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Playing with time: Kate Bush's temporal strategies and resistant time consciousness

D-M Withers

Abstract: This article focuses on two of Kate Bush's post-*Aerial* (2005) albums: *Director's Cut* (2011) and *50 Words for Snow* (2011). In these albums Bush plays with the temporal qualities of recorded music to create the conditions for *self-reflexive* internal time consciousness to emerge within the listener. I argue that self-reflexive internal time consciousness is a process that enables a listener to gain some understanding that they are embroiled in an act of perception forged via active engagement with recorded music. Bush creates these conditions in two principle ways: In *Director's Cut* she disturbs the memory of previous recorded versions that are re-visited on the album so they can be mobilised as new, interpretative-perceptive acts. In *50 Words for Snow* she uses duration as a structure to support the construction of extensive perception. Bush plays with time on these albums because her conceptual music relies upon the uninterrupted unfolding of consciousness as it becomes interlaced with her recordings, understood in the Husserlian sense of temporal objects. Implicit to her temporal strategies is a critique of contemporary listening conditions and how they undermine the very forging of the perceptual act.

Keywords: *Duration, Temporality, Consciousness, Listening, Perception, Kate Bush*

To imply that a listener should pay attention to the practice of listening may seem indulgent for a commercial popular music artist working in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Yet the desire to cultivate an attentive listener is strongly suggested by the temporal strategies that are discernible in Kate Bush's recent works. This article focuses on two of Bush's post-*Aerial* (2005) albums: *Director's Cut* (2011) and *50 Words for Snow* (2011). In these albums Bush plays with the temporal qualities of recorded music to enable the emergence of a given listener's *self-reflexive* internal time consciousness. Bush devises a number of strategies that enable a listener to gain some understanding that they are embroiled in an act of perception, forged via active engagement with a piece of recorded music. Bush creates these conditions in two principle ways: In *Director's Cut* she disturbs the memory of previous recorded versions that are re-visited on the album so they can be mobilised as new, interpretative-perceptive acts. In *50 Words for Snow* she uses duration as a structure to support the construction of extensive perception. In what follows I elaborate how Bush uses the temporal properties of her music that support the making of the perceptive act. Through this process, she invites listeners to become attentive to the practice of listening itself. Before exploring these ideas in detail the conceptual quality of Bush's music, and how this relates to

technology, will be discussed below.

Kate Bush and ‘Conceptual Analogue’

Kate Bush is, in the foremost sense, a conceptual artist. Her work, in itself, presents theoretical arguments that are useful for understanding the limitations and creative thresholds of contemporary popular music cultures. Across her career, Bush has consistently elaborated concepts, told stories and communicated ideas. Her work harbours intellectual aspirations, in the spirit of much progressive rock music. We need look no further than the elaborate song cycle of ‘The Ninth Wave’ from *Hounds of Love* (1985) or ‘Sky of Honey’ from *Aerial* (2005) to witness the execution of conceptual forms that invite what Ron Moy calls ‘critical connections between influences, works and weighty matters of epistemological analysis’ (Moy 2007, p. 39-40). Yet Bush’s recent work, I want to suggest, exists in tension with the ‘contemporary structure of listening’ that sanctions ‘specific technical mediations of listening as subjectively normative’ (Mowitt 1987 p. 214-217). Her work, in other words, is at deliberate odds with the contemporary structure of the digital, which is normatively perceived to engender shuffle-based, discontinuous listening. To counter this tendency Bush seeks to re-create the creative and listening processes associated with analogue technology. Through this she remains ‘conceptually analogue,’¹ primarily in the temporal sense, because her conceptual work relies on the attentive, unfolding of the listeners’ consciousness. Such temporal-aesthetic unity is compromised by contemporary structures of listening that have been characterized as an unstable ‘technological ecology’ (Roy 2015, p. 1), within which the consumption of popular music has become multiple, heterogeneous and fragmented (Nowak 2015).

Bush’s career straddles many different technological eras. In the 1980s she was at the forefront of innovations driving creativity in the music industry. She was a pioneer user of the Fairlight sampling synthesizer, and effectively mobilized the promotional video to publicise her music at the height of MTV’s popularity. Yet when it comes to contemporary digital technologies, and how they shape listeners’ engagements with her music, there is discernible hesitancy. In her characteristically selective promotion of 2011’s *Director’s Cut*, such feelings were expressed as a preference for analogue formats:

¹ Wolfgang Ernst (2014, my italics) explains that ‘when the transfer techniques of audio carriers changes from technically extended writing such as analog[ue] phonography to calculation (digitization), this is not just another version of the materialities of tradition, but a *conceptual change* [...] material tradition is not just function of a linear time base any more.’

