

Film star, propping up the bar, driving in a car, it looks so easy

Film star, propping up the bar, driving in a car tonight

Film star, giving it class, living it fast, it looks so easy

Film star, giving it class, living it fast tonight

What to believe in, it's impossible to say?

What to believe in when they change your name

Wash your brain, play the game again. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah

Suede – Coming Up (1996)

‘My Face is Never was’

Exploring the Textual Construction of the Celebrity -
Productive Intersections of
The Actor, Institutions and Audiences

Shenja van der Graaf

Insanity, insanity
What have you done to me?
Insanity, insanity
Where is my vanity?
Insanity, insanity
What did you do to me?
Insanity, insanity
Blocked my ways to see
Insanity, insanity
What life means to me
Insanity, insanity
I have to let go to see
Insanity turns sane on me

For all objects of affection, my subject and the wannabe's-out-there

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Finally, thanks for *Buffalo '66* Vincent G. – you know I'm kidding, right? I go anywhere and anytime you're there... and not to forget John Cusack...

Preface

How many people can you fool? I don't have an answer. The only thing I know is that love and hate are inherent to the human species. Kierkegaard once wrote that you can only understand life backwards, but you have to live it forwards. This cannot be more true than my own experiences.

The entire process of gathering information, meeting people, leaving them behind, emotional and psychological struggles, political mind-games, bogus lies, cranky emails, devilish gossip, ignorance and my foolish heart all contributed to the completion of two years' work. I lived in the United States and the United Kingdom to hook up with people who work in the media industry and people who are active users and producers of media texts. I learned a hell-of-a-lot: One week counts for one year of your life. It was worth it.

To give two years of your life to study signifying processes of Keanu Reeves, would drive anyone insane. Not because you hate the man. I wish it would be that simple. But to be confronted with his name and face over a longer period of time doesn't contribute to a healthy state of mind. Talking with a friend and noticing I am leaning on a *Johnny Mnemonic* pinball machine; having breakfast with another friend who points me on a picture on the wall - of course, it was a signed *Dogstar* image -; staying in a hotel where the movie channels are promoted by a huge card board of *Chain Reaction*; sitting in a bus where two people are discussing *Devil's Advocate*; hanging out at the same parties; zapping through my television channels and look who is there at the *Rosie O'Donnell Show*?; I can go on forever, but 'Keanu is everywhere'. In 1997 I told him about the possibility that I would get sick of his face. Well, it has happened. And I am really sorry for all that and even more.

Introduction

As an 8-year old kid I liked a Dutch band called Roberto Jacketti and the Scooters but after a while I traded them in for Michael J. Fox (travelling back to the future), Don Johnson (the black sun glasses) and Tom Cruise (the brother I never had). I can't remember when I lost my interest in these popular creatures; they just slipped away, though, not in their entirety.

During my studies at the Utrecht University in The Netherlands, I became intrigued by studying the human side of media production and media reception. Therefore, I decided to travel to the heart of today's popular cinema: Los Angeles. It is in this city where I visioned the contours of this study. It aroused my interest to study the media industry in theory and practice. However, the achievement of a critical but practical insight into the entertainment industry presented in this study, arised from *Societal Graduation Hymn Tribute: On the Dialectics of Conflict and Consensus Layers Between the Production and Reception of a Specific Media Text* (1998). It came about by my fascination for both Jürgen Habermas' work on communicative action and the concept of 'hegemony'; the study offers a critical comparison between Critical Theory and theories developed by Cultural Studies. Enough said, for further reading I refer to that work, now it is time to move on.

In 1997 I am having lunch somewhere in Los Angeles, while working on my laptop. People walk in and out, including my 'case study'. It is a bizarre coincidence since I was not planning or even better, it did not cross my mind to set up an appointment with Mr. Keanu Reeves. It took me about thirty minutes to decide whether I should talk to him or not. We ended up talking for a long time about lots of things. Three days later this little encounter was on Ted Casablanca's (E! Online) web site¹.

E! Online: Ted Casablanca's Awful Truth: 10/23/97

The Eyes have it: Keanu Reeves, grunge central, chatting with a woman in the lobby of Hollywood's famous [...], where the decor is as musty as Keanu's muscles.

