

‘Skewed intimacies and subcultural identities: Anne Boleyn and the expression of fealty in a social media forum’

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Abstract

The aim of this research project was the investigation of a subculture surrounding the famous Tudor queen Anne Boleyn; what that possible subculture means for those involved, and if it constituted part of a new phenomenon of female orientated online subcultures; cybersubcultures. Through the analysis of film, TV, historical literature and fiction, the research illustrates how subcultures are perpetuated through generations cyclically. The research then documents the transition from the traditional or 'classic' subcultural model of the 60s to the 21st century cybersubculture and fandom, suggesting a new way of thinking about subcultures in a post-subcultural age. The research suggests that the positioning of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon/role model, based mainly on a media-mediated image, has formed a subculture which thrives on disjointed imagery and discourse in order to form a subculture of peculiarly subtle resistance.

This new cybersubculture reflects the ways in which women are now able to use social media to form communities and to communicate, sharing concerns over men and marriage, all whilst percolating around the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn as their starting point. These interactions – and the similarities they shared with the 'classic' subcultural style – form the data for this research project. The behaviours are analysed by using a symbolic interactionism approach which best develops the relationship of the fans against this media-mediated image; it shows the ways in which the fans gain meaning through the various media depictions of Anne Boleyn and then integrate them into their own lives, exploring issues of masquerade and commodification in the process. Symbolic interactionism also shows how fans engage with Anne Boleyn's myriad representations as a wronged woman, tragic figure, temptress and traitor. These images are then interpreted through a contemporary 'pseudo-feminist' lens.

One of the underlying questions posed by the research is: do the fans sufficiently understand the complexities and contradictions in moulding such a divisive figure into a feminist icon? If so, then this can be seen as a 'flawed project of persuasion' on the part of Anne Boleyn's partisans, and part of modern fandom's usurpation of the conventional reading of texts as a whole. Regarding the question of the 'flawed project of persuasion', the research hypothesises that these fans gravitate toward Anne Boleyn partly because she is a contentious figure; feeling disenfranchised themselves, they covet an icon that also projects that persona. As proto-feminists they have chosen a high-achiever, someone who was challenging and remains challenging because of what they represent; this further cements the fact that the fans are subcultural, because they are rebelling against the norm in the choice of their icon – the fact Anne Boleyn herself rebelled against societal norms only closes the case as far as they are concerned.

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For the 'compare and contrast' aspect of my research I am indebted to Margaret Lumsdaine, now former president of *The Marie Stuart Society*, for making the members of that organisation aware of the research I was undertaking.

This PhD is dedicated - in part – to all those adults with autism who fell foul of an unsympathetic education system in their youth but still managed to 'make it' in the long run.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

‘...a generation ago, if a student enjoyed a Tudor novel or film and became curious about the *real* story, his or her exploration might begin with an in-person library trip. Today, exploration often begins with an online search engine.’ (Matthews 2015, p. 5)

Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII, king of England, was executed on the morning of May 19th 1536 on charges of treason, adultery, and incest. Current thought has settled on the idea that the charges laid against her were fabricated, although several prominent historians have raised their heads above the parapets and stated that they believe that there was in fact a kernel of truth to them; G. W Bernard, for one, who made a convincing case for Anne’s guilt in his controversial book *Fatal Attractions* (2011). In recent years the various issues regarding Anne Boleyn’s purported innocence have also been championed by an ardent online fandom, comprised largely by women. The main arena for this debate is the forum – or chatroom – of the website known as *The Anne Boleyn Files*. On this website the fans of Anne Boleyn engage with a mainly media-mediated image of the infamous Tudor queen. This image is comprised of a composite of fan-favourite films, novels and TV series, alongside a smattering of historical ‘fact’ to form an idealised version of Anne Boleyn. On the forum of the website, Anne Boleyn is portrayed as a woman who aimed high, and who was laid low purely by the relentless patriarchy of the Tudor machine. Her husband Henry VIII becomes the epitome of this form of all-encompassing patriarchy within the confines of the forum, cited in some quarters as a woman-hater and a serial killer. This is despite the fact that the number of men executed during his reign outweighs the women considerably. Patriarchy, as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, is, for the purposes of this research, almost in tandem with the general rule of order seen in England during the late 15th and early 16th century

‘...literally ‘rule of the father’; the term was originally used to describe social systems based on the authority of male heads of the household. It has now acquired a more general usage, especially in some feminist theories, where it has come to mean male domination in general.’ (Marshall & Scott 2005, p. 482)

Regardless of her innocence or guilt (or perhaps because of the possibility of both), Anne Boleyn remains a striking figure, not only for her fans but also for the general public. Her ‘crimes’ appeal to a modern audience who are fascinated by their salacious, scandalous, almost abject nature; aspects of the abject come into play when analysing with these perceptions, and are pertinent to various aspects of the research.



The 'go to' portrait of Anne Boleyn, currently on display at the National Portrait Gallery in London

Charges of alleged adultery aside, Anne Boleyn was party to the breakdown of Henry VIII's marriage to the devoutly Catholic Catherine of Aragon. To this end there are frequent and often vitriolic exchanges between 'pro-Anne' and 'pro-Catherine' users on *The Anne Boleyn*

Files forum. In the ruthlessly patriarchal society of the Tudors, Catherine of Aragon's failure to beget a male heir led Henry VIII to annul their marriage, and then to seek a second wife, namely Catherine's lady-in-waiting Anne Boleyn. Vast sympathy from Anne Boleyn's fans surrounds the circumstances whereby Anne Boleyn suffered the several miscarriages that played a part in her own eventual downfall, and yet the same empathy is for the most part denied to the similar circumstances that befell Catherine of Aragon. Catherine's devout nature, her wifely 'modesty', and her willingness to turn the other cheek to her husband's infidelities have apparently neutralised any possibility of her becoming a role model for a young, 21st century audience. Also no salacious sort of scandal surrounds Catherine, and thus as a result she appears to be seen as a less appealing figure than Anne Boleyn, the queen with the 'fiery, racy' reputation.

On the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, Anne Boleyn's fans are at great pains to point out the layers in her life besides the popular public perception of the scheming witch with six fingers and the penchant for bedding her own brother. Whilst Anne Boleyn was perhaps not the devout Protestant reformer/religious heroine some historians have painted her out to be, she was nevertheless an integral part of the initial reformation seeking change or separation from what was perceived as the vice-ridden Catholic Church. It was Anne Boleyn who introduced to Henry VIII to various banned texts that promoted the rule of a king within his own realm, without any jurisdiction from foreign powers, aka the Pope. Because the Reformation dovetailed with Henry VIII's break with Rome on the grounds of his divorce, the image of Anne Boleyn as the great reformer has become indelibly linked in some quarters with the resultant schism, and therefore with notions of 'Englishness', and English independence from foreign rule. This mantle is further magnified by the legacy left by her daughter Elizabeth I, who perfected the work set about by her parents when it came to the establishment of the new protestant regime. Elizabeth, in ways that will be explained later, helped even more so than her parents through the means of religious reformation to cement the notion of the national identity, of 'Englishness', a spirit of national identity still very much in evidence in some quarters today; one need only consult the result of the European referendum in June 2016 for pointed examples. Because of these varying factors a strong nationalistic streak often runs through the discourse on Anne Boleyn. This sense of 'Englishness' seems also to have attracted a sizeable American audience. Ian Craib comments on how the search for identity can become confused with the need to identify with *something* on a social level:

'...one of the ways in which we try to protect ourselves from the anxiety of living is by trying to identify ourselves with something, by trying to make our social identity into our identity. If, for example, I take my gender as a basis for my identity and join one of the various men's groups which promise to enable me to discover my 'real' masculine self, or alternatively to rid myself of my more traditional, macho or chauvinist elements, then I am being offered a 'new' self which will carry all sorts of satisfactions' (Craib 1998, p. 170)

This alludes to the idea that people may become attracted to Anne Boleyn because she, alongside the Tudor genre as a whole, represents a very specific form of 'Englishness'. Although the topic of Anne Boleyn can be seen as almost intrinsically 'English', she was actually educated and in a sense 'fashioned' at the French court, and it was that very foreign allure which many historians have credited with igniting the initial interest of Henry VIII.

Despite that renowned allure, alongside her status as the archetypal 'other woman', Anne Boleyn eventually herself fell victim to *another* other woman, her own lady-in-waiting Jane Seymour; '...loaded with panegyric', as Agnes Strickland put it (cited in Ives 2004, p. 305). Jane Seymour was lauded at the time during which she supplanted Anne – mainly by pro-Catholic forces, it has to be said - but now, almost four hundred and fifty years later, Anne Boleyn is now revered as the ultimate victim of Tudor patriarchy, whilst Jane Seymour seems generally to be reviled for supplanting such a proto-feminist powerhouse. In some quarters Jane Seymour is now being reinvented as a modest, discreet role model of femininity, to be lauded over and above Anne's own rather reckless firebrand persona. One example in particular of this peculiar dichotomy is the recent novel *The May Bride* by Suzannah Dunn (2014). Again, these issues are expanded upon, with relevance to the idea of Anne Boleyn as a subcultural and also a possible feminist icon, in later chapters and also in the results of the research.

For her many fans there is little doubt that part of Anne Boleyn's appeal is her ambiguity, the contrary interpretations her image offers; an almost flagrant defiance of feminism on the one hand and yet everything it espouses on the other. This research project has sought to understand the historical and fictional, mainly media-mediated depictions of Anne Boleyn, hoping to better understand the stance taken by her fanbase; her role as commodity, for example, an object placed in the King's path, as Luce Irigaray puts it, '...the female has always served the self-love of man.' (Irigaray 1993, p. 63) This example alone further illustrates the many differing versions of Anne Boleyn. For instance, when Anne Boleyn needs to be seen as the victim of the all-consuming Tudor patriarchy she was then most definitely forced into her role as the king's concubine by her family; conversely, when her fanbase needs her to be the sassy social climber then it appears that she in fact instigated much of the king's pursuit on her own initiative.

Despite an already fairly secure place in the psyche of the British public, the aforementioned films, TV, historical works and popular fiction regarding Anne Boleyn have proliferated in recent years. All of these have helped in furthering her iconic status. For instance, tourists from all over the world flock to see the site of her imprisonment and execution at the Tower of London, or to visit and pay homage at her childhood home of Hever Castle. Replica Anne Boleyn costumes of various quality and authenticity are sold online – 'cosplay', more of which later - and among other weird and wonderful Boleyn paraphernalia available, the internet auction site Ebay also sells rings that '...allegedly have been infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn.' (Weir 2009, p. 335) As recently as 2014 a mass media campaign was employed by London Underground which depicted the famous National Portrait Gallery of Anne Boleyn as an enticement to visit the Tower of London. An even more recent campaign decided to try out the image of Lady Jane Grey instead, and basically offering the same gruesome enticements. There are events surrounding Anne Boleyn, from books launches to screening of some of the more famous films about her held at the Tower of London, and various other locations as well, including her childhood home of Hever Castle, on a regular basis, but especially near or on various anniversaries. The public are actively encouraged to become members of Historic Royal Palaces, by which they then have access to even more events occurring either at the Tower of London, Hampton Court, or several other non-Tudor related locations such as Kensington Palace (Hever Castle and Blickling Hall are not held by Historic Royal Palaces). As previously stated, for the general

public much of the interest surrounding Anne Boleyn seems to stem from the idea that she may have been guilty of some of the crimes of which she was accused. To reiterate, this makes her an appealing prospect for a modern audience, almost taboo. On the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, the emphasis is on proving her innocence of the charges of which she was accused and thereby generally rehabilitating her posthumous reputation. This idea of Anne Boleyn as a figure of infamy is linked with integral aspects of subcultural theory, whereby the disenfranchised in society embraces something counter to the conformative and mostly dominant culture; Anne Boleyn, by the nature of her incestuous, adulterous reputation, is counter the dominant, conformative culture that frowns on incest and prohibits as best it can the promotion of adultery. There is a fascination with the forbidden; David Starkey comments on the fascination with Anne Boleyn, saying that she '...had the gift of arousing strong feelings. People were never neutral: they either loved her or loathed her' (Starkey 2004, p. 257). Howard Brenton, author of the play *Anne Boleyn* that was performed at the Globe Theatre says; '...Today there is a fast-growing Anne Boleyn cult' (Brenton 2010, paragraph 2 of 14).

The silent film *Anna Boleyn* (1920) – Anne Boleyn's first 'starring role' - may have had some influence on the rise in related literature, as is often the case in the present day when tie-in books and other media are published to cash in on the release of a major movie, or sometimes to tie in with a particular anniversary. The rise of interest may also have been due to the erection of a monument at the Tower of London dedicated to those executed within its grounds; this was replaced later by the glass monument which stands there today (although many historians are at pains to point out that this tribute is some way distant from the correct spot). This first spike in interest, which occurred during the Victorian era, was in part due to the expressed interest of Queen Victoria herself; it may be postulated that what she herself found some concern in, her well-to-do subjects also found interesting as well. Mary Queen of Scots was another 'pet project' of Queen Victoria's, who relished her trips to Scotland and made much of the fact that she was descended from Mary and not from the woman who had sanctioned her execution, Elizabeth I. It is possible to venture that, in identifying herself with Mary Queen of Scots, Victoria was unconsciously evoking a clear, early example of symbolic interactionism with an iconic historical figure.

Since the Victorian era, the output of historical works, theatre and fiction, as well as films and TV series concerned with Anne Boleyn has been somewhat cyclical in nature. Following the considerable Victorian interest there were also significant surges in the 1930s, 1960s, 1970s, all of these perhaps coming about as a result of various major film endeavours, before seemingly peaking with an almost unprecedented level of interest in the subject at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The internet and the rise therein of various online communities seem to have been a deciding factor in this latest and largest spike of interest. Currently Anne Boleyn schemes in Philippa Gregory's bestselling novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*; she is the 'calculating concubine' in the aforementioned Booker Prize winning *Wolf Hall* (2009), which recently transferred to the stages of the West End and then to the small screen, along with the sequel *Bring up the Bodies*. On stage Anne Boleyn also features heavily in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, right to up being the star of her own show, namely the Howard Brenton play *Anne Boleyn*, which was performed at the Globe Theatre several years ago. On the small and big screens she has been portrayed by actresses as well known and diverse as Vanessa Redgrave, Natalie Dormer, and Helena Bonham-Carter. Well-known

historians such as Alison Weir have critiqued the popular *The Tudors* TV show (2007 – 2010) and its ‘fairy-tale’ view of Anne’s life; the same criticisms have also been aimed against the work of authors like Phillipa Gregory. However, it is because of that TV show, and also the immense popularity of Gregory’s novel, which dovetailed dynamically with the proliferation in online forums, that a real, solid fanbase for Anne Boleyn was able to manifest, as exemplified by *The Anne Boleyn Files*. The fandom on the forum of this website is so pronounced, alongside the other related phenomena mentioned thus far in this introduction, that it appears to constitute a subculture, albeit a subculture with distinctly 21st-century style. It is in fact a cybersubculture.

Cybersubcultures share many traits with what can be termed ‘classic’ subcultures. This definition of the ‘classic’ subculture refers specifically to the sort of small-scale social movement that became so prevalent during the 1960s onwards, and which is in many quarters tied up with the idea of youth movements such as the Mods and the Rockers. The internet as a potentially subcultural space gives diverse and disenfranchised peoples different ways to relate not only to aspirational lifestyles, but now to iconic figures also. These relationships – certainly in the case of *The Anne Boleyn Files* – manifest by instances of symbolic interactionism on the part of the fan themselves. In brief, Gilbert describes symbolic interactionism as suggesting that ‘...all human behaviour is social, involving social interaction and the development of shared meaning.’ (Gilbert 2013, p. 426) The social interaction occurs online on the internet forum of the website *The Anne Boleyn Files*. In this setting, participants develop shared meanings of the various mediated Anne Boleyn texts.

The words ‘iconic’ and ‘legendary’ are frequently bandied about by today’s media – not to mention by users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum where Anne Boleyn herself is concerned - but the fact that the legend of Anne Boleyn is able to reinvent itself cyclically means that in this case the words are entirely appropriate. With Anne Boleyn’s story so widely known, the various interpretations of her life seem to be given over to a myriad of possible parables. It can be interpreted, for instance, as a parable against the perils of men and marriage. There is also, for example, the famous rhyme about the six wives of Henry VIII (made into full verse by the *Horrible Histories* TV series, with lyrics by Terry Deary);

Divorced, beheaded and died
Divorced, beheaded, survived
I'm Henry the Eighth, I had six sorry wives
Some might say I ruined their lives

Catherine of Aragon was one
She failed to give me a son
I had to ask her for a divorce
That broke her poor heart, of course

Young Anne Boleyn, she was two
Had a daughter, the best she could do
I said she flirted with some other man
And off for the chop went dear Anne

*Lovely Jane Seymour was three
The love of a lifetime for me
She gave me a son, little Prince Ed
Then poor old Jane went and dropped dead*

*Divorced, beheaded and died
Divorced, beheaded, survived
Horrible Histories Divorced, Beheaded, Died
I'm Henry the Eighth, I had six sorry wives
Some might say I ruined their lives*

*Anne of Cleves came at four
I fell for the portrait I saw
Then laid eyes on her face and cried
'She's a horse! I must have another divorce! '*

*Catherine Howard was five
A child of nineteen, so alive
She flirted with others, no way to behave
The axe sent young Cath to her grave*

*Catherine Parr she was last
By then all my best days were past
I lay on my deathbed, aged just fifty-five
Lucky Catherine the last stayed alive
(I mean, how unfair!)*

*Divorced, beheaded and died
Divorced, beheaded, survived
I'm Henry the Eighth, I had six sorry wives
You could say I ruined their lives.*

When this highly potent image is used as advertising, for instance, the brand recognition of that image, entrenched already in English folklore, becomes so powerful – iconic, even - that it metamorphs into its own cultural 'signifier'. Anne Boleyn is often represented as the most famous queen consort of all the six wives, the one who gambled all on the fickle love a king and then lost her head when she failed to produce the much longed-for male heir. She is both savvy social climber, and, when necessary, much-maligned mistress; this refers back to the earlier statement regarding the often fluid nature of her fandom in regard to her agency. This dual role runs along much the same lines as the traditional 'virgin/whore' trap often used to encumber women, and allows sufficient leeway for both success and failure in terms of the relationship between the fans and the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn which is engendered by the process of symbolic interactionism.



Henry VIII and his Six Wives, courtesy of a promo image for the final season of Showtime's seminal 'The Tudors' series (2007 – 2010); Natalie Dormer as Anne Boleyn is furthest back on the left

1.2 The research problem

Substantial research, which will be expanded in the literature review in both chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, has led to the conclusion that the historical, 'authentic' Anne Boleyn has been fashioned into a media-mediated feminist icon for the 21st century, with substantial subcultural following. This is in a similar vein to other well-known historical figures. These other figures include her husband Henry VIII, their daughter Elizabeth I, and also Mary Queen of Scots, of whom a small comparative study was conducted alongside the main investigation into the Anne Boleyn subculture. This was in order to provide a contextual framework for the research. The interest in Anne Boleyn has culminated in the last decade or so with a strong online presence, mainly centred on *The Anne Boleyn Files* website. On the forum of this website the cause of Anne Boleyn's rehabilitation is carried on by a mainly female fanbase. The fact that so much of the membership appears to be female is partly because the carefully manipulated media image of Anne Boleyn has passed through so many filters and has come to represent a myriad of different meanings for different people; wronged woman, tragic woman, temptress, traitor, religious revolutionary, etc. All of these personas reflect very strongly certain roles in which women are either expected to conform to, or to refrain from conforming to; the aforementioned virgin/whore dichotomy is particularly prevalent in the case of Anne Boleyn.

One of the integral problems of this research project is the exploration of how that real, solid fanbase surrounding Anne Boleyn first emerged. Rhiannon Bury's work *Cyberspaces of their own – female fandoms online* (2005) was pivotal in paving the way for conducting this kind of research, and for detailing how issues of access and observation might be successfully carried out in a virtual space, in a forum in particular; Bury was also among the first to definitely cite how the fandom phenomena laid claim to the realm of cyberspace – this research project will explain how fandom fused with subculture in this medium to become cybersubculture. By utilising this and other resources, the research seeks to understand how the online fanbase surrounding Anne Boleyn connected with the mainly media-mediated 'historical celebrity' image of Anne Boleyn, using the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* as the main case study. The website's forum currently has 425,899 (mainly female) members, with membership growing on an almost daily basis. Whilst all aspects of Anne Boleyn's life are discussed on the forum, the main thrust taken up by many of the members of the forum seems to be the seeking of the rehabilitation of Anne Boleyn's memory, based around what appear to be 21st century 'sanitised' notions of Anne Boleyn as the 'historical celebrity'. The 'abject' side of her history is discussed only under the terms by which it seems it must therefore be rehabilitated, with the all-consuming caveat that any slanderous accusations against her were the results of an all-consuming patriarchy and must therefore be false. To this end often the forum's participants will employ what they ascribe as 'feminist thinking' to explain various aspects of Anne Boleyn's life, and also as a way of describing her as a role model for their own lives today. This interaction with this version of Anne Boleyn again constitutes a clear form of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism runs throughout the gamut of the research because the films and TV series concerning Anne Boleyn hold meaning for the fans, as do the countless books and novels that they devour; the idea of the fan as a disruptive reader of mediated texts – i.e. received wisdom concerning Anne Boleyn – is also covered. Symbolic interactionism is introduced fully as a concept in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Each of the differing representations of Anne Boleyn in film, TV or novels contain markers that link them to the time in which they were produced, but they are seemingly accepted by her fanbase as denoting some sort of 'fact' in regard to their plan to rehabilitate Anne Boleyn's image; this then has an impact when it comes to the unconscious engagement in symbolic interactionism with her. For instance, different generations of this fanbase mimic different depictions of Anne, based on the books and films from the era in which their interest in her first manifested, thereby beginning the process of identifying with her via symbolic interactionism. The fact that these books and films almost always reflect the social climate in which they were produced, leading down the years to a variety of wildly disparate depictions of Anne Boleyn; they do however serve to provide a chorological portrait of the progress of feminist depictions in the media throughout the decades. There are many fans of Natalie Dormer's feisty portrayal of Anne Boleyn from Showtime's *The Tudors*, and yet also a whole earlier generation who adore Genevieve Bujold's fey Anne from the 1969 movie *Anne of the thousand days*. There is an element of discovery for differing generations, moreso for the younger generation who are informed of older interpretations of Anne Boleyn on screen and in novels and who are then able to discover these differing interpretations for themselves.

1.3 The research question

The rationale behind this research project is to establish the existence of a subculture surrounding the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. It also seeks to explore whether or not that purported subculture has made her an iconic figure, an iconic figure with distinct feminist resonances; a feminist icon. Following on from this, the research then seeks to explore the scope of that subculture and what it says about how women utilise social media to form new, safer online spaces where new forms of subculture – cybersubcultures – might flourish.

As well as investigating whether this online fanbase constitutes an actual subculture/cybersubculture, the research also sets out to discover how much of the life of the real, historical Anne Boleyn is reflected in that subculture, and how much has been produced by the ‘historical celebrity’ culture or media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. This issue produces questions of authenticity, and how much the media reinterprets the roles and personas of historical figures to reflect the changing social mores of society, something which the research reveals has happened on a regular cyclical basis.

For the purposes of this research, a questionnaire was deployed to the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. This method of data gathering dovetailed with one of the basic tenets of symbolic interactionism, the ‘...preference for gathering and examining qualitative data.’ (Dennis and Smith 2015, p. 352 - 356)

The research expands what is already known and understood about both existing ‘classic’ subcultures and also the relatively uncharted area of cybersubcultures and fandom. Furthermore, it paves the way for the further study of new, differing forms of subculture, particularly those with a large online presence and which can be termed cybersubcultures; also existing ‘classic’ subcultures that have benefitted from the online revolution in order to expand their sphere of influence. The research also documents, in relation to the example of Anne Boleyn, the rise of what the research has termed as the aforementioned ‘historical celebrity’. It then illustrates how this links with ideas of mainstream celebrity culture and the moulding of various figures, both contemporary and also historical figures, into modern day icons. The ‘historical celebrity’ has increasingly come into vogue in recent years, but remains a relatively unexplored avenue as far as any serious study is concerned. Besides cybersubculture and online fandom, it is hoped that the research will go some way to expanding the pool of knowledge on this particular subject.

However, far more pertinent to being an original contribution to knowledge is the investigation concerned with the existence of female subcultures, which at present is negligible compared to the body of work that has been conducted concerning male subcultures, but where women often still played a vital, if subsidiary role. Recent academic debate on the direction of subcultural study would situate these new genre of subcultures – including the cybersubculture - as ‘post-subculture’, with issues of agency and individualisation to the fore in the emerging generation (Hodkinson, 2015) Tracey Greener and Robert Hollands would alternatively refer to these new spaces simply as ‘postmodern’ (Greener and Hollands, 2006).

With regard to the positioning of Anne Boleyn as an iconic figure - a feminist icon - Rosalind Brunt is pivotal in discussing how a female figure – historical or otherwise - can be moulded first into an object of media adoration, before going on to explain how that figure may then become viewed as an actual icon; ‘...the entry of ‘icon’ into the vernacular tells us something about how new interpretations of the iconic are bound up with the democratisation of cultural studies’ (Richards 1999, p. 11). An icon is something of great symbolism, as Biedermann explains;

‘...symbols and metaphors extend into the realm of everyday language and figures of speech. Icons also permeate images from the world of advertising, as well as political slogans and emblems, the parables of our religions, the icons and writing of foreign and prehistoric cultures, legal customs and artworks, poetry and historical figures’ (Biedermann 1992, p. vii)

To reiterate, it was borne out by the results of the research that Anne Boleyn’s mainly female fanbase have undertaken an ongoing project by which they are attempting to rehabilitate what is perceived as her ‘besmirched’ reputation. This they do without fully digesting the entirety of her historical persona, or without fully separating it from the media-mediated Anne Boleyn they have seen on the screen and read about in books. This has led them to ignore or airbrushing unwieldy aspects and ‘cherry-picking’ elements that best suit their image of the classic ‘wronged woman’; many historians are guilty of much the same misnomer, including Anne Boleyn’s most eminent biographer Eric Ives, who even goes so far as to apologise for the impartiality towards his subject in the preface to his book, *The life and death of Anne Boleyn* (2004). Ives’ work on Anne Boleyn will be discussed in the net chapter.

One of the many visible results of this striking loyalty is that some of Anne Boleyn’s fans describe her as a ‘feminist icon’. This was definitely one of the questions the research sought to answer, and initial exploration certainly bore this idea out among the fans. In fact Eric Ives himself went so far as to call for her virtual canonisation as a feminist icon:

‘...she was the most influential and important queen consort this country has ever had. Indeed, Anne deserves to be a feminist icon, a woman in a society which was, above all else, male-dominated, who broke through the glass ceiling by sheer character and initiative.’ (Ives 2004, p. xv)

But it is problematic to describe Anne Boleyn as a ‘feminist icon’ unless the term ‘feminist’ is very loosely interpreted merely as signifying in this instance a woman who is seeking purely personal power, which is one of the most quoted, albeit probably erroneous depictions of Anne Boleyn. In exploring feminist icons, Katharine Sarikakis issues an implicit warning not ‘...to glorify popular icons and treat them in isolation, as “unique” cases or cases that herald “new” ways of thinking about women and feminism.’ (Sarikakis 2011, p. 116) However, in this instance it is necessary to consider Anne Boleyn – the media-mediated image of her – as a unique case, and one that heralds new ways of thinking about women, certainly in terms of their subcultural spaces.

Although feminism as a concept did not exist in Tudor times there were women – and also some notable men, including Anne’s implacable opponent Thomas More - who pushed hard for the education and advancement of women, although Anne Boleyn herself appears to have had no interest in this. Perhaps as a result historians – even those particularly partial to

her cause - have painted her as somewhat egocentric. However, these disparities have not prevented the various members of Anne Boleyn's fanbase, along with Eric Ives, from considering her as prime material for 'canonisation' as some sort of feminist icon; this problematic dichotomy between the various different depictions of Anne Boleyn and their possible authenticity as a feminist icon are explored during the course of the research, when these and other questions were put to the respondents of the research questionnaire.

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The research also explores whether this cyber subculture is unique to Anne Boleyn, or whether it can also be applied to another equally divisive female 'historical celebrity' of the much vaunted Tudor era, Mary Queen of Scots. This has been undertaken from the angle of 'compare and contrast' side-line to the main area of the research; an amended version of the questionnaire was emailed to members of *The Marie Stuart Society*, with the option of them then also filling in the section on Anne Boleyn. The section on Mary Queen of Scots was retained for those answering concerning Anne Boleyn, thereby giving them also an opportunity to comment if they so wished.

Mary Queen of Scots also has a significant fanbase and a society – *The Marie Stuart Society* - that meets several times a year, and which is resultantly a far more 'corporeal' grouping than the forum of the mainly online *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Like *The Anne Boleyn Files*, *The Marie Stuart Society* also organise trips to places of interest pertinent to their chosen passion; unlike *The Anne Boleyn Files* they also publish a journal several times a year, in lieu of a more obvious online presence. The membership of *The Marie Stuart Society* is far older than that of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, and also has a much larger male presence, again something which is explored in the results of the research.



'Mary Queen of Scots in captivity', 1871, by John Callcott Horsley

1.4 The aims of the research

- To establish whether there is an online subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn
- To ascertain who follows such a subculture, and why; the ascension and fusion of fandom with ideas of subculture
- To document and reconcile the relevance of this cybersubculture to previous ideas of subculture and how they then move forward, fusing with the idea of fandom in the process
- to add to the knowledge around the subject area of female dominated subcultures/cybersubcultures
- To examine whether the portrayals of Anne Boleyn in popular culture have unconsciously carved her image into that of a feminist icon
- To explore the idea that Anne Boleyn is an 'unsafe icon' for this subculture because of her many differing, media-mediated portrayals
- To explore how Anne Boleyn compares with Mary Queen of Scots as an iconic figure and how this creates issues of authenticity

1.5 The organisation of the thesis

This research project documents Anne Boleyn's development into a figure of both attraction and tragedy, a process which began long before the internet made it possible for various disparate groups of women to flock under her banner, where they now proceed engage in a form of symbolic interaction with her mainly media-mediated image.

A historiography of Anne Boleyn across various mediums forms the first chapter of the literature review, whilst the second chapter of the literature review concentrates on subculture and subcultural theory, before moving on to document the rise of the cybersubculture and the role that symbolic interactionism plays in these new online spaces. Regarding the historiography, there are two seminal factual works on the life of Anne Boleyn: Retha Warnicke's *The fall of Anne Boleyn* (1989) and the aforementioned Eric Ives' *The life and death of Anne Boleyn* (2004). Alongside these are important works by Alison Weir on Anne's tenure in the Tower of London; also Antonia Fraser and Nora Locks, the latter having wrote Anne Boleyn in both fact and fiction. These two women give a 1970s slant on Anne which gives rise to some examples of feminist standpoint theory. Second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with a proliferation of Tudor TV and film which represented a significant shift in the way that Anne Boleyn was portrayed, particularly in the aforementioned works of Fraser and Locks. Another far more significant shift occurred in the twenty-first century with the advent of *The Tudors* television serial and *The Other Boleyn Girl* movie – based on the bestselling novel - both of which dovetailed with an increase in internet forums, bringing us back to *The Anne Boleyn Files*. This, along with further research undertaken, shows how the interest in Anne Boleyn is cyclical in nature, and tends to reinvent and reinvigorate itself from one generation to another. Interest surrounding Mary Queen of Scots seems to work in roughly the same manner; there are also 'spikes' of interest in both women when various anniversaries in their lives are marked. Each interpretation differs from those of previous generations because of the specific social markers used therein. The most recent portrayal of Anne Boleyn in popular culture comes

from Hilary Mantel's novel *Wolf Hall*, which was adapted both for the stage and the small screen in 2014/15 respectively, where Claire Foy played a more muted and slightly more sympathetic Anne Boleyn than was offered by Natalie Dormer's fiery and seminal portrayal in *The Tudors*.

The use of symbolic interactionism spearheads the Raison d'être of the research and allows for the exploration of the relationship between the fans and the above-mentioned portrayals of Anne Boleyn. A partially multidisciplinary approach allows aspects of gender and femininity in which many of the portrayals of Anne Boleyn are heavily steeped, to be examined, at least in regard to their relevance as far as the developing role of women in subculture has expanded. Queer theory is mentioned on several occasions, because, for example, Anne Boleyn played against gender stereotypes in a time when women were expected to be submissive; it is therefore possible to interpret her role in some senses as being 'queer'; queer performance also breaks down conventional forms of identity, which Anne Boleyn did, bringing 'alien' French styles and customs to the somewhat staid and suspicious English court of the time. Bhattacharyya explains this in queer terms as being when

'...straight culture, and especially the most cherished aspects of high culture coded as straight, is revealed to be cut through with the unsettling presence of homosexual desire, practice and people.' (Bhattacharyya 2002, p. 90)

As a result of the research it may also be suggested that 21st century perceptions of Anne Boleyn appear to have marked her down as having engaged in what would be considered a form of performativity, whereby she is seen to be stepping out of a conventional gender role and then subverting it to her own ends, in a style similar to that of 'queer'. As Judith Butler explained, this

'...is not suggesting that the subject is free to choose which gender he or she is going to enact. 'The script', if you like, is always already determined within this regulatory frame, and the subject has a limited number of 'costumes' from which to make a constrained choice of gender style'. (Quoted in Salih 2002, p. 63)

Irigaray's theory of masquerade is also pertinent to Anne Boleyn and also to her successor Jane Seymour, signifying the roles that women act to please men (1993). All of these examples of differing fields can be drawn back under the umbrella of subcultural theory, whereby they offer to examine behaviours espoused by women working with the mainly male subcultural frame.

There is a significant gap in knowledge regarding Anne Boleyn as an iconic figure, and next-to-nothing on her image as being the site of possible subcultural activity. The only work thus far coming close to examining these ideas was the publication of transcripts of some of the discussions undertaken online by members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. This book was entitled *The Anne Boleyn Collection* (2012), and was collated by the site's owner, Claire Ridgway. Claire Ridgway's help and assistance was sought and obtained in smoothing the way to securing participants from the website's forum for the purposes of this research. The transcripts give a good insight into the general day-to-day dynamic of the website's forum,

but nevertheless remain an edited version of online events rather than a true representation of the daily life of an internet forum, with all of its lulls in activity and in-house dramas or 'framings'.

A year after the publication of *The Anne Boleyn Collection*, Susan Bordo's book entitled *The Creation of Anne Boleyn* (2013) examined the various chronological aspects of the Anne Boleyn phenomenon. This is done from an almost purely personal point of view, and with a heavy dose of what might be considered highhanded feminism; as a result it fails to make any secure links with actual subcultures. It documents the existence of *The Anne Boleyn Files* and makes a strong case for an argument of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon, but it does so almost entirely on the basis that – yet again – she was the unequivocal victim of patriarchy when the text requires her to be, and yet a glass-shattering proto-feminist when she is needed to switch to that particular role. Nevertheless it was one of the primary texts of the research because it is the first serious study not of Anne Boleyn but of the whole cultural phenomenon surrounding her. A more in-depth appraisal of Bordo's book may be seen in the next chapter.

Similarities with Bordo's book and also with this research can be seen in several other publications concerned with the lives of famous – or indeed infamous – royal females: Jayne Elizabeth Lewis's *Mary Queen of Scots – romance and nation* (1998), for instance, which traces the British nation's romance with the Scots queen, and which was the partial inspiration for the inclusion of a comparison case study of Mary Queen of Scots. Also useful was Michael Dobson's *England's Elizabeth: an afterlife in fame and fantasy* (2004), which examines the national obsession with Anne Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth I. This text sets the interest in a chronological order as attempted by Bordo and then surpassed by Lewis.

The publication of these books – not to mention the results of the research – show that Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots share a unique subcultural status that makes them different from almost any other British 'historical celebrity' (for examples outside of these shores the nearest possible equivalent would be probably Marie Antoinette). The closest in comparison in England without taking into account any sort of feminist slant would be Richard III, who enjoys an astonishing level of precedence in terms of a fan following; *The Richard III Society* boasts thousands of members. However, as a historical figure he also enjoys an almost equal amount of scandal; even the press coverage of the discovery of his skeleton in a Leicester car park proved divisive, as did his reburial in the cathedral, which was headline news during the entire week leading up to the event. The scandals that surround Richard III differ from those of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots in that they are not largely based around the fact of gender. Richard III is perhaps most famous for being the possible murderer of the 'Princes in the Tower', the possible claimants to his throne, and also for of course being the king who fell in battle and thus unwittingly allowed the historical Tudor era to begin, with the victory of Henry VII.

The study of Anne Boleyn from historical documents and the various interpretations they have produced has led to the creation of a vast body of work, constituting countless subsequent historical texts, fictional works, TV shows and films. Each of these has moved the public perception of her forward, or sometimes even sideways, to one extent or another. In recent years some more rigorously academic works have also been published that have seen matter-of-fact shifts in the way that she is represented. Some of these works have attempted to study her from, among other aspects, a purely feminist point of view;

this has lent credence to the aspect of this research that states that not only is Anne Boleyn an icon, but also very much a feminist icon. Whilst many of these later works are intended to be read from the purest academic stance, they are often nevertheless considerably coloured by their authors' rather biased points of view where their subject is concerned. To this end they must be viewed as merely more chapters in a long historiographical narrative; David Starkey's rather succinct comment about Anne Boleyn and how she seemed somehow to engender a certain lack of neutrality seems particularly apt in this case. Chris Weedon commented on the contrary nature of historiography when he said that

'...history is important since it has made the present what it is and how we understand the present will depend, in part, on the versions of history to which we have access.' (Weedon 2004, p. 83)

In this sense even the documents from which the majority of the historical research is drawn are subjective, and again in both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots' case are often coloured by various points of either praise or prejudice; 'divisive' is often a catchword used to open any debate on either of them. It is quite possible that no 'colourless', unbiased report of Anne Boleyn ever existed within her lifetime, so contentious was her reputation once she set foot on the world stage. Linda Hutcheon reinforces this when she says that '...what actually becomes fact depends as much as anything else on the social and cultural context of the historian'. (Hutcheon 1989, p. 76)

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The scope of this research project is perhaps best summed up by Howard Brenton, author of the play *Anne Boleyn*;

'...today there is a fast-growing Anne Boleyn cult. She appeals both to adolescents and to ageing romantics. Her story has a Wagnerian intensity of love, death and betrayal, shot through with a very un-Wagnerian sense of reckless fun, of daring sexiness. But there is a deeper reason for the growing obsession with her. The flowers (left anonymously on her grave each year on the anniversary of her death) acknowledge an unease; we love her story but feel guilty toward her.' (Brenton 2010, paragraph 2 of 14)

The hope is that the research will underline this, and go some way to understanding the fascination with the 'unease' that still surrounds such a controversial figure, and how it has made of her both a subcultural and also a feminist icon.

1.6 Original contribution to knowledge

The original contribution to knowledge in this research comprises in the main the part of the research concerned with expanding the knowledge of the existence of female subcultures, which remains negligible compared to the work concerning male-dominated subcultures. In these instances, women tend to have been reported merely in their roles as accessories or curiosities as part of these male-dominated subcultures. However, the proliferation of the internet and the resulting advent of 'safer' online spaces has allowed for a far great scope for women to form a new style of subculture, profiting from the expansion of the cybersubculture. Therefore the original contribution to knowledge is in fact two-pronged,

because it also allows for an elaboration of what is already known about cybersubcultures by marking them out as a place whereby subcultures for women might proliferate.

Another aspect to the original contribution to knowledge would be the securing of the status of the media-mediated image of the Tudor queen Anne Boleyn as a subcultural icon, and also of her place as something of a feminist icon, even one of a divisive nature, a result that surely fits in with the pattern of her divisive reputation rather perfectly. The research topic also provides a structure for understanding the complex ways in which audiences utilise social media to frame and then 'trouble' ideas of gender and gender appropriate behaviour.

Chapter 2: Anne Boleyn and the Tudors in Cultural Forms

2.1 Introduction and background

This chapter will provide an extensive background and biography of Anne Boleyn; also a historiography of her character and chronology. It will provide information on the various interpretations in cultural forms over the subsequent centuries since her death. The emphasis in these will be on the latter half of the twentieth century and the early twenty first. An overview of the 1950s and 1960s is important to the research because it was during this period that subcultural studies first came to prominence, alongside the second wave feminist movement, which in subsequent decades allowed for greater exploration of the role of feminist icons. The historiography will serve to document the way in which the historical persona of Anne Boleyn has undergone various changes in interpretation and cultural bias. It will illustrate how social and cultural forces helped to turn her into the many-faceted media-generated 'historical celebrity' seen today

Any research involving a historical figure, whether it is purely historical research, or even in the case of this research a cross-pollination of disciplines, such as the formation of a subculture around a historical figure, needs nevertheless to begin with a fairly detailed evaluation of that historical figure. Moreover it also requires a contextualisation of their role in history, and finally to finish with an appraisal of how that role has been interpreted over the years. This means not only giving a detailed overview of Anne Boleyn's life, but also a historiography of that life, so that emerging trends may be pinpointed and then highlighted as focal points wherein interest and ardour in the subject may have begun to veer in the direction in which this research is based. Salevouris with Furay (1988) define historiography as

'...the study of the way history has been and is written – the history of historical writing, if you will. When you study "historiography" you are studying how individual historians have, over time, interpreted and presented specific subjects.' (Salevouris with Furay 1988, p. 255)

It is worth stressing however that this research project is more concerned with the historiography of Anne Boleyn than with the historical facts of her case, therefore historiography is of more importance in this chapter as a tool than historical research methodology, with access to primary and secondary sources, because the history of these documents themselves are covered in the texts of the historians who have studied Anne Boleyn in great detail. It is their digestion of these primary and second sources that form the historiography of Anne Boleyn, which produces the picture that is then assimilated or indeed dissimilated into popular culture by way of films and historical novels. The historiography will serve to document the way in which the historical persona of Anne Boleyn has undergone various changes in interpretation and cultural bias, and ultimately to illustrate what social and cultural forces helped to turn her into the many-faceted media-mediated 'historical celebrity' we see today.

2.2 Anne Boleyn: a historical contextualisation

Anne Boleyn was born in either circa 1501 or 1507. The debate still rages regarding the definitive answer, but the more probable is circa 1501, due to the dating of a letter written by her to her father from the court of Margaret of Austria in 1513, from a position in the royal household that simply would not have been available to a girl of only seven or eight years of age. Her biographer Eric Ives certainly concurred with this statement, but Marie Louise Bruce makes a strong case for dating Anne's birth as 1507 when she says

'...no parish records were then kept, so Anne's birth was unrecorded, but the scholar, historian, and antiquary William Camden, in his *History of Queen Elizabeth*, published in 1615, sets it as 1507, a date which fits in with other clues we have and which is positively confirmed in a life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria. The Duchess, a friend of Queen Mary I of England, was born in 1538, and her biographer, Henry Clifford, was for many years a member of her household, so is a trustworthy source.' (Louise Bruce 1972, p. 9)

There is also no consensus around the actual location of her birth, but many historians – Ives and Alison Weir among them – agree that she was born in Norfolk and may have spent the very early part of her childhood at Blickling Hall before the family relocated to Hever Castle in Kent; Hever nevertheless remains a strong source of much of the romantic legend surrounding Anne Boleyn, with its fairy-tale like quality and relatively unscathed setting.

Anne was either the first or the second daughter of Thomas Boleyn and his wife Elizabeth Howard, who came of the wealthy, influential and affluent Howard family. It is widely believed now that Anne's sister Mary of *The Other Boleyn Girl* fame was probably the elder sister, and that their brother George was either a little older or a little younger than Anne herself; another brother died in his teens and there may have been further sibling who did not live long out of infancy. Infant mortality was dangerously high in Tudor times, and a remark by Thomas Boleyn that his wife brought him a baby every year seems to indicate that far more than the three surviving children were born. Thomas Boleyn himself was a diplomat of some considerable skill in the court of Henry VIII, the young king having ascended to the throne on the death of his father Henry VII in 1509 (Fraser 1993, p. 144) It was through various channels of influence as an ambassador to the Low Countries that Thomas Boleyn was able to secure a place for his daughter Anne in the household of Margaret of Austria, the daughter of the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian I. At the time of Anne Boleyn's arrival in her household Margaret was ruling the Netherlands on behalf of her father and her highly cultured court was seen in part as the essential finishing school for any girl wishing for a place at the various European Renaissance courts. Via the evidence of a letter she sent to Thomas Boleyn, it is apparent that Margaret was enamoured of the precocious young Boleyn, and only with some reluctance sent her to the wedding of Henry VIII's sister Mary to the ageing Louis XII of France in 1514, from which point Anne became one of Mary's maids-of-honour, a position of some responsibility and social standing. When Mary Tudor was widowed Anne apparently transferred to the service of the new French queen, Claude, but of her time in the French court almost nothing is known, only that Ives for one believed that she would have avoided most of the famous licentiousness of the court because Claude, famously shy and retiring, was pregnant for almost the entirety of her marriage, and spent much of her time away from the hustle and bustle of daily court life.

Anne Boleyn's time in the French court came to an end when her father summoned her back to England early in 1522 with a view to betrothing her to her Irish cousin James Butler, but the plan fell through. It has been speculated that on her return Anne had already been heavily influenced by the first tumultuous waves of Protestantism which were then sweeping across Europe, as an answer to what was seen as the endemic corruption in the Catholic church. Certainly she was schooled in the French ways, witty and stylish and adept at playing the courtly games of dalliance that were all the rage on the continent but for the most part unheard of in the more austere English court. She set the tone for styles to come, and apparently - according to some of her contemporary commentators - made the most of a more modest beauty to stand out from the crowd in a way that was calculated to catch the eye (Fraser 1993, p. 150) It is this recourse to style *and* substance and a determination to stand out that made Anne Boleyn such an appealing iconic figure several hundred years later when the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website would unwittingly make her the centre of an online subculture.

After the collapse of the Butler proposal, Anne from there went on to form a romantic attachment to Henry Percy, the son of the Earl of Northumberland; at a similar time her sister Mary also became Henry VIII's mistress. The king was still married to his first wife Catherine of Aragon at the time, although thus far the union had produced only one living daughter, Mary Tudor. Anne became one of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting, trading on the French fashions and her continental education to make herself the centre of any social gathering. The relationship between Anne and Henry Percy was dissolved by the intervention of Cardinal Wolsey, with Percy pledged to be married to a daughter of the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury. Historians continue to wrestle with the exact date during which Anne first caught the king's eye, with some saying as early as 1524 and others as late as 1526; either way he was soon courting her although she initially refused his advances and may only have accepted them under the advice and guidance of her family, who doubtless saw a glittering opportunity opening up before them if a more permanent form of the king's affections could be attained. How much of her courtship with the king was actually instigated on behalf of Anne by her family, and how much of it may have been down to her own personal ambition has not been and - unless essential new documents are unearthed - probably never will be satisfactorily known. There has been some speculation that the Percy romance was dissolved because Henry had already by that time taken an interest in Anne and wanted her for himself - this is the scenario in the 1969 movie *Anne of the thousand days* - but recently historians have discovered too great a disparity in the dates of the ending of Anne's liaison with Percy and the first documented evidence of the king's interest in her (Ives 2004, p. 66-67) The exact instigation of Anne's courtship with Henry VIII - how much was self-motivated and how much she was propelled into it by a patriarchal desire for power - have also been the talking point for fans of Anne Boleyn on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* on countless occasions, with the perceived image of Anne Boleyn dancing delicately backwards and forwards from feminist icon to patriarchal victim as and when circumstantial evidence suits.



A coquettish Anne Boleyn (Natalie Dormer) plays with the affections of a king in episode three of the first season of Showtime's 'The Tudors'

Henry's infatuation with Anne soon became known to the court at large, dovetailing with the declaration of his intention to divorce Catherine of Aragon on the basis that their marriage was invalid because Biblical texts declared that the marriage of one brother to the wife of another, dead brother rendered it thus. These texts also rendered all of their offspring as illegitimate as well. Historians have speculated that Anne refused to become Henry's sexual partner until he had obtained his divorce and she therefore married him and became queen; recently it has been postulated that Henry himself may have in fact been the driving force behind the sexual ban, in a concerted effort to keep the liaison as 'legitimate' as possible. Henry VIII petitioned to the Pope for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, but after a court was held to discuss the matter in London, during which Catherine made a dramatic appeal to the king's conscience by falling to her knees in front of him, the proceedings were adjourned. As a result Cardinal Wolsey, the man who effectively ran the country, was disgraced and eventually arrested for his inability to procure the desired divorce. He died on his way to London before he could be tried and executed. Wolsey was succeeded in the king's confidences by Thomas Cromwell, who went on to mastermind Henry's divorce with Catherine, as well as helping to dissolve the monasteries; he and Anne Boleyn initially worked in some sort of tandem, sharing a similar religious outlook, but their relationship soon began to dissolve after she failed to produce a son for Henry, and also far more seriously when she challenged Cromwell as to where the monies from the dissolved monasteries were in fact being funnelled. In this sense, far from being the Reformation's biggest asset, Anne was at that point fast becoming its biggest liability.

