IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION AND COMMUNITY

IN

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By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

MASTER OF ARTS (2005)   McMaster University

(Music Criticism)   Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Identity, Representation and Community in Lilith Fair

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 153

ABSTRACT

Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music was the first all female music festival to tour North America. Its founder, Canadian singer/songwriter Sarah McLachlan, hoped that Lilith Fair would demonstrate the "great and diverse music being made by women." What was immediately apparent in the inaugural 1997 tour, however, was the predominance of white singer/songwriters. As a consequence, the festival did not celebrate a diverse range of women musicians, but rather a particular "women's music" community informed by the patriarchal ideology of "Woman" and respectability. The white, middle class, heterosexual woman performer was the norm at Lilith Fair; in addition, the predominance of singer/songwriters guaranteed a particular construction of the body: contained and constrained. Furthermore, as Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 attempted to diversify the festival's line-up, the notions of diversity and difference were enacted in specific and problematic ways, reproducing the racial duality white/black and enforcing this hierarchy by the way in which the festival utilized physical space.

This thesis locates Lilith Fair in ideologies of gender, race, class, sexuality and community in order to investigate how the music and extra-musical activities of Lilith Fair constructed this particular "women's music" community. By considering the festival's relationship to the notion of respectability, the problems of representation this invokes are explored, especially with respect to the position of women musicians in popular music. The musical performances are then examined as a space in which the women musicians were able to both resist and invest in respectability. Finally, the representation of Lilith Fair in the print media is critically examined in terms of how this discourse evoked gendered hierarchies, marginalizing the significance of Lilith Fair.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Susan Fast, for her patience, support and encouragement throughout this process. Her meticulous editing pushed me to "unpack" the myriad of issues this topic presented and to think and write carefully and critically. I am also indebted to Dr. Catherine Graham for the interest she showed during the researching and writing of this thesis and her willingness to lend resources and discuss ideas, as well as Dr. Christina Baade and Dr. James Deaville for their enthusiasm and support throughout the course of this program.

Finally, I must thank my family and friends not only for their patience and love, but for enduring my feminist readings of various extra-curricular activities while we were supposed to be "taking a break." In particular, thank you to my sister Catherine for her tolerance and sense of humour during the past two years, and Brad, for listening patiently while I sorted through my thoughts and monopolized his computer. Last, but most certainly not least, I must thank my parents. Their love and support has given me the strength and confidence to complete this project and continue on to the next.

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PREFACE

Lilith Fair was a music festival founded by Canadian singer/songwriter

Sarah McLachlan that toured North America during the summers of 1997, 1998

and 1999. The festival included 57 women performers in 1997, this number grew

to 155 in 1998 and dropped to 133 in 1999. A one-day event, Lilith Fair typically

played one day in each city it traveled to, two days in larger cities such as

Toronto, Canada. The festival primarily took place in amphitheatres, utilizing

three stages - the Main Stage, Second Stage and Village Stage - to

accommodate the 11-12 performers who played each date. The venue's stage

served as the Main Stage, the Second Stage was typically located beside the

Main Stage or amongst the seats and the Village Stage was constructed in the

Lilith Fair Village, an area located at the entrance to the venue in which audience

members could purchase souvenirs and find information concerning various

women's issues. Each date played began with three consecutive performances

on the Village Stage, followed by three on the Second Stage and then five to six

on the Main Stage.

Although it was widely featured and reviewed in a myriad of journalistic

literature, scholarly critique of Lilith Fair has been strikingly absent. With the

exception of an essay by Kalene Westmoreland that compares third wave

feminism in Meredith Brooks' "Bitch" and Lilith Fair, and a passing mention by

Linda Lister in her article on female popular musicians and the book *Girls Rock*

(2004), academic attention to this festival has yet to be paid.[1] I was immediately

struck by this absence during an independent study of women in popular music.

I had, perhaps naively, expected to find a wealth of discussion around this

festival. Although certainly not the first all-female music festival, Lilith Fair was

the first all-female music festival to *tour* North America.   That is, surely, no small

feat. What I failed to consider, however, was the possibility that despite the

significance of this festival, it was still perceived as a "women's music" festival.

This is a category that will be carefully scrutinized in the following chapter, for

now it should be said that "women's music" is a notion both steeped in patriarchal

ideologies and linked to the lesbian-feminist challenge to patriarchy in the 1970s,

positioning women musicians in popular music in a very particular, marginalized

manner. Accordingly, female popular musicians struggled to gain visibility and

representation within an industry that actively silenced them. Lilith Fair was not

only a "women's music" festival, but as the journalistic literature was quick to

point out, Lilith Fair was undeniably 'white.' Perhaps it is this glaring problem of

representation or the festival's status as a "celebration of women in music" and

the resulting tendency to marginalize female popular musicians that has

engendered such a sweeping dismissal. Whatever the reason, this dismissal has

consequently brushed aside the politics of representation that were so visibly,

and even invisibly, played out in Lilith Fair, politics that are deeply imbedded in

social and cultural practices beyond that of the popular music industry.

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[1] These sources are listed in the Bibliography under Scholarly Sources.

This thesis addresses the politics of representation and community in Lilith Fair that have otherwise been ignored. In doing so, the festival is located in ideologies of gender, race, class and sexuality in order to explore how these issues operate in society and how they are mapped onto popular music, situating Lilith Fair in relation to this broader context. By removing Lilith Fair from the margins of popular music and situating it in a social and cultural context, the festival cannot be dismissed as simply "a celebration of women in music." Rather, it can be acknowledged as a cultural production in which the politics of identity and representation were played out both musically and extra-musically. From this perspective, the women and musics included and heard will be discussed and critiqued as voices and texts both imbued with and actively producing social and cultural meanings, while negotiating the boundaries of gender, race, class and sexuality.

Chapter One: Theorizing Lilith

Lilith Fair was not simply a "celebration of women in music," but a direct response to McLachlan's experience in the popular music industry. First and foremost amongst the discriminatory practices cited by McLachlan was her management's refusal to allow female singer/songwriter Paula Cole to open for McLachlan's *Surfacing* tour in 1996.[1] Responding to the popular music industry's deeply embedded notion that multiple females on a single concert bill would not be a profitable venture, Lilith Fair was constructed as a vehicle to disprove this idea. Not only did Lilith Fair prove profitable enough to tour in subsequent years, 1998 and 1999, but outsold all other touring music festivals of 1997; this included the male dominated rock and punk festivals, Lollapalooza, HORDE and Summersault.[2]

The resistance to an all-female bill is based on the idea that music composed and performed by women constitutes "women's music" and will not appeal to the mainstream or sell tickets. Stemming from this notion is the frequently enlisted label "women in music," as evidenced in Lilith Fair and throughout the popular music industry. What is at stake here? Why is it necessary to reference women musicians as being "in music" as if they are not an accepted part of it? Music's secondary placement consequently marginalizes it, implying that those included in "women's music" are women first, musicians

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[1] Buffy Childerhose, *From Lilith to Lilith Fair* (Vancouver: Madrigal Press, 1998), 19.
[2] Lorraine Ali, "Backstage at Lilith," *Rolling Stone*, 4 September 1997, 28.

second. This constructs a distance between women and music; they are women

and they are musicians, two separate and distinguishable identities. Thus, these

labels imply that music is a masculine domain through the very absence of a

correlating signifier, the invisibility of maleness positioning it as normative. Music

is now a domain women must trespass in order to participate. What this betrays

is a resistance to a female presence in music that can be traced back to the

middle ages.

Carol Neuls-Bates found that in the fourth century women were excluded

from singing in churches and synagogues; separate convents were the only

space in which women could make music. It was not until the late sixteenth

century that women established themselves as professional singers in

mainstream Italy. Concurrently, the use of castrati came into favour, men

castrated before their voices changed in order to allow them to sing in the alto

and soprano range, preventing women from participating in opera until the

eighteenth century.[3] It was at this time, and within high culture, that reason was

coded as masculine, artistic imagination as feminine.[4] Intersecting with the

gendering of reason and imagination was the prevalent trope that conflated

music's power with the perceived erotic power of the female body. With the

emerging romantic ideologies of the nineteenth century, male musicians reacted

to this paradigm in a myriad of ways in an attempt to masculinize the perceived

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[3] Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), xii.
[4] Suzanne Cusick, "Gender, Musicology and Feminism," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 478.

feminine nature of music. The "rational" aspects of music were actively promoted

through the construction of music as objective and universal, attributes

considered masculine.[5] This is clearly evidenced in George Upton's *Woman in*

Music, in which Upton finds music to be an exact science, mercilessly logical and

relentingly mathematical and thus incongruous with the feminine poetical

imagination.[6] Upton then suggests that for women,

> To confine her emotions within musical limits would be as
> difficult as to give expression to her religious faith in notes.
> Man controls his emotions, and can give an outward expression
> of them...Woman reaches results mainly by intuitions. Her
> susceptibility to impressions and her finely-tempered organization,
> enable her to feel and perceive, where man has to reach result by
> the slow processes of reason...She will always be the recipient
> and interpreter, but there is little hope she will be the creator.[7]

Upton's division of the artistic and rational clearly removes women from the

arena of composition, limiting them to that of the performer or listener. As

women can only *receive* music, the feminine nature of music is removed and

replaced with masculine reason. Similarly, Suzanne Cusick highlights an

interesting passage taken from Waldo S. Pratt's essay "On Behalf of

Musicology."

> The artistic is the side of practical action, largely controlled
> by intuition, feeling, imagination; while the scientific is the
> side of logical or rational examination, descriptive analytic,
> definitive, philosophical.[8]

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[5] Cusick, 478.
[6] George Upton as cited in Neuls-Bates, "A Classic Formulation of the Theory of Women's Innate Inferiority," In *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 207-209.
[7] Upton, 207-209.
[8] Cusick, 479.

By aligning musicology with the scientific, Pratt renders the artistic elements of music scientific, removing any trace of the "feminine." While these two examples highlight the resistance to female composers and the effort to exclude women from music, Susan McClary cites the construction of the "madwoman" in opera and the matrices of desire present in Heinrich Schenker's model of analysis as revealing music to be a site that simultaneously excludes women from the practice of music and betrays a deeply embedded fear of women. McClary also points to the 1970 edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, in which the masculine/feminine dichotomy is mapped onto strong and weak cadences. This is compounded by the construction of the masculine cadence as normal, positioning the feminine presence as abnormal.[9] These historical examples highlight the fear the feminine presence posed to the masculine identity of music and the resistance this engendered.

The above discussion is unfortunately strikingly relevant to the situation of women popular musicians today, despite the "age" of the examples. The resistance to female musicians and their status as "other" within music is evidenced in both McLachlan's experience as a popular female musician and the release of compilation recordings such as the *Women and Song* series following Lilith Fair. Other all-female touring music festivals have also been produced since the success of Lilith Fair. Chicks with Attitude and First Ladies Tour, both

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[9] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 11.

touring during the summer of 2004, are two such examples. Although they do

not directly reference "women in music" in their titles, gender is still given primacy

as a means to signify what these tours are about. This is particularly

troublesome given the absence of a correlating practice regarding 'Man'

musicians, tapping into Judith Butler's notion of origin and copy,

> Masculine is the more 'basic' and original form, it is also
> seen as the authentic and natural form of the origin. As
> a result, women are seen as an imitation, an inauthentic
> copy of the masculine original.[10]

Following this, a set of binary oppositions are enacted through the practice of

identifying gender solely in relation to women musicians that always collapse

back onto the man/woman dichotomy: origin/copy and authentic/inauthentic.

Female musicians are consequently an inauthentic copy of the natural, male

musician. If we return to the idea that "women's music" and its variations

distance women from music, therefore producing two distinguishable identities,

we can see that it removes women from music, marginalizing the feminine

presence and the threat this poses to the perceived masculine identity of music.

Thus, even when women are "in music," the construction betrays the fact that

women are not an accepted part of this arena as they are now "in" it, but have

not been or are not always and hence must be described as being "in music."

Therefore they are never really in music, but positioned at its margins.

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[10] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 92.

There are two final but important examples to consider in relation to "women's music" and Lilith Fair. While "women's music" is undoubtedly steeped in patriarchal ideologies, it is also linked to the "women's music" festivals of lesbian-feminists in the 1970s and the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990s. The utopian world lesbian-feminists envisioned in the 1970s was not only based on socialist ideals and opposed patriarchy, but identified as "women's" as a means of linking this community to the nurturing and loving characteristics associated with women.[11] Festivals such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival were modeled on the counter-culture of the 1960s, consisted of folk singer/songwriters, and included workshops that attempted to raise and solve lesbian-feminist issues.[12] Riot Grrrls, on the other hand, emerged in 1991 from the underground music communities of Olympia, Washington and Washington, DC.[13] Bands participating in this movement appropriated "girl" as a positive and powerful term and challenged traditional conventions of performance and feminine display, often writing "slut" and "whore" on their bodies as a means of diffusing the negative connotations of the terms, as well as performing topless.[14] Lilith Fair was not only positioned in relation to "women's music" as a patriarchal category, but must be considered within the context of these two significant "women" identified movements. As we will explore shortly, Lilith Fair constructed

[11] Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 218.
[12] Faderman, 221.
[13] Marion Leonard, "Feminism, 'Subculture' and Grrrl power," in *Sexing the Groove*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 230.
[14] Leonard, 232-234.

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itself in relation to respectability and heterosexuality and was therefore positioned quite differently than the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and Riot Grrrls, movements/events that foregrounded discourses of sexuality and challenged traditional femininity. As such, the relationship between these events will be considered in terms of how Lilith Fair negotiated these resistant and subversive discourses.

Particularly interesting is Lilith Fair's resistance to the gendered practices of concert billing implicitly challenges the notion of "women's music." Despite this, the festival was still titled *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*. An examination of Lilith's story and why she was chosen to represent the festival will provide some clarification here. Because the tour was constructed around a challenge, a resistance to gendered practices within the music industry, McLachlan decided to name the festival after the biblical figure Lilith whose resistant story she felt suited the purpose of the festival.[15] Lilith is purported to be the first woman God sent to Adam in Eden.[16] Lilith, however, refused to be placed in a position of subservience to Adam and was promptly removed from Eden by God. She was then forced to give birth to the devil's spawn daily and, if she did not return to Adam in Eden, one hundred of her children would be killed each day.[17] Lilith did not return. What is striking about this story as told by McLachlan in the book *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*, is her

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[15] Childerhose, xii.
[16] Ibid, xiii.
[17] As described by Sarah McLachlan in Childerhose, xiii-xiv.

omission of the conclusion of the story, in which Lilith is vilified and called a demon. McLachlan states that she used the part of the story that she thought could best guide women in their lives.[18] The original story, then, is rewritten in a manner that removes traditional stereotypes that link women with notions of evil and frames the story solely around Lilith's act of resistance. Mapped onto Lilith Fair, resistance becomes the central theme. Moreover, the part of the story that recounts Lilith's anger for being removed from Eden is conveniently omitted in McLachlan's version. Not only is Lilith Fair able to distance itself from the notion of evil, it also evades the construction of anger, exemplified by the inclusion of celebration. In choosing a story that lacks the connotation of anger and rewriting it in a manner that bypasses constructions of feminine excess and irrationality that would link it to the body, McLachlan removes constructions that would marginalize and devalue the festival.[19] What we see is a resistance to patriarchy that is nonetheless informed by it, as both the story and festival are constructed according to traditional notions of femininity in an effort to evade constructions that would marginalize the festival as a representation of feminine excess. Not only this, but by aligning with traditional notions of femininity Lilith Fair simultaneously distances itself from the lesbian-feminist "women's music" festivals of the 1970s as well as the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s, relationships that will be taken up more thoroughly in the following chapters.

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[18] Childerhose, xiii.
[19] As Chapter Four will examine, however, coverage of Lilith Fair in the print media did just that.

Inherent in *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*, then, is an opposition

one may not expect to find. The resistant figure of Lilith is placed next to "women

in music," Lilith's resistance to patriarchy placed next to the patriarchal

construction "women in music." Thus, the festival's resistance of a patriarchal

industry as symbolized by Lilith appears to be contained within patriarchal

ideologies. This is a key idea that will be taken up following a discussion of who

these "women in music" are and therefore who it is that is making this challenge.

Although this is a festival designed by a woman musician and performed

by women popular musicians, Woman/woman/women are complex and

problematic categories regardless of the context in which they are placed.

Feminist literature thoroughly exposes the problems inherent in the construction

of the category "Woman" and, subsequently, "woman" and "women." Rooted in

enlightenment models of thinking, "Woman" was constructed as the inferior

"other" to "Man," one of a series of binary, hierarchical oppositions constructed in

the seventeenth century. Based on this social construction of inferiority and

"Woman's" subsequent alignment with nature and the body, feminists have

established that these hierarchies are not rooted in biological fact but are, rather,

social fictions. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, "one is not born a

woman but becomes a woman" encapsulates the challenge feminist thinking has

raised to the idea of "Woman" as biological fact. [20] Judith Butler has established

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[20] Cited in Monica Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman," in *Feminisms*, ed. Sandra Kemp & Judith Squires (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 220.

that gender is socially constructed and performed. As a series of repeated acts, "gender cannot be understood as a role which expresses or distinguishes an interior 'self'…but constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority."[21] Thus, not only is "women in music" a social construction, the very notion of "woman" is rooted in patriarchal ideologies that place women in an inferior position to men. Moreover, "Woman" is rooted in the idea of biological essence, producing a social fiction that marginalizes and obscures differences between women. This is a critical proposition in relation to "Woman," as the link to biology constructs the implication of heterosexuality. As this suggests, reduction to biology renders subjectivities invisible and "women" unstable as a collective, a collective in which women are very differently positioned. This is seen in "women's music" as its embeddedness in the binary opposition of man/woman serves to marginalize the differences between women, race, class and sexuality all collapsed onto gender and rendered invisible.

The categories of Woman/woman/women, then, fail to acknowledge the intersection of gender with race, class and sexuality and how these identities position women differently. By invoking "Woman" in its title, then, Lilith Fair runs the risk of not representing a range of women musicians, but rather a particular *white* "woman." This is clearly demonstrated by who played the festival, an issue that will be taken up and critiqued in Chapter Two. For now, however, Richard

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[21] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. S. Case (New York: Routledge, 1990), 279.

Dyer's work around whiteness clarifies how "Woman" is socially coded as white.

Dyer posits that whiteness is both visible and invisible. Whiteness must been

seen in order to accrue privilege, but the resulting position of power must be

invisible. This dichotomy results in the production of white as colourless and thus

it is excluded from racial discourse.[22] The very absence of racial discourse

pertaining to "Woman," then, constructs whiteness. Following this, George

Lipsitz explores how the "possessive investment in whiteness" produces social

hierarchies.[23] Contending that one invests in their whiteness and obtains

tangible, material benefits in terms of wealth, property and, more symbolically,

opportunity, whiteness then is produced as an "unmarked category against which

difference is constructed."[24] As Stallybrass and White find,

> A recurrent pattern emerges, the 'top' attempts to reject and
> eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only
> to discover that it is in some way frequently dependent upon the
> low-Other, that what is socially peripheral is so frequently
> symbolically central.[25]

When considered in the context of race, it becomes clear that in order for

whiteness to maintain its superior and normative position, it must be seen, thus

depending on the 'low other' in order to construct this difference. Lilith Fair's

identification as a "celebration of women in music" clearly employs a patriarchal

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[22] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 44-45.

[23] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 1.

[24] Lipsitz, 1.

[25] Cited in Stuart Hall, "What is the 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studes*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 474.

construction that, through the absence of racial discourse, reproduces itself as white. Despite the plural connotation of "women" as it appears in Lilith Fair's title, it is actually only the white, female body that is included.

The way in which "Woman" is embodied by notions of femininity, "the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women," solidifies its whiteness.[26] The femininity produced in the nineteenth century was informed by Victorian ideologies and was very much a classed sign. Linked to middle-class family decency, Beverly Skeggs asserts that femininity was constructed in relation to the mother's role as caregiver and educator, as well as her control over her sexuality. This construction was always performed by a white, middle-class and de-sexualized body. Thus, white, middle-class femininity was defined as the ideal and coded as "respectable."[27] While femininity automatically positioned middle and upper-class white women, it did not work in the same way for working-class or lesbian women of any ethnicity,

> White middle-class women were able to locate themselves
> within a pure and proper femininity, precisely because
> Black and White working-class women were defined and
> designated unpure, dangerous and sexual...Thus the
> heterosexual subject is a particular sort of woman, not
> working-class or Black, but respectable. This is very
> different from the homosexual subject which, White argues,
> has become the sign of sex.[28]

The naturalization of heterosexuality and its embeddedness in the term "Woman"

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[26] Beverly Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1997), p. 98.
[27] Ibid, 99.
[28] Ibid, 122.

removes the oversexed lesbian body from the notion of respectability. Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* discusses how sexuality was confined to the home during the eighteenth-century and the heterosexual and procreative couple was constructed as the social norm. Foucault argues that we are born into heterosexuality as institution and dominant norm. Homosexuality, therefore, is defined in opposition to heterosexuality, as the unacceptable, unnatural "other."[29] Furthermore, the nineteenth-century conception of femininity further marginalized the black body. Cornel West observes that the myth of black sexuality centres on the notion that it is more free and liberated and has the potential to result in sexual power over whites. As such, black sexualities are constructed as disgusting, dirty and unacceptable, a sign of sex and a representation of what the respectable "woman" is not.[30] This removal from "woman" places black women in a precarious situation as they are often forced to choose between issues of gender and race, commitment to gender issues perceived as racial disloyalty. As Johnnetta Cole observes in *Gender Talk*, race loyalty has frequently marginalized the differences between black men and women, and marginalized black women from the politics of gender.[31] Consequently, whiteness and heterosexuality are produced as normative positions, removing them from discourses of race and sexuality. What we see is that "woman" as embodied by the respectable body is constructed just as much by what it signifies as what it

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[29] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. R. Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 310.
[30] Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1993), 83.
[31] Johnnetta Cole, *Gender Talk* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 72-73.

does not. Informed by the role of nurturing wife, mother and caregiver, "woman" is not a sign of sex and is therefore not embodied by the working-class, black or lesbian body.