The great thing about vinyl is that if you wanted to get a decent-sounding cut, you could really only have 20 minutes max on each side. So you had a strict boundary, and *that was something I'd grown up with as well*. Also, you were able to have different moods on each side, which was nice [...] There was something about having this 12" disc—it even smelled nice (Bush quoted in Domball 2011).

The dis-ease is further elaborated in the special edition booklet accompanying *Director's Cut*. Here she reflects on the process of creating 1993's *The Red Shoes*, an album that straddled the transition from analogue to digital production methods: 'everyone was under so much pressure back then [i.e., the late 1980s and early 1990s] to work in the digital domain as it promised so much with the lack of tape hiss and its supposed clarity. I remain a devoted lover of analogue' (Bush 2011). These statements reveal two important points. Firstly, that analogue was formative for Kate Bush; it was something she'd 'grown up with'. Here we can point to certain kinds of studio techniques but also, crucially, how analogue formats—and Bush is explicit in naming the 'nice smelling' analogue record—delimited how creative possibilities were embedded *within* the popular music artefact. The value of a strict temporal boundary—20 minutes maximum each side—profoundly shaped how concepts were formed, lending the artist a technique for structural-aesthetic consistency inherent to the format. This, in turn, shaped the listening experience for the 'consumer'. The second point to note is that the digital, at the cutting edge of late 1980s early adoption, felt to Bush an imposition. 'Everyone was under so much pressure back then,' and under such pressures it is presumably hard to make aesthetic decisions based on preferences for recording techniques rapidly moving 'out of fashion', as analogue methods were at that juncture. Bush's analogue fidelity was therefore informed by her experience as both listener of analogue-borne music *and* as creative artist working within the enabling constraint of analogue affordances. The sequential/durational temporalities of analogue forms profoundly shaped her experience and idea(l) of what music 'is'. The strategic provocation of temporal relationships within *Director's Cut* and *50 Words for Snow* are then examples of 'conceptually analogue' practices created by Bush that respond to the normative lack of duration within the early 21st century's social-technical milieu.

The question of 'conceptual analogue' is a complex one that cannot be confused with an attachment to analogue *purity*. One can be 'conceptually analogue', in other words, and still use digital tools. Indeed, in the 2011 interview Bush pragmatically articulates a preference for hybrid analogue-digital working environments: 'My studio is a fantastic combination of old and new, and that's how I've always liked to work. But now, the new is newer, and old remains old' (Domball 2011). To be conceptually analogue is to be attached to the

temporalities embedded within analogue formats and working processes because the restrictive, yet clearly articulated durations they afford perform an important creative function. Specifically, the temporal properties are containers for ideas, and delimit the possibility of forging consciousness as they emerge through the unfolding flux of the temporal object. Bush's music privileges a temporal expression located in linear time that unfolds, due to formalistic constraints, from point A to point B. This tangible durational quality, mechanically enabled by arm and needle or tape playback mechanism, produces conditions whereby Husserl's 'act of perception (1964, p. 116)' can occur, co-produced with the unfolding temporal object. To be conceptually analogue in a predominantly digital context, but one characterised by fragmented listening practices, is to re-introduce the effects of analogue constraints. This is achieved by disturbing and redistributing *the temporal qualities* 'which [bring] about *consciousness* of a temporal flow' (Husserl 1964, p. 139, my italics) previously generated by, and beholden to, analogue processes. It is to re-create the temporal features of long playing analogue formats that 'revolve and evolve more slowly' and 'are more considered,' supporting the musician in the practice of 'ordering time' (Osborne 2014, p. 111-112). These conceptually analogue qualities endure, paradoxically, beyond constraint of mechanical carrier—operating, therefore, as what we could call *mnemotemporalities*,² appearing in the digital domain as remnants of another kind of attention, arguably evanescent within a technological-mnemonic context driven by logics of 'hyper' rather than 'deep' attention (Hayles 2012). In the early 21st century the conceptual analogue is a hybridity that operates at the threshold of technical-mnemonic capacity. Constructed, most probably simulated, it is a reverberation of what can just about be recalled and, most importantly, it designates a relationship within a temporal structure.