Henry ennobled Anne Boleyn, making her Marquess of Pembroke in 1532, thus raising her within the ranks of the nobility to such an extent that she was able to accompany him on a visit to France for a conference at Calais later in the year. However, both before and during her visit she was still effectively snubbed by various members of the French nobility because

of her 'dubious' position and pedigree. It was on or shortly after this visit that it is generally believed that Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn first slept together, when their only surviving child, Elizabeth I, was conceived. By this time Catherine of Aragon had been banished from court and was living as a sort of prisoner in a succession of households in the Midlands, although the vast majority of the English public were behind her cause, and still considered her to be the rightful queen of England. They also considered her daughter Mary to be Henry's rightful heir. Among Anne Boleyn's more contentious missives was the one where she sent instructions that if Mary, at that point humiliatingly installed as staff in the household of the baby Elizabeth, did not tow the line then her '...ears should be boxed like the bastard she was' (Weir 2007, p. 235 – 236)

Henry and Anne were married on the 25th January 1533 in a small and fairly secret ceremony in London. The marriage between Henry and Catherine was declared invalid, and the marriage between Henry and Anne entirely lawful. This had been done without approval from the Pope and was simply yet another stage of what would be the eventual complete and utter break between England and the Papacy. Various prominent Catholic clergy, including Sir Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher were imprisoned in the Tower of London for refusing to acknowledge the validity of the marriage, and both men were to lose their lives on the block as a result of their recalcitrance.

Anne was crowned Queen of England on the 1st June 1533; by this time she was visibly pregnant. From that moment henceforth Catherine of Aragon was informed that she was to style herself as 'Dowager Princess of Wales'. Parliament declared that Henry was now supreme head of the Church of England, sealing once and for all the split from Rome. On the 7th September 1533 at Greenwich Palace Anne Boleyn went into labour; however, instead of the birth producing the much longed-for son she instead produced a redheaded girl who was christened Elizabeth. Disappointment was heavy, but Henry declared that as they were both young, sons would soon surely follow. The various jousts and pageants that would have accompanied the birth of a boy prince were however discreetly cancelled; the all-encompassing Tudor patriarchy at its finest. The child was given her own establishment at Hatfield House, and to add to her humiliation, as previously stated, the recently demoted Mary Tudor, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, was forced to wait on her. A battle of wits then ensued between Anne Boleyn and Mary over Mary's recognition of Anne's status as the new queen of England. This led to much heated language, most of it on Anne's part, along with the aforementioned various threats of physical violence towards Mary; it was even put about on more than one occasion that Anne and/or members of her family intended to poison both Mary and her mother. Certainly Bishop Fisher was poisoned; his poor cook was boiled alive in oil for the offence, but whether he acted alone or was paid to make the attempt has never been satisfactorily explained. These and other aspects of the case that run contrary to the moulding of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon are often either ignored or airbrushed aside during discussions on *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum.

Anne miscarried or suffered some sort of phantom pregnancy in 1534; one minute it was widely rumoured that she was expecting and then all of a sudden all trace or mention of the promise of a prince vanishes completely (Bernard 2011, p. 74 – 75) By the end of 1535 she was pregnant again, and then, on the 8th of January 1536 Catherine of Aragon died; Anne Boleyn was now without doubt the queen of England. However, Catherine's death proved to

be something of a double-edged sword; if Anne once again failed to produce a male heir the king would, in the eyes of the Catholic church, be free to divorce her and remarry without any hint of illegality. It was around this time that he began courting one of Anne's ladies-in-waiting, Jane Seymour, but there appears to have been no indication that he was seriously considering marrying her. In fact his interest in Jane Seymour was on several occasions dismissed as nothing more than another one of the king's occasional dalliances. Soon after Catherine's death, the king was knocked unconscious in a jousting accident; what is less certain is whether Anne came across Jane Seymour sitting on his lap not long before the accident occurred. Either way one or the other of these incidents, or perhaps even a combination of both, caused her to miscarry of a male foetus on the 29th of January. From that moment on Anne's days were essentially numbered, although many historians have speculated that at that point in the proceedings neither she nor the king really realised it. Much controversy has surrounded the miscarriage of this male foetus, and as to whether or not it was in some way deformed; the allegation that it was in turn led to the accusation that Anne was a witch. Witches were said at the time to give birth to deformed foetuses. Recently it has been speculated that the foetus was deformed because the father was in fact Anne's brother George. This then led some to see this as a confirmation of Anne's infidelity and incest, but with others making some headway for Anne's cause in attributing it to the fact that she was so desperate to survive that she turned to her brother to help her conceive, given that the king was both losing interest in her as well as being partially impotent himself.

The historian Retha Warnicke (1989) argued strongly for the case that the foetus Anne miscarried was deformed, and that this was almost entirely responsible for her downfall. She set the crisis against the backdrop of superstition that prevailed throughout 16th century Europe, which harks back to the previous mention of witchcraft;

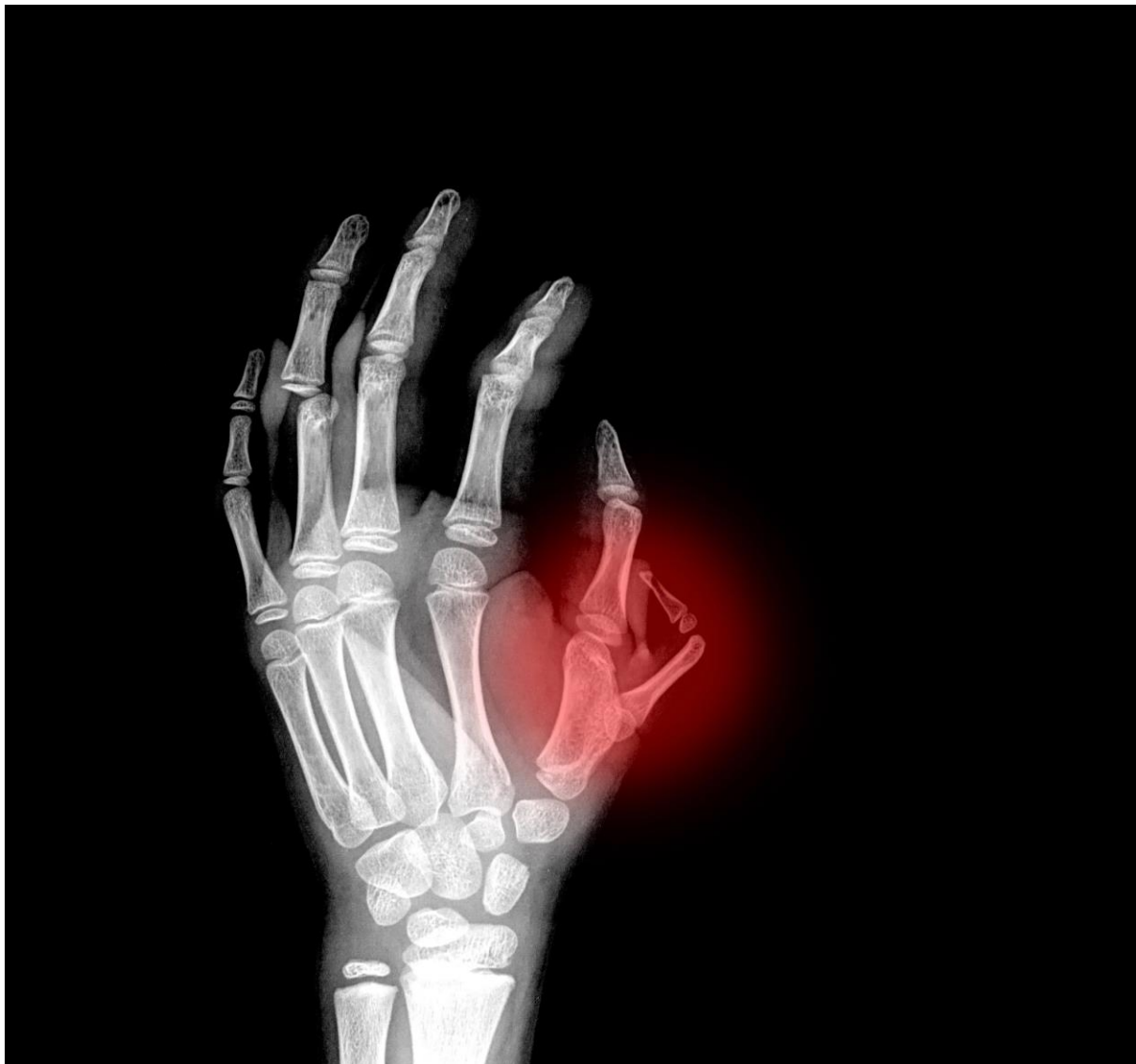
'...virtually all early modern Europeans believed in the existence of evil spirits; Satan was for them an actual demon who worked ceaselessly to lure mortals into becoming his followers. Among his worshippers, witches were considered such a menace that in 1542, less than six years after Anne's death, parliament enacted a statute that, among other prohibitions, specifically forbade the use of witchcraft to incite a person to illicit love.' (Warnicke 1989, p. 192)

Warnicke then goes on to say that carnality was considered in Tudor times to lead to adultery, sodomy, and even bestiality. Therefore the act of sodomy was made illegal by the Reformation parliament. As Warnicke explains, '...a major reason for these restrictions was that illicit sexual acts were blamed for the birth of deformed children.' (Warnicke 1989, p.195) Convinced therefore that Anne delivered of a deformed foetus, Warnicke then uses this hypothesis to explain almost entirely the reason for Anne's downfall, although the theory has been hotly contested by more recent historians. That her brother George might have been homosexual has also been widely speculated, and if, as Warnicke suggests, he was responsible for the fathering of the aborted foetus through some sort of desperate act to save his sister, then the 'taint' of his homosexuality is only confirmed in the fact that the foetus was deformed. Nevertheless, the legend of the deformed foetus has become as much an integral part of Anne's myth as the suggestion of the sixth finger. This ties in with ideas of her as a taboo subject, something that serves to titillate a modern audience and makes an easily mouldable image of her all the most marketable.

Anne Boleyn's downfall occurred with such swiftness and severity that it sent shockwaves throughout the court and continues to divide historians and academics to this day, as do so the many other aspects of her life; it also remains the biggest topic of conversation across the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Anne Boleyn miscarried of the male foetus at the end of January 1536; by the 2nd of May she was under arrest and a prisoner in the Tower of London, facing heinous accusations of adultery, incest, and treason. Among others arrested in the coup was her brother George – for the aforementioned accusation of incest – as well as several other prominent courtiers including the poet Thomas Wyatt, with whom Anne had been romantically linked before her marriage to the king. It is now widely believed that Thomas Cromwell engineered the rapid coup at the court, possibly largely in response to Anne's opposition to his plans to redistribute the money taken from the dissolved monasteries. However, the theory is not without its opponents, including those who believe that Anne may have been wholly or at least partially guilty of the crimes of which she was accused, and that instead of fabricating evidence against her Cromwell merely took what rumour and innuendo was already to hand (Norton 2009, p. 67) i.e. also Warnicke's theory about the deformed foetus. Other possibilities point to Cromwell not being involved at all, at least until Henry ordered him to find a way to get rid of an unwanted and by now embarrassing wife simply because he had fallen in love with Jane Seymour, and considered that it was unlikely Anne would ever carry a male child to full term. Again Anne Boleyn becomes here the victim of a ruthless and indiscriminate patriarchal system, one that she herself to some extent took advantage of to become queen when it became clear that Catherine of Aragon was past the years of childbearing. It is worth repeating that this aspect of Anne Boleyn's life comes under more scrutiny than almost any other on *The Anne Boleyn Files* website forum, and is by far the most divisive of the many discussions carried out there.

The men accused of adultery with the queen were all found guilty of the crimes brought against them, with the lowly musician Mark Smeaton the only one who maintained his guilt throughout; a confession was most likely racked out of him at the Tower of London after an initial and perhaps equally brutal cross-examination by Thomas Cromwell. Anne Boleyn and her brother George were tried at the Tower of London and both were also found guilty. Anne was condemned to death either by burning or beheading, but the king later commuted the sentence to beheading, and by the far more merciful stroke of a French swordsman as opposed to the dull axe reserved for the others. Archbishop Cranmer was instructed to declare Henry and Anne's marriage null and void, thereby making their daughter Elizabeth a bastard alongside Catherine of Aragon's daughter Mary. Anne Boleyn was brought to the scaffold within the grounds of the Tower of London and decapitated by the swordsman of Calais on the 19th May 1536. Such was her disgraced character that no provision had been made for her body after death, and the corpse was put into an arrow chest which had lain nearby. She was buried inside the church of St. Peter ad Vincula, also within the grounds of the Tower of London, where she remained undisturbed for several hundred years. Various of the unfortunates also buried there were exhumed and an examination of the various remains were carried out by the Victorians. To this day the exact location of Anne Boleyn's remains in St. Peter ad Vincula has never been satisfactorily ascertained, but none of the skeletons removed and examined had the so-called 'deformity' of the sixth finger. However, several other of the bodies had long since dissolved entirely, and it may be that Anne Boleyn's was among them, and that she may indeed have had the

sixth finger, in some way, shape or form, after all. A plaque has been laid in what is generally assumed to be the 'correct' spot just inside the altar area.



The purported sixth finger, as illustrated in the book 'I Love the Tudors' (2016), by the author of this thesis

A memorial was erected at the Tower of London on Tower Green to those executed there, with Anne Boleyn's name among them; more recently a glass plaque was installed again bearing the names of all those executed, and roses are left there for Anne on the anniversary of her execution, as well as in the church of St. Peter ad Vincula. The site has become a place of pilgrimage for fans of Anne Boleyn, with May 19th in particular the time to pay tribute to her memory; this was something many of the respondents to the research questionnaire said that they had done, or would consider doing. However, a few of the respondents were in fact vehemently opposed to the idea, for various reasons including the fact that they felt the idea was too extreme, and that for all her influence they had never actually known Anne Boleyn personally. These remarks were in marked contrast to those who emphasised much more with her and who were clearly evincing far more the sort of

symbolic interactionism which ran as a thread throughout many of the responses to the research questionnaire. Nevertheless, the Tower of London and Hampton Court provided pivotal destinations for school trips for the ages of 5 – 11, a fact unearthed when attempting to ascertain to what extent Anne Boleyn's story might first impact on a potential fanbase; that fanbase consisting of the occupants of a typical British classroom.

2.3 Anne Boleyn: how the national curriculum covers the Tudors

The most recent History National Curriculum, which schools were instructed to follow from September 2014, saw a shift in the way that the Tudor period was taught to British schoolchildren. In the revised programme, the Tudor era was moved to what is classed 'KS3' or years 7-11, which covers ages 11-16. Prior to this change in the curriculum, the Tudor era was always taught in year 4 classes - aged 8-9 - using the following units of work, classified his.7, his.8, his.19.

In His. 7 children were taught the story of the Tudors using the saga of the six wives of Henry VIII as a focal point. The provision was made that the learning could be adapted for a younger age group, namely year 5 and 6 children. The social and political context of the contemporary stress on this period are many and myriad; strains and ideas of 'Britishness' permeate through various strands of the curriculum, but these stresses are to be found in the timetables of almost any given country in regard to their own history. It seems to be an important point for 21st century schoolchildren because of the major religious upheavals of the age and also the 'bizarre' chronology of Henry VIII's marital life, along with the remarkable achievements of his daughters in a painfully patriarchal age.

The overall expectations at the end of the unit were that:

'Most children will: be able to place the Tudors within the context of Britain's history; make inferences and deductions from portraits; know about the work of a Tudor monarch; know in outline the story of Henry VIII's life; identify different ways in which people have represented and interpreted it; be able to communicate their knowledge and understanding orally and in writing.

Some children will not have made so much progress and will: know that the Tudors were a long time ago; know that Henry VIII was a king and that he had six wives; know about other events in his life; be able to make some deductions about the appearance of Henry VIII and his wives from their portraits.

Some children will have progressed further and will: know the dates of the Tudor period and its key events; understand what sort of information can and cannot be deduced from portraits; know and understand aspects of the break with Rome and dissolution of the monasteries; understand why there are different interpretations regarding Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves.'

The following line of enquiry asked children to discover how many times Henry VIII married, and then to ask what he was like as a person; what he did all day, before moving on to ask why he divorced Catherine of Aragon: 'Give the children a text with a simple description of Henry's problems, e.g. *the need for a son, Catherine's age, the need for money*. It should also include a few solutions. Ask the children to identify the problems. Help the children place the problems in order of importance and to suggest solutions and produce a grid with

two columns: problems and solutions.’ Following on from this the learning then moved on to the topic of Anne Boleyn: ‘Did marrying Anne Boleyn or Jane Seymour solve Henry’s problems? Tell the story of Anne Boleyn. Ask the children to look at the list of Henry’s problems and their grid with problems and solutions. Give them simple information about the marriage to Anne Boleyn and ask them to decide if the marriage solved any of Henry’s problems. Ask them to add another column to their grids called: ‘Did the solution work?’; ‘Tell the story of Jane Seymour and the birth of Edward. Explain that although the birth of Edward seemed to solve one of Henry’s problems, on Jane’s death Henry still had a problem.’ The learning then moves on to discuss Henry’s later marriages.

His. 8 dealt mainly with the lives of the rich and the poor in Tudor times, and served as a kind of class debate for the younger generation. His. 19 dealt with the Tudor exploration of the world, with much emphasis on the exploits of Francis Drake during Elizabethan times.

However, as previously stated, the most recent History National Curriculum, which schools were instructed to follow from September 2014, saw a shift in the way that the Tudor period was taught to British schoolchildren. In the revised programme the Tudor era was moved to what is classed ‘KS3’ or years 7-11, which covers ages 11-16. Anne Boleyn is not mentioned explicitly in the guidelines laid out for the new curriculum, but her daughter Elizabeth I, is:

‘Key stage 1

Pupils should develop an awareness of the past, using common words and phrases relating to the passing of time. They should know where the people and events they study fit within a chronological framework and identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods. They should use a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms. They should ask and answer questions, choosing and using parts of stories and other sources to show that they know and understand key features of events. They should understand some of the ways in which we find out about the past and identify different ways in which it is represented.

In planning to ensure the progression described above through teaching about the people, events and changes outlined below, teachers are often introducing pupils to historical periods that they will study more fully at key stages 2 and 3.

Pupils should be taught about:

- changes within living memory – where appropriate, these should be used to reveal aspects of change in national life
- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally [for example, the Great Fire of London, the first aeroplane flight or events commemorated through festivals or anniversaries]
- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements, some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods [for example, Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong, William Caxton and Tim Berners-Lee, Pieter Bruegel the Elder

and LS Lowry, Rosa Parks and Emily Davison, Mary Seacole and/or Florence Nightingale and Edith Cavell]

- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality'

The English Reformation and Counter-Reformation – Henry VIII to Mary I – are taught in Key stage 3.

These early discussions of the life of Anne Boleyn, with their particular emphasis on the roles she played in the Reformation and also her failure to produce a son in a time of rigorous patriarchy, tied in strongly with later comments made by members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* with regard to when their interest in Anne Boleyn first began. Also of note are the later mentions in the curriculum of Anne's daughter Elizabeth. Certainly for the author of this thesis, lessons in school firmed the first immediate contact with Anne Boleyn and the Tudor period and served to ignite the interest in her, alongside school visits to locations such as Hampton Court.

2.4 Anne Boleyn in historical works

To begin with it must be understood that there are two distinct stages to the 'creation' of Anne Boleyn as she is presented for the purposes of this research, which is as a media-mediated 'historical celebrity' at the centre of an online subculture. This is the Anne Boleyn that most modern audiences subscribe to, especially those studied in the course of the research on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Before her there is the actual life of Anne Boleyn the woman, documented only in brief snippets from original sources before she became a public figure of some significance, and then of course up until the point of her execution wherein her doings were far more scrutinised, and presented on more of a world stage. Then there is the second stage, the media-mediated 'creation', that is all of the subsequent historical records, books, plays, films, TV, etc. which go on to form the amalgamated results of the historiography of her life, and which unwittingly divulge to her fans how history was written about her by various historians like Alison Weir and Retha Warnicke; how it changed over time and fused with various media forms to form the current perception of Anne Boleyn as a sort of 'historical celebrity'.

Those original sources – mainly despatches of various ambassadors, most notably Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador to England for Charles V - who wrote about Anne Boleyn during her lifetime were for the most part, and perhaps understandably, not entirely complimentary to her. In fact this is perhaps something of an understatement, given the radical shifts that England was undergoing in religious terms at the time, and because of the part that she was purported to have played in them. The slanders that she underwent during her trial, and for most of the rest of the Tudor reign, when the very act of speaking her name was something of an anathema, helped solidify her image in amber as an object of scandal and slander. This image remains to a large extent unchanged to the present day. These slanders, however, which were intended to blacken her name beyond recognition, have in fact helped foster the image which the research shows so many of her fans wish now to attempt to rehabilitate; the slanders also created that 'salacious' side of her persona that draws in members of the public and which therefore allows Anne Boleyn the 'historical

celebrity' to continue to exert a fascination far beyond the reach of countless other historical figures.

As has been previously stated, much of the more morbid side of this interest seems to lie in the idea that Anne Boleyn may have been guilty of some of the crimes of which she was accused (incest, adultery, and witchcraft, posthumously). This makes her an appealing prospect for a modern audience due to the taboo nature of these crimes. For the knowing modern audience, helped along by a hefty dose of hindsight, there is also twist to the tale, a spike in the upward trajectory of this wronged queen, and a sense somehow that in the end history 'evened things out' by making Anne's daughter Elizabeth perhaps the most successful and famous female monarch in history. However, for the detractors of Anne Boleyn there is also the sense that history evened things out in the manner of her downfall; although Anne Boleyn became known – both in her lifetime and subsequently - as the archetypal 'other woman', she eventually fell victim to Jane Seymour. She played the same 'game' Anne had done with the king's affections, but at a ruthlessly accelerated rate, and then went on to achieve the great goal of giving him a son. It is worth noticing that there is a distinct disparity in the way Anne Boleyn, the classic 'other woman' is represented by historians, and the way her successor Jane Seymour, who used many of those same techniques to hook Henry VIII, is represented. Although Jane Seymour was lauded at the time of her ascension into Henry VIII's affections, she is now generally reviled by modern historical writers such as Eric Ives. Her legacy also sits badly with Victorian writers and historians such as the Strickland sisters. In this sense it is Anne Boleyn who is instead revered whilst at the actual time of her execution she was positively reviled. Certainly this turnabout seems to be the case to a great extent as far as users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum are concerned. It would appear that the trial and execution of Anne Boleyn has been recognised as a case of framing or trumped-up charges despite the fact that she was tried and found guilty by a jury of her peers, and this provides much of the basis for regarding her as a sentimental heroine in the 21st century. The fact of Jane Seymour's triumph seems to satisfy some sort of justice for those who believe that even a kernel of truth may exist in the charges against Anne Boleyn, or for those who are even now partisans of the much-wronged Catherine of Aragon. Peter Ackroyd gives an example of this dichotomy in his book *The History of England Volume II ~ Tudors* in which he states that:

'...it is at least possible that Anne Boleyn was not as innocent as she claimed. It may be that she pursued other men in desperate search for a male child who could be hailed as the heir to the throne, thereby saving herself and her family for the foreseeable future.' (Ackroyd 2012, p. 97)

Retha Warnicke cements this rather controversial view when she says 'she was a victim of her society's mores and of human ignorance about conception and pregnancy,' wherein she alludes once more to the scandal around what she believed to be a deformed foetus which Anne Boleyn gave birth to (Warnicke 1989, p. 242). Warnicke's view cements the sight of Anne as the sympathetic victim of patriarchy personified once again, whilst at the same time side-lining the similar fate that befell her predecessor in the childbearing stakes.

With Mary Queen of Scots the story of scandal is much the same, albeit on a somewhat larger stage; she was accused of conspiring to murder the king of Scotland, her second husband, so that she could marry her lover. After the murder it is alleged that they staged

her own kidnap to allow Mary to marry her lover 'under duress'. 'The Casket Letters', which have divided historians ever since they first appeared, point the way in great part to the controversy surrounding Mary, and also to the fact that she, like Anne Boleyn, may have been framed. 'The Casket Letters' are a series of love letters and sonnets allegedly written by Mary to her lover, the Earl of Bothwell, and which detail evidence of their adulterous affair, even telling of the plot to murder her husband. Historical opinion points to them being largely fraudulent – genuine letters by Mary were 'spiked' with passages probably from a former female lover of Bothwell's - but as Peter Ackroyd (2012) points out, there is also a stubborn strand of thought that persists that like Anne Boleyn, Mary was not as innocent as she and her partisans have frequently pointed out. The final authenticity of 'The Casket Letters' has never been decisively proved. Opinion on the subject of Mary Queen of Scots divides people as fiercely as it does with Anne Boleyn, as the novelist Margaret George explains

'...opinions of her varied violently in her own day, and four centuries have done very little to reconcile the opposing views. Was she the depraved Jezebel of Knox's imagination, steeped in lust and folly? Or was she the long-suffering, tolerant goddess of her partisans?' (George 1992, p. 867)

The same is almost entirely true of Anne Boleyn; in fact, were the name 'Knox' omitted from the above passage – in reference to the famous Scottish protestant preacher - one may as well be reading a critical comment on Anne Boleyn as much as they might be on Mary Queen of Scots. The majority of historical opinion – Bernard and Warnicke aside - seems to have settled on the fact that Anne Boleyn was framed for varying reasons, with Elizabeth Norton for instance pointing out that

'...whilst many people in England did believe in Anne's guilt, the charges against her were laughable. An English queen, as both Henry and Jane (Seymour) were well aware, was never alone and it would have been impossible for Anne to have committed adultery on so many occasions.' (Norton 2009, p. 69)

As far as Mary Queen of Scots is concerned, whilst there is a general consensus that 'The Casket Letters' which led to her condemnation and long imprisonment in England are forgeries, historians still struggle to decide to what extent she was actually in some way complicit in the knowledge of her husband's murder, and even at the worst that she actually conspired to lure him to his death, 'The Casket Letters' or no. Most historians paint her at least partly culpable, either blinded by love for Bothwell or dangerously vulnerable with postnatal depression, and sometimes a combination of the two (John Guy, Antonia Fraser, Roderick Graham); a further few even brand her as incorrigibly involved (Marjorie Bowen and Retha Warnicke). 'The Casket Letters' were merely the means by which the nobles in Scotland were able to 'seal the deal' on Mary's fate and to ensure that upon her flight into England she remained a prisoner there in perpetuity, with no hope of ever regaining her former throne.

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That chronology of the literature written about Anne Boleyn after her death certainly does fall into two distinct stages. Some of the earliest written materials regarding Anne Boleyn were published in her lifetime, firstly family letters and the few scant records that accompanied the education and prospects of a young girl in the Tudor era, and then mainly

those religious tracts that opposed the king's marriage to her and the break with Rome that ensued. Also of importance but unfortunately equally biased are the ambassadorial despatches concerning her; the main body of these consist of the despatches of the aforementioned Savoyard Ambassador Eustace Chapuys, who served in England in Henry VIII's court from 1529 to 1545. This gave him the full scope of intimacy in terms of the time he spent there, from Anne's ascension to her swift downfall, and also the subsequent rise of Jane Seymour. His portrayal in *The Tudors* TV show presents him as a kindly, in fact almost fatherly figure to Catherine of Aragon's daughter Mary, and vehemently opposed in everything he does to the course of 'the concubine', which was the actual name he used for Anne Boleyn, both before and after she became queen; his actual despatches are full of references to Anne in this vein.

Moving back to matters of theology, one of the main religious tracts published against the marriage of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII – in 1536 – was written by Reginald Pole, of Plantagenet blood and therefore with a claim on the throne to rival that of Henry VIII. Pole's claim eventually led to the execution of his sixty eight-year old mother Margaret Pole, the Countess of Salisbury, some years later, when he himself had fled the country and been made a cardinal by the Pope. Pole's work, the '*Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione*' was a spirited condemnation of the king's various policies, and was to earn him Henry's undying wrath. But to these works of Catholic propaganda Anne Boleyn was merely a symptom, and not necessarily the cause, even though they branded Henry as an adulterer, and Anne Boleyn with whom he had been unfaithful. It was not until Nicholas Sanders' 'seminal' work entitled *Rise and growth of the Anglican Schism* (circa 1573) was published that the image of Anne Boleyn – the witch and the scheming woman – which still persists to some extent today, was able to take proper shape and form. Sanders was to be perhaps both Anne's and also her daughter Elizabeth's most ardent detractor; as previously stated, his works are responsible for a great many of the falsehoods regarding Anne Boleyn that persist to this day, such as the sixth finger story. In his work, Sanders also reinforced the notion maintained by Catholics that Elizabeth I was a bastard, but also that she born of an incestuous union, as he stated that Anne Boleyn was in fact Henry VIII's daughter, conceived during an affair with her mother. Many other paternal slanders exist for Elizabeth I, including that she was the result of Anne's incest with her brother, possibly the most popular myth of them all in regard to the topic, and also that she was the daughter of the musician Mark Smeaton, the only man condemned to die for his affair with Anne Boleyn who actually confessed his guilt. It was also said of Sanders that

'...as a result of the scandalously immoral nature of the union between Henry and Anne, Elizabeth herself was not only a bastard but a monster of sinfulness. He directly set himself against recent Protestant texts which acclaimed Elizabeth as a messianic figure presiding over England as the new Israel'. (Hackett 1995, p. 131)

By modern standards, Sanders' work can in no way be interpreted as any sort of serious attempt to document the life of Anne Boleyn, but by the self-same standards of the time it was never-the-less the definitive history of the English Reformation from a Catholic point of view. The mud it slung at Anne Boleyn was to stick for centuries.

Agnes Strickland's *Lives of the queens of England*, published in twelve volumes between 1840 and 1848, was one of the first full-bodied and most popular and widely available pieces of research concerning the monarchy, covering the Tudor era in some considerable detail. It came at a time when both more rigorous and also more popular historical research was coming into vogue, with historians for the first time having access to some of the ambassadorial despatches and various published tracts that have previously been mentioned. It was also unusual in that it was serious history written by a woman, or women, as it was in fact penned by both the Strickland sisters. It was around this time that the popular image of Henry VIII as a tyrant and a 'lecher' who slew his wives on a whim came into sharper focus, and for the first time female writers in particular began to question the evidence against Anne Boleyn in terms of her purported treachery. Jane Seymour, initially lauded at the time of her becoming queen, was, as previously stated, said by Strickland to have been '...loaded with panegyric'. (Ives 2004, p. 305) Now it was Anne Boleyn who began to be revered by the Victorians, and Jane, who died in childbirth and perhaps ought to have solicited on that score alone a more sympathetic hearing, generally reviled, certainly by partisans of Anne. Again as stated, this is a trend that has continued to this day in terms of a historiographical chronology of Anne Boleyn, although there have been several attempts in the last ten years or so for writers to bring forth their own new versions of Jane Seymour's life, with varying degrees of success. This has resulted in some astonishingly personal attacks on Seymour, even by the most prolific of academic writers, such as Eric Ives. In his 2004 book *The life and death of Anne Boleyn* he even goes so far as to say that, in response to Jane Seymour's attire on her wedding day that '...anyone familiar with Holbein's portrait of Jane Seymour might be forgiven for feeling that she needed all the help she could get.' (Ives 2004, p. 360) Despite the fact that she had achieved what Anne Boleyn had done in a fraction of the time it seems that writers now tend to paint Jane Seymour as the villain of Anne's downfall, while forgetting the worst excesses of what Catherine of Aragon and her daughter Mary went through – indirectly - at Anne Boleyn's hands. Ives is one of the few male biographers of Anne, and his impartiality, or rather startling lack of, he at least admits to in an earlier part of the text

'...I have sometimes described Anne Boleyn as the third woman in my life, after my immediate family, and it is true that once she interests you, fascination grows, as it did for men at the time. (Ives 2004, p. xiv)

However, this has the unfortunate side-effect of making even the most rigorous, modern biography of Anne Boleyn open to at least some accusations of a blatantly biased slant. It also serves to perpetuate the contentious nature of the subject at hand and therefore continues to cement the idea of that allure to the modern audience of a divisive, 'dangerous' figure. Often the most telling comment on the topic of Anne Boleyn will come with the mere first mention of her name in any of the given texts at hand; this then usually gives a fairly accurate indication of where the author's sympathies are going to lie for the remainder of the work. For instance, Alison Weir initially refers to Anne Boleyn in her 2001 work *Henry VIII King and Court* as being '...driven by ambition rather than virtue'. (Weir 2001, p. 262) Suzannah Lipscomb introduces her as the '...witty and captivating Anne Boleyn. Although not particularly beautiful...' (Lipscomb 2009, p. 37) This gives an insight into how Anne Boleyn is viewed, as a woman not of exceptional beauty but of great character and wit. In fact, Anne's appearance is of paramount importance to her legend.

Although she is the archetypal 'other woman', the fact that she is portrayed as not being a conventional beauty indicates that there is an 'accessibility' to her that makes her less of a threatening figure than an otherwise 'out and out' beauty would be, at least as far as her fans are concerned. This makes the fact that she achieved what she achieved in terms of what a modern audience would see as blatant social-climbing seem all the more, for want of a better word, 'admirable'; an uncontested beauty would perhaps seem a less appealing prospect for some sort of subcultural redemption, and the kind of 'quirky' toing and froing in regards to her actual appearance – there seems to be only a vague general consensus - makes her seem perhaps more accessible still to her audience of fans. The fact that Anne Boleyn was a brunette was mentioned several times in the results of the research questionnaire, as was the fact that traditionally Jane Seymour has been portrayed as having blond hair; in several answers the colours were set up like some sort of long-lasting conflict between certain stereotypical images of modern women, of 'blond vs. brunette'.

As far as exploration for the research allowed, it appeared that there was no apparent debate within academia regarding the often blatant bias towards the subject of Anne Boleyn. Eric Ives penned several important papers before the publication of his 2004 book and has 'parried' frequently with fellow historians G. W. Bernard and also Retha Warnicke over the years in their various to-and-fro arguments regarding the minutiae of Anne Boleyn's life; in fact they seemed to form a veritable triumvirate spearheading the way forward in terms of Boleyn-related studies. Whilst Susan Bordo acknowledges the undoubted popularity of Anne Boleyn, she herself also fails to address the bias behind the subject matter in her book *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, which sets about chronicling the entire phenomenon itself and therefore if anything actually adding to a certain lingering sense of bias. Any other academic work explored during the course of the research was less concerned with a bias towards the subject matter than with the actual subject matter itself; also, given the fact that the fans of Anne Boleyn had formed their media-mediated image mostly from the more popular works, it was felt prudent not to stray too far from this territory.

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Texts about Henry VIII or his Six Wives as a whole could be seen as the first port of call for anyone wishing to find out about Anne Boleyn, as they place her position in terms of the entirety of Henry's reign. As such she often gets a more impartial treatment than in books solely devoted to her, even when that devotion springs from what appear to be the best of intentions. Antonia Fraser, in her book *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* gives a good, concise overview of Anne's background. However, she again cements the legend of why she may have become such an accessible figure for modern audiences, highlighting the fact of her rather extraordinary education in a time when young women were supposed to have been generally known for anything but;

'...it may seem whimsical to select the Boleyn capacity to learn foreign languages as the first link in the long chain of circumstances that would end with Anne Boleyn as Queen of England. Yet in seeking to explain the extraordinary career of this young woman, it is appropriate to concentrate on any single element that marked her out from her contemporaries'. (Fraser 1993, p. 145)

The education that Anne received, beginning in the sense that Fraser refers to it at the court of Margaret of Austria in Mechelen, is well documented in many of the later historical texts written about her. Such detail serves to drive her away from some of the more salacious elements that for many people can be the initial attraction to her, and serve to round her out as a more fully represented historical personality. A good education at a time when such a thing was portrayed as being hard to come by for a young woman also makes her an enticing prospect for the modern female fan as much as do allegations of adultery and witchcraft; the fan is able therefore to relate to her accomplishments on something of a more cerebral level as well as being perhaps titillated by some of the more scandalous stories that surround her. In this way, what is known of Jane Seymour's more modest education is often held against her in what can often, in terms of historical research, seem like little more than a game of one-upmanship. That one-upmanship can be seen rebounding backwards in time to take in various views of Catherine of Aragon as well, some of which are brought into sharp focus in Joanna Denny's deeply anti-Catholic book *Anne Boleyn*. In it, of Anne's predecessor, Denny says

'...Englishwomen certainly enjoyed far more freedom than those of continental Europe. They were not shut away in the kind of purdah practised in Spain, an inheritance of Islam, in which Catherine of Aragon kept her daughter Mary'. (Denny 2004, p. 61)

Such a statement flies in the face of much of the accepted knowledge of Catherine of Aragon, who in fact sought out the best teachers for her daughter, among them the most prominent emerging humanists of the time. However, she had little personal say about the sorts of conditions her daughter was kept in as Mary was taken away to her own household. For a far more balanced view of Mary's education we again must refer to a text that encompasses the Six Wives in their entirety, in this case Alison Weir's *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*;

'...as she grew older, she was allowed to take part in court festivals and pageants; Mary's formal education began in 1523. The King and Queen wished it to be a classic grounding in all the subjects appropriate to a Renaissance princess'. (Weir 2007, p. 127)

In his book on Thomas More, Richard Marius for one says that

'...the sixteenth century is the first after the classical age when he find fairly large numbers of educated women in all the European countries, in many respects a century of great queens and great female religious figures. In England alone the list of accomplished women is long enough to show that More's views were part of a stream of thought and not merely a drop in the desert of feminine servitude'. (Marius 1984, p. 223)

In light of this, Denny's misdemeanour can be seen as a classic example of how it has become de rigueur in some circles to defame the two queens on either side of Anne Boleyn in order to make her own star burn brighter. It is as though blackening the names of Catherine of Aragon and Jane Seymour has the effect of removing the questionable tarnishes on Anne's own image. Catherine of Aragon's rather fervent form of Catholicism has for the most part worked against her in revisionist respects, with Denny's diatribes being of particular note.

Despite these advances in the education of women, men of the Tudor era were still very much at the top of the wholly patriarchal pecking order. Women were seen as basically subservient, although in general court life women were nevertheless treated with considerable respect. This code of honour was based on the Arthurian idea of chivalry, which Henry VIII apparently set much store by. Women's sexual natures were seen to be best tamed through marriage, and always seen otherwise as somehow as 'naughty' or 'tempting'. This partly explains the widespread reviling of Anne Boleyn at the time, whose explicit sexuality was said by her Catholic detractors to have lured the king away from Catherine of Aragon. Childbirth in Tudor times was only one of many perils that women had to endure, but the experience gave them some control and agency over their own bodies; the birthing chamber was very much the domain of the midwife, and men were not permitted to enter. Women were as a rule treated as second class citizens, effectively the property firstly of their families and then their husband, and any property they themselves might have owned or enjoyed became their husband's on their marriage as well. Even those women fortunate enough to be higher up the social ladder were still regarded as inferior, mere bartering pieces to be married off to maximum financial effect. This was almost certainly the case with Mary Boleyn and her affair with Henry VIII, and may even have contributed in some way to the path that Anne Boleyn herself eventually trod.

Several decades after Anne Boleyn's death, the famous Protestant preacher John Knox published a pamphlet in 1558 entitled *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women*. This was an attack on Mary Queen of Scots' mother Mary of Guise, and also Mary Tudor, Catherine of Aragon's daughter, who by then was fast earning the nickname she would take into immortality, that of 'Bloody Mary'. At this point she was queen of England and burning protestants indiscriminately. Knox's tract stated that the rule of a woman was unnatural and a thing against God, and that it could be considered lawful for her subjects to overthrow her. In a turnaround from what might be considered the mores of the modern world, in which the fans of Anne Boleyn now fight for the rehabilitation of her reputation, it was women in Tudor times who were seen as the more sexually voracious of the species. This was again something for which Anne Boleyn and her reputation would suffer when she began to experience marital problems, even moreso when issues of the king's own virility were called into question. In fact, as well as being considered the more sexually voracious of the species, women in the 16th century were also prone to suffering from what was known as 'wandering womb' syndrome, a related side-effect linked to masturbation. This was a theory that originated in ancient Greece and basically believed that the womb would go wandering around the woman's body of its own free will, pressing itself against other organs and causing no end of ailments, unless the woman was sexually sated (Bullough 2003, p. 22). Even as late as the 16th century this was still generally believed to be the case, until the invention of the microscope revealed that the womb was in fact actually stationary; such theories tie in with Warnicke's own hypothesis (1989) about issues of unnatural sexual acts that dogged Anne during the dark days of her trial.

To return to the chronology of Anne Boleyn in historical works, second-wave feminism in the 60s and 70s coincided with a proliferation of Tudor TV and film, among them *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970) and *Elizabeth R* (1971), both acclaimed BBC miniseries, as well as the films *Anne of the Thousand Days* (1969) and *Mary Queen of Scots* (1971). All of these

contributed in representing a shift in the way Anne Boleyn was portrayed – and therefore a shift in her historiography - especially with the works of Antonia Fraser and Norah Lofts, both of whose works have also offered up possible instances of feminist standpoint theory. Fraser focused on the personal lives of Henry VIII's six wives, and because of her pivotal role Anne Boleyn receives the lion's share of the attention. In David Starkey's book on the same subject, published several decades later, almost the entirety of the book is given over to Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, with the subsequent four wives relegated almost to the status of footnotes. Lofts' entertaining but brief biography of Anne Boleyn makes much of the mythic status of its subject, giving a good indication that even by the 1970s Anne Boleyn was already being viewed culturally as an iconic figure. This was long before the internet would enable her various disparate fans to form together and create online communities. The book also links Anne Boleyn firmly to her Norfolk roots – Lofts was a native - breaking away from the affections of most of the modern fanbase who view Hever Castle in Kent as her home, at least from a spiritual point of view. Lofts also wrote the novel *The Concubine*, as well as a novel concerning Catherine of Aragon, *The King's Pleasure*. These were merely several examples of a wider body of work pertaining to the subject of the Tudor monarchy. In the course of *The Concubine*, Lofts relates how Anne Boleyn disguises herself during a series of masques, following the birth of Elizabeth and in the face of the king's increasing impotence, to get herself pregnant by sleeping with a succession of courtiers, none of whom actually realise it is her. Thereby Anne uses sex as a means by which to save herself, with Lofts attempting to turn the charges of adultery on their head, although they end up being the means by which Anne is of course brought to the block. The instance of feminist standpoint theory, which adheres more to this narrative than perhaps to many of the others concerned with Anne Boleyn in the 1960s and 1970s, will be explored further later in this chapter.

The two main, modern factual works concerning a serious attempt at studying the life of Anne Boleyn are Retha Warnicke's *The Fall of Anne Boleyn* (1989) and perhaps more prominently Eric Ives' *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (2004). These may be situated alongside second tier texts by the aforementioned historians Alison Weir, Antonia Fraser and Nora Lofts. As well as doing her best to pinpoint the exact date of Anne Boleyn's birth, Warnicke's rather divisive, rigorous book offers the aforementioned idea that Anne's supposedly deformed foetus was responsible in entirety for her downfall. The book also puts forward the idea that her fall was also sped up by the presence of a homosexual clique in court and headed by her brother George. This clique was said to be comprised of several of the men who were accused of adultery with her and eventually executed. The evidence for homosexuality among the men accused is scant, although given the passage of time unfortunately not entirely possible to refute either. Warnicke adheres to Nicholas Sander's view (circa 1573) of Anne's monstrous miscarriage whilst dismissing all of his other allegations elsewhere in the text. As a result of some of her more controversial theories, the book is generally not well regarded among Tudor historians, and particularly not among fans of Anne Boleyn.

At this point it may be of note that Warnicke's more academic work was not as well received in the questionnaire results as the other, 'popular' histories by the likes of Alison Weir, and also *The Anne Boleyn Files* favourite, Eric Ives. Warnicke's work may be more academic because she places greater emphasis on the socio/political climate of the time rather than

focusing on the day-to-day 'tittle-tattle' of the Tudor court; her work on the marriage of Anne of Cleves, Henry's fourth wife, goes into even more exacting detail regarding the customs of the relevant countries, the tone of the text a world away from Weir's more relaxed approach to the subject matter.

Eric Ives' *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* is still considered the seminal and authoritative work on the subject. Ives was an expert on Tudor history, and on the Boleyns in particular, and his study of the religious nature of Anne Boleyn's character is almost without compare. The book lingers less on the reasons for her downfall than does either Warnicke's or G. W. Bernard's books, both of which use their varying theories in regards to her fall as their major selling points, and not entirely offering as a result a satisfactory overview of her life, whereas Ives' work manages to do this. However, in the main Ives steadfastly sticks to the noncontroversial idea that Anne was framed. In thus doing – and by his own roundabout admission – he is astonishingly biased in his opinion towards Jane Seymour, and such little strokes unfortunately go a long way to discrediting a more serious appreciation of his work; his admission that Anne Boleyn had become, during the course of his research, 'the other woman' in his life may tickle the fancy of the ardent Anne Boleyn fans online, but it again undermines the seriousness of a nonbiased academic approach to a subject. Several online reviews have come to the same conclusion. The original edition of his work was considered to have 'provoked' the response work of Retha Warnicke, and also of G.W. Bernard and his book *Fatal Attractions* (2011), both of which offered the hypothesis that Anne was guilty of adultery, but only because of her ardent desire to survive. It is worth noting that Ives' work – considered the most popular – is almost consistently laudatory in its tone, whereas Warnicke's book offers the deformed foetus theory, and Bernard's book also hypothesises that Anne Boleyn may in fact have been guilty of some of the charges laid against her. On *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, Ives' work was the one most often cited and highly praised of all the books to have been written about Anne Boleyn; the author himself was the subject of a meeting with various members of the forum on one of their rare 'real life' gatherings.

Alongside these two books is the work by popular historian Alison Weir, which specifically concentrates on Anne's tenure as a prisoner awaiting execution in the Tower of London, *The Lady in the Tower: the fall of Anne Boleyn* (2009) Weir provides a brief overview of Anne Boleyn's life and the possible reasons for her downfall, without actually committing herself to a definite answer on whether or not she was guilty, before turning all her efforts into documenting the last several weeks of Anne's life in as much detail as is available from the historical records. She then goes on to describe the execution of Anne Boleyn on the 19th May in graphic detail, with frequent reference to current medical knowledge concerning decapitation, perhaps for sensationalist reasons, or perhaps to put her reader as much as is possible in the place of the victim. As well as being a detailed document of the last days of Anne Boleyn's life, Weir moves into the arena of the media and touches on possible subcultural territory in the postscript, when she comments on the cult growing around her subject. For instance, she points out, that as well as the replica costumes sold online, among other things, the internet auction site Ebay sells rings that 'allegedly have been infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn' (Weir 2009, p. 335).

Also published during the last decade was Joanna Denny's *Anne Boleyn* (2004) and of greater significance G. W. Bernard's *Fatal Attractions* (2011), like Retha Warnicke's work perhaps

also a possible 'response' to the seminal work by Ives, and yet another book which points to the fact that Anne may not have been as innocent as her fans protest her to be. In such cases as Bernard's – and perhaps Warnicke's – the intention seems to be not to 'blacken' Anne Boleyn's character, but perhaps to try and understand the circumstances of her downfall from a different stance, which, the research argues, sometimes means putting across points about her conduct that some of her fanbase may find unpalatable. These facts may also therefore be in direct contrast to their efforts to 'rehabilitate' her. Such efforts on the part of authors like Bernard and Warnicke could in some senses be regarded as significantly more rigorous, in that they avoid the sort of bias which Ives himself professed to be partial to, but unfortunately they then fall prey to criticism from the partisans of Anne Boleyn who seem unwilling to concede even the remotest possibility that she may have been guilty, even if that guilt stemmed merely from the desire to save her own skin. In his book, Bernard suggests that Anne Boleyn in fact was only of peripheral importance to the Reformation, as well as hypothesising that it was Henry VIII who refused to sleep with her until they were married rather than the other way around. He also suggests that Anne may have been guilty of the crimes of adultery of which she was accused, and that the pregnancy which resulted in the deformed foetus – the Warnicke theory – came about from relations with her brother, hence why the body aborted the 'unnatural' result of their liaison. For most of his evidence Bernard refers to the records of Anne's trial at the Tower of London, always a tricky area because some of them are missing. He asserts sensibly that serious historians should always question the evidence at hand, and not simply accept popular views of how certain pivotal historical events are reported. In this sense both his and Warnicke's works are considered to be 'revisionist' approaches to the topic. This is a point of view to some extent taken up and questioned by fans of Anne Boleyn, who seem to be responding to what they perceive as a challenge to the status quo image of her as someone who was entirely innocent of the charges for which she was accused and then executed.

