, refers to any type of emotional effect or impact Kate Bush has instilled on the participants. When analysing the participants' narratives, I found out that the strongest emotional links the participants feel they have with Kate Bush are obsession and the experience of an impact Bush has had on the participants' personal lives, which can be categorised in three ways. Two female participants described Bush's impact on their social lives, while two males reported on Bush's artistic and emotional impact. Table 2 below lists the results of the participants' experiences on having an emotional link with Bush and her music.

Table 2. Fans' emotional links with Kate Bush.

Emotional link	Rationale	Frequency
Obsession	Creative impetus, auditory and visual stimuli	1 x female 1 x male
Bush's impact socially as a constant presence	Bush's constant presence through her music, impact on personal choices	2 x female
Bush's impact artistically, as a mentor	Bush's role as a mentor in encouraging in artistic pursuits	1 x male
Bush's impact emotionally, as a great friend	Bush as a great friend through her encouragement to enjoy emotions	1 x male

Two out of the eight participants expressed their obsession with Kate Bush and her music. Obsession is a strong emotion and indicates a deep, profound fascination with a fan object. In the fifth example, Lisa (age 55) exhibits reasons behind her obsession with Kate Bush, which began when she found out more about Bush's career.

Example 5. Lisa, 55

It wasn't until a few years later that a friend of mine married a British chap who filled me in on her [Bush's] history. From that point on I was obsessed. I loved the storytelling in her lyrics, her unique arrangements and the obvious perfectionism on display. I loved the visuals on her album covers and videos. I admired the way she'd charted her own course and never caved to trend or public expectation. And of course, there was the astonishing four-octave voice and the rich, emotive piano. [---] The obsession never faded, even when she seemed to vanish for the twelve years between *The Red Shoes* (1993) and *Aerial* (2005).

Lisa's obsession with Bush is largely based on Bush's creative impetus and the whole creative world Bush allows the listeners to embark on with her albums. Her creative work is not limited to writing and composing songs, but extends to unique arrangements in the songs, to decisions about what the album covers should look like, and to visionary power that she also brings to her music videos. Lisa adds that she admires Bush's independency in creating her career and her uncompromising style when it comes to her creative work. It is this musical authority Bush professes over her work that intrigues Lisa and affects her in such a manner that Lisa describes her interest in Bush as an obsession. The obsession is

clearly a positive thing for Lisa, and not even the 12-year gap between albums has changed Lisa's mind in admiring Kate Bush.

Scott (age 45) also describes himself as being obsessed with Kate Bush, and declares to be a super fan. In the example below, Scott reports that he has been obsessed with Bush since he heard her compilation album *The Whole Story* (1986) at the age of 18.

Example 6. Scott, 45

On a whim, I decided to purchase *The Whole Story* to hear what Kate's earlier work was like. That is all it took to hook me! I was amazed at how the musicality of her earlier songs had been so forward thinking and was immediately turned on by Kate's unique "sonic library" (her ethereal vocal styling, integration of vocal percussion, and influences of ethnomusicology). I remember hearing 'Wuthering Heights' and thinking to myself, "I can't believe this song was a hit single in 1978. Why weren't we hearing things like this on the U.S. airwaves back then?" I felt that U.S. radio programmers had robbed me! From that point on (~1988) to the present, I've been obsessed with Kate Bush and definitely consider myself a super fan.

As with Lisa (see Example 5 above), Scott's obsession is based on Bush's creative work. Scott describes Bush's creative elements in her songs as being part of a sonic library and that the use of this particular library is what intrigues Scott in Bush's music. The obsession is thus based on auditory stimulus, and not, for example, on Bush's image or her visual work. Scott's experience therefore differs from that of Lisa's. Lisa's obsession is based on the overall creative work Bush produces as an artist, including both auditory and visual stimuli, whereas Scott bases his obsession largely on the sound world of Bush's creative work. Scott also identifies his disappointment in not having heard Bush's first single played in American radio stations at the time of its publication, and the disappointment is so strong that Scott compares it to robbery. Scott feels being robbed of something that later became important to him, and he feels he would have wanted to be exposed to Bush's music from the beginning. Scott's definition of himself as an obsessed super fan is a clear indication that Bush's music is important to him and that he has established a profound connection with Bush and her music.

Four participants described the impact Kate Bush has had on their personal lives. In Example 7, Cecilee reports that Bush has changed her life and that Bush's music is a well-established entity in her life.