Bush's mobilisation of temporal, conceptually analogue strategies must then be understood as a ventured interest, an artistic tactic that enables her to forge concepts that are at the centre of her creative project. For Bush to elaborate concepts she needs *to take time* so that she may give back time: the time of the ideal listener's consciousness who comes to conscientiously and attentively 'adopt the time the temporal object in question' (Stiegler 2014, p. 19) in a relationship of care, observation and mnemonic creativity. Time, as Yuk Hui points out, 'is always given as a gift, and this givenness *has to be united, gathered in a manner that allows us to experience the profoundness of its existence*, both for itself and in itself' (2016, p. 173, my italics). Yet such a temporal context is not 'given' in the contemporary, technologically sanctioned listening environment. Within the digital social-technical milieu individual and

² Think of the temporal legacy emitted by the gramophone disc with its 3-minute boundary, and the remarkable resilience of this duration within the imaginary of the popular recorded song. See Osborne 2014, p. 97.

collective mnemonic capacities are increasingly manufactured and therefore controlled by the hyper-industrial apparatus (Stiegler 2013a, p. 91-92). There are myriad forms of temporal perception that interrupt and disrupt the unfolding of duration within which the conceptual unity of Bush's music is expressed. To counter this, Bush deploys a number of strategies that we shall now explore.

To play with time you must pay attention to time (and listen)

Director's Cut is a decisive break with Bush's album-format releases. Although she had tampered with individual recordings before,³ *Director's Cut* stands out because it substantially reworks 'old' material selected from *The Sensual World* (1989) and *The Red Shoes* (1993). Prior to *Director's Cut* the driving concept of each new Kate Bush album was located in its imagery, narratives and consistent production techniques. Her albums are typically complex and deliberately immersive sonic environments. Populated by characters and stories, she presents concepts that can be decoded 'in the eye of the beholder' (Letts 2010, p. 21). In *Director's Cut*, however, such a framework is absent. Instead of stories and images, we are encouraged to contemplate the studio practices the artist deploys to re-work what, to Bush's great many long-time listeners or fans, is an already-familiar collection of songs.

My reading of the conceptual effect of *Director's Cut* is informed by my history as a critical listener to Bush's music. Like many others, when I first listened to *Director's Cut* I knew the songs from *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes*, and I knew them very well. As both scholar and fan of Bush's music the songs had become affective repositories that accrued meanings at particular points of my life. The songs, in this sense, already operated as a structuring device for episodic memories that populate my life narrative (DiNora 2000; Bull 2009). It was therefore difficult, if not impossible, to step outside my memory of the original versions when I heard *Director's Cut* for the first time. The original tracks endured as mnemonic imprint, existing as what Husserl called 'modified datum' or 'retentions' (1964, p. 96). These sonic memories, as 'retentions that remain within' me (Stiegler 2009, p. 19), were reactivated upon exposure to the re-worked songs, facilitating the process of (re) interpretation and reintegration of the new works. Such reflective processes, as they unfold within the listener's consciousness, is central to the strategy Bush deploys in *Director's Cut*. Such an experience is perhaps generalizable to all musical listening that necessarily brings the listening subject's own internal archive to bear on any new retentional-perceptive act. On

³ For example the re-recorded vocal on 'Wuthering Heights' released as part of *The Whole Story* single compilation album (1986).

Director's Cut, however, the reflective process is intensified. It is rendered deliberate—conscious—indeed invited by the artist, so that the willing listener may grapple with the procedures that arise. Other possibilities for interpreting *Director's Cut* will of course be available to listeners with different musical auto/biographies to my own. The point to emphasise is I did not approach *Director's Cut* with a 'clean' sonic consciousness, and this presents an opportunity, tacitly formulated by Bush, to listen differently.