Following on from the works of Warnicke, Ives and Bernard, a major shift in the perception of Anne Boleyn occurred in the 21st century with the advent of *The Tudors* TV series (2007 – 2010) and also *The Other Boleyn Girl* movie (2008), adapted from the novel of the same name. Both of these dovetailed with an increase in internet 'fan forums', which brings the research back to the main area of analysis, *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Also available during this period of high profile film and TV series were the first serious works circulating around the idea of Anne Boleyn as an icon rather than simply a retelling of her life. Foremost among these was Susan Bordo's book *The Creation of Anne Boleyn* (2013) and also the transcripts of discussions by members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum; *The Anne Boleyn Collection* (2012), collated by the site's owner, Claire Ridgway. Jayne Elizabeth Lewis's *Mary Queen of Scots – romance and nation* (1998), previous to these works, sought to trace the British nation's romance with the Scots queen and therefore set something a precedent in being concerned with the influence and iconic status of a historical figure rather than being simply another retelling of said historical figure and their life. Margaret Marshment recognised the allure of Mary Queen of Scots in *The Female Gaze – women as viewers of popular culture* (1988), and Retha Warnicke commented on how Mary Queen of Scots has been romanticised into an icon in her book *Mary Queen of Scots* (2006), which was published some seventeen years after her controversial work on Anne Boleyn. Likewise Carl Rollyson makes a good case for Mary Queen of Scots as a female icon in his book *Female Icons* (2005); also Dobson's *Elizabeth's England: an afterlife in fame and fantasy* (2004), which

examines the fascination with Mary Queen of Scots in terms of her rivalry with Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth I.

After the publication of these works it seemed inevitable that before long someone would address the issue of Anne Boleyn's status outside of her life as a historical figure, and Susan Bordo's book was the first to try and pin down the point in question. *The Creation of Anne Boleyn* is therefore the only serious text to really hint at the idea or indeed even the possibility of a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn. It documents *The Anne Boleyn Files* amongst various other strands of Tudor phenomena as being of paramount importance in building up an iconic media profile around the Tudor queen. However, far from lauding the idea of an organised online fanbase, Bordo in fact says of the various online communities dedicated to Anne Boleyn that

'...viewers, encouraged by the anonymity of Internet conversations, didn't hold back on slinging mud at one another, and for moderators of the site, it became a "challenge maintaining the line between constructive criticism and negative character bashing"' (Bordo 2013, p. 249)

Certainly this overview seemed very much in keeping with the controversial nature of the subject at hand. This is played out by other work into the dynamics of online communities, with Hills (2002) commenting that online forums are frequently found to be places of '...intensely private sentiments and attachments.' Bordo also serves up a relatively detailed timeline of the various mediums in which Anne Boleyn appeared from her death up until the present day, picking out various chronological points of particular importance and then devoting entire chapters to them, such as the influence of *The Tudors* TV series and what she garnered on its genesis from the actress Natalie Dormer, who played Anne Boleyn in the show. The problem with Bordo's work is that like Eric Ives, she is intensely partisan to Anne Boleyn's position, to the point where she proceeds to launch a series of vitriolic attacks on many of those who would otherwise have been perceived as partisans of Anne themselves, including David Starkey. For the fictional works of Phillipa Gregory and even Hilary Mantel Bordo is almost equally scathing, without apparently realising that it is due to the sometimes fanciful distortions of these authors that Anne Boleyn owes the greater part of her mythic status. Bordo acknowledges the cyclical nature of much of the material concerning Anne Boleyn, and also how it reflects the social mores of the times in which it was produced. The book is more entertaining than academic, but falls short of being the definitive detail on the cultural afterlife of its subject because Bordo herself is so very vitriolic in rejecting anything other than an almost saint-like view of her subject. Its value in regards to this research is in its originality rather than its all-encompassing, impartial coverage of a cultural phenomenon, and also because of her blatant identification with the subject matter; in this instance Bordo herself readily provides a clear example of symbolic interactionism in action.

Bordo's book can also perhaps be seen as part of the revival of interest in the subject in the wake of *The Tudors* TV series. The show certainly served to ignite the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* and also to provide Anne Boleyn was a significant 'push' towards securing her place as a true iconic heroine, a subject upon whom the instance of symbolic interactionism might then more easily settle. When the collection of discussions and essays taken from the forum, entitled *The Anne Boleyn Collection*, was published by the site's owner, Claire Ridgway, she spent one chapter succinctly explaining what she believes the appeal of Anne

Boleyn is to a modern audience, echoing the myriad interpretations that Anne Boleyn's mainly media-mediated image generates;

'...it got me thinking that the beauty of Anne Boleyn, the thing that draws us in and won't let go, is her mystery and the fact that she can be all things to all people.' (Ridgway 2012, p. 239)

This ties in with previous statements made during the course of this research, that the many and varied interpretations of Anne Boleyn that have been filtered through the media have allowed a myriad of differing representations of her to be offered up to the general public and also her fanbase for consumption.

2.5 Anne Boleyn in literature and on stage

As has already been examined during the course of this chapter, there are numerous historical books about Anne Boleyn which give the full and frank story of her early days, her rise to prominence all the way to her shockingly rapid fall from grace, and all told from a variety of different viewpoints. Most of these works would no doubt purport to be works of unbiased merit when in fact most of them are anything but, although a few – Eric Ives – at least, declare their partiality within the opening pages. Almost exactly the same story of Anne Boleyn's life is told from a fictional stance in a slew of novels, and almost always penned by female authors. The same holds almost entirely true of Mary Queen of Scots and of her various fictional exploits. The most recent novel concerning Anne Boleyn, and certainly one of the most lauded, is the Booker-prize winning *Bring up the Bodies* by Hilary Mantel, sequel to the previous Booker-winner *Wolf Hall*. This double win was an unprecedented achievement for a novel and its sequel. Both books have been rapidly translated for the stage and enjoyed a sell-out run in the West End; the third volume, which focuses on Jane Seymour, is due for release in the next year or so.

However, to return to the beginning of Anne Boleyn's posthumous career in literature and on the stage, it is worth noting that the Tudor reign ended in 1603, some 67 years after her death. Due to the nature of her 'crimes' the name Anne Boleyn was at that point still literally taboo. According to many historians her daughter Elizabeth I herself is said to have mentioned her merely once or twice, although after she died a ring she was found to be wearing contained a small miniature portrait of both herself and her mother. This situation of persona non grata was only exacerbated during the course of Elizabeth's reign by the fact that Anne Boleyn had been slandered in the notorious tracts by Nicholas Sanders, which meant that a purely academic work or even an appearance in fiction escaped her until several years after the Tudor reign ended. This first notable foray for Anne Boleyn in the world of fiction came in the form of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (circa 1613), although her daughter is the real heroine of the piece, promising the reform of religion in England, despite only appearing at the very end as a baby at her christening. After appearing in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, Anne Boleyn soon became a popular figure for other dramatists, as did Mary Queen of Scots, whose own path to posterity followed a somewhat different route to Anne Boleyn's, in that she was quickly, albeit unofficially, canonised as a martyr to the Catholic cause. Subsequent works of fact and fiction in her case began to proliferate far sooner than they had with Anne Boleyn. The memories of both women were eventually reorganised into opposing tracts against the Protestant and Catholic faiths respectively, and

these religious aspect continues to colour perceptions of them to this day, albeit in a more secular world with a little less intensity.

Continuing in this vein, in fiction the various portrayals of Anne Boleyn are fairly inconsistent and for the most part she seems to come off rather badly as a result. On the other hand, Mary Queen of Scots – as well as her lover and eventual third husband, the Earl of Bothwell – tend to get a far better hearing, despite being much maligned for their supposed regicide and illicit love affair. The most often cited novels concerning Anne Boleyn are those which have appeared in the last several decades; it is significant that it is also this modern body of work which has been most consistently adapted for both the big and small screens as well as the stage. Anne Boleyn is portrayed, for instance, as a hard-hearted schemer with an almost tunnel-vision approach to the throne in Philippa Gregory's highly successful novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001), thus allowing her side-lined sister Mary – the eponymous heroine of the title – to take centre stage and also the lion's share of the audience's sympathy. The same holds true for the film adaptation (there was also a relatively low-profile TV production several years prior to this), although on the big screen Natalie Portman's Anne is slightly more sympathetically portrayed. In this version, the incident of incest with her brother is the result of sheer desperation to conceive or face ruin, which rehashes certain basic elements of the plot of Norah Loft's *The Concubine*. As a result of these fictional takes on the life of Anne Boleyn, historians such as Alison Weir struggle to wrest highly popular fictional works from what they perceive to be 'fact', especially when equally popular film adaptations follow. There seems, however, to be a vaguely acknowledged grasp of the fact that in such instances historical events often have to be both compressed and neutered in order to turn them into viable forms of entertainment for a mass-market audience. Several historians have gone so far as to acknowledge the debt they owe novels and their subsequent film or TV adaptations for stimulating interest in what can be considered by some quarters as a rather stuffy, specialist subject.

Following on from Gregory's bestseller, Anne Boleyn then became the 'calculating concubine' in Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (2009), and its sequel *Bring up the Bodies* (2012). The two books are part of a trilogy penned by Mantel, and, as previously stated, she won the Booker Prize for both. This was an unprecedented achievement which also allowed her to hurl forth a series of articles in various newspapers regarding the present state of the monarchy and also offering her own insights in a comparison between the role of the future queen consort Kate Middleton and that of Anne Boleyn. Mantel's work has also come in for some criticism from historians such as John Guy; Guy, like Alison Weir, believes that these fictional takes on the Tudors, i.e. *The Tudors* TV series and particularly Mantel's two novels, are somehow distilling real, rigorous research and blurring the lines between fiction and reality (Brown 2017, paragraph 5 of 25). Despite this, the focus of Mantel's books is Thomas Cromwell, and it was with this in mind that Mantel was herself quoted on the whole issue of Anne Boleyn possibly eclipsing the star of her novels:

'...Mantel knows that with Anne Boleyn, she's on both well-trodden and controversial ground. She acknowledges that people are "obsessed" with Anne, and "they're going to hate that I haven't presented her as a victim" – indeed, Mantel leaves the whole question of Anne's supposed adultery "hanging in the air".' (Penn 2012, paragraph 13 of 22)

Both books were adapted for the stage by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and enjoyed sell-out runs in London's West End; even more recently they have been turned into a lavish six-part drama for the BBC with Claire Foy as Anne Boleyn (2015).



Claire Foy as Anne Boleyn in the BBC adaptation of 'Wolf Hall'

It is interesting to note that almost all of these works of fiction are written by women; when it comes to fictional representations of Mary Queen of Scots, the majority of these are also written by women. The fictional Mary Queen of Scots comes across as a far more sympathetic character than the fictional Anne Boleyn, despite being the possible author of countless plots against the life of Elizabeth I, not to mention the still unresolved issues of her complicity in the murder of her husband and subsequent marriage to the chief suspect. Mary Queen of Scots seems to have cornered the market more in terms of being regarded as an out-and-out 'romantic heroine', whereas Anne Boleyn seems to be viewed slightly more cynically, even by those who profess the utmost adoration of her. Mary Queen of Scots was the daughter of a king and was crowned queen at just six days old, whereas Anne Boleyn was in a sense seen as the ultimate social climber; this pedigree has been the cause of much mudslinging over the years but in fact Anne Boleyn was descended on her mother's side from the Howard family, and therefore, along with her father's antecedents, she could include in her forebears '...a duke, an earl, the granddaughter of an earl, the daughter of one baron, the daughter of another, and an esquire and his wife.' (Ives 2004, p. 4)

Antonia Fraser and Nora Locks are slightly more sympathetic in their approach to Anne Boleyn than either Philippa Gregory or Hilary Mantel. Their work, like those of Gregory and Mantel, could be interpreted as coming from something of a feminist standpoint theory, wherein it could be perceived possible that the story of Anne Boleyn's life trajectory can only truly be understood by another woman. If this is taken as fact then certainly in the last fifteen to twenty years those works are decidedly less sympathetic towards their central protagonist, often indeed casting Anne in the role of anti-hero or even villain whilst

characters such as Thomas Cromwell and Mary Boleyn take centre stage. In the 1970s it seems to have been important merely for Anne Boleyn to be reclaimed from some of her previous 'less salubrious' representations, and to be presented as a 'wronged women' without recourse to some of the more controversial facts of her case; even when Loftis portrays Anne as committing adultery it is adultery as a survival mechanism by which she hopes to secure the young male heir her husband desires. These facets and aspects of Anne's behaviour would be addressed in later generations, and, as has been pointed out, recent female novelists in particular have perhaps as a result of these somewhat sympathetic portrayals of the 1970s, given her a far more chilly reception. In the 1970s, Mary Queen of Scots' image remained much the same despite the box office success of the movie *Mary Queen of Scots* starring Vanessa Redgrave as the eponymous heroine; in many of the subsequent works Mary was still portrayed as a much-maligned queen.

Regarding these less than sympathetic recent portrayals of a fictionalised Anne Boleyn, it is worth noting that it may be the accusation of incest that continues to colour and darken aspects of her 'rehabilitation', whereas Mary Queen of Scots remains free from this almost 'abject' level of character assassination; it seems the possibility of complicity in regicide and incessant plotting remain a more palatable pill to swallow for the public than the thought of their heroine sleeping with her own brother. The results of this research project bore out the fact that one of the most often asked questions concerning Anne Boleyn by those unfamiliar with her story was, 'Did she really sleep with her brother?' – It seems that mud sticks, even after several centuries.

These onscreen images of Anne Boleyn, as well as those on the page, both fact and fictional, have, with the help of intertextuality, helped to form the present media-mediated 'historical celebrity' image of Anne Boleyn. Historical, 'factual' accounts of the life of Anne Boleyn have influenced fictional works, which in turn have been adapted into movies or TV series. When researching historical sources it is important to be aware of issues of authenticity and even the authorship of historical documents should be scrutinised; Howell and Prevenier (2001) discuss this problem with reference to Anne's daughter Elizabeth I, for example. At this point it may be worth referring back to the quote by Linda Hutcheon in chapter 1 of the thesis, when she says that '...what actually becomes fact depends as much as anything else on the social and cultural context of the historian'. (Hutcheon 1989, p. 76) Contemporaries of Anne Boleyn were less concerned with producing reports of historically rigorous and unbiased data than with sending despatches which reflected the religious opinions of their masters, hence the comment above Hutcheon's quote in chapter 1 reflecting the fact that we probably possess no truly unbiased historical document regarding Anne Boleyn within her lifetime, or indeed after; the inability of many current historians to keep 'a clear head' where Anne Boleyn is concerned has already been touched upon and will again be addressed in later chapters of the thesis.

2.6 Anne Boleyn in film and TV

During the preparation for this research project on the subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn, two key texts were consulted in order to help ascertain the depth of the influence that images of Anne Boleyn on film and TV have had in forming the media-generated image of her which is then consumed by her fanbase. Firstly the Gillian Rose text *Visual*

Methodologies (2012) was employed. In this book, Rose initially talks about the use of visual materials as a way of researching into various sections of society, and of the various social, cultural and gendered depictions that these visual materials offer, especially in such a 'media-savvy' age, when imagery and appearance are purported to be of paramount importance. Several of these ideas have been employed during this chapter when examining Anne Boleyn in the visual media of film and TV. From her initial onscreen appearance in 1920, all subsequent appearances of Anne Boleyn as a character in either film or TV have been analysed for changing social and cultural markers in the various onscreen portrayals, and also in the marketing used, culminating recently with her highly sexualised depiction in *The Tudors* in 2007. This portrayal was a far cry from the somewhat comedic silent film starring Henny Porten of 1920.

Rose also covers the use of content analysis in her work and it will be used on several occasions during this research to highlight changing images of Anne Boleyn, specifically in regard to her onscreen incarnations. In the past content analysis was usually employed for the study of written and verbal texts. It may also be used to examine images, such as those used of Anne Boleyn used in large mass-media campaigns, cinema promotional artwork, and also, for the purposes of the research, the covers of – mainly – historical fiction texts, which employ far more vivid imagery than standard historical texts and which also often employ actors or actresses engaging in 'cosplay'. There is also some comparison and then contrasting of depictions of Anne Boleyn with those of Mary Queen of Scots in film and TV, ranging from Katherine Hepburn's sympathetic portrayal in *Mary of Scotland* (1936) to that of Samantha Morton in what has been accused of being the 'anti-Catholic' *Elizabeth ~ The Golden Age* from 2007. The increased sexualisation of both subjects in film and TV terms follows roughly the same trajectory.

Discourse analysis – the study and interpretation of various texts - scrutinises the way in which large institutions use visual images in these mass-media campaigns, in order to fast-track meanings and maximise the impact on their target audiences. Venues such as the Tower of London, Hampton Court and Hever Castle trade on the fact of being homes of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and as such engage in these large media campaigns in order to draw in visitors. Where Henry VIII is concerned this sort of imagery is even more readily employed; he was once said to be so recognisable that people were able to identify him by his silhouette alone. A special exhibition was staged at the Tower of London on the 500th anniversary of his ascendancy to the throne, back in 2009, with the whole of one side of the building being draped in an enormous banner composed entirely of said silhouette. In regards to the issue of the recognisability of the silhouette, the same has also been said on more than several occasions for the daughter Henry and Anne Boleyn produced, Elizabeth I. Undoubtedly the often produced National Portrait Gallery image of Anne Boleyn is also highly recognisable, and graces the front covers of most of the historical works concerned with her, as well as the larger media campaigns. In much the same way that the Tower of London and Hampton Court trade heavily on their association with Anne Boleyn, many of the castles and manor houses both in Scotland and in England in which Mary Queen of Scots stayed during her reign use the fact of her residence as one of the main points of their pulling power. In fact there are whole guidebooks enabling the enthusiastic fan to follow in her footsteps, such as J Keith Cheetham's *On the trail of Mary Queen of Scots* (1999); Anne Boleyn was limited more geographically in the main to the south-east of England, apart from

the occasional progress to the home counties, but there is still a book published about the various residences related to her, entitled *In the footsteps of Anne Boleyn*, by Sarah Morris and Natalie Grueninger (2013).

These traditional images of famous English monarchs are heavily geared towards tourists and as such ply classic images of English history which focus often on the sexual aspects and/or the gory nature of the lives and deaths of the personages in question. In this respect they are treated as little more than fictional characters; it was speculated in one of the responses to the questionnaire whether in five-hundred years' time similar campaigns might be focusing on famous victims of domestic violence from nowadays. That said, the practice does not entirely focus on 'historical' characters from within the realms of royalty. For instance, the victims of Jack the Ripper are in representation divided up into being comedy ciphers of good time East End prostitutes by tour guides, and by serious historians who seek to give some serious representation of their lives and the social conditions in which they found themselves. As Anne Boleyn's image is sexualised by the media in order to sell her story, so the more macabre side of the tale is marketed by various tourist attractions in order to pull in the crowds.

Issues of the male gaze and of voyeurism are also explored in Rose's text, which for the purposes of the research serve to the gradual increase in the sexualisation of promotional images of Anne Boleyn in almost all of her onscreen appearances. The notion of the male gaze was first tackled by feminists as a result of Laura Mulvey's article 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' (1975), wherein '...using psychoanalytic theory, Mulvey argued that the visual pleasures of Hollywood cinema are based on voyeuristic and fetishistic forms of looking.' (Stacey 1987, p. 48) These forms of voyeuristic and fetishistic forms of looking, so it is argued, are enacted almost entirely from a male perspective, with a male character's gaze encompassing the female form in a film most likely produced by a man. Greg Walker commented on the issue of the male gaze in regard to the film *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (covered elsewhere in section 2.6), that the male gaze is...

'...associated with active seeing, with the voyeuristic look (and hence with the audience's own perspective), as both Henry and the camera view his prospective brides with an eye to their physical desirability, while the female is displayed as the passive recipient of that gaze.' (Walker 2003, p. 67)

As previously mentioned, this is also the case with Mary Queen of Scots, especially in regards to the American teen drama *Reign*, available in the UK on Netflix. A scene had to be trimmed from the pilot episode of *Reign* because it featured an explicit masturbation scene that followed on from an earlier scene involving the Queen of Scots and her ladies-in-waiting attending a 'bedding ceremony' following a royal wedding in France. After witnessing the ceremony, the various ladies-in-waiting scatter around the chateau in order to find some sort of sexual relief/release from what they have just witnessed. One of the girls – 'Kenna' – finds a secluded stairwell and then begins to masturbate before she is interrupted by none other than the king of France, who proceeds to take over proceedings himself. When the pilot episode was aired the scene was trimmed but the gist of what was taking place was still readily available to the viewer. The CW, who produces *Reign*, explained the workings of the scene thusly

‘Doing this research, we realized how young they all were. And we were reminded of the fact that 14 was considered a marriageable age then. Having seen lots of period pieces and lots of depictions of nuptials, including consummation scenes, I felt there was something to be explored there — making it more intimate to a group of girls in a castle. We wanted to dramatize what Mary had signed up for, which was essentially being put together with someone in an arranged marriage. I also wanted a moment of levity. When we went in and pitched to the CW, I pitched that scene. I pitched the girls watching, and I also pitched the girls’ reactions. I thought it was a fun way to show that Aylee (Jenessa Grant) was shocked and nearly wanted to faint, and Mary was decidedly intrigued. And one of the girls who is more comfortable with sexuality really got inspired by it. We follow them: One goes and looks for her girlfriends, Mary runs back to court to really try to have it out with Francis. And the one girl goes to a stairwell, and she pleasures herself. My feeling on it is that it’s a part of sexuality, and it just didn’t seem like any big deal.’ (McCarthy 2013, paragraph 8 of 14)

This scene makes sense when one considers that the overt sexualisation of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots has become an essential currency in reinventing them for the modern, hypersexualised age; however, a similar scene also occurs in an episode of *The Tudors* in the finale of the first season, when Henry VIII fantasises over Anne Boleyn, although the scene is considerably less explicit. Very few images of Anne Boleyn in film and TV focus on at all on Anne as the reformer, although within the course of her twenty hours of screen time in *The Tudors* they are able to explore to some extent several sides to her character. This is simply because of the sheer amount of time expended in telling her story over the longer, serial format; likewise in the recent adaptation of *Wolf Hall*, the six-hour screen-time allows some exploration of the effect Anne Boleyn herself had in pushing on the reformation. However, far more column inches in the national press were devoted the next day to the recall of the scene in episode three, where Thomas Cromwell imagines caressing the tops of her breasts (Sutherland 2015, paragraph 13 of 23).

As far as the sexualisation of male figures in films and in TV adaptations or drama based around the Tudors is concerned, here a far more subtle process is at work. This process is worth mentioning here purely for the purpose of balance. However, it is for most part a process almost non-existent until the 1990s are reached. The sexualisation of a character such as Henry VIII himself only really becomes apparent from the advent of *The Tudors* onwards, where he is portrayed by former model Jonathan Rhys Meyers. It continues with *The Other Boleyn Girl*, where Henry is portrayed by Hollywood heartthrob Eric Bana; these depictions are good significant social markers for changing social and gendered perceptions of the film and TV show’s participants. These depictions point to the influence of the hypersexualised MTV generation among other things, and the also advent of the ‘metrosexual’ man; both Rhys Meyers and Bana both frequently grace the covers of many of the glossier men’s style magazines. There was something of an outcry at the idea of the young, slim Rhys-Meyers being cast as the corpulent king Henry VIII initially for *The Tudors*. This piece of casting, however, had the effect of highlighting vast tracts of the monarch’s reign when he was not the obese, aged lecher of popular imagination, as well as serving to better draw in that young MTV generation audience; it is doubtful that a semi-corpulent Keith Michell-type casting of the kind seen in the 70s with *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* would have worked at all in the current hypersexualised climate. This was probably the reason why heartthrob Damian Lewis was chosen to portray Henry in the recent *Wolf Hall* adaptation. The casting of Rhys Meyers, going against type where classical imagery of Henry VIII is concerned, shows that in this way even TV shows such as *The Tudors*, with its reputation for

historical inaccuracy, may in fact bring beneficial effects to their audiences simply by expanding received wisdom on a particular subject in question.

The Tudors show was a massive television hit and many of the respondents to the research questionnaire cited it as being responsible for drawing them – back - into the sphere of the possible subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn. The show was also enjoyed by people who were already fans of Anne Boleyn, if the debates that rage around it on *The Anne Boleyn Files* are anything to go by. Therefore it operates on several successful levels. The results of the research certainly bore out the fact that it was significantly influential in drawing new people into the world of Anne Boleyn, and also for changing perceptions of those who were already engaged with her. The chapter of Rose's book that focused on the issue of audience studies also showcased how fans buy merchandise and explore other avenues of fulfilment in relation to their chosen interest as well as simply watching the programme they are a fan of. This ties in with the idea that fans of Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots may make pilgrimages to places of interest such as the Tower of London, Hampton Court or Holyrood Palace, and also buy strange and unusual items on internet marketplaces such as Ebay.

Researching the development of Anne Boleyn on film and in TV also lead to another key text, namely Ien Ang's book in which she explores the nature of the TV audience by analysing responses to the soap opera, *Dallas*. In *Watching Dallas* (1982), Ang argues that despite the frothy surface of the famous soap, underneath the programme actually explores real issues of social and cultural importance, and sets this out as the basis for her argument that it can be taken seriously as a worthwhile sociological subject. This idea dovetails with several notions surfacing in the research concerning fans of Anne Boleyn, who seek to understand and perhaps rehabilitate her image in terms of how it has been 'blackened' by the various negative portrayals over the years. Some of the results of the research played out the idea that many of her fans suffered from accusations that their interest of passion was somehow 'frivolous' or unworthy of serious discussion or appreciation; worse still, that it was perhaps a purely hard-line feminist concern. The identification with soap operas and a predominantly female audience is also highlighted by Christine Geraghty, who says

'...the assumption that soaps are for women is widely held and the interest shown in soaps by both feminist critics and the more traditional women's magazines stems from this appeal to a predominantly female audience.' (Geraghty in Bonner (ed) 1992, p. 221)

The Tudor family are to all intents and purposes perhaps the most famous historical family in British history. Their various entanglements, rivalries and the like are more the stuff of soap opera than any actual soap opera itself; indeed this is often touted as one of their unique selling points and a possible reason – among many – for what is perceived as the nation's continuing love affair with them.

As part of her research on *Dallas*, Ang places an ad in a paper asking for people to report in on their own reactions to watching the soap opera. This was an avenue of exploration employed in the research questionnaire in regard to the films and TV series centred on Anne Boleyn. Respondents to Ang cited either their love or their loathing for the programme, with few if any remaining indifferent, another aspect mimicked by followers of Anne Boleyn. Ang also mentions the marketing created around the soap opera, which is again mirrored by the

many weird and wonderful objects available to Anne Boleyn fans, from costumes, books, jewellery, films, and the like.

During the course of her research it became apparent to Ang that there was a distinct element of escapism in the fictional, wealthy world that the inhabitants of *Dallas* occupy, which is again mirrored by the wealthy, but decidedly factual world the Tudors inhabited. The fans of *Dallas* cited the 'unreal' nature of the entire Ewing family living in one household when they have so much money; the Tudors had plenty more money and lived for the most part separately, making them in this sense far more accessible. Yet by the standards of their time the Tudors would still seem to be on the surface the more inaccessible of the two, with religious strife and a totally different social world compared to the near-contemporary one which *Dallas* occupied. Ang also talks of how family life is not so much idealised in soap operas such as *Dallas* but instead rather rudely shattered, again mirroring the Tudors. This can be seen with the beheading of Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, as well as the bitter rivalry between cousins, such as that which existed between Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. Andrea L. Press picks up on the similarity between another popular American soap *Dynasty*, and the reflections it feeds back to the viewer on real life families when she says '...rich people, she claims, are emotionally the same as poor; they're not fundamentally different, nor do they act so. They simply have more money' (Brown (ed) 1990, p. 168) This take on the differences between the families onscreen and the families at home viewing them, whereby similarities are somehow brought to the fore to give a unifying effect that speaks to a mutual basic humanity, has often been touted to highlight the reason why the Tudors are so popular still with a modern television demographic. Basically put, beneath all the power and the trappings the Tudors are basically just a dysfunctional family, the same as the rest of 'us'.

Ang mentions how respondents who enjoyed *Dallas* frequently had to defend themselves against those who either did not enjoy it, or those who simply watched it and then forgot about it. She mentions in relation to this feeling that there seems to be a general taboo in getting too 'involved' with something, whether it be a programme, a topic, or a hobby, to too great an extent, as though such a level of devotion were somehow harmful to the individual; non-participants either berated them for it or play-acted out some sort of faux pity for them. This harks back to the idea that too much interest in a certain subject when espoused as a passion is somehow seen as being 'frivolous'.

Ang also talks of the audiences, in the main heterogeneous, at which *Dallas* is aimed at; in the same way this research project attempts to cite the audiences that are most targeted by all things Tudor, especially in terms of the mass culture aspects surrounding Anne Boleyn. In *Dallas* male characters play a far bigger role and yet it was estimated by Ang that overall the show was watched by many more women than men. In much the same way, the majority of the fandom for Anne Boleyn is comprised – as far as the findings of the research indicate – almost entirely of women. However, for most – with the possible exception of their daughter Elizabeth I – Henry VIII, that paragon of masculinity, remains the most famous and recognisable of Tudor and indeed English monarchs as a whole. Ang says that

'...as a political and cultural movement, feminism is sustained by collective fantasies of a social future in which the oppression of women will have ceased to exist.' (Ang 1982, p. 121)

For fans of Anne Boleyn this is something of a paradox; they are in some senses living out the future that might have saved their fallen queen, and thus expend considerable energies in raising arguments in favour of her once vilified character in the hope of somehow redeeming her memory.

Before moving on to discuss the varying images of Anne Boleyn onscreen, it is worth also mentioning another visual media in which she had been depicted several times, namely the TV documentary. Documentaries either about or featuring Anne Boleyn have proliferated in a range roughly in tandem with the explosion of interest in the Tudors which occurred around the publication of *The Other Boleyn Girl* novel and of course *The Tudors* TV series. For instance, *Henry VIII: the mind of a tyrant* aired in 2009, midway during *The Tudors* run, with Sophie Hunter playing the role of Anne Boleyn. As the title suggests, the programme was more concerned with conveying the entirety of the king's life, but an entire episode – episode 3, 'Lover' – was given over to retelling the story of his relationship with Anne Boleyn. The programme was presented by David Starkey, who also fronted a documentary on Anne's daughter, entitled simply *Elizabeth*. These and other documentaries all follow a similar format, interspersing a simple retelling of historical facts by a suitably qualified presenter – David Starkey, Susannah Lipscomb, Lucy Worsley – with scenes re-enacted by a guest cast, enabling the end product to boast the title 'docudrama'. Starkey's documentary was produced to tie in with his book of the same name, whereas the majority of the other documentaries were more standalone affairs.

None of the respondents to the research questionnaire cited any documentary from any era as either sparking or maintaining their interest in Anne Boleyn, therefore rather relegating the medium to an ancillary role in maintaining or augmenting the overall media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, at least as far as this research project is concerned; even documentaries based entirely around the subject, such as 2013's *The last days of Anne Boleyn*, failed to solicit a mention. The 2016 offering from the BBC, *Six Wives with Lucy Worsley*, aired too late for respondents to cite any reaction in the research questionnaire. *The Guardian's* Joel Golby gave the show a considerable panning after it aired, suggesting a general 'dumbing-down' of historical documentaries in order to give them a more populist slant:

'...It is my sad duty to announce that the series contains acting. This is in order to liven up proceedings. To make it feel like olden days, actors swish around in period dress delivering intense dialogue only vaguely directed at each other, as Worsley, clad in a simple maiden's cloth cap, watches rapt in the background. It's weird: the historian peeks around corners, eavesdrops on romantic encounters, tends to fire as people storm across rooms. As Henry's pursuit of a son becomes an ever more intense narrative, you keep expecting Worsley to pop her head up into a stiffly acted sex scene and shout-whisper "HE REALLY WANTS A BOY ONE" to the camera.' (Golby 2016, paragraph 4 of 7).

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To begin the analysis of the varying images of Anne Boleyn onscreen chronologically, one of the first feature films with Anne Boleyn as a main character is the 1911 film *Henry VIII*, with Laura Cowrie as Anne. In 1912 there was a short film about Cardinal Wolsey, where Anne Boleyn was played by Clara Kimball Young. In 1920 *Anna Boleyn* debuted, the first full-length

feature based entirely on Anne Boleyn's story, starring Henny Porten in the title role, with Emil Jannings playing Henry VIII. The silent film was a German production, and, as stated, was the first to feature Anne Boleyn as the main focus of the narrative. Stylistically it appears to modern audiences as something of a black comedy, with the silence offering an almost macabrely madcap slant on the ravenous monarch as he pursues a rather unwilling Anne Boleyn around a variety of scenic locations. Anne Boleyn is portrayed as a victim of Henry VIII's ravenous desires, but the silent nature of the film has seemingly made it inaccessible to the majority of her modern fanbase, none of whom cited it during their responses to the research question regarding their favourite Anne Boleyn film. It therefore exists as a curiosity of a bygone age of movie-making rather than as a pivotal piece of influential Boleyn propaganda.



Henny Porten as Anne Boleyn in 'Anna Boleyn'

Aside from various other minor roles or appearances, the next film to feature Anne Boleyn was the 1933 *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, with Merle Oberon as Anne. Oberon only appears in the beginning of the film, which opens with Anne's execution (most of the narrative is concerned with Henry VIII's marriages to Anne of Cleves and then Catherine Howard). The film was both a critical and a commercial success and was most likely the first time therefore that Anne Boleyn had received such worldwide exposure in one media generated swoop. Charles Laughton won an Academy Award for his portrayal of Henry VIII, which then became the default onscreen setting for the character for the next several decades. Whilst *Anna Boleyn* might have been an unintentional farce, *The Private Life of*

Henry VIII is very definitely played as a black comedy. The opening scene of Anne's execution cements this notion neatly, with an unnamed henpecked husband observing the event, envious at the panache with which the monarch disposes of his unwanted wives, a scene that was ultimately trimmed from the final cut. Issues of the male gaze are evident in Oberon's brief turn as Anne in this, her only scene; Oberon was a classic beauty and this was the first film where lingering shots of her were thus allowed to relay something of their subject's notorious sexuality.

From this film onwards there would be a steady increase in the sexualisation of the onscreen Anne Boleyn, before it reached what appears to be a peak with *The Tudors* television series in 2007.

Besides cameos in such films as *Young Bess* (1953) and *A man for all seasons* (1966), the next major screen outing for Anne Boleyn was to be not until 1969, with the seminal *Anne of the Thousand Days*. The title refers to the poetically perfect exact time of her tenureship on the throne of England. It was to be one of the most popular and enduring depictions of Anne Boleyn, and one that was frequently cited as being a firm favourite among participants of this research project. The film was based on a play from 1948 and starred the relatively unknown Genevieve Bujold as a feisty but desperately feminine Anne. The film was successful enough to be nominated for ten Academy Awards although in the end it won only the one, for best costumes. The segments of the film set at Hever Castle were shot at the actual location, lending it a lasting sense of authenticity; this was cited as being an outstanding feature of the production by the participants of the research when it came to answering the question regarding their favourite film. Thematically, the film portrays Henry VIII as an insatiable sexual predator in much the same way as did the 1920 *Anna Boleyn*, but unlike the 1920 portrayal of Anne Boleyn, Bujold is far feistier, holding the king and his advances at arm's length. In the end she succumbs more to the lure of power than at the prospect of his personal charms. Given that there are forty nine years between the two films it is not remarkable that that the portrayals of the respective Anne Boleyns are wildly different. Susan Bordo devotes an entire chapter over to the mythos of the movie in her book *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, where she says of Bujold's performance that

'...I loved fiery, rebellious Anne. I loved the way she bossed Richard Burton's Henry around like a surly twentieth-century teenager. I loved the fact that Genevieve Bujold's hair was messy as she delivered that speech to Henry, loved her intensity, loved her less than perfectly symmetrical beauty, loved the fact that someone that small could pack such a wallop.' (Bordo 2013, p. 190)

Several of the participants in the research cited the movie as the catalyst that ignited their interest in Anne Boleyn, although less cited Bujold's performance than did the number who referred to Natalie Dormer's version of Anne Boleyn in *The Tudors*. Dormer's portrayal seems to be by far the definitive onscreen Anne Boleyn, not just for the current generation but seemingly for previous generations as well.

Following on from *Anne of the Thousand Days*, there was a relative lull in appearances by Anne Boleyn on the big and small screens in the 70s. The one noteworthy addition was that of Dorothy Tutin in the acclaimed BBC drama *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*. However, the actress, so Bordo felt, was a little 'too old' to be accurately portraying the character.

Nevertheless Tutin was nominated for a Bafta for her portrayal. It was not long after this series was shown that the film *Mary Queen of Scots* hit the cinemas, with Vanessa Redgrave playing the eponymous heroine. This was a follow-up of sorts to the follow-up to *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* series, *Elizabeth R*, which featured as the focus for one of its feature length six episodes Vivienne Pickles as Mary Queen of Scots. Following these, Anne Boleyn made one more appearance on the big screen, in what was essentially a condensation of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* series; *Henry VIII and his six wives* saw Keith Michell again giving his generation-defining performance as the famous king, and Charlotte Rampling as a competent but unmemorable Anne Boleyn. In the film, Anne Boleyn's story was inevitably pared down to go with the condensed cinematic retake on the successful six-part BBC drama. These various endeavours marked the end of what had been a brief but glorious cinematic and small screen revival in the careers of both of the 'tragic queens'. In fact it would be almost thirty years before Anne Boleyn would be portrayed on either the big or small screen to any significant degree. This time the way was paved by the cinematic success of *Elizabeth* in 1998, starring Cate Blanchett as Anne's daughter. This film revived interest in the historical both as an epic and as a soluble form of entertainment to what was by then a far more sophisticated audience.

Philippa Gregory's pivotal novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* was released in 2001, and two years later the BBC adapted it for the small screen with Jodhi May playing Anne Boleyn. In 2008 it became a feature film with Natalie Portman playing Anne Boleyn and Scarlett Johansson as Mary Boleyn; Eric Bana played Henry VIII. Both the book and also the film of *The Other Boleyn Girl* are notorious among Anne Boleyn fans – and with Bordo especially - for the sheer amount of historical inaccuracies they purport to pass off as fact. In her book *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, Bordo even provides a handy checklist for readers to strike off the various inaccuracies against the truths; tellingly she does not provide a similar checklist for *The Tudors*, which suffered from almost as many accusations of taking liberties with the truth. Apparently Bordo found Natalie Dormer's portrayal in that series to be of sufficient repute to avoid too much mudslinging. As previously stated, a cinematic shift in tone meant that in this adaptation of a popular novel, Anne Boleyn ceased to be the hard-hearted schemer of said novel and reverted to the sort of sympathetic role normally espoused in many of the works concerning Mary Queen of Scots. In the film adaptation, Mary Boleyn remains basically the same as she is portrayed in the novel, and it is interesting to note that as a result of Gregory's fiction there has been a further move in recent years to rehabilitate her image as well. Alison Weir has led the way in this regard with her biography of Mary Boleyn, which attempts to sort the fact from the fiction where her life as the supposed concubine of the King of France is concerned, during the time when she and her sister served as ladies-in-waiting to the French queen. However, despite the attempts of Weir to paint Mary Boleyn in a more sympathetic light, the title of her book is still *Mary Boleyn ~ 'The Great and Infamous Whore'* (2011).

For almost all of the respondents to the research questionnaire, the pivotal, and in most cases the *only* onscreen Anne Boleyn who matters was Natalie Dormer, the actress who played her over the first two seasons of *The Tudors*. Dormer's performance was given as much, if not more, credence for creating a cult around Anne Boleyn than Genevieve Bujold's, at least according to the efforts made by Susan Bordo in that regard. Bordo interviewed Dormer extensively during the research for her book and wrote of her

performance as Anne Boleyn, among other things, that she was ‘...sexy, but brainy, politically engaged and astute, a loving mother, and a committed reformist.’ (Bordo 2013, p. 216) She also commented on the number of websites set up by fans to praise Dormer’s performance in the wake of her tenure on the TV show – many of which are now defunct - as well as penning a comment from the actress herself on the amount of fan mail she received as a result of the impact of the show. Among the comments from the respondents to the research questionnaire concerning Dormer’s depiction of Anne Boleyn were that she was an ‘...interesting and complex woman’, and also that as a result of seeing Dormer’s Anne Boleyn they had become ‘...fascinated’ with the whole Tudor period. A more in-depth analysis of respondent reaction to the various onscreen depictions of Anne Boleyn can be found in the analysis chapter, wherein symbolic interactionism takes place on the part of the respondent/recipient of the mediated text.



Natalie Dormer as ‘THE’ onscreen Anne Boleyn, in ‘The Tudors’

The adaptation of Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* was in production at the time during which this research was being conducted, but had yet to be screened by the time all of the data had been received back from the various participants. The actress Claire Foy played Anne Boleyn

in the six-part production, which finally turned out to be an amalgamation of both *Wolf Hall* and also its sequel, *Bring up the bodies*. Initial reviews praised Foy's more restrained but 'pained' performance as a woman clinging desperately onto what one commentator called the 'oily rope' of power (Raeside 2015, paragraph 3 of 7).

2.7 Mary Queen of Scots: comparing the queens

Similarities with various aspects of this study can be seen in several other publications concerned with the afterlives of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots: Jayne Elizabeth Lewis's *Mary Queen of Scots – romance and nation* (1998) traces the British nation's romance with the Scots queen. This work can be viewed if not as an archive of possible subcultural activity, then at least as a chronology of a society's fascination with a historical figure, which then turns that figure into something approaching a cult; also Michael Dobson's *Elizabeth's England: an afterlife in fame and fantasy* (2004), which examines the English cultural obsession with Anne Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth I. Some of the fascination about Anne Boleyn can without doubt be attributed to her daughter Elizabeth, who has continuously been viewed in history as perhaps the most famous and successful queen England has ever produced. That success story somehow provides the ironic, triumphant end to a reign obsessed with the patriarchal idea of male heirs. Certainly it is the life of Elizabeth I that is covered in some detail in the Key stage 1 of the current national curriculum, and not the life of her mother.

To compare another infamous female monarch with Anne Boleyn forms the basis of a 'compare and contrast' aspect to this research project. It was the discovery of the book by Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, as well as passages in Dobson's book on Elizabeth I, that gave forth a convincing argument that if there were a contender to the throne of 'tragic queen' for Anne Boleyn then it would be Mary Queen of Scots. Mary Stuart in fact shares a unique place in the annals of history with Anne Boleyn. Both women were revered and reviled within their respective lifetimes, and their mutual memories and also their respective tragic ends have struck a chord with subsequent generations that seems to have snowballed in recent decades. There are as many – if not more - films about Mary Queen of Scots as there are about Anne Boleyn; and Mary Stuart of course shares another, far more intimate historical link with Anne Boleyn by being the cousin and longstanding 'nemesis' of her daughter, Elizabeth I. Jayne Elizabeth Lewis's aforementioned book charts the gradual formation of her legend through the books and plays about her, from Elizabethan to Victorian times and briefly beyond; like Bordo's attempted feat in *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*. Like both Bordo and also Claire Ridgway, Lewis succinctly sums up the thrust of this research project when she says:

'...as we might expect, British women's visions of the Queen of Scots have often diverged radically from those of British men. This difference naturally raises an array of questions: does women's habitual identification with a ruined queen reflect their own sense of cultural dispossession and exile from history?' (Lewis 1998, p. 10)

Such sentiments can equally be applied to Anne Boleyn, and have formed the basis of the research into *The Anne Boleyn Files website* and the people who use it, and its forum, for discussion of the various aspects of Anne Boleyn's life. Lewis also documents the rise, during

the late seventeenth century, of a new dramatic form called the “she-tragedy” and comments on it that

‘...through the suffering female victims at their centres, she-tragedies explored predicaments of feeling in ways that had not been possible in the ranting heroic tragedies popular earlier in the Restoration, and they marked also a new interest in the heroic possibilities of helplessness.’ (Lewis 1998, p. 88)

It may be ventured that since this new form of play came into being, both the lives of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots have come to be typified as a sort of unconscious mutual “she-tragedy” on the part of their many fans. It could also be argued that in terms of the fandoms and possible subcultures surrounding Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots that the “she-tragedy” is in fact still very much alive, and if anything even more powerful and alluring for a feminist audience today. Several of the respondents of the research stated that they had come to link their own modern-day struggles as women with the lives of Anne Boleyn, taking the example she set as both a source of solace and, so it would seem, a reinforcement of the struggles they themselves were enduring; symbolic interactionism at its simplest. It may even be that the status of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots as a ‘historical celebrity’ owes more to the idea of the “she-tragedy” than to almost any other permutation of their stories as then told when the style first came into fashion. For many audiences, part, if not most, of the ‘appeal’ of these two women seems almost the foreknowledge of the gruesome fate that awaits them, the downward spiral from triumph into disgrace and then finally death. This idea is related to issues around ‘fascination’, ‘repulsion’, ‘the abject’, and whether the preoccupation with the morbid in terms of a modern audience can be considered a form of voyeurism; none of the responses to the research questionnaire bore this notion out, even with the questionnaire being entirely anonymous.

Briefly, ‘the abject’ is the notion of something that is outside of the norm and the mainstream and considered mainly by the simple fact of its ‘otherness’ as being somehow ‘bad’, ‘degenerate’, or ‘degraded’. Over the years the term has been applied to women, as well as homosexuals, people of colour, disabled people, animals; indeed anyone or anything that does not fit within the conventional bracket. It can also be – and often is – applied in terms of the more challenging forms of physicality, such as faeces, or the corpse. In the case of Anne Boleyn one may also include incest, and the graphic reality of execution, as described by Alison Weir in the closing pages of her book *The lady in the Tower*; ‘...in 1956, two French doctors concluded: ‘Death is not instantaneous: every element survives decapitation. It is a savage vivisection.’’ (Weir 2009, p. 272) By its very abhorrent nature human beings are drawn to the abject, and are fascinated with the forbidden.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overview of the career of Anne Boleyn as played out in the pages of historical ‘fact’, historical fiction, in film and also on TV and on the stage. This overview illustrates how Anne Boleyn has come to stand for contemporary concerns at particular historical moments in her life. Many of these examples have been related to instances of relevant results from the research project. This has been in order to build up a better understanding of the various points during these chronologies when the respondents in

question were beginning to consume and digest them, and to feel an affinity for Anne Boleyn as a character. It also serves to illustrate at what point they were therefore engaging in some form of symbolic interactionism with Anne Boleyn, albeit for the most part on an unconscious level. This chronology has also provided some basis for observing how shifting portrayals of Anne Boleyn – and also of Mary Queen of Scots – have occurred in tandem with shifting portrayals of women in general, although not to a significant degree unless one gives full room to the story of the struggle for women's rights from the mid-1800s onward, an entire topic unto itself. Instead the chronology has been more concerned with illustrating how depictions of the two women changed more in tandem with general societal mores. Echoing comments made in section 1.3 of this thesis, Linda Porter explains the pitfalls of falling into this particular trap, in her biography of Henry VIII's sixth wife Catherine Parr

'...the sixteenth century had never heard of feminism, and though much has undoubtedly been learned from studying women of the period, 'gender studies' is a modern invention and has become a growth industry. Like all constructs projected onto the past it can be enlightening but also misleading.' (Porter 2010, p. 33)

The chapter has also shown where these portrayals have veered off at certain junctures into more subcultural spheres, thus providing what seems to be firm evidence that the particular grouping of fandom surrounding Anne Boleyn has indeed come to form a subculture. This fact will be expanded upon in the next chapter, where the origins of the concept of subculture are explored, with particular relevance to the topics raised in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Literature review: Subculture and Subcultural Theory

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to provide a comprehensive overview of the origins and current status of the field of subculture from the 1950s onwards, and in particular of subcultural theory; moving on then to cover in some detail the concept of post-subcultural theory. It will then serve to tie those strands of thought together with the previously established ideas regarding online fandom and their relationship with Anne Boleyn; and finally, to discern how the online following of Anne Boleyn, specifically in the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, actually constitutes a subculture in itself.

3.2 The origins of subculture

With particular reference to the overall outcome of the research project, this chapter will discuss the birth of what could be considered feminist subcultures – a relatively uncharted territory - and the new phenomenon of internet subcultures, known as ‘cybersubcultures’ and how these two phenomena fuse together. In order to establish whether the following created by *The Anne Boleyn Files* can be considered a subculture, it is important firstly to understand what is meant by the concept of ‘subculture’ itself.

Subcultures first came to prominence in the field of research in the 1950s. They were initially identified as groups within society who were – for various reasons, class the more prominent among them - breaking away from established values and norms and creating their own sets of belief systems, albeit inevitably on a microscopic scale. Their existence has thus been regarded as highly contentious by the established values and norms of the dominant society. This is because they appear to challenge the established norm of that society even though they may form no actual opposition to the established majority other than to provide an alternative space for the further exploration of identity. Given the results of this research, there is no doubt that Anne Boleyn as a ‘historical celebrity’ possesses an enormous fan-following or ‘fandom’, which mirrors some aspects of a subculture. For the hypothesis of this research project it has been investigated whether that following reaches that degree of intensity and dedication which qualifies it as an actual lifestyle choice, the level of devotion usually associated with an actual subculture.

There are many ways in which a subculture manifests itself, and more recently still through a range of mediums which have been become increasingly available over the last ten to fifteen years; social media has a large part to play in this upsurge in available spaces. The line between someone being a fan to being an active participant in a subculture is something of a fine line, more of which will be explained further on during this chapter, although briefly, Gillian Rose defines a fan, in terms of television viewing at least, as

‘...someone whose activity involves them translating that viewing into some kind of cultural activity, by sharing feelings and thoughts about the programme content with friends, by joining a community of other fans who share common interests.’ (Rose 2012, p. 270)

However, the link between subculture and fandom is in fact not quite so clear cut. Sandvoss (2005, p.9) comments that

‘...from this definition of fandom as a form of sustained, affective consumption follows the relationship between fandom and ‘subculture’, a concept which has been popular in the study of specific social groups from mid-twentieth century sociology to media and cultural studies. Most – maybe all – of those who participate in subcultures which evolve around a given media text or genre conform to the patterns of regular and emotionally committed consumption by which I define fandom here’.