Of course, I wanted to find out who informed Mr. Casablanca about this pleasurable encounter of small-talk-having-fun-nothingness. I remember that there were three or four Asian people talking in a corner way in the back who did not pay attention at all, a waiter and a young man who desperately wanted our attention. This young man tried to make it to our conversation. When Keanu left for a few minutes I was alone with this man. He asked me whether I was visiting my boyfriend in Los Angeles . It was something Keanu had told him, at least, that is what I learned later on. This was my first encounter with the construction of 'Keanu'.

I had a great time in Los Angeles. I talked to directors, talent agents, teachers, editors, managers, and a lot of other people who work in the 'biz'. Most topics of conversation concentrate on what you do and who you

know in the business. Each person - who participates in the production of media products and the consumption

of these products - is responsible for his or her own share in the creation and circulation of the Hollywood

industry; often in the form of celebrities who are passed along in the promotion of the media (or merchandise) products or by name-dropping to 'meet new friends'. We all have some sort of knowledge about people in the public eye ranging from actors to politicians, from gurus to notorious serial killers. Celebrityhood comes in all forms. We come to the knowledge of public persons from different informational sources such as newspapers, television, radio, movies, magazines, and the internet. Besides this institutionalized information system, we come to the knowledge of public persons from the human-inherent side in the form of gossip. People like to talk. It doesn't matter whether it takes place in a corporate business or in a hairdresser's seat. The knowledge we have – true or false - gives way to a construction of a public person that floats around in our society; just think about the media hypes featuring president Bill Clinton and Princess Diana².

Although, it's interesting to study our preoccupation with the lives of public persons this is not the topic of this thesis³. This study has three aims that respectively relate to the construction of the popular actor, the development of a new methodology (directed towards specific types of audiences) and – to a lesser extent – the improvement of communication between academics and (fan)audiences which is dealt with from a self-reflexive perspective. The first aim comes about by the question how and why some individuals become publicly well-known. Besides professions such as being a president or a princess intended to look after their nation's inhabitants, or being famous (or notorious) for killing people, there are professions that are intended for other people's entertainment and relaxation such as acting. Especially in Hollywood, actors and actresses are subjected to a system that produces media products which are generally promoted and distributed by and through the actors. However, actors are no mass products themselves. On the contrary, actors are individuals and therefore have an undeniable specificity. First, the actor has a physique that distinguishes him from others. Second, his image is circulated and referred to over time and space. Together, they represent a set of personality characteristics of the actor as an individual. Thus, the actor is thought of as a person who represents certain characteristics that are not necessarily his own for the actor's personality derives from several sources such as the roles he has performed, interviews he has given, gossip in magazines and his physique which are discussed throughout this study. The construction of the popular is theorized by the *discourse* about the *textual*⁴ construction of the actor (as site⁵). Michel Foucault (1980) uses *discourse* to refer to particular ways of organizing knowledge regarding specific types of power relationships. It refers to all forms of language or to a system of social representations that produce and circulate a coherent set of meanings about a particular topic. Ien Ang (1989, 1991) uses *discourse* to theorize television audiences. She argues that audiences are constructed by various discourses and by understanding them, discourses exert power over audiences. For instance, advertisers define audiences as consumers and study their buying patterns or habits. Audiences are then studied by the way they resist the discursive power of texts. Thus, discourse refers to – outlined by Turner

(1990, p. 33) – “socially produced groups of ideas or ways of thinking that can be tracked in individual texts or groups of texts, but that also demand to be located within wider historical and social structures or relations.” Here, discourse is explained by the various ways meanings and texts are produced - based on representations of the actor in the media - by human beings. Due to power inherent in discourses, not only texts are produced and received but give way to social experiences as well. Making meaning is therefore always related to someone’s background: a blue-collar or a Keanu Reeves’ fan will understand the film *Act Of Vengeance* differently.

The second purpose of this study refers to the development of a new methodology to study audiences on the basis of Cultural Studies theory⁶. Richard Johnson (1983) and Graeme Turner (1990) have made comprehensive studies of (British) Cultural