For listeners such as myself, who retain the sonic trace and bring it to the listening act, *Director's Cut* operates, conceptually, as a mnemonic tool that can disturb the working of memory and highlight awareness, *within the listener*, of the link between memory and the *act* of perception. At the most basic level, listening to a different version of a song you already know well will inevitably invite comparison. To place this in a theoretical framework, it is a process where primary impressions, or the initial sensory perception of the work (*Director's Cut*) collides with secondary retentions, the previous instances of experiencing a recorded piece of music (*The Sensual World* or *The Red Shoes*) which, as Stiegler puts it, 'I can re-activate in my imagination through the play of memory' (2010, p. 38). Of course, experiencing the same piece of recorded music differently is possible even when there is no reworked version to map onto the original work: the act of perception produced in the interplay between primal impression and secondary retention is always a selective process, which is rendered further contingent due to factors such as where one is listening, how and with what tools (the quality of the speakers, the location where listening occurs and what activities may accompany the listening act). Despite the mechanical reproducibility that underpins conditions of retentional capacity (Stiegler 2010, p. 39), and the exact calculation of digital recording in particular, these contingencies always remain. Nevertheless, the possibility of mnemonic disturbance—which, I want to suggest, enables one to become conscious of being involved in a retentional *and* perceptive process—is arguably amplified when recorded versions cohere enough to be recognisable, but are modified in substance, pitch or (temporal) arrangement. Such gentle frictions ensure that the listening experience becomes a necessarily self-reflexive process that triggers resources of individual memory when it is engaged with an unfolding musical stimulus.

Bush's strategy in *Director's Cut* to motivate memory to work in the interplay between primary and secondary retentions therefore disrupts the nostalgic reverie that has been discussed in relation to ipod culture, where 'musical identity is inscribed onto a portable memory bank giving the user instant access to its contents' (Bull 2009, p.89). Within this context, memory, conflated with the technical device itself, is played back in a seamless, automatic manner. *Director's Cut*, in comparison, offers few opportunities for listeners

wishing to settle within the assured contents of their musically supported auto/biographies. It relocates the technics of memory to an interior realm—memory produced in the interplay of sense and recollection, perception and imagination—in order to recalibrate the perceptive process as it emerges creatively within gaps arising between the familiar fall of voice or expression and the discrepancy encountered in re-worked version.⁴ This mnemonic action is markedly different to a listening repetition that ‘integrate[s]’ what is heard ‘into the existing system of secondary retentions, which it thus *reinforces*’ (Stiegler 2015, p. 145, emphasis in original). Such listening is what Stiegler would call a ‘stereotypical listening’ experience: when a song is played back without interference, struggle or attentiveness. *Director’s Cut*, by contrast, ‘overturn[s] this organization,’ and creates explicit opportunities for a ‘traumatypical secondary retention’ to emerge from the listening encounter. Traumatypical secondary retention is ‘a temporal phenomenon experienced by the perception-consciousness system [that] suddenly comes to explode the expectations accepted by stereotypical secondary retentions [...and] opens a path’ (Stiegler 2015, p. 145-146). This rupture appears quotidian rather than dramatic in *Director’s Cut*. It emerges through extending the duration of songs, which stretches temporal capacity so listeners literally have more time for their consciousness to dwell in. There is also more time for sustained instrumental flourishes, as *Director’s Cut* ‘de-clutters’ songs, making original versions feel condensed, claustrophobic or rushed. This process dynamically supports the listener to create new (and potentially ongoing) interpretive-perceptive acts vis-à-vis both the new and old versions of the songs.

Listening to *Director’s Cut* is to engage in an interpretive process that transforms memory into a resource for listening to the world *beyond* Bush’s music. Within self-reflexive internal time-consciousness, where the stereotypical listening encounter is thwarted by a de-familiarising temporal object that activates the self-conscious invention of new retentional capacities (the traumatypical opening up of the mnemonic path), it becomes possible to pay attention, in other words, to the practice of listening itself. Here the self-reflexivity of the psychic faculty of attention converges and maps onto memory (subjective-social-technological) within the expressive domain of consciousness. A listener participating in self-reflexive internal time consciousness becomes aware (if only for a short while) of *how* it is constituted through the flow of time, understood as the unfolding of, and interlacing with, the temporal object. Noticing time passing, or, rather, noticing that one is listening and that listening is a temporal process that requires a degree of applied attention to do it well, can emerge through engagement with *Director’s Cut* that becomes an album, in part, ‘about’

⁴ By this I do not mean that interior memory is not supported by technics, but rather the capacities for interiorizing digital technics are undermined by the conditions of contemporary capitalist culture. For more on the relationship between interiorisation and exteriorization see (Stiegler 2009, p. 19).

remembering how to listen in a world where such capacities are not—socio-technically—given. Conceptually this lesson is almost as important as listening to the content of the ‘cut’ songs, which may be subtly undermined as they compete with the dance of retentions that unfold during playback.