If one is to take this stance on the line between fandom and subculture then the boundary is so blurred as to be almost nonsensical.

After subcultural study first came to prominence in the 1950s, subcultures themselves then continued to become a fairly commonplace – if contentious - feature of the modern social world (Weeks 1986). Although the existence of these fledgling subcultures was regarded as contentious, they were nevertheless seen as important, if not in fact vital social spaces for various members of society who for one reason or another simply did not ‘fit in’ with the established norm. For the most part early, or what for the purposes of this research are called ‘classic’ subcultures, were mainly male-dominated; the subculture around Anne Boleyn also breaks boundaries even within subcultural norms because it is almost exclusively female, whereas, to reiterate, ‘classic’ subcultural formations are, as Brake explains, ‘...some form of exploration of masculinity. They are therefore masculinist’ (Brake 1985, p. ix). Where women did partake in ‘classic’ subcultures they were often on the fringes of the action, and it was only the gradual breaking down of social boundaries that eventually led to their increased participation and eventual breaking away to form their own groupings.

Issues of gender representation momentarily aside, one of the first serious studies into the idea of subcultures defined them as smaller, more compact cultural movements that existed outside the main section of society. This was conducted in the mid-1930s by R K Merton. Merton’s ‘strain theory’ suggested that only some people will be able to achieve society’s cultural goals, but he then went on to hypothesise that many others will aspire to these goals which are deemed desirable by the main section of society, but lack the means to achieve them for a variety of reasons. Those who failed to achieve these goals were those more likely to drift between the cracks in society and might end up in what would be considered a subculture, where an alternative set of goals was readily available. According to Merton, there was an inevitable tension between the values or goals that one might have and aspire to, and the structural position one might hold; this idea places particular emphasis on the idea of class as being a major contributing factor into the formation of subculture, something that was indeed to a larger extent borne out by later examples of the phenomenon. (Kidd 2002, p. 115) Merton hypothesised that the continuance of ‘strain theory’ would eventually have widespread problematic results for the dominant social and cultural forms in society, and his theory was in essence – as explained above - born out when subcultures began to come into their own in ever-increasing ways in the 1950s. Kidd also explains that

'...Merton noted that the socialisation of culture into the members of society might not lead to everyone being bonded into a state of harmony and consensus, as believed by other functionalists such as Talcott Parsons.' (Kidd 2002, p. 115)

Issues of class were inherent in the Anne Boleyn cybersubculture as an undercurrent; venerating a member of the monarchy cannot come without some ramifications. This was something which became apparent when the matter of Anne Boleyn as a 'social climber' was touched upon in some of the answers to the research questionnaire. None of the respondents cited this as the main reason that they were engaged with Anne Boleyn, although it was certainly a factor. Instead the answers tended to skate around the periphery of the topic rather than citing her upward social rise as a reason for engaging them in their own attempts to transcend their surroundings; Anne Boleyn was of relatively noble birth, the family's seat of power at the time located at the impressive Blickling Hall in Norfolk, so for those aware of the intimacies of her tale it was far from a case of rags to riches and more of a case of 'relative riches' to the coveting of a crown.

These paths of investigation set out by Merton influenced the Chicago School in America, but their ideas were regarding the formation of subcultures were to develop down a different route, with particular reference to the role of the city and urban spaces in differentiating various social groups and classes. It was from researchers in the Chicago School, via the theories of George Herbert Mead, that the idea of a society and a sense of self-identity were linked by the ways in which human beings related to and interacted with each other (Wagner 1994, p. 154) The explosion in subculture that occurred in the 1950s in the United Kingdom started with the moral panic surrounding 'Teddy Boys', of whom Dominic Sandbrook says were '...the real 'folk devils of the fifties' (Sandbrook 2005, p. 442) In true subcultural style they were identified as a group within the majority of society breaking away from established values and norms in order to create their own set of belief systems. To put it into some sort of chronological context this was to some extent nothing new, because various disenfranchised groups in society had been doing it for centuries, on countless grounds, from religion to sexuality. They were not at this point clearly classified as such, in much the same way that homosexual behaviour had existed for millennia but it was not until relatively recently in the 19th century that the idea of 'the homosexual' as a distinct identity was first classified and came to be seen as separate from 'the norm'. Although in the case of the homosexual identity, the classification was mainly administered through vaguely negative medical means, it eventually became a means by which gay and lesbian people could recognise and begin to classify their own identities, and to make meaning of their lives outside of the dominant strand of mainstream society.

Subculture could therefore be seen very strongly as the production of meaning, of alternative strands of meaning, whereby individuals who were often perceived as being socially and/or culturally disenfranchised created identities for themselves by fashioning, or indeed 'subverting', meaning from mainstream rituals and symbols (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). This idea of the framework of subculture is integral to the idea regarding the formation of a subculture surrounding a media-mediated version of Anne Boleyn.

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The 1950s is linked with the emergence of youth culture and with the idea of the youth of that era rejecting the values and mores of their elders, and to some extent of society in general; James Dean – *Rebel without a cause* (1955) – is a classic example of this kind of disenfranchised youth imagery that was so prevalent at the time. The film concentrated on the perceived decline in the morality of youth and the clash between the disintegrating youth and the older generations, a clash that would become the buzz-line for the subcultural scares that were to follow in the 1960s. Since then the two – subculture and youth culture – have to some extent become intertwined. In fact subcultures have often been played out as being almost interchangeable with youth cultures, but recently they have become somewhat separated; subcultures can and do exist with little or no youth element, or with a youth element that doesn't outweigh the age demographic of the rest of the membership. Jeffrey Arnett also noted that few adolescents ever actually become part of a youth subculture (Arnett, 1995).

Stanley Cohen also identified a link with the idea that youth groups in question (mostly men) were somehow unable to reach the aspirational ideas that their society imposed on them and so set about creating their own 'alternate' society within the existing social structure. Men were more likely in this social period to be performing in tandem with expected gender stereotypes, to be aspiring, and thus any foreshadowing of failure was more likely to lead to an active role in the resultant period of disenchantment. In this sense it was more likely that they would either create or at the very least gravitate toward some sort of subcultural formation or other if they failed. To some extent these subcultures duplicated the dominant society but inverted many of its meanings and gave rise to a specific form of symbolism, a symbolism that was most often expressed through language, clothing and music. Because of their more subjugated role in society at the time, women were seen as having less agency available to them in order to attempt any actual removal of themselves from the dominant cultural form. In some of the later movements they were able to do so by following the precedent set by the males.

Further studies regarding subcultural movements occurred more widely in the 1960s, at around the time the Teddy Boy movement was joined by the Mod and also by the arch enemies of the Mod, the Rockers; the two famously clashed several times over the years, particularly on Brighton beach. Collectively the Teddy Boys, the Mods and the Rockers were then seen as the main subcultural movements of the time (Cohen, 1972). At this time the idea of subculture was still inextricably tied up with that of youth culture, and also with the wider civil rights movements then sweeping parts of the western world. These subcultural movements attracted the young in great numbers because of their often anti-establishment ethos, a strand of thought that ties back into the idea of the subculture as an avenue of identity exploration for those who have failed to fit themselves within mainstream society. Along with these main subcultural movements went an increase in the amount of money young people were earning, giving them greater mobilisation and also increased chances of 'buying into' the subculture of their choice, with regards to uniform and also more general merchandise. Uniformity and paraphernalia increasingly metamorphosed into merchandising over time, so that now, over forty years later, *The Anne Boleyn Files* website has a section devoted entirely to merchandising. This is alongside the existing range of Anne Boleyn paraphernalia available from the various palaces and stately homes concerned with

her; alongside books and DVDs, and other material such as the aforementioned curiosities on Ebay.



The Mods vs the Rockers

The Mods, Rockers, and also later the skinheads also operated through an overtly masculine sense of space and style, of an almost overt aggression, which has led to the retrospective labelling of these and other of the youth culture movements of the era as ‘tribal’; further commentary on the issue of new forms of subcultures possibly being considered ‘tribal’ will be addressed further on in this thesis. In their book *Tribal – made in Britain – a personal history of British subculture* (2015), Martin Roach, Ian Snowball and Pete McKenna interviewed various members of these movements – or tribes – and asked them to provide their recollections and insights. Perhaps unconsciously, they nevertheless sounded the death knell for these old or ‘classic’ subcultural styles when they said ‘...being a young person in Britain throughout the ‘50s up until the early or mid-90s meant you would be exposed to ‘the tribes’.’ (Roach, Snowball and McKenna 2015, p. 16) Unconsciously, this statement very clearly illustrates the point at which the old, ‘classic’ subcultural style gradually gave way with the advent of the internet, eventually leading to the emergence of the cybersubculture, and the ascendancy of fandom. It would seem that fandom then fused with subculture, especially within the cyberspace sphere. This period of change and renewal for subcultural study has been termed by some sociologists as ‘post-subculture’. Paul Sweetman classified this period as of shifting thinking as

‘...the emergence and partial consolidation of what has been widely labelled ‘post-subcultural’ studies; a body of writing and research intended to re-assess our understanding of subcultural-type practices and formations in light of both perceived difficulties with the previously dominant framework *per se*, and apparent changes in the nature and composition of such groupings since the 1980s.’ (Sweetman 2013, p. 1.1)

Andy Bennett explains this defining moment in the following way:

‘...during the 1990s and early 2000s, a body of work emerged which argued that the concept of subculture, as this had been applied to the study of style-based youth cultures during the previous 25 years, had become redundant as a conceptual framework. Although precise opinions as to the reasons behind this varied between theorists, a general postulation held that youth identities – and indeed social identities per se – had become more reflexive, fluid and fragmented due to an increasing flow of cultural commodities, images and texts through which more individualised identity projects and notions of self could be fashioned.’ (Bennett 2011, p. 493)

Bennett eschewed classic subcultural formation theory in favour of what he termed ‘neo-tribalism’ and also a more consumerist take on the formation of youth cultures (Bennett, 2005), but his slant did not take into account the structural inequalities faced by many young people; also his work still continued to concentrate on subculture as something that was mainly youth-orientated, a view this thesis seeks to call into question. In a related article, Bennett would also attempt to situate what he termed ‘online identity expression’ as containing more neo-tribalistic traits as opposed to subcultural traits, but in the case in question he was sourcing data mainly from social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace and not from more specific online forums with a focused agenda aside from simple social networking (Bennett and Robards, 2011). However, others also favoured a shift toward the study of ‘...more fleeting, transient communities’ (Wheaton 2007, p. 283), which, although indicative of the fast-moving form of social networking often associated with websites such as Facebook and MySpace, does not, it appears, to resemble the more solid, stable environment created on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website.

Also, in contrast to what is considered is the ‘classic’ idea of the male-dominated subculture, this research project focuses on the idea of a subculture which is mainly populated by, and associated with, women. The focus of that subculture is a woman, Anne Boleyn. The lack of research into subcultures mainly populated by women – and especially those instigated by women, as in the case of *The Anne Boleyn Files* - has been rather sparse: Judith Halberstam illustrates this lack when she says:

‘...almost all of the early work on subcultures, including Hebdige’s, has presumed the dominance of males in subcultural activity and has studied youth groups as the most lively producers of new cultural styles.’ (Halberstam 2003, p. 319)

Halberstam’s comments chime with those quoted from Angela McRobbie later in this thesis, whereby McRobbie’s commentary on the lack of study into these sort of subcultural spaces are employed to highlight both the lack of subcultures mainly populated by women, but also to confirm that the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* qualifies as one of these new subcultural spaces specially for women.

The numbers of men involved in the following of Anne Boleyn are low – 23 of the 316 respondents, this number including those from *The Marie Stuart Society* – this number therefore providing the research a clear opportunity to interrogate the omissions of subcultural theory in regard to subcultures surrounding women. The research on the phenomenon of ‘girl gangs’ has tended to depict a rather faceless, homogenous group with disparate identities and nothing in common to unite them other than current youth trends

such as music and dress. In other words, no real tribal connection with a movement on the scale of the Mods or the Rockers is apparent, nor was the subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn as youth-orientated as the often quoted 'classic' subcultural style, as will be made clear in the analysis chapter. In other circles these girl gangs tend only to be reported in terms of their perceived social threat; Susan Batchelor commented on this as a perceived all-encompassing problem within girl gangs but failed to further differentiate between the possible various types of gangs

'...the media fondness for relying on simplified statistics and atypical cases precludes any discussion of the complex socio-specific contexts of violence in girls' lives. As young women are demonised by the media, their genuine problems can be marginalised and ignored. Indeed, it is the girls who have become the problem.' (Batchelor 2008, p. 27)

Carol Dyhouse covers some aspects of women and girls in subculture in her book *Girl Trouble – panic and progress in the history of young women* (2014) but again fails to make clear, direct examples of any form of female subculture that could be cited alongside the traditional male dominated subcultures of the 1950s and 1960s; she says that

'...teenage girls attending the local grammar school were uneasy about going into coffee bars, let alone jazz clubs. They saw them as attracting 'Teddy boy' types, or girls who hadn't been well brought up.' (Dyhouse 2014, p. 153)

This investigation by the sociologist Brian Jackson highlights the idea that subcultures were essentially masculinist and were something that girls were somehow 'caught up in' rather than being creators and instigators, as is the case with *The Anne Boleyn Files*. The new wave of independence most women were confronted with in the 1960s in particular did not yet stretch to the point where there was enough confidence to peer over the parapets of societal norms in most regards; they were still the girlfriends of the boys and the men who were spearheading the current subcultural movements. Hence, although some academic work has been published on Teddy Girls and the work of Ken Russell in providing a visual record of Teddy Girls is well known, they nevertheless remain the female counterpart of a masculinist subculture; the girls were also photographed alongside their male counterparts. By the time The Spice Girls had coined 'Girl Power' in the late 1990s, women were already well on their way to forming their own subcultural spaces, aided in no end by the advent of the internet; 'Girl Power' itself is too broad to be considered a subculture in its own right, rather more a rallying call for a more outspoken form of feminine independence with distinctly capitalist credentials.

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Subcultural theory has often come in for some criticism because of its gender blind and colour blind approach. This has been despite the involvement of both women and ethnic groups, especially in the later skinhead and punk movements of the 1970s, and especially in resistance to some of the perceived right-wing aspects of some of those groups. It has been previously mentioned that many women were drawn into subcultural movements during these points simply by virtue of following their male partners into the fray. Lauraine Leblanc studied the stories of several women who were involved in or on the fringes of mainly male-

dominated subcultures and noted the discrepancies in her book *Pretty in pink: girls' gender resistance in a boys' subculture*:

'Both American and British feminist critics of subculture studies have posited a number of arguments accounting for this. One argument is that much of the research has been conducted by male researchers who focus on and sympathise with male members.' (Leblanc 2001, p. 67)

One of the most in-depth studies of subcultural movements was provided by Dick Hebdige, who studied the formation and also the behavioural patterns of the gangs of black youth who began forming in different cities during the 1960s. However, at this time, the subcultures that had begun to form around gay and lesbian identities were often ignored; this was several years before homosexuality would be decriminalised in Britain. Subcultures also have a strong history within communities which at first glance might appear to be considerably more disenfranchised than those of the white working class male (around whom the original ideas of subcultural theory centred). For instance, in connection with subcultures that have been based around sexual orientation, Jeffrey Weeks has explained that these movements are spawned for the most part from the idea that '...forms of moral regulation give rise to transgressions, subversions and cultures of resistance' (Weeks 2003, p. 27). Therefore, the more the dominant culture imposes its morals and mores, the more likely that there is to be resistance ranging from passive to subversive that can create subcultures of the moment.

With the formation of 'classic' subcultural formations from the 1950s onwards, the influence of popular culture on these movements was essential and cannot be underestimated. It is also integral to the understanding of the more contemporary forms of subculture that have culminated in the kind of modern, online cybersubculture typified by *The Anne Boleyn Files*. The influence of popular culture, of movies, TV series, and books about Anne Boleyn, are without doubt the overriding reason for the existence of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website and forum. If we accept that the characteristics of a classic subculture (Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers) include musical tastes, their own style of dress, as well as various other mediums through which their lifestyle choices were informed, these aspects can therefore be applied to the following of historical figures such as Anne Boleyn, albeit via the new phenomena of a cybersubculture.

The style of dress favoured by the Mods and the Rockers is one aspect of the classic subcultural style that survives the eventual transition to cybersubcultures. The results of the research bore out that the people who were interested in Anne Boleyn, whilst not wearing 'uniforms' as such, nevertheless did engage in forms of 'cosplay' on occasion as well as devising other outlets through which the lifestyle choice in question was informed. Many Anne Boleyn fans often include photographs of themselves in period costume when posting online in forums such as *The Anne Boleyn Files* – 'cosplay' – which many fan cultures undertake and which is widely recognised. Until recently this was more typically seen in followers of such science fiction shows as *Doctor Who*, where the cultural fanbase may be clearly more visible to the mainstream audience. On occasions such as the anniversary of the execution of Anne Boleyn there are often costumed performers present at such locations as the Tower of London, employed to entertain the tourists and to regale them with the tragic story of the queen in question, usually with a suitably light-hearted take on

her final, gory moments. 'Cosplay' is covered in greater detail in the next chapter where it can be considered in the wider context of symbolic interactionism.

The various online forums about Anne Boleyn often may also include drawings or artwork made by the fans; entire sections devoted to it on *The Anne Boleyn Files* and on many other similar sorts of fan-websites. The subject of 'fan fiction' runs alongside this avenue of expression, where fans write their own stories featuring their heroes or heroines, with 'slash fiction' being the more sexualised version of this genre. Both 'fan fiction' and 'slash' were explored during deeper involvement in the workings of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, although it soon became apparent that they are huge topics unto themselves and for the purposes of this research can only be covered in a cursory fashion.

Music played less of an important role in the proceedings but the consumption of certain television shows, films and novels was of almost paramount importance, as highlighted in the previous chapters. Although, as previously stated, subcultures have been applied in typical ways to young people and have become very much entangled with ideas of youth culture, the subculture that surrounds the media-mediated figure of Anne Boleyn also has its own contributing factors which set it apart from what would be considered the subcultural 'norm'. These factors were analysed during the course of the research through films, novels, and significant places to visit, and the questionnaire was then formulated with those particular avenues of exploration in mind. Where the subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn most definitely deviates from certain aspects of youth culture is in the fact that she is a historical subject and that the pursuit of such a subject is not necessarily immediately centred on ideas of youth or of youth culture; if anything the idea of a youth culture centred on a historical figure would appear to pull more toward the establishment type that most youth cultures might be seen to be trying to push against. To wit, for many people history is something that they learn about at school and unless those formative years mark them out as having a particular interest in the subject, then they are unlikely to return to it again albeit in the most tangent of ways, perhaps through films or television series. It was in this sense that *The Tudors*, with its fast, MTV style of pace and emphasis on sex and sexually explicit promotional imagery, was so important in capturing almost a whole new generation of fans for Anne Boleyn, and for turning a potentially rather staid subject into something exciting. According to the results of the research, the 'new' fans were from that point of having become involved with the series, then converted to the cult of Anne Boleyn.

A fast, MTV style also translates well when considering the discourse used in these new online spaces. It is an indication of the subcultural status of the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* that the discourse of language, often viewed as one of the baseline bastions of 'respectable' society, is usurped by the particular discourse of the cyberspace online forum, with their usual various 'skewed' intimacies and abbreviations. In a medium which is reliant for the most part entirely on language and with little or no visual stimulus aside from stills photographs (the posting of videos in the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* seems to have been something of a rarity), the importance of creating new and innovative verbal avenues of dialect becomes even more pronounced than within the sphere of normal day-to-day interaction. This reliance on language and the eschewing of visual imagery – for the most part – also highlights the lure the medium may have for women, and why many forums are

for the most part populated by women, echoing Gelder's (2007) statement regarding the male affinity for graffiti and more visual forms of messaging, in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Jones (1997) cited some of the various ways in which media tools such as the internet, as well as Facebook and Twitter (*The Anne Boleyn Files* also has a Facebook presence as well as a Twitter account, as well as being on Flickr), have been appropriated by marginalized and fringe communities in order to expand the reach of their own social spheres. Jones also examines the nature of duality on the internet and also the problem of differing personalities in real life (usually referred to in the medium with the abbreviated term of 'IRL'). Weinberger (2002) emphasises the considerable impact the internet has had on culture in general, on subculture and also the various ways in which the internet has expanded ideas of social interaction - for better or worse - in particular. In fact, Weinberger declares the internet to be a new type of public sphere and therefore another arena wherein subcultures may form and even thrive in a way that would not have been possible in 'real world' conditions. The importance of this argument in relation to the research cannot be overstated. Despite substantial research in recent years on various aspects of the internet, there is still something of a reluctance to see internet spaces used for means of social interaction as being 'real' venues for social interaction. Weinberger's work to the contrary is of value in establishing *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum as a viable site of subcultural activity.

In the next section, further exploration will be made of how subcultures have changed with the advent of the internet, heralding the arrival of the cybersubculture; alongside this, the phenomena of fandom will be explored, with a view to explaining the possible meshing of the two mediums.

3.3 Subcultures, Cybersubcultures and Fandom

It was significant to note that on the initial fact-finding forays into the world of Anne Boleyn fandom, such as those who attended 'The Anne Boleyn Literary Festival' at Blickling Hall in 2012, most of those engaged with a view to taking part in the research were teenage girls, or slightly older. Again this is most likely due to the depiction of Anne Boleyn in the television series *The Tudors*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Kidd confirms this idea when he says that

'In many youth subcultures emphasis is placed on the consumption of popular culture. Given this, the growth of TV viewing in the last twenty years or so has been particularly bound up with the creation and rise of youth culture' (Kidd 2002, p. 126)

Since Natalie Dormer's 'definitive' portrayal of Anne Boleyn, the character has risen further still to become not merely just a 'historical celebrity' but also a veritable icon of popular culture, with cameos in TV programmes as diverse and popular as *The Simpsons* and *Doctor Who*.



Anne Boleyn as depicted in 'The Simpsons'

The word 'fan' derives from the Latin word 'fanaticus'; 'fan' is in the modern sense however an abbreviated form of the word 'fanatic'. Henry Jenkins cites the first clear usage of the term 'fan' as it is understood today as early as the late 19th century, thereby predating subculture as it is presently understood by several decades at least

'...first appeared in the late 19th century in journalistic accounts describing followers of professional sports teams (especially in baseball) at a time when the sport moved from a predominantly participant activity to a spectator event, but was soon expanded to incorporate any faithful "devotee" of sports or commercial entertainment.' (Jenkins 2013, p. 12)

Ross Haenfler defines fandom as '...a community built around shared enjoyment of a movie, book, band, TV show, comic book, hobby, sport, celebrity, or other piece of popular culture.' (Haenfler 2013, p. 126) In regard to programmes such as *The Simpsons* and *Doctor Who*, Haenfler remarks that often the most fervent fan cultures will be built around these sorts of shows; the research indicates that very much the same sort of fandom was built up around *The Tudors*, and in particular Natalie Dormer's portrayal of Anne Boleyn in that show; this then fused with an existing fandom for the other media-mediated versions of Anne Boleyn and led to the creation of *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Further on this chapter, Haenfler also remarks on the question of overlap between fandom and subculture.

As previously stated, modern subcultures have their own style with reference to music, dress, and often with an alternative use of language. The perceived 'moral threat' to the majority is confirmed in this instance through the use of drugs rather as well as from feuding teenagers. The latter was certainly the case with the Mods and Rockers of the 1960s, where

a few scuffles on the east coast of England were enough to create a wave of moral panic. Much of this ground-breaking work was done by Stanley Cohen (Brake 1985, p.63), previously covered in this chapter, and who definitively covered rise of the Mods and the Rockers.

It was also interesting to note, with particular reference to 'The Anne Boleyn Literary Festival', that those teenage girls were often chaperoned by mothers whose interest if not equalled but in some cases even superseded their own. Whilst music is often seen as an integral ingredient in any classical subcultural formation, J. Patrick Williams makes the important point that the advent of the internet has now made that medium perhaps the most important part of a subcultural whole

'...what has emerged over the past twenty five years of research utilising the subculture concept is a tacit assumption that music is *the* nexus of subcultural phenomena. I offer a corrective to this trajectory in subculture studies by exploring the emerging importance of the internet in subcultural experience and participation.' (Williams 2006, p. 173-174)

When the results of the research questionnaire were received it was revealed that whilst the younger audience did consist of a large number of the respondents, it was in no way enough to indicate a youth culture as would be defined by the normal parameters of a subculture/youth culture. In contemporary society the rise of the internet has provided a new and 'safer' space for subcultural identities of all ages to flourish and to form in what have come to be called 'cybersubcultures'. Previous to this, such spaces were more commonly referred to – and occasionally still are, in some quarters – as 'virtual communities' (P. Wilbur in Porter 1997, p.5) Such has been the influence of the internet on these 'virtual communities' that they have revolutionised the way in which many fans of various media may communicate, as in the case of science fiction fandom:

'...although SF fandom was in existence well before the advent of the internet, the internet has become its major communication channel. Thus, daily interaction with other members can occur from the comfort of home, even if those members live on another continent. Such online communities bring a whole new meaning and application to the word community.' (Obst 2002, p. 11)

Bury confirms this idea, especially in regard to fandom as a whole, and not just science fiction, when she said '...fans were among the first groups of people to extend their bodies into cyberspace' (Bury 2005, p. 214) moving on from this, Bell (2001) explains how it is not enough simply for a subculture to exist; it must have a meaning, a sense of agency and purpose, words which echo statements by Bury regarding the need for a sort of perpetual posting motion in order to keep up the momentum in an online forum. Bell says that

'...subcultures aren't just groups of people with common interests that stand in opposition to other groups; they must be doing some kind of cultural work with those interests and that opposition.' (ibid, p. 164)

This view was later echoed by R. J. Maratea and Phillip R. Kavanaugh in their 2012 work on the issue of deviant identities forming in cyberspace: '...the ability for geographically remote individuals to interact with others in relative anonymity has helped facilitate the emergence of collegial online communities.' (Maratea and Kavanaugh 2012, p. 104) Alfarez Abdul-

Rahman said that these new online communities were essentially the same as traditional social spaces (Abdul-Rahman, 2000) However, in the wake of the first wave of online communities, R. Peris stated that

‘...interpersonal studies tend to conclude that face-to-face relationships are the richest from the communication viewpoint and that all other forms of relationships are of a more limited nature in comparison.’ (Peris 2002, p. 43)

It may be argued to some extent this prejudice still exists in regard to online communities, and that Peris’ remark may perhaps be as pertinent now as it was then. A warning against the darker side of the online revolution – in regard to online communities – was also sounded by Susan Herring, again, as in the case of Peris, as early as 2002:

‘...At the same time, online discussion forums provide a new arena for the enactment of power inequities such as those motivated by sexism, racism, and heterosexism. The relative anonymity of the Internet releases some of the inhibitions of a civil society.’ (Herring 2002, p. 371)

To return to Bell’s point, the idea that a subculture must have a sense of agency of purpose is certainly the case with the fandom surrounding Anne Boleyn. A great deal of effort is expended on the online forum to refuting the allegations made against her at the time of her trial, and the subsequent ‘besmirched’ legacy left behind. The agency of Anne Boleyn fans is evident in their aim to rehabilitate the modern ‘salacious’ myths that have swamped the historical woman. That fandom might operate this way in the face of established ‘fact’ is explicitly made clear by Jenkins when he says

‘...from the perspective of dominant taste, fans appear to be frighteningly out of control, undisciplined and unrepentant, rogue readers; fans enthusiastically embrace favoured texts and attempt to integrate media representations into their own social experience.’ (Jenkins 2013, p. 18)

Jenkins goes further still, illustrating the way in which fandoms ‘raid’ established canon to form their own perspective on particular figures and genres, and to rewrite texts to suit their own agenda. The results of this research bear out the idea that the fans of Anne Boleyn see themselves as a form of the subaltern, fighting against the ‘normal’ idea or received wisdom of Anne Boleyn as the harlot who committed adultery and incest with her brother and countless other men besides. These ideas have in a greater sense contributed to why she is perhaps the best-remembered of the six wives of Henry VIII, and this without even reckoning on her role in the break with the Church of Rome and as a Reformation figure. However, recent works such as Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*, as well as certain aspects of *The Tudors* TV series, have attempted to shed significantly more light on that aspect of her life. Alongside the work carried out by her main biographer, Eric Ives, this less salacious side to her character solicited many admiring comments in the results of the research, but it may be conjectured that it receives less attention due to its limited appeal to any youth culture aspect of the subculture that surrounds her. To wit, in an increasingly secular society, archaic religious practices would seem of little concern to the average modern youth. The overriding theme in the responses received in this vein were that Anne Boleyn was a figure of aspiration because of what she had achieved as a woman,

in the face of such overwhelming patriarchy, and not because of the changes brought about in religion by her presence and intervention.

This sense of purpose, so intrinsic to a subculture, began with the advent of the internet and subsequent examples of fandom to fuse those fandoms more coherently with older subcultural styles. In fact, the edges between the one and the other blurred to such an extent that initially it became hard to see where fandom ended and subculture began; Sandvoss was indeed to explode most of the myths surrounding this division between the two. Before the internet, both fans and members of a given subculture were somewhat limited in the interest they shared with others due to normal geographical limitations. However, the internet opened up a world of possibilities for finding and communicating with people of similar shared interests all over the world. Jolie Christine Matthews, in her examination into a general online fandom of *The Tudors* TV series (2015), cites this shift as a time when

‘...a generation ago, if a student enjoyed a Tudor novel or film and became curious about the *real* story, his or her exploration might begin with an in-person library trip. Today, exploration often begins with an online search engine.’ (Matthews 2015, p. 5)

Victor Costello, in a similar, albeit less adamant vein than Jenkins, defines fandom as people who...

‘...combine conspicuous, enthusiastic, consumption of official texts and spin-offs with their own creative and interpretive practices. Fans are viewers who do not merely watch films or television programmes but also write fan fiction and cultural criticism, produce fan art, scratch videos, websites and so on, and who seek out other fans with whom to share their enthusiasm. . . . Fans are distanced from ‘ordinary’ consumers because their modes of consumption are considered excessive.’ (Costello 2007, p. 127)

On fan-created websites such as *The Anne Boleyn Files*, forums or chatrooms were created as a subsection of the main website, where users and fans could interact on a more personal basis. Isolated individuals who up until the advent of the internet and online communities indulged their hobbies or fandom singularly or in small groups were suddenly made privy to a whole smorgasbord of communication and fraternity with similar fans from around the world. Marshall illustrates the ease with which these new online spaces were intrinsic in the creation of a far more fluid form of subculture when he says

‘...chatrooms, which are dependent on the relatively simple technology of internet relay chat (IRC), allow participants to engage in text-based real-time conversations. What has made this form another challenge to our divides between public and private space is the ease with which one can join chatrooms and communicate about some of the most intimate details of one’s life.’ (Marshall 2004, p. 55)

The text also touches on the new moral panics surrounding false identities in chatrooms and online grooming, thereby holding up a mirror regarding the older moral panics of the ‘classic’ subcultural styles of the 1950s and 1960s. These issues – alongside ‘trolling’ – have of late been highlighted by the media to such an extent that they may be perceived in some senses as new moral panics; see also issues of ‘slut shaming’ for girls and issues around body size and the cult of the ‘selfie’. These similarities with the old styles of subculture serve to

further illustrate how the cybersubculture is a logical progression of the subcultural phenomenon as typified in the 1950s and 1960s. This idea of a darker side to cybersubcultures was echoed by Thomas J. Holt in his article on deviancy in cybersubcultures:

‘...the Internet and computer mediated communication methods, such as newsgroups and Web forums, allow individuals to exchange all sorts of information almost instantaneously (DiMarco and DiMarco 2002). Deviant and criminal peers can communicate online across great distances, facilitating the global transmission of subcultural knowledge without the need for physical contact with other members of the subculture.’ (Holt 2007, p. 172)

A further and also more explicit link between the old subcultural styles of the 1950s and 1960s and the new cybersubcultures or fandoms is also made by Darin Barney in his book *The Network Society*:

‘...the next culture identified by Castells is virtual communication culture – arising from the online social formations established by early users of the internet, many of which were born of the countercultural movements and alternative lifestyles of the late 1960s.’ (Barney 2004, p. 167)

Sherry Turkle (1995) argued that the process of fashioning out a new identity for oneself online was all part of the process of integrating oneself into the new, online spaces and communities:

‘...the internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self that characterise postmodern life. In its virtual reality, we self-fashion and self-create.’ (Turkle 1995, p. 180)

One of the first subcultures to be created – or in this case revitalised - courtesy of the new internet generation – and therefore one of the first legitimate cybersubcultures – was the Goth movement. The Goth movement managed to straddle with some success the gradual transition from the more ‘classic’ style of subculture to the new cyberspace subcultures that were fast forming:

‘...it is clear that the most active online Goth groups are frequently located in a physical socius: the environment of clubs, music stores (not quite yet replaced by MP3 downloads) and friends’ houses that underpinned Goth lifestyle in the 1980s remains as important today.’ (Whittaker 2007, p. 36-37)

The Goth movement also situated itself within the musical sphere so often typified in the ‘classic’ subcultural styles of the 1960s, but music itself was not the entirety of the subculture, echoing the point made earlier in this chapter by Williams. David Hesmondhalgh pointed out how these Goth communities also laid ‘...stress on friendships, special goth events (such as the annual Whitby Gothic Weekend), DIY media, clothing and the Internet.’ (Hesmondhalgh 2005, p. 30) The Goth movement also concentrated heavily on literature, including the gamut of vampire novels and works by other horror writers, a phenomena not seen in the subcultures of the 1960s. In this sense it can be stressed that the Goth subculture seemed to have more substance to it rather than as a youth-orientated kneejerk reaction to a society which seemed to have no place in it for the youth in question. In this

sense the Goth subculture is similar in style to the fans of Anne Boleyn, albeit without the focus on one particular figure and also without an underlying feminist movement and the companion issue of redemption.



The quintessential Goth girl

As Cheris Kramarae points out, where women are concerned it appeared an imperative need for these new cyberspace subcultures to serve as a virtual space where they were able to talk not only about the chosen focal point of the community in question, be it Anne Boleyn, Mary Queen of Scots or motherhood or dieting, but about a whole range of other issues as well:

‘If, however, we define community as including interpersonal interaction, economic interdependency, sharing of social life, including sickness, health, spiritual concerns, we see we don’t have many of these in cyberspace.’ (Kramarae in Jones 1998, p. 118)

Gender is still very much a concern in cyberspace, this even with recourse to a post-subcultural position, as Bury explains:

‘...contrary to claims that gender or other embodied identities no longer matter in cyberspace, online communities are constituted along the fault lines of the gendered body in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.’ (Bury in Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003, p. 283)

The isolated individuals of either gender who free floated without an anchor before the advent of the internet began, with the advent of online communities, to gel into a set of more cohesive, tight-knit groups. Again, as stated by Sandvoss, the line between being ‘a fan’ and belonging to a subculture began to blur to the point where there was no longer really a line at all. Bell (2001, p.167) goes on to further explain this idea when he says that

‘...fan cultures are like subcultures in their lifestylisation of an obsession, in their practices of bricolage, and in terms of the impact that being a fan of something can have on a person’s identity and social relations.’

This confirms Turkle’s work regarding the self-creation of identities which occurs when exploring new, online spaces; these new forms of identities have led to new forms of subcultures. Bell goes on to illustrate a small but perhaps vital difference between fan cultures and subcultures when he says how fan cultures are often seen to immerse themselves in ‘lighter’ fare as opposed to more ‘serious’ subcultures. In other words, fan cultures might follow various TV programmes like *Doctor Who* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* rather than tackling the rehabilitation of a disgraced Tudor monarch. A small but relevant factor in deciding whether or not Anne Boleyn’s online following constituted a subculture proper was the case of ‘Lara Croft’, the fictional character created for the ‘Tomb Raider’ computer-game series. There are startling similarities between this fictional character and the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn:

‘A fixture of the pop-culture landscape since 1996, Croft embodies or incarnates a nexus of cultural, economic, and technological forces, whose shared characteristic is their powerful hold on a vast audience base. Lara Croft is nothing without her fans.’ (Rehak in Bell & Kennedy 2000, p. 159)

However, the detail lies in the last line of the quote, for whilst it may be that the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn is nothing without her fans, the historical, ‘real’ Anne

Boleyn will always be of interest to serious historians. This lifts her to a level above the fan movement (Rehak's own words) of 'Lara Croft', and propels her – in all formats – into a much more serious sphere, thus enabling her image to bridge the gap between fandom and subculture. At the same time she belongs to both camps when she is viewed through any of the various different disciplines and mediums by which she is known. This is where the boundaries between the idea of being a fan of Anne Boleyn and partaking in an actual subculture with the serious intent of trying to rehabilitate her historical image using 21st century discourse begin to differentiate themselves. Of the fact that Anne Boleyn has a considerable fanbase there can be no doubt, given programmes such as *The Tudors* and novels by Hilary Mantel and Philippa Gregory abound. Yet the question persists: do fans, a fanbase and their accompanying agenda constitute an actual subculture? Before embarking on the research, reading led to several sources that would indicate that indeed, it might well be the case. For instance, Sandvoss explains that

'...the object of fandom, whether it is a sports team, a television programme, a film or pop star, is intrinsically interwoven with our sense of self, with who we are, would like to be, and think we are' (Sandvoss 2005, p.96)

This is the point at which Anne Boleyn fans stray into actual subcultural territory, entering that new arena (whilst seeing themselves for various reasons as the subaltern) set out on a mission of identification and redemption. Do they, for example, seek to remedy their own position in society by rectifying the injustices done to Anne Boleyn? The results of the research have shown that they may even take the mantle of the injustices done to her and wear them as a badge of honour. They then engage in forms of symbolic interactionism with that media-mediated image and cement what Sandvoss explained, whereby that image of Anne Boleyn becomes who they would like to be and even who they think that they are.

This constant straying of fans into subcultural territory means that fandom to an extent now supersedes subculture and in a sense renders it somewhat redundant. Fandom is a far more fluid and accessible site of being, a more fluid term, and may in time leave the notion of subculture as something strictly archaic and concerned with those old moral panics of the 1950s and 1960s, of which more modern groupings no longer share any similarity. To sum up, fandom may very much be post-subculture. Definitions of fandom, which are in fact definitions of what is considered subculture, are far more flexible than the rather stringent ideas of what currently constitutes a subculture, if the admonitions of Sandvoss are to be ignored. One may be 'a fan' of a certain TV programme or even a devotee, but there is little distinction between the two terms, whereas to consider oneself a member of a subculture is to have immersed oneself almost entirely in an alternate way of living. However, the line between being a fan and fandom and then into subcultural territory proper has been transgressed instead by those who oppose such communities, rendering fandom a far closer bed-mate to subculture than had perhaps previously been considered. It was in the aftermath of an episode of the cult TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, wherein Jenkins describes how a moral panic had ensued over the content of the episode in question, and

'...the concerned adult community chooses the entire Wiccan culture as a scapegoat for their aggression – burning books, searching lockers, shutting down the Internet, locking their kids in their rooms and throwing away the key' (Jenkins 2006, p. 230)

In this instance what was previously the province almost entirely of the subculture i.e. the moral panic, has now become also the province of the fan, the fan of fantasy television or, more recently gaming. The ability of the internet to spread information and connections on an almost instantaneous basis has given conventional fandom the freedom to step up and lay claim to a more subversive status than even subcultural theory may have deemed feasible. It may be as a result that the whole notion of 'fandom' needs to be re-examined in the light of such changes brought about by the internet, and perhaps with a view to relegating the study of subculture to the examination of something which belongs strictly in the past. However, it is sufficient for the purposes of this research to classify that the fandom surrounding Anne Boleyn does in fact constitute a subculture, albeit a more modern 'cybersubculture' with post-subcultural pretensions. It is made up of fans of Anne Boleyn, whose behaviour mimics so many of the facets of a subculture that the line is blurred and the more flexible format of 'fandom' is preferred, whilst the rigorous label of 'subculture' is for the purposes of the research applied. It may be considered part of the original contribution to knowledge to merely consider the idea that fandom and fan culture may one day supersede 'subculture' entirely and may require redefinition ahead of the notion of 'post-subculture'.

Because subculture and subcultural theory have become in some ways tied up with idea of youth and youth culture, it is still necessary to cover the ages of the participants of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, and to discover whether youth was indeed a prevalent factor in the formation of this new type of subculture. The largest single group of responses to the research questionnaire question 'How old are you?' were from the 18 – 25 age range with a total of 87 participants constituting 27.53% of all overall participants. However, 229 of the other respondents were not in that age range, and so overall they constitute the largest number of respondents. This means that the fans of Anne Boleyn do not in any real sense conform to the idea of youth culture as it is understood in terms of the traditional notions of subculture.

Geographical locations of the participants was also of interest, because when concerning Anne Boleyn there is often a strong undercurrent of the notion of 'Britishness' or 'Englishness' surrounding the subject. This is in part due to the nationalistic empire-building legacy of her daughter Elizabeth I, but also because Anne Boleyn's marriage to Henry VIII caused the break with Rome and the Catholic Church, wherein she was therefore a part of the English Reformation. This isolated the country from a religion which governed most of Europe. This recourse to 'Englishness' is explained in part by Bradley (2007, p. 90) who claims that issues of national identity are sometimes to be found in some expressions of subcultural forms, whatever the country of origin. To highlight one of the more extreme examples, the far-right skinhead subculture of the 1970s and 1980s was based as much on ethos as it was on appearance, with the emphasis on each to such a degree that anything less than mutual devotion to both would be seen as inconsistent with the movement as a whole. However, Weinberger places this theory in the past to a certain extent when he says, 'On the Web, the community is defined by interest, not geography, and there is no natural boundary to how large the circle of fame can grow' (2002, p. 104). Despite this, in defining a subculture, this research found that it was important to examine how issues of geography may or may not affect the interaction of those users from around the world with such an

intrinsically 'English' subject as Anne Boleyn. For instance, Michael D. Ayers found that there could be a disparity between the activism and agenda of an online group that simply failed for the most part to translate into any sort of 'action' outside of the internet:

'Does the existence of a group of people operating online under an activist group umbrella necessarily mean they are an activist group? The online group members I interviewed did not seem politically and socially motivated outside of the confines of their computer screen. An online social-movement group must have some level of activism in the "real" world if the changes it seeks politically are to go beyond the realm of the Internet itself.' (McCaughey and Ayers 2003, p. 162)

For his study, Ayers had been researching specifically into the phenomenon of online women's social movement groups, which tallies with the credo of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, which purports to offer 'The REAL TRUTH about Anne Boleyn - The Most Happy'.

The participants in the research were overwhelmingly women. Along with the original hypothesis that a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn would for the most part be populated by women, this meant that besides straightforward subcultural theory it was also possible to apply some notions of feminist subcultural theory to the results of the research. This was purely as a point of reference to the fact that the research was dealing with a female historical figure with an estimated largely mainly female following. Therefore, the analysis of the data collected from the research incorporates some small discussion on a feminist subcultural perspective, which is linked to the original 'strain theory' identified by Merton. Specifically, this strand of thought comments on the idea of 'lack' on the part of some disenfranchised individuals to achieve society's goals; combined with the work of Elizabeth Jayne Lewis on the identification of females with a 'ruined queen' such as Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots, this can help to understand the overwhelmingly female fan base of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum a little better. It is worth bearing in mind that these two women aspired to or were born into the highest echelons of society and then fell spectacularly from grace as a result of the pressures of their ambitions. Therefore it is far easier to understand how some sort of fandom or subculture might form around them, because, like the original subjects of the 'strain theory', they were unable to achieve society's prescribed goals because they were – in this instance - women working against an oppressively patriarchal social structure. Given that versions of both women now exist as media-mediated 'historical celebrities', via television series such as *The Tudors* and films such as *Elizabeth ~ The Golden Age* (2007), it is easy to see how their image can be consumed at any given time by an eager audience and then reinterpreted on a cyclical basis to give new meaning to a new generation of fans or followers. The internet therefore provides a virtual space and a banner under which their 'fans' may gather.

That the internet is so prevalent when it comes to nurturing the sort of fandoms and subcultures that have been the subject of study of this research is highlighted by Gelder (2007), who explains the appeal of the masculine narratives of men who take part in scrawling graffiti. This type of expression can be seen as almost parallel to the kind of anonymous identity used by those who use online forums and chatrooms, therefore,

'...the graffiti subculture is a kind of home-away-from-home, but it is also a place where a graffiti artist or tagger's 'personal and physical' self no longer seems to matter' (ibid, p. 140)

This research shows that such sentiments are almost entirely echoed, albeit unconsciously, by online users of discussion forums such as the one attached to *The Anne Boleyn Files* website. The users of these forums create online identities, often using nicknames or what are sometimes referred to as 'screennames', in much the same way as graffiti artists have their own 'tags' with which they use to sign their work. The use of internet forums or chatrooms, which are a non-conventional means of communication similar to the system also seen in graffiti and 'tagging', highlights their possible place in the subcultural caste system and means they are thus a viable space for subcultures to flourish – and more importantly to change - in the 21st century. This contributes significantly to the hypothesis of this research that a genuine subculture began to take root around the 'historical celebrity' figure of Anne Boleyn on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* some time during the last decade or so, building on what had been up until that point a widely scattered, disparate fanbase. Jenks (2005) states that

'...both Hall and Hebdige have referred to youth subcultures as 'noise' (a concept which communication theorists employ to mean anything that gets in the way of ordered communication)' (p. 122).

If graffiti is seen as a means of communication of a non-ordered sort, then it is logical that internet forums must be viewed in the same way. If this theory is taken to its natural conclusion then internet forums, being anything but a mode of 'ordered communication', must surely qualify as a genuine subcultural space. This conclusion lends credence to the hypothesis of this research, that the following that surrounds the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn is a subculture of some considerable standing. At this point it is then possible to develop the idea of it also progressing into an entirely new form of space – a cyberspace – for an entirely new form of subculture for the 21st century. As recently as 2010, Nancy K. Baym confirmed in her work *Personal connections in the digital age*, that she considered online spaces and the information and fraternities therein as a cogent kind of '...subcultural capital.' (Baym 2010, p. 83) However, the whole issue of cyberspace providing new communities is not without its critics; Howard Rheingold says of the matter:

'...perhaps cyberspace is precisely the *wrong* place to look for the rebirth of community, offering not a tool for conviviality but a life-denying simulacrum of real passion and true commitment to one another.' (Rheingold 2000, p. 10)

This means that various websites and forums exist created for communicating and socialisation, shared virtual spaces where individuals can interact with a wide range of people within what can be considered a relatively or even an entirely closed space. Often membership to these online spaces is strictly monitored by administrators to prevent 'trolling', basically abuse of other users. Sandvoss (2005) explains the emotional ties and possible avenues of affinity in these online spaces when he says, '...there can be little doubt that many fans themselves imagine these networks as a community and equal to other friendship ties' (p. 56). In an ever-increasingly digitalised age, where social interaction online and in social media seems in danger of surpassing that of 'normal' face-to-face interaction, online spaces function in the same way that the old subcultural spaces of music halls and youth clubs would for the 'classic' subcultural formations of the 1950s and 1960s. Certainly

many of the participants responding to the research cited the use of communities/chatrooms and online social media as an ever-increasing means by which they interacted with the world. These new social spaces appear to provide a virtual space which caters for the specific needs of women intent on forming their own subcultures, or for women who want to participate in them. The formation of a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn is an almost logical progression. It is different to traditional or 'classic' subcultural formations which have been for the most part inherently masculine in both numbers and mantra. Virtual space provides safe spaces for females whereas 'classic' subcultural formations have always tended to be more masculine. Therefore the advent of the digital or online age has provided a safer space for females to gather and socialise without the risk of physical confrontation. This is not to say that males do not benefit from the use of virtual online spaces, but that in the sense of this research these virtual online spaces have a particularly pivotal role to play in creating a safe space for the mainly female fans of Anne Boleyn.

In his book *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, David Bell (2001) explains how the step from subculture to what is considered a cybersubculture is a relatively straightforward one because the '...ways of using computer technologies that subvert in some way dominant social norms or dominant formulations of what technology is for' (p. 163) Such subversion can only continue to proliferate as

'...the particular and conspicuous patterns of fan consumption and the specific forms of social interaction that take place between fans have become an ever more integral part of everyday life in modern societies; and as fandom has grown into a truly global phenomenon drawing on popular texts ranging from the global media spectacles of American exports like Hollywood blockbuster'. (Gray 2007, introduction)

3.4 The Anne Boleyn Files

It is worth at this point illustrating and also reiterating the key points and aims of the content of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, and also the format of the website in general. Other websites were explored during the early days of gathering various online information, but most trails led back time and again to *The Anne Boleyn Files*; the fact of an unofficial endorsement by Eric Ives via his meeting with the group helped cement the decision, alongside published works by the website's creator Claire Ridgway. The other websites investigated seemed for the most part not to have gravitated beyond the purely personal endeavour and into something more concentrated towards giving a good, daily digest of Anne Boleyn's life, as is the case with *The Anne Boleyn Files*.