Example 7. Cecilee, 30

Being a Kate Bush fan has really changed my life. She has shown me that music can be far more than predictable and safe nuggets of pop music. She has also shown me that it is okay to be yourself, no matter how weird other people might think you are. [---]No matter what, her music always remains. I cannot imagine not having her music in my life. It has followed me through my being on my own in France in 2006, my getting my first apartment and living on my own, and getting married. There is always something new to find in her music, and I look forward to more from her!

In the example above, Cecilee describes a fundamental impact Bush has had on her life: Bush has changed it. This is a strong statement, and in Cecilee's case the impact is seen in two ways. Bush has, first of all, changed the way Cecilee feels about music. She has learnt from Bush that it is acceptable to write music that differs from traditional pop music and that it is respectable to experiment with music and produce songs that deviate from mainstream norms. Bush has also impacted how Cecilee feels about herself in relation to other people. She writes that Bush has shown her that it is admissible to lead a life according to one's own preferences despite what other people's opinion might be. Kate Bush's music is also connected with important events that carry an emotional meaning to Cecilee, and she lists milestone events in her personal life where Bush's music has been a significant element. Cecilee's future prospects are filled with anticipation for more music from Bush, and she maintains that Bush's music is a constant presence in her life. This is an indication that Bush's music will continue impacting Cecilee's life and will have its place in future events.

In the example below, Meredith (age 43) announces that Kate Bush's music is responsible for *everything* in her life. She writes that she would not have her long term relationship, her social life and her career without Kate Bush. Meredith describes the night she heard Bush's music for the first time as *fateful*, as this was the moment her life started evolving in way that would not have been possible without Bush's music.

Example 8. Meredith, 43

The music of Kate Bush is literally responsible for **everything** in my life: my 23-year relationship, my career, my friends, and my best memories. I can't even begin to imagine what my life would be like if I hadn't heard *The Whole Story* on that fateful night back in October of 1987.

Bush's music has had a fundamental impact on Meredith's life. Her life has taken shape based on the choices she has made on account of Bush's music, and the consequences of these choices have been pleasant and positive. She is able to trace these choices back to

moments of listening to Bush's music, and describes the night she first heard Bush's music as *fateful*, which indicates a strong recognition of the impact of Bush's music on the participant's life. The impact Bush's music has had on Meredith is of such nature that she cannot imagine what her life would be like without it.

The third participant to describe Bush's impact on his life is Doug. In the example below, Doug recalls Bush as a person who made him think that it is acceptable to follow one's own artistic path, and that there is a place in the world for uniqueness.

Example 9. Doug, 51.

Kate was somebody who was so unique and individual that it made me think at the time (I was about 18 at the time) that there was place in the world for unique and individual people. As I was fairly active in writing poetry and fiction at the time, Kate made me feel that it was OK to follow my own artistic path.

In Doug's experience, the source of the impact is not directly stated, as Doug only makes mention of *Kate*. It is thus unclear whether the motivation came through the interpretation of Bush's music, her overall artistic persona, or from Bush as a private person with personal opinions seen for example, in interviews, or from the combination of all three. Nevertheless, *Kate* has been a positive force behind Doug's perception of himself as an artist, thus becoming a mentor and an encouragement for Doug to continue with his artistic pursuits. The more Bush has managed to reinforce Doug's artistic identity through her works, the more involved she is in Doug's life, and due to that more emphasis is placed on Bush's impact on Doug's side.

While in Doug's experience Bush can be seen as a mentor, in the tenth example Dall (56) claims that Kate Bush has been a great friend to him, for both his mind and for his spirit. Dall does not have a personal contact with Bush, but feels that he shares a connection with her through her music.

Example 10. Dall, 56.

Her emotional connection to her original works and Kate's sharing of her emotional range so powerfully has been a personal inspiration for me. Her songs strong yet subtle afford many listenings and helped me enjoy my own strong feelings. [---] For mind and for spirit, Kate Bush has been a great friend from afar.

In the example above, Dall states that Bush has been a great friend for him, which is a clear indication of a profound emotional connection he shares with Bush. The feeling of friendship is based on, first of all, Dall's interpretation that Bush is emotionally connected to her songs, and that she wants to share her emotions with her listeners. In other words, as a listener and a reader, Dall reads Bush positively and his description of Bush as a friend is based on the positive impact Bush has instilled on his life. Bush has been involved in Dall's life through her perceived encouragement to enjoy emotions, and this encouragement has been, for Dall, so positive and pleasant that Dall chooses to name Bush a great friend of his.