In the stretched temporal containers of *Director’s Cut* we pay attention to time, and listen. How oddly displaced I felt when Bush decided to re-arrange parts of songs that appeared to be fixed in the final, studio version; a fixing that prior to 2014’s *Before the Dawn* concert series felt assured due to Bush’s seeming preference for the recorded audio-visual artefact. I needed time (I needed to listen) to accept the different version; weaving altered choruses and extended verses into alternative perceptive frames. I used to love singing along to that part and this, mimicking the emphatic, full-bodied delivery of Bush’s recorded performance on ‘The Red Shoes,’ repeating ‘really happening to yaaaaaaaah’ as I stood and scrubbed the dishes. But that moment in the chorus had fallen silent, and Bush’s delivery less committed, withheld and withdrawn on *Director’s Cut*. The moment gone, but forcefully recreated, a different mnemonic patterning of perception challenged my complacent enjoyment. In other instances erratic rhythms became stable, the voice deepened or the piano ballad was absent. The mnemonic terrain of everyday listening ruptured, if not exploded entirely, other pathways had to be furrowed. *Director’s Cut*, a kind of perceptual *re-encoding* that aims to counter the technical properties of compression, removal and masking that inform the design of the MP3 format, the quintessential *weak temporal object*, designed to account for cultures of distracted digital listeners (Sterne 2012).

Mourning memory

If the retentional capacities that underlie conditions for forging perceptive acts have undergone dramatic transformations in a digital mnemotechnical context – as Stiegler suggests (2011, p. 3) – perhaps this is an occasion for mourning. This is one way to read *Director’s Cut* version of ‘Moments of Pleasure.’ Ostensibly a song about memory—a portrait of ‘moments’, experiences and people who do not exist apart from their endurance within the mnemonic imagination—it is also a site of profound grief. The original version’s chorus includes the words: ‘just being alive/ It can really hurt’; memory itself is recalled as the ‘gift from time’ ‘to those who will survive.’ In *Director’s Cut* mournful hums replace the sung lyrics, which suggests both the incommensurability of grief and the inadequacy of language to do justice to remembrance in the face of persistent loss. Yet if we understand *Director’s Cut* as a tool to re-activate the memory of imagination—the retentional imagination that is required to remember—the song plays upon this double absence: of the

grieved-for loved ones and, more generally, the loss of autonomous memory itself in the face of widespread, accelerated automation, that dislocates the agency of the perceptive act rendered ‘possible at will [...] repeated as a sphere of “I can”’ (Husserl 1964, p. 67).

The cut ‘Moments of Pleasure’ articulates the loss of memory beyond an expression of amnesia; memory does not disappear in the song, nor is it wilfully forgotten. Instead it sustains through pulsations, and therefore radically alters the expressive possibility of the mnemonic terrain. In this sense what links the psychic and social field—the ‘full’ memory of the original version and its capacity to be recalled to a version of this fullness—has undergone qualitative metamorphoses, converging with Catherine Malabou’s notion of ‘destructive plasticity’: ‘modes of being without genealogy [without memory...] suddenly deviant’ that emerge ‘out of a *deep cut* that opens in a biography’ (2012, p. 3). The humming that spreads throughout the cut chorus, barely rising to reach the melodies that populate the original, whose lines were delivered with such self-assurance, are an arrangement of injured, automated, memories, appearing within the song as ‘strange figures [that] rise out of the wound, or out of nothing, an unhitching from what came before’ (Malabou 2012, p. 2).

Cutting the digital

In the first part of the article we heard of Bush’s dislike of early digital production methods that profoundly shaped both *The Sensual World* and *The Red Shoes*. In *Director’s Cut* the programmed drum sounds that populated *The Red Shoes*, originally produced using an Akai S900 sampler and Simmons drum pads (Palmer 1991) are replaced with ‘organic’ drum textures. This strips away the early digital production aesthetics that mark the recordings within the sonic imaginary of the late 1980s/early 1990s. Often recordings of that era are saturated with simulation techniques, be they of instruments or acoustic environments such as rooms or hallways, achieved through processing effects units such as the SONY M7 or the Rev 7. The enthusiastic adoption of digital techniques, which were introduced into recordings studios in the late 1970s, ‘moved production away from mythologies of the organic, “real time and space” and the acoustic’ (Moy 2007, p. 77). This rendered the final mix of *The Red Shoes*, according to Bush, a ‘little edgy’ (2011).