The *Anne Boleyn Files* is perhaps the premiere website devoted to the discussion of all things concerning Anne Boleyn; its main tagline, as previously mentioned, is 'The REAL TRUTH about Anne Boleyn - The Most Happy'. Jenny Preece comments on the importance of establishing the credentials of an online community when she says

'...for newcomers, knowing the purpose of a community and stating it clearly also helps to deter casual visitors who lack commitment, along with those who will become frustrated because they are not getting what they expected from the community.' (Preece 2000, p. 81)

Of significant importance is the fact that there is a strong emphasis from the start on veering away from the images of Anne Boleyn created by various media forms, and instead developing a more rounded, 'realistic' approach to the study of her life. However, on the website's forum a great deal of time is still devoted to those media images, and as the website may, as surmised, have been created in part as a response to Natalie Dormer's seminal depiction of Anne Boleyn in *The Tudors* TV series. Such a slant cannot be entirely ignored, however well-intentioned the website's remit may in fact purport to be. The website's creator, Claire Ridgway, maintains an almost daily blog presence on the website (she is by her own admission lately less prolific on the forum itself) using the main part of the website as a form of diary whereby various key events in Anne Boleyn's life are documented, with other users of the site then free to post their comments on what she has written. These posts are simultaneously aired on the website's Facebook page and also on Twitter. She also documents various publishing events regarding Anne Boleyn or the Tudors, as well as screenings, and even books written by the users of the website and its forum, as well as having published several of her own. The website has a number of sections, including book reviews, news of events relating to Anne Boleyn, a question-and-answer section, the forum itself, products (the website sells Anne Boleyn-related jewellery as well as a number of other related paraphernalia, including the books published by Claire Ridgway), and a resources section which provides links to other relevant websites. Peter Holtz describes the generic layout of a forum similar to *The Anne Boleyn Files*;

'...An Internet forum or message board is an online discussion site. Internet forums have a tree-like structure: Usually, different topics are discussed within different thematic sections and sometimes subsections. Within the sections or subsections, users can start a discussion – a so-called thread – with a "starter posting." Other users can reply to the starter posting or to other users' comments. These messages are called posts or postings. In many forums, threads and postings can be read by every Internet user, but to achieve the right to post or to start a thread, users have to register and log in.' (Holtz 2012, p. 58)

The forum of the website was the main focal point for the research, and it is here that members can start topics, reply to other topics, and generally get to know each other to whatever extent they wish. There are thirteen sections, which are listed below:

1. Announcements
2. Introduce yourself
3. Anne Boleyn
4. The Six Wives
5. Henry VIII
6. Tudor personalities
7. Genealogy/family trees
8. Movies and books
9. The Tudors show
10. Historical debates
11. Tudor life and times
12. Off topic chit-chat
13. Book club



Claire Ridgway, creator and owner of *The Anne Boleyn Files*

Inevitably there is some overlap in the content of the various sections and some are generally busier than others, but this varies. Some sections are used almost daily, whereas others – both individual topics and sections - may remain static for upwards of a month or more.

- ‘Announcements’ has six topics as of this writing, with rules about ‘spamming’ – i.e. posting for profit or ‘trolling’ - where one user may harass another being among the most prominent. Potential users of the forum are advised by Claire Ridgway to acquaint themselves with the protocol of posting on such a forum before they begin to interact on a regular basis.
- ‘Introduce yourself’ is where most new members of the forum go to first; they introduce themselves in a specific post and then are generally greeted by other members for the forum. More people tend to view these new posts than to reply in them, and the replies of greeting tend to be of an understandably generic nature, given the limited information laid out by the prospective new member of the forum.
- ‘Anne Boleyn’ is most certainly the busiest section of the forum, where the minutiae of her life is examined in the most painstaking detail and debate; topics range from ‘Anne’s astrological sign’ to ‘Have you cried over Anne?’. The conversation on this part of the forum tends to try and limit itself to discussion concerning the actual historical Anne Boleyn, although there is, as said, inevitably some overlap with other sections, especially those concerned with TV and film depictions.
- ‘The Six Wives’ section is characterised by a discussion of Henry’s other spouses, with topics such as ‘Which wife do you just not ‘get’? And ‘Who is your favourite wife?’ Topics on this section of the forum tend to be rather biased against Henry

VIII's other wives and more in favour of Anne Boleyn, perhaps logically given the forum's mantra; special vitriol seems to be reserved for Jane Seymour, as mentioned which became apparent when conducting the research. Catherine of Aragon tends to get a much more sympathetic hearing but still has detractors of considerable vigour.

- 'Henry VIII' topics include 'Why was Henry a tyrant' and 'Is Henry VIII in hell?' Needless to say many, if not all of the topics in this section tend to be weighed heavily against the famous Tudor monarch, with many of them originating from the point of view of a concerted feminist critique on the idea of Tudor patriarchy
- 'Tudor personalities' has discussion on everyone from Cardinal Wolsey to Anne's brother George, with most of the topics again heavily biased against anyone who might be perceived as having had a detrimental effect on the career and general upward trajectory of Anne Boleyn. Both this and the previous section have an exceptionally low turnover of posts and activity as opposed to some of the other sections.
- 'Genealogy/family trees' has only one post, with advice on how to ascertain if one is descended from a Tudor personality. Activity in this section tends to be low as well; there is perhaps a desire on the part of the users of the forum to distance themselves from those who frequently pop up in various quarters claiming to be descended from this or that famous historical celebrity – in this sense the fans do not appear interested in establishing a biological connection with the object of their fascination – this is a different type of activity.
- 'Movies and books' contains a range of discussion on everything from *The Other Boleyn Girl* movie – and book - to the teenage book *VIII* by H. M. Castor. Discussion on the various actresses who have played Anne Boleyn over the years dominates much of the discourse, and it was from this section of the forum that many of the answers to the research questionnaire were most often mirrored. Topics in this section have included 'If the Tudors were around today, what shows would they appear on?' and 'Favourite Anne actress?' Activity in this section of the forum is still relatively robust, although there is little current discussion regarding the recent BBC adaptation of *Wolf Hall*; it may be that post-Natalie Dormer, the cyclical nature of the entire Anne Boleyn phenomena has for the time being burned itself out, and that it may in fact be another several years before another TV series/movie/book makes quite such an impact as did *The Tudors*.
- 'The Tudors Show' is based entirely around discussion and analysis of the episodes of Showtime's *The Tudors* series, which ran from 2007 until 2010; like the above 'Movies and books' section, it was also from this section of the forum that many of the answers to the research questionnaire were most often mirrored. Topics in this section included 'Of all the inaccuracies...' and 'Natalie Dormer, is she really Anne Boleyn?' Six years on from the show's final season, this section of the forum is now relatively dormant, with no real activity to show for the last ten months or so.
- 'Historical debates' discusses everything from 'Favourite historical male' to 'The Princes in the Tower'; topics in this section have included 'Paying respects at the Tower' and 'Witchcraft accusations'. Discussion on this section tends to cover periods other than the Tudor era, although there is some crosspollination with the next section, 'Tudor life and times'.

- 'Tudor life and times' has discussions on subjects such as 'Literature from the Tudor period' to 'Hair colours'. Because of the more general nature of this section it remains relatively active.
- 'Off topic chit-chat' has discussions such as 'What are we all reading?' and 'What if there was no religion?' but there is also, as mentioned, some overlap, with several of the topics either about Anne Boleyn or other Tudor personalities. A more general sense of socialising tends to prevail in this section of the forum.
- 'Book club' is for discussion of the Book Club book of the month, with titles ranging from *Gone with the Wind* to the more traditional Tudor fare, again evincing some overlap with other sections such as 'Movies and books'. Like 'The Tudors Show', this section has remained relatively quiet for the last several months or so.

Forum members on *The Anne Boleyn Files* usually post under an alias or username; sometimes these are a play on the words of their own name. Clicking on their forum name takes the inquisitive to their private statistics, which tells their username, and then their real first and last names, either of which might be left anonymous. Their location is also given (again optional) along with a potted biography. There is an option to contact the user via a private message; also the forum statistics for each particular user, which tell when they joined, when they last visited, the amount of posts they have made, and also a control enabling anyone to search out all of the various topics they have posted in since they joined. There is also an option for the member to post photographs of themselves in their profile, and almost all of the members have a small photograph or 'avatar' next to their name that appears in each post they make. Most of the time this picture is of themselves but sometimes it is a portrait of Anne Boleyn, or a 'screenshot' or publicity photograph of one of the actresses who played her over the various media; artwork is also occasionally employed.

The individual 'topic' sections on the forum express in differing ways how the discourse around Anne Boleyn is shaped, highlighting the sometimes uneasy balance between circling the media-mediated images of Anne whilst at the same time trying to do justice to the real, historical woman; also discourse between various forum members in their respective posts is based on a wide variety of factors. Some people have been members of the forum for a long time and as a result of extended interaction they know each other extremely well, whilst at the opposite end of the spectrum there are people who have only recently joined, alongside those who may have posted for several years but who still tend to shy away from anything more than the most cursory forms of interaction. The anonymity of being able to post under an alias or username means that members of the forum are able to be far more familiar than they would in a face-to-face setting, and this serves to give an unusually familiar dynamic to some of the conversation. This is a theme that runs through almost all online forums and other forms of social media, especially Twitter; Facebook, on the other hand, encourages users to post under their real names, which leads to a somewhat different, and often more intimate form of interaction. Such a social dynamic makes this online space of especial significance to women. This will be echoed in the comments of Spender (1995) and Kitchin (1998) later in this chapter, relating to the ease with which women are able to turn typical situations of gender empowerment on their heads within the 'safe' area of cyberspace.

3.5 Historical Celebrities

There has been mentioned several times during the course of this research various issues concerning – and references to – ‘historical celebrities’. This pertains to the idea that the historical figures of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots have somehow been ‘transformed’ for the 21st century into consumer commodities whose images are utilised for a variety of different purposes and functions. This research has put forward the idea that their images have become so commercialised through various films and novels that they are now as entirely recognisable, in this multitude of media formats, as to be comparable to contemporary music and reality TV stars. These media-mediated images of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots are of great importance when understanding many of the often misconceived modern-day perceptions surrounding the two women. They are also vitally important in explaining and understanding the reasons and origins for the fandom that surrounds them. In his book *Celebrity Society*, Robert van Krieken (2012) puts forward the idea that the Tudors were in fact the first genuine ‘historical celebrities’, and that this explains much of their appeal to a modern-day audience, with all of the emphasis on pomp, pageantry, as well as the ruthless exercise of power. This idea is captured by the following quote:

‘Elizabeth I embodied many of the features of modern celebrity in her relationship with her subjects, both powerful as a monarch and acutely conscious of how dependent her power was on how she was represented and how she was perceived by the English public. Henry VIII before her was also excellent at stage-managing his public persona, and this was not a merely superficial aspect of his power and authority. I explain what Norbert Elias meant by ‘court society’, and how we should understand the ways in which the structure of celebrity society emerged from, and remains continuous with, the social and interpersonal world of the aristocracy in early modernity’ (van Krieken 2012, p.11)

As fandom takes these texts and media-mediated images of Anne Boleyn, and infuses into them the sensibility of the Hollywood blockbuster, so all subjects of said fandom become infused with the same ethos; hence the transmogrification of Anne Boleyn into a ‘historical celebrity’. With the increasing use of social media, with Facebook and Twitter especially in the ascendancy, it seems that this gradual erosion of historical fact in favour of the ‘historical celebrity’ will continue. There are countless Facebook pages devoted to Anne Boleyn, Mary Queen of Scots and also to the rest of the Tudors in general, as well as countless Twitter accounts from fans purporting to be the actual historical characters in question. Likewise, *The Anne Boleyn Files* and *The Marie Stuart Society* both have Facebook pages, but only the former has a Twitter account. These social media outlets are part of the whole ecosystem that make up the new cybersubcultures.

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To further clarify exactly what is meant by the term ‘historical celebrity’, it can be seen how one such purported figure - for instance Jane Austen - differs so greatly in the various aspects of her fandom from either Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots. Jane Austen has enjoyed numerous film and television adaptations of her many works. There are various societies dedicated to her life and her works that are situated all over the world, and these societies hold events and meetings where various aspects of those works and the various

film and TV adaptations of them are discussed in great detail. Similarly, such projects surrounding Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots are discussed by their respective fanbases on their respective online forums and in their societies. A cursory glance at the online diary for the 'The Jane Austen Society of the United Kingdom' reveals a full and lively calendar that supersedes the online forums and societies of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots combined. However, the nature of those events differ considerably with the events surrounding the legacy of Jane Austen, which are focused on celebrations of her literary works and the subsequent adaptations, but without the inevitable recourse to debate about historical slurs and mysteries, such as those surrounding Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots. In contrast to the Jane Austen fandom, the events and outings regarding the two 'tragic queens' are of a far more 'radicalised' nature, focused almost always with the angle on aspects of injustice and rehabilitation. Fans and followers visit the Tower of London on the anniversary of Anne Boleyn's execution to lay flowers, and likewise they visit the site of Fotheringay Castle where Mary Queen of Scots was executed to leave cards and messages. Against this there is no sense of Jane Austen as a 'wronged woman'. Although she lacks the mystery of either Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots she is still a 'historical celebrity' because of the longevity of her works, but not because of the 'infamous' nature of her historical legacy.

That the majority of Anne Boleyn's fans seek to rehabilitate her tarnished memory can be left in little doubt, especially when the responses to the research questionnaire are taken into account, as will be seen in chapters 5 - 7 of the research. An attempt at rehabilitation on the part of her sister-in-law Jane Boleyn – 'the infamous Lady Rochford' – was recently undertaken by historian Julia Fox (2007) Jane Boleyn supplied some of the evidence regarding the incest between her husband and his sister. She would later lose her head alongside Henry VIII's 5th queen Catherine Howard for aiding and abetting her adultery with one of the king's gentlemen. Both their names are included alongside Anne Boleyn's on the glass plaque memorial currently to be seen on Tower Green at the Tower of London.

It has already been mentioned how the 'disenfranchised' from various quarters of society might be drawn to a contentious historical figure such as Anne Boleyn because her narrative speaks to them and relates in some way to their current situation in the world. Dick Hebdige supports this idea of subculture tied inextricably with contentious or 'dangerous' figures, and comments that

'...the teddy boys and mods and rockers, the skinheads and the punks – who are alternately dismissed, denounced and canonised; treated at different times as threats to public order and as harmless buffoons, create a space to express themselves through identifying with a subculture' (Hebdige 1979, p. 2)

Sandvoss may have dismissed the disparity between fandom and subculture, but in order for there to be a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn that was viable in rigorous academic circles there needed at the very least to be a credible level of fandom first and foremost. Keeping in line with Sandvoss, Haenfler states that

‘...subcultures certainly overlap with fan cultures or fandoms, described by Henry Jenkins as communities who share a deep interest in some object of popular culture and who translate their love into cultural activity with other fans’ (Haenfler 2014, p. 22)

He goes on to warn against a constricting definition of subculture, reinforcing the idea of overlap set out by Sandvoss, which therefore made it far easier for the purposes of the research to ignore areas where the two definitions began to blur and it became pertinent to point out the differences. For instance, an established Anne Boleyn fandom may indeed have subcultural aspects to it, with people following it for different reasons in the same way that skateboarding is a sport, also a hobby, *and* has subcultural connections. This is because of the ways in which users dress and also the language or ‘lingo’ that is used by them as a form of verbal shorthand. Fandom would appear on the surface to be a more modern, less lifestyle based phenomenon that concentrates more on media celebrities, films and television programmes rather than entire, all-encompassing lifestyles, as subcultures tend to. Thus fandom differs from the ‘traditional’ subcultural style espoused initially by Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers, those archetypes of subcultural theory. One of the other main ways that the difference occurs is because of the deviation from the ‘classic’ subcultural signifier of class (Muggleton 2012). A subculture surrounding a Tudor queen would easily break this pattern because, despite her doomed ending, Anne Boleyn, who climbed from a relatively modest social status to marry a king, is therefore also a figure of high aspiration. Issues of power are also inherent in this reading, all the more enticing to those who feel marginalised or disenfranchised, but not necessarily by class. Many of those who responded to the research admired Anne Boleyn for the way she was able to escape her relatively humble beginnings and eventually climb all the way up the social ladder by marrying the king of England. What tended to be ignored was the fact that it was the career and influence of her father, and his connections at the various European courts, which were first able to place her in a position of greater advantage at the court/finishing school of Margaret of Austria, rather than through any direct agency of her own.

3.6 Gender and Subculture

Whilst Brake was pessimistic about the advent of subcultures centred on women, Fiske (1989) easily recognised how popular culture could have a role to play, especially when women began to take centre stages as protagonists in their own right. In the case of the ‘historical celebrity’ version of Anne Boleyn it is the issue of, and the empowerment such an image gives to women regardless of its authenticity, that needs our attention. In terms of relating to the historical figure of Anne Boleyn, one may argue whether authenticity is in question; rather it is the idea of ‘redemption’ to the fan in question which is of importance. Redemption is a task undertaken by much of the online fanbase from *The Anne Boleyn Files*, who base their idea of Anne Boleyn in great part on the media-mediated image of the ‘historical celebrity’.

In regard to the idea of subcultures centred around women, John Fiske (1989, p.191) stated that the idea of empowerment came to the fore when he said ‘...it may be part of the new way in which she walks down the street or the shopping mall, demanding that people take notice of her.’ Gelder (2007) furthered this optimistic attitude explaining how, with the help of the internet ‘...the girl’s bedroom is protected, sealed off from the more precarious world

of the street' (p. 99). This observation makes it quite clear that for the most part the sort of subcultural experience for the female is very much different than to that of the traditional or 'classic' experience of the male. Men are not in such need of safer spaces for exploration, and most classic subcultures are very much masculine, boisterous affairs. This idea of the need to negotiate different and often safer subcultural spaces for girls is also highlighted by Angela McRobbie (2000). Due consideration needs to be given in researching female subcultures therefore to gender based concerns, with issues such as personal safety to the fore, playing an important role in shaping how these new subcultural spaces came about. William J Mitchell even suggests that the safety of the online space might be taken a step further, and that females may not even need to disclose their gender when interacting online

'...you are not compelled to display the usual markers of age, gender, and race. You can hide behind your handle or avatar, and you can readily construct disguises and play roles' (Mitchell 2000, p. 87)

It is possible also to root the experiences of some women online as being 'cyberfeminist', and certainly this seems to be the case with the ethic of many of the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files*. Andrew Calcutt speaks expressively about the failure of traditional feminism in solving all of the problems of the modern woman, and speculates that a safe space such as the internet, relatively free from traditional hierarchical structures, can only see the progress of women flourishing as a result:

'...in cyberfeminism, the reality of women's exclusion from the centres of power in society has been transposed into the fantasy that the Internet is 'beyond outdated power structures'.' (Calcutt 1999, p. 15)

The idea that the internet is more suited to being female-centric is echoed by other researchers, including Dale Spender, who, despite a rather disparaging line of thought regarding the idea of women as inveterate gossips, nevertheless says

'...the medium is more attuned to women's way of working in the world than to men's. Cyberspace has the potential to be egalitarian, to bring everyone into a network arrangement. It has the capacity to create community; to provide untold opportunities for communication, exchange, and keeping in touch. In other words, it is like an enhanced telephone.' (Spender 1995, p. 229)

This view is also borne out by Rob Kitchin, who comments:

'...because of the relative anonymity of cyberspace and because the women on these discussion groups are well used to making their voices heard in the male-dominated worlds of high-tech and academia.' (Kitchin 1998, p. 68)

Gender based differences mean that even very recently '...girls have been overlooked or misrepresented in studies of youth subculture' (Kehily and Nayak 2013, p. 70). Certainly in the early days of the internet, and following the first formations of online communities, women were again very much overlooked. In 1996, Ziauddin Sardar considered that

‘...women are conspicuous largely by their absence: less than one per cent of the people online are women. This is not surprising: cyberspace, like earthspace, has not really been developed with women in mind.’ (Sardar & Ravetz 1996, p. 24)

This lack mirrored the invisibility of women in the various real world spaces where the ‘classic’ male-orientated subcultural activities were played out. Even when male subcultural – or ‘fan boy’ activities – are called into question because they might be perceived as ‘geeks’, they are still regarded as an almost entirely masculine sphere, as Melanie Kohnen explains

‘...despite the panel summary’s emphasis on male and female geeks, moderator Steve Rotterdam characterized the average geek in the following way: ‘mostly male, 18–34, intelligent, educated, hyper-connected, wired to engage.’ (Kohnen 2014, p. 75)

This partly reinforces Gelder’s point about female subcultures being less street-orientated – Kohnen’s topic was the ever-popular San Diego Comic Convention - and more home-orientated. For the female, the portal of access to these subcultures, the internet, is available in the privacy of the bedroom; as seen by Kohnen’s statement, they are rarely considered a reality outside of this sphere. It is therefore easy to see why women rapidly turned to the internet as a safe space, and began to build communities there rather than in the real world; presently, on social media at least, women users outstrip the men by considerable numbers. One of the respondents to the questionnaire specifically cited *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum as ‘...a safe space to discuss my latest Tudor theory with like-minded people’. Several of the respondents also mentioned related social media as a tool in helping create links for safer spaces that would not otherwise have been obviously available to them.

This is not to say that online spaces are entirely safe – issues of verbal abuse and also ‘trolling’ on Twitter and Facebook frequently make the news – but because these infringements are played out in a virtual space there is always the recourse to simply ‘switching off’ or ‘blocking’ the antagonists in question, an option not readily available to the average woman in the street. The research into *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum was to discern whether the following it commands has reached a point where it qualifies as an actual lifestyle choice. This is usually the point at which an interest or a fandom becomes an actual subculture. The level of devotion usually associated with subculture is apparent because participants dress and even act in a certain manner, belonging to a circle of people subscribing to the same style. Because this subculture in question is for the most part a cybersubculture it is therefore considerably more difficult to discern manners of dress and behaviour, at least on a day-to-day basis. Certainly many of the members surveyed admitted to taking part in a form of ‘cosplay’ but this is different from the normal subcultural uniforms of, for example, the skinhead. Those who did respond in the affirmative where ‘cosplay’ were concerned were all women – there were no examples of the few male members admitting to dressing up as Henry VIII, for instance – but the women who said that they dressed as Anne Boleyn did so purely to take part in large events, such as the ‘The Anne Boleyn Literary Festival’ at Blickling Hall in 2012. On other occasions they said that they sometimes simply wore small items of related memorabilia, such as replicas of Anne Boleyn’s famous ‘B’ pendant. Many examples of ‘cosplay’ concerning the Tudors were performed courtesy of paid employees of the various palaces and stately homes connected

with their subjects, in this capacity acting as a more colourful tourist guide and also on occasion actually recreating certain key historical scenes for visitors in the form of short plays or shows.



‘Cosplay’ performers as Anne Boleyn and her brother George at the Tower of London

As previously stated, the findings of the research showed that many of the women who responded to the initial request for research participants became fans of Anne Boleyn via the television series *The Tudors*. Rose examined how cults are formed around a television programme in *Visual Methodologies* (2012) regarding how audiences make meaning out of what they watch. *The Tudors* was also enjoyed by those who were already fans of Anne Boleyn. However, the website of *The Anne Boleyn Files* was not established until 2009, by which time the series was already in its third season, and by which time Anne Boleyn had been executed onscreen and replaced as the lead female character by Jane Seymour. However, the creation of the website seems to have been a direct response to the surge in popularity achieved by Anne Boleyn as a result of the popularity and exposure of *The Tudors*. If the debates on *The Anne Boleyn Files* are indicative, *The Tudors* ascribes to Rose’s idea of appealing to an audience on multiple levels: by mixing up historical stories with a healthy dose of sex and an emphasis on scandal, as well as by populating the cast with well known, often photogenic faces.

The study of an online forum forming around a television series was also the subject of the research conducted by Rhiannon Bury in her 2005 book *Cyberspaces of their own – female*

fandoms online. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, this book in particular pointed the way in which the research into an all-female online forum might be successfully conducted and then concluded. Bury became a fan of the show *The X-Files* and searched online for a group to join in order to be able to discuss aspects of the show with like-minded people. Locating a website devoted to the show's main male star, she was made aware of the fact that the women who populated the site vehemently did not identify as 'fan girls', which she viewed as a '...negative categorisation' (Bury 2005, p. x) The members of this forum made it clear to Bury that besides discussing the show they were also frank and open about various aspects of their lives, their children and also their partners. This very much echoed what was observed on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, especially in regard to the various subsections of the forum, as detailed earlier in this chapter. Bury also commented on incidents of harassment by male forum users against female members of various forums very early on in the development of the cybersubculture, which in turn led these and other women to move away from these forums and develop their own online spaces over which they maintained complete and total control. Bury argues against the comments of Gelder and Mitchell made previously in this section, regarding possible avenues of anonymity for females operating online, citing a difficulty in forgetting the physical body even when interacting online. This is a trend that continues to this day with issues of trolling and 'fat-shaming' on Twitter, although recent results indicate that more than half of online harassment of women is actually performed by other women. Bury maintains that issues of body and gender very much still matter in cyberspace, regardless of the relative anonymity provided by the internet. She touches on issues of gender and performativity by Judith Butler in order to illustrate the ways in which matters of the body are played out online; this also tied in intrinsically with the results of this research project, whereby respondents to the research questionnaire were seen to be subtly attempting to reclaim Anne Boleyn's virtual body from the masculinist fate that befell it. However, much of Bury's work centred specifically around female-only forums, whereas *The Anne Boleyn Files* was open to all.

In her book, Rose also showcased examples of how fans buy merchandise and explore other avenues of fulfilment. These examples tie in with examples already presented, of fans making pilgrimages to the Tower of London, Hampton Court and Holyrood Palace, and buying items on internet marketplaces like Ebay. Humm (1997) provides more specific detail about how a female audience engages with films and TV programmes, whilst Connell (2002) touches on the dilemmas faced by the sexualisation of the female form in programmes such as *The Tudors*, a dichotomy only too evident when the character depicted is empowered by a 21st century sensibility when it comes to characterisation, but also hampered by the accompanying focus on sexuality and pandering to a still mainly male gaze. This is evident in some of the early publicity photographs of Natalie Dormer as Anne Boleyn, some of which show her scantily clad and draped suggestively over Jonathan Rhys Meyer's Henry VIII; in one he is even seen gripping her neck in an aggressive manner. None of the respondents to the questionnaire cited any specific problem with this sort of highly sexualised and even subversively violent imagery being used to represent Anne Boleyn, even the imagery which showed her in a submissive and the aforementioned threatened position. For the female respondents to the research questionnaire it seemed to be simply enough that she had delivered a winning performance for their favourite historical character over almost twenty hours' worth of television.



Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Natalie Dormer pose for promotional material ahead of season two of 'The Tudors'

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It is important to point out that although subcultural theory and to a lesser extent subcultural study have been side-lined in recent years, Williams for one (2011) points out that despite the post-subculture debate highlighted earlier in the chapter by Bennett, subcultural theory still continues to be employed by academics. For the purposes of this research, subcultural theory is therefore relevant in illustrating the way in which the subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn conforms to subcultural norms. Symbolic interactionism then highlights how the mainly female followers of the subculture operate within that space, and explains their relationship to the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn.

Subcultural theory states that modern subcultures tend to have their own style with reference to music, dress, and alternative uses of language. In contemporary society the internet has, as previously illustrated, already provided a new, 'safer' space for these subcultural identities to flourish and develop without falling prey to any of the accusations of moral panic that often accompanied some of the earliest expressions of youth subculture in the 1950s and 1960s. This is not to say that the internet is not a place of considerable controversy, but the expressions of contentious behaviour so often found in classical subcultural formations are largely absent because of the essentially passive and often 'furtive' nature of cybersubcultures. Jenkins (2006) comments that '...popular culture has become one of the central battlegrounds through which teens stake out a claim on their own autonomy from their parents' (p. 196). Duffett (2013) expands on this, offering the idea that due to the internet '...fandom has become more visible, more mainstream and more normal' (p.15). Thus a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn, who is not a pop star or a character like 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' – both previous popular points of interest for young women - suddenly becomes a more viable option as opposed to being merely a niche interest, or one with an academic slant. Bell (2001) goes on to explain how it is not enough for a subculture to exist; it must have a meaning, and also a sense of agency because

'...subcultures aren't just groups of people with common interests that stand in opposition to other groups; they must be doing some kind of cultural work with those interests and that opposition' (ibid, p. 164)

As well as the great effort given over to refuting the allegations made against Anne Boleyn, her fanbase also frequently discusses the dilemmas of women in positions of power during Tudor times in general. Evidence suggests that the participants of this research have in some sense come to view themselves as the subaltern fighting against the received wisdom of Anne Boleyn as the whore who committed adultery and incest. In this sense they are definitely engaging in what can be classified as classical subcultural behaviour, in that they are rebelling against a dominant mind-set. As Proctor has stated, it is the '...fan activity [that] is often celebrated as a triumph for agency at the expense of structural factors' (Burke 2013, p. 155). There is also a strongly tribal and nationalistic slant to this sense of devotion, one which is engendered by most examples of subculture, especially those that originated in the UK. Chapman has explained in regard to issues of national identity and British historical films (some of which feature Anne Boleyn *and* Mary Queen of Scots) that '...the idea that films 'reflect' the societies and cultures in which they are produced and consumed is far from being a revelation' (Chapman 2005, p. 1). Elizabeth I, Anne's daughter, is often cited as one of the main architects of what Bradley (2007) calls the Tudor 'British' project. It is her

kinship to Anne that also bolsters this sense of nationality among the fans of Anne Boleyn. However, despite what may be perceived as the essential 'Englishness' of a subject such as Anne Boleyn, 65.82% of the participants in the research were actually from overseas, compared with what turned out to be a relatively minor 25.63% from within the UK itself (Bradley 2007, P. 110). Sarup (1996) too touches on this notion of British ideology, whilst Weedon (2004) explores the potential pitfalls inherent in such an ideology.

3.7 Symbolic Interactionism

At this point the role of symbolic interactionism in regards to this research – as lens through which this particular form of subculture is best observed - is due for expansion. Williams (2011) explains how

'...people interact with social objects (people, messages, material objects, ideas, and so on) and then interpret what they have encountered, assigning socially learned meanings and then acting on the basis of those meanings' (p. 143)

Basically, this means that individuals are able to shape their own social realities by agreeing on a mutual course of action, or even individually, when confronted with a variety of phenomena. The precise origins of symbolic interactionism have been described by Susie Scott, among others, as 'messy' (2015). The social psychological theory was summed up by George Herbert Mead and later expanded by Herbert Blumer, based on the idea that the individual is taken primarily as a social being, and whereby meanings emerge for that being through their interaction and response to the things that have meaning for them. This can then be observed through their interaction between people. Put simply, Blumer, who actually coined the term, described the process thus:

'The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may note in his world – physical objects, such as trees or chairs; other human beings, such as a mother or a store clerk; categories of human beings, such as friends or enemies; institutions, as a school or a government; guiding ideals, such as individual independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands or requests; and such situations as an individual encounters in his daily life. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.' (Blumer 1969, p. 2)

To reiterate, these various theories were taken and then enlarged upon by the Chicago School and by Mead in particular. The two trains of thought remained relatively in tandem, but in the Chicago School there was more of a concentrated drive toward understanding the various forms and patterns of social life and the individual personalities within that life. Symbolic interactionism became merely one of the many branches of study emanating out from the Chicago School, with the main thrust of the original work concerned with sociological studies of urban life in Chicago, with a basis of ethnographic fieldwork.

Meanwhile, Mead theorised that the self came about purely through the interaction it had with others, and also with society as a whole. To this end, interaction is underlined by the use of language, and this differs little whether it is the verbal language or the language

written down in books, or online, in the chatrooms of internet forums. This notion makes symbolic interactionism flexible enough as a tool to be turned toward the study of an online forum/subculture. Haenfler recognised the importance of studying a subculture from such a perspective, with the emphasis on the participants' lived experiences: '...rather than stable groups with recognisable "members," clear boundaries, and universal core values, subcultures are meaning systems that constantly change, have diverse participants' (Haenfler 2014, p. 14). Language is an important subset criteria for symbolic interactionism, and language too is all-important in the often impersonal and faceless world of an online forum or chatroom. In these settings everything must be expressed through the written word without recourse to verbal cues, although pictures are often posted, occasionally in the form of a 'meme'; a 'meme' is a photograph with a caption written over it that was penned by the person posting the picture, usually with a humorous or sarcastic slant. Although pictures are often posted on these forums or chatrooms, and also video clips, these tend to stray more into the areas dominated by websites such as YouTube. Websites such as YouTube do not, by virtue of their format, encourage group interaction; rather people 'follow' frequent posters on YouTube and interact simply by posting comments on the videos available. This online form of interaction espoused by the forum or chatroom leaves aspects of Erving Goffman's theory of symbolic interactionism – based on observations made pre-internet - invalid and thus adds to the original contribution to knowledge inherent in this research, in that it expands the meaning of symbolic interactionism to encompass individuals who have not, and often never will meet face-to-face. In this sense they lack what would therefore be considered 'classic' strands of socialisation within the sphere of their interaction.

At this point it is pertinent to mention that within the sphere of symbolic interactionism the idea of deviancy has been observed with a view in part to determining how some members of society might slip through the social net and end up forming micro societies of their own. For the purposes of this research they could be considered subcultures, but as the theory of deviancy understands them they would more likely be considered criminal gangs. Expanding this theory, individuals either stay within the parameters set by society or they are labelled as deviant because of the behaviour they exhibit, or the identity which they choose to exhibit, in both cases often criminal, but more often than not as a necessity to survive. Therefore the two are often intrinsically linked. Sharrock, Hughes and Martin explain the process when they say '...deviance is bestowed by interactional, collective and organised processes of labelling because 'deviant' is one kind of identity, and identities in general are all bestowed by 'labelling' processes' (Sharrock, Hughes and Martin 2003, p. 184) For the most part this study of deviancy has taken to mean literally criminal behaviour, or the instance of gangs. The relationship between gangs and subcultures can be relatively clearly defined, especially in regard to the classic subcultural styles of the 1950s and 1960s, where gang violence between the Mods and the Rockers was rife, and became the subject of social panics because of this 'deviant' behaviour. Therefore symbolic interactionism is further relevant to this research because of the strand of thought within it that focuses on deviancy in regard to subculture, as much as the main strand of thought of symbolic interactionism which explains how individuals relate to one another within a subculture. This relates to a media-generated image of Anne Boleyn. That Anne Boleyn could be considered a 'deviant' figure because of the legacy of her life only further strengthens the link between the disenfranchised, disempowered women who feel drawn to her, and the idea that

subcultures have somehow spun out of 'normal' society and are therefore something deviant themselves. The research is, after all, studying a woman who was accused of incest and of harbouring up to one hundred lovers; 'deviant' by modern standards, let alone the rigorous sexual mores of the Tudors.

That subculture, with its 'deviant tendencies' and symbolic interactionism are indeed deeply intertwined can be found in the merest basic tenet of symbolic interactionism, whereby the idea is laid out that people act and relate to phenomena in a way that derives meaning for them, and that these meanings come about on the most part through forms of social interaction; no censorship is offered for the ideological intent of said images. For the members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum the phenomena is the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, and how they relate to that image and derive meaning from it to fuel their own lives, exchanging ideas and opinions with each other on the forum; this is how instances and behaviours considered to be symbolic interactionism are produced. Because most of the interaction takes place online, this makes symbolic interactionism far more a feature of cybersubcultures than it would of the classical subcultural formation, where access to imagery was far less prolific. In these cases often movements were geared more around a way of life than focusing on one individual in particular. Mods, Rockers and skinhead subcultures are all lifestyle subcultures, with many prolific participants but no one focal figure and any number of varying influences, unlike the subculture that surrounds Anne Boleyn, wherein she – or at least the many and varied interpretations of her – is the main, sole focal figure. Also many of the classical subcultural formations are either music or class based, and most times a fusion of the two, whereas the cybersubculture surrounding Anne Boleyn is almost entirely based around a veneration of her as some sort of feminist icon, or at least as a martyr to a type of patriarchy long since past. To remove Anne Boleyn from the equation would be to nullify the cybersubculture entirely, whereas skinhead style, for instance, has continued to proliferate despite issues of class being largely removed from the equation; skinhead is now seen as a political movement of both the far left as well as the far right. The results of the research have borne out the fact that for the most part, Cybersubcultures seem much more concerned with venerating the individual, or the television programme, or the novels, or the movie, rather than they are with a more general sort of classical subculture, which rarely percolates around a particular figure. Cybersubcultures are also far less concerned with the idea of resistance, although this element is present to some extent in the cybersubculture surrounding Anne Boleyn because of the issues of patriarchy and the idea of setting her up as a feminist icon.

Jones (1997) cites the ways in which the internet, including social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, have been appropriated by fringe communities (subcultures) to expand their own social spheres. He examines the somewhat difficult nature of duality on the internet and the problem of integrating these differing personalities in real life (usually referred to in this context with the abbreviated 'IRL'). Anne Cranny-Francis creates a further link between the idea of duality online and the idea of symbolic interactionism and online identity when she says

'...this possibility of formulating an on-line identity opens up for the individual the whole issue of identity. It raises issues about how much of identity is inherent in the individual and how much is generated by others' reactions to that individual.' (Cranny-Francis 2005, p. 23-24)

Weinberger (2002) also emphasises the impact the internet has had on the notion of subculture, declaring the internet to be a new public sphere wherein subcultures may form and thrive, eventually in some cases becoming cybersubcultures. The importance of this distinction cannot be underestimated with regard to this research, wherein it is possible to say that a disparate but distinct subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn may have existed prior to the internet. It was however only with the advent of the internet and online spaces that such a disparate subculture was able to cohesively form into what would be considered a 'classical' subcultural formation. Then, by way of the medium in which it was formed, it also became a cybersubculture. Gere adds to this with the notion of the rise of what has been termed 'cyberfeminism,' whereby women are seen to appropriate online spaces for their own usage (Gere 2002, p. 157) Again, the importance of this argument cannot be overstated in regard to this research. There is a reluctance to see internet spaces as 'real' venues for social interaction, and Weinberger's work to the contrary is valuable in establishing *The Anne Boleyn Files* as a viable site of subcultural activity and cultural work, as well as being a viable social space in its own right. Sandvoss also says that

'...alongside social networks based on face-to-face interaction, the steep rise of internet access over the past two decades has provided an alternative space of dialogical communication that mirrors the virtual space of mass media such as radio and television, in which new 'computer mediated fan communities' have formed' (Sandvoss 2005, p. 56).

If subculture is seen in this instance as the production of meaning/shared meanings, one of the obvious questions regarding the research was: What do Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots mean to a certain subset of society? The study of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum has shown that understanding of the relationship between the 'fan' and the object of their interest is best gained by the use symbolic interactionism. To reiterate, meaning is produced for the 'fan' or individual by shaping how they act in relation to the object or person for whom they derive a sense of meaning. In this case for the 'fan' or individual it is the figure of Anne Boleyn, and the myriad ways in which her image and its meaning are used by the media, that is the object of their ongoing interest. Dillon identifies this as '...the exchange of symbols that inheres in the ongoing, self-other interpretive process that characterise social interaction' (Dillon 2010, p. 263).

Identities in symbolic interactionism are further formed and also shaped by social interaction, completing the whole and forming the identity that might be considered 'subcultural'. Sandvoss explains that in this sense this is '...conceptualising fans as performers, rather than recipients of mediated texts' (Sandvoss 2005, p. 48). However, in order to become performers, the fans must first receive the mediated texts in question, and then process and assimilate them through the unconscious use of symbolic interactionism. At that point they do indeed then become what Sandvoss terms 'performers'. Alison Weir confirms this idea by stating that Anne Boleyn, '...has become a virtual celebrity on whom people project their own preoccupations and fantasies' (Weir in Carrick 2013, p. IV). That such a statement was even made allows for the validation of the whole idea of Anne Boleyn as an icon, and as a figure around whom a viable subculture might well form, whether before the internet or after.

The level of fandom surrounding an iconic figure – and whether or not it can subsequently be considered a subculture – can in some senses be ascertained by marking how much merchandise a particular fan purchases, or how often they watch their favourite film or TV programme concerned with the topic of interest; this idea of merchandise as a form of symbolic interactionism is further explored in chapter 7. The level of fandom may also encompass how many ‘places of pilgrimage’ fans have visited, and also how much time and financial investment they put overall into pursuing their passion. There were interesting distinctions in the results of the research to be made between those who classified what they did as ‘a hobby’, those who classified it instead as ‘an interest’, and finally those who saw it as a full-blown ‘passion’ with an overall effect on every aspect of their daily lives. It is possible to therefore interpret the consumption of merchandise as a vague form of symbolic interactionism, if merchandise also is considered a form of mediated text. These mediated texts are consumed and processed, whether it be through the process of viewing, reading, or even wearing, and the recipients thereby gain greater affinity with the object in question, i.e. Anne Boleyn. Moving on from this, the anonymity of the internet allows for a far greater stage upon which players (or actors) may, on receipt of the mediated texts, become performers, utilising the merchandise; the process of symbolic interactionism regards the idea of identity as an eventual outcome, but players may create new, secondary identities online, thus deviating from the set course prescribed.

The many of the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum use aliases, giving them greater freedom and scope to ‘speak’ in a way that would be far more circumscribed in a real life situation. Symbolic interactionism dictates that performers impose subjective meanings on various peoples, places and situations, meanings that may – and often do not – adhere to common fact. For the purposes of the research this means that the performers/users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum ascribe meaning and intent on media-mediated images of Anne Boleyn that do not often adhere to the common fact of the real woman in question. In some respects it may even be possible to go so far as to say that they render the ‘real’ Anne Boleyn redundant by focusing on the media-mediated image instead. The outcome of these meanings and intents is an Anne Boleyn interpreted as an icon by the performers/users, some of whom then employ other social media platforms by which to increase the spread of information. Some of them may even have their own websites devoted to the subject, and may even go so far as to pen books on the subject and have them published. The merchandise they have purchased may include costumes, which then becomes ‘cosplay’. In these instances the symbolic meaning of the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn supersedes the life of the real woman, which is effectively trampled over by 21st-century mores and morals.

The internet also stretches the limitations of symbolic interactionism by doing away with the need for face-to-face encounters. These are the traditional channel through which the identity grows by observance with symbolic interactionism. However, symbolic interactionism remains because an online identity is still a performance, albeit a performance through the medium of words – and occasionally videos – rather than through face-to-face contact. Susie Scott says that the process of forming identity via symbolic interactionism is ‘...therefore something that is actively accomplished, worked at and ‘done’ by individuals in the course of interaction, and this is a self-conscious, reflexive process.’ (Scott 2015, p. 20) There is no reason to suppose that this may be limited merely to the

face-to-face, certainly not when given the proliferation in online communities in recent years.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the origins, chronology, and current situation regarding the field of subculture with particular reference to the way in which it has fused with the concept of fandom. The chapter has also highlighted the role that symbolic interactionism plays in linking the idea of this fusion of fandom and subculture. It has also served to tie those strands of thought into the previously established ideas regarding forms of online fandom and their relationship to a media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, and to discern whether or not the online following of Anne Boleyn, specifically in the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, constitutes a subculture in itself. This chapter has also highlighted the work on the blurred boundaries between fandom and how symbolic interactionism may be used to bridge them, something very much evident around the Anne Boleyn subculture highlighted on *The Anne Boleyn Files*. During the course of the next several chapters it will be of importance to attempt to situate that new definition of subculture – both fandom and ‘cybersubculture’ - within the wider context of subcultures, based on the initial work set out in this chapter with regard to symbolic interactionism.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

So far, the previous chapters of this thesis have laid out the contextual, historical and theoretical foundations for this research project. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research process, including the qualitative nature of the methodology, as well as the personal journey undertaken in becoming a member of *The Anne Boleyn Files*.

By the use of a research questionnaire, one of the main aims of the research has been to establish whether or not there is a credible subculture surrounding a media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. Having then verified this, the hope was to then gain a greater understanding of how human behaviour forms various social structures such as subcultures, especially in new and relatively untried social arenas like websites and their attendant forums or chatrooms. The research also has attempted to define 'fandom' and how it relates to the concept of subculture by the example of symbolic interactionism; and from there to pave the way for a new understanding of the concept of 'fandom' as something progressing out of the traditional idea of subculture into new and unexplored spheres, such as cybersubcultures. All of this will culminate in what may be considered an alternative avenue of thought in regard to the whole subculture/post-subculture debate.

Alongside this, the research has established a history of Anne Boleyn in her various cultural forms and aspects in previous chapters, including an examination of the nature and function of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website and its attendant forum, which is the main focus of study for this research. The research has proven this as perhaps the main online site of subcultural activity surrounding Anne Boleyn, a claim that will be confirmed by the results of the research questionnaire in subsequent chapters. The research has also established a history and discourse of subculture and fandom in general, with particular reference to online communities because of the focus of the research on *The Anne Boleyn Files*.

The research has investigated ideas of cyber-spacial identities and 'virtual cultures', internet forums which are used for socialising and discussion, such as *The Anne Boleyn Files*. The remit of the forums tends to be far wider or tends often to veer toward more conventional forms of socialisation as opposed to what may be considered a more 'militant' movement with regard to a particular subject in question. As previously mentioned, these forums also have a presence through other various online media, such as Facebook and Twitter. These have also been examined and their influence accounted for in terms of the research and the possible effect their presence may have on how members interact with each other. Because Facebook and Twitter accounts are an offshoot of the main website forum or chatroom and not the actual original site of supposed subcultural activity, it is possible to disengage from what would otherwise be an exhaustive examination of their influence. The central aims of the research remain the clarification of a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn as she is perceived as a historical celebrity by users of the forum or chatroom of the website *The Anne Boleyn Files*, and a reimagining of the sphere of subculture to include or adapt into the field of fandom, spearheaded by the concept of the cybersubculture.

4.2 Methodological design: Piloting the questionnaire and using Survey Monkey

For the research element of this project a straightforward discussion topic was started on the subject of the proposed research on the forum of the website *The Anne Boleyn Files*. This thread invited members to partake in the research via an online questionnaire which was powered by the online provider 'Survey Monkey'. This process is sometimes referred to as 'netnography', which David Silverman defines as: '...virtual participant observation via interactions through online chat rooms, group blogs, social networks and discussion boards.' (Silverman 2014, p. 243) Once placed, this discussion thread was merely an invite to the participants and was not viewed as a source of raw data unless users began to make conversation regarding the research project in the actual thread itself, in which case their permission would have been sought beforehand. As of this writing no conversations have been attempted within the space of the discussion topic, although several people have expressed a desire to see the results of the completed research. To this end, some participants have provided their email addresses so that the results of the questionnaire can be sent to them at the conclusion of the research. To those who replied and volunteered to take the online questionnaire they were then emailed the relevant link, which was then later posted into the body of the discussion topic itself. The progress of the questionnaire could be saved by them on 'Survey Monkey' at any time.

After initially providing a link to the questionnaire there were at first instance no responses to the discussion topic. The approach was then revised to canvassing for participants generally on the forum before posting a further request for participants. This second attempt enlisted the help of the website's creator Claire Ridgway, in a concerted effort to further recruit participants. During the process of recruiting participants for the research there was little to no interaction with the forum/subculture as an active participant or even as an outsider, thereby avoiding almost all ethical issues of intrusion. I had created a profile on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* that had been active for several months beforehand, but at that point had only participated in a small number of discussions; these discussions had not reaching any real level of rapport with the other users of the forum. However, this familiarity with the website and its subject enabled me to build a level of trust and rapport with the users of the forum. This then worked favourably for the purposes of the research when recruiting participants on the second attempt. I was then able to refer back to the fact that I had started several conversational topics regarding various aspects of Anne Boleyn's life as well as participating in several others which were started by other members of the forum, as well as pointing out the initial attempt as recruiting participants for the research. As a fan of Anne Boleyn for several years prior to commencing the research project, I had long considered myself active in this subculture that surrounds her. This fellowship with other users helped the ease with which the request for participants was eventually answered. Despite this there were still several possible pitfalls inherent in attempting to study an online group as opposed to showcasing the lifestyle of a more classic subcultural formation; Tim May said of this problem

'...not only do the boundaries between the public and private aspects of life have the potential to become somewhat blurred, but also in seeking consent from respondents, from whom should this be obtained? If a group is 'virtual' and subject to routine changes in its composition this creates problems for those seeking to follow such a doctrine' (May 2011, p. 62)

Various other pitfalls inherent in digital ethnography are also underlined by John Postill, who says, '...where the old communities had 'streets and alleys', internet researchers are now imagining communities bound by 'bits and bytes',' (Postill 2008, p. 415). The comment is apt in underlining the gap between the old style/classic of subculture or community, with a particularly pertinent reference to "...streets and alleys' as imagined in youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s, and the current cybersubcultural revolution.