Despite the prolific amount of interrogation by feminists into the construction of "Woman" and systemic issues of representation, the term and accompanying ideology of respectability continues to reappear. Evidenced in *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*, it becomes clear that despite the evocation of the resistant figure Lilith, McLachlan has also engaged the social fiction of "woman," a category at the root of patriarchal oppression and performed by a particular body. In working with the notion of respectability, Jacqueline Warwick states,

> Whether women reject behaviour deemed appropriate
> and fly in the face of those values or engage in the unceasing
> struggle to maintain propriety, it can be argue that respectability
> and middle-class decency are of central importance to girls and
> women of all classes and racial groups.[32]

Thus, if women are pressed either to resist or engage with respectability, I would argue that Lilith Fair employs the notion of respectability through its association with the patriarchal construction of "Woman." In doing so, Lilith Fair does not resist this construction, but works from the position this produces. This is hinted at in the opposition I observed earlier in Lilith Fair's title, *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music.* Although based on an act of resistance, Lilith Fair does not

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[32] Jacqueline Warwick, "I Got All My Sisters With Me: Girl Culture, Girl Identity and Girl Group Music" (PhD. Diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002), 3.

reject the behaviour central to the performance of respectability. Rather, Lilith

Fair resists the gendered practices of the music industry from a respectable

position, in contrast to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and the Riot Grrrls,

as that which would challenge respectability, anger and feminine excess, is

removed from the story which informs the festival. Moreover, respectability can

be theorized as a means to negotiate the festival's link to the movements/events

mentioned above, a link that reproduces covert lesbian discourses within Lilith

Fair.[33] It is also evident that rather than rejecting the position women popular

musicians occupy, participants in Lilith Fair invested in it to demonstrate how this

position could be used as a source of power. Lilith Fair took the marginalized

category of "women's music" and transformed it into a mainstream, commercial

event. By doing so, the festival demonstrated that this patriarchal construction

that marginalizes women from music could actually become a source of power.

As the highest grossing tour of 1997, Lilith Fair removed "women's music" from

the margins and placed it in a highly visible, commercially successful position.

By employing respectability, however, McLachlan's intention to demonstrate the

"beautiful abundance of women in music out there who are incredibly diverse,"[34]

becomes highly problematic as Lilith Fair represents a particular "woman," rather

than all women or even a range of women. This has significant implications

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[33] I thank Christina Baade for this observation.

[34] Sarah McLachlan as cited in Marc Woodworth, ed. *Solo: Women Singer-Songwriters in Their Own Words* (New York: Delta, 1998), 17.

when considered in light of McLachlan's desire to foster a sense of community among the women musicians participating.

Before taking up the issue of what community means and how it is formed, the desire to *foster* a community must be explored as it stems from particular gendered practices. As an all-female music festival, McLachlan hoped Lilith Fair would construct a space in which women musicians could develop a sense of community. As McLachlan highlights in the foreword to *From Lilith to Lilith Fair*,

> So Lilith Fair was created for many reasons: the joy of sharing live music; the connection of like minds; the desire to create a sense of community that I felt was lacking in our industry.[35]

This lack of community can be traced back to the masculinization of music discussed earlier and the way in which "Woman" influenced women's participation in the musical sphere. In the nineteenth-century, women's involvement in music was confined to the private sphere, constructing music-making as a solitary activity.   Singing, playing the piano or violin were deemed appropriate musical activities for the "respectable woman" to participate in, but were also confined to the home. Consequently, women involved in domestic music-making have been historically denied access to musical training and education, solidifying their exclusion from the musical public sphere. Although women could perform for others within the private sphere, the instruments deemed appropriate were primarily solo instruments. Thus, for women in the

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[35] Childerhose, xiv-xv. Here McLachlan is referring to a lack of community between women musicians in the popular music industry.

nineteenth-century music was a solitary activity outside of the actual

performance, women learning on their own rather than learning or playing *with*

others. Domestic music-making was not something that facilitated participation

in other musical activities; it only permitted interaction with the audience women

performed for. Music was an activity women engaged with in terms of

bourgeoisie decorum, the proper middle-class woman having the ability to play

an appropriate instrument within the home for her family.[36]

Female musicians in popular music experience similar constraints today.

Although women now participate in the public sphere of music making, Mavis

Bayton's work concerning women in popular music highlights the gendered

nature of the music industry and the ways in which this isolates women

musicians from one another. Bayton finds that in popular music female

musicians tend to be concentrated in the role of backing vocalist and solo vocal

performer.[37] This presents a problematic dichotomy. Women musicians either

perform in isolation from other women musicians or in a subordinate position, as

group activity is limited to the marginalized role of backing vocalist, with the

notable exception of bands in the Riot Grrrl movement. It is only when women

musicians are not the primary performer, then, that interaction is permitted.

Moreover, if we consider the resistance to multiple women musicians on a single

concert bill, it is clear that this gendered practice solidifies women musicians'

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[36] Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 52.
[37] Mavis Bayton, *Frock Rock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

isolation from each other. Included primarily as solo performers, women are also frequently prevented from performing together, removing a primary way in which these solo performers could interact and hindering the fostering of any sense of community for women musicians.

What community means and how it is formed, however, is complex and varied. For Lilith Fair, community did *not* refer to a fixed location or group of performers. Rather, the festival appeared in various cities all over North America with a constantly changing line-up, as performers left the tour and others joined. The only constant performer was Sarah McLachlan. As Raymond Williams posits, community does not necessarily intimate a fixed, collective identity. It can represent an emphasis on relationships developed in response to a centre of power and display. [38] This approach to community may prove useful for analyzing Lilith Fair. Williams suggests that community, as a marker of a political position, can also be identified as communtarianism, an ideology predicated on the notion of reviving a common life. Here social reality is primary in the commitment to collective values. If Lilith Fair's resistance to gendered practices is taken as a collective value, then the festival's community can be seen as deriving from the relationships this political position produced.

As Seyla Benhabib observes, however, communitarianism divides into two main strands, integrationist and participatory. The integrationist strand holds that modernity has resulted in a loss of coherent values and a sense of belonging that

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[38] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishing Ltd, 1961), 305.

would provide a foundation for public life, therefore privileging collectivity over various subjectivities. Participatory views, on the other hand, contend that there is not a loss of shared understanding but political agency in the public decision making process.[39] While the desire to revive a common life characterizes communitarianism as a whole, this ideology diverges at the question of how to achieve this, highlighting the contentious nature of community. Who decides whom will be included? Rita Felski addresses this question in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (1989) when she discusses Jürgen Habermas's notion of a counter public sphere, an "enabling fiction which engenders a sense of collective identity."[40] Felski highlights that this collective is only possible through the masking of material inequalities and political antagonisms between individuals. In order to facilitate the construction of community, Felski suggests that differences must be subsumed by the collective. Only by privileging commonality can a sense of collectivity arise. The problem, however, is when to recognize inequalities and antagonisms and when to marginalize them for the sake of the collective, positioning the issue in relation to power. Martha Minow frames the issue as follows: "what we need are ways of understanding when different treatment stigmatizes and when similar treatment stigmatizes by disregarding

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[39] As paraphrased by Catherine Graham in "Dramaturgy and Community-Building in Canadian Popular Theatre: English Canadian, Quebecois and Native Approaches" (Thesis, McGill University, 1996), 156.
[40] Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989), 168.

difference."[41] When whiteness is positioned as the category against which difference is constructed, the non-white body is stigmatized as low other. When women are positioned within "women's music" they are stigmatized by the constructed absence of difference, inequalities and subjectivities rendered invisible.

When mapped onto Lilith Fair and its challenge to the music industry, the construction of this festival's community is based on a political position rooted in the idea of commonality of experience. This is not to imply that "women in music" denotes a community. "Women in music" is a social construction and therefore a fiction, though this fiction can produce very real material consequences. Thus, although an attempt to evoke a commonality between participants, "women in music" does not automatically enact a community. The problems of representation evidenced in "Woman" and Felski's observation that the collective masks critical differences highlights the complexity of forming a community. Lilith Fair's community hinges on the common experiences of women popular musicians, producing, as Felski suggests, an enabling fiction. However, in doing so it privileges the collective and obscures the differences among these individual experiences. The construction of Lilith Fair's community as rooted in commonality, therefore, evokes a particular notion of community, one informed by the social fiction of "Woman" and the performance of respectability.

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[41] Cited by Ruth Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 2.

This intersection of community and representation was evidenced in second wave feminism and has been addressed by a plethora of feminists, bell hooks and Elizabeth Spelman among them. As Spelman finds, the "story of man" contrived a fiction in which women could not recognize themselves.[42] The process of challenging and editing this fiction, however, produced another fiction, that of a common oppression, in which only those women who rewrote history were represented. As bell hooks finds,

> The vision of Sisterhood evoked by women's liberationists
> was based on the idea of common oppression. Needless
> to say, it was primarily bourgeois white women, both liberal
> and radical in perspective, who professed belief in the notion of
> common oppression. The idea of "common oppression" was
> a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true
> nature of women's varied and complex social reality.[43]

Considerable debate around second wave feminism has arisen as a result of this problematizing of common oppression. Out of this has come third wave feminism, which Heywood and Drake find is clearly marked by its engagement with contradiction. From this position, third wave feminism seeks to recognize and understand shifting bases of oppression and the multiple axes of identity, therefore acknowledging that women are oppressed differently. Third wave feminism is embedded in popular culture and takes sexual politics as a key site of struggle.[44] This has particular implications when mapped onto Lilith Fair, as it

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[42] Liz Spelman, "Woman: The One and the Many," in *Feminisms*, ed., S. Kemp and J. Squire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 236.
[43] bell hooks, "Sisterhood: Political solidarity between Women", in *Feminism and Community*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Marilyn Friedman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 293-294.
[44] Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, eds., *Third Wave Agenda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3-4.

appears to be drawing from both waves. The concept of community was a major

feature of the second wave, yet the location of feminism in popular culture

characterizes both waves. Where this is complicated is at the site of sexual

politics, where third wave feminism is situated. Because Lilith Fair engages with

the notion of respectability, it constructs itself as heterosexual. Therefore the

festival distances itself from the discourse of sexuality due the normative position

of heterosexuality, and is removed from the site of sexuality that the third wave

locates itself in. Moreover, by engaging with the concept of community as

informed by "woman," the festival constructed a particular "woman," not a range

or multiplicity of women.

Lilith Fair contains elements of these feminist ideologies, but does not

appear to situate itself in relation to a particular one. Rather, the festival draws

on certain aspects, but often in ways that problematize representation. This is

symptomatic of McLachlan's reluctance to engage with feminism as an ideology

that informed Lilith Fair.

> If I took every opportunity to spout feminism then, sadly,
> men would be terrified of the tour. And in order for Lilith
> to achieve our goals, we couldn't have it be marginalized.[45]

McLachlan's statement taps into a pervasive problem. In the 1990s, feminism

began to be perceived in relation to emotion, specifically anger, hate and

irrationality and even equated with man-hating. These perceptions expose a

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[45] Childerhose, 71.

fear and resistance of feminism, as McLachlan points to in the above quote. Because feminism challenged inequalities and patriarchy, women who participated in this challenge, and still do, transgressed gendered boundaries that were fundamental to the construction of man/woman and the normative, privileged position this produces for men. In response to these transgressions and subversions, tropes of anger and irrationality have been mapped onto feminists and the ideology of feminism as a means to marginalize these actions and place them back within patriarchal constructions, thus re-establishing the man/woman opposition. If we relate this idea back to the resistance betrayed in "women's music," it becomes apparent that engaging with the notion of feminism within the context of a festival celebrating "women in music" is a highly complex issue, particularly given the visible challenge Lilith Fair raised to the music industry.

The evasion of feminism as evidenced in Lilith Fair links this discussion back to the opposition that was exposed in the festival's title *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*. I suggested that the festival's resistance of a patriarchal industry as symbolized by Lilith appeared to be contained within patriarchal ideologies by the way in which the story was rewritten. By invoking the patriarchal construction of "women in music," Lilith Fair consequently involved the notions of "Woman" and respectability, positioning the festival's community in relation to a particular woman, one rooted in patriarchal ideologies. Moreover, by

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evading identification as feminist, Lilith Fair avoided provoking the fear and

resistance that produced the very patriarchal notion it is rooted in, "women in

music." If we map this engagement with "women in music" back onto the music

industry where it is still evidenced, it can be theorized that Lilith Fair's challenge

is nevertheless contained by the industry as the festival engaged with, rather

than resisted, the patriarchal and gender ideologies that inform this industry.

Chapter Two will further explore this notion with respect to the festival's

reproduction of women musician's position in popular music. For now, however,

it is clear that this containment produced complex problems of representation in

relation to the construction of a Lilith Fair community.

   Having unpacked how this community is marked, a consideration of how it

negotiates the concept of festival is important. As an arena where ideas and

messages are produced, performed and received in particular spaces for a

limited time, festival is constructed as something different, something separate

from everyday life. How can a community be constructed and maintained when

Lilith Fair as a festival seems to contradict any concept of permanence?

Literature concerning festival centres on the issue of time and space as primary.

Marianne Mesnil suggests that festival signals a rupture in time, thus occupying a

different position in time and space than everyday life.[46] Alessandro Falassi

identifies festivals as a "time out of time, a special temporal dimension devoted to

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[46] Marianne Mesnil, "A Place and Time in the Carnivalesque Festival," in *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 189.

special activities."[47] Victor Turner approaches festival in terms of the liminal and liminoid. As a transformative state generally connected with rites of passage, individuals or groups transform from one mode of social existence to another, accruing license to be different, a difference not permissible in everyday life. Liminality, however, is only applied to true passage rites in tribal or agrarian communities.[48] Liminoid is the term Turner applies to the leisure practices of industrial societies, phenomena typically constructed by one group for another that frequently critique social norms. Because Turner views liminoid phenomena as a matter of choice, they do not signal a permanent transformation for the participant. Furthermore, Turner asserts that the liminal and liminoid coexist in modern societies. Observing that both can exist in the modern society, Turner suggests that the liminoid, typically a leisure genre, is thus freer than the liminal and also a commodity. However, some liminoid entertainment or performances, such as Mardi Gras, have traces of the liminal, the liminoid occasionally a remnant of a past liminal ritual. Turner also qualifies that when a liminoid entertainment becomes exclusivist, a social club with particular membership requirements for example, the liminal becomes a condition of entrance into the liminoid.[49]

Although the liminal and liminoid coexist in modern society, I would argue that Lilith Fair functions as a liminoid phenomenon. Constructed by women

[47] Alessandro Falassi, Festival: Definition and Morphology," *in Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival,* ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 4.
[48] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982), 29.
[49] Turner, 29.

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musicians as a critique of the popular music industry, this critique was positioned in relation to the mainstream, commercial music industry. At the same time, however, the festival itself developed along the margins of this industry, characteristic of the liminoid, as women musicians challenged the gendered practices of the industry that marginalized their position. Thus, while Turner expresses hesitation over the diversity of industrial leisure genres and the possibility of legitimating various mores and orders, it is evident that Lilith Fair's critique of the music industry distances it from liminality. The festival is also firmly rooted in the concept of leisure, as Lilith Fair was a form of entertainment individuals *chose* to attend. The situation is less clear, however, when placed in the context of Turner's permanent liminoid settings that become exclusivist, thus drawing on the liminal. If bars and social clubs are permanent liminoid settings as Turner suggests, the amphitheatres Lilith Fair performed in, settings designed for leisure, would also be considered as such. Thus, if Lilith Fair is considered exclusivist, it would then engage the liminal as a prerequisite for the liminoid. While Lilith Fair's "celebration of women in music" attached a gendered connotation to the festival, Lilith Fair did not become exclusivist. Audience members did not have to be female; rather McLachlan encouraged men to attend. I would argue, then, that Lilith Fair as a leisure event developed in the margins, critiquing the popular music industry, yet its not functioning in an exclusivist manner consequently positioned the festival as a liminoid phenomenon. The impermanent quality of its liminoid identification, however,

does not imply that a community cannot be constructed. It is precisely the space produced in this sense of space and time that permits a community.

The location of festival in time, a time removed from the everyday, constructs an alternative space to everyday life. Spatially, Lilith Fair took physical areas and enclosed them, investing these spaces with new meaning, specifically that of women in popular music and their challenge to the music industry. By constructing this physical boundary, the space was transformed, removed from everyday routine and infused with this new, impermanent meaning. This works temporally as well. Dates were selected and invested with meanings separate from everyday life, or work, in terms of Turner's work/leisure differentiation. Leisure, as an urban phenomenon, is defined in relation to work, work organized separately from free time. Leisure time then becomes either freedom-from or freedom-to. Individuals are either freed from obligations and the workplace, or gain the freedom to enter a place that transcends these obligations and permits play.[50] As this suggests, this space facilitates behavior otherwise impermissible. Outside of time and constructed as a space in the margins, festivals are conducive to a plethora of subversions and transgressions, similar to carnivals. Bahktin's analysis of the carnivalesque revealed that early modern European festivals and carnivals were times when the official power relations were disrupted by collective voices that worked through a system of the grotesque, transgressive and inversive to suspend the everyday, break with the

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[50] Turner, 36-37.

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ordinary. Thus, the carnivalesque was a critique from below of the "everyday

world of 'normal' power relations."[51]

It is in this separate time in which impermissible behaviour is permitted

that community is formed. Mesnil observes that participation in festival time and

atypical behaviours generates the cohesion of a momentary community. This

commonality of experience, then, becomes a critical factor in the construction of

community, despite the problems of representation discussed earlier. This

functions in a similar manner to Benedict Anderson's "imagined community."

Anderson finds that sacred communities of the past were imagined through

sacred language and script, while the community of modern nations is imagined

through newspapers and the novel. Taking the newspaper as an example,

Anderson observes that individuals read the paper everyday, knowing others do

as well, but never meeting the majority of them. Thus, embedded in calendar

time as signified by the date at the top of the page, individuals are able to

imagine a community through the daily "ceremony" of reading the paper.[52] This

idea of a community "imagined" during festival time applies to both performers

and audience members. Although performers meet other performers, and the

audience can see, and even meet other audience members, neither will meet all

performers or audience members involved. Participation in festival time permits

the imagining of a community based on the knowledge that others are

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[51] Robert Allen, *Horrible Prettiness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 35.
[52] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 44-45.

participating, fostering an imagined shared experience of the event.

Consequently, the perceived commonality of experience generated in festival

time permits the imagining of community. Although Mesnil suggests this

dissipates at the conclusion of festival time, later chapters will explore how the

imagining of community can transcend festival time. What we see then, is that

participation in Lilith Fair as a festival and the challenge it represented facilitated

an imagined community, the community constructed on-stage intersecting with

the category of "Woman" and producing a certain notion of a "women's music"

community.

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to make clear that while I

critically examine Lilith Fair in terms of representation and community, this is not

meant to devalue the significance of the festival. As the first all-female touring

music festival, Lilith Fair challenged gendered practices in the popular music

industry that served to marginalize and devalue women popular musicians.

Consequently, these women were able to transcend the resistance they faced in

receiving air play and concert billing. Through citing and examining the problems

of representation in Lilith Fair, I work from the perspective that although Lilith Fair

was able to address some problems, it could not possibly address all problems

women popular musicians face in the music industry. Robert Allen observes,

> It is tempting to see the cultural production of subordinate groups merely in terms of its resistance to the power of more dominant groups…It is further tempting to view resistant forms of cultural production as unproblematically and unambiguously progressive – as if there were a solidarity among the discourses of subordination. Historically, however, this has not been the case. In fact, it is just as likely that the structures of dominantion and subordination will be produced in the culture of the subordinate.[53]

As this chapter discussed and as subsequent chapters will further explore, Lilith Fair's engagement with respectability and construction of a particular "Woman" meant that white female musician's resistance to the gendered practices of the music industry was achieved at the expense of other non-white female popular musicians. Lilith Fair, then, reproduced issues of subordination in its efforts to resist the power of the more dominant group, the music industry. With Allen's warning in mind, the value of Lilith Fair is recognized while critically examining the problems of representation evidenced in this resistant form of cultural production. The following chapter will undertake a detailed examination of representation in Lilith Fair and how the music contributed to the construction of community. It will also explore how Lilith Fair engaged with respectability, its intersection with the rock/pop dichotomy and the gendering of popular musics.

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[53] Allen, 32-33.

Chapter Two: A Celebration of Whom?

When Lilith Fair debuted in 1997, it was immediately apparent that the

festival's resistance towards discriminatory practices in the music industry was

rooted in an assumption of commonality of experience, rendering differences

between women musicians invisible and enlisting the notion of "women in music."

As theorized in Chapter One, this subsequently constructed a particular

"woman," one informed by the patriarchal ideology of respectability. Lilith Fair

1997 represented not a range of women, but the white, middle-class,

heterosexual woman, articulating a particular "women's music" community. It

was then suggested that by invoking the patriarchal ideologies that informed the

popular music industry, Lilith Fair was subsequently contained by that which it

sought to resist. This chapter takes the idea of containment as a starting point

from which to examine the position of women musicians in popular music in the

1990s. By examining this position and how it is informed by the gendering of

rock and pop music, I will argue that the 1997 festival's containment within the

music industry subsequently reproduced women musicians' position in popular

music as informed by race, class and sexuality. The musical and extra-musical

activities of Lilith Fair will also be considered in terms of how these activities

employed and traversed the respectable climate the festival symbolized.

Alan Wells' examination of the Billboard Charts during the 1990s clearly

shows that women musicians occupied a marginalized position in comparison to

men during that decade. Focusing on the Billboard annual top 200 albums,

Wells observed that while women were found in the upper levels (top 20) of the chart, they were absent in the lower levels. In comparison, men were found throughout the two hundred positions.[1] Although women can be found in top positions, overall they are significantly outnumbered by men. This situation clearly reflects the resistance to female musicians discussed in Chapter One. Whereas male musicians are represented regardless of their level of success, as defined by album sales and chart position, female musicians face a perilous situation; they must be highly successful in order to participate in mainstream popular music. As Wells states, "female success is not very deep: indeed it may be as precarious as the next big hit."[2] This gendered restriction discloses the resistance to female musicians still embedded in the popular music industry. Men are free to participate in popular music while women are severely limited. Furthermore, Wells' analysis highlights the genres in which women musicians are commercially successful. Listed below are the highest selling women musicians during the 1990s.

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[1] Alan Wells, "Nationality, Race, and Gender on the American Pop Charts: What happened in the 90's?," *Popular Music and Society* 25, no.2 (Spring/Summer 2001), 226.
[2] Wells, 229.