Yet Bush does not abandon the digital entirely—as we heard earlier, her studio remains a mixture of analogue and digital tools. Nor is *Director’s Cut* any straightforward attempt to replace simulated sounds with ‘real’ or ‘organic’ ones. ‘This Woman’s Work’, which appears on *The Sensual World* as an intimate piano led ballad, is accompanied on *Director’s Cut* by keyboards, layered vocal textures and extended instrumental silences. ‘Deeper

Understanding' explores how humans turn towards computers 'like a friend,' delving into the complex desires for the 'little black box.' In the 'cut' version Steve Gadd's drumming replaces the Fairlight synthesizer's programmed percussion. The rhythmical emanations in the cut version, non-electronic at source, along with Brendan Power's energetic harmonica solo – which powerfully enacts the technicity of breath vibrating through brass or stainless steel reed – are juxtaposed with the excessively computerised voice of 'the computer' sung by Bush's son Albert. The accentuated use of the vocoder for the computer vocal – and since that technology so identified with the 1970s, this is surely, knowingly anachronistic – disturbs the memory of when computers were futuristic, rather than naturalised and pervasively embedded within the fabric of everyday life and culture.

'Rubberband Girl' is the most substantially transformed 'cut' song. Completely re-invented and re-performed, Bush's abandonment of the original is the clearest evidence of what has become her antipathy toward early digital production methods. The original, we may remember, is a driving pop song underpinned by a repetitive, thoroughly electronic snare. Bush's vocal is pitched at the higher edge of her range, evocative of the 'girl' in the song's title, deliberately and appropriately eccentric for a song that celebrates the elasticity of creative body and mind. The *Director's Cut* version, in stark comparison, is converted into a straightforward, Americana-tinged rock and roll song. The new version feels informal and 'live', conjuring the atmosphere of an after dinner jam with friends, and post-production appears unobtrusive (while probably being extensive). An important difference to the *Director's Cut* songs as a whole is that Bush's re-worked vocals are consistently in a different key due to her age-deepened voice. In the re-worked 'Rubberband Girl' Bush delivers an ambivalent vocal that abandons the full-bodied volatility of the original. The new version refuses to ascend to such vocal heights or intensity. Truncated rather than extended in length, an exception on *Director's Cut*, the memory of the original 'Rubberband Girl' is less cut than deracinated. The song is now reclaimed, steady and safe, laid over a 4/4 rhythm, holding no echo of the original that gets shoved back in memory as an effigy to the over-indulgent trust in the omnipotence of digital simulation. We do not recognise 'Rubberband Girl' at all and, as a consequence, we do not recognise the (early) digital and its calculating imposition.

***Director's Cut* not remix**

An important thing to note about *Director's Cut* is that it is, self-consciously, a *cut* rather than a remix. The valorisation of the 'remix', where information travels across borders through a combination of sharing and theft, is perceived as central to the unique cultural and economic value of digital infrastructures. Remixing and sampling are of course not the exclusive

purview of the digital, and on *Director's Cut* Bush indulges in the more literary mode of sampling through her intertextual citation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* on 'Flower of the Mountain'. Bush has also been no stranger to the compositional power of sampling: as Moy comments, using early digital technologies she 'brought a particularly "musical" sensibility to the Fairlight [which] resulted in samples used as textures or additions to more acoustic timbres' (2007, p. 78). Yet rhizomatic, accelerated mash-ups could not be more different to the linear, time-intensive cutting process that is the central gesture of *Director's Cut*. The artwork, which presents Bush in her role of auteur-musician—song-writer, producer and overseer of creative action—foregrounds the materiality of tape (albeit film tape), displacing the digital sound wave that graced the centrepiece of 2005's *Aerial*. Bush, an interdisciplinary artist, may also here be invoking the 'rhythmic knowledge' of film editors, which arise as they 'manipulate the composition of moving images and sounds to shape a film' (Pearman 2009, p. xvii).