Returning to the issue of consent, in the final instance consent was obtained both by enlisting the aid of Claire Ridgway in recruiting respondents for the study and also by implying that consent was obtained through the simple act of partaking in the study. When research is conducted, often the researcher has to deal with a gatekeeper who allows access to the participants. For this research, although I attempted to carry out the research by becoming a member of the forum, the response rate was low. Therefore I engaged in a conversation with Claire Ridgway about my research. She helped me by publicising the research on the forum using her Twitter account. Therefore she could be considered a gatekeeper informally as she helped facilitate the research: '...to gain access to a site, the researcher must often go through a gatekeeper, a person who can provide a smooth entrance into the site.' (Leedy 2012, p. 143)

This method of recruiting participants to take part in a research project is – as well as being volunteer sampling - also a form of participant observation. I did however cease all regular activity on the website's forum several months ahead of posting the first request for research participants. Concerning participant observation, Leedy explains that

'...the advantage here is that the researcher might gain insights about the group and its behaviours that could not be obtained in any other way.' Conversely it may also be said that '...the disadvantage is that he or she may become so emotionally involved as to lose the ability to assess the situation accurately' (Leedy 2012, p. 143)

For the purposes of the research I also felt that my participation on the forum at the point of commencing the research project was not so substantial that I had become emotionally involved with any of the participants, or indeed vice versa. Such a level of commitment takes longer than the fairly sporadic input that I engaged in during the months leading up to the final implementation of the research project. In fact, apart from the website's owner Claire Ridgway, I had little or no personal knowledge of any of the other users of the forum. However, others were so deeply entwined in personal relationships of varying degrees that they were comfortable and able enough to interact with each other on a first name basis. To reiterate, the total number of respondents, covering both members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum and also a smaller number of members from *The Marie Stuart Society*, was 316.

The anonymous questionnaire method was chosen because it allowed for potentially sensitive questions to be asked without the resultant embarrassment or deception sometimes inherent in face-to-face interviewing techniques. Walliman confirms these limitations when he says 'the responses can be completely anonymous, allowing potentially embarrassing questions to be asked with a fair chance of getting a true reply.' (Walliman 2001, p. 236) Walliman also espouses the use of the questionnaire as a positive tool for reasons of geographical limitations – in the case of this research many of the respondents were from abroad or scattered widely around the UK – and therefore it was deemed more

practical to employ the questionnaire method for this particular research project, than to attempt to embark on any face-to-face interviews.

The questionnaire itself was comprised of a variety of different format types of questions, beginning with simple data gathering closed questions in the opening section and then longer, open questions later on. This type of combined format regarding questionnaire layout is encouraged by Simmons in Gilbert (2001) Because the initial request for research participants on *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum met with no response, I adjusted the questionnaire before reposting the request on the forum. At no point was the questionnaire piloted to any potential participants in the research process.

Regarding issues of representation, the sort of sample garnered from administering the questionnaire to the users in this way is volunteer sampling. This means placing an appeal for participants and then using those individuals who answer the appeal; this is also referred to as self-selecting sampling. The request for volunteers was placed prominently on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, and was later reposted, at which time the same request for volunteers was 'Tweeted' by Claire Ridgway. One of the main pitfalls of this type of sampling was that the sample taken may not be entirely representative of the target population of the forum. Conversely, the process of self-selection also meant that any and all respondents would be far more enthusiastic in taking part in the research because they themselves had volunteered to do so. Seale (1998) argues against the use of a more representative random sampling method from a sampling frame because the research in this case was relatively small in scale, whereas the aforementioned methods tend to work better on a larger-scale study.

The total number of respondents to the questionnaire was 316, out of a membership on the website's forum of some several thousand. However, further research into the 'posting habits' of the membership of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum revealed that only a small number – some several hundred – actually posted on a regular basis, i.e. at least on a weekly basis. Each member of the forum has certain statistics publicly available on their online profile which are visible for all to see. These statistics include the date and time of any and all of their posts, as well as their location and also the exact number of posts they had committed to the forum at any one time. This data on members' posting behaviour and patterns was observed over a period of several months and thus it was possible to conclude after this window of time that – when all of the questionnaires had been returned - that the 316 respondents would in fact be a fairly realistic representative sample of the users of the forum.

During the planning stages of the research, it was initially considered to proceed at some point with a small number of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with various members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. These interviews would have allowed for more flexibility should initial results from the questionnaire have proved to have been disappointing. This approach is supported by Flick (2011) when gathering data from participants that '...in contrast to questionnaires, interviewers can deviate from the sequence of questions' (p. 112). This would also have allowed for the asking of questions which would not have been possible on the questionnaire, for reasons of space, particularly. However, due to the unexpectedly large response to the questionnaire from the participants from *The Anne Boleyn Files* it was eventually decided against this form of data gathering; it has been

mentioned here merely for the purposes of creating a complete map of the research journey, and of the various avenues of data gathering considered before the final form of the questionnaire was settled upon.

Although the possibility of the semi-structured face-to-face interviews was discounted for the research at a relatively early stage, there were conducted a series of face-to-face 'pop interviews' with members of the general public at locations pertinent to both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots. 'The Anne Boleyn Literary Festival' at Blickling Hall in 2012 was one of the locations used for this side-line to the main body of the research. These 'pop interviews' have been used in order to provide some 'scaffolding' for the findings in the main questionnaire, again with the proviso at the outset that had the initial results been somewhat less abundant than the data eventually received from the questionnaire, they might then be included. These 'pop interviews', as well as offering up opportunities for photo-elicitation, also yielded valuable insights into the emotional attachment aspects, as Seale explains, '...another way of analysing the interview as a topic is to understand the talk as generating various versions of preferred self-identity, containing moral elements' (Seale 1998, p. 214)

The 'Survey Monkey' online questionnaire which was completed by both users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* and also by members of *The Marie Stuart Society* was a self-completion questionnaire. It was composed of forty seven questions divided up over several sections, covering the topics of both Anne Boleyn and also the possibility of a 'contrasting cult' concerning Mary Queen of Scots. Users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum were able at any time to link to the questionnaire via the link embedded in the discussion topic that had been started on the forum, or by following the link sent out by Claire Ridgway. For members of *The Marie Stuart Society*, the questionnaire was made available to all members via an email link provided by the president of that organisation, Margaret Lumsdaine. The results of the online questionnaire could be viewed at any time by the participants during the point when it was 'live' and when they were still in the process of responding to it. As Bryman (2001, p. 129) states, with this research method '...there is no interviewer to ask the questions', which gives the scope for a far greater breadth of answers to what may be a particularly sensitive subject, and a greater assurance of anonymity for ethical considerations.

Although the issue of consent was covered by the simple fact of the participant taking part in the questionnaire, consent forms were prepared in the early stages of the research. These were rendered redundant because of the anonymous nature of the questionnaire. All of the closed-questions were pre-coded, and sufficient space was given over to longer, open-ended questions, wherein the format allowed for answers of considerable depth and breadth. It was estimated for the benefit of the participants that the time taken to complete the questionnaire could be several hours. However, with the software made available to them by the 'Survey Monkey', participants had the option to save their progress and then to return to it at a later date. The email feedback received after the research had been completed indicated that most participants filled in the questionnaire over a course of several weeks rather than several hours. A full breakdown of an uncompleted version of the questionnaire can be seen in the appendices, as well as a full sample of one of the completed questionnaires from an anonymous participant from *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum.

There were various possible difficulties with implementing the research method chosen, as Walliman explains in regards to the notion of administering the questionnaire

‘...they limit the range and scope of questioning – questions needs to be simple to follow and understand so complex question structures are not possible; prompting and probing are impossible, and this limits the scope of answers and the possibility of getting additional data’ (Walliman 2006, p. 88)

It was found that not all of these issues affected the setting out of the ‘Survey Monkey’ questionnaire, because the format offered was so flexible, and also because the open-ended questions were sufficiently worded to allow for the in-depth responses received from the participants. Prompting was possible with the rolling format of the questionnaire, and it was envisaged correctly that a well-worded question could encompass an almost infinite range of possible avenues for response. Adequate space and the ability to return and edit answers at a later date on the part of the respondent also meant that the scope of answers was almost endlessly variable. This also meant that the final results were comprised of an extremely large amount of raw data. Also the issue of a low-return rate was avoided because of the fact that the time allowed for the completion of the questionnaire was over a period of some several months, and also the fact that the participants had been garnered through the use of voluntary sampling. This meant that they were more willing to participate to an in-depth degree than would other participants who had been recruited using different sampling frames.

The final design of the questionnaire was built by choosing from a variety of templates on the ‘Survey Monkey’ website.

Away from the possible pitfalls of distributing an online questionnaire to a wide range of anonymous participants, another possible limitation to the validity of the research may have emerged through the potential neglect of the notion of feminist methodology, whereby the idea of the male perspective on the given subject is taken entirely for granted. For instance, for the purposes of this research project: I am a male studying what I believe to be an iconic historical female, and studying the media-generated modern image of her from the point of view of a group of internet users who, on the basis of the findings, are mostly female. Taking this into consideration the possibility of feminist standpoint theory is a possible issue in terms of viewpoint, where it may be that only the group of women themselves under discussion who have the right to judge whether they consider Anne Boleyn to be a feminist icon. However, providing an actual answer to the all-important question of whether or not they themselves considered Anne Boleyn to be an icon in the course of the questionnaire thus negated what might have been a possible stumbling point in regards to this aspect of the research project. This eventuality was also covered by marking some of the other questions in the research to be specifically concerned with issues of gender. This issue of feminist standpoint theory would cause some apprehension when it came to recruiting participants for the research on *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, who were aware of my gender before they undertook to take part in the research. It was feared that their responding to the call from a male researcher might have been viewed by them as somehow ‘less credible’ than the idea of responding to a female researcher. This proved not to be the case as the final response was considerable, and the fact that I was a relatively rare male member of the forum may in fact have served to pique interest in other users.

4.3 The Questionnaire

One of the main purposes of the questionnaire was to highlight common themes in the behaviour of the respondents in a set of questions surrounding their liking and affinity for Anne Boleyn. The purpose was to establish whether or not a 'credible' subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn as a media-mediated 'historical celebrity' existed, with its consequent level of commitment that would therefore constitute it as being a viable subculture by academic sociological standards. This would be demonstrated via the use of symbolic interactionism. Therefore, the basis outline of the questionnaire was, as Leedy puts it, to

'...pose a series of questions to willing participants; summarises their responses with percentages, frequency counts, or more sophisticated statistical indexes; and then draws inferences about a particular population from the responses of the sample.' (Leedy 2012, p. 189)

Among other things, the questionnaire contained a series of questions that canvassed the reading habits of the participants. The questions included queries into how much historical works *and* fiction the respondents read regarding Anne Boleyn; how many 'pilgrimages' to places of interest they embarked on; and how much merchandising they purchased. Perhaps most importantly the questionnaire also asked why the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* liked Anne Boleyn enough to participate in the forum on a regular/semi regular basis; all of this with a view to gauging how their answers would give clear and prime examples of symbolic interactionism. The questionnaire also measured how much time they devoted to the subject in regards to general hours spent online, as well as the aforementioned issues of reading books or watching films and TV series concerned with Anne Boleyn. The questionnaire also asked what they felt their possible affinity with Anne Boleyn was, and whether or not they regard her as any sort of a role model or even as an iconic figure; whether they regard their time spent on both the forum and on the subject in general as a 'hobby' or in fact as a 'passion'. From these answers it was possible to isolate several specific instances of symbolic interactionism alone. Exactly the same objectives were borne in mind with those participants to whom the questionnaire was administered for *The Marie Stuart Society*, who were responding to the 'compare and contrast' questions section of the questionnaire.

Finally, the questionnaire also explored the 'contentious' idea of Anne Boleyn's 'unsafe' status as a role model or subcultural icon, by asking the participants to consider their thoughts and feelings regarding what were termed as 'the less salubrious sides of her case'. It was in this section of the questionnaire that issues of 'fascination', 'repulsion' and 'the abject' were discreetly explored. Using the data acquired it was then possible to establish links between Anne Boleyn as a possible subcultural icon and the 'type' of person attracted to that mainly media-mediated image. In turn this could be related to the personality type typified in a 'classic' or traditional subculture, and then by searching for similarities among those who use or frequent cybersubcultures, or those straddling the post-subcultural debate. These issues of preferred self-identity in relation to an idealised iconic figure are further expanded and confirmed when the issue of symbolic interactionism between the subject and their chosen object is taken into account.

4.4 Data analysis

The production of meaning between the participants and the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn was key to understanding how the participants formed and furthered those images in their own minds. They used this to gain some sort of significance and meaning within their own lives, thereby partaking in an often unconscious process of symbolic interactionism with that image. In other words, to repeat, if subculture is seen in this instance as the production of meaning, therefore the research questionnaire was asking: what does Anne Boleyn mean to this certain subset of society? Symbolic interactionism, to reiterate Chapter 3 of this thesis, was derived from the work of the American George Herbert Mead and explored by the Chicago School. It produces meaning and cohesion for the individual by shaping how they act in relation to the object or person from whom they derive a sense of meaning. They are then further formed in this fledgling identity by social interaction with the likeminded, which completes the whole and forms the identity shape that might for the criteria of subculture be considered 'subcultural'. Symbolic interactionism seems to work best, for the purposes of this research, where a subculture centres around a particular figure as opposed to a general lifestyle. These issues of preferred self-identity outside of what is considered the 'mainstream' often involve the forging of extremely close friendships, and often especially with participants who have never met each other in real life but who interact intensely in the virtual world of the internet forum or chatroom.

In analysing the results of the research, thematic analysis has been employed in order to tease out these instances of symbolic interactionism, and then relating them back to the research question. Thematic analysis thereby gives a voice to the every patterns of the participants' lives, and highlights specific instances whereby they make a connection with the various media-mediated images of Anne Boleyn. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke pinpoint the necessity for using thematic analysis in this type of research when they say

'...for instance, you might wish to provide a rich thematic description of your entire data set, so that the reader gets a sense of the predominant or important themes. In this case, the themes you identify, code, and analyse would need to be an accurate reflection of the content of the entire data set.' (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 83)

By using thematic analysis in this way, it has highlighted common issues in the behaviour of the respondents to establish whether or not a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn exists, with its consequent level of commitment to the point where it may be considered a lifestyle choice. This is the benchmark for marking out what might be considered a subculture if the research adheres to the 'classic' model of a subculture as espoused by the use of subcultural theory. However, provision has been made to more realistically cite this new cybersubculture more within the post-subcultural sphere of debate. Symbolic interactionism has been used with the thematic analysis in order to highlight patterns of behaviour that coincided with researched and observed patterns of behaviour of established 'classic' subcultural formations, to look for instances of similarity or down right duplication; traits in the Anne Boleyn cybersubculture that mirrored existing subcultural styles are documented in subsequent chapters. These led the research to conclude that a viable subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn did in fact exist.

Once the existent of a viable subculture – or cybersubculture – had been established, it was important to address the main population demographic of that cybersubculture. Because a great majority of the participants were female, alongside the original hypothesis that a subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn would be compromised almost entirely of women, the research studied some aspects of feminist subcultural theory. This has been applied to those strands of thought most concerned with the emergence of subcultures surrounding and/or created by women, or those for the almost exclusive use of women.

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During the research, it became possible that the subculture formed around Anne Boleyn may have possessed some aspects of what is termed a new social movement, or an 'NMS'. New social movements, among other things '...also sought goals of changing cultural values and asserting new identities, concepts that traditional political theories could not address' (Williams 2011, p. 171). New social movements have also been classified as '...roughly, environmental, antinuclear, peace, feminist, and gay and lesbian.' (Handler 1992, p. 697) Therefore – especially with reference to feminism - the notion of new social movements is a field which has some bearing on the findings of the research, because there is no doubt that the results of the research questionnaire bore out the fact that Anne Boleyn is considered by many to be a feminist icon. Handler also comments on the fact that the main drive of the new social movement is to subvert dominant discourse; there is no restriction on what form or type of discourse may be open to attack – macro or micro - and given that the tagline of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum is 'The REAL TRUTH about Anne Boleyn - The Most Happy', that there is in fact a very firm notion of also placing the subculture as part of a new wave of online social movements. By means of more rigorous academic research, members of the forum seek to dispel some of the more fanciful 'fake news' and dubious 'facts' that have percolated around the image of Anne Boleyn, media-mediated or otherwise, for so long. In his book *Networks of outrage and hope* (2015), Manuel Castells cites the internet as being an essential tool for the modern-day NMS:

'...because people can only challenge domination by connecting with each other, by sharing outrage, by feeling togetherness, and by constructing alternative projects for themselves and for society at large.' (Castells 2015, p. 257)

Castell's work was cited by Darin Barney in the previous chapter when discussing the evolution of the social platform (3.3).

Paolo Gerbaudo says of the new social movement

'...social media can be used to construct a sense of solidarity within a diverse constituency, sharing a common sense of indignation, anger, frustration and perception of shared victimhood in face of a corrupt system.' (Gerbaudo 2012, p. 161)

When we differentiate between classic social movements and digital ones, we can see that *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum represents a new form because it uses a digital platform. The question is whether digital social movements become part of reality. In the case of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, this only becomes a part of reality when the pilgrimage to the sites where Anne Boleyn lived or died takes place. Victoria Carty makes explicit the link between the online and the new social movement when she says

‘...over the past several years there has been an explosion of protest activity among young people around the globe as they embrace a new vision of the future and demand radical changes in the existing economic and political systems.’ (Carty 2015, p. 3)

This reiterates what has been said about the credo of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website and their desire to disseminate a more accurate portrayal of Anne Boleyn amidst the more populist ‘fake news’.

The issue of new social movements is nevertheless an aside in regard to the main thrust of the research, but an aside that nevertheless needed to be noted.

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Also covered during the course of the data analysis was the issue of ‘changing cultural values’, which is tied in with the possible idea that the image of Anne Boleyn needs to be rehabilitated; as is clear, this is certainly something that the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum are heavily invested in. Much of these emotive issues came to the fore when issues of symbolic interactionism were raised, when the respondents related issues and incidents in their own lives to the fact – not to mention the various myths and legends - that had sprung up surrounding Anne Boleyn. Many of the respondents stated that one of their main aims in participating in the forum was to help further rehabilitate the image of Anne Boleyn, thereby creating in some sense a dichotomy, whereby this media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn was the thing that had attracted them in the first place. The sense was that somehow that image of Anne Boleyn was flawed, and that it needed to be presented in a more sympathetic and perhaps also a more historically rigorous light. This is very much the manifesto for *The Anne Boleyn Files* website.

Analysis of the various media forms featuring Anne Boleyn capitalised on these flawed aspects of her image. Films and TV series, historical novels and also media advertising campaigns, have shown how the image of Anne Boleyn has been developed – to a great extent by her fan following, but also by authors of both historical fact as well as fiction - into a seductive figure of attraction and tragedy. In regard to this aspect of the research, Bryman explains the various advantages content analysis has in the investigation of themes within these various texts by saying

‘...it is a very flexible method that can be applied to a variety of different media. In a sense, it is not a research method in that it is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts rather than a means of generating data’ (Bryman 2008, p. 274)

To this end some content analysis of various books, films and TV series featuring Anne Boleyn from a chronological stance have been employed, an overview of which has already been documented in the previous chapters. This analysis bore out the cyclical nature of interest in Anne Boleyn, an interest that has increased dramatically in the last decade or so. There were surges in interest around the advent of the Second World War, although these were more focused on Elizabeth I, Anne Boleyn’s daughter, who was featured in several feature films in a role akin to that of national heroine. A film about Mary Queen of Scots was made by the opposing Nazi party in Germany at around the same time. This film depicted Elizabeth I as a force representing the worst aspects of Britain’s colonial past, and the Scots

Queen as an unfortunate victim of that ravenous foreign policy. As a further example of the cyclical nature of the interest, it was then not until the 1960s that there was a significant surge of interest in Anne Boleyn, coinciding with the later stages of several of the civil rights movements.

4.5 Participants: Mapping the Journey

I had joined *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum several months before asking the participants for help in the research project. The experience during my time as a member revealed that the forum was an internet space mainly used by women in their early to late twenties, for discussing not only Anne Boleyn but all other related Tudor topics, with an emphasis on the impact and influence of the-then relatively recent *The Tudors* TV series. This preconceived idea, that the forum would be comprised of almost entirely females, was partly based on prejudice on my part; even before joining the forum I had considered myself 'unusual' as a male with an active interest in Anne Boleyn, even though several of the seminal factual works on the subject were written by men. At this point I had already begun to delve into the archive of previous posts on the website's forum, and to discover that the majority of the posts and the users were women as well, and that men were in a distinct minority. These initial and somewhat prejudiced preconceptions on my part were also influenced by previous work into online forums carried out for my undergraduate research degree. For the purposes of that research I had surveyed the followers of popular horror fiction writer Anne Rice in an online forum that these fans frequented. I had then administered to them a questionnaire similar in scope and style to the one that would be employed for this research project. Many of the participants on that Anne Rice forum were self-confessed 'girl geeks', women in their late teens and early twenties who spent a great deal of time online in chatrooms on websites devoted to their chosen topic of choice, including in this instance the Anne Rice website. There were some male participants on the forum but they were few and the majority were openly gay; this seemed to allow for a more relaxed atmosphere of interaction between the men and the women (none of the respondents from *The Anne Boleyn Files* at any point stated that they were openly gay). Having conducted that research, I carried to *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum this initial idea of what might be found amongst the general demographic of the users.

However, I was to find that subcultures surrounding strong female figures, something of a novelty when I first researched them in regard to Anne Rice, had spiralled with the advent (and subsequent decline) of TV icons such as 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer', and also with the rise in popularity and proliferation of 'slash fiction'. Despite this relatively quick crest and decline, writers like Anne Rice, as well as characters like 'Buffy', had in fact given rise to a new-wave of highly visible female role models in the world of literature and entertainment. When *The Tudors*, with its stylised depiction of Anne Boleyn, first appeared, it seemed only a matter of time before there would follow some sort of an online presence. That came within a couple of years with the advent of *The Anne Boleyn Files*.

Only 22 of men responded to the research questionnaire out of the total of 316 respondents. This number includes the respondents from *The Marie Stuart Society* as well, which had a much higher concentration of males amongst its membership. This small number of respondents indicates that the males were still very much in the minority on *The*

Anne Boleyn Files, or perhaps were present and aware of the research project but chose not to respond for other reasons. Perhaps, cynically, less of an inclination to join the struggle of rehabilitating either Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots' memory is one theory.

Although they are an online community, various members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum have on occasion met up in real life (or 'IRL', as is the popular abbreviated online term); perhaps once a year and there were a disproportionate amount of men at the meetings compared to the apparent membership of the forum. After some investigation it turned out that many of these men were in fact the husbands or partners of the female members, and were simply accompanying them on the various infrequent outings. In the end, the overall impression of the lack of male users on *The Anne Boleyn Files* reinforced certain aspects of my original hypothesis regarding the general demographic of the users of a forum devoted to the rehabilitation of a calumniated Tudor queen. Clearly there needed to be a substantial level of emotional investment in the topic, something that might be lacking in your average heterosexual male of the relevant age, when it came to espousing the cause of Anne Boleyn.

4.6 Ethical concerns

Ethical considerations in regard to the administration of the 'Survey Monkey' questionnaire and also the research in general were taken into account following the guidelines laid out by the BSA (British Sociological Association). The research project was also approved by the University Research Ethics Committee in 2013. However, several issues arose out of the nature of the research, and these are addressed here.

To begin, because of the personal nature of the online forum investigated, it is worth referring again to Weinberger's *Small Pieces Loosely Joined* (2002) and also to sections of Matt Hills' *Fan Cultures* (2002). Both of these books have echoed the sentiment of *The Anne Boleyn Files* users in establishing the internet as a site for the possible growth of a subcultural movement around a divisive figure like Anne Boleyn. In fact, Hills comments that; '...these spaces function as 'interpretive communities' while also providing a shared cultural space for intensely private sentiments and attachments' (p. 182).

These were considerations that were taken into account ethically and also when wording the questionnaire, and again these complied with the guidelines that were laid out by the British Sociological Association. The questionnaire was completed in one draft and not piloted before it was administered, and with a minimal amount of tweaking to the various questions therein when the initial post on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* failed to garner any interest. Simmons in Gilbert (2001) also highlights the problems inherent with issues of over or under-reporting personal findings, as does Seale (1998). Some of the answers given by participants to some of the open-ended questions were so lengthy that for reasons of space it was possible – and also pertinent – to 'cherry-pick' the relevant avenues of exploration. The possibility of under-reporting meant there was always a danger that some interesting new angle on the research results might be overlooked, whereas over-reporting and trying to develop new and interesting themes meant on several occasions I was confronted with avenues of analysis different to the one employed for the purposes of the research. When this happened I have made a point in the body of the work of mentioning the other possible avenues of exploration, but without expanding upon them to any significant degree.

Any of the major issues of participant involvement were avoided due to the anonymous nature of the questionnaire. This meant that the issues raised by Walliman (2006), such as by '...faking friendship you might encourage the interviewee to open up' were sidestepped, and also underlined by the fact that up until the point when the questionnaire was administered, my own participation in the forum had been sporadic. Issues of direct and non-direct observation are covered by McNeill and Chapman (1985). Correspondence with the participants was limited to the distribution of the questionnaire, although, as previously stated, several of the participants subsequently emailed to ask about the outcomes of the research. Claire Ridgway has also asked to be kept informed of the progress of the research project.

4.7 The interviewees

The interviewees were contacted by the posting of a thread on *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum in the 'Anne Boleyn' section of the forum. The title of the final thread was 'Fan Boleyn – The cult of Anne Boleyn and what she means to YOU'. A similarly titled topic was posted almost two months earlier, entitled 'Research into Anne Boleyn – volunteers wanted', but although this topic was viewed by members of the forum a total of 208 times, there were no responses. It was at around this time that I attended a performance of the Anne Boleyn play *Fallen in Love – the secret heart of Anne Boleyn* at the Tower of London on the 19th of May, the anniversary of Anne Boleyn's execution in the self-same location. Whilst there, flyers were distributed that had originally been handed out during 'The Anne Boleyn Literary Festival' at Blickling Hall in 2012, the previous year, and then only to a small number of respondents, some of whom were already members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. On that occasion few responses were received to the request for research participants, but those that were given were overwhelmingly positive in nature; their details were filed ahead of the time when it would be appropriate to email them the questionnaire. On this second attempt to recruit participants in a medium outside of the internet it was decided to target the Tower of London event specifically because it seemed logical that the significance of the date would attract a larger number of dedicated Anne Boleyn fans. Claire Ridgway was in attendance at the performance of the play, and picked up one of the flyers although in the end it was not possible to meet her face to face. She was contacted by email and informed of the existence and nature of the research, attaching to the email all of the relevant information. She was also told of the thread previously posted on her website's forum - with little apparent success - and asked whether she would put her name to a new thread asking for research participants if it were posted in the same section. This she did, and as stated she also 'Tweeted' the link on her Twitter account and posted it on her Facebook page as well (this aspect of Claire Ridgway as gatekeeper was also covered in 4.2).

4.8 Conclusion

The methodology employed in this research project has been mainly thematic in nature, employed with the aim of establishing whether or not there is a subculture surrounding the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. Once this was verified it was then possible to gain a greater understanding of how human behaviour forms various social structures such as subcultures, especially in new and relatively untried social arenas such as websites and their attendant forums or chatrooms. By making a case for the bridge between fandom and

subculture in previous chapters, it has also been possible to pave the way for a clear example of where the former becomes the latter in regard to the sections exploring the role of the participants in this chapter, as their journeys in taking part in the research project were mapped out. Fandom has been defined, and now paves the way for a new understanding of the concept as something progressing out of the traditional idea of subculture and into new and unexplored spheres, alongside and as part of the ongoing post-subcultural debate. Volunteer sampling allowed for a larger response to the questionnaire than was first anticipated, and also gave a greater credence to those responses because the impetus was formed by those who wished to participate in the research, and who clearly had a passion for the subject in question.

Chapter 5: The beatification of Anne Boleyn

5.1 Introduction

This chapter opens by sifting through the basic but essential data offered up by the respondents to the research questionnaire, ascertaining ages, occupations and locations. Whilst this may seem on the surface to be fairly standard data, age and occupations factor heavily into what is understood about the classical subcultural model, and any variations will serve to highlight how the new cybersubcultural style differs from the aforementioned, and also highlights what similarities remain. The chapter then moves on to explore some of the unexpected findings that came up during the exploration of the research data; this data has been divided up into two separate sections and covers issues of authenticity and how *The Anne Boleyn Files* experience might relate to other online forums, and then the commodification of Anne Boleyn, and how merchandising plays an increased role in the sphere of the cybersubculture, in a way unrivalled in the old subcultural style.

5.2 The Anne Boleyn Files - using the findings from the forum

To commence the study of the findings from the research into the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website, there now follows a thematic analysis of the responses to the questions from the Survey Monkey questionnaire. From this analysis the main emerging themes are highlighted; these will then be linked back to the original hypothesis and also to form a continuation of the research laid out in both chapters of the literature review. The research questionnaire was originally divided up into several sections with question numbers beginning and ending in each section, but for the purposes of thematic analysis the questions are now presented simply according to the discovery of the emerging themes, and not in a strictly chronological order. This method of presenting findings is recommended by Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007), among others. With so much data available it became merely a matter of picking from the rich responses on offer, to find the answers that best illuminated the original hypothesis.

Although symbolic interactionism forms the basis of the theoretical framework by which the research sought to understand the way in which a potentially subcultural audience engages with a media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, a direct question to this end was not itself framed in the questionnaire. This was because it was felt that the term was too laden with sociological 'jargon' for the layman and might cause people to skip the question rather than attempting to tackle it head-on. Instead, carefully wording several of the questions in the questionnaire helped tease out those important instances of symbolic interactionism, among them, for instance, did the forum members sufficiently understand the complexities and contradictions inherent in moulding such a divisive figure into an icon? And did they understand how choosing such a contentious figure reflected their own sense of place and agency within the world? The way in which the questionnaire was constructed sought to understand the subjective positions of the respondents in relation to both the world at large and also the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn they had engaged with in order to make sense of that world.

Question one of the research questionnaire asked the respondents 'How old are you?' For this question a range of six possible answers was provided. The youngest available option was the '18 to 25' age bracket, whilst the oldest available option was the '65+' age bracket. The largest number of respondents were in the '18 to 25' age bracket, a total of 87 participants, or 27.53% of the total data set; the smallest number of respondents were in the '65+' age bracket, a total of 19 participants, or 6.01%. From the '18 to 25' age bracket upwards the statistics decreased with each subsequent option available. The results of this question appeared to indicate that the membership of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum conformed with the somewhat unassailable idea of subculture being tied up intrinsically with youth culture, with the largest section of the forum's membership being placed firmly in the youngest age bracket. This finding echoes Hodgkinson's words in chapter one of this thesis (2015), whereby these new online spaces are classed as 'post-subculture' but are still very much observed with a youth membership in mind. However, the combined figures from the other age brackets outnumbered the '18 to 25' age bracket, somewhat destabilizing this initial stereotype. Given the way that TV programmes like *The Tudors* were marketed towards a younger audience, this trend toward a somewhat older membership was a surprise, as it had not been anticipated that the research would break ground in this particular direction. The younger participants were the most prolific when it came to posting on *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, however, confirming the fact that '...members of youth subcultures tend to be highly visible' (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995, p. 7).

The results of the questionnaire also extended what has already been stated about the way in which the various members of online forums form deeper social connections through the relatively anonymous window of the internet. The results also reinforced what is known of how these online communities are first formed and of how users of these spaces come together and communicate under a variety of aliases. This has resulted in new patterns of subcultural interaction that are basically unavailable to the more traditional 'classical' subcultural formations seen in the 1950s and 1960s. These new patterns of interaction can be seen as symptomatic of the wider incursion of the digital age into social life – Facebook and Twitter, again - and have allowed for the greater sharing of stories and ideas on a more global scale, as evinced by the number of respondents from around the world regarding the research questionnaire.

Following on from the age of the respondents, question four of the research questionnaire asked 'Where do you live?' The largest response to this question by far was the fourth option of 'overseas (please specify country)', which accounted for a total of 208 of the participants, or 65.82%. The next highest set of responses came from those who lived within England, which accounted for a total of 81 of the participants, or 25.63%. The other 27 participants were from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Although it has been established that Anne Boleyn can be construed as a very 'English' subject, it was evident from these findings that her fanbase nevertheless has a very global makeup. The large overseas set of respondents tallied with the theme of an online global forum, and how a cybersubculture could be a global phenomenon in the way that a more classic style of subculture never could. It showcased the ability of the internet to be able to reach out to all four corners of the world and encompass users regardless of their geographical location. This was a feature

that would have been entirely alien to the classic subcultural configuration typified in the 1960s, when there were few means for similar subcultures and their attendant styles to come together in such a way. In analysing the data it was discovered that several of the respondents had travelled from the US in order to undertake 'pilgrimages' to places associated with Anne Boleyn and the Tudors: respondents had made specific trips to the Tower of London *because* it was where Anne Boleyn (and also Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey) were executed.

Of the responses from the United States, these included participants from Chicago and Texas, among others. This cemented the idea that the biggest fanbase for Anne Boleyn abroad centred on those respondents resident in the US. This clarified the idea that the US has long since had an interest in the British monarchy, both past and present, and that this interest is in some way disproportionate to that evinced by other countries; one possible reason was a heightened interest in ancestral links and a great interest in religious affiliation in the US. This also became apparent in regard to the 'compare and contrast' part of the research, whereby issues of authenticity regarding the Anne Boleyn fans were ascertained when comparing them to like-minded fans of Mary Queen of Scots. A total of 61.84% of the respondents – or 94 respondents – said that they were interested in Mary Queen of Scots and went on to answer section five; 38.16% of respondents said that they were not interested in Mary Queen of Scots and thus skipped over section five. There were several interesting overseas responses that tied in with the appeal Mary Queen of Scots has for an American audience. One respondent commented

'She's sort of idealized among pre-teen aged Catholic girls in 1960's middle America. She's all 'died for her faith' and had on that rebellious red petticoat at her execution. Which was so grisly and done so badly. I could throw up a little bit just thinking about it.'

Another respondent made the link between Anne Boleyn's daughter Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots, in doing so using terminology normally employed by fans of the *Twilight* series of books and movies and the promotional material used therein:

'Since I got interested in Elizabeth I. My interest in Mary is mostly negative. I am a member of team Elizabeth.'

Where there was a relatively sharp divide in the results of the research in this particular area was over the matter of religion, and also over ideas of national identity. This was shown particularly with the – expected – contrast on either side of the border between the supporters of Anne Boleyn and those of Mary Queen of Scots. Anne Boleyn was an Englishwoman, one who played a significant part in the Reformation and the formation of what eventually became the Church of England. Her daughter Elizabeth I continued the work began by her parents, and prided herself of being from absolutely English stock. However, Elizabeth I famously avoided referring to her mother's besmirched memory, and equally famously invoked her father's fairly frequently, especially in her speech rallying English troops against the Spanish Armada at Tilbury;

'I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman,
But I have the heart and stomach of a king,
And of a King of England too...' (Somerset 1997, p. 591)

Although Mary Queen of Scots was descended from the Tudor progenitor Henry VII (she was his great granddaughter) she was half Scottish and half French, through her parents James V of Scotland and the French Mary of Guise. She was a Catholic, and a Catholic martyr at that. There have for instance, been calls for her to be canonised at the Vatican several times, the cause stalled by virtue of the 'murky' aspects of her case, namely her unsolved involvement – or lack of it – in the murder of her second husband and subsequent marriage to the chief suspect.

Mary Queen of Scots was executed for treason because she plotted to murder Elizabeth I and then have England invaded by foreign forces, placing her on the throne she believed was rightfully hers. Therefore, from this perspective she is the polar opposite subject to the 'essentially English' Anne Boleyn. What Mary Queen of Scots may gain in the sheer amount of literary works given over to her cause she also possibly lacks in the simple fact that she is often perceived as a foreigner herself by British audiences. The established church remains today the Church of England, and even today Catholics are barred from ascending to the throne.

In a multifaith society it is however possible that this complex history may make Mary Queen of Scots an even more appealing figure. However, initial forays into the world of *The Marie Stuart Society* at least seem to indicate that their membership is made up almost entirely of white middle class Scottish and English members. The only visible divide comes from the fact that there is a 'Scottish branch' and an 'English branch,' perhaps due to the sheer geographical breadth of the ground covered during her lifetime. This may also be out of a sense of the Scottish feeling of 'ownership' of the subject, although issues of symbolic interactionism here were far more difficult to discern perhaps because of a perceived reluctance on the part of the respondents to embrace the idea of identity in their responses; the younger respondents questioned about Anne Boleyn were far more forthcoming when it came to discussing issues of identity, whereas the generally older male respondents regarding Mary Queen of Scots were not.



The somewhat sinister - i.e. anti-Catholic - promotional material released ahead of Mary's appearance in 'Elizabeth – The Golden Age'; Mary is played by Samantha Morton

Issues of national identity also manifested strongly when dealing with Anne Boleyn in comparison to her predecessor, the Spanish Catherine of Aragon. In Spain the term 'Anna Bolena' is still used to signify an untrustworthy, sexually unscrupulous woman. While in the image above the Catholic women are depicted dressed in black and lurking menacingly in the shadows –whereas Elizabeth – the Protestant – is depicted as virginal and white. Anne Boleyn was said to have stated, during her rise in the English court, as saying that she wished that all Spaniards could be drowned at the bottom of the sea. There has been a groundswell of support for Catherine of Aragon in recent years, with a number of new biographies – Giles Tremlett's 2010 effort in particular - alongside a sense that she was the real victim of the various turbulences that marked the Tudor religious schism and the king's new marriage. However, the sense on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* is still very much 'Pro Anne/anti Catherine' or vice version, again with echoes of the *Twilight* movies and their promotional material.

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Question two of the research questionnaire - 'What best describes your occupation?' – gave among the various answers from the respondents 'office assistant' to 'civil servant' and

many others besides. Alongside these were several participants who were 'retired', and also a number of one-off occupations aside the more generic answers, such as 'magazine journalist' and 'fitness teacher'. There was a higher than expected proportion of employment among the entirety of the participants, a trend which served to shake off some aspects of the standard subcultural image of the unemployed or 'delinquent' youth epitomised in the 1950s and 1960 subcultural movements. This also served to shake off the more modern image associated with fandom, of that of the 'geek'. As Bury has stated (2005), when *Star Trek's* William Shatner told fans to "Get a life" on *Saturday Night Live*, those fans were '...mothers, daughters, girlfriends, wives, administrative assistants, fundraisers, computer analysts, doctors, students, quilt makers, costume designers and technical writers to name but a few roles/identities (Bury 2005, p. 210) However, the anonymous aspect of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum resurfaced in this regard, with few users expanding the sphere of conversation to include activities/job/lifestyle outside of their central interest in Anne Boleyn. This is one of the ways in which a cybersubculture differs from the more classic subcultural formations, with the latter's emphasis on face-to-face interaction and shared life experiences.

The responses to question three – 'Are you married, single, or in a relationship (please give brief detail)' – served to further dismiss what may be considered conventional subcultural wisdom. To wit, there has been a tendency to regard the province of the online forum as the refuge of the lonely or the socially awkward, but this trend in regard to the responses to question three proved very much to the contrary. There were also some unexpected, unconventional and enigmatic answers, such as this from one participant:

'I'm in a relationship with someone who isn't sure if he wants to be with me, but won't give me the opportunity to break up with him'.

Another participant provided disclosed the information that they were married '...to a dinosaur'. Again, this type of answer was suggestive of the blurring between the private and public which is frequently played out in the arena of the forum, a phenomenon more often than not facilitated by online communication. Several other respondents either lived with their partners or were in long term relationships and a handful were divorced or separated. In other words, very few of the respondents actually cited themselves as being single and therefore challenge the perception that the members of the group should be viewed as either lonely or socially awkward. These more mature relationships further underlined the differences between online subcultural norms and 1960s subcultures.

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In the responses to the questionnaire, various respondents favoured depictions of Anne Boleyn on screen and in historical fiction. Fictional accounts were the first point of call for these respondents' induction into the world of the Tudors.

Two questions centred around depictions of Anne Boleyn in film and TV, as well as in books, and these questions brought forth answers most closely linked to instances of symbolic interactionism. For example,Meaning was derived from these portrayals of Anne Boleyn via Blumer's theory (1969) cited in chapter 3 of this thesis, whereby human beings

act toward things on the basis of the meanings that they hold for them. This was then used as a template to fashion identity and meaning in the modern world, harnessing the various modern depictions of a long-dead Tudor queen. One of the respondents said in this regard

‘...I was first interested in her daughter Elizabeth. It was through reading bios on Elizabeth that I happened upon Anne Boleyn. Antonia Fraser once called Anne “...curiously modern” and I agree with this sentiment. It is perhaps what sparked my interest in her. I could relate to her on some personal level.’

The research also challenged preconceived ideas about subcultural formation in regard to how the historical significance of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots has been taught in school. Here the respondents cited a far earlier feeling of ‘response’ to the subject matter than the normal timeframe during which ‘traditional’ subcultural identities are most often formed - the early teens - when exposure to popular and alternate culture are often at their peak. This relates to G. W. Bernard’s comment (2011) in chapter 3 of this thesis, regarding Anne Boleyn’s engaging life story. The way in which the stories of the two women were taught in pre-teen school emphasised not only the dramatic nature of their lives and their downfalls, but also painted them with the alluring double halo of both saint and sinner, or to put in more modern parlance, the ‘virgin/whore’ dichotomy. There was an increased emphasis placed on the Tudor period in history in curricula observed for the last thirty years or so, for example, as has been made clear from the evidence presented in previous chapters; aside from the frequent mass media coverage this was not entirely unexpected, as the Tudor period was a time of great religious and social upheaval; it also marked the creation of a particular ‘myth’ of Englishness and type of national identity. Along with the events of the Civil War and then the First and Second World Wars aside, it remains perhaps the most taught subject in history in the pre-teen school curriculum.

5.3 ‘Spirit and bravery’ - the development of a feminist icon

Another of the overarching themes that emerged from the results of the research suggests that the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn was viewed by many of her fans as presenting her as a feminist icon. This is both a natural and also a logical progression from the previous finding concerning *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum as a subculture and also the wider issue of cybersubcultures as safe online spaces for women. Once the safe online space was provided, the cybersubculture could flourish, fashioning the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn into what could be considered a feminist icon. However, the research also identifies the ways in which discrepancies or flaws in this image in the historical ‘evidence’ were often either whitewashed, airbrushed, or merely dismissed in favour of the desired image of Anne Boleyn which had been crafted cyclically in popular culture. This cyclical amalgamation of images, fused into one current, coherent form, then represented to some extent the essence of that particular generation in question, and more especially the social mores of that generation. It is worth at this point reiterating the words of Anne Boleyn’s biographer, Eric Ives, in chapter 1 of this thesis, when he called for her virtual canonization as a feminist icon:

‘...she was the most influential and important queen consort this country has ever had. Indeed, Anne deserves to be a feminist icon, a woman in a society which was, above all else, male-dominated, who broke through the glass ceiling by sheer character and initiative.’ (Ives 2004, p. xv)

Ives' work was venerated and often discussed on the forum of *The Anne Boleyn* Files and he gave a talk for a small number of the group shortly before his death. The present image of Anne Boleyn that is venerated on the forum, created through the fusion of his admittedly biased work, was also fashioned in the main alongside the popular portrayal by Natalie Dormer on *The Tudors*. Those intertextual portrayals of Anne Boleyn in popular culture – the work of Ives, the portrayal of Dormer, perhaps also the fiction of Philippa Gregory - have come together to form a generally agreed upon composite image of what this historical woman 'ought' to have been like, when viewed through the looking-glass of 21st century feminism.

More specifically, each of these varying depictions is then marked by the social climate in which they have been produced. For example, as film and TV depictions of Anne and the Tudor period proliferated in the 1950s and 1960s they dovetailed unintentionally with various social movements for women's rights and various stages of the feminist/post-feminist movement. Therefore each depiction of Anne Boleyn was increasingly marked by the historical moment in which it was produced as much as it attempted to mimic accurately the historical moments which it depicted. Such an alchemy of basically unrelated events could not have occurred in previous generations; whilst Mary Queen of Scots was a symbol of great romantic attachment to the Victorians, the overtly sensitive sexual sensibilities of the time would not allow for any sort of rational conversation about anything less than her absolute innocence of the crimes of which she was accused. Chronologically speaking, the same also held true for Anne Boleyn, who at the time of the Victorians was just beginning to emerge from under the shadow of her husband, and to be free from any real sort of religious rancour.

Agnes Strickland (writing in the nineteenth century) whose in-depth research and attention to detail won her countless plaudits, described Jane Seymour, initially lauded at the time of her becoming queen - and as stated in chapter 2 of this thesis - to have been '...loaded with panegyric' (Ives 2004, p. 305). However, whereas the Victorian Strickland sisters were passionate partisans of Mary Queen of Scots, they were still less sympathetic to Anne Boleyn herself. Susan Bordo, in *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, comments extensively on how Strickland purported to place Anne Boleyn as the author of her own misfortune, alongside other Victorian idealised images of Catherine of Aragon that were increasingly coming into vogue at the time. Commenting still further on the works of the Stricklands, Bordo says '...the books are far from "light and dainty" in their heavy moralising, done in the typically prudish language of instruction in proper feminine comportment' (Bordo 2013, p. 154.) Works such as Bordo's have allowed for the compartmentalisation of outmoded depictions of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots whilst at the same time highlighting the cyclical nature concerning the interest in the two women. In a sense they may have formed a kind of inverse 'masquerade manual' – see 7.3 - and also served to frame their subjects as feminist icons, albeit with the aforementioned heavy dosage of moralising.

At the same time these works have also allowed the researcher to develop a coherent chronology for how society slowly moulded the two women into figures of attraction, tragedy and also, with their 'grisly' ends, the abject. Works such as these allowed Anne Boleyn in particular to become a figure from whom it was possible for a fan to form an attachment by means of symbolic interactionism, by making her a figure of attraction and tragedy, murdered by an oppressive patriarchal powerhouse.

Although many of the respondents did not deconstruct the term 'feminist icon' in any great depth, one cited how Anne Boleyn's life had influenced her in what they considered to be a directly feminist aspect. They stated that Anne Boleyn's '...wit, flair and intelligence' had sparked their interest in her and that she had changed the respondent's view of all Tudor women as weak and giving themselves freely to a man. Such a mind-set would therefore marry easily and appealingly to others seeking positive feminist images already set against a historical background:

'Anne was different, she had such a strong backbone and vigorous determination, that she impressed me as a person from the beginning. Anne also seemed, in my eyes anyhow, like an early feminist, she stood up for women, by showing the men that she was equally capable at standing her ground. Her bravery and courage also attracted me, as she delivered almost the impossible, convincing Henry to change the face of England forever. There was certainly, I saw from the beginning, more to this remarkable woman than "the wife that just got beheaded".'

Among the many other responses received were comments such as 'I liked her strength and bravery' – 'She was unjustly accused' – 'Her individuality and refusal to take crap from anyone' – 'Brave, smart and independent woman, ahead of her age' – 'Her spirit and bravery' – 'One of the first modern women and she passed this on to her daughter Elizabeth'. Several other answers took on a decidedly darker hue: 'Her deviousness' – 'Nothing, because she was an evil whore' and also 'Outspokenness, complexity, boldness, fiery temper – my own marriage shares some 'interesting parallels'.

Clear instances of symbolic interactionism between the fans and these particular images of Anne Boleyn occurred as early as question seven in the responses; 'What sparked your interest in her?' One of the responses to this question cited a desire to imitate her confidence, intelligence and also her wit; moreover, she was the ideal woman to be aspired to and believed fervently that '...she comes to those who need her.' This and various other answers were a clear indication that the use of symbolic interactionism as a tool by which to study the forum and its members had borne significant fruit; it is also clear from this answer that the respondent viewed Anne Boleyn through the prism of someone they clearly considered to be an inspirational, iconic female.

As the research hypothesis sought to establish the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon, question nine asked the respondents 'Do you think Anne Boleyn is an icon – historically, culturally or both?' among the answers one respondent said that they did not consider her, nor anyone, as an icon. They then went on to cite *The Tudors* TV show for pulling them back into the sphere of Boleyn-related study – as did several others – and then declared *The Anne Boleyn Files* to be the best website determined to deal with the many myths and falsehoods that have sprung up about their heroine. Claire Ridgway was singled out for particular praise in this sense. This respondent lived in the US. The final sentences of this particular response served to highlight the ways in which the internet and globalisation have yet to permeate every aspect of social life; the participant cited what they believed to be a lack of knowledge regarding Anne Boleyn as the reason that they did not regard her as an icon culturally (living in the US they were not exposed to quite the same level of 'stimuli' as for instance a respondent living in London might experience). At the opposite end of the spectrum, this respondent said:

'I think she is an icon both historically and culturally; historically just because she - whether directly or indirectly - had such an impact on the course of English (and ultimately British) history. She was at the forefront of a faction who brought "heretical" religious ideas to Henry's attention, people who wanted to reform the Catholic Church, which eventually sparked his idea to break with the Catholic Church and make himself Supreme Head of the English Church. The English Church of course evolved into the Anglican Church, and all monarchs up to and including our current queen, have been head (Governor) of the church ever since. As well (and this is indirectly), she was the mother of Elizabeth I, considered by many to be one of the greatest British monarchs. At the very least, we can acknowledge that the world would look very different if Elizabeth had never existed - she saw in the true beginnings of English exploration and colonisation, which of course ultimately resulted in the British Empire. The monarchy itself would probably look hugely different - it's impossible to postulate, but the Stuarts may never have come to the throne, there may have been no Cromwell, no Civil War. I mean, all of this is getting to be very speculative, but you can very easily say that if Anne Boleyn had never been queen, the world would not look the way it does today. Culturally I think she is an icon as well - nearly 500 years after her death, we're still talking about her. She is a recognizable figure. We make popular movies and TV shows, publish fiction books, in which she features prominently. She still captures peoples' imaginations - walk into any bookstore and you will find at least one biography. Webpages like The Anne Boleyn Files exist because there are groups of people who are actively seeking information on her and her life. I mean, if she wasn't still culturally an icon you wouldn't be able to write this paper!'