Alan Wells' Examination of the Billboard
Charts during the 1990s[3]

Artist					
Janet Jackson	6 ('86)	5 ('87)	1 ('90)	4 ('93)	7 ('94)
Mariah Carey	1 ('91)	2 ('94)	2 ('96)	19 ('99)	
Celine Dion	16 ('94)	3 ('96)	3 ('97)	2 ('98)	
Madonna ('98)	11 ('87)	12 ('89)	8 ('91)	18 a	
Shania Twain	19 ('95)	6 ('96)	5 ('98)	3 ('99)	
Whitney Houston	1 ('86)	12 ('88)	10 ('91) b		
Paula Abdul	3 ('89)	6 ('90)	18 ('91)		
Spice Girls	1 ('97)	10 ('98)			
Alanis Morissette	14 ('95)	1 ('96)			
TLC	5 ('95)	10 ('99)			
Toni Braxton	7 ('94)	9 ('97)			
Lauryn Hill/Fugees	5 ('96)	11 ('99)			
Jewel	5 ('95)	13 ('99)			
LeAnn Rimes	6 ('97)	14 ('98)			
Sade	8 ('86)	12 ('93)			
Wilson Phillips	15 ('90)	5 ('91)			
Gloria Estafan (Miami Sound Machine)	10 ('86)	13 ('88)			
Debbie Gibson	7 ('88)	16 ('89)			
Anita Baker	9 ('87)	17 ('89)			
Barbra Streisand	12 ('86)	16 ('98)			
Bonnie Raitt	16 ('90)	16 ('92)			

One of the most striking things about this chart is the absence of rock

musicians; singer/songwriter Alanis Morissette is arguably the only woman

included who could be considered as falling under this category. What is clear is

that women are included in the genres of dance (Jackson, Madonna, Abdul,

Spice Girls, Estafan and Gibson), singer/songwriter (Morissette, Jewel, Wilson

Phillips, Raitt), R&B (Baker, Hill, Houston, Braxton, Carey, Sade), hip-hop (TLC,

Lauryn Hill), country (Twain and Rimes), and adult contemporary (Dion and

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[3] Wells, 228.

Streisand). Not only are female rock musicians absent, but so are bands. With

the exception of 3 groups on this chart, all of the women are solo performers.

Lilith Fair's 1997 line-up parallels this situation. Out of 52 acts, 5 were identified

as rock. Of these 5 acts, 4 were solo performers accompanied by a band and 1

was a band. Accompanied is used here intentionally, as these women were

billed as solo performers rather than fronting a band. Significantly, however, the

one rock band present, Lovechild, identified themselves as acoustic due to the

absence of an electric guitar. [4] There are several issues to contend with here,

but this absence of rock bands demands immediate problematization, as it is

linked to the gendering of rock as male.

Scholars such as Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie (1978), Robert

Walser (1993), Susan Fast (2001) and Diane Railton (2001) have examined the

various ways in which rock music has been coded as male, removing rock and

popular music from its low "other" status in relation to Western classical music

and identifying it as a social text rich with cultural and political significance. In

doing so, rock music has been revealed as a space in which masculinity is

produced and performed, including and excluding women in very particular ways.

Frith and McRobbie suggest that rock operates as a form of sexual expression

and control through the management of rock production by men, illustrating

rock's maleness by highlighting the dichotomy between cock rock and teenybop.

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[4] "Recap," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/news/august/12/recap.html>, Accessed March 2,
2005.

Observing that cock rock musicians symbolically used the guitar as a phallus, attention is also drawn to the lyrical representation of women as subordinate, as well as their depiction as sexual objects on album covers. Teenybop, on the other hand, is found to be consumed by girls and contains contrasting representations of male sexuality based on softer ballad styles and expressions of self-pity and vulnerability.[5] Although Frith and McRobbie's work is important, it has been widely criticized for its privileging of heterosexuality, among other things. As Keith Negus suggests, "its central argument is based on a narrow series of essentialist assumptions which privilege heterosexual behaviour."[6]

In opposition to the argument that rock is male because it is controlled by men, Robert Walser, focusing on heavy metal, theorizes that rock is constructed as male through four particular strategies: exscription of women, misogyny, romance and androgyny. Thus, metal musicians do not express maleness, but rather "forge" masculinity.[7] Diane Railton, on the other hand, discusses the difference between rock and pop music, asserting that rock music defined itself in opposition to the "low" pop music of the 1960's and the feminine, emotional and physical response it was found to provoke. [8] Despite this salient observation, Railton's work is hindered by her suggestion that rock introduced the "mind to the

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[5] As summarized by Keith Negus in *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 124-125.
[6] Negus, 125.
[7] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 115-125.
[8] Diane Railton, "The Gendered Carnival of Pop," *Popular Music* 20, no.3 (2001), 322.

music as well as a body."[9] In doing so Railton assumes that rock music is

uniformly political and intellectual and devoid of bodily pleasure, a generalization

made even more problematic by Railton's failure to define exactly which rock

music she is referring to. Railton's assumption is one Susan Fast discredits with

her analysis of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love," a song she identifies as one

of the bands most sexually explicit recordings.[10] In her analysis, Fast incisively

recognizes the female experience within the rigidity of rock's maleness and

asserts that the song is "also about a woman's sexual desire, physical desire that

is not romantic but carnal," examining how elements such as the voice, harmony,

and rhythm are experienced as bodily pleasure and challenging Railton's

assumption that rock music intellectualizes the body.[11]

        Despite the divergent ways in which these scholars theorize, it is clear that

rock music has been coded as male and subsequently dominated by men. As

the absence of female rock musicians in Wells' chart and Lilith Fair's line-up

indicates, rock's masculine identity limits the participation of female musicians.

Lilith Fair's identification of rock musicians as solo performers accompanied by a

band further betrays rock's gendering. As rock music is primarily performed by a

band, positioning the women as solo musicians taps into the group/solitary

dichotomy of music making and the gendered connotations this carries, as

discussed in Chapter One with respect to Mavis Bayton. Thus, these women

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[9] Railton, 324.
[10] Susan Fast, *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 189.
[11] Fast, 194.

musicians are placed along the margins of rock music; they are not entirely

excluded but situated in a manner that clearly draws attention to the different

ways in which men and women make music. Additionally, it should be noted that

the above mentioned scholars all point to the electric guitar solo as a primary

feature of rock music. The way in which the electric guitar has been used in

rock, as a phallic symbol and signifier of male virtuosity and power during solos,

has led to its social coding as masculine, creating a significant obstacle for

women musicians. As Mavis Bayton observes, for a woman to learn electric

guitar, she must diverge from traditional norms and engage with a music coded

as male.[12] First, she must negotiate technology, a domain coded as masculine in

the culture/nature hierarchy. Secondly, women must enter music stores for

either lessons or equipment. Music stores tend to be male dominated spaces

where experimenting with the technical equipment is a "norm," constructing an

intimidating space for women to enter. Finally, the physical aspects of playing

the electric guitar are often problematic for the female player. Not only do long,

feminine fingernails have to be cut short in order to play, but according to Bayton,

many female electric guitarists struggle to find a comfortable position in which to

hold the guitar, as guitars are not designed to accommodate breasts.[13] This

final observation is somewhat problematic. As will be illustrated shortly, women

do play the acoustic guitar, an instrument which does not accommodate breasts

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[12] Bayton, 39.
[13] Ibid, 39-42.

any more than an electric guitar. I would suggest, then, that physical concerns do not play as important a role as the other gendered barriers Bayton identifies. Nonetheless, these factors have solidified rock's male identity by constructing a music that centres on an instrument coded as male, privileging notions of masculinity over femininity.

This is plainly evidenced by the instruments played by Lilith Fair performers. Specifically, 34 of the women performers played guitar. Of these 33 female guitarists, only 5 played electric guitar. Moreover, 9 of the 55 performers identified themselves as pianists, and only a handful did not play an instrument.[14] What is important to consider here is whether the electric guitarists present played solos, as it is the electric guitar *solo* that typifies rock performances. This is somewhat difficult to ascertain because the DVD and CD recordings do not contain only select Lilith Fair performances. Drawing from recordings other than Lilith Fair, 4 of these 5 electric guitarists typically play solos. Of the performances included on the Lilith Fair DVD and Lilith Fair CD, volume 1, however, only Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls and Meredith Brooks play electric guitar solos. If it is the electric guitar solo that signifies rock, then the remaining electric guitarists who do not solo on these Lilith Fair recordings would not be perceived as *authentic* rock musicians; they are women playing an electric guitar, but not rock musicians.

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[14] "Lilith Fair Artists," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/artists.html>, Accessed June 3, 2004.

Not only was rock music in Lilith Fair marginal at best, but so was the presence of bands or duos. Of the 54 acts that performed, 39 were solo singer/songwriters.[15] This is an important consideration because the genre of singer/songwriter does not impede the participation of female musicians due to its link to traditional notions of femininity, constructing it as a space "appropriate" for women musicians. Because singer/songwriters are typically solo performers, it is a genre that tends to be culturally perceived as a solitary activity in opposition to rock music as a predominantly band or group activity. Thus, although both musics can be played in the private and public spheres, the perception of the singer/songwriter as solitary links it more closely to the private sphere. Furthermore, the privileging of lyrics in this genre, particularly with respect to the folk revival, links the singer/songwriter to the mind as it is perceived as "head" music rather than dancing music. Singer/songwriters also predominantly play acoustic instruments that are considered appropriate for female musicians, primarily the acoustic guitar and piano, as discussed in Chapter One. If this is considered in relation to Bayton's findings concerning the electric guitar's coding as male, then the female singer/songwriter does not necessarily have to transgress gendered boundaries in order to participate in this genre. The singer/songwriter is thus a genre that does not prevent or limit the participation of women musicians.

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[15]"Lilith Fair Artists," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/artists.html>, Accessed February 28, 2004.

One important qualification to make here concerns how race informs the position of women musicians in popular music. The singer/songwriters included on Wells' chart, Raitt, Jewel, Morissette and Wilson Phillips, are white women. If we look at the African-American women musicians, we can see that they tend to be concentrated in the genres of R&B, hip-hop and soul.[16] These are genres coded as black and removed from popular "white" music, a practice Barry Shank traces back to the 1950s. Under the assumption that white audiences would rather hear and purchase the music of white musicians, white performers adopted the styles of African-American musicians and attained economic rewards, as white performers had greater access to the music industry. The result of this practice was "popular music, the music that hit the 'pop' charts in the trade magazines, meant 'white' music – the music that was distributed in white neighbourhoods."[17] Concurrent with this was the production of race music and race records that were marketed for an African-American audience and consequently coded as African-American. Shank's historical discussion remains relevant despite the recent rise in popularity of black youth culture, placing rap, hip-hop and R&B in a more visible, mainstream position. Paraphrasing Jim Sernoe's writing, Wells notes that it was not until the introduction of SoundScan in 1991 that a more accurate method of measuring album sales was established. Before SoundScan was developed, rankings were compiled from subjective

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[16] Wells, 228.

[17] Barry Shank, "The Face of Race in Rock and Pop," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rock and Pop*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 260.

reports of radio programmers and store managers. Now genres such as hip-hop, country, metal, and R&B are more accurately represented on the Billboard charts.[18] Nevertheless, as Reebee Garofalo's work examines, genres such as R&B are still charted separately from the mainstream, white music charts. Consequently, African-American musicians frequently must achieve success first on the R&B chart before crossing over to the mainstream, white popular music charts.[19] Although black musicians are increasingly able to circumvent crossover, as evidenced by the visibility of black youth culture, Wells still found that in the 1990s men and women were positioned differently based on race: white men occupy the most privileged position, followed by African-American males, white women and African-American women. African-American women musicians occupy a more marginalized position in the music industry than white women musicians.[20]

Within popular music difference is defined relationally, white "pop" music functioning as the norm against which "black" music is defined. Whiteness is not only constructed at this larger level, however, but within the genre of singer/songwriter. Dyer's theory that the absence of a racial discourse constructs an assumption of whiteness can be applied here.[21] Because

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[18] Wells, 223.
[19] Reebee Garofalo, "Black Popular Music: Crossing Over or Going Under?" In *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies and Institutions*, ed., Tony Bennett, Simon Frith, Lawrence Grossberg, John Shepherd, Graem Turner (New York: Routledge, 1993), 237.
[20] Wells, 223.
[21] Dyer, 45.

whiteness is positioned as a norm it is also naturalized, removed from racial discourse. As whiteness is not culturally perceived as a race, if race is not spoken, then whiteness is implied. The invisibility of whiteness in contrast to the visibility of blackness within popular music not only marginalizes African-American women musicians, but simultaneously constructs the singer/songwriter as white. This whiteness is clearly evidenced in Lilith Fair's line-up.

The numbers below were obtained through the artist information posted on the official Lilith Fair website or official personal websites. The women were identified through the information included in biographies and journals, in which the women's upbringing and ethnicity were outlined. Specifically, of the 57 performers who participated in Lilith Fair 1997, 53 women were white, 3 were African-American and 1 was Tibetan.[22] The marginalized position of African-American women musicians in popular music is examined by Ellie Hisama in her essay on Joan Armatrading, in which Hisama reveals a major difficulty black female musicians face when trying to succeed in the American popular music market.[23] Notions of femininity, beauty and respectability are constructed around whiteness and the containment of feminine sexuality. This is in direct opposition to the representation of the black body and ideologies of black sexuality as more free and liberated than white sexuality. As a result many black female singers

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[22]"Lilith Fair Artists,"<http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/artists.html>, Accessed February 28, 2004.
[23] Ellie Hisama, "Voice, Race, and Sexuality in the Music of Joan Armatrading," in Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music, ed., E. Barking and L. Hammessley (Zurich: Carciofoli Verlagshaus, 1999), 116.

are pressured to cultivate an image of sexual availability and do not figure into either the racially marked "women's music" or singer/songwriter category. [24] For musicians such as Joan Armatrading, a black singer/songwriter who challenges traditional notions of what black singers should be, success is not easily achieved in the American market. Thus, ideologies of black sexuality limit the participation of African-American women musicians in the genre of singer/songwriter, a music that dominated Lilith Fair. The marginalization of African-American women in Lilith Fair was solidified by the way in which they, Tracy Chapman and Cassandra Wilson, were featured. Chapman, a singer/songwriter, performed on the Main stage, Wilson, a jazz singer, performed on the Second stage. The "white" genre of singer/songwriter is positioned on the Main Stage, while Wilson's performance of a music coded as black is placed on the Second Stage. Although performed by Chapman's African-American body, it is a body performing a music coded as white, reinforcing the whiteness of the Main Stage, as all other Main Stage performers were white singer/songwriters. This position is complicated by Chapman's musical performance, particularly as she sings in a low register, an issue that will be problematized shortly as music is considered a space in which to negotiate respectability. At the same time jazz is constructed as "other" by its secondary position. The prevalence of white singer/songwriters, absence of rock musicians and marginalization of African-

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[24] Hisama points to Tina Turner, 116. Other examples include Toni Braxton, Janet Jackson and Beyonce Knowles.

American women clearly demonstrates that Lilith Fair 1997 reproduced the position of women musicians in popular music and the problematic issues of representation it contains.

The position of the singer/songwriter in relation to rock and pop music and the gendering of these musics further complicate this situation. A secondary means Railton identifies in rock music's construction as male was an emphasis on serious meaning in contrast to pop music's preoccupation with young love and girlhood adolescence. Rock music instead focused on songwriting and lyrical content based on politics, life experience and art.[25] Pop music, on the other hand, is linked to the body and to commercial and chart success rather than intellectualism and authenticity. This stems from the physicality of a pop performance, pop performers being primarily singers and dancers. Without an instrument to regulate physical activity, these bodies are free to move and dance. There are obvious problems with this dichotomy, perhaps the most glaring one being rock's exclusion from the commercial sphere, as chart success and selling records is by no means unique to pop music. Although undeniably problematic, it is necessary to recognize this dichotomy because it is a pervasive and important cultural construction that positions genres and musicians differently. The genre of singer/songwriter provides an alternative space for women musicians excluded from rock music and who do not perform pop music by distancing and marginalizing the body through songwriting and playing an instrument. What

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[25] Railton, 325.

songwriting and musicianship map onto the singer/songwriter is the notion of authenticity; musicians who write their own songs are perceived as authentic in contrast to those who sing material written by others. This link between songwriting and authenticity is symptomatic of the cultural construction of the voice as a "natural" part of the body rather than an instrument to be mastered. Singers tend to be devalued as a consequence of this construction as they are distanced from ideas concerning good musicianship and skill. Songwriting, however, maps these qualities onto the singer, authenticity stemming from the notion that the singer is performing personal words and thoughts and the technical mastery required to compose the music. The singer/songwriter is also able visually to marginalize the body while demonstrating skill, constructing a performance perceived as authentic in relation to inauthentic, manufactured pop music and the body.

As the discussion above suggests, the genre of singer/songwriter is not only coded as white but performed by a respectable body through the marginalization of the body and dance. The official DVD *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music* provides an interesting look at the performances given and their construction of this respectable woman. The DVD consists of solely main stage performances, in particular by Shawn Colvin, Jewel, Meredith Brooks, The Indigo Girls, Sheryl Crow and Sarah McLachlan. All of these women are white, singer/songwriters and play acoustic guitar on the DVD, with the exception of Brooks and Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls who both play electric guitar. Because

the performers' hands are involved playing the guitar, they do not have the

freedom to remove the microphone from the stand and move about the stage.

Movement is therefore restricted to instrumental solos and breaks, when the

singer is not positioned close to the microphone. As a result, dance is not a

prevalent feature of these performances, the microphone and instrument serving

to contain the female body and any notion of feminine excess dancing could

imply. Sarah McLachlan is pictured below as an example. [26]

Jewel's performance of "Near you always" is an excellent example of this

containment of the female body. In this performance Jewel accompanies herself

on acoustic guitar as she sings into the microphone. She does not play a guitar

solo in this performance and there is no band to provide one. She is positioned

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[26] *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music* DVD. Produced by Rob Cowlyn, Lauri Feldman, Martin Fischer and Janet Russo. High Five Entertainment/Brainchild Productions, 2000.

at the microphone for the entire song. Not only does the acoustic guitar obstruct the view of her body, but her body and any movement that could imply feminine excess is contained by the microphone. A similar thing happens when Sheryl Crow plays the accordion during "Strong Enough." Because the accordion prevents Crow from removing the microphone from its stand, her movement is restricted, as is the view of her body.

As suggested, instrumental solos and breaks are the only instance when the performer is freed from the microphone and permitted movement. However, solos shift attention away from the singer to the instrumentalist. In the case of the Lilith Fair DVD performances, attention is therefore focused on the technical display of male guitarists or drummers. This is particularly evident in Sarah McLachlan's performance of "Building a Mystery." Her male, electric guitarist plays the solo during this song, the camera immediately shifting from McLachlan to a close-up of the electric guitar. Moreover, although McLachlan moves away from the microphone towards the guitarist and moves her body in time with the music, bending and shifting forward with the downbeats, she does so as she watches (even admires?) her electric guitarist. McLachlan is de-emphasized at this point as attention is focused on the technical display of her guitarist in two ways. First, the camera cuts away from her to the electric guitar. Secondly, McLachlan remains in the shot, but in the periphery as a spectator. Not only this, but McLachlan draws the spectator's eye towards the soloist and those looking at her move with McLachlan to the soloist, shifting the power centre from

McLachlan to the guitarist.[27] Thus, the formal structure of popular song also serves to contain the female singer/songwriter body, as the only time afforded for movement is secondary to the privileged instrumental solo. This also reinforces the construction of technique and virtuosity as a masculine domain. These performances highlight the fact that not only is the singer/songwriter coded as white, but it is a genre performed by a respectable body through the containment of the body and marginalization of dance, signifying a particular idea of 'woman.' The singer/songwriter subsequently removes the African-American body, a body that signifies all that is dirty, dangerous and without value.[28]

The situation is less clear with respect to the lesbian body. Warwick observes that the containment of female sexuality is a critical feature of respectability. As discussed in Chapter One with respect to Foucault[29], the heterosexual and procreative couple has been situated as the naturalized, social norm and the dominant institution into which individuals are born.[30] Thus, if respectability hinges on the containment of sexuality, on the absence of sex, then the respectable "woman" performs a heterosexual body. However, despite the respectability of the singer/songwriter, this genre has deep roots in "women's music" festivals such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Moreover, two of the Main Stage performers, the Indigo Girls and Tracy Chapman, have significant lesbian/queer followings; the Indigo Girls are "out" lesbians while Chapman's

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[27] This is a term used by Susan Fast, 187.
[28] Skeggs, 74.
[29] Chapter One, 15.
[30] Foucault, 310.

sexuality remains ambiguous. I would argue that the predominance of singer/songwriters produces an overall climate of respectability within which a lesbian discourse can be found to be operating.

If the singer/songwriter's bodily containment employs respectability and therefore implies heterosexuality, how could a performance communicate an alternative? Did the performances given at Lilith Fair continually invoke this respectable "woman?" Warwick asserts that respectability presses women to either engage with or resist behaviour deemed appropriate for women.[31] If resisting acceptable behaviour implicitly rejects respectability, then perhaps it is in resistance that someone other than the white, middle-class, heterosexual woman can be found. Going one step further, a space is conceivably opened up in which subjectivities can continually be articulated, performed and transformed. I would qualify here that this is not meant to imply that an action perceived as sexual necessarily intimates homosexuality or blackness, but rather that the resistance of the respectable "woman" opens up a space in which the spectator may interpret and perceive performances in more varied and divergent ways. Therefore, a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman rejecting respectable behaviour performs an alternative femininity and therefore does not necessarily communicate "woman." While it is clear from the analysis above that the singer/songwriter's use of the body can perform the white, respectable woman, this is only one aspect of a musical performance. By taking a closer look at the

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[31] Warwick, 3.

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vocal and instrumental music as they relate to the use of the body, music will be considered as a site where Lilith Fair performers were able to negotiate the respectable "woman" the festival symbolically represented.

Suzanne Cusick provides a useful point of departure here, observing that the voice is a cultural construction, performing the borders of the body in a manner that relays gendered meanings. For Cusick, young children learning to sing are in the process of acquiring the discipline of "Song." By the age of 11 children can recognize the tonic, sing in tune by themselves and with others and sing numerous phrases in an order that constructs a formal structure. The onset of puberty, however, produces vocal changes that require the re-learning of the discipline of "Song."[32] This vocal change is typically discussed in relation to boys as their voices become lower in register. Cusick asserts that the process of learning to speak with this new voice means boys learn to perform their biological difference from girls. Furthermore, boys do not re-learn the disciplines of "Song" they learned as children, abandoning the tenor register they may share with girls for a lower register, hence the common choir director dilemma of too few tenors. Whereas boys are found to experience a change of voice at the onset of puberty, Cusick observes that while girls do experience a biological change in lung capacity, they are told they do *not* and therefore do not have to learn an adult register. Girls, it follows, perform their sex and gender as an absence of change,

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[32] Suzanne Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," in E. Barkin and L. Hamessley, 32.

singing as they always have. Women who sing with voices that have accepted

the various disciplines of Song, such as singing in tune, clear diction and word

painting, perform their sex and gender.[33] Register becomes one clear signifier of

gender, as the voice is divided into Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass, the former 2

signifying female, the latter male. Ultimately, Cusick argues that an adult male

singing in a distorted or strained style is signalling his refusal to re-learn "Song"

and therefore performs his maleness, while females who do not employ distortion

perform their femaleness. Although the differences in singing styles and register

Cusick draws attention to are significant, they are couched in the principles of

Western classical traditions stemming from her own classical vocal training. As a

result, her analysis ignores the fact that distorted or strained singing is both a

part of rock history and is indebted to the blues.[34] With the exception of women

such as Janis Joplin and Melissa Etheridge, white female singers do not employ

vocal distortion to the degree that male rock singers do. White, adult female

singers, whether rock musicians or not, typically sing in a "clear" voice. This is

because vocal distortion culturally signifies maleness and blackness due to its

rock roots, rather than stemming from the discipline of "Song" as Cusick

discusses. Thus, if a female singer was to sing in a distorted or rock style, she

could be heard as resisting respectability by employing a sound that signified a

male domain, a domain that requires women to transgress gendered boundaries

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[33] Cusick, 36.
[34] I thank Susan Fast for this observation.

and traditional notions of femininity in order to participate. The kind of strain that is required, moreover, signifies the opposite of respectability in that it draws attention to the physicality involved in producing the distortion, both visually and aurally. The female body must be contained and controlled in order to be respectable, a strained and distorted voice signalling that which is not "ladylike."