The use of analogue tape to (re)record material some of the material on *Director's Cut* meant it was produced within the temporal constraints of the medium. Tape has to be wound and rewound to find the right place; calculated precision is impossible and access is a question of timing and response within a recording/playback medium defined by continuous variation. Buried deep in the process of producing *Director's Cut* there are practices grounded within a self-consciously slowed down temporal flow. Do these techniques filter through to the listener? *Can* they filter through, when those listening are so far removed from the original context of production, arriving after the trace of analogue continuity has been fundamentally, irrevocably transformed via digitised consumption? How does Bush's 'desire to carve and hence adjust the world' (Kember and Zylińska 2012, p. 89) *her* sound world, translate into a technical context continually and rapidly splintered into information bits and spliced together again, a world continually processing calculations? Do we hear analogue, do we feel it, or can it be best understood as an intention or orientation within time—an invitation to listen, a *mnemotemporal* technique, that echoes within the sonic infrastructure at several points removed from the scenes of transmission? This temporal quality is impossible to pin to an exact point—comparable with the winding back and forth of analogue tape in edit/playback—the point at which we may say: *There* the analogue is. We may surmise, however, that utilising analogue technologies to re-produce the songs so that they may be heard again—and differently—is a strategy to 'make cuts where necessary, while not forgoing the duration of things' (Kember and Zylińska 2012, p. 81).

To sustain duration

One way to not forgo the duration of things is precisely to not forgo duration. *50 Words for Snow*, an album released in the same year as *Director's Cut*, does precisely this. With seven songs spread over 65 minutes, the album embraces the extensiveness of digitised temporality, challenging listeners to not only listen (or notice that one is listening), but also sustain a listening practice over an elongated stretch of time. *50 Words for Snow* is a blossoming of Bush's desire to slow things down. She exaggerates the boundless temporal qualities of digital form, suggesting to the listener there is the possibility of digital depth contra to the logic of skim, graze and browse. Duration is key to this, even as the opening song on the album 'Snowflake' is an admission of duration's fragility. The focal point is the voice of Bush's son Albert, whose choir-boy vocal mourns for 'my fleeting song, fleeting' (Bush 2011b). The interruption of duration—in this case the vocal duration of the 'unbroken' male voice—is an ever-present threat lurking *outside* the song's unfolding that is frozen in time, like recorded sound. As we listen we know that the recorded voice we hear has since lost its capacities to endure. The recording of Albert's voice is an act of preservation in the starkest sense. It ensures that what inevitably mutates can be sustained by documentary, mnemotechnical, practice.

Significantly positioned as the opening track on the album, 'Snowflake' self-consciously frames *50 Words for Snow* as an assembly of unstable and transitory temporal milieus. These durations are continually endangered by vulnerabilities born of the sharp, finite dimensions that lurk within—and threaten to break—the continuous flux of *any* temporal unfolding. But this does not mean one cannot try to commit to duration, or creatively pursue what duration enables people to do: forge *acts* of perception within the unfolding temporal object. *50 Words for Snow* is another example of Bush taking time to give back time to the listener, an offering of a creative resource for managing sensory life amid the clutter of digitised noise. The repeated phrase—'the world is so loud. Keep falling. I'll find you'—is indicative of Bush's aim to attentively hold the listener, as well as hold the listener's attention. *Remember*: giving oneself over to a temporal object, to the practice of listening, is a relation of care, when, David Toop suggests, I 'allow every part of myself to slow down, to forget what has happened earlier and what might happen later [...] stopping somewhere near *the basement of hearing*, where the tiniest of sounds seems amplified' (2010, p. 60). This sense of descending, of falling into listening, awakened in a self-conscious immersion in and of sound, is conjured by Bush's invitation to keep falling. This opening toward 'a form of concentrated attention, [...] essential for developing skills in the habit of listening' (Toop 2010, p. 61) abound within 'Snowflake,' where there is time to play and *practice* making retentions. The song is

meditative, facilitating the removal of the listener from the noise of the world. The consistent repetition of the central phrase, both musical and lyrical, soothes and reassures. The simplicity of the utterance foregrounds memorability and therefore its accessibility to consciousness (like a pop song), it is something to hold onto, a mnemonic loop of comforting predictability amid incessant change.

50 Words for Snow therefore offers further techniques to engender self-reflexive internal time consciousness, which emerge through a prosaic commitment to duration. Songs such as ‘Misty’, which conjures a fantastical sexual encounter with a snowman, unfolds over 13 and-a-half minutes, melding duration with slowness. The song’s temporal structure supports the production of internal time consciousness through its extensiveness, enabling attention to loop in and out of focus should it need to, like a psychic lens, enabling the listener to apprehend ‘the manner in which the immanent-temporal Object “appears” in a continuous flux, i.e., how it is “given”’ (Husserl 1964, p. 45). This process is subject to repetition, arrest and deferral in ‘Misty,’ as the expired duration resists closure through the song’s sustained duration. Through being witness to the continuation of the flux, there is a strengthening of psychic capacities to endure within the given temporal frame. These techniques are supported by images, motifs, micro-temporal signatures, sonic textures and, as would be expected with a Kate Bush song, the odd (ridiculous) narrative which reward the listener’s commitment and endurance. The listener is not cast adrift in a terrain of homogenous, digital atemporality. They are encouraged to reclaim internal time consciousness, composed within an extensive temporal flux, supported by the framework of the song.