The idea of Anne Boleyn as an icon – in this instance a feminist icon - was cited by another of the respondents in answer to this question, who also touched on the cyclical aspect of the interest in Anne Boleyn, not to mention the way the depiction in each generation is very much moulded by the culture in question's mores and values:

'She appears in so much pop culture. McFly songs (Transylvania) and in films (opening of 'Kevin and Perry go large'), her style in 'Ugly Betty' (B necklace) and even rap songs! As well as being historically significant she also appear to represent to my generation (as each history has its take) as a feminist icon and symbol of abused women whose are treated thus due to intelligence, ambition and refusal to conform to male expectations. It got her killed then, but it is celebrated now.'

Another respondent was more specific, inasmuch as that they actually referred to Anne Boleyn as an early proto-feminist.

Question fifteen of the questionnaire was 'Anne Boleyn fans call her achievements inspirational, but do you think they airbrush what we might perceive to be failings in her character by blaming them on the patriarchy of the time?' One respondent to this question determined that Anne Boleyn was *not* a feminist, and that her younger – one might almost read 'online' into the equation - fans were mistaken in thinking that she was

'Modern teenagers like her because they think she was a feminist. She wasn't, she would have rather had a son over Elizabeth, used her body to get her Pembroke title and crown, and she ruined any chance of future consorts of Henry to make an impact on politics/court. She was an anti-feminist!'

This respondent and several others spied the possible pitfall apparent in this question, an avenue of exploration that attempted to hold up a mirror to the inconsistencies inherent in

trying to force 21st-century mores and morals, not to mention a liberal dose of feminist thinking, onto a largely unobtainable – and therefore not entirely authentic - 16th century woman. As stated, the above respondent and several others were able to correctly identify the dichotomy in the relationship between the two conflicting sets of mores.

Other respondents made vital comments regarding how contemporary fans of Anne Boleyn attempt to mould her into their idea of what they think an intelligent proto-feminist ought to be like; also how they whitewashed the aspects of her actual, historical life that refused to fit in with the new media-mediated interpretation of her. This question more than any of the others attempted to tackle the issue of the ‘flawed project of persuasion’, and to offer up to the respondents the idea they were perhaps consciously complicit in choosing such a contentious figure for beatification as a subcultural icon. Very few of the answers elicited any sort of sympathy for Catherine of Aragon, whilst another professed admiration for Anne Boleyn on the one hand, whilst simultaneously swearing bodily harm on any woman who attempted to wrest away her husband in a fashion similar to that concerning Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon.

Once more, some clear and explicit examples of symbolic interactionism were also present among several of the answers given. These served as always to underline the methodological framework in which the research was undertaken:

‘Historically, she is an icon because nowadays a lot of women who know about her identify themselves with her, because of her courage, wit, tragic end, misery, etc., but also because she is considered, besides the most important consort in England, one of the people who shaped England as we know it in our days. Perhaps people might think that she is given too much credit, and that her influence was not that big, but anyone who reads about the period, historical and accurate books, can see how things changed pretty soon after Anne appeared. Culturally, she is considered an icon, since she is the best known wife of all the ones Henry VIII had. She is seen as a hero of the Anglican Church, a martyr since the days of her daughter's reign and an independent, ahead of her time woman, who would not fear to speak out her opinion in a world dominated by men.’

Some of the respondents were prepared to label Anne Boleyn as an historical icon but felt unsure about further bestowing upon her the accolade of fully-blown cultural icon; this links back to the idea of the ‘historical celebrity’. In fact, these respondents seemed to allude to the idea that applying such a label was actually more revealing where the fans of Anne Boleyn themselves were concerned. They stated that it was impossible to pin a label on her because her motives were unknowable; another instance of authenticity, because to be able to quantify Anne Boleyn, to reduce her to her base elements so easily, would rob the very real mystery that still surrounds her of its merit. In fact, to many of the respondents Anne Boleyn was a historical icon or ‘historical celebrity’ but she was not considered by them to be a current cultural icon despite the prevalence of her image in various media-marketing campaigns.

Question eleven asked the respondents if they considered Anne Boleyn to be an inspirational woman, and of so, why? It was felt in the preparation of the questionnaire that the term ‘inspirational’ might elicit in the more cautiously minded more answers than the possibly loaded ‘iconic’ question. Although similar to question nine, there were still several lengthy responses to this question from various respondents, to whom the question may in

fact have been better framed in regards to their own relationship – symbolic interactionism – with Anne Boleyn as opposed to the general idea of regarding her as a generic icon.

5.4 ‘A subculture for whores who wreck marriages!’ - Subculture and fandom discussion

The main overarching theme that emerged from the research findings was the fact that a subculture – a cybersubculture – centred around the mainly media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn was not only confirmed, but that it was almost entirely populated and propelled forward by women. This cybersubculture had been created by women as well, beginning with the inception of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website by Claire Ridgway. However, despite ample evidence pertaining to the idea that it was a viable subculture, several of the respondents cited that they did not feel that they themselves were part of a subculture; however, to reiterate, the evidence of the responses, when aligned with what is known about cybersubcultures, nevertheless confirmed the fact that it was a working cybersubculture.

Working backwards from Claire Ridgway, a feeling of continuity where the input of women was concerned was achieved by highlighting the fact that exploration of early historical literature that centred on Anne Boleyn, from the Strickland sisters onwards (the 1840s), up until the present day. This was with the notable exception of Eric Ives and G. W. Bernard. As well as providing a sense of continuity and also a certain sense of ‘ownership’ of the subject at hand, these and other female historians were cited several times in the results by respondents who pinpointed their particular texts as starting points for their passion.

Whilst there were many instances of new patterns of behaviour within the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* that served to adhere it to the developing phenomenon of the cybersubculture, it was important that there be enough remaining also of the old, classical style of subculture for it to qualify as a new site of subcultural activity. In other words, there needed to be a link between the old style of subculture and the new style of the online cybersubculture. Whilst the mode of interaction – the computer – was very different from the classic subcultural model, the impetus behind such a community remained almost exactly the same as those which drove the classical subcultural models of the 1950s and 1960s. Back then, an identification figure of elevated status around whom the group could gather would only occasionally be the focus of the subculture; this occurs much more with modern styles of subculture and especially cybersubcultures.

Dress and uniform from the classic style of subculture becomes ‘cosplay’ in the sphere of the new subcultural model, and is less employed on a regular basis and more for ‘special occasions’. The notion of rivalry remains, with fans of Anne Boleyn often clashing in online sparring matches with partisans of Jane Seymour, and even on occasion Catherine of Aragon; this also recalls the respondent who claimed that they supported ‘team Elizabeth’ in regard to Mary Queen of Scots in the notorious clash between the two queens. It was most often during these exchanges that the idea of the notion of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon was articulated. The examples of the two queens on either chronological side of her – Catherine of Aragon and Jane Seymour - were then derided for what were perceived as their essentially passive and compliant ‘feminine’ natures. These characteristics were the virtual anathema to anything concerning the bold and brassy Anne Boleyn; no one has ever called

Catherine of Aragon a feminist icon, although, as previously stated Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour mastered the art of masquerade to a significant degree.

To further unpack this finding, question five of the research questionnaire asked 'What is your gender?' Of all of the responses, only 21 of the participants turned out to be male; the other 294 were all female, whilst one gave no discernible answer. The findings of this particular part of the research came as no surprise, given the previous knowledge and affiliation with the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website and the resulting hypothesis regarding an overly female population residing therein. It also helped to cement the idea that the internet was better able to provide what might be considered safe subcultural spaces for women to interact. These findings strongly echoed the works of Fiske and Gelder, among others, cited in chapter 3 of this thesis, not to mention tallying with Bury's essential research into female fandom. That the research broke new ground was evident when it is to be considered that female subcultures are not only far rarer than their male-dominated counterparts but, as mentioned by Judith Halberstam, woefully underrepresented in terms of research and documentation as well. This lack is so pronounced that it has been commented upon by Angela McRobbie (2000), who also covered girl gangs – a form of subculture - in her research. McRobbie suggested that the culprit for this lack could be the male-dominated areas of both sociological studies and also the press coverage often associated with subculture

'The popular press and media concentrated on the sensational incidents associated with each subculture (for example, the teddy-boy killings, the Margate clashes between mods and rockers). One direct consequence of the fact that it is always the violent aspects of a phenomenon which qualify as newsworthy is that these are precisely the areas of subcultural activity from which women tended to be excluded' (McRobbie 2000, p. 15).

Because of prevalent issues of patriarchy, these 'girl gangs' function differently from the standard 'classic' subculture because they often have no figure or formula of identification that gives them a clear and distinct identity. They also have little in common to unite them other than current youth trends such as music and dress, albeit a far less potent brand than the lifestyle choices that fuelled the Mods and the Rockers in the 1950s and 1960s. However, they share certain other similar surface traits with classic subcultural formations; class and the sense of disenfranchisement from the upper or mainstream echelons of society, but here the similarities tend to end. Any work on female subcultures has on more than one occasion been erroneously labelled 'females *in* subculture', whereby the presence of females in established male subcultural movements such as the skinheads, the Mods, or punk were documented as a mere by-product of the subcultural movement in general, rather than as a phenomenon in their own right.

These findings might then have been presented as purporting to document the existence of female subcultures in their own right, when in fact the females were merely 'present and correct' within existing male-dominated subcultural spaces. Other attempts to document instances of 'legitimate' female subcultures have claimed, for instance, that the female equivalent of a 'chav', labelled in this sense a 'chavette', somehow denotes a subculture in its own right; this may be illustrated by the concept of 'ladette' culture. In regards to 'chav', this avenue of exploration is of a considerably questionable nature, considering the original 'chav' epithet was coined by the mass media as a pejorative term and has never been

satisfactorily cited as a site of subcultural activity; ‘...as chav-hate began to emerge as a force in mainstream culture in 2004, it found supporters in the mainstream press’ (Jones 2012, p. 113). In this context it is possible to situate the whole chav ‘phenomenon’ into the same sort of moral panic category as the Mods and Rockers of the 1960s, now considered venerable bastions of the subcultural movement. However, ‘chav’ differentiates because it has come to be considered as a complete and entire social class, rather than as a subculture proper; however, the similarities remain striking.

Other abortive attempts to document the existence of female subcultures in their own right have included the ‘Hello Kitty’ merchandise phenomena; a phenomenon explored in Rosalind Wiseman's book *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (2002). In this book, the ‘queen bee’ is the head girl, or the leader of the all-female pack, a little like a vaguely less threatening girl gang. The book was then adapted into the movie *Mean Girls* in 2004, where the queen bee character is described as ‘...your typical selfish, back-stabbing slut-faced ho-bag’. These and several other instances of purported subcultural activity fall well outside the boundary of what is often considered the usual ‘classic’ definition of a subculture, which consists of a group operating outside societal norms, with their own values, their own belief systems and their own social structures, often but not always at odds with the mainstream dominant culture.

Continuing in this vein Liwei Zhu, in her work ‘Woman subculture development seen from woman language’ (2011), went so far as attempting to define the whole of womankind as some sort of subcultural movement, in her words a ‘...marginalised group in society’. Defining the majority of the world’s population – more than half - as a ‘marginalised group’ is problematic enough in itself, without then failing to provide adequate explanations of the differences between various cultures and how women are treated east and west, and including the setbacks and successes. Previous subcultural research logically stipulates most often that the subculture itself is always smaller than the societal norm, hence the obvious prefix ‘sub’. By grouping the entirety of womankind into a sociological bracket reserved for what have traditionally been viewed as the disenfranchised - compared to the main strata of society - is to do womankind an immense disservice, not to mention the rather more pressing fact that it also dissolves the hardships and concerted efforts of genuine *minority* groups. Certainly there are similarities between the difficulties faced by anyone falling foul of what is still essentially a patriarchal society, but to repeat, such an umbrella term as offered by Zhu takes away from the very unique micro struggles of countless numbers of subcultures that are sometimes comprised of perhaps just a few hundred thousand ‘participants’ at best. It is also worth noting that Bury (2005) considers female fandom to be a minority fandom, and therefore it is not unimaginable that it could be considered separate from the all-encompassing problematic issues of defining the entirety of womankind as a subculture; to reiterate Bury, a fandom – like a subculture - is something ‘enjoyed’ by a minority.

Because finding evidence of a female subculture that was not in some way simply an offshoot of an established mainly male subculture was extremely difficult. It was into this lack that the internet came into play; for many women it operates as a massively liberating tool of communication. The internet enables various disparate groups of women to reach out and form connections, transgressing geographical boundaries whilst at the same time locating themselves in the relative anonymity and safety of the bedroom. This example was

previously illustrated by Gelder (2007) in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Because of the social boundaries still stacked against women it seemed that society required a new style of subculture – the cybersubculture – in order to give an organising voice to those disparate groups. Given that it is now almost two decades since the dawn of the internet revolution, there has been sufficient time for these spaces to grow and develop, alongside the explosion in varying forms of social media.

Now a website like *The Anne Boleyn Files* is able to reach new and existing members in a variety of innovative ways, many of them by using social media. As confidence in these new online spaces continued, it became possible to veer away from straightforward historical discussion of the kind which was previously only the purview of your average historical group, and to move into the more private process of creating icons of various historical personalities. Such a phenomena was not entirely unheard of; *The Richard III Society* was created as far back as 1924, and *The Marie Stuart Society*, concerned with Mary Queen of Scots, was created on the very cusp of the internet revolution in 1992. However, the former concentrated on reimagining the much maligned legacy of a long-dead king, whilst the latter initially only tentatively toyed with the idea of attempting to rehabilitate the divisive figure of Mary Stuart. *The Anne Boleyn Files* didn't exist before the internet and began life only as an online space. In that sense the forum was able to fully benefit from the various technological and social advances of previous decades, and to unashamedly nail its colours to the mast where the rehabilitation of England's most controversial queen was concerned. Such a thing would have been unthinkable in 1924, and even in 1992 the idea would have suffered from being on the cusp of a technological revolution then in its infancy. The fusion of fandom into cybersubculture means that the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* is now able to spearhead the way for other such online communities to proliferate, and to further the post-subcultural debate.

In the research responses to the subject of Jane Seymour, Anne Boleyn's successor, often bordered on the vitriolic and several are worth quoting in full. In these answers it was possible to see the faint echo of the old Mods vs Rockers riots on Brighton beach in the 1960s, further confirming themes and links between the classic subcultural style and the new style of the cybersubculture:

'Any Anne fan will tell you that Jane Seymour is a two-faced girl that was even worse than Anne because she was a meek little nothing and was only put there because Henry needed a change. Anne Boleyn fans do tend to hate her. But, in reality, Jane did supplant Anne by doing the same things. The reason it worked so quick was because Cromwell had come up with an idea to get Anne out of the way quickly--death. He had Henry sign the warrant for her arrest. Jane WAS a meek, sweet person on the outside. Henry liked this. She didn't fight like Anne. She didn't have that fire like Anne. She was calm and compliant. He needed that. For him, it was like coming inside from being outside in hot summer. She was cooler and more easily handled. But Jane Seymour, I believe, was just as ambitious and determined as Anne, but she hid that well behind what her family told her what would attract him. And she did it well. I believe she was all of those things, but I also think her personality today is unattractive, plain, and annoying. She was guided by her family but never complained. She knew exactly what she was doing and never looked back. She knew those charges against Anne were fake. She knew she had seen an innocent woman put to death so she could be Henry's wife. I don't believe she felt guilty about that. So it begins to contradict who people said she was like. If she was such a kind, sweet woman then she would have demanded Henry put Anne in a nunnery or exile her--not kill her. But she didn't. She never complained. In fact, she never

complained because her family warned her against it. Jane was often described as a meek, milk-faced girl. She was a plain Tudor rose. Light blonde hair, milky skin, cornflower blue eyes. She didn't have the dark mystery Anne held in her looks. She was just a very plain Jane--pun intended. She needed help on her rise, no doubt.'

However, an alternative view was suggested by another respondent who branded the purported subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn '...a subculture for whores who wreck marriages'! Whilst the rivalry between the two queens lacks certainly the whole 'moral panic' aspect of the aforementioned Mods and Rockers rivalries of the 1960s, fans of Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour were nevertheless observed to have 'flamed' each other on occasion. 'Flaming' is defined in an online forum or chatroom based context as aggressive and/or insulting interaction between different users. Bury (2005) remarked upon the phenomenon during her own studies of online fan cultures. Other respondents agreed with the assessment of Eric Ives' comment in regard to the portraiture of Jane Seymour – see previous comment by respondent - using it as an opportunity also to question his more general stance towards women. In this way more was revealed of the rather strange dichotomy also borne out in other areas of this research, whereby Anne Boleyn is venerated as a feminist example to women. However, Jane Seymour is all but vilified for her 'feminine' failings; she is '...far more simplistic' – 'Jane was just as bad as Anne, maybe even worse' – 'I loathe this aspect of history; Jane Seymour was worse IMO' – 'We love to judge women', and perhaps most pointedly, and with reference to the recent phenomenon of 'slut-shaming'

'Jane likely purposely tried to distance herself from her predecessor with good reason, but those who like Anne associate Jane with regression and slut-shame her in the way they dislike towards Anne.'

Slut-shaming is a relatively recent phenomenon – or an older behaviour adapted to an online age – whereby women are castigated for dressing or behaving in a certain way, and often by other women. The echo of the rivalry between the two queens surfaced in more than one of the answers in this sense:

'Although I love Eric Ives and think his work on Anne Boleyn is very important, that comment always struck me as...antifeminist and odd. I still don't think Jane is reviled as much as Anne is, but I think doing such character assassination to her is also unfair. The court of the Tudors was premodern. We cannot judge them by the same standards that we'd judge women like Anne and Jane today. Anne would be an A-list actress or a politician's wife or a politician herself- and Jane would have been a schoolteacher or something. They are different women who accomplished different things. Jane did use her virginity as bait, but she was likely coached by her family and faction and stripped her autonomy - though she was capable of politics when she tried, I'm not sure how much it was authentically hers, whereas Anne's passion for religious reform seems more genuine to me. Ultimately, Anne is a more important and interesting figure, but Jane is too much maligned in the Anne fandom for my tastes and she should be viewed under the same nuanced historical lens as Anne.'



(Above) Annabelle Wallis as Jane Seymour in season three of 'The Tudors'

The work of Eric Ives also surfaced in several other answers, along with various comments on other renowned Tudor historians, including the prolific Alison Weir. One of the respondents cited Ives as the best Anne Boleyn writer but shied away from praising Weir because

‘You can actually feel the animosity and sometimes even distaste she has towards her.’

These comments refer back to statements made earlier in this thesis whereby it was perceived that even the most respected of historian were nevertheless partisan when it came to matters concerning Anne Boleyn, once more echoing David Starkey’s comment about impartiality. With reference to the idea that the project by Anne Boleyn’s fans to rehabilitate her memory might be considered a ‘flawed project of persuasion’, it is worth repeating in full what one respondent said in that regard:

‘Yes and no. Don't get me wrong if I could meet one person in the whole world, it would be her. I think she is fascinating and inspirational in many ways. But I also think she did some terrible things and I think it's narrow-minded of her 'fans' to overlook them. I find her inspirational for these reasons: She was a strong woman and seemed to have no qualms about standing shoulder to shoulder with the most powerful men in the country. She produced a daughter who she absolutely adored and it seemed would do anything for. She was very noble when faced with death - She stood for religious reform, and against Catholic dictation. Something I feel quite strongly about personally. But these are uninspiring qualities/behaviours: She ruthlessly stole another woman's man -She would let nothing stand in the way of what she wanted, no matter who she might hurt -She took incredible

risks just to achieve power – I find this quite irresponsible. So yes and no. But even more than being inspiring I think women identify with her because of how poorly she was treated by the man who supposedly loved her. I think this 'wrong-doing' is the ultimate reason women gravitate towards and feel, in a way, protective of her.'

The comment from this respondent illustrates the clear way in which Anne Boleyn is perceived as a feminist icon by the members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, but at the same time it also allows for a healthy dash of discerning worship amidst all of the unfettered adulation. This comment more than many of the others puts the 'flawed project of persuasion' into context but it also makes it quite clear where the many fans stand on the position of the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has illuminated the basic ways in which information was first gathered from the data supplied by the research questionnaire. It has set out the various basic information regarding the participants in this research project, including age and location, and it has also touched on the multifaith aspects that became apparent when sifting through the data; these were most concerned with the opposing religions of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots.

The chapter also presented an in-depth look at the subculture surrounding Anne Boleyn, regarding issues of gender and impartiality, especially when concerned with the relationship between Anne Boleyn and her successor, Jane Seymour. In this sense it was able to link the findings of the research back to work on girl gangs whilst at the same time setting up new ideas regarding safer spaces for women, most of them online.

The following chapter examines the background to what could be considered the 'beatification' of Anne Boleyn, by examining the various media in which she has been portrayed over the years. This then leads into a related discussion on authenticity, and on whether the participants in the research project consider themselves to be a part of an actual subculture.

Chapter 6: The mediation of Anne Boleyn

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the main anticipated themes from the research results will be unpacked and explored further, with regards to favourite films, books and TV series; the impact of these media on forming the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn has been laid out already in previous chapters but pertinent points will be reiterated throughout the presentation of the findings. The authenticity of the various TV, film & books concerned with Anne Boleyn are placed under a more rigorous spotlight, before wider issues of authenticity are explored.

6.2 'Entertaining but historically suspect' - TV, film & books

In an increasingly consumerist age, the research discerned that the Tudors and especially Anne Boleyn are now almost a brand, something first cited as a point of interest during school days, with the Tudor period of British history featuring on the UK national curriculum at almost all stages. This was illustrated in previous chapters of this thesis. G. W. Bernard (2011) illustrated the impact of Anne Boleyn's story when he said that '...most of us acquire our first historical impression at an early age from some vivid story or image' (p. viii). This early fascination often leads the individual to seek out likeminded people with which to share and swap ideas, hence forming a group which has in time, thanks to the internet, come to be considered a viable subculture. Having said this, an early interest in Anne Boleyn, or indeed one that may have begun during school time, was cited by few of the respondents to the questionnaire. Childhood interest was several times cited in another way, either by being given a book as a present, or by being taken to see a relevant film (*Anne of the thousand days* proved especially popular in this regard):

'...my mother was a huge history fan with a particular interest in Tudor history and every Sunday we would sit down to watch a historical film. One of these films was *Anne of the thousand days*. We then studied the *Six Wives of Henry VIII* at the school and I was hooked.'

This is a typical response – interest in Anne Boleyn or the Tudors is reinforced often by parental/family interest and powerful engagement with a movie or TV series being a particular point of entry into the subject. Indeed, even where people have studied the period at school or university they still say things like:

'My genuine interest in Anne Boleyn began when the movie *The Other Boleyn Girl* came out in 2008'.

The melodramatic and romantic narratives as explored by Ang (1982) in 2.6 of this thesis particularly come into play here. That most of the respondents were women was of course a pre-empted fundamental finding of this thesis, and the responses to the question of TV and film tapped into what Ang has identified as 'feminism and the tragic structure of feeling' (Ang 1982, p. 121). Ang refers to feminism as '...a collective fantasy of a social future in which the oppression of women will have ceased to exist' (Ang 1982, p.121). Watching your average Tudor TV or film and at once the female audience is able to put themselves back to a time of what could be considered extreme patriarchy, and to watch the struggle a woman

whom many of them considered to be inspiring, iconic, and a proto-feminist. Ang describes the TV discourse of the 'tragic structure of feeling' as moving in the direction of a happy ending. Thus, the female viewer is able to take comfort from the fact that Anne Boleyn's daughter eventually goes on to become England's most successful solo ruler, and an unmarried one at that. The story of Anne Boleyn's daughter resonates especially because it does not conform to what Ang perceives as the classic 'happy ending' of the monogamous married heterosexual couple who live happily ever after and within the confines of the perceived patriarchy of marriage. This imagery and the hindsight of what could be considered Anne Boleyn's very own 'happy ending' only serve to reinforce her as a feminist icon and therefore make the TV and film viewing experiences an intrinsic part of the whole experience on the part of her many fans.

Rose also cites the use of psychoanalysis in watching film and TV, and in the viewing of the images and situations seen there. This is a useful albeit peripheral observation in regard to the research as it ties in with the research questionnaire, asking the various members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum what sort of feelings and pleasure they derived from watching films and TV shows about Anne Boleyn, and about what they then took away with them afterward in terms of an overall viewing experience. This was done also with a view to establishing a sense of a wider emotional response, perhaps with feelings of actual affinity and symbolic interactionism involved. The questionnaire for this research project also asked the members of the forum how many times they had viewed their favourite film and TV series of Anne Boleyn, and what led them to engage in these multiple viewings. In these instances the most popular choices for respondents were the movies *Anne of the Thousand Days* and *The Other Boleyn Girl*. As a brief example, one of the respondents said of their viewing experience:

'...for me at least Genevieve Bujold's *Anne of a Thousand Days* film portrayal is perhaps the best portrayal film wise of Anne. Opinion of the TV Adaptations of Anne are very much divided as each TV portrayal has merit, save for the first *Other Boleyn Girl* TV film, that is perhaps the worst one I've ever seen. If I was to pick a favourite I think it would be Helena Bonham Carter, there was just something about the way she was in her portrayal that appealed to me.'

And yet another respondent said:

'Anne of the thousand days. To be fair it's probably my favourite because it's the first portrayal I ever saw and it's stuck with me since I was very little, but it is one of my top films of all time (not just about Anne). I'm not sure it's an entirely accurate portrayal – I don't think Henry offered to let Anne go if she renounced her daughter's claim to the throne – but I do think it's a great depiction of how things could have been. What I love about this film is how strong Anne's character is. What draws me to her is her defiance in becoming Henry's mistress and her strong love for her daughter. This film really puts you on Anne's side by showing how loyal she was to Henry after their marriage and how brave she was when his love started to fade. It's a good example of a woman done wrong and it makes you feel a connection with her I think.'



Genevieve Bujold as Anne Boleyn in 'Anne of the thousand days'

Despite these and other answers, any sort of real, organised movement for the advancement of women – or, more plainly put, feminism - did not exist as it is known today during Anne Boleyn's lifetime. However, Anne Laurence has observed that '...there were women who were conscious of those rights, but they were individuals, not part of any political movement' (Laurence 1994, p. 253). Therefore, the idea of Anne Boleyn as some sort of a proto-feminist can be considered merely the creation of her fanbase, and as a development of her initial transformation from wanton woman into wronged heroine. This also ties in with previous statements in this thesis, whereby it may be considered that she held little interest in advancing the cause of women once she was queen and possessed of some sort of political power. Karen Lindsey's book *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived ~ A Feminist Reinterpretation of the Wives of Henry VIII* (1995) was probably the first serious work attempting to situate Anne Boleyn in that particular place, although once again at the expense of Jane Seymour. The book also provides little more than a rehashed retelling of the familiar chronology of the six wives, with very little recourse to hard academic fact that might cite their lives and achievements as anything approaching what might be considered feminist.

Many others cited *The Other Boleyn Girl* although a few went as far as to say that the book – or the film that followed – actually put them off seeking out further Anne Boleyn fiction. Among other responses regarding fiction written about Anne Boleyn were: 'The Other Boleyn Girl; it isn't afraid of presenting Anne in a bad light' – 'The Other Boleyn Girl, even if it wasn't historical or accurate of Anne's character' – 'It takes a long time to read in English so have not read many books in this yet!' – 'Don't read fiction in relation to Anne; history is fascinating enough!' – 'It's hard to get novels in California on historical figures of British history' – 'Murder most royal by Jean Plaidy. It compared Anne with Catherine Howard which was fascinating since they were cousins and followed the same path.'

The lack of a substantial following for the similar figure of Catherine Howard is commented upon later in the thesis.

Many of the respondents failed to give sufficient answers concerning factual books they may have read about Anne Boleyn; fiction seemed to be the preference. When they did answer they almost invariably chose Eric Ives' *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* as their

preferred text, with some of them even citing it as essential reading for any self-respecting fan:

‘...because it is a comprehensive, detailed account of Anne Boleyn’s life based on real and solid historical evidence. Unlike some authors, he has very balanced views and the wealth of knowledge makes the book very readable.’

This comment is in direct contrast to several of those laid out in the previous chapter of this thesis, from respondents who found Ives’ attitude to Jane Seymour in particular anything but balanced, and in one case actually ‘antifeminist’. Another respondent said ‘Eric Ives is for me the best Anne Boleyn writer. He is accurate, yes, a little biased towards her’ – ‘The only books I have read are those by the creator of The Anne Boleyn Files’.

One of the respondents cited G W Bernard’s book and held it against the ‘...glossed over ‘modern/feminist’ view of Eric Ives and other militant pro-Anne supporters’. In this statement can be seen the echo of contemporary feminist thought with the various depictions of ‘moderate’ and ‘militant’. Another respondent said that when they read Ives’ book that they ‘...feel the closest to knowing and grasping who Anne really was’. One of the respondents said that ‘History books used at school’ were their favoured choice of reading. Another answered ‘I have still to find a factual book on Anne Boleyn. That is why I joined The Anne Boleyn Files’. This answers illustrates the way in which the internet opens up new avenues for exploration and communication between likeminded individuals, and cements the idea that *The Anne Boleyn Files* has become for some the first port-of-call when wanting to find out about Anne Boleyn.

‘I enjoyed Susan Bordo’s “The creation of Anne Boleyn”. I suppose that, much like a fine meal, I love to savour the historical and cultural impact of that particular period and Anne’s story in particular.’

Question eighteen of the research questionnaire specifically asked, ‘Which fictional book on Anne is your favourite, and why?’ Few answers were anticipated because of a preconceived notion that members of the forum would want to appear more academically inclined toward their chosen subject rather than admit to being influenced by ‘popular’ fiction. Many of the respondents said they did not have a favourite fiction book about Anne Boleyn, which seemed to confirm the initial feelings regarding the question. The answers that were given were short and for the most part to the point: ‘I do not read fictional accounts of Anne and never have,’, and also that the fiction made Anne Boleyn appear either ‘guilty or malicious; significant barriers to forming a symbolic interactionist exchange.

Reference to particular books was in general far less among the answers from the respondents than was the case with those answers commenting on films and TV shows. For answers to this dichotomy, one of the respondents said - in regard to fiction concerning Mary Queen of Scots, for instance - that the (novels) were ‘...entertaining but historically suspect’. Also, several of the answers regarding Mary Queen of Scots indicated a strongly anti-English bias, commenting that the fiction was set almost entirely in England and with the actions and characters displayed with an English sensibility; such interpretations would therefore seem to make instances of forming an affinity with the character by means of

symbolic interactionism rather more fraught. Where there were more positive answers, the respondents cited either the two books by Jean Plaidy, which were published in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, or the more recent work by Margaret George, *Mary Queen of Scotland and the Isles* (1992); several others cited Philippa Gregory's book on Mary Queen of Scots, *The Other Queen* (2011).

Where TV and film adaptations of Mary Queen of Scots' life were concerned, responses differed from those evinced by the fans of Anne Boleyn. Whereas the pivotal portrayals of Natalie Dormer and Genevieve Bujold were highly influential in shaping the modern, media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, one respondent said of such similar screen images of Mary Queen of Scots that they had never seen a film concerning her life and that they had no wish to do so. They then added that they did not wish to be influenced by 'stereotypes'. They did not elaborate on what they might have meant by this statement. In this respect they differed from the fans of Anne Boleyn, who very much copied the behaviour of fans of the soap *Dallas*, as explained by Ien Ang (1982) in chapter 2 of this thesis.

6.3 'The object, person or process in question either *is* authentic or is *not*, period' - authenticity and the real

Issues of authenticity emerged so much in the testimony from the respondents that as a theme it needed to be further unpicked and explored. Williams (2009) related it to the notion of social reality when exploring the idea of authenticity; '...authenticity cannot be stripped away, nor can it be appropriated. In short, the object, person or process in question either *is* authentic or is *not*, period' (Williams 2009, p. 2). Susanna Larsson wrote in a similar vein, and when studying fans of heavy metal, that '...subcultures are special in negotiating what is authentic due to its extensive claims on looks, attributes and jargon.' (Larsson 2013, p. 95-96) She reiterates the key tenets of subculture by stating that a subculture is a) a culture which sets its participants apart from the mainstream of society and b) performs a critique of that society, and then finally c) this critique/'otherness' is voiced through jargon and symbols. The fans of Anne Boleyn are set apart by the very nature of their devotion; their performed critique is based on challenging historical/media-mediated assumptions about Anne Boleyn; and that their jargon and symbolism is in this case funnelled through the means of the internet where they exist as a cybersubculture.

Larsson is fairly explicit in the difficulties inherent in deciding what is authentic and what is not and that a great deal of authenticity is very much subjective. Authenticity is bound up in a sense of self and how a particular person interprets their identity and then the world around them. To be authentic means immersing oneself in the entirety of a particular given experience, so to be an authentic Anne Boleyn fan would mean in the 21st century participating in the online subculture surrounding her: reading the books, watching the films and the various TV series.

For the purposes of this research it was important to understand that the forum of *The Anne Boleyn Files* website was an authentic cybersubculture, and this was achieved by mirroring behaviours and patterns established in classical subcultural formations and also by using the compare and contrast technique with a similar subculture, namely *The Marie Stuart Society*. Therefore, a pivotal question in regard to the issue of authenticity was, 'Do other fan groups

have a similar way of thinking about the object of their fandom?' – if similarities could be proven between the fans of Anne Boleyn and another similar historical figure then it would be possible to view the former as part of a trend, as something authentic as opposed to being merely a 'blip' in the plethora of online spaces available. If *The Anne Boleyn Files* were taken as a heavy metal group with fans deeply ingrained in the lore, to use Larsson's example, then might not their authenticity be further cemented by comparing them to another subculture of a similar style but perhaps lack a more contemporary idea of authenticity? It was in this instance that the responses garnered from *The Marie Stuart Society* were invaluable, in regard not only to the whole 'compare and contrast' angle of the research project, but also in establishing how far the knowledge might be used to expand the existing understanding of the Anne Boleyn fans. A total of 61.84% of the respondents – or 94 respondents – said that they were also interested in Mary Queen of Scots and went on to answer the related section five. 38.16% of respondents said that they were not interested in Mary Queen of Scots and thus skipped over section five. Of those who were interested in Mary Queen of Scots, the duration of their interest was considerably greater than that of the respondents who were interested in Anne Boleyn: 'since 1959' – 'I've been interested for the last 15-20 years' – 'For many years now' – 'Same as Elizabeth, Henry and Anne, about 40 years' – 'About 30 years'.

Question twenty nine revealed that 14.85% of the respondents, or a total of 15, were members of *The Marie Stuart Society*. A total of 85.15% of respondents, or 86 of the respondents who answered this section said that they were not members of *The Marie Stuart Society*. As the main organisation concerned with Mary Queen of Scots, *The Marie Stuart Society* provided a perfect foil for the online fandom exemplified on *The Anne Boleyn Files*, allowing for the various issues of authenticity to be explored under strikingly similar but also at times vastly different conditions. The questionnaire was distributed to the members of *The Marie Stuart Society* with the help of their president, Margaret Lumsdaine. The society was formed in 1992 to mark the 450th anniversary of the birth of Mary Queen of Scots, and there is both a Scottish and an English branch. However, their online presence in comparison to that of *The Anne Boleyn Files* is minimal. They have a fully functioning website but there is no forum for online discussion as such; it was found through the research that this may be because of a largely generational gap between the members of *The Marie Stuart Society* and the somewhat younger users of the forum on *The Anne Boleyn Files*. In comparing and contrasting, similar questions were signposted to members of both groups in the research questionnaire, and their results will be examined below.

Members of *The Marie Stuart Society* were also asked whether they felt part of some sort of a subculture in regard to their interest for Mary Queen of Scots. The subsequent answers ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. Many of the responses to this question were in-depth and showed a considerable grasp of the concept of subculture on the part of the – assumed – layman, and how it relates to wider issues of sociology, and, for the purposes of the research, also to issues of gender and feminism. Many of the respondents agreed that their mutual interest in Mary Queen of Scots made them a part of some sort of subculture, or at the very least a fandom of sorts. Mentions of 'community' and 'unity' featured several times amongst the responses. However, at least several of those interested in Anne Boleyn reacted against the idea, with one in particular saying 'I hate the word "fan".' Other respondents agreed with one of the theories of this parallel strand to the

research project, concluding that there was a subculture of sorts surrounding Mary Queen of Scots, but that it was not as developed as that which concerned Anne Boleyn. This may be because, as has previously been stated, the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn seems to have more successfully straddled the bridge between historical and popular culture:

‘Having recently become involved in this subculture I have been surprised that there are not more followings for her online. I don't think this is a subculture in the same way as the history of Anne.’

Another respondent agreed to an extent, in that they said that they would describe it as more of a 'fan-following' than a subculture; to them the notion of subculture seemed to be something of an extreme way to describe the idea. A large number of the respondents also refuted the idea that they were in any way part of some sort of subculture or fan-following; several of the answers echoed that of the above quoted response, namely that attempting to view the following of Mary Queen of Scots as a subculture was too extreme a stance to take. One respondent added to this notion by saying that they did not feel part of a fan-following or indeed a subculture; such a label would therefore make every author, film producer and playwright a member of a subculture, although they cited Quentin Tarantino as a possible exception to that particular line of thought. Again the discrepancy in age between the respondents to Mary Queen of Scots over those of Anne Boleyn was striking; ‘I do not look up Mary on the internet so I cannot comment on this’ – ‘No she's not as high profile as Anne’.

In regard to instances of symbolic interactionism within this specific set of answers, question thirty three asked the respondents who had elicited an interest in Mary Queen of Scots, ‘Are there aspects to Mary that you identify with in particular? What is it about her that inspires you?’ Not as many respondents to this question said that Mary Queen of Scots inspired them as opposed to those who said that she did not. For those who answered in the affirmative there was an anticipated similarity with some of the answers given by the partisans of Anne Boleyn in the previous section. These answers were however once more tinged with the idea that the respondents were talking about two very different women. The fact that Mary Queen of Scots was perceived to have made so many mistakes in her life seems strongly to have gone against her where this question was concerned. For instance, it was mentioned more than once – and also in the examples given in the similar question previously to this one – that had she thought more with her head, like Anne Boleyn, then she may have left a better example to posterity where women were concerned. Anne Boleyn seems to have been more favourably viewed because she led with her head and not her heart. To this end there almost seems to be an underlying notion that Anne Boleyn's execution was more unjust because she was perceived as being a shrewd political thinker, whereas Mary Queen of Scots somehow ‘deserved’ her fate because she allowed her ‘womanly’ passions to override her political judgement. From a feminist point of view this may be construed as the classic image of the ‘overemotional’ woman of the pre-feminist era coming into direct collision with the more capable creature of the feminist and post-feminist eras. This image of Mary Queen of Scots owes much more to the fictions of authors such as Barbara Cartland rather than to any authentic historical documentation, as Jenny Wormald explains:

‘...the archetype, in other words, of the woman who adores the man who tramples on her. In the twentieth century this is not an unfamiliar concept; Barbara Cartland and a host of lesser lights have made their reputation from it. And because it is now so familiar, not enough emphasis has been

given to the fact that it was *not* a common theme in the sixteenth century' (Wormald 2001, p. 181).

This again illustrates the dichotomy in the age range of those who felt more for Mary Queen of Scots against those who were partisans of Anne Boleyn, that they were perhaps more likely to 'buy into' such a belief as opposed to the more media-savvy fans of Anne Boleyn. It also strongly illustrates why perhaps Mary Queen of Scots lacks the standing in popular culture that the media-mediated construct of Anne Boleyn enjoys; also why examples of symbolic interactionism among the fans of Mary Queen of Scots were far more infrequent. Returning to the issue of authenticity, relating oneself to either Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots becomes inherently problematic when the fact is that they have both been dead for several hundred years; the authentic Anne Boleyn is unknown to us, and therefore the respondents found themselves relating for the most part to the media-mediated images and fostering a relationship that was based on instances of symbolic interactionism with those images of her. They strive for a sense of authenticity but because of the dichotomy of their icon being long since dead they will never really reach it, in the same way that tourist organisations that offer up an 'authentic' experience of this or that native culture can never be offering entirely the real thing because it is an ideal that changes with the culture (Williams 2009, p. 3).

Many of the respondents who cited a feeling either of affinity for Anne Boleyn and the various aspects of her behaviour – especially her initial upward trajectory – were in a younger age bracket. The high instance of hostility to what is seen as the essentially patriarchal Tudor regime meant that almost any action of Anne's could be construed in a positive or feminist light, and these too were mostly to be found in the responses from those of a younger age. Conversely, any shortcomings on Anne Boleyn's part were perceived merely as side-effects of that all-encompassing patriarchy. Given that the consensus on these behavioural decisions were taken within a relatively small group, they were therefore seen as definite indicators of examples of symbolic interactionism, which focuses more on the meanings and behaviours of groups within society rather than with society as a whole. The link is made only by observing how these groups then relate to that wider society as a whole, and as such it is therefore a perfect vehicle for observing how members of certain subcultures reconcile themselves to the larger society outside – in this case – their bedroom window. It is from this perspective that the creation of a mainly media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn clashes with how that creation is perceived by the society that created it in the first place, before it was appropriated by the fans of Anne Boleyn themselves. Certainly many of the answers to the related questions featured respondents citing example of portrayals from relevant TV shows and films.

6.4 Conclusion

By way of concluding this section of the findings it seems feasible to continue somewhat with the last theme explored, that of authenticity, and frame within it perhaps one of the most pivotal questions posed to the respondents. The final question in the questionnaire, question forty seven, asked the respondents, 'Who would you say was the definitive 'romantic, tragic queen' of popular history? Anne Boleyn, or Mary, Queen of Scots? And why?'

Initially it appeared as though more respondents favoured Mary Queen of Scots as the definitive 'romantic, tragic queen' of popular history over Anne Boleyn. Among the more standard comments from the respondents were: 'MQS leads by a mile, but Anne Boleyn is also a very tragic figure' - 'Mary; Anne is a bit player compared with Mary, a queen in her own right' - 'Anne; being English I know more about her story' - 'To be honest this is a bit of a Victorian perspective on both of them' - 'Anne; she was far less culpable in her own fate than Mary was' - 'Anne Boleyn because she was wrongly put to death whereas Mary did actually commit treason by plotting to take the throne from Elizabeth I'. Another respondent touched on the previously cited bias regarding the presumed innocence of Anne Boleyn and the presumed guilt of Mary Queen of Scots; they stated that Anne Boleyn was most definitely innocent of the crimes of which she was accused and therefore her fans were drawn to her story because of the injustice of it all. They then went on to suggest a kind of communal guilt among the fans. Yet another respondent said:

'I would say Anne Boleyn is the definitive romantic, tragic queen of popular history, mainly because I am more interested in her than Mary, Queen of Scots, although I've read some about her also. For me, I feel as though Mary, Queen of Scots was meddling where she shouldn't have been meddling. It's tragic that she was executed, and especially that her cousin had to order it, but she was actively seeking to overthrow Elizabeth and set herself onto the throne of England. Sounds like treason to me. On the other hand, we have Anne Boleyn, who had terrible accusations made against her (most historians believe these accusations were lies) by people who either despised her or who no longer found her useful. She was wrongly convicted based on inaccurate information, by peers who had everything to gain from her conviction, and then ordered executed by her husband, who had tired of her attitude and needed a male heir. Anne Boleyn's story will get me every time.'

The pattern already touched upon repeated itself with this type of answer, with Mary Queen of Scots somehow 'deserving' of the death sentence for her apparently 'foolish and feminine' nature. Another response, referring to Anne Boleyn's profile in popular culture, went some way to explaining why the members of *The Marie Stuart Society* tended to be from an older, more middle-class and often conservative demographic. The respondent stated that Anne Boleyn resonated more in popular culture because there was a general consensus that she was framed. However, another respondent said that Mary Queen of Scots was the definitive romantic, tragic queen, because she was 'ruled by her heart' and wasn't as independent or practical; Mary was viewed as more of a victim. Yet another respondent echoed the above comment when they said that Mary Queen of Scots had endured a much harder life than Anne Boleyn, thereby making her more romantic and tragic

'She had several failed marriages which is a good focus point for historical fiction. She was betrayed by her people and forced to abdicate before being imprisoned for almost two decades and then finally executed by her cousin. Her life is far more tragic and sympathetic than Anne, who I would argue caused her own downfall by being bad tempered and selfish.'

These various answers, whilst differing in their sentiment, went some way to confirming the differences borne out by the initial hypothesis and then the results of the research data in regards to the fans of Anne Boleyn and those of Mary Queen of Scots. This was especially true in relation to age, gender, and also general background. As stated, there were more male respondents from *The Marie Stuart Society* and the demographic was also far older than the respondents from *The Anne Boleyn Files*. They also responded less favourably to

the idea of a 'stronger, more independent, more practical woman' than they did the idea of a woman who 'ruled with her heart and tended to view things through rose coloured glasses', i.e. Anne versus Mary. Therefore a subculture – or a cybersubculture - surrounding Anne Boleyn, with her younger but not atypical - as far as classic subcultures are concerned - youthful fanbase, was a far more viable option to be the subject of a subculture in this age of social media. This is especially so when the average age of the respondents to the Anne Boleyn section of the questionnaire - those who actively and frequently engaged with social media - was far younger, but not enough to make it a stark similarity with the aforementioned classic subcultural style. The more internet savvy fans found on *The Anne Boleyn Files* proliferated far easier than *The Marie Stuart Society*, with their more cursory online presence. Other respondents who preferred Mary Queen of Scots over Anne Boleyn also highlighted in their answers what might be called a more 'traditional' view of a romantic heroine: 'Mary, Queen of Scots because she was romantic and a bit frivolous. She didn't always understand the complex realities of the court'. This ties in with Wormald's work on the way Mary Queen of Scots has been romanticised in a different way to the work 'performed on' Anne Boleyn.

The full final word for this question would have to go to the respondent who answered and echoed Anne Boleyn's scaffold speech in the process:

'...definitely Anne Boleyn. Anne was a radical free-thinker and patron of the arts - which is at the heart of romanticism. Unfortunately, those beliefs that originally attracted Henry VIII to Anne eventually also led to her tragic end and an image tainted through history by her trumped-up charges of incest and adultery. I only hope through more factual novels and sites like *The Anne Boleyn Files*, that we can all finally meddle in her cause, and judge the best.'

Chapter 7: The commodification of Anne Boleyn

7.1 Introduction

This final analysis chapter focuses on the way that the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn has been commodified and commercialised through various merchandising ventures, and how the fanbase has responded to these interpretations, many of which make up the composite image of Anne Boleyn that they respond to. Analysing the data in this way holds a mirror up to the way in which the old classic subcultural styles consumed identity through dress and the like, and therefore provides a further bridge between the old style and the new. This is further reinforced by the presence of pilgrimages undertaken by members of the new style of cybersubculture, which reflect the iconic subcultural clashes of the 1960s.

The chapter also then focuses on the idea of masquerade – previously mentioned – as a further way in which the fans of Anne Boleyn interact with her via means of symbolic interactionism.

7.2 ‘Check out my ring; it’s got Anne Boleyn’s spirit in it’ - merchandise, cosplay and the commodification of Anne Boleyn

The results of the research questionnaire indicated that most of the merchandise concerned with Anne Boleyn was not an overt concern for the majority of the respondents. This was in some contrast to the studies on media consumption made by Gillian Rose (2012), regarding the merchandising from various other film and TV franchises. In classic subcultural formations, particularly of the 1950s and 1960s, ‘merchandising’ might be more aptly described as the clothing or uniform of the subculture in question, for instance, the often elaborate and expensive outfits of the Mods and Rockers. Translated into the style of the cybersubculture, this resurrects the question of ‘cosplay’, also initially broached in chapter 2 of this thesis; ‘...many Anne Boleyn fans often include photographs of themselves in period costume when posting online in forums such as *The Anne Boleyn Files*.’ ‘Cosplay’ differs greatly from the conventional uniforms of the classic subcultural style, which were worn on a daily basis and were diluted within the label of ‘youth fashion’. Dressing up as Anne Boleyn would to most seem very much more like a form of fancy dress, although the intent behind the costuming actually makes it considered to be ‘cosplay’. As mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis, employees at various of the Tudor attractions around the country frequently dress up or employ ‘cosplay’ in order to engage visitors – it is thus partly a commercial/marketing activity as well as a means for fans to express themselves. ‘Cosplay’ can also be seen in abundance at various TV and comic book conventions held both in the UK and more especially in the US, where fans dress up as their favourite TV or comic book characters. ‘Cosplay’ was seen less evidently in the cybersubculture surrounding Anne Boleyn because of the fact it is mainly played out online.