The examples that follow are not quite so straightforward. The performances recorded on both the DVD and *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music* CD do not uniformly enact or reject the respectable "woman." I have chosen to focus on performances other than Sarah McLachlan's for a particular reason that is worth mentioning. Having attended Lilith Fair in 1997 as a teenager, the performance that struck me the most, and still does today, was given by Meredith Brooks. Amidst the numerous singer/songwriters, Brooks' unpolished vocals and electric guitar solos seemed almost out of place. In comparison to McLachlan's subdued reflections, Brooks' performance is rich with contradictions despite the "respectable" climate of Lilith Fair. Furthermore, I felt that a focus on McLachlan would marginalize lesser-known women musicians whose performances contain significant moments of negotiation and resistance. As such, the performances included will illustrate two ways in which respectability was musically navigated.

Meredith Brooks' performance of "Bitch" on the Lilith Fair DVD provides an interesting example. As previously established, rock music typically involves vocals that signify masculinity and power, normally achieved by straining and

distortion. Although a singer/songwriter, rock musician, Brooks' vocal

performance does not necessarily have the same cultural meanings. She sings

in the alto register, in tune, with clear diction and no distortion whatsoever. In

fact, the only time when some sort of strain is heard is during the final line of the

song, "I wouldn't want it any other way."[35] Rather than shifting into head voice,

Brooks utilizes her chest voice resulting in a slight vocal strain. While this sound

helps signify the power referenced in the lyric, the strain is not enough to produce

any sort of distortion and occurs only this once. Thus, her vocals are not heard

as rock.

Lyrically, however, Brooks reclaims the negative connotations of "bitch"

and uses the term to criticize sexism and refuse containment by traditional

ideologies of femininity, "I'm a bitch, I'm a lover, I'm a child, I'm a mother, I'm a

sinner, I'm a saint, I do not need feel ashamed."[36] The plurality Brooks

constructs and the refusal to be contained is not communicated with her vocal

performance, but rather the instrumental music. Primarily based on the chords I,

ii and V, the third of each of these chords are absent, leaving open fifths. As

Brooks is a singer/songwriter rock musician, this is perhaps not surprising. An

open fifth, particularly on the V chord, is typically considered a power chord in

rock and heavy metal music. Thus, Brooks utilizes the power this signifies as

she appropriates the word 'bitch,' leaving no doubt that her intention is to

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[35] As heard on the *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music* DVD, 2000.
[36] Ibid.

challenge certain patriarchal ideologies. The open sound of these chords also

helps to construct the plurality and refusal to be contained that Brooks sings

about. Moreover, Brooks *plays* the electric guitar solo during this performance,

not only preventing a shift of attention away from her, as evidenced in

McLachlan's performance, but demonstrating her mastery of a "male" instrument

and establishing her as a rock musician. Although Brook's music is heard as

rock, incorporating electric guitar, distortion and heavy drumming, her voice is

juxtaposed against this tapestry as one signifying "woman." Brooks neither

rejects nor employs respectability as she instrumentally performs music heard as

male and vocally performs a style heard as female.

When this musical performance is considered in relation to Brooks' use

of her body, however, the situation becomes blurred. Although Brooks is

positioned by the microphone just as Jewel and McLachlan were, limiting her

movement and containing her body while singing, she nevertheless finds

avenues to circumvent this restriction. At the opening of the song Brooks does

not stand at the microphone, but rather off to the side. During the brief

instrumental introduction she is able to dance and move freely before the

microphone contains her movement. When she begins the first verse the

camera cuts to a shot of the audience, where 3 white women in the front row are

dancing. Upon the camera's return to Brooks, she gestures to the women in the

audience and encourages them to "go ahead." Although a fleeting moment, it is

striking when considered in relation to the marginalization of dance and the body

by other singer/songwriters on the DVD. Here Brooks subverts this

marginalization and gives primacy to dance, as the moment of dialogue between

the audience and performer takes precedence over the musical performance.

The relationship between Brook's body and the music, particularly during

the chorus, signals a power and resistance not found in her vocal performance.

The first time the chorus is heard, Brooks punches the air with her fist as she

proclaims "I'm a bitch," an action that reappears the second time the chorus is

sung and is expanded on during its final repetition. During the third and final

chorus Brooks not only punches the air with her fist, but kicks her left leg

backwards, her entire body twisting with this physical movement, adding visible

emphasis to the lyrics and suggesting an effort to break free from the

microphone's containment of her body. Finally, during the two instrumental

breaks in "Bitch," Brooks is able to move away from the microphone. In the first

instance, she moves off to the side and solos on her electric guitar, bending and

shifting forward. As a result, Brooks' face is obscured by her long hair that

"wildly" tosses from side to side as she plays, emphasized by the camera's

upward angle. This is not a movement that signals control and containment, but

rather the opposite. The second instrumental break, which concludes the song,

is even more striking. At the completion of the lyrics, Brooks spins away from the

microphone as if suddenly released from it. She then proceeds to bend and shift

forward with the music, stamp her feet and also point the neck of the guitar out

towards the audience, adopting a gesture frequently seen in rock performances

that is often perceived as phallic. While all of this is going on, her male band members are positioned at their microphones singing "ooh, ooh, ooh." This portion of the song inverts what has previously been seen; it is now the male musicians who are contained by the microphone as back-up singers and the female who is permitted the freedom to move. Brooks' body, especially when contrasted against the stationary position of her band, is clearly anything but "respectable." This is a body no longer contained, free to move and dance, and signifying feminine excess. Thus, this particular performance is one imbued with contradiction as she musically performs that which is female and male, while physically resisting containment by the microphone and instrument. As a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman, Brooks does not communicate the patriarchal notion of "woman" but rather a femininity defined by contradiction and plurality and which oscillates between that which is respectable and that which is not.

The other example I want to consider is Lisa Loeb's "Falling in Love," as recorded on the *Lilith Fair Volume 1* CD, a performance that in contrast to Meredith Brooks', clearly articulates a particular femininity and evokes respectability. Gender is immediately indicated for the listener in the first verse, "She wanted to be a cowboy, she was shootin' 'em down. She was trampin' around, and he walked in crooked with the clear blue eyes."[37] There is no ambiguity here as Loeb clearly identifies this relationship as heterosexual and

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[37] Lisa Loeb, "Falling in Love," *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music*, Columbia House, W2 30125, 1998.

romantic when she states "the time between meeting and finally leaving is

sometimes called falling in love."[38] Not only is this a heterosexual relationship,

but the woman is positioned in the private sphere, the man in the public sphere:

"she'd sit and wait for the sound of his feet on the doormat, sound of his hand on

the doorknob."[39] Thus, Loeb evokes traditional notions of femininity and

masculinity in relation to this heterosexual couple. Even more problematic is the

fact that the woman in this song wanted to be a cowboy, a male domain, which

she subsequently gives up to enter into this relationship. Although gender and

sexuality are clearly marked by Loeb, I would argue that this does not necessarily

prevent the listener from substituting a personal experience. The idea of falling

in love or a failing relationship is not uniquely heterosexual, as homosexual

relationships can and often do follow the same pattern. Moreover, a failing

relationship can apply not only to romantic, but platonic and familial relationships.

The listener can insert alternative relationships into Loeb's heterosexual

dialogue.

Despite this point of entry for the listener, the vocals perform a very

particular identity. I would like to pay particular attention to the inclusion of

Emmy Lou Harris singing harmony and back-up vocals. While Loeb sings the

first verse and chorus on her own, Harris joins in on the remainder of the song.

Providing harmony during the chorus, her vocals during the verses primarily

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[38] Loeb, 1998.
[39] Ibid.

consist of syllables such as "oh." I would argue that what is first a personal

experience becomes one that is shared. Jacqueline Warwick's study of girl

groups in the 1960's provides clarification,

> However, the response portion of a Girl Group song sometimes
> takes the form of abstract, wordless harmonies heard behind the
> solo line — this too can be understood to represent a sympathetic
> company of other girls. The mere presence of backing vocals
> signifies a collective, a community of singers who agree with and
> support the lead singer's position (although in many cases where
> dialogue is represented more literally, the backup singers can
> contradict the soloist's statements). Backup singers conjure a
> sisterhood, lending their voices to strengthen the statements of an
> individual vocalist.[40]

This is heard in "Falling in Love." Harris' supporting harmonies construct a

sense of community, that this is a common, shared experience. "Falling in Love"

not only constructs heterosexuality in the lyrics, but can be heard as vocally

performing a heterosexual community, as Harris' support implies she

understands what Loeb is singing about. These are white singer/songwriters

singing of the common experiences of heterosexual love. Thus, Loeb and Harris

are able vocally to perform a "respectable" community, signifying a community of

particular "women."

We have seen thus far that Lilith Fair not only reproduced the position of

women musicians and the problems of representation this contains, but that the

festival symbolically represented the respectable "woman." It has also been

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[40] Warwick, 40.

theorized that the musical performances provided a space in which to engage, resist and navigate respectability. Lilith Fair's extra-musical activities function similarly. Forming corporate partnerships with Bioré, Nine West and Borders Books and Music, Lilith Fair and its sponsors made donations to particular organizations, Border's donating proceeds from the sale of Lilith Fair compact disc recordings. The organizations identified as official Lilith Fair charities included LIFEbeat, RAINN, the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Wider Opportunities for Women, the International Rett Syndrome Association, Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club, Artists against Racism and Voters for Choice Education Fund.[41] Local charities were typically women's shelters or crisis centres and received one dollar from every ticket sold in their respective city. As suggested by the descriptions, the festival, in alignment with its gendered focus, chose to support women-centred issues. Moreover, these organizations were present at each festival performance in the form of booths providing information and education for audience members. Thus, Lilith Fair was not only a musical event, but a socially and politically activist event.

The extra-musical marketing and fundraising activities were framed in a very particular manner that served to reinforce Lilith Fair's respectable identity. As Skeggs has suggested, "to become respectable means displaying femininity

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[41] Lifebeat is the American music industry's response to AIDS awareness. Rett syndrome is a neurological disorder present only in girls. Voters for Choice Education Fund is an organization that supports women's reproductive freedom. Sierra Club is an organization promoting the conservation of the natural environment. "National Groups," <http://www.lilithfair.com/97/community.html>, Accessed June 17, 2004.

through appearance and conduct."[42] We have examined how Lilith Fair achieved

this musically, but not how the festival engaged with this concept outside of

performance. As the highest grossing North American tour of 1997, Lilith Fair

was able to make substantial donations and fundraise significant amounts of

money.[43] Combined with the festival's challenging of gendered practices, Lilith

Fair clearly functioned in the masculine, public sphere in a significant way. This

is mitigated, however, by Sarah McLachlan's rejection of feminism, as quoted

earlier, and positioning of the social and political activities of the festival within

ideologies of education and caring, thus placing these activities within the bounds

of respectability,

> Lilith is about a sense of community, caring and helping others.
> Throughout the tour everyone involved in Lilith Fair will be working
> with local groups to promote causes important to the community
> and Lilith Fair.[44]

This rejection of feminism and employment of respectability should be placed

within the social and political climate in the U.S. during the 1990s. As Susan

Faludi discusses in *Backlash,* the feminist campaign for equal rights and

reproductive freedom received significant criticism from the New Right during the

1980s and into the 1990s, evidenced in the failure of the Equal Rights

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[42] Skeggs, 102.

[43] Biore alone gave RAINN, LIFEbeat, National Association for Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Wider Opportunities for Women and International Rett Syndrome Association $20,000 each.

[44] 'Community,'
<http://www.lilithfair.com/scrapbook/lilith9x.php3?destURL=http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/dates/html>, Accessed February 28, 2004.

Amendment in the early 1980s and widespread debate over a woman's right for a safe and legal abortion.[45] Feminism would have been an extremely contentious label for McLachlan to employ. Framing these extra-musical activities as respectable can thus be theorized as a strategic means of negotiating the larger political climate.

Lilith Fair's extra-musical conduct is linked to the respectable, caring and nurturing mother, the festival's activities constructed in relation to traditional femininity and distanced from the public sphere in which they take place. This construction of respectability is solidified by Lilith Fair's labeling of sponsors as either Learning or Wellness. Lilith Fair's social activities are therefore distanced from the public sphere by subsuming them under gendered labels that tap into the function of "woman" as caregiver and educator. Interestingly, both Bioré and Nine West were identified as Wellness sponsors. Although Nine West made donations to breast cancer research, the company has more to do with the performance of femininity than women's wellness; fashionable shoes are a marker of beauty rather than health. While clear skin can signify health, it is also inextricably linked to beauty as females are taught to cover blemishes and wrinkles with make-up. Mavis Bayton points out in her study of British, female musicians that "there are more pressures on female performers to conform to certain 'right' images,"[46] these images informed by traditional notions of feminine

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[45] Susan Faludi, *Backlash* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991), 232.
[46] Bayton, 15.

beauty. Instead of challenging these notions, Lilith Fair's partnership with Biore and Nine West employs them. This is not to say this is a negative action. Rather, by investing in traditional femininity Lilith Fair and its sponsors were able to raise substantial sums of money for women's social issues and organizations. In doing so, however, the "respectable woman" is constructed, reinscribing a particular "women's music" community. In a similar manner, the classification of Borders Books and Music as a Learning sponsor enacts respectability by aligning the corporation and festival with education and the mind, constructions imbued with implications of the middle-class.

Just as the musical performances provided a space to negotiate this respectable climate, so do the extra-musical activities. Although blanketed in respectability and neither a "soapbox for extremist feminism" nor a forum for sexual politics, Lilith Fair nevertheless retained a point of entry for the lesbian participant within these activities.[47] The topic of sexuality remained notably absent from Lilith Fair press conferences and information posted on the official website; however, booths such as the Voters for Choice Education Fund and Planned Parenthood were not necessarily "respectable" given the political climate in the United States.[48] While both groups can naturalize heterosexual sex through their emphasis on pregnancy prevention and abortion rights, issues predicated on heterosexual sex, there has nonetheless been a significant and

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[47] Cited in Childerhose, 20.
[48] One of the Main Stage acts was the Indigo Girls (Amy Ray and Emily Saliers), both openly lesbian musicians.

active lesbian presence within these organizations, particularly with respect to reproductive freedom. As Lillian Faderman observes, the Gay and Lesbian Democratic Clubs have supported these issues throughout the past thirty years.[49] Thus, as Lilith Fair negotiated its relationship to other "women's music" festivals such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and the political climate of the 1990s, a climate of respectability and therefore heterosexuality encompassed the festival, allowing for, yet mitigating the possibility of a secondary, albeit marginalized, lesbian discourse.

A final consideration of Lilith Fair's extra-musical qualities is its definition as "lifestyle in concept," a description referencing the festival's commitment to contribute to women's issues and local communities.[50] Labeling the festival in such a manner distances it from the public sphere in which it operates in and aligns it more closely with the private sphere in which women are positioned. The activities are associated with personal codes of behaviour rather than functioning in the "workplace." By distancing the extra-musical activities from the political, public sphere, traditional notions of femininity and respectability are mapped onto these extra-musical activities. Furthermore, as Chapter One discussed, festivals occupy a particular space in time, momentary in quality, when activities that would not occur in everyday life are permissible. This

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[49] Faderman, 296.
[50] As quoted on the Lilith Fair website, "Sarah McLachlan creates Lilith Fair for 1997," posted Wednesday, February 12, 1997 < http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/dates.html>, Accessed February 28, 2004.

suggests that the significance of Lilith Fair and the challenge it made are momentary, dissipating at the close of the festival. By suggesting the festival constructs a lifestyle, Lilith Fair is able to negotiate this momentary nature and imply a lasting effect or change.

Interestingly, however, the way in which in community was constructed in relation to the audience can be seen as contradicting the more lasting effect that "lifestyle" implies. As argued in Chapter One, community can be imagined through participating in an event or act in which one does not necessarily meet other participants, but knows they are participating. For those who attended Lilith Fair 1997, the participation that facilitated this imagining was limited to just that, attendance. The information booths and vendors present in The Village area employed a specific form of communication between those with the information and products and those in attendance: one way communication between that of the "retailer" and "consumer." Consequently, what emerges is a style of communication resembling capitalist modes of exchange. Information and knowledge is commodified, now an object to be exchanged. What is absent in this capitalist exchange is dialogue. Audience members could walk through The Village and pick up various pamphlets, but there were no activities in which they could participate and voice their opinions. The audience lacked agency beyond the ability to physically pick up information. The participatory theory of community discussed in Chapter One asserts that a loss of political agency has resulted in a loss of community. If agency is the key to the construction of

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community and change, then it can be argued that the lack of dialogue and

outlets for participation contradicted the notion that Lilith Fair was "lifestyle" in

concept. Furthermore, I would argue that this "lifestyle" is imbued with

connotations of the middle-class, not only by the respectability Lilith Fair

constructed, but by the means of exchange on which this "lifestyle" is predicated.

Although the information was free within The Village, it was not free of monetary

value in the sense that one had to purchase a ticket to enter the larger venue.

As ticket prices ranged from $30 and upwards and the festival primarily took

place in cities, one had to have access to both money and transportation if

situated outside of these urban centres.[51] Thus, lower income households and

individuals may not have had the same access to this event as a middle-class

individual living in either a rural or urban centre. If considered in this light,

"lifestyle" was a middle-class one.

Lilith Fair 1997 constructed and performed a particular "women's music"

community, engaging with the notion of respectability both musically and extra-

musically. This inaugural "celebration of women in music" celebrated the white,

heterosexual, middle-class woman, marginalizing the inclusion of both the non-

white and the lesbian body. In the following chapter these issues will be

discussed with respect to Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 in order to examine how the

community constructed during these two years negotiated these issues and

engaged with respectability. As the line-up for these two years expanded to well

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[51]"Lilith Fair," < http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/dates.html>, Accessed June 7, 2004.

over one hundred musicians and included musics other than the

singer/songwriter, Lilith Fair will be considered with respect to difference and

diversity in order to examine whether this "celebration" provided visibility for the

identities rendered invisible in Lilith Fair 1997.

Chapter Three: Diversifying Lilith

Lilith Fair 1997 was widely criticized in the print media for the predominance of white singer/songwriters and a lack of diversity.[1] In response to these criticisms, Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 attempted to diversify the festival's line-up. On the official Lilith Fair 1998 website, organizers of the festival released this statement,

> In addition to the Main Stage, Lilith Fair will again incorporate Second and Village Stages for both established and emerging artists, with an emphasis being placed on offering an even broader range of musicianship to this year's audience.[2]

What does Lilith Fair's and the media's reference to broadness and diversity mean, however? This quote links these terms to musicianship, suggesting the issue revolves around musical genre. In doing so, the organizers of Lilith Fair ignore the connectedness of genre and gender/race/class/sexuality, a connection exemplified by the singer/songwriter. By separating genre and identity, the festival "sanitizes" the discourse of diversity as social issues are removed. Diversity with respect to ethnic identity, on the other hand, is frequently cited by nations, cities and communities as a means of describing the ethnic make-up of the particular geographic area. In this case, it is the way in which ethnicities identify themselves, this can include race, language, religion, politics and value systems, and how they are perceived by others that constructs

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[1] A complete list of Lilith Fair reviews can be found in the bibliography under Journalistic Literature.
[2] "Plans for Lilith Fair 1998 near completion." *News Archives*
< http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/pressrelease.com> Accessed May 24, 2004.

imaginary boundaries serving to demarcate one group from another.[3]   What

these two brief and differing examples stress is that in order to explore the

transformation of Lilith Fair's community from 1997 to the following two years, it

is important to interrogate the concept of diversity, what it means, how it positions

individuals and how it shapes the ways in which bodies interact with their

environment.

The above examples clearly highlight the interconnectedness of diversity

and difference, but this is not to suggest an equation of meaning, or an

interchangeability of usage. Diversity and difference function quite specifically

despite the closeness in which they operate. As Joan Scott elucidates, diversity

refers to a plurality of identities and is a condition of human existence, while

difference is "an effect of practices of discrimination and exclusion that make

differences meaningful and define some groups and people as different from

what is taken to be a norm."[4] If considered in this light, difference may be

examined in relational terms. As Heidi Mirza puts forth, "the very notion of

difference is relational; you are always positioned in relation to the norm, which is

whiteness."[5] Ultimately, and as we have seen, the relational character of

difference actively reproduces hierarchies that render subjectivities invisible due

to the binary relations that are constructed.[6]

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[3] Wsevolod W. Isajiw, *Understanding Diversity* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1999), 17.

[4] Joan Scott, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity." *Institute for Advanced Studies* (Summer, 1992), 6.

[5] H.S. Mirza, *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 13.

[6] Mirza, 13.

Scott's separation of diversity and difference is somewhat oversimplified, however, as it ignores where these two concepts overlap. If difference actively positions individuals in relation to a norm or universal, diversity, while still intimately connected to the political level of communities and nations, can then function in relation to the subjectivity of individuals. Subjectivities are informed and delineated by their intersection with class, race, gender and sexuality. These are markers of identity that are no less socially constructed and perceived whether considered separately in relation to norms, or collectively in recognition of the plurality of identities. Although difference as a *practice* may reproduce norms and binary hierarchies and diversity may recognize pluralities, their interconnectedness still meets at the point of social construction. Whether dual or plural, individual and/or group identities are still socially constructed and perceived differently. Diversity therefore rests on the assumption that people are different in *many* ways, differences that are socially constructed.

These issues and concepts cannot be easily separated with respect to Lilith Fair either, both diversity and difference operating simultaneously and fluidly within the festival. The 1997 festival clearly operated within the context of gender difference as it was identified as a women's music festival. We have already established that "women's music" is a social construction with real material consequences. In light of Cusick's assertion that a singer performs the interior of her body, no two female singers can be perceived as sounding the

"same."[7] "Women's music," rather, is an oppressive category functioning to position women differently and marginally within popular music. Nonetheless, Lilith Fair's celebration of "women in music" provided a means to distinguish the festival from a male dominated industry and male dominated festivals. In celebrating this gendered difference, identity categories beyond that of gender were rendered invisible, difference defined in relation to the man/woman binary opposition.