In conclusion, Kate Bush has an unwavering status in half of the participants' lives as far as prioritising performers goes, and she is given special labels to indicate how she stands in relation to other performers and musical acts. The participants view Kate Bush as a unique artist and regard her music as something that stands out and resonates with their personal musical tastes and preferences. Bush's music speaks to the participants in ways other artists' music cannot, and this affects the participants in giving Bush a special status in their lives.

Six participants reported on the emotional links they feel they have with Kate Bush and her music. Two participants described their link as an obsession, and four participants described the impact Bush has had on their lives, socially, artistically and emotionally. Through her music, Bush has become an essential element in the participants' personal lives, and her music carries pleasant consequences for the participants.

5 DISCUSSION

The results of the present study show, first of all, that Kate Bush is esteemed over other possible and potential fan objects. As Duffett (2013:157) has pointed out, esteeming a mediated element of popular music over other fan objects is a clear indication of identification: the participants view Kate Bush as resonating with their personal musical preferences and with wishes and needs that directly concern their personal lives. Kate Bush, through her music, offers pleasures and possibilities to the participants, and when the participants' needs are being met in Bush's music, the result is a feeling of love, resonance and strong relatability on the fans' side. This in turn influences the participants to place

Bush mentally and emotionally in a special place in their lives, and the fandom itself is cherished and valued. In other words, the participants' personal needs echo in Bush's music, and the more these needs are being met in the fans' interpretations, the higher the status Bush receives in the participants' lives.

Secondly, emotional connection with a fan object is an essential part of fandom, and is always related to personal reading processes, as Duffett (2013:2) and Grossberg (2001:52) have found out. The results of the present study show that the majority of the participants have an emotional link with Kate Bush and are engaged in reading her texts in various ways. Obsession with Kate Bush's music indicates a profound and intense connection which is not easily broken. In the case of the two participants, the obsession with Bush's music is based on visual and auditory stimuli, which means that these participants read, interpret and connect with Bush's work on account of her creative work. As Grossberg (2001:52), Duffett (2013:178-179) and Vroomen (2002:35) have underscored, as readers of Kate Bush, the participants construct and negotiate their identities based on the emotional interpretations they make of Bush's work, and the result is a strong connection the participants choose to call obsession. The interpretation of the connection as obsession is a result of perceiving Bush's creative work as resonating with the participants' personal preferences. Lisa (see Example 5 above in 4.2), for instance, mentioned that she is enthralled by Bush's visual work. This is an indication that there is an element in Bush's creative world that directly speaks to Lisa and creates an interpretation of Bush and her work as something that deserves closer inspection from Lisa's side.

In Duffett's (2013:178-179) and Vroomen's (2002:35) findings, fandom is a constant reading process whereby the fan is negotiating meaning in relation to his or her personal life. Cecilee's (see Example 7 above in 4.2) and Meredith's (Example 8) cases are clear indications of reading processes that have lasted for many years: they have read and reread Bush's music in relation to their personal lives, and each time the interpretations have been positive and the participants have gained a pleasant impact from Bush's presence. Cecilee regards Bush as a constant entity in her life, and she is expecting the reading process to continue in the future as well, and Meredith reported that it is impossible for her to picture a life without Bush's music, also indicating a continuous reading process. These positive descriptions

reinforce Bush's place and purpose in their lives, and also affect the participants' individual and perpetual needs and wishes to have Bush in their lives.

Thirdly, Grossberg (2001:52), Duffett (2013:54) and Frith (1996:121) maintain that fans engage in reading processes through involvement in the fan object's world. It is interesting, however, that in the case of Cecilee, Meredith, Doug (see Example 9) and Dall (Example 10) Bush has, through her music, also become involved in the participants' lives. The participants do not necessarily report on changes they have noticed in Bush's texts, and the interpretations based on those changes, but solely describe how Bush's music has been an essential entity in the changes and personal processes they have gone through in their lives. Through listening to Bush's music, the fans invite Bush's presence in their lives, and the more Bush's music manages to speak directly to their needs, the more Bush is regarded as affecting and impacting their personal processes. This is an interesting notion about Bush as an intimate stranger, who affects and impacts the participants' experiences solely through her music and the perceived thoughts and ideas her music arouses in the fans. It is noteworthy to understand that Kate Bush as an artist does not carry an inherent meaning; rather, it is strictly the fans who listen to her music that perform these interpretations of her in relation to their own lives. In other words, it is not Kate Bush as a person that is being invited in the participants' lives, but Kate Bush as an artist and more specifically her music or, if you will, the different perceptions of the personas she enacts through her music. It is then the influence of this invitation that causes the participants to react to her in certain ways, and the stronger the influence, the stronger the experience of Bush's impact on the fan's life. In the participants' experience, the influence has been highly positive and emotionally loaded, and this in turn has strengthened the participants' connection with Bush and her music.