50 Words for Snow offers continuity with Bush’s career-long approach to song writing: the album accentuates the immersive qualities of sound in order to tell imaginative and complex stories. ‘Lake Tahoe’, a ghost story about a Victorian woman searching for her lost dog, has a three-part narrative that shifts perspective as the song unfolds. The first section, sung by a chorus of ephemeral voices, introduces Lake Tahoe’s forbidding conditions. The chorus invokes a cinematic vision of a phantom woman who ‘rises, as if out of nowhere./ Wearing Victorian dress.’ Following an extended hold of the violin note, layered over by atmospheric noises, the momentum changes, signalling a new stage of the song and its storytelling. In this realm ‘the clock has stopped./ So long she’s gone,’ evoking the permutation of temporality that occurs within the act of perceiving the temporal object: When interlaced with engaged consciousness, durational layers may become revealed. These break with the imagined tyranny of clock time (Bastian, forthcoming), expressed via the truncating tick-tock of the song formalised as digital file. Gradually the ghost emerges as the central voice in the song

before she also evaporates, metamorphosing Bush's voice as the dog's call, which woofs at the absurdity of the song's conclusion.

'Lake Tahoe' is another lengthy, slow paced song. Its lineage is not what Eldrich Priest calls the 'boring, formless nonsense' produced by 20th century composers of a 'post-Cagean sensibility,' whose 'long, quiet, repetitive, and slow-moving music intended to be experienced without (external) interruption,' thereby 'express[ing] a sense of boredom' (2013, p. 35). Rather, the temporal extensiveness explored by Bush on *50 Words for Snow*, cradled within slowed down tempos, is a song writing *technique* that enables her to express complex narratives that traverse imaginaries of cinema, radio play and song. These songs are meditative, imaginative playgrounds that in their ideal sense cultivate temporal conditions where *duration-with-attention* can emerge. Bush engenders temporal circumstances where the listener may contemplate the necessary interrelation of duration and attention. If such a relation cannot be taken for granted within the current socio-technical milieu, which conditions not only the act of listening but also threatens to undermine the forging of the perceptual act via the temporal object, then *50 Words for Snow* offers several contexts to practice listening in duration, supported by Bush's immersive sonic environments that are invitations to engage in creative acts of interpretation.

Techniques for temporal perception

Director's Cut and *50 Words for Snow* present a range of tools to interpret and understand the dynamic interplay of memory, duration and attention as they unfold within the expressive domain of consciousness. They are unique collections of temporal objects that are also invitations to sharpen the 'psychic faculty that allows us to concentrate on an object, that is, to give ourselves over to an object' (Stiegler 2013b, p. 81) in the act of perception. If the psychic faculties that forge acts of perception with the temporal object cannot be assumed to exist, or are continually threatened by the dynamics of the attention economy which 'sell the time of the human brain which has been made *universally* available' (Stiegler 2015, p. 87), then techniques where perceptive actions can be practiced, sharpened, reclaimed and re-membered are necessary, one might speculate, for the survival of perception itself understood as an *interpretive act*. Bush's recent works offer consciousness, or even conscientiousness, that there is such a *struggle* at play in the world: her acts of resistance are mnemonic and durational; indeed they enable the mnemonic and durational to emerge as qualities enmeshed in and of time, allowing us to explore how these time-based phenomena relate to creation of resilient perceptive acts. She does this by creating sonic environments that disturb memory-scaffolds that programme how we listen to familiar objects, and through invitation to the

listener to extend, concentrate, wander and be present within a slow paced and unfolding narrative. Such acts of perceptive listening may go unnoticed and ‘can be discounted or forgotten so easily, or deflected in the need to move quickly, achieve, extract the maximum from being alive’ (Toop, 2010, p. 61). Yet they are openings towards understanding the complex ways consciousness, listening, duration, memory and attention combine within the scene of perception emerging through temporal objects, *deliberately* re-organised to support the listener’s mnemonic creativities.⁵

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