When diversity is considered with respect to 1998 and 1999, it becomes evident that dualities are still in operation. Lilith Fair 1997 received widespread criticism for the predominance of white singer/songwriters. For example, Neva Chonin's *Rolling Stone* review found the 1997 festival to have a "whitebread, folkie focus,"[8] while Steve Dougherty, writing for *People Weekly,* praised the diversity of the second and third Lilith Fair CDs, implying the first volume 1997 performances lacked diversity,

> The follow-ups to the 1997 tourhighlights album (released
> last year) vols. 2 and 3 showcase the 1998 Fair's more
> ethnically diverse and musically muscular lineup.[9]

In the following two years diversity as demanded by the media and diversity as a response from the festival reproduced two critical assumptions and/or norms. First, the naturalized and normative position of whiteness is reproduced because the lack of something "other" than whiteness is constructed as different, invoking

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[7] Cusick, 32.

[8] Neva Chonin, "Lilith Fair," *Rolling Stone*, 6 August 1998, 34.

[9] Steve Dougherty, "Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music Vol. 2, Vol. 3," *People Weekly*, 21 June 1999, 43.

the binary white/other and reproducing whiteness as a norm. Secondly, the white singer/songwriter is reproduced as a normative position for women musicians, as difference is defined in opposition to this genre. Taken together, Lilith Fair 1997 was constructed as the norm against which to define diversity and difference in the following years. This chapter will take a close look at the community constructed in 1998 and 1999 in order to elucidate the meanings of diversity and difference within the festival's context. It will also examine the music performed by these bodies, exploring how the music produced and constructed difference within Lilith Fair.

Returning to the statement released by Lilith Fair organizers, does the demand for diversity within the festival's line-up translate as a call for bodies other than white, or perhaps musics other than the singer/songwriter genre, or both? Can these two questions really even be separated considering the racial coding of the singer/songwriter genre? Given the criticism around whiteness, an examination of who was included in Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 will be discussed first. It also needs to be said that this is a discussion fraught with issues of essentialism and power. Through grappling with the issue of ethnicity, my aim is not to render other subjectivities invisible, such as class and sexuality, but rather to demonstrate that whiteness was dominant. In attempting to do so, I drew information from the official Lilith Fair website biographies and did not assign any performer an ethnicity based on my own perceptions. Rather, the non-white performers listed below were identified as such in their respective biographies.

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Caucasian women who did not identify an ethnic background have been listed as white, although I do realize this does not remove them from the discourses of ethnicity. This absence of identification, of course, stems from the normative position of "white." As Richard Dyer observes, white as a skin colour and hue is unstable, distinctions within whiteness always discernible and signifying both ethnicity and class.[10] That said, the identification of women as white is not meant to privilege, but rather to broach a discussion of how difference and diversity operated within Lilith Fair.

In 1998 Lilith Fair expanded from 1997's 51 acts, 57 performers, to 138 acts, 155 performers.[11] Of these 155 performers, 137 were white, 12 were African-American, 1 Jamaican, 2 Asian, 1 Indian, 1 Indonesian and 1 Native-American. Although 2 musicians remain unidentified, non-white women musicians would still be outnumbered significantly.[12] Lilith Fair's line-up of 137 white women musicians means that more than two-thirds of the performers are still white. The situation in 1999 is similar. There were 115 acts and 133 musicians. Of these 133, 114 women were white, 10 African-American, 2 Asian, 1 Indian, 1 Haitian, 1 Hawaiian, 1 Brazilian and 1 Portuguese-Canadian, 2 Japanese, and 2 remain unidentified.[13] As in 1998, well over two-thirds of the performers in 1999 were white.

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[10] Dyer, 57.

[11] "Artists." <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/docs/artists/>, Accessed May 17, 2004.

[12] Ibid, May 27, 2004. Two of the 155 are unknown as information could not be obtained via the internet, periodicals, or have since left the music industry.

[13] "Artists." < http://www.lilithfair.com/artists/>, Accessed June 8, 2004.

Due to the financial success of the inaugural year, Lilith Fair was able to increase the number of musicians included in year 2 by almost 300%. Given this, the rise in non-white performers must also be considered in light of overall growth and not simply the result of an attempt to diversify. It was not only the number of non-white musicians that increased; so did the number of white musicians. As a result, the gap in proportion does not decrease, but remains relatively stable. It could be theorized, therefore, that the rise in non-white musicians stemmed from an overall growth rather than an effort to increase their representation. Furthermore, what these statistics show is that the primary ratio of performers is based on white performers versus black performers, bodies outside of this racial duality never actually increasing in representation, a fact most apparent on the Main Stage of both years. Of the 24 Main Stage performers in 1998, 18 were white and 6 were African-American.[14] This dualism also functioned in Lilith Fair 1999 as 12 of the 17 Main Stage acts were white, 5 African-American.[15] Not only could the rise in African-American performers be attributed to the growth in the festival as discussed above, but these numbers suggest that Lilith Fair's definition of diversity is actually more closely linked to the notion of difference as defined by Scott. The Main Stage performances engage a binary opposition as difference is defined in terms of the white/black racial hierarchy. Race as a duality is therefore reinforced, as bodies other than white or African-American absent from the Lilith Fair Main Stage. The Main

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[14] "Artists." <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/docs/artists/>, Accessed May 17, 2004.
[15] "Artists." < http://www.lilithfair.com/artists/99.html>, Accessed June 8, 2004.

Stage did not construct an environment of diversity, but rather one of difference, positioning the white female as the norm against which to define difference and reproducing a binary, racial hierarchy.

The Second and Village Stages did not engage with difference in quite the same manner as the Main Stage did. The white singer/songwriter functioned as the norm against which to define difference for the entire festival. However, while informed by this larger notion of difference, diversity was evidenced on the secondary stages. Because the Main Stage remained predominantly white and singer/songwriter in genre, the majority of women performing other genres of music or who were non-white were included on the Second and Village Stages. In1998, 7 of the 12 African-American women performed on the Second and Village Stages, split between the two stages, and the non-white, non-African-American women performed on the Second and Village Stage only.[16] In 1999, half of the African-American women performed on the Village Stage, the remaining non-white women performing between both of the secondary stages.[17] The secondary stages evidenced a diversity of ethnicities.

Diversity, however, is not an autonomous ideology removed from social and political implications. What the above discussion suggests is that the festival's engagement with diversity centred on ethnicity, reproducing its whiteness throughout by positioning Lilith Fair 1997 and the white singer/songwriter as the norm against which to define that which was different or

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[16] "Artists." <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/docs/artists/98.html>, Accessed May 18, 2004.
[17] "Artists." < http://www.lilithfair.com/artists/99.html>, Accessed June 9, 2004.

diverse. While diversity may not involve the practices of discrimination contained

in difference, as Scott observes, it is nonetheless informed by boundaries that

shape the way in which individuals are perceived and positioned,

> The presence of diverse groups, ethnic, national, and
> racialized, can best be understood in terms of a two-
> sided boundary that includes an internal and external
> dimension, involving a simultaneous relationship to
> one's trajectory and history and to others.[18]

This internal and external boundary means that diversity cannot evade social

relations of domination, but should also not be reduced to such a discussion.[19]

This is a fine line to tread, particularly when difference and diversity are both

operating within Lilith Fair. As the above discussion points out, the way in which

non-white musicians were included in terms of their physical location was highly

problematic. In order to fully grapple with this, a description of the use of

physical space is necessary.

The majority of Lilith Fair concerts took place in amphitheatres, where a

single, large stage was already in place. Seating consisted of rows of seats in

front of the Main Stage, grass seating behind them. The number of performers

on each bill, typically 11-12, however, meant that one stage would not suffice, the

set up and removal of each performance too time consuming to fit into one day.

As such, the organizers of Lilith Fair decided to construct the Second Stage and

Village Stage in order to accommodate the festival's large number of

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[18] Christiane Harzig and Danielle Juteau, "Introduction," in *The Social Construction of Diversity* ed. Christiane Harzig and Danielle Juteau (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 5.
[19] Ibid, 5.

performers.[20] Although a necessity in terms of production, the way in which these stages were positioned constructed hierarchies, privileging the Main Stage over the Second and Village Stages, the Second Stage over the Village Stage. The pictures below are typical of the stage positioning. The Second Stage was most commonly placed off to the side of the Main Stage or behind the seats before the grass area began. The Village Stage was constructed in the Lilith Fair Village area, typically located at the venues entrance. These were areas not usually visible from the seating area, and also positioned in an area with the distraction of booths and vendors. It is worth noting here that there is not a single picture that contains all three stages. While the first two pictures show the physical proximity between the Main and Second Stage, the Village Stage is not present, highlighting just how far removed this stage was from the spectator seating.

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[20] "Lilith Village Acoustic Stage Performers Announced."
<http://www.lilithfair.com/scrapbook/lilithOx.php3?docURL=http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/dates.html>, Accessed May 3, 2004.
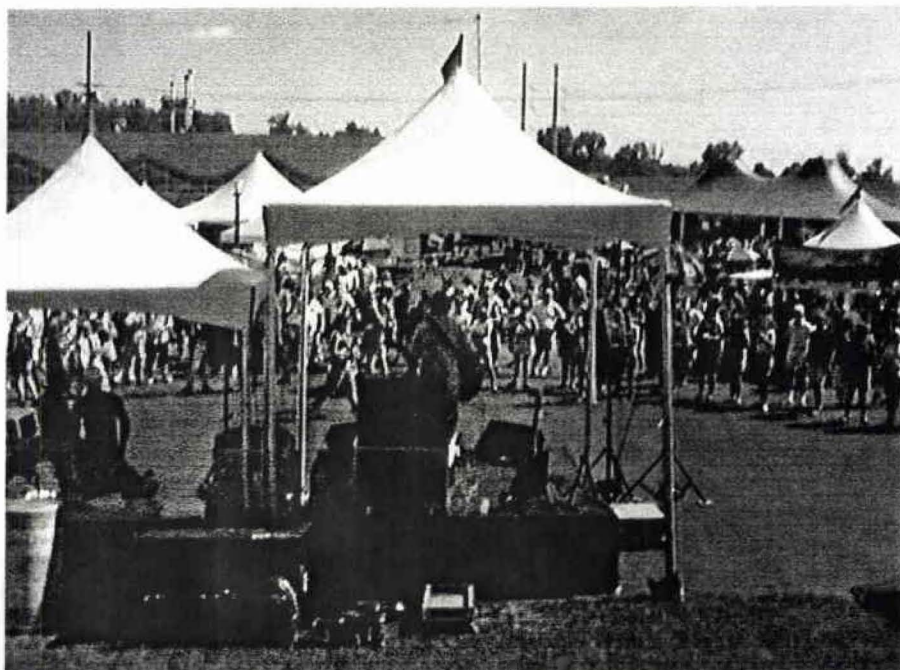
St. Louis Venue[21]
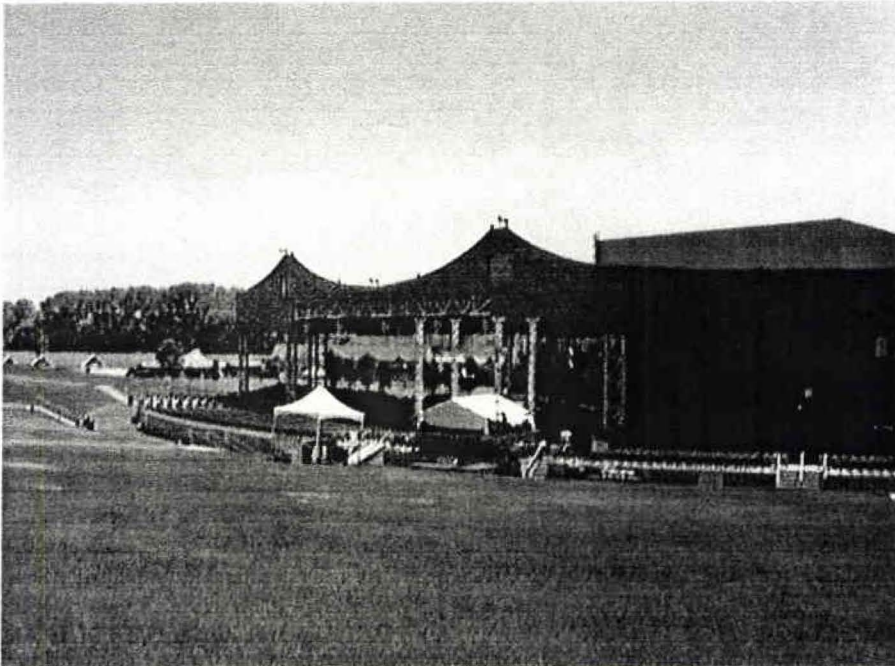
Close up of Lilith Fair Second Stage[22]

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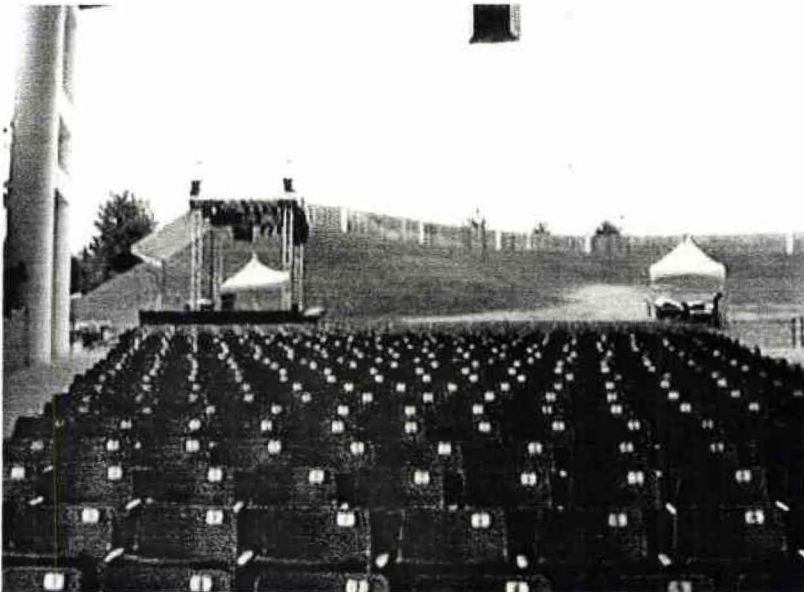
[21] "St. Louis Gallery," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/index2.html>, Accessed March 21, 2005.
The white tent on the right is the Second Stage.
[22] "Nashville Gallery," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/news/august/06/aug06_pg4.html>,
Accessed January 5, 2005.

Lilith Fair Village Stage[23]

As these pictures illustrate, the Second and Village Stage performers were not only given a smaller space in which to perform, the physical location of the stage was such that the performances were not visible to all audience members. This is particularly striking in the picture of the Second Stage, the seating facing the Main Stage, the audience members then positioned with their backs to the Second Stage performer. This has serious implications. The limited number of non-white musicians is now compounded by the fact that the majority of these musicians were included on secondary stages that were either removed from the main performance area, or positioned out of view of the majority of the audience.

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[23] "St. Louis Gallery," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith97/news/jul15/stlouis_pg7.html>, Accessed March 21, 2005.

Thus, not only are non-white musicians marginalized in terms of numbers, they are physically included on the outskirts of Lilith Fair, performing in its margins. Stuart Hall posits, in relation to black culture, that "spaces won for difference are few and far between, carefully policed and regulated, limited and underfunded...invisibility replaced by segregated visibility."[24] If we map this onto Lilith Fair's use of physical space, it can be theorized the festival is reproducing larger notions of racial politics. While the invisibility of non-white musicians in 1997 was replaced with larger representation in 1998 and 1999, this representation was visible only along the fringes of Lilith Fair. Thus, the "segregated visibility" of African-Americans within society is enacted in Lilith Fair. Imagined difference constructed a physical boundary systemic of larger issues of positionality and discrimination.

This should also be considered in light of the fact that white singer/songwriters performed on these stages. Due to their predominance, not all singer/songwriters could perform on the Main Stage. This physical positioning, however, does not translate in the same way it did for non-white musicians or non-singer/songwriters. Because the white singer/songwriter is taken as the norm against which to define difference, this performer automatically assumed a privileged position. Consequently, the white singer/songwriters' presence on the secondary stages does not contain the same implications it does for the other performers. In fact, the white singer/songwriters' inclusion on

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[24] Stuart Hall, David Morley, Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 468.

all three stages could be seen as a means of reinforcing this particular body and music as the norm by reproducing the larger number of white bodies over non-white bodies on each stage.

As a result of this positioning, the music performed on these stages was marginalized and situated within a hierarchy. As the previous two chapters theorized, by working within the popular music industry, it becomes increasingly difficult to challenge the problems it contains. Thus, because Lilith Fair operated within the popular music industry, it subsequently reproduced the problems of representation and inclusion women musicians in popular music experience. In 1997, this was evidenced by the almost complete absence of rock and non-white musicians, women who are significantly underrepresented in popular music. In 1998 and 1999, the problem concerned where rock and non-white musicians were incorporated. Female rock musicians, for instance, still had a marginal presence on the Main Stage. Liz Phair, Meredith Brooks and Tracy Bonham were the only rock musicians on the 1998 Main Stage, with Liz Phair and The Pretenders the only rock musicians on the 1999 Main Stage.[25] Where the majority of rock musicians were included, such as Holly McNarland and Rodie Ray, and the bands Half Mad Poet, Love Riot, Talking to Animals and Glassoline, was the Second and Village Stage. In fact, there were approximately 20 rock musicians and bands performing on the 1998 Second and Village Stages.[26] Lilith

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[25] "Artists," <http://www.lilithfair.com/artists.htp> Accessed June 4, 2004.
[26] "Lilith Fair 1998 Tour Dates," <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/docs/dates>, Accessed June 18, 2004.

Fair 1999 evidenced similar numbers. Moreover, white dance artists, such as

Madonna and Britney Spears, are completely absent from the Main Stage of both

these years, their presence limited to the secondary stages.[27] This is critical

within the context of Lilith Fair's engagement with respectability. Rock music has

continually been reproduced as a masculine domain unsuitable for female

musicians. Dance music, although a genre considered permissible for women

due to its status as "low other" and its link to the body, simultaneously contradicts

the notion of respectability for the same reasons women are permitted to perform

it; it is too closely aligned with the body and sexuality. Thus, white women

musicians who performed musics other than that of the singer/songwriter and

who challenged the construction of respectability were marginalized.

This also had critical implications for non-white musicians. The majority of

African-American performers in 1998 and 1999 were not singer/songwriters of

the folk/pop variety. Rather, the inclusion of African-American bodies was

accompanied by the inclusion of musics coded as black. The festival did not

include African-American singer/songwriters such as Tracy Chapman in 1997,

but women who performed in the genres of jazz, rap, dance, hip-hop, R&B and

gospel. In 1998, for example, rappers Missy Elliot and Queen Latifah performed

on the Main Stage alongside the soul, funk and R&B musician Me'Shell

Ndegeocello. These genres were also performed by other African-American

[27]"Artists." < http://www.lilithfair.com/artists/>, Accessed June 11, 2004. The 1998 program
featured only one dance act, Swamperella, fronted by a white woman on the Village Stage. The
1999 program included the Dance Hall crashers on the Second Stage, fronted by a white woman.
Only two other dance acts performed in 1999, Sozzi, a Hawaiian musician, and Mya, an African-
American musician.

women on the secondary stages, such as Morcheeba's trip-hop performance and

Felicia Loud's soul band.[28] As Chapter Two discussed, these are genres

positioned differently than the music found on the white, mainstream popular

charts. They are musics coded as black and marginalized, as we saw in Barry

Shank's discussion.

As Stuart Hall posits, "The essentialist notion of ethnicity is extremely

damaging because it doesn't allow for pluralization; it doesn't allow for

hybridization."[29] Ethnicity does not consider the various subjectivities of

individuals, such as gender, class and sexuality. This has particular implications

for Lilith Fair. One factor that did remain constant throughout the three years the

festival toured was the larger construction of respectability and heterosexuality.

As the previous chapter discussed, the charities, sponsors and information

booths that constituted the festival's Village implied heterosexuality through the

inclusion of issues predicated on heterosexual sex. The content of this space

remained consistent over the three years the festival toured, issues such as

domestic violence, reproductive rights and environmental concerns the focus. As

Chapter Two suggested, however, not all of these issues would have been

considered "respectable" and they also included a significant lesbian presence, a

presence nonetheless operating covertly within the festival's climate of

respectability. Overall Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 engaged with diversity by

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[28] "Artists." <http://www.lilithfair.com/lilith98/docs/artists/>, Accessed May 16, 2004.
[29] Stuart Hall as cited by Julie Drew in, "Cultural Composition: Stuart Hall on Ethnicity and the Discursive Turn," in *Race, Rhetoric and the Post Colonial*, ed. Gary A. Olson (N.Y. State University of New York Press, 1999), 205.

positioning Lilith Fair 1997 as the norm against which to define difference.

Because the festival maintained the larger implication of heterosexuality, it limited

its definition of diversity to ethnicity, erasing the notion of plurality. The way in

which musics and bodies other than the singer/songwriter were included

reproduced the problematic ways women musicians are positioned within the

larger popular music industry, as well as larger issues of social mobility. In doing

so, Lilith Fair was able to maintain its respectable position, women and musics

that challenged this construction physically positioned differently and marginally.

I would argue, however, that the musical *performances* were able to articulate

diversity in a manner which the physical inclusion of musicians was not.

Queen Latifah's rap performance of "Life" in 1999 articulated an African-

American experience in the ghetto, also referencing the murders of Tupac

Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. In the third verse Latifah references the frustration

caused by the situation in the ghetto,

> Boy, your wife is sheddin' tears, and your crew they ache for you,
> But you got seeds, and we got to make sure they don't
> Inherit a world that's wicked by nature.
> Leave it to the Lord to even up the scores.
> The street's already raw, full of player haters, fake for sure.
> Takin' yours, makin' mistakes, ya fell.[30]

Consisting of an introduction, three verses and a chorus, the song both

musically and lyrically constructs a sense of frustration yet persistence with

respect to the problems pervading the ghetto. Accompanied by keyboard and

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[30] Dana Owens, "Life" in *Lilith Fair: A celebration of women in music vol. 2&3* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1998), 18.

drums, a groove is established at the outset in the key of A major, the harmony moving between an Amaj7 and G#m7 throughout the entire performance. Thus, the minimal harmonic motion throughout the rap constructs a specific space from which the performer and listener do not deviate. As Susan Fast observes, referencing Tricia Rose and Christopher Small, "harmonic stasis has been coded as an engagement with the present moment."[31] The harmonic structure Latifah employs draws the listener into this "present moment," reinforced by the steady rhythmic structure of the keyboard, a dotted quarter followed by an eighth note tied to a half note, in the time signature of 4/4. This harmonic and rhythmic stasis only relents at the conclusion of the performance, as the cymbals are heard in the background accompanied by a descending scale in the keyboards which finally give way to Latifah's repetition of "life," the performance fading out rather than resolving. Significantly, the listener is released from the "present moment" but is not offered a resolution, a concluding cadence being completely absent. Not only does this musically paint the lack of resolution in the experience she describes, but the absence of a cadence signals a refusal of Western classical and popular music traditions. Although cadences do appear in numerous musics, rap is often characterized by this 'fading out.' In doing so, Latifah privileges the African-American experience until the performance is no longer audible.