6 CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that as cultural creatures, fans share a cultural relationship with Kate Bush solely through her published works and not, for example, through knowing her personally. The interpretations the participants make of Kate Bush carry special meanings to the participants as individuals, and the interpretations are based on the

participants' personal desires, wishes and needs. Kate Bush as an artist does not carry an inherent meaning, and therefore there are no right or wrong ways of interpreting her texts. Kate Bush's purpose in this regard is only to offer texts for the fans to interpret, and the purpose of the present study was to find out what kinds of interpretations the participants create of Bush on the basis of her artistic status and the quality of the emotional link they share with Bush.

The fans explore Kate Bush's world in their personal fandoms, and view and evaluate Kate Bush through the lenses of their personal preferences. The participants of the present study view Bush in positive terms and label her as a favourite performer, a yardstick, an object of obsession, a constant, a mentor and an encouragement, and a great friend. Through these labels Bush fulfils the fans' personal needs and reinforces individual fandoms and emotional connections the fans share with her published works. The result is willingness on the participants' side to continue their Kate Bush fandom, which equals a continuous reading process and a perpetual process of meaning negotiation whereby Kate Bush will, conceivably, receive new interpretations in the fans' minds. This, in turn, indicates that Kate Bush will have a purpose regarding the fans' future lives, and that Bush's presence through her music will continue impacting and influencing them also on a personal level.

The nature of the results may be due to various reasons. As the study coincided with Bush's second tour held in autumn 2014, which caused quite a hype among Kate Bush fans, the participants were eager to share their appreciation of Kate Bush, and the narratives were quite positive and highly emotional. On the other hand, fandoms are highly emotional relationships and a fandom that would be neutral in terms of its object is an unlike fandom. The nature of the results of the present study can, therefore, also be taken as a quite natural way of viewing an object of interest. The participants were also encouraged to write emotional narratives in the instructions, and the results might be due to that as well, even though the encouragement was included merely in one sentence (see Appendix B). Also, the tour might have encouraged some fans to take part in the present study as the tour and the hype concerning it might have made the fandom feel fresh again and, therefore, presented the participants with a motive to write positive fandom depictions. Also a task to write about one's own Kate Bush fandom might have, for some, felt like a proper means to

have a concrete representation of one's own fandom, and an emotional stance might have felt a fitting choice for that reason.

As the study concerned only eight participants, it is not possible to generalise the results to cover all American Kate Bush fans. The present study was, however, second in its nature concerning Kate Bush fandom, and first to cover also male Kate Bush fans. The present study brought valuable information about the interpretation processes of Kate Bush fans that are said to be in the minority on account of their nationality. Above all, the merit of the present study lies in its ability to show that a relationship between a fan and a fan object can be highly intense, and that a fan object can impact the fans' personal lives in major ways through his or her published works. The present study was able to identify the gap of future research, as it opened up space for research pertaining to male and female Kate Bush fans all over the world concerning all age groups. Varied research questions are also in place, as it would be relevant to explore the origins of Kate Bush fandom in each participant's case, and investigate fandom practices with the focus pertaining to, for example, extreme ways of practising one's own fandom. Within the context of media culture and popular music fandom, it would also be interesting to study Kate Bush fandom in relation to mainstream pop music fandom by comparing Kate Bush fans with a group of contemporary pop star fans.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participants' form of consent

Academic Research Permit Application

The author of the BA Thesis: Sara Nyman

The coordinator of the BA Thesis: Tuula Hirvonen

The University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Data collected for this BA Thesis will be processed anonymously. Participants' identity will remain protected. Data will be preserved in the University of Jyväskylä. Participants will be informed when and where the data will be used. The participant can at any point cancel his or her participation in the research project.

1. I give my permission that texts produced by me are collected and preserved.
2. I give my permission that texts produced by me can be used for research purposes.