However, whilst the more traditional forms of merchandising – apparel, memorabilia – were not an overt concern for the majority of the respondents to the research questionnaire, the purchasing of books devoted to the subject of Anne Boleyn, and also DVDs of the many films and TV shows related to her, were. Cotton Seiler highlighted the growth in the area of

merchandising for various franchises in his essay on 'The commodification of rebellion', concerning youth cultures, when he said

'...merchandising, too, has radically expanded in product range and price over the past three decades. Merchandising represents another technique of exploiting consumer affect, by offering an item – a T-shirt, poster, button, or program – designed to commemorate the event and testify to the fan's attendance and devotion.' (Gottdiener (ed) 2000, p. 211)

This turns the relationship between the consumer and the product into something of a symbolic interactionist exchange, whereby the product becomes part of the whole process of employing symbolic interactionism to further explore the way Anne Boleyn's fans relate to her media-mediated image. David B. Shank and Rohand Lulham explore the relationship between self-concept, identities and products, coming to the conclusion that '...specifically, people can choose, associate with, and use products to influence how other people perceive them in particular roles' (Shank and Lulham 2016, p. 188). Michael R. Solomon also recognised the role that merchandise and products held in helping to cement the unconscious symbolic interactionist exchange: '...the notion that many products possess symbolic features and that consumption of goods may depend more on their social meaning than their functional utility.' (Solomon 1983, p. 319) This idea of a clear link and a relationship between the buyer and the product when symbolic interactionism is employed is also reiterated by James H. Leigh and Terrence G. Gabel, who say '...many products are purchased for their symbolic significance to important reference groups.' (Gabel and Leigh 1992, p. 5).

Regarding other forms of merchandise, question twenty asked the respondents: 'Alison Weir has mentioned the media surrounding Anne Boleyn, in particular the area involving merchandise. Of this she said, Replica costumes are sold online, and among other weird and wonderful Boleyn paraphernalia, the internet auction site Ebay sells rings that '...allegedly have been infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn.'. What are your thoughts on this?' This was a far more loaded question, and one that elicited far stronger responses. Many of the respondents answered in relation to the specific issue of the Ebay rings rather than to the wider question of the whole gamut of Anne Boleyn merchandise available. They said that the idea of rings sold on Ebay and allegedly infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn was 'unprintable', or 'a load of rubbish...I would not buy those rings!!' Other respondents were careful to distance themselves from what they perceived to be an excess of fan adoration where 'extreme' merchandising was concerned. However, they still cited themselves very much within the range of respondents who purchased – or considering the purchasing – of what they believed to be 'safe' Anne Boleyn merchandise; those who purchased without the 'safe' tag labelled it weird or 'silly'. They even went so far as to say that such an idea constituted an obsession, not a fandom;

'A poster or a necklace with her portrait of her isn't a big deal. It's just something to symbolize saying that you admire her. But buying those ridiculous things like those rings are getting on the weird side. Can you imagine walking over to your friends and saying, "Yeah, check out my ring. It's got Anne Boleyn's spirit in it.".'

Other respondents were more vitriolic; 'People who buy Boleyn paraphernalia are stupid and as juvenile as Justin Bieber fan girls' – 'Anne is such an icon that this is done' –

‘Commercialism is unfortunately the watchword of western civilisation’ – ‘It really is a tribute to Anne, the fact that after all these years she is still a very famous and iconic woman’ – ‘Rolls eyes. I’d love to buy a Tudor outfit’. This type of response tied in with Bury’s work on female forums and how they distanced themselves from the perceived notion of the ‘fan girl’.

Whilst studying the responses to this question, the issue of ‘cosplay’ – also a form of merchandising - was raised once again. Several of the respondents cited costuming as part of their fan-following, but cited geographical reasons for wanting to ‘connect’ with Anne Boleyn in this manner; i.e. if they weren’t local to London they considered the need to want to express their fandom in such a way as somewhat redundant. This ties in with the idea of pilgrimages and links back to the 1960s scene of the Mods and Rockers meeting on Brighton beach, as mentioned in chapters 3 and 5 of this thesis.



Online replica of the famous ‘B’ necklace

Another respondent was at great pains to draw the line between what they perceived to be harmless 'cosplay' and the shameless merchandising of Anne Boleyn's image. Whilst they explained that they owned a replica of the famous 'B' necklace and also a shawl with an Anne Boleyn image, the idea of a ring 'infused' with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn was a nonsense, and somehow demeaned the more serious aspects of the media-mediated image.

A great many respondents answered simply that they did not buy any Anne Boleyn merchandise besides the books, fictional and factual, and the DVDs. Here the established pattern of behaviour of the Anne Boleyn fans once more deviated significantly from the classic subcultural pattern, whereby a lifestyle can and often is created not only through modes of dress and speech but also by 'buying into' a certain image, with all of the requisite paraphernalia that said image often entails; again the case of the Mods and the Rockers comes to mind. Several of the respondents said that they had considered buying other forms of merchandise, with most citing a replica of Anne Boleyn's famous 'B' necklace as the item that they would most like to own. Several more did however admit to purchasing considerable amounts of Boleyn-related merchandise, although they were in the minority; the haul of one of these fans is worth quoting in full, for it gives an idea of the gamut of merchandise on offer

'I have a book mark, a pin tray, a badge and compact mirror with her portrait on which I won, a lapel pin brooch of her emblem, a gift. A framed water colour print of Hever Castle on my wall bought at Hever. I have 3 costume prints by John Bloomfield, who designed the costumes for the 1970s BBC series, 2 of Henry, 1 of Anne of Cleves; the Anne Boleyn one is still eluding me!! (As are the other 4 wives!) 7 inch costume dolls made by Peggy Nisbet made from the 1950s until 1990, (check them out on eBay) I collect all the historical range but have many Tudor ones; set of stamps, a gift; Anne of a thousand days cinema programme from the 60s; Six Wives of HVIII BBC series costume tour booklet (1971) with set of postcards of the actresses in costume and Henry.'

Where merchandising for Mary Queen of Scots was concerned, for the most part all of the answers were a resounding 'No'. Again, this is perhaps purely reflective of the age-gap between the majority of respondents to that section of the questionnaire. However, personal experience garnered by attending several of the meetings of *The Marie Stuart Society* uncovered the fact that many of the members in fact spent several hundred pounds each on related merchandise, most specifically a bronze maquette of Mary Queen of Scots which was commissioned as a precursor to a life-size statue to be unveiled at her birthplace of Linlithgow Palace



The maquette of the life-size statue of Mary Queen of Scots

Many of the items concerned with Anne Boleyn were available to buy at many of the locations associated with her and also other members of the Tudor dynasty, further reinforcing the idea of the commodification of Anne Boleyn's media-mediated image. Christina Goulding (2000) commented on the fact that this particular facet of commodification is of prime concern to the curators of the various sites of historical interest maintained around the country. Goulding claimed it was possible to categorise visitors (three types) to these various places in terms of what they wanted to get out of their particular visit; following her hypothesis and when the responses to the research questionnaire are taken into account, an authentic experience of Anne Boleyn would seem to figure the most, that is to be able to tread where she trod, or indeed to stand on the spot where she was executed. Of this particular form of commodification, Chris Halewood and Kevin Hannam say:

'...according to this school of thought, heritage tourism may also lead to a standardization of culture and a translation of a local phenomenon into a global one.' (Halewood and Hannam 2001, p. 567)

The statement concerning the translation of a local phenomenon into a global one is particularly potent where Anne Boleyn is concerned, both in terms of her own lifetime, when Catherine of Aragon referred to her as '...the scandal of Christendom', and now, as the highly recognisable face of many an ad campaign concerning for instance the Tower of London, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. The fact that so many of the respondents were from overseas also helps cement this idea of the way in which the local intersects with the global. The idea that this commodification is only increasing is highlighted by Athinodorus Chronis, who says:

‘...During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we are witnessing an increasing popularity of the past that directly involves marketing, selling, and consumption of various products, services, and experiences’ (Chronis 2005, p. 214).

Eleanor Bavidge (2013) also commented on the nature of commodification where historical figures are concerned, with particular emphasis on the Tower of London and Anne Boleyn; her research was based on data actually gleaned from the Historic Royal Palaces website and therefore is worth quoting at some length. It also ties in with what the research established concerning the way children are taught about the Tudors, which was covered in chapter 2 of this thesis

‘...parts of the site promote this relationship with the past in a way that meets the expectations of key target audiences – overseas tourists and British school children. Williams notes that foreign tourists are particularly interested in instances of state crimes carried out against home citizens ‘because of their lack of ties and everyday immersion in the foreign society tourists are free to speculate ... about imagined dramas of hurt, accountability and retribution’. When addressing its younger visitors, the Tower has adopted a similar approach to that of the popular *Horrible Histories* series (BBC), by focusing on unpleasant and gory aspects of the past. ‘Beat the Block’ offers school-aged children the chance of historical game play in which they can ‘take the upward path that leads to freedom or the slippery slope to the scaffold. They are invited to vote on what happened to the two young princes and visit the site where Boleyn was executed by the ‘clean stroke of an expert swordsman’ and the death spot of Margaret Pole who was ‘less lucky’ as a ‘blundering executioner “hacked her head and shoulders to pieces”’ (Bavidge 2013, p. 327-328).

This perhaps a more positive slant on the idea of commodification and how cultural interest can be twisted into a more positive form of education; however, Robert Shepherd (2002) comments on the way that commodification can also be seen to ‘cheapen’ the historical experience somewhat:

‘...tourism is bad because it corrupts culture; it transforms what has been sacred into the merely profane; it cheapens the ritualistic, transforming what was authentic into spectacle.’ (Shepherd 2002, p. 192)



The White Tower at the Tower of London

Question twenty two asked the respondents 'Have you visited any of the places associated with Anne Boleyn (if not, skip this section)'. This was a simple 'yes or no' question, with 57.89% of the respondents answering that they had visited one or more of the places associated with Anne Boleyn, whilst 42.11% of the respondents stated that they had not. The making of pilgrimages has however been frequently observed as being a pivotal part of authentic subcultural behaviour. This idea of pilgrimages may be best typified with the aforementioned (Brighton) beach battles and subsequent moral panics of the 1960s with the Mods and the Rockers, which became virtual pilgrimages and were played out in movies such as 'Quadrophenia' (1979); again see chapters 3 and 5 of this thesis, with particular reference to Cohen. Pilgrimage is more often associated with visiting places of worship, such as Mecca, but this appears in the instance of this research to be a behaviour that has transferred to the fans of Anne Boleyn. This means the fans make a special visit or 'pilgrimage' to mainly three sites associated with Anne Boleyn; the place of her birth at Blickling Hall; Hever Castle where she grew up; and the Tower of London, where she was executed. Based on this behaviour, the status of Anne Boleyn could be seen as being akin to a goddess, tying the notion of pilgrimage in with the aforementioned religious definition. For the fans it seems like the end of the journey but a journey continued into the present through keeping the memory of Anne Boleyn alive. There was, however, far less of a tribal,

'classic' subcultural aspect to the pilgrimages made by the fans of Anne Boleyn. The respondents answered that they made these pilgrimages purely to pay their respects and to feel some sort of connection with the places where Anne Boleyn once lived, rather than to clash openly with an opposing group. However, the basic need to undertake some sort of a physical journey remains the clear link between the 'classic' and the 'new' style of cybersubculture. However, issues of authenticity appeared to prove far more elusive when dealing with a subject some several centuries dead, as exemplified in some answers to question twenty four - 'Have you visited the Tower of London or any of the above locations on the anniversary of her death? If so, did you lay flowers? What did the occasion mean to you?' Issues surrounding the idea of authenticity were met with relevance to this occasion with almost downright disdain; Anne Boleyn was dead, one respondent said, and they had never known her, although they allowed themselves a little flourish by adding:

'...she was strong minded enough not to want their sympathy.'

However, other respondents said that they either had visited the site at the Tower of London on the anniversary of her death or that they would like to. One of them visited on the actual anniversary of her death, 19th May. Another respondent said

'...I went to the Tower on the anniversary of her death last month to watch a play, I did not however lay flowers - I walked around the grounds and into the Chapel and just remembered Anne, everything she did, everything that she means to me and took it all in. It meant a lot to be there on the day, it felt like the appropriate way to honour Anne.'



Roses for a fallen queen; the monument at the Tower of London as seen on the 19th May

With a similar approach in mind, question forty two asked the members of *The Marie Stuart Society*, 'Have you visited any of the places associated with Mary, Queen of Scots (if not, skip this section)'. 37.93 of the respondents – a total of 33 – said that they had visited places associated with Mary Queen of Scots, whilst 62.07% - a total of 54 of the respondents – said that they had not. This can therefore be compared with the same question posed to the fans of Anne Boleyn in that section of the questionnaire, where with 57.89% of the respondents answering that they had visited one or more of the places associated with Anne Boleyn, whilst 42.11% of the respondents stated that they had not. Regarding the Mary Queen of Scots 'pilgrimages', 22 of the respondents had visited Holyrood Palace; 28 of the respondents said that they had visited Edinburgh Castle; 8 of the respondents said that they had visited Fotheringay Castle, site of her actual execution. 7 of the respondents said that they had visited Mary, Queen of Scots House in Jedburgh; and finally 71 of the respondents answered that they had visited 'other (please specify)' places connected with Mary Queen of Scots. Among the other places cited were Mary Queen of Scots' tomb in Westminster Abbey, Falkland Palace, Dunbar Castle, and Wingfield Manor. It is also worth noting that most of the respondents from *The Marie Stuart Society* had not observed the anniversary of the death of Mary Queen of Scots in the significant way in which fans of Anne Boleyn did, for instance leaving flowers at the Tower of London on the 19th May. The exception to this was on the 430th anniversary in 2017, when a service was held in Fotheringay and the piece was featured on the local news.

Question forty five asked these respondents 'What was the furthest you have travelled to visit a site associated with Mary?' One respondent to this question had travelled from as far as Pennsylvania in the US, all the way to Scotland in order to visit a site associated with Mary Queen of Scots. As with the same question posed to the fans of Anne Boleyn, many of the respondents to this question were visitors to the UK – or France, where Mary was queen for a time - who had included the trip to a place relevant to Mary Queen of Scots as part of a wider visit to the country in question. Some of the respondents were native to Scotland and did not have to travel far in order to visit a place relevant to the subject in question. However, one respondent said:

'...if I undertake a trip to Scotland one day, I would check out a few places associated with Mary while I'm already there, but I wouldn't go on a trip simply because of her.'

Perhaps one of the most pivotal questions directed to the respondents in regard to the issue of Anne Boleyn as an authentic icon was question forty six, 'Getting beheaded apparently is a real 'advantage' for a sentimental heroine. What do you make of this statement?' - This question crossed the boundary between the fans of Anne Boleyn and also those of Mary Queen of Scots. It was hoped that it would elicit some of the most revealing responses of the entire research questionnaire. However, some of the answers were emphatic in the negative: 'Rubbish' was one comment, whilst 'Trite' and 'It's sarcastic and a little crude' were among the others voiced in the negative. However, others were given to voicing the exact opposite opinion; 'True, because it is very melodramatic' was one such comment. Some of the respondents seemed to have confused themselves with the particular wording of the question, which applied to the idea that the act of execution would somehow have a 'beneficial' effect in mythologizing the victim. This would then lay the ground for their image to become a sort of cultural shrine. Several responded as though the question were aimed at the immediate, actual aftermath of the historical act, misinterpreting it almost as a conscious decision on behalf of either of the two women. However, during initial exploration of the responses, at least one of the respondents seemed to have perceived the meaning behind the wording of the question

'There is a certainly a correlation between the level of interest a fame certain historical females have and their demise. There is truth in the comment but the truth is that I am interested in what led to that demise rather than the end itself.'

Another respondent pointedly remarked

'I believe that it romanticizes their history and paints them as a tragic figure. I think modern audiences often look at it by modern conventions and standards and see these women as hapless victims of the patriarchy.'

In regard to what have been termed the 'less salubrious' sides of Anne Boleyn's character, one respondent replied to this final question by saying: 'Neither. I think Catherine of Aragon was the bigger tragedy'.

And another rare but illuminating remark came from one respondent who referred indirectly to the work of the Strickland sisters, saying that the Victorians had '...a lot to answer for', and that there had been no need to romanticise either tragedy; this refers back

to Bordo's comments on the work of the Stricklands in 5.2 of this thesis. This respondent went on to say that Anne Boleyn died to suit the whim of a predatory, egotistical Henry VIII and that if Jane Seymour had survived childbirth, she may have remained Queen of England, but he would have had many mistresses.

On the subject of Mary Queen of Scots they added that she died to prevent her ever getting near the English throne. The opening gambit of this answer succinctly illustrates the way in which the foundations for the romantic subcultures that surround these two women, both in different ways, saw their crucial genesis as far back as the Victorian era, when their 'tragic' lives were first fashioned into a collectible cult. Examples of this were penned by Bordo in *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, and by Jayne Elizabeth Lewis in *Mary Queen of Scots - Romance and Nation*. Particularly potent was the fact that the "she-tragedy" – cited in chapter 2 of this thesis – as documented by Lewis and in vogue during the seventeenth century, and which seemed to have been reinvented with regard to its heroines on a cyclical basis, although always airbrushed and liberated a little from the mores and prejudices of each previous generation.

The idea that Anne Boleyn was a victim of an overwhelming patriarchy was initially highlighted in the theoretical frame section of chapter 1 of this thesis. This confirms the idea that for her fans there are two versions of her; the 21st century media-mediated construct and the 'authentic' 16th century woman. One is the rousing victor over patriarchy thanks to the patronage of these fans, and the other is the less well-known but perhaps marginally more realistic 'authentic' Anne Boleyn. Another respondent also highlighted the link between the portrayal of Anne Boleyn as a victim of patriarchy, making her perfect fodder for the modern mind to manipulate into a sentimental heroine, but thereby robbing her of any real sense of retrospective agency. They cited the statement's wording of 'advantage' as problematic but conceded to a certain cynical truth in the wording. They then went on to add a cautionary note by wondering whether only women who have been victimised can ever be called heroines as opposed to having some sort of autonomy to make heroic choices. Another respondent commented on the statement embedded in the question: 'The cynic in me says sad but true'.

It was during deeper exploration of question forty six that further highlights were found which pointed back to some of the most important, underlying factors in establishing the idea of a cybersubculture surrounding Anne Boleyn. One respondent answered that they felt the question was accurate in some respects, but only really if the woman was attractive, and that therefore they didn't anticipate much of a following for the Countess of Salisbury, for example.

The Countess of Salisbury was aged 67 when she was executed by a particularly inept headsman at the Tower of London, on the orders of Henry VIII, several years after Anne Boleyn's execution. Today her name sits alongside that of Anne Boleyn and also Henry VIII's 5th wife Catherine Howard on the glass memorial to those executed within the precincts of the building. Her death is notorious among historians because of that bungling job carried out by the headsman, but, as the respondent correctly pointed out, there seems scant market for a romantic cult surrounding a 67-year old woman whose only crime was to be the mother of a rival claimant to the Tudor throne. On the other hand, despite her youth and apparent beauty, Catherine Howard seems never to have garnered any particular

following either. However, if neither of these women can claim a particularly strong following then this illuminates a comment from another of the respondents, who said that being beheaded was not the only way to secure immortality in the annals of history:

‘No, I think many other historical figures, who died in their respective bed, are as much or even more popular than the beheaded queens. Elizabeth I, the «murderess» of Mary, who renounce love for the throne's sake, or empress Josephine or Catherine of Aragon, abandoned wives, are good examples.’

Another respondent compared the demise of Anne Boleyn to the conclusion of the American drama *The Sopranos*, further cementing the idea that the Tudor saga is often viewed through the modern lens as a sort of soap opera; these aspects were initially covered during the reading of Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas* in chapter 2 of this thesis:

‘As there are always 2 sides to a story, almost every 'heroine' who has been beheaded has had at least a partial bum rap. The other advantage would be that their story was cut short (no pun intended.) Kind of like the Soprano's series ending, it leaves the audience wanting more.’

However, another respondent commented – as previously mentioned – that Catherine Howard, 5th wife to Henry VIII, despite that youth and apparent beauty, enjoys precious little fan-following compared to that of either Anne Boleyn or Mary Queen of Scots. This again refers back to the fact that Catherine Howard was found guilty of an adulterous relationship that almost beyond doubt took place, whereas with both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots, the pivotal question of ‘guilt’ has never been satisfactorily proved. The disparity between the fans of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots in regards to the respective guilt or innocence of their heroines was highlighted by one respondent, who gave voice to a common idea already explored during the course of this research. This was the notion that Anne Boleyn was almost certainly innocent, whilst Mary Queen of Scots apparently was not and was therefore somehow ‘deserving’ of her fate; this respondent said that they thought that any time someone meets a tragic end that is considered unjust then the life of that person becomes more interesting because of the sympathy felt for that person. The respondent felt the statement was truer for Anne Boleyn because they believed that Mary Queen of Scots had been involved in treasonous activities, whereas Anne Boleyn was a victim of court politics and the inability to produce a son.

Continuing with the theme of execution, the morbid or abject aspects of the media-mediated images of both Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots were touched upon several times during the course of this research. This facet was picked up by one of the respondents when they answered this question. The respondent cited Catherine Howard alongside Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots and ruminated on whether they would be so well-remembered if they hadn't been beheaded; the word ‘morbid’ was specifically used on one occasion. This view was given a more modern slant by another respondent, who said that the tragically young dead are always popular; almost sainted: ‘...we see that after a group of teens die in car wrecks. Suddenly, they were always perfect and kind.’

7.3 'Women have no identity or substance beyond the masquerade as such' – when Butler met Boleyn

The Issue of masquerade manifested several times during the study of the responses received, to the point where they formed a subtle undercurrent theme that sat alongside the overarching idea of symbolic interactionism. Masquerade – reiterating Irigaray from the introduction to this thesis in chapter 1 - signifies the roles women play to please or appease men, and forms a vital part in understanding how Anne Boleyn operated during her time at the Tudor court and how she played against an essentially patriarchal system. Judith Butler's work on masquerade – stemming from studies on earlier works by Joan Riviere (1929) - included the idea that masquerade was to '...transform aggression and the fear of reprisal into seduction and flirtation.' (Butler 1990, p. 65) Riviere's work also touches on the idea that

'...femininity is taken on by a woman "who wishes for masculinity," but fears the retributive consequences of taking on the public appearance of masculinity.' (Butler 1990, p. 70)

Riviere initially began by studying an academic woman who spent her post-lecture time flirting and behaving in a 'coquettish' manner to her male colleagues, thereby apparently undermining the nature of her academic work. Riviere concluded that this behaviour came about because she had to make herself less threatening to the men she was lecturing, fearing that her academic persona had somehow transformed her into a man and thereby threatened their own masculinity (Rose 2012, p. 168) Riviere therefore decided that certain aspects of 'womanliness' could be worn as a mask at will; masquerade.

Using this template it is therefore quite possible to translate the single-minded ambition of Anne Boleyn into an example of masquerade, although the image wavers somewhat depending as always on how much one buys into the leverage of her own agency, and how much she was insinuated into a position of power by her family; certainly various TV and film depictions tend to vary on this matter and can often be viewed in this sense in a purely chronological order; the more recent the depiction, the more likely Anne Boleyn is operating under her own auspices, whereas the older the depiction, the more likely she is to be shoehorned by her family into the role of Henry VIII's mistress. It is worth being careful in this regard always not to elide the 'real' historical figure of AB with the performed AB in TV and film.

Certainly the idea of masquerade as a performance, as something theatrical, dovetails ideally with the image of the sophisticated Anne Boleyn returning from France and then dazzling the rather staid English court with her sophisticated wit and conversation. The fact that she is depicted in many TV series – *The Tudors* in particular – as first catching Henry VIII's eye during a masque where she played the aptly-named Perseverance (1522's 'The Chateau Vert') in this instance becomes particularly pertinent – see 2.2 of this thesis. Certainly her behaviour might well have been calculated to appeal to Henry VIII's definite desire to return to a more 'Arthurian' theme of courtly love; the game of courtly love was itself a mass of ritual and symbols in itself. Because of the overtly patriarchal nature of Tudor society it is of course possible to view her form of masquerade as the behaviour put forward by Irigaray in which the woman '...does in order to recuperate some element of

desire, to participate in man's desire, but at the price of renouncing their own.' (Wagner-Lawlor 2002, p. 114).

One respondent admitted to copying Anne Boleyn's behaviour, and its similarity to masquerade, when they said '...I like that Anne is part virginal maid and part usurping super-bitch'. Another said '...her drive and tenacity', whilst yet another answered '...I identify with her aspiration to be an intelligent female in a predominantly male-driven society'.

The results of the research pertaining to masquerade are in some ways equally pertinent to Jane Seymour, Anne Boleyn's successor. Jane Seymour won Henry VIII's affections in a matter of months by aping certain cultural and behavioural signifiers – masquerade - initially set down by Anne Boleyn when she herself set about wooing the king away from Catherine of Aragon. Whereas Anne's behaviour was *apparently* spontaneous (according to the historians) and natural, Jane Seymour's 'technique' was copied from the example previously set, and was calculatedly used to bring about the same effect in a far faster timeframe. In so doing she drew on stereotypical Tudor norms of the submissive woman which were in direct contrast to Anne's breakthrough firebrand form of femininity, which had begun to leave the king somewhat cold.

However, both women's technique in fact springs from Riviere's idea that '...women assume a mask of womanliness to disguise their masculinity (such as, for instance, their intelligence or power)' (Shingler 1995, p. 180). In the questionnaire administered to the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum, the subconscious issue of masquerade was used as way of finding out whether followers or fans of Anne Boleyn actually set out to mimic certain aspects of her character, thereby engaging either in a conscious or indeed in an unconscious form of symbolic interactionism with the character which could also be seen as playing on the 'real' Anne Boleyn's own use of masquerade. Their response might also be seen as a direct rebuff to Slavoj Zizek's idea that '...Women, quite simply, have no identity or substance beyond the masquerade as such' (Tauchert 2000, p. 475).

Many of the respondents cited Anne Boleyn's ability to wield her hard-won power after she became queen, and in particular paid reference to the fact that it was her desire to bestow charities with the proceeds from the dissolved monasteries that caused her to clash with her former ally Thomas Cromwell in the first place, which may have been an even more decisive factor in her downfall than her inability to produce a male heir. In this sense and tying in with the theme of masquerade it may be surmised that Anne Boleyn possessed what could be considered a 'phallic' persona, and merely played the coquette in her bid to win better power and agency for herself; again, the sense of her own agency is tempered somewhat by a historical inability to discern how much input her family had in the part of placing her at the attention of the king. The term 'phallic' in this sense is interchangeable with what Arnot refers to as Riviere's idea that femininity is actually a masquerade concealing 'manliness' (Arnot, 2011). Furthering the idea – for fans of Anne Boleyn especially – that Anne Boleyn may have been a woman who by the criteria of Riviere's notion of masquerade possessed a 'phallic' persona, Kerry Maguire analyses detail from the initial work into masquerade by Riviere and places this sort of a persona as someone

'...that privately despised the men to whom she subjected herself and considered herself every bit their equal. Presumably, then, this woman's identity was phallic, not in any way conventionally womanly' (Maguire 2000, p. 58)

The research questionnaire also enquired of the fans whether they perceived those aspects of Anne Boleyn's nature as positive or 'feminist', and how they then felt about the 'less salubrious' sides of her nature; this was exercised as view to seeking out any impediments that might disrupt the flow of symbolic interactionism. As previously stated, masquerade in this sense can be seen as an extension of the relationship a fan forms with the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn and another way in which fans might mimic her example. Of the answers given, one respondent said rather revealingly that they would rather meet her than any other person in the world but that despite this she did some terrible things and that it was wrong of her fans to overlook them, thereby challenging the process of the symbolic interactionist exchange. To fans Anne Boleyn was a strong woman who seemed to have no qualms about standing shoulder to shoulder with the most powerful men in the country. She produced a daughter who she absolutely adored and it seemed would do anything for. She was very noble when faced with death. She stood for religious reform, and against Catholic dictation. However, they also said that she ruthlessly stole another woman's man; that she would let nothing stand in the way of what she wanted, no matter who she might hurt. But even more than being inspiring they believed that women in particular identified with her because of how poorly she was treated by the man who supposedly loved her; this 'wrong-doing' was the ultimate reason women gravitated towards and felt protective of her.

The idea of masquerade was also used for the brief analysis of visual materials from the various media campaigns surrounding Anne Boleyn, including the campaign run on the London Underground during the summer of 2014. Although the traditional - some would say stereotypical Tudor costume of Anne Boleyn has deviated little in decades - the way that she has been represented in terms of scenes of nudity, and of agency in particular, have vastly changed according to the time and the current social and political climate in which the relevant film or TV show was made. As well as these and various other media campaigns, a cursory examination was also made of the portraits of Anne Boleyn. Also worthy of mention is the portrait controversy surrounding Anne Boleyn, specifically what are believed to be the authentic portraits of her and what are not, including the famous National Portrait Gallery canvas (painted posthumously); also the Windsor Castle line-drawing depicting 'Anna Bollien Queen' (supposedly done during her lifetime), which may or may not have been mislabelled and actually be of someone else altogether, as frequently happened with this particular collection of drawings.

Portraits in particular, as Rose points out, may be analysed using compositional interpretation, a discipline specifically designed to examine, among others, the expressive content of painted works. Therefore portraits featuring Anne Boleyn, almost all of which were done after her death, will have a more compositional interpretation than contemporary portraits; they are in a sense a form of painted masquerade, whereby various signals and signs are produced on the canvas rather than the body-as-canvas. The posthumous portraits are depicted thus because of the vast legacy Anne Boleyn left behind, as both the woman who helped introduced reform into the English church, and as the

mother of Elizabeth I, who continued that reform and took it to its natural conclusion. Elizabeth I was famous for using compositional Interpretation in her portraits, such as the famous 'Sieve Portrait', whereby the sieve is a symbol for virginity; also 'The Rainbow Portrait', where her dress is emblazoned with countless subtle eyes and ears, indicating that her influence and sphere of agency extends beyond her mere physical body and out into her realm of England itself. The daughter rather than the mother is therefore more of an object of masquerade, as '...she is involved in masquerade, in pretence and in artifice.' (Edholm in Bonner (ed) 1992, p. 166)



The Rainbow Portrait of Elizabeth I

Such portraits relay a vast amount of messages, and were far more intended to be pieces of propaganda than they were mere decorative works of art.

Whilst the subject of masquerade was not actively sought out when preparing the research questionnaire, it was a topic readily recognised when the data was assembled. Masquerade as a form of role-play therefore became a comfortable extension of the role the fans of Anne Boleyn played when they sought to mimic her life by means of a relationship based on symbolic interactionism.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter brings to a close the results from the research, and explores some of the various other issues which perambulated around the issue of cybersubculture and *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. Issues of authenticity have been illustrated to be pertinent to subcultural study, with especial reference to Larsson's work, and the comparison with *The Marie Stuart Society* served to further reinforce how authenticity can be interpreted in a generational context; the members of the aforementioned society may constitute a subculture but in terms of contemporary sociological thinking – and indeed the post-subcultural debate – they may not be considered 'authentic', the final nail in the coffin coming in the form of the cybersubculture.

This chapter also served to tease out the unexpected instance of masquerade from the responses to the research questionnaire, and to tie it in with what was already surmised about the possible behaviours espoused by Anne Boleyn and her contemporaries and how they might be deftly tied into a modern notion of what is considered masquerade.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to bring to a conclusion the research project establishing the existence of the subculture - or cybersubculture - surrounding the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. The chapter will round off the research by setting out a brief summary of the findings and then relating them back to the initial aims. This will be followed by a concise appraisal of the overall achievements of the research and how they relate to the various issues explored therein; a brief statement regarding the author's positionality in regards to the research will also be included. Finally there will be a brief exploration of possible areas and avenues for further research; and then a final, overall conclusion to the research project itself.

8.2 Key findings

The key finding of this research project was the fact that there was a viable online subculture - a cybersubculture – that surrounded and focused on a media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. This was exemplified by the presence of the website *The Anne Boleyn Files*, whose members were used as the basis of the research project. The research also defined that the subculture seemed to be at the spearhead of an entirely new wave of 'safe' online spaces mainly managed and used by women, with reference to the research undertaken by Bury in particular. The findings showed that these new cybersubcultures gave women the freedom to express themselves in a certain style, a style that mimics certain aspects of the 'classic' subcultural norm whilst at the same time expanding upon it with the resources made available by the innovations and conveniences of the internet and also social media. They were also not male-centric in the way that the old subcultural styles were and the women were free to discuss other aspects of their lives and relationships as well as the topic of the Tudors. These findings expanded upon the initial original contribution to knowledge aspect of the research project by shining a light on the relatively unexplored area of female-dominated/originated subcultures, up to which point the subjects were either researched under the banner of 'girl gangs' or simply seen as a curiosity or side-line to the otherwise masculine-dominated 'classic' subcultural norm.

The sense of elasticity to the concept of subculture was provided by observing the arguments ongoing in the post-subcultural debate, which has been used in this research project to bridge the gap between fandom and subculture, and from thence into cybersubculture. Likewise the research has also highlighted the innovation and importance of the internet, not just where issues of gender are concerned, but also in the wider sphere of subcultures themselves, providing – with the proposed fusion with fandom and the resulting cybersubculture – a way forward for the medium of the subculture that might ensure its survival when all of those post-subcultural debates have been finalised.

8.3 Achievements of the research

The main achievement of this research project, aside from that of establishing a valid online subculture –a cybersubculture - exists around the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn, has been to open up the study of the cybersubculture phenomena as a whole, and to therefore further the existing post-subcultural debate and perhaps find a future for it in the sphere of the online space. The findings regarding the cybersubculture – not to mention the positioning of the media-mediated Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon - were achieved by framing a research questionnaire which was then deployed to the users of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum. It was hoped that these answers would elicit responses that mimics the behaviours espoused in traditional or ‘classic’ subcultural styles, which for the most part they did. The answers were then analysed with a view to opening them up into a different subcultural style for the 21st century. This new ‘style’ was one that had flourished with the advent of the internet and allowed for greater freedom for women in particular to not only partake but also to instigate, originate and own. Women were seen to profit from the expansion of the cybersubculture; therefore the original contribution to knowledge was in fact two-pronged. This is because it also allowed for an elaboration of what is already known about cybersubcultures, by marking them out as places whereby new subcultural online spaces originated and also used by women might proliferate.

The research also established that the members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum viewed a media-mediated version of Anne Boleyn as a feminist icon and interacted with her image through the mainly unconscious use of symbolic interactionism, to varying degrees; examples of masquerade were also obvious in several of the answers received and therefore warranted an separate, small analysis of their own. Symbolic interactionism has illustrated the sort of 21st century subculture where a lifestyle choice is overwritten more by the desire to emulate and espouse the life/cause of one specific and often iconic figure, in this case Anne Boleyn. Symbolic interactionism can in this sense be considered one of the more adept disciplines with which to view and then understand subcultural behaviour, certainly when the subculture in question revolves more around a specific figure – albeit media-mediated – rather than a general lifestyle choice, as espoused by the more classic subcultural movements.

8.4 Position statement regarding the research

Concerning the author’s positionality in regards to the research, it would be sufficient to align the results of the research alongside what is already considered current in the subcultural debate, harkening back to Hodkinson’s comment in chapter 1 – 1.3 – regarding the idea of online communities as being ‘post-subcultural’. Tracey Greener and Robert Hollands called these new spaces simply as ‘postmodern’ (Greener and Hollands, 2006), but the author would shy away from this definition in favour of the more field-specific term coined by Hodkinson. A clarification of the author’s position in regards to the research would also be served by reiterating Paul Sweetman’s comments on the move from the more traditional – ‘classic’ forms of subculture, to the field of post-subculture:

‘...the emergence and partial consolidation of what has been widely labelled ‘post-subcultural’ studies; a body of writing and research intended to re-assess our understanding of subcultural-type

practices and formations in light of both perceived difficulties with the previously dominant framework *per se*, and apparent changes in the nature and composition of such groupings since the 1980s.’ (Sweetman 2013, p. 1.1)

The work and words of Andy Bennett are also pertinent in this regard and may be found in chapter 3 of this thesis, in section 3.2. Quoting the opening of chapter 4, the research has attempted to define ‘fandom’ and how it relates to the concept of subculture; and from there to pave the way for a new understanding of the concept of ‘fandom’ as something progressing out of the traditional idea of subculture into new and unexplored spheres, such as cybersubcultures. This has culminated in what may be considered an alternative avenue of thought in regard to the whole subculture/post-subculture debate. The author maintains the notion that fandom to an extent now supersedes subculture, rendering it somewhat redundant. Fandom is a far more fluid and accessible site of being, a more fluid term, and may in time leave the notion of subculture as a term to be archived, concerned with those old moral panics of the 1950s and 1960s, of which more modern groupings no longer share any similarity. To sum up and link to the previous points, the author believes that fandom is very much part of the post-subcultural debate and therefore its place in the thesis is necessary, fandom providing one of perhaps several sites where the post-subcultural debate may need to settle. This thesis sits squarely in the post-subcultural debate, but understands that ‘classic’ subcultural theory is still often employed by academics. To this end it may be noted that the research also reinforced current understanding about subcultures by using the ‘classic’ subcultural style as a ‘tick box template’ to illustrate the transition into a post-subcultural position.

8.5 Areas for further research

Further exploration might still be made of the more implicit links between symbolic interactionism and the ways in which it fuels the participants in the type of subculture – the cybersubculture – which seems so pertinent and prolific to the 21st century. Representations of Anne Boleyn and Mary Queen of Scots aside, it seems feasible that there may be far more subcultures – most, if not all of them online – that have made their mantras and set up their stalls around one specific person, contemporary, historical, fictional, real or otherwise. For instance, the pop star Madonna seems a likely focus for such cybersubcultural activity, and also the deceased, Diana, Princess of Wales. In Jeffrey Richards’ book *Diana – the making of a media saint* (1999), there seems in fact some sort of coded promise for a subculture to form around the memory of the deceased Princess; *Princess Diana Remembered* is a website in much the same mould as *The Anne Boleyn Files*, but it currently lacks a forum or chatroom. In fact, the website seems to be much more concerned with talking ‘at’ its followers as opposed to opening up any sort of dialogue between them.

The case for a subculture for Madonna would be very different from the ones either explored or cited in the course of this research project – Princess Diana included - because Madonna is alive. However, she is also undoubtedly ‘iconic’ and a great many may also take her to be some sort of feminist icon; the same could be said in a more burgeoning way for Beyoncé, and as a black feminist icon. The website *Madonnalicious* has a forum similar in structure to that of *The Anne Boleyn Files*, and it may be that a thorough investigation of its ongoing content would reveal a subcultural style similar to that in nature espoused by the

users of *The Anne Boleyn Files*. The forum's content is mainly concerned with discussing Madonna's recent tours/albums, with other sections including discussion on past tours and albums, but little else besides; no apparent discussion on her impact of possible status as an icon, feminist or otherwise. Many papers have been written on the subject of Madonna's music and her possible role as a feminist icon but seem not to have coalesced into something more substantial, subculture-wise. An investigation into the fandom or a subculture surrounding a living person as opposed to a historical figure would undoubtedly provide insight into a different slant on the dynamic involved with subcultural style for the 21st century, and also for further but perhaps differing cases of symbolic interactionism.

Another further area for research would be an investigation of the negative implications which might feasibly arise around the idea of online subcultural spaces entirely for women. The development of safe online spaces carries the unfortunate connotation which constitutes the idea that women still remain vulnerable in real world, physical spaces, and in one sense could be seen to have been herded or 'driven' online in the face of an increasingly hostile, fractious world. It is unclear how a positive progression could be made from this standpoint, and certainly right now it would seem that the payoff for women have safe spaces in which to facilitate subcultural movements of their own would come at the price that these spaces are virtual and not 'real'. This carries over into the youth element of the cybersubculture and the links it retains with the original, classic style of subculture whereby women remained for the most part on the fringes. Brendesha M. Tynes calls for greater monitoring of online spaces also, given the risks of 'grooming' that some young people face. (Tynes, 2007)

Issues of race and ethnicity need also further exploration in the field of the cybersubculture, and certainly in that increasingly invisible line between fandom and subculture; as relatively recently as 2005, Bury stated that there was no work done whatsoever on examining these facets of fandom, at least not from a female point of view. In fact Bury's own studies seemed to indicate that '...media online fandom is overwhelmingly white' (Bury 2005, p. 207).

8.6 Conclusion

Through the use of subcultural theory, and by citing symbolic interactionism as an example of how a modern cybersubculture might operate, this research project has established that there is a viable online subculture surrounding the media-mediated image of Anne Boleyn. This has exemplified by the presence and proliferation of the website *The Anne Boleyn Files*. It has also established that the subculture in question seems to be at the spearhead of an entirely new wave of 'safer' online spaces – cybersubcultures - mainly used by women of various ages to express themselves in security and in a certain style that is pertinent and a logical progression to what is understood about 'classical' subcultural styles. Therefore this new online style is able to mimic certain aspects of the 'classic' subcultural norm whilst at the same time expanding upon it with the resources made available by the innovations and conveniences of the internet and of social media.

The rapid proliferation of the internet and then social media have secured these new online spaces as being viable alternatives to the established subcultural spaces that already exist,

and it is possible that they may in times to come even supersede them entirely. Certainly they have allowed the phenomenon of fandom to proliferate, and to provide clearer links between this and subculture, out of which the research shows that many cybersubcultures have been formed. It may be that the 'classic' subculture is 'dead' and that the cybersubculture is now the future for all previously considered formations of alternative, underground or lifestyle-based identity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The questionnaire(s)

Presented here in full is the finished transcript of the questionnaire piloted to members of *The Anne Boleyn Files* forum.

‘Trajectory of the tragic queen: Anne Boleyn in subculture’

Questionnaire

For users of the Anne Boleyn Files

Section one

Yourself

1. How old are you?
18 – 25
26 – 34
35 – 45
46 – 55
55 – 65
65 +
2. What best describes your occupation?
3. Are you married, single, or in a relationship (please give brief detail)
4. Where do you live?
UK
Scotland
Ireland
Wales
Abroad (please give brief detail)
5. What is your gender?

Section two

Anne Boleyn

1. How long have you been interested in Anne Boleyn?
2. What sparked your interest in her?
3. Are you interested in Mary, Queen of Scots as well (if so please answer section 3 after finishing this one)
4. How long have you been a member of the Anne Boleyn Files forum?
5. Do you think Anne Boleyn is an icon –historically, or culturally?
6. In following Anne Boleyn do you feel yourself to be part of some sort of subculture or ‘fan following’, with a sense of community? What are your views on this being regarded as a subculture?
7. Is Anne Boleyn an inspirational woman?
8. Are there aspects to Anne Boleyn that you identify with in particular? What is it about her that inspires you?
9. How would you describe your interest in Anne Boleyn? Would you call your interest a hobby or a passion?
10. What are your views on Anne Boleyn’s character: her perceived role in the breakup of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon’s marriage, and her treatment of their daughter Mary?
11. Anne Boleyn fans call her achievements inspirational, but do you think they airbrush what we might perceive to be failings in her character by blaming them on the patriarchy of the time? For example ‘Anne was a radical forward-thinking woman, except when she was dominated by men and that excuses her actions’
12. Jane Seymour supplanted Anne by performing the same ‘techniques’ that Anne had deployed on the King and with far quicker results, and yet Jane is generally reviled, even by so-called impartial historians; see for example a comment made by Eric Ives regarding Jane’s royal apparel, ‘...anyone familiar with Holbein’s portrait of Jane Seymour might be forgiven for feeling that she needed all the help she could get’. What are your thoughts on this?

Anne in the media

13. Which TV or film portrayal of Anne is your favourite, and why?
14. Which fictional book on Anne is your favourite, and why?
15. Which historical factual book on Anne is your favourite, and why?
16. Alison Weir has mentioned the media surrounding Anne Boleyn, in particular the area involving merchandise. Of this she said, Replica costumes are sold online, and among other weird and wonderful Boleyn paraphernalia, the internet auction site Ebay sells rings that ‘...*allegedly have been infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn.*’. What are your thoughts on this?
17. Do you buy any Anne Boleyn merchandise other than book or DVDs, and if so, what?

Pilgrimages of grace; visiting Anne Boleyn

18. Have you visited any of the places associated with Anne Boleyn (if not, skip this section)
19. Have you visited (please cross)
 - The Tower of London
 - Hampton Court
 - Hever Castle
 - Blickling Hall
 - Other
20. Have you visited the Tower of London or any of the above locations on the anniversary of her death?
21. If so, did you lay flowers? What did the occasion mean to you?
22. What was the furthest you have travelled to visit a site associated with Anne?

Section Three

Mary, Queen of Scots

1. How long have you been interested in Mary, Queen of Scots?
2. Did the interest evolve from your interest in Anne Boleyn, or was it vice versa?
3. Are you a member of the Marie Stuart Society?
4. Do you think Mary, Queen of Scots is an icon – historically, or culturally?
5. In following Mary, Queen of Scots do you consider yourself to be part of some sort of subculture or ‘fan following’, with a sense of community?
6. Is Mary is an inspirational woman?
7. Are there aspects to Mary that you identify with in particular? What is it about her that inspires you?
8. Would you call your interest a hobby or a passion?
9. What do you feel about the ‘less salubrious’ sides of Mary’s character, including the accusation that she murdered her second husband to make way for the third, and that she plotted to have Elizabeth I murdered?
10. Mary Queen of Scots fans call her achievements inspirational, but do you think they downplay what we might perceive to be failings in her character by blaming them on the patriarchy of the time?
11. Mary’s third husband Bothwell - according to historical record - raped Mary and forced her to marry him, yet female writers of historical fiction, notably Jean Plaidy, Margaret George, Phillipa Gregory and others, portray him as some sort of masculine ideal. What are your thoughts on this?

Mary in the media

12. Which TV or film portrayal of Mary is your favourite, and why
13. Which fictional book on Mary is your favourite, and why
14. Which historical factual book on Mary is your favourite, and why
15. Alison Weir has mentioned the media surrounding Anne Boleyn, in particular the area involving merchandise. Of this she said, Replica costumes are sold online, and among other weird and wonderful Boleyn paraphernalia, the internet auction site Ebay sells rings that ‘...*allegedly have been infused with the spiritual essence of Anne Boleyn.*’. What are your thoughts on this?
16. Do you buy any Mary Queen of Scots merchandise other than book or DVDs, and if so, what?

The royal road to Fotheringay; visiting Mary Queen of Scots

17. Have you visited any of the places associated with Mary Queen of Scots (if not, skip this section)
18. Have you visited (please cross)
 - Holyrood Palace
 - Edinburgh Castle
 - Fotheringay Castle
 - Mary Queen of Scots’ House

Other

19. Have you visited Fotheringay Castle or any of the above locations on the anniversary of her death?
20. If so, did you lay flowers? What did the occasion mean to you?
21. What was the furthest you travelled to visit a site associated with Mary?

Section four

And finally

22. 'Getting beheaded apparently is a real 'advantage' for a sentimental heroine'. What do you make of this statement?
23. Who would you say was the definitive 'romantic, tragic queen' of popular history? Anne Boleyn, or Mary, Queen of Scots? And why?

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Filmography

Anna Boleyn, d. Ernst Lubitsch (1920, Germany, 118 mins)

Anne of the thousand days, d. Charles Jarrott (1969, UK, 145 mins)

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, d. Joss Whedon & others (1997 – 2003, USA, 44 mins per episode)

Dallas, d. Leonard Katzman & others (1978 – 1991, USA, 47-50 mins per episode)

Elizabeth R, d. Roderick Graham & others (1971, UK, 85 mins per episode)

Elizabeth ~ The Golden Age, d. Shekhar Kapur (2007, UK, 114 mins)

Henry VIII and his six wives, d. Waris Hussein (1972, UK, 125 mins)

Henry VIII: the mind of a tyrant, d. David Singleton (2009, UK, 50 mins per episode)

Horrible Histories, d. Steve Connelly (2009 – 2013, UK, 30 mins per episode)

Mary of Scotland, d. John Ford (1936, USA, 123 mins)

Mary Queen of Scots, d. Charles Jarrott (1971, UK, 128 mins)

Mean girls, d. Mark Waters (2004, USA, 97 mins)

Quadrophenia, d. Franc Roddam (1979, UK, 117 mins)

Rebel without a cause, d. Nicholas Ray (1955, USA, 111 mins)

Reign, d. Fred Gerber & others (2013 – present, USA, 42 mins per episode)

Six Wives with Lucy Worsley, d. Russell England (2016, UK, 58 mins per episode)

The last days of Anne Boleyn, d. Rob Coldstream (2013, UK, 60 mins)

The other Boleyn girl, d. Justin Chadwick (2008, UK, 115 mins)

The private life of Henry VIII, d. Alexander Korda (1933, UK, 97 mins)

The six wives of Henry VIII, d. Naomi Capon & John Glenister (1970, UK, 85 mins per episode)

The Tudors, d. Ciaran Donnelly & others (2007 – 2010, USA, 55 mins per episode)

Wolf Hall, d. Peter Kosminsky (2015, UK, 60-65 mins per episode)