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[31] Fast, 195.

The construction of the chorus is perhaps the most complex, or layered, portion of the performance as it involves numerous, distinct voices singing and rapping in an almost fugal manner. The chorus is as follows,

> Life is what you make it, now matter how you kick it,
> Or how high the stakes get, you gotta take it.
> Some of you want some snake shit, other futures is vacant.
> Oh, jiglet, close the door and stand awake with it.[32]

These lyrics epitomize the feelings of frustration and persistence, as Latifah suggests taking ownership of one's life regardless of the situation. The performance of the chorus is not as simple. As Latifah performs, back up singers perform "my body wants ya, my body needs ya, and if there was a way I could keep you forever."[33] Added to this is another female voice singing the same lyrics as the back up singers, but differing rhythmically, as well as a male voice that repeats "life". Thus, the chorus provides a voice for many, both male and female, but simultaneously silences them all as no one voice is privileged over another.

"Life" not only articulates an African-American experience, but has particular gendered implications. As a female, African-American MC, Queen Latifah participates in a male dominated genre. She situates herself as such quite explicitly in "Life" with her references to Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G. Vocally, her lower, alto speaking voice suggests both the masculine and feminine, as the listener knows she is female, but hears a voice performing in a

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[32] Owens, 18.
[33] Owens, 16.

male register. This is particularly striking in the chorus, where her lower voice is

juxtaposed with both distinctly female and male voices; Latifah's voice is actually

closer in register to the male's. Furthermore, Latifah takes over from the female

back-up singers at the end of the song, singing "oh, my body wants you," then

reverting back to her speaking voice for the fade out. As she sings in an alto

range that would be the upper regions of a tenor range, she juxtaposes a more

feminine singing voice with an androgynous speaking voice, thus refusing

positioning as either male or female. This vocal performance can be theorized in

relation to Elizabeth Wood's "sapphonics,"

> "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of
> lesbian possibility and a range of erotic and emotional
> relationships among women who sing and women who listen
> …and refers to a particular kind of voice that crosses register
> boundaries and thus challenges polarities of both gender and
> sexuality.[34]

In this light, Latifah's vocal performance and use of register not only resists

identification in terms of gender, but permits lesbian possibility. Thus, Queen

Latifah's performance articulates an African-American experience in the ghetto,

linking it to the working-class, yet producing a lesbian space.

Suzanne Vega's performance of "Luka" deals with the issue of abuse, the

subject matter clearly articulated in the first verse with, "If you hear something

late at night, some kind of trouble, some kind of fight."[35] What is particularly

interesting here is the subject position of the narrator, as Luka is positioned as

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[34] Elizabeth Wood, "Sapphonics," in *Queering the Pitch*, ed., Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, Gary Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 27.
[35] Suzanne Vega, "Luka," in *Lilith Fair: A Celebration Women in Music vol. 2&3* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard corporation, 1998), 104.

such in the first phrase, "my name is Luka, I live on the second floor."[36] There is

no reference to Luka's age, ethnicity, gender or sexuality, the identity left

completely up to the listener to construct. Furthermore, although abuse is clearly

the subject matter, the kind of abuse is ambiguous. It can be extrapolated that

the abuse takes place within the home, as the location of the apartment is

referenced when Luka asks that the neighbour not ask questions about any

noise. This does not define the relationship, however, and it remains open for

identification by the listener.

The musical setting of the song reinforces this ambiguity thus permitting a

diverse range of listeners to identify with the song. The basics of the music are

constructed simply and directly. The key is E major, the time signature 4/4, and

the accompaniment is limited to an acoustic guitar and hand drums, constructing

a simplicity that draws the attention to the lyrics. This is emphasized by the

harmony, as the song is based on the chords I, IV and V, firmly establishing the

key. With the exception of two deceptive cadences, the prevalence of dominant

chords and perfect cadences does not disrupt the listener's sense of home.

Nothing about the musical accompaniment signifies a particular subjectivity,

providing an entrance for the listener. Although the genre of singer/songwriter is

coded as white, the openness of the subject position and topic is not racially

coded. While this could be considered as a means of inclusion, Dyer would

suggest this absence of racial coding implies whiteness. In terms of gender, the

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[36] Vega, 103.

name Luka suggests a male figure, but the character is performed by a female

voice, the lack of concreteness again permitting the subject to oscillate between

genders. Thus, the lyrics and performance of Suzanne Vega's "Luka" may imply

whiteness, but beyond this resides a plurality of identities that may be inserted by

the listener.

The politics of race and sexuality are given primacy in Me'Shell

Ndegeocello's 1998 performance of "Soul Record." This performance is

particularly interesting given Lilith Fair's larger construction of heterosexuality.

Openly bisexual and highly political, Ndegeocello addresses an African-American

experience, both past and present, both lyrically and musically, stating,

"Remember back in the day when everyone was black and conscious, down for

the struggle…"[37] This is then located in relation to sexuality as she states "I need

some black on black love."[38] Musically, the song fuses funk, soul and a hybrid of

rap and spoken word, referencing a myriad of African-American genres,

particularly when she includes the title of a Four Tops song, "Ain't No Woman

Like the One I Got," as a lyric. What is most striking, however, is the way in

which this live performance is altered from the version recorded on the album

Plantation Lullabies. The most direct reference to sexuality is completely absent

from the Lilith Fair performance and replaced with a synthesizer solo,

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[37] Me'Shell Ndegeocello, "Soul Record," in *Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music vol. 2&3* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1998), 80.
[38] Ibid, 81.

> Beautiful brown bodies. Pimp, switch and stay
> to the soulful sounds. Gotta get up, gotta get down,
> 'cause you give me good feeling.
> You give me good feeling. Yes, you do.[39]

Moreover, the line "A slow grind for these changing times," which precedes the above lyrics, is replaced with "It's no crime for this age and time."[40] Because this lyric follows the reference to black on black love, the politics of sexuality are not removed, but de-emphasized, with the politics of race privileged. It is unclear exactly why this change was made. However, within the context of Lilith Fair, the original version would have directly challenged its heterosexual and "respectable" identity. Ndegeocello's bisexual identity is also a consideration here. As West observes, queer black identity does not figure into either male or female black sexuality, resulting in an even more precarious position.[41] Given this, the removal of these particular lyrics aligns the song more closely with the respectability the festival constructed by subsuming the politics of sexuality within the larger, silent discourse of heterosexuality. Notably, the bass, piano and guitar solo that occur between "a slow grind" and the omitted section, a section referred to as "the booty-slamming part" in the official publication of lyrics, is still present.[42] In this case, sexuality may be contained lyrically, but it resists containment musically.

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[39] "Meshell Ndegeocello Lyrics." <http://www.poplyrics.net/waiguo/meshell/001.htm>, Accessed January 31, 2005.

[40] Ibid.

[41] West, 88.

[42] "Plantation Lullabies." <http://www.meshell.com>, Accessed February 2, 2005.

The song as a whole also refuses containment, both structurally and vocally. "Soul Record" does not follow the typical verse and chorus structure of popular song, so commonly heard elsewhere in Lilith Fair. The introduction is followed by a rap that actually fluctuates between spoken word and rap. This is followed by what could be called the chorus, which shifts between Ndegeocello's singing and speaking voice. This section is not heard again in this live performance, but it is on the album version. Thus, Ndegeocello refuses to be contained by either the original version or form. Following this is an interlude, rap, four instrumental solos and a fade-out based on "remember back in the day." The song does not follow traditional popular song form, but is instead composed of riffs and grooves. This subversion of traditional Western melody and harmony can be traced back to James Brown in the 1960s and his stylistic use of gospel and blues as he articulated the new sound of soul and funk.[43] Ndegeocello's performance thus draws on significant African-American musical practices that submerge Western, white, musical practices.

Ndegeocello's oscillation between singing, rapping and speaking constructs a sense of freedom as she moves from one to the other fluidly, refusing to be contained by any one vocal discipline. The vocals also refuse to define subject positions. Alternating between a husky speaking and rapping voice that occupies the lower register of an alto voice, and a singing voice working in the upper alto range and shifting periodically into head voice,

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[43] David Brackett, "James Brown Superbad and the Double-Voiced Utterance," in *Popular Music* 11, no. 3 (1992), 309.

Ndegeocello's performance does not articulate a particular gender. Ndegeocello constructs a sense of androgyny or perhaps taps into Wood's "sapphonics," producing a space for lesbian possibility. By escaping containment both structurally and musically, Ndegeocello refuses identification. Although lyrically the song defines race, the music and vocal performance is such that subjectivities remain fluid and plural.

Although the physical layout of Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 articulated a certain notion of difference and constructed hierarchies, the musical performances were able to transgress this and communicate diversity through either the production of a plurality of identities or a systematic lack of positioning that permitted the listener to insert his/her own particular subjectivity. Having thoroughly examined community with respect to the performers, community in terms of the audience should be considered.

As discussed in the previous chapter, community not only referred to the performers involved, but the audience and fans of Lilith Fair. Whether attending, logging onto the website or following the festival in the media, individuals were able to imagine a sense of community through the realization that there were other people who attended or followed the event, despite having never met. This imagined community remained consistent throughout 1998. Lilith Fair 1999, however, marked a radical shift in this imagined community. In previous years, the website functioned in a manner akin to Anderson's ceremony of reading the newspaper. The site was updated daily, users able to logon and have access to

information concerning the festival. This was expanded in 1999 to include

message boards and Chickmail. Message boards permitted users to read and

post messages to other Lilith Fair fans. Thus, users could not only imagine other

users on-line, they now had a visual representation in the form of messages.

Chickmail operated similarly. As the official community sponsor in 1999,

Chickmail provided free e-mail service for those who signed up. By way of e-

mails, Lilith Fair fans were sent information regarding tour dates, locations and

special events. These two additions to the website still do not provide direct

communication, however. Users could only respond to messages and updates

that had already been posted or sent, thus individuals were not actually

communicating with a person at the time they were logged on. The construction

of chatrooms significantly altered this, however, because when a user signed into

a chatroom they were communicating and interacting *with* someone. The

imagined community had a certain structure and form. This begs the question, is

this community still imagined?

Anderson's imagined community is inextricably linked to calender time.

This applies to Lilith Fair in so far as the festival occurred annually and websites

were updated daily. Virtual communication, however, is able to transcend time

and space. Participants in chatrooms are not bound by the homogenous empty

time signaled by dates to which Anderson refers. Users can be in any location at

any given time or in any time zone, transcending time and space to participate in

virtual communities. If Anderson's imagined community rests on the idea that

members never meet but only know of other member's existence, does the

virtual community's transcendence of time to permit virtual meetings locate the

community in reality rather than the imagination? This would posit that virtual

existence corresponds to the physical world, a difficult argument to make. One

of the major arguments against this correspondence is the ability to construct

alternate personalities on-line, obscuring reality in favour of the individual's

desired identity.[44] Although this kind of deception is possible outside of the

virtual, it is nonetheless more difficult.

Using Anderson's idea that communities are distinguished by the style in

which they are imagined, we may begin to answer some of these questions and

reconcile the virtual with the imagined. With this in mind it becomes possible to

conceive of a chatroom as the physical style in which a community is imagined.

Participants do not physically know other participants, but are able to meet in a

virtual space articulated physically by a computer that transcends actual time and

space, thereby imagining a community through the commonality of location and

interest. Steve Fox's study of virtual communities provides some clarification

here. Suggesting a Community Embodiment Model, Fox posits the "virtual

community melds the physical and virtual as embodied by the imagined."[45] In

order to picture the virtual community, there must be some physical semblance,

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[44] E. Reid, "The Emergence of Community in Computer Mediated Communication," in
CyberSociety: Computer Mediated Communication and Community ed. Steven C. Jones
(London: Sage, 1995), 166.
[45] Steve Fox, "The New Imagined Community," *The Journal of Communication Inquiry* 28, no.1
(January 2004), 53.

> (1) the technology that enables entrance into the community, (2) the content and representation (e.g., in text and graphics) that help Create the structure and form of the imagined community, (3) the history of the users (e.g., through logs or daily postings), (4) the intertextuality of content (such as links in text to other graphics or text), and (5) the communication/interaction among individuals.[46]

These physical factors intersect with the virtual in such a way that community cannot exist beyond the imagined; they depend on an individual envisioning or imagining other members *through* the textual and visual interaction. The addition of chatrooms in 1999 altered the way in which community was imagined. Although interaction and participation were facilitated by this addition, merging the physical and the virtual, this virtual space still depended on the imaginings of Lilith Fair fans to create the community. Not only did users need to imagine a community as a mode of motivation to log on, but mere participation in the chatroom does not necessarily constitute community unless the member imagines it to be.

One final consideration with respect to this new community is the element of participation. As the previous chapter pointed out, the notion of community as constructed by Lilith Fair 1997 and 1998 centred on a one-way relationship. Audience members could explore The Village of Lilith Fair and *receive* information, but dialogue and interaction were not facilitated in this structure. This applies to the website of those two years as well. The addition of the chatroom was the first mode established by the festival that facilitated two-way

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[46] Fox, 53.

communication. If this is considered within the context of a participatory

community as outlined by Rita Felski, that the loss of community is linked to the

loss of agency, it can be theorized that Lilith Fair 1999 provided a means for

community members to reclaim their agency or voice that had been silenced by

the previous two years. This is particularly relevant given the philanthropic focus

of the festival that encouraged performers and fans to contribute to the charities

in some form. This meant that Lilith Fair fans now had agency and a voice in this

particular imagined community.

Lilith Fair 1998 and 1999 articulated a notion of community informed by

difference and diversity, oscillating between the two in a manner that permitted

the construction of hierarchies and the performance of a plurality of subjectivities.

Although performers were situated in the festival in a manner systemic of larger

problems of representation evidenced in the popular music industry and society,

their musical performances were able to move beyond both the imagined

differences and physically constructed borders. Congruent with this change in

community was a change in its application to the audience's imagined community

in 1999. Thus, fans found agency within the imagined community as performers

articulated agency musically.

Chapter Four: Lilith in the Media

Lilith Fair garnered significant media attention throughout all three years that it toured. Reviews and feature articles on Lilith Fair were published in a myriad of magazines, including *Rolling Stone, Newsweek, Ms, Village Voice, Brandweek, The Advocate, Canadian Business, People, Maclean's, Herizons* and *Flare.*[1] An analysis of the critical writing published in these, and other, periodicals reveals that this discourse did not merely report on a newsworthy event or critique Lilith Fair's musical performances. Rather, these writings evaluated the festival in ways that constructed and situated it within a series of binary hierarchies: man/woman, rock/pop, authentic/inauthentic, culture/nature and political/personal. In doing so, Lilith Fair's significance as the first all-female touring music festival was marginalized and devalued. As Kembrew McLeod has noted, "it is the cumulative effect of this pattern of discourse – not the influence of a particular critic or piece of writing – that is important."[2] With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the rock journal *Rolling Stone* critiques Lilith Fair in a manner that privileges rock over pop music and evokes a gendered hierarchy. Congruently, *Flare*'s emphasis on beauty and fashion and *Canadian Business*' focus on Lilith Fair's marketing and sponsorship stem from the subject focus of these respective periodicals. Finally, McLachlan's hesitance to label the festival as feminist provoked stern criticism from feminist publications such as *Herizons*

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[1] A list of magazine articles is located in the bibliography under Critical Discourse.
[2] Kembrew McLeod, "Between Rock and a Hard Place: Gender and Rock Criticism," in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. S. Jones (Philadelphia, 2002), pp. 96.

and *Ms*. However, by focusing on the language of this criticism as a whole it is

apparent that Lilith Fair was situated and discussed in varying ways that

nonetheless all serve to devalue its significance. It is important to note at this

point that while some of the criticisms cited resonate with my own, the magazine

coverage is not working from the perspective I established in Chapter One.

While seeking to unpack the problems of representation and community that

occurred during this festival, I also recognize the significance of Lilith Fair and do

not devalue the festival on the basis of my critique. The criticism of Lilith Fair in

the various magazines, however, positioned the festival within a network of

inferior binary constructions. This chapter will analyze this discourse by looking

at the various "nicknames" attached to Lilith Fair, criticisms of the music and

performances and representations of the performers.

Lilith Fair was referenced in many ways during the three years it toured,

both in the titles as well as the body of the articles. Some examples include

"Galapalooza,"[3] "Fair Maidens,"[4] "Fair Ladies,"[5] "estrogen package tour,"[6] and/or

"estrogen-powered."[7] Latching onto the significance of gender to Lilith Fair, the

result is the tendency to discuss women musicians as if they constitute one

homogenous group or genre, evoking the category of "women's music." As

theorized in Chapter One, this category betrays a historical resistance to the

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[3] Christopher John Farley, "Galapalooza," *Time*, 21 July 1997, 56.
[4] Anonymous, "Fair Maidens," *Village Voice*, 12 May 1998, 43.
[5] Anonymous, "Fair Ladies: Lilith's New Look Debuts in Portland."
<http://www.rollingstone.com/new/story?id=5924799>, June 22, 1998. Accessed June 13, 2004.
[6] Richard Skanse, "Lilith's Last Stand." <http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story?id=5924337.>
April 27, 1999, Accessed June 13, 2004.
[7] Carrie Bell, "ChickClick," *Billboard*, 3 July 1999, 22.

presence of female musicians, as well as evoking the notion of "woman," a

concept steeped in patriarchal ideologies. Presently, women musicians in

popular music are positioned within "women's music" on the basis of their gender

and their exclusion from rock music.   The above listed monikers clearly enact

the notion of "women's music" and the resistance in which it is couched, as the

primacy of gender betrays a perceived necessity to include it. "Women's music"

in this context also removes the women musician's individual identities and

subsumes them in a single category. The music produced and performed by the

individual women is devalued by the very absence of its discussion, suggesting

music composed by women is somehow inferior to music composed by men.

Finally, these monikers were employed as signifiers of what to expect, the

fictional notion of "women's music" positioned as sort of social fact to symbolize

what would be heard. As Chapter One established, gender is performative and

does not express a pre-existing essence; female musicians cannot and do not

perform music that is perceived as sounding the same simply because they are

female. Despite this, gender was positioned as a signpost of what one could

expect to consume aurally through the use of these monikers.

        The descriptions of Lilith Fair as either "estrogen powered" or an "estrogen

packed tour" are particularly problematic constructions that link the women

performers to the body. This description devalues the women musicians by

reducing them to their biology, removing both their individual and musical

identity. "Estrogen" also engages with the cultural trope of feminine excess and

irrationality. When women are linked to hormones it is often within the context of

a loss of control over emotions and an inability to function rationally, hormonal

imbalance rendering women irrational. This is most frequently evidenced with

reference to pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), social discourse attributing what is

perceived as hysteria, irrational or excessive behaviour on the part of a woman to

an excess of hormones caused by PMS. Estrogen, as a gendered marker, not

only links women to the body and erases individual identities but maps notions of

feminine excess onto Lilith Fair as a means to marginalize its significance.

The appropriation and reconstruction of "Lilith Fair" as "Fair Ladies" or

"Fair Maidens," on the other hand, evokes a particular woman. The use of "fair"

in this context references complexion or skin colour, specifically with respect to

whiteness. As Richard Dyer observes, distinctions between whiteness in the 19th

century signaled class,

> Working-class and peasant whites are darker than
> middle-class and aristocratic whites...Gender
> differentiation is also crossed with that of class: lower-
> class women may be darker than upper-class men; to
> be a lady is to be as white as it gets.[8]

Fair skin suggests the respectable middle-class woman tied to the domestic

sphere as wife and mother, not the working-class woman working outside. This

is a woman who is subordinate to her husband and looks after the household.

Moreover, she is not a woman who participates in the public sphere and

challenges patriarchal ideologies. "Fair" directly opposed Lilith Fair, a festival

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[8] Dyer, 57.

operating in the public, commercial sphere that challenged gendered practices of

a patriarchal industry. Thus, "fair ladies" appropriates the challenge and

resistance that Lilith Fair represented and positions it back within patriarchal

ideologies. Not only has the festival's resistant tenet been defused, it has been

rendered consonant with the ideology it is trying to resist.

Time magazine's feature article "Galapalooza" is a play on the male-

dominated festival Lollapalooza, signifying that this is a festival comprised of

women, as if that is all one needs to know about Lilith Fair. I would also suggest

that this evokes the notion of friendship as this is a festival of "gals," a colloquial

term typically used when referencing a group of female friends. If taken in this

context, the festival is distanced from its political position. Lilith Fair is now a

group of female friends performing rather than a group of female musicians

resisting gendered practices of the music industry. Perhaps more problematic is

the cover of Time in which the article appeared pictured below.[9]

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[9] "Jewel and the Gang," Time, 21 July 1997, Cover.
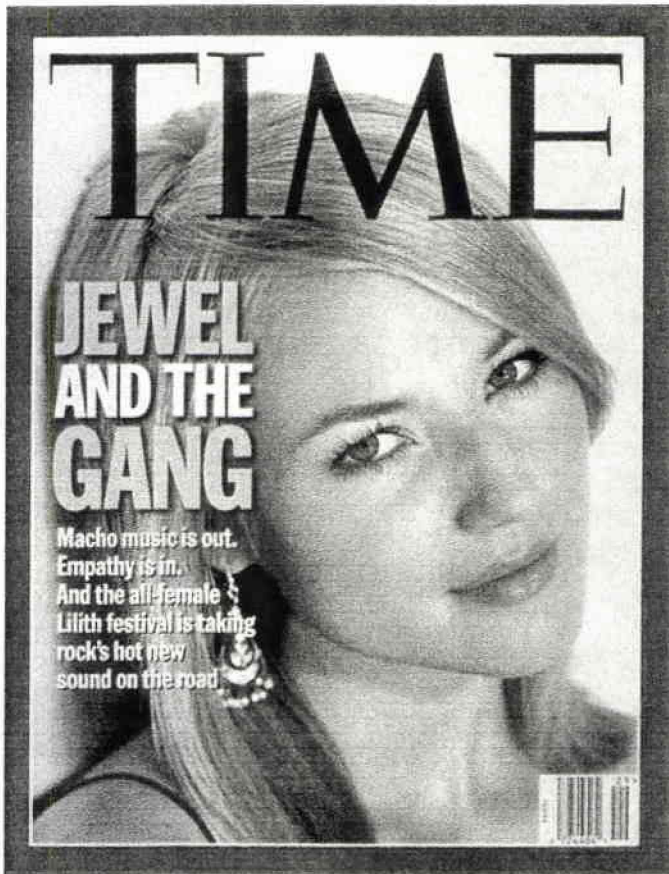
What is interesting in this *Time* cover is the caption overlaying Jewel's picture.