Place:

Time:

Signature:

Print name:

Appendix B: Instructions for the narratives

Being a Kate Bush fan - What does it mean? Share your story!

I am a university student of English in Jyväskylä, Finland. I am doing my BA Thesis on Kate Bush fandom, and now I would like to ask you to write your own personal story on being a Kate Bush fan with the following instructions:

You are a Kate Bush fan – what does it mean to you and how does it show in your life? You can start with your first contact with Kate Bush –was it, for example, listening to her first single *Wuthering Heights* in 1978, or did you become aware of her when *Hounds of Love* was released? Continue describing your relationship with Kate and yourself as a fan based on your own experiences and perceptions. You can, for example, describe what it means to you to be a Kate Bush fan, and how it shows in your life: do you, for example, listen to her music every day, do you purchase magazines that include her interviews, do you have posters of Kate on your walls, or do you take part, for example, in *the Sensual Walk* event? Or any other things that belong to your Kate Bush fandom!

You are the main character of your story, and you choose what to include in your story and in what order. Write openly and honestly. Complete your story with illustrative examples. Write in English in your own style and in your own voice. The story does not have to be grammatically perfect, and you do not have to worry about writing grammatically correct English. Do not be afraid to be emotional: if you love Kate, let it show!

Please write about 1-5 pages in English. Font size 12, line spacing 1,5. Please include information on your age, gender, and nationality.

Please send your story on being a Kate Bush fan to katebushfandom@gmail.com

By: 7th of December, 2014.

Data will be used for research purposes, and data outcomes will be processed anonymously. Please see Academic Research Permit Application *here*:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B88M4ltKIKdVbURaWVVzdlhTdU0/view?usp=sharing>

Please print the Application and scan or take a photograph of it and send it together with your story as an attached file.

Contact information for further inquiry: sara.g.m.nyman@student.jyu.fi

Contact information of the coordinator:

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Appendix C: Methods of analysis

Content analysis

- 1) Reading through the material (24 pages in A4 size)
- 2) Indexing/coding all the interesting points (according to the research questions*)
- 3) Reducing the data
- 4) Clustering the data
- 5) Data abstraction

*What kind of status does Kate Bush have in the participants lives?/What kind of emotional connection the participants have with Kate Bush?

The process of analysis

- 1) Reading
- 2) Indexing/coding (original expressions)

"On a whim, I decided to purchase *The Whole Story* to hear what Kate's earlier work was like. That is all it took to hook me! I was amazed at how the musicality of her earlier songs had been so forward thinking and was immediately turned on by Kate's unique 'sonic library' (her ethereal vocal styling, integration of vocal percussion, and influences of ethnomusicology)." (Male, 45)

"She has continued to make music that is totally hers and yet, at the same time, music and lyrics that I can relate to. Rarely does a musical act come along where I have felt "Hey, I feel/think that way, too!" (Male, 51)

3) Reducing the data

Original expression	Reduced expression
I love searching for new music, over the years no matter how many new bands I discover I feel that Kate is the singer and writer that all others are measured against.	Kate Bush as a yardstick
It wasn't until a few years later that a friend of mine married a British chap who filled me in on her [Bush's] history. From that point on I was obsessed.	Obsession with Kate Bush

4) Clustering the data

Reduced expression	Clusters
Kate Bush as a yardstick	Kate Bush as a yardstick
Kate Bush as a favourite performer	Kate Bush as a favourite performer
Obsession with Kate Bush	Obsession with Kate Bush
Kate Bush's impact socially	Kate Bush's impact

5) Data abstraction

Clusters	Labels	Themes
Kate Bush as a yardstick Kate Bush as a favourite performer Kate Bush's originality	STATUS	KATE BUSH'S ARTISTIC STATUS IN THE PARTICIPANTS' LIVES
Obsession with KB KB's impact socially KB's impact artistically	EMOTIONAL LINK	PARTICIPANTS' EMOTIONAL LINK WITH KATE BUSH

CONNECTION
Kate Bush in the eyes of American fans

Appendix D: Kate Bush's selective discography

The Kick Inside, 1978

Lionheart, 1978

Never for Ever, 1980

The Dreaming, 1982

Hounds of Love, 1985

The Whole Story, 1986

The Sensual World, 1989

The Red Shoes, 1993

Aerial, 2005

Director's Cut, 2011

50 Words for Snow, 2011