Jewel and "empathy" are collapsed as representations of Lilith Fair's musical

content. The term "empathy" is not gender neutral. It carries with it connotations

of the nurturer and caregiver, roles assigned to women. In this respect

"empathy" evokes the man/woman binary and marginalizes Lilith Fair as it is

placed within this patriarchal construction. Thus, the sensitive and caring

singer/songwriter is evoked and produced as a signifier of what one could expect

to hear at the festival. This is contrasted against the statement "rock's hot new

sound," creating an interesting dichotomy as the maleness of rock is aligned with

the feminine singer/songwriter. Labeling the festival as "rock" can map

authenticity onto Lilith Fair, as theorized in Chapter Two, something at work here but in a specific way. The description of Lilith Fair as rock rather than pop positions it as authentic. What remains firmly intact, however, is the distance between male and female, as "male" rock is not present as it is "out," but empathetic "female" rock is in. This seems to mediate the resistance to female musicians as Lilith Fair is identified as rock, but "women's rock." Thus, the festival accrues a measure of authenticity while still firmly differentiated as a female event. The inclusion of "hot" problematizes this. If "hot" is a reference to that which is current or trendy within the music industry, then the festival and its "hot new sound" is merely a passing phase, not something of lasting significance. The resistance to female musicians is present once again.

While these examples point to the ways in which gender was explicitly evoked as a means to devalue the festival, gendered constructions were also evident in the oppositional hierarchy rock/pop. Specifically, Lilith Fair was either criticized for an absence of rock musicians or praised by mapping rock onto its performances. Although Chapter Two similarly recognized the absence of rock music, it was discussed at the time in relation to the gendering of rock as male and the network of obstacles that are subsequently erected as a means to limit the participation of female musicians. Thus, the absence of rock musicians was discussed earlier with respect to its social and cultural context, and *not* as a problem unique to Lilith Fair. This is not the case in the examples to follow. By removing rock music from its cultural context, Lilith Fair is subsequently

subjected to discourse that fails to acknowledge the systems in place that limit

the presence of female rock musicians. If we return to Diane Railton's discussion

of the gendering of rock and pop music, employing the rock/pop hierarchy not

only privileges rock music and its maleness, but reproduces its normative

position and situates Lilith Fair in relation to the man/woman opposition.

"Fair Ladies: Lilith's New Look Debuts in Portland" was published in

Rolling Stone in June of 1998 and contains this rock/pop hierarchy, reflecting the

type of criticism the second year of the festival received with respect to

diversifying the musical content.

> Sarah McLachlan promised that this year's version of Lilith Fair, her
> celebration of women in music, would be more musically diverse.
> She kept her promise and it was a good thing she did, as bands
> such as Erykah Badu, Sinead O'Connor, Lhasa, Billie Myers and
> K's Choice provided the moments of fire and musical interest that
> kept the seven and half hour show from seeming like an
> attenuated campfire singalong.[10]

The performers mentioned are all technically singer/songwriters, but do not

necessarily write the folk music associated with the genre. Badu is known for her

blending of hip-hop and soul, Lhasa performs primarily jazz music while Myers

composes dance music, and O'Connor and K's Choice are rock musicians.

Particularly interesting is the description of these women as "bands" despite the

fact, with the exception of K's Choice, the women are all solo performers

accompanied by a band. By attaching "bands" the critic constructs the

implication of rock music, a genre predominantly made up of bands in

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[10] Anonymous, "Fair Ladies: Lilith's New Look Debuts in Portland." Accessed June 13, 2004.

comparison to the solo, female singer/songwriter, and privileged in the rock/pop

hierarchy. The above listed women are privileged through their association with

rock. Noting the source of publication is important here, as the critic has written

a favourable review of this particular concert for a *rock* magazine. In order to

maintain rock's superior position in relation to pop, what is valued in this concert

must be constructed in relation to rock music. The music valued in this review is

subsequently linked to rock music, privileging these performances and

maintaining rock's superior position in the rock/pop hierarchy. This is reinforced

by the simultaneous marginalization of singer/songwriters, comparing them to a

"campfire singalong." Constructed in this comparison is the implication that

music performed by singer/songwriters is simplistic, as listeners can also sing the

music. The idea of a singalong and the notion of simplicity that is attached to it

also taps into ideas of community and childhood. This language removes

singer/songwriters from the "masculine" music industry and places them in

nature, a space gendered as feminine in the culture/nature hierarchy.[11] Thus,

that which is valued is linked to rock music, what is not is removed and aligned

with the feminine. Despite the fact this criticism references a 1998 performance,

it simultaneously devalues the 1997 festival that was predominantly

singer/songwriters. By engaging with the oppositions of rock/pop and

culture/nature, this review consequently reproduces gendered oppositions that

simultaneously privilege rock music and devalue Lilith Fair.

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[11]Carolyn Merchant, "Women and Ecology," in *Feminisms,* ed., Sandra Kemp &
Judith Squires (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 473.

The privileging of rock music is evidenced elsewhere as well. Shawn

Conner finds that "it was up to Sheryl Crow to get the festival back on its legs.

When deciding to take this gig, she must have realized someone was going to

have to bring the noise, and it might as well be her."[12] Here the implication is that

Lilith Fair requires rock music to be interesting or, in other words, the festival

requires a masculine presence. Rock music is similarly privileged in a review

published in *Village Voice*,

> Though Sarah McLachlan's sparkly, seraphic presence evoked
> high-pitched screams, I keep waiting for her to evolve as Mann
> and Ndegeocello have, and buy a distortion pedal. McLachlan
> must have been the quiet girl on the playground who never got
> angry and never chased the boys.[13]

Here, rock music is implied with the reference to the "distortion pedal" and angry

behaviour and privileged in a very particular manner. A hierarchy is established

by the suggestion that McLachlan's evolution involves playing rock music, the

genre of singer/songwriter constructed as a stepping stone towards that.

McLachlan is incomplete or unfinished as a musician until she composes rock

music.

While it is perhaps not surprising that publications such as *Rolling Stone*

and *Village Voice*, which feature predominantly rock musicians, would criticize

Lilith Fair for an absence of rock music, this criticism appeared in various other

publications. A review of the first Lilith Fair CD compilation published in the

feminist publication *Herizons* references the women's performances as, "light

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[12] Shawn Conner, "Lilith Fair '99 Gets Canadian Kick Off."
<http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story?id=5924830>, July 9, 1999. Accessed June 13, 2004.
[13] Carrie Havranek, "The Sound of the City," *Village Voice*, 17 August 1999, 121.

tunes suitable for a hangover brunch [which] are slammed up against rocking

numbers that could peel the enamel off your teeth."[14] The language used here is

subtle in the sense that neither the light nor rocking performances are directly

criticized. However, music considered appropriate for a hangover and music that

is so forceful as to remove part of the physical body is also not necessarily

complimentary. The dichotomy that is set up here is worth investigating, as it can

be linked to the boundaries surrounding feminine behaviour. As Toril Moi

observes,

> 'Femininity' is a cultural construct. Seen in this perspective,
> patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social
> standards of femininity on all biological women, in order
> precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for
> femininity are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform
> can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural.[15]

As discussed in Chapter One, acceptable feminine behaviour is linked to

patriarchal ideologies of the respectable "woman." Whereas Moi asserts that

behaviour that does not conform is perceived as unnatural, it can be argued that

it is not just considered unnatural, but excessive and irrational, as McClary has

noted in her discussion of madwomen in opera.[16] Thus, if gender is the stylized

repetition of acts that are culturally intelligible as male or female, as Butler

suggests, then females have been subjected to a very particular set of acts and

behaviours that are culturally intelligible as acceptable.[17] Those acts that

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[14] Cindy Filipenko, "Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music," *Herizons*, Winter 1999, 44.
[15] Toril Moi, "Feminist, Female, Feminine," in *Feminisms,* ed., Sandra Kemp &
Judith Squires (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 246.
[16] McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 32.
[17] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 270.

contradict traditional femininity are perceived as unnatural and excessive. The language in this *Herizon*'s review manages not only to devalue the "light" performances of the singer/songwriters, a genre that does not contradict traditional femininity, but also dismiss those performances that do contradict acceptable femininity as excessive. Consequently, women musicians are left no space in which they can compose or perform music deemed valuable, removed from both rock music and their marginalized position in popular music. It should be reiterated here that McLachlan's reluctance to label the festival and its activities feminist provoked considerable debate within the feminist arena. This review could be symptomatic of the tension that it produced.

The *Advocate*'s review of *Lilith Fair Volume 2* utilizes rock music as a means to critique in a different manner that has quite different consequences: "Whereas the initial Lilith collection offered plenty of folky soft spots from the inaugural year, these new discs reflect the tougher, more diverse 1998 tour."[18] Although rock music is not directly referenced, it is implied. The folk emphasis of the first volume is neither praised nor criticized, but there is the suggestion that the new volume is superior. This is primarily achieved by the mapping of the masculine attribute "tough" onto the new volume in relation to the "folky soft spots." Volume 2 is gendered as male while the first volume is constructed as female through the feminine connotation of "soft." The gendered connotations of these adjectives simultaneously imply rock music versus the singer/songwriter. If

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[18] Anonymous, "Fair Ladies," *The Advocate*, June 22, 1999, 142.

volume two is not feminine and folk, then it can be inferred that it is the opposite, male and rock. The second volume is privileged both by its masculine affiliations and the connotation of rock music it carries with it. This binary of folk/tough can also be read as a reference to the lesbian-feminist singer/songwriters of the 1970s and the Riot Grrrl and edgier girl-power queer acts of the 1990s. Nevertheless, it is still "tough" music that is privileged over the softer, "feminine" music. What happens when the source of publication is considered, however? *The Advocate* is a gay and lesbian publication, which could present an alternative reading. Is "tough" necessarily masculine or can it be perceived as tapping into the trope of "lesbian as butch, a not-woman, a not-man?"[19] If this is accepted as a possibility, the author can be found to have appropriated "tough" as a means of including the homosexual subject, providing a point of entry that the festival symbolically did not evoke. A key point here, however, is that *The Advocate* is primarily directed towards a male audience.[20] With this in mind, "tough" does not necessarily signify a moment of inclusivity, but rather an adjective with specific gendered meanings that align with the readership of the magazine.

Thus far, the criticisms cited have evoked the rock/pop hierarchy as a means to evaluate and marginalize Lilith Fair. This has largely been discussed in relation to white women, however. What is particularly interesting in the critical discourse concerning Lilith Fair is the emphasis on diversity and the position this

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[19] Wittig, 322.
[20] I thank Christina Baade for this observation.

places upon African-American women. African-American women musicians are valued by criticisms that cite them as a much needed source of diversity, constructing a privileged position within the context of the festival. While the criticisms that follow resonate with some of the criticisms I have made concerning Lilith Fair and representation, there is an important difference that needs to be clarified. I have argued that Lilith Fair constructed and represented a particular "women's music" community rather than a range of women musicians, despite the plural connotation of "women" as it appears in Lilith Fair's title. In making this critique I have sought to unpack the category of "woman" and the problems of representation such a notion produces. This is not to imply that Lilith Fair lacked value or significance as it was, or that diversity inherently improves things, but rather that as a resistant form of cultural production it was still subject to the discourses of subordination. What is evidenced in the critical discourse is exactly this discourse of subordination, the construction of African-American women musicians as "musical other," reinforcing both their exclusion from "woman" and their different positioning in the music industry. Thus, the way in which diversity is praised enacts certain binary hierarchies.

In a favourable review of volume 2 and 3 of *Lilith Fair: A celebration of women in music* published in *People Weekly*, the author finds,

> The follow-ups to the 1997 tour highlights album (released last year) vols. 2 and 3 showcase the 1998 Fair's more ethnically diverse and musically muscular lineup.[21]

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[21] Steve Dougherty, "Lilith Fair: A Celebration of Women in Music Vol. 2, Vol. 3," *People Weekly*, 21 June 1999, 43.

Not only are non-white women privileged by citing them as the source of diversity

Lilith Fair lacked and needed, this is placed beside the adjective muscular.

There are two things happening here. First, the ethnically diverse line-up is

positioned as superior to the 1997 line-up, a line-up dominated by white

musicians. Secondly, music that is muscular is privileged, thus privileging a

characteristic constructed as masculine, evoking the man/woman hierarchy.

Furthermore, as we have seen, "woman" does not represent a range of women

but a particular white "woman," removing the non-white and lesbian body.

Monica Wittig observes that "woman," as a dominant norm, ignores sexuality as

well as other pertinent differences, misrecognizing and oppressing those who

would be different.[22] As a result of these misrecognitions, women who do not

figure into "woman" have positioned as "other" within the larger "other" status of

"woman." Because the 1997 tour album is not "ethnic" or "masculine," it can be

inferred that it is the opposite, white and feminine and therefore implying

"woman." These non-white women are privileged in so far as their presence is

perceived as an improvement over the previous recording, but these women are

located outside of "woman." Although momentarily subverting their "othered"

position by acquiring visibility, these non-white women are nevertheless still

removed from "women" as they are "ethnic." The visibility acquired only serves

to highlight these women as "other." This is not to say that assimilation into

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[22] Wittig, 220.

"woman" would be desirable, but rather that non-white women are still segregated from women.

This also occurs in a 1999 review by Rob Sheffield in *Rolling Stone*. He finds that Missy Elliott "upstages the Earth goddesses [as she] tore the roof off the sucker,"[23] earth goddesses referring to the white, singer/songwriters. This remark both privileges Elliott and her hip-hop performance as she is constructed as superior to the white, singer/songwriters through her upstaging of them, but reinforces her position as "other" as she is positioned differently than the white performers. As "Earth goddesses" engages with the feminine domain of nature, Elliott's distanced position from the singer/songwriters is solidified by her removal from nature. This position also evokes the culture/nature hierarchy as hip-hop is an urban performance style. Removal from nature, however, would seem to contradict the cultural tropes assigned to the black body that align it with nature and the body, stemming from slavery and the association of African-Americans with physical labour and activity.[24] As Carolyn Merchant has observed, the link between women and nature is tied to the "ancient identity of nature as a nurturing mother."[25] The notion of nurturing is quite distinct from the trope of black sexuality that links the African-American body with nature, nurturing evoking traditional, respectable femininity. Thus, Elliot's black body, which is clearly not contained as she "tore the roof off the sucker," suggests excessive rather than

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[23] Rob Sheffield, "Missy Misdemeanor Elliott Brings the Funk to the Fair," *Rolling Stone*, 5 February 1998, 49.
[24] West, 85.
[25] Merchant, 472.

nurturing behaviour. As such, Elliot is removed from nature and positioned as the uncontained "other."

Neva Chonin's criticism of Lilith Fair 1997's lack of diversity systematically devalues both the festival and the singer/songwriter, accusing the festival of having a "whitebread, folkie focus."[26] In doing so she links the blandness of whitebread to Lilith Fair, implying the festival contains little of interest. Concurrently, Chonin implies the same thing of folk music through her incorporation of the genre in her criticism. Furthermore, if the absence of value is mapped onto issues of race, it can be theorized that this criticism constructs brown bread as the superior "other," thus inverting the binary opposition of white/other in terms of racial identity. Therefore, music composed and performed by white female musicians is devalued, while simultaneously privileging music by the "other," those whose presence would conceivably signify diversity. The relationship between the white and African-American musicians as constructed by these criticisms taps into the notions of relational difference and the symbolic centre as discussed in Chapter One. Although the African-American women musicians of Lilith Fair are privileged when cited as needed diversity, they are simultaneously positioned in relation to the white women musicians. Thus, they are still defined in relation to whiteness. The privilege these African-American women musicians acquire in the criticism is dependent on the normative position of whiteness and the practice of defining difference against it. Consequently, the

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[26] Neva Chonin, "Lilith Fair," *Rolling Stone*, 6 August 1998, 34.

binary construction of white/other is reproduced. Although the privilege afforded

the African-American women musicians may suggest an inversion of this

hierarchy, it is nonetheless maintained as whiteness remains that against which

difference is defined. The white singer/songwriters in these reviews still hold a

position of privilege despite the criticism leveled against them.

In the criticisms that follow below this hierarchy between women is set

aside in favour of man/woman and authentic/inauthentic. Lorraine Ali wrote the

first *Rolling Stone* feature article on Lilith Fair after following the festival during its

first five days in 1997. She states, "…as wide a range of people the tour admits,

it's too one-dimensional, there's nothing too risky or nongoddesslike."[27] What I

would like to draw attention to is the neologism "nongoddesslike." The use of

such gendered markers when discussing the performers was as pervasive as the

nicknames attached to Lilith Fair. *Elle* referenced the performers as "rocking

girls,"[28] *Time* chose "sirens,"[29] both *People*[30] and *The Advocate*[31] identified the

performers as "sisters," "goddess" and "priestess" appeared throughout *Rolling

Stone,*[32] and "divas" appeared in *Entertainment Weekly.*[33] These descriptions all

stress gender, whether explicitly as in "rocking girls" and "goddess," or by the

absence of a male equivalent as in "siren" and "diva." In doing so, the

performers are constructed and evaluated as women rather than as musicians,

[27] Lorraine Ali, "Backstage at Lilith," *Rolling Stone*, 4 September 1997, 28-33.
[28] James Patrick Herman, "The Rocking Girls of Summer," *Elle*, June 01, 1997, 132.
[29] Anonymous, "Sirens of the Road," *Time*, May 26, 1997, 101.
[30] Maris Sandora, "Sisters in Song," *People Weekly*, Aug 11 1997, 30.
[31] Berry Walters, "Sing out, Sisters," *The Advocate*, June 22 1999, 25.
[32] Appeared in Neva Chonin's, Rob Sheffield's and the above mentioned Lorraine Ali article.
[33] Chris Willman, "A Fair to Remember," *Entertainment Weekly*, 19 June 1998, 45.

specifically white women as race is absent from these descriptions. This

construction taps into Judith Butler's notion of origin and copy, that the masculine

is the more basic and original form, women an imitation.[34] Thus, the emphasis

on gender reinforces "man" as that which gender is defined against and therefore

positions the women musicians outside of the musical arena or as an inauthentic

copy of the male musician, functioning similarly to "women's music."

Authentic/inauthentic appears in a highly visible form when Lilith Fair is

compared to male dominated festivals. *Maclean's* finds that the festival was

"created as a kinder, gentler alternative to male-dominated events like

Lollapalooza," as does *Billboard*.[35] Whereas a male equivalent for "siren" is

absent, here the discourse directly refers to the corresponding male event,

constructing Lilith Fair as an imitation, therefore inauthentic and inferior.

Although not necessarily constructing the hierarchy of

authentic/inauthentic, two particular writings do raise the different ways in which

men and women are represented in the music industry. The first example is the

Maclean's review, "A fair to remember."[36] Here author Nicholas Jennings begins

by describing the success of Lilith Fair, noting the musicians performing, the

number of concerts played, and the amount of money raised for charities.

Stating in this paragraph that Lilith Fair was "conceived and headlined by

Canada's Sarah McLachlan," the subsequent paragraph begins "interestingly,

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[34] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 92.

[35] Anonymous, "Lilith Entertains for the Last Time," *Maclean's*, Jul 5, 1999, 10, and
Terri Horak, "McLachlan Plans All-Female Tour," *Billboard*, 19 October 1996, p.2.

[36] Nicholas Jennings, "A Fair to Remember," *Maclean's*, 31 August 1998, 54.

McLachlan's partners are all men."[37] Jennings then proceeds to describe the

many tasks these men complete in order to organize and run Lilith Fair,

specifically marketing, managing and production, positioning McLachlan as the

spokeswoman. Mavis Bayton has found that positions in the music industry are

gendered, as men are concentrated in the role of manager, musician, technician,

engineer, DJ and executive, women in the role of solo singer, back-up vocalist,

wife, girlfriend or groupie.[38] Jennings' description supports Bayton's

observations. Although following the description of Lilith Fair's success with a

description of the male organizers, it can be proposed that Jennings constructs

an implication that the success of the festival can really be attributed to the men,

not to the women musicians.

This is not the case in *Advertising Age*'s "Lilith Fair: Terry McBride." Here,

given the nature of the publication, the focus is on the marketing of Lilith Fair,

more specifically it praises the efforts of marketing director Terry McBride,

> Terry McBride, managing director of concert tour Lilith Fair,
> has been named to The Marketing 100 for 1998. McBride set
> out to promote Lilith Fair locally and nationally. The idea, he
> says, was to get everyone talking about the show on both
> national and local levels. [39]

As a result of this statement and the focus of the article, the success of Lilith Fair

is attributed to the marketing of the event rather than the performers, or women,

involved. The privileging of marketing over music in this criticism implies that the

success of this all-female festival is actually the result of a man's work rather

[37] Jennings, 54.
[38] Bayton, *Frock Rock*, 1.
[39] John W. Ellis IV, "Lilith Fair: Terry McBride," *Advertising Age*, 29 June 1998, 26.

than the performances of the female performers. The gendered roles of the

music industry and women's marginalized position are reconstructed, therefore

marginalizing and devaluing their participation and performances.

Representations of Lilith Fair and its Performers

While the above criticisms position Lilith Fair within various gendered

hierarchies as a means to marginalize its significance, the ways in which the

performers are constructed and represented within the discourse further

problematize the situation. As Holly Kruse observes, "criticism views women as

'others' and therefore they can be talked about in ways that would be unthinkable

for speaking of male artists."[40] As a result of this "othering," popular music

discourse tends to focus on the women musicians' appearance rather than

musicianship; musicianship is consequently gendered as male, marking women

musicians as an anomaly and reinforcing their "othered" identity, as Anna

Feigenbaum suggests. Moreover,

> Articles on women tend to be written from the position
> of male voyeur, focusing more on the body, image or
> persona of the artist then her music. When music made
> by women is discussed it is generally compared to music
> produced by other women and attention is drawn to the
> female or 'feminine' nature of the music.[41]

Obviously the comparison to other women musicians does not apply to Lilith Fair

in the same way it would outside of an all-female music festival. However, the

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[40] Holly Kruse, "Abandoning the Absolute: Transcendence and Gender in Popular Music
Discourse," in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. S. Jones (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,
2002), 135.
[41] Anna Feigenbaum, "Some Guy Designed this Room I'm Standing In: Marking Gender in Press
Coverage of Ani DiFranco," *Popular Music* 24, no.1 (Winter, 2005), 38.

suggestion of the male voyeur is indebted to Laura Mulvey's work around the

male gaze in cinema, in which women are positioned as sexual objects for the

male viewer. In a different manner, Diane Railton suggests that pop music

discourse focuses on "star" personalities in contrast to rock music's focus on

musicianship as a means to construct its maleness.[42] In both cases female

musicians are positioned as objects of desire and/or fascination, marginalizing

their musical performances. This practice is evidenced in the critical discourse

concerning Lilith Fair, diffusing the challenge the festival made to the popular

music industry by positioning the women musicians as objects to be looked at

rather than listened to. As will be illustrated, the objectification of women

musicians is primarily achieved by the privileging of appearance and dress over

musicianship, positioning the female body as the focal point. A consideration of

the spectator will follow the analysis of this discourse as a means to problematize

Mulvey's "male gaze" and locate the female spectator.

Shawn Conner's *Rolling Stone* review exemplifies this practice,

> Deborah Cox benefitted from a smooth backing band and
> much stronger material than Mya, but the whiteclad
> (tank top and vinyl pants) performer was also undeniably
> all about the benjamins, singing shamelessly radio-
> friendly R&B and boasting about how her gospel tinged
> "Nobody's supposed to Be Here" had spent a record
> amount of time at the top of the charts.[43]

Conner does reference music first, but it is the band, which perhaps not

coincidentally consisted of male musicians. The review quickly shifts to a

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[42] Railton, 321.
[43] Conner, "Lilith Fair '99 Gets Canadian Kick Off." July 9, 1999.

detailed description of Cox's apparel and then criticizes her music, not

performance, by aligning it with the commercial. Cox is clearly not a musician to

be listened to in this criticism, but a female to be looked at.

"Fair Ladies: Lilith's New Look Debuts in Portland," published in *Rolling

Stone*, immediately poses a problem. The festival's inclusion of a more diverse

range of musical styles is referred to as a "look," language that does not imply a

musical program, but rather the appearance of the festival and the performers.

The situation does not improve in the main body of the text as the critic describes

the appearance of each performer before the music. Below is the review of

Sinead O'Connor's contribution to the Portland concert,

> With her buzz-cut crop, fatigues, combat boots, and a
> teasingly sacrilegous T-shirt reading "Jesus is Coming,
> Look Busy," O'Connor looked ready to return to her often
> puzzling firebrand persona of the early Nineties. But
> hitting the stage with a lusty whoop, O'Connor led her
> five-piece band through a set that showed she could be
> charming without loosing any of the intensity that
> characterized her past.[44]

This review describes O'Connor's appearance before addressing the music she

performed. Furthermore, the description is of a female who is obviously

transgressing traditional notions of femininity, yet the critic uses language that

trivializes this transgression by characterizing it as "puzzling." Contradictions

abound in the remainder of this quote as the review attempts to deal with her

performance. O'Connor achieved fame in the 1990s as a rock musician who

often pushed boundaries of gender, femininity, sexuality and religion, amongst

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[44] Anonymous, "Fair Ladies: Lilith's New Look Debuts in Portland," July 11, 1997.

other issues. The language of the review, however, first sexualizes her with "lusty whoop," and then positions her within the realm of traditional femininity by stating she could be "charming." Therefore, O'Connor's transgressions of femininity are placed back within inferior constructions, her "lusty whoop" aligning her with the body and her "charming" performance solidifying her femininity, locating her performance as a source of pleasure rather than transgression.

It should be noted that the examples thus far concerning representation are taken from *Rolling Stone*. If Railton's finding that rock music constructs maleness by focusing on musicianship in opposition to the focus on star personalities in pop (feminine) music is considered here, then it is perhaps not surprising that the women musicians are discussed in this manner, although this does not render it any less problematic. Moreover, as Frith, McRobbie and Walser have shown, women are typically positioned as subordinate in rock and heavy metal. A survey of the critical discourse concerning Lilith Fair, however, shows that this practice was not limited to rock publications, but permeated the breadth of publications, from business journals to entertainment weeklies to women-centred publications such as *Chatelaine*.

One such example, "Front and Centre Stage: Sarah McLachlan's Lilith Fair Celebrates Women, Music and Life" by Nicholas Jennings, is particularly interesting. Beginning with a brief description of what Lilith Fair is and when it began, Jennings then shifts to a description of McLachlan,

> In fact, McLachlan is a 10-year veteran of the music world, a down to earth diva whose physical transformations and musical maturity have gradually unfolded on video screens across the continent. Gone is the waiflike girl whose breathy vocals and sometimes precious songs once made her appear almost too vulnerable. Gone, too, are the curly, shoulder-length tresses that defined her look through much of the 1990s.[45]

Positioning her as a music veteran, Jennings then completely digresses to a discussion of her appearance. Moreover, the organization of the article marginalizes Lilith Fair despite its prominent mention in the title. Following McLachlan's physical description is a discussion of her biography, abandoning discussion of the festival. Thus, McLachlan is positioned as a personality rather than musician, Lilith Fair reduced to an incidental feature that is systemic of Railton's finding that pop music discourse tends to focus on "star" personalities rather than musical analysis. What is "front and centre stage," is McLachlan's body, not her music.

In a similar manner *Canadian Business* published an article entitled "Her Way," in which McLachlan was positioned as a role model for women in business. Despite this, the article includes a rather bold and contradictory statement,

> She has also transformed the way the recording industry looks at women, both as an audience and as artists. Along the way, Sarah McLachlan the singer -- with her elfin good looks and at-times lilting, at-times plaintive soprano -- has become Sarah McLachlan the high-flying business concern.[46]

[45] Nicholas Jennings, "Front and Centre Stage: Sarah McLachlan's Lilith Fair Celebrates Women, Music and Life," *Macleans*, 28 July 1997, 48.
[46] Joe Chidley, "Her Way," *Canadian Business*, Dec 31, 1999, 116.

While the author qualifies that it is the recording industry that has been

transformed, obviously the business world has not. Although a "high-flying

business concern," McLachlan's appearance is nevertheless described before

being positioned as a business woman. There are two things happening here.

McLachlan is being described as having undergone a transformation from a

singer to a business woman. This is accompanied by the interjection of a

description of her appearance. As a result, appearance is separated from

business concerns, removing femininity from this arena. It is, however, aligned

with the music industry, immediately contradicting any transformation of the

recording industry. Moreover, the very inclusion of her appearance regardless of

where and how suggests that appearance is still somehow important or

necessary when discussing women. The fact that this is a business periodical is

important. Business is very much coded as male, the presence of females

limited in comparison to men as it is an arena plagued by gender discrimination.

McLachlan's inclusion in this publication thus positions her within business, but

the way in which she is discussed simultaneously distances her from this sphere,

reproducing the tenuous position of businesswomen.

The article that accompanied *Time*'s cover "Galapalooza" also featured a

notable statement, describing Jewel's *music* as "wispy blonde."[47] While the

criticisms examined thus far privilege discussions of appearance over music,

Time collapses music and appearance, rendering them inseparable. Thus, not

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[47] Farley, 40.

only does appearance apply to the female musician, but it is now conflated with the music they produce. This description also distances the music from musical discourse as it is not discussed in terms of musical style or musicianship. The reader cannot ascertain what this music actually sounds like or is composed of because the description refers to Jewel's appearance. Consequently, Jewel's music is removed from the musical sphere and placed within the bounds of femininity. Not only is appearance privileged over music, but music and appearance intersect at a point where they become interchangeable. Both Jewel and her music are objects of the "gaze."

Chatelaine named McLachlan "Woman of the Year" in their 1998 feature article on the musician and Lilith Fair. Discussing the reasons for the festival, the significance of its success and the issue of gender equality, the article then shifts to a discussion of what the festival means to young women struggling with self-confidence. Thus, after positioning McLachlan as a powerful, successful woman, the articles' shift to a discussion of adolescence is accompanied by a description of McLachlan's appearance as an adolescent, "in junior high, guys nicknamed her Medusa (yes, she of the snaky hair)."[48] In an article that is supposed to focus on McLachlan's accomplishments, a description of her appearance is nonetheless included, collapsing the two and implying that women and appearance are inextricably bound together. Flare's article "Sweet Surrender"

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[48] Kim Pittaway, "Sarah McLachlan: Woman of the Year," Chatelaine (English edition), Jan 1998, 34

functions comparably.[49] Constructed in a question and answer format, the article

features subject headings such as "How Lilith Fared" and "Mirrorball" followed by

two or three sentence responses from McLachlan. It is perhaps not surprising

given the magazine's focus on fashion and beauty that the article would end with

the subjects "Miss Dressup," "Sarah Style," "Colours" and "Shoes."   However, in

doing so the discussion on Lilith Fair and McLachlan's career is marginalized in

favour of discussions concerning appearance, thus privileging it.

The criticisms cited above clearly marginalize musicianship in favour of

appearance, positioning the Lilith Fair performers as objects to be looked at.

Given that, with the exception of the *Flare* and *Chatelaine* articles, the authors

are male, this positioning can be theorized as enacting the notion of the male

gaze. As Feigenbaum observes in her study of Ani DiFranco media coverage,

> Although the disproportionately low number of women in
> rock journalism certainly contributes to the marginalisation
> and degradation of women rock musicians independent of
> the gender of the author, my primary objective in this study is
> to locate lexical patterns, independent of the gender of the
> author. Analysing only the numbers and percentages of women
> who are rock critics at the expense of examining what is actually
> being written about women artists often runs the risk of
> overlooking problems associated with the language of music
> criticism itself.[50]

While the focus of this chapter has been on the language of the criticism and the

cultural meanings it contains, a consideration of who consumed this discourse is

absolutely critical at this point, as Lilith Fair attracted a predominantly female

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[49] Karen Gordon, "Sweet Surrender: Sarah McLachlan Riffs on Love, Lilith and Fashion," *Flare*, June 1999, 103.
[50] Feigenbaum, 39.

audience. Mulvey's notion of the male gaze has been criticized for overlooking the female viewer. In *Star Gazing*, Jackie Stacey critiques Mulvey and suggests that "identification between femininities contains forms of homoerotic pleasure which have yet to be explored."[51] Stacey then goes on to broaden the definition of desire, refusing a definition that only recognizes homoerotic pleasure and exploring "the relationship between self, ideal self and idealized image of femininity...in the female spectator/star relationship."[52] Athough the above criticisms were written by men about women in a manner that objectifies them and can be theorized in terms of the male gaze, what happens when we consider that it is both males and females who are reading this discourse, especially given the predominantly female readership of *Chatelaine* and *Flare*? As the previous chapters have theorized, Lilith Fair symbolically represented the heterosexual woman. It was in the musical performances that plurality was articulated, performances that are sidelined in this discourse. While this could be perceived as another practice that removes the lesbian subject, female musicians are nevertheless still on display for the reader, whether for the pleasure of a male or female viewer or a fan idolizing a performer. Thus, while the male gaze rests on an assumption of heterosexuality, recognizing the female spectator provides a point of entry for the lesbian spectator, a spectator marginalized within the festival's "respectable" climate.

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[51] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 29.
[52] Stacey, 132.

Given this discussion of the "gaze," it is worth mentioning a final article in relation to this topic. In the *Village Voice* article "The Sound of the City," Havranek's review of Sheryl Crow's Lilith Fair performance centres on her appearance rather than her music: "Sheryl Crow, in a muscle T-shirt and sporting a short, tousled haircut, plowed confidently through her hits, with the swagger of a male rocker."[53] Including no musical analysis whatsoever, Crow is put on display and depicted and praised using masculine language. Not only is her dress described with gendered language such as "muscle t-shirt," Crow is praised for her male rocker swagger. In a similar manner to Chapman's muscular folk-pop, Crow's performance is valued for its masculine characteristics, the success of this performance by a female body described using masculine language. Consequently, the author depicts an almost androgynous individual. Crow is a female with a decidedly male appearance. She is on display, but for whom is left unclear.

While the above criticisms tend to focus on the women musician's appearance, positioning them as objects to be looked at rather than musicians to be listened to and discussed, other criticisms function quite differently as they situate Lilith Fair's politics within the personal/political dichotomy. *Newsweek's* article "The Selling of Girl-Power" contains the problematic statement, "Lilith Fair, at first glance, has the touchy-feely feminist vibe of a grown-up slumber party in

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[53] Havranek, 121.

the woods."[54] By placing the festival in nature and constructing it as a slumber

party, a traditionally adolescent activity, Lilith Fair is aligned both with the

feminine and "girlness," thus removing its political significance altogether. As

Heywood and Drake observe, "political battles fought today are battles of

representation, struggles for control of the mass media, definitions and

terminology."[55] As third wave feminists attempt to reclaim identity and recognize

plurality, it becomes important to resist the tendency of the media and social

discourse to appropriate feminism and its ideologies and rearticulate them in

ways that render them, according to Feigenbaum, apolitical or hyperpolitical.

This is evidenced in two ways. Political ideologies are diffused as stylistic or

personal, or described in terms such as militant and radical, framing them as

hyperpolitical.[56] What is evident in discourse concerning Lilith Fair is the

tendency to evoke the political/personal hierarchy. Although the festival resisted

a feminist label, it was nonetheless infused with feminist ideologies, ideologies

frequently constructed as trivial and stylistic and therefore apolitical. This is

apparent in *Newsweek*'s comment cited above. Feminism is trivialized with

informal grammar and then positioned as a female, adolescent event. Lilith Fair

is now apolitical.

The hyperpolitical is cited in *Entertainment Weekly*'s article "A Fair to

Remember" as a means to depoliticize Lilith Fair,

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[54] Karen Schoemer, "The Selling of Girl Power," *Newsweek*, 29 December 1997, 90.
[55] Heywood and Drake, 102.
[56] Feigenbaum, 48.

> Once upon a more militant time, when they held the odd
> "women"s music' festival, they spelled women with a y.
> No such matriarchal mandate for Lilith Fair.[57]

Here Lilith Fair is constructed as apolitical in comparison to "more militant"

festivals of the past, a comparison that ignores the fact that these "womyn's"

music festivals still continue today. In doing so the political/personal is

constructed and Lilith Fair is marginalized not necessarily as a personal event,

but one in which feminism is stylistic, unessential, and unnecessary. *Village*

Voice similarly trivializes Lilith Fair's politics as stylish and commercial,

> Lilith has no other purpose than 'celebration' of female artists,
> yet its focus on identity makes it seem like a noble cause.
> McLachlan organized an event in which promoting herself is
> perceived as a political act. The more famous she is, the better
> we all feel.[58]

In this review by a woman, "celebration" is appropriated and located in the

personal, removing politics and constructing the festival as a commercial space

in which McLachlan can market herself.

Both the *Billboard* article "McLachlan plans all-female tour" and *Macleans'*

"Lilith entertains for the last time" describe Lilith Fair in such a way as to

construct a particular femininity. Following McBride's statement that the festival

would be lifestyle in concept, Terri Horak, writing for *Billboard*, goes onto

describe the festival's vendors as "geared toward a gentler lifestyle."[59]

MacLean's similarly finds that Lilith Fair was "created as a kinder, gentler

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[57] Willmon, 48.

[58] Ann Powers, "Wannabes," *Village Voice*, 5 August 1997, 64.

[59] Terri Horak, "McLachlan plans all-female tour," *Billboard*, 19 October 1996, p.2.

alternative" to male dominated festivals such as Lollapalooza.[60] What is
important to note here is that, as mentioned in Chapter Two, "lifestyle in concept"
referred to Lilith Fair's commitment to supporting local and women-centred
issues. "Lifestyle" had more to do with the political than the personal. The
adjectives "gentler" and "kinder," however, construct a traditional, respectable
femininity, a femininity linked more closely to the personal/private sphere. By
placing the festival within constructions of traditional femininity, both articles
position the festival in relation to a patriarchal ideology, reproducing "man" as
superior to the inferior "woman." Similarly, in another *Macleans* article Nicholas
Jennings describes the festival's backstage area as a "virtuous health spa."[61] A
spa is typically constructed as a female domain, but one also linked to the body.
Occupying the inferior position in the mind/body hierarchy, the body is valued as
"virtuous" in this description. As such, Horak engages the "respectable woman"
in relation to the backstage, an area in the rock world typically linked to sex.
Moreover, spas are a place in which one not only takes care of the body, but
indulges in pampering, an activity to do "for yourself" with middle- to upper-class
associations. Consequently, Lilith Fair is subjected to a series of gendered
binaries, public/private, political/personal and mind/body, in which the festival
occupies the inferior "other" position.

It is evident in these three criticisms from varying publications that Lilith
Fair's politics were appropriated and repositioned in the realm of the personal.

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[60] Anonymous, "Lilith Entertains for the Last Time," *Maclean's*, Jul 5, 1999, 10.
[61] Jennings, "A Fair to Remember," 54.

The festival's construction of community was treated in a similar manner. As

mentioned earlier, Bayton's study found women are predominantly represented

in popular music as solo acts and are consequently relatively isolated from one

another. Lilith Fair constructed a space in which women musicians could foster a

sense of community, and it did so quite publicly, frequently as a topic at the

festival's press conferences. The language used to describe Lilith Fair's

community, however, devalues it and evokes stereotypes of the bitchy,

competitive female. Drawing on this gendered stereotype, Lorraine Ali not only

devalues Lilith Fair's community, but challenges whether one even exists,

> Maybe the fact that there's little air time alloted to women
> explains the underlying sense of competitiveness at these
> press events, which resemble the uncomfortable alliance
> of a Nato meeting...The participants look as detached from
> one another as a seated row of subway riders.[62]

This criticism was made after the second day of the 1997 tour, and is in

reference to the first press conference given by Lilith Fair performers. How Ali

thought she could make such a claim so early on is an important question,

particularly as this was the first feature article on the festival published by *Rolling

Stone*. Ali does not seem to take into consideration that the majority of the

performers present had only met the day before. Regardless of why, this

criticism reduces the Lilith Fair community to a group of strangers competing with

one another, drawing on gendered stereotypes in a manner that undermines the

festival.

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[62] Ali, 32.

Steve Mirkin's comment does not invoke such stereotypes, but the informal way in which he treats the festival's community devalues it as he states, "fun, and a sense of camaraderie, were the general themes at the press conference to announce this year's Lilith lineup and itinerary."[63] Mirkin does not recognize the political significance of the festival's community, but rather reduces it to a form of friendship. Shawn Conner addresses community in his reference to the final group performance,

> The pleasant, up-with-people number seemed about as inspired as McLachlan's set and Mya's bubblegum R&B and perfectly epitomized this year's Lilith Fair: fitfully enjoyable, smugly self-satisfied and running out of ideas.[64]

This criticism ignores the significance of the final group number as an opportunity women popular musicians rarely, if ever, had prior to Lilith Fair and consequently devalues it. This is solidified by the comparison to commercialism – bubblegum R&B – and the notion Lilith Fair does not present anything new. Although the festival was promoted as a unique event, the first all-female music tour, Conner suggests that now that it has been done, it does not need to continue.

This survey reveals that the magazine coverage of Lilith Fair did not simply cover a newsworthy event. Moreover, although some of the writing is symptomatic of the type of publication in which it appeared, taken as a whole this discourse reveals distinct practices that, while not uniform, enact a series of binary oppositions. By locating Lilith Fair within gendered oppositions, the critical

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[63] Steve Mirkin. "Not Your Usual Divas: McLachlan talks about upcoming Lilith Fair." <http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story?id=5927899>, April 17, 1998. Accessed June 13, 2004.

[64] Conner, "Lilith Fair '99 Gets Canadian Kick Off."

discourse concerning the festival appropriated the significance of gender and

repackaged it in a manner that marginalized and devalued the festival as a

whole. Consequently, the challenge Lilith Fair raised to the music industry was

diffused and positioned back within patriarchal ideologies.

Conclusion

I was sixteen years old when I attended Lilith Fair and was completely unaware of most of the issues I have discussed and critiqued throughout this thesis. When I arrived at the Molson Amphitheatre in Toronto, Ontario, with four of my friends, I was simply excited to spend a day in the city without parental supervision, enjoying the music I listened to in the privacy of my bedroom while I suffered through my teenage angst. Although unabashedly naïve, for me this was not a festival dominated by white singer/songwriters, but an event filled with female musicians, most of whom I was unfamiliar with, as well as a time in which to learn and explore. As thousands of women wandered the grounds sporting Bioré nose strips and Lilith Fair t-shirts they came across a myriad of booths that featured only women's issues, removing domestic violence and sexual abuse from discourses of silence and locating in them a space safe for discussion and learning. When they sat down and listened to the performances, they heard women's voices, voices unencumbered by practices that typically limited the time and place in which they were heard. As Lilith Fair went on to outsell its male-dominated counterparts and tour for three years, reaching millions of women and men all over North America, the festival came to signify a cultural moment when women in popular music were challenging and breaking down barriers that had existed in the music industry for years. Women's voices were no longer silent or marginalized, but heard in the mainstream, and not only from within Lilith Fair. Alanis Morissette, Shania Twain, the Spice Girls and Britney Spears all emerged

in the mid- to late-1990s in significant and far-reaching ways, challenging

traditional femininities and promoting "girl-power."

Although the problems Lilith Fair contained were invisible to me at the

time, what it represented was nonetheless significant, as women came together

to *tour*. Community was an instrumental feature of this festival, something

women popular musicians have historically been denied when functioning

beyond that of the supportive female or backing vocalist, and thus it should not

be overlooked or dismissed for the problems it posed. I return to this idea,

already presented in Chapter One, in order to leave this thesis not on a note of

praise or critique, but of critical praise for Lilith Fair. As Jacqueline Warwick

writes,

> Girls groups past and present do promote the value of girl
> solidarity, mutual helpfulness, and strength in numbers,
> and should be considered anew for their potential as models
> for girls and women. Indeed, sister is powerful. [1]

Lilith Fair's version of sisterhood was undeniably problematic, representing and

featuring particular women musicians while marginalizing others, but it was also

unequivocally powerful. Lilith Fair provided a forum for women musicians that

had not previously existed, the all-female *tour*, and while it produced another

discourse of subordination within its resistance of a larger such discourse, it is

unfair and far too simplistic to set aside the progress this festival made for the

problems it created or failed to address. This tenuous balance of positive and

negative, progression and regression, only points to what I hope I have made

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[1] Warwick, 219.

clear: Lilith Fair was not simply a celebration of women music, but a significant

event ripe with issues of power and representation, an event that dismissed

without critique or discussion silences the voices that were heard and those that

still need to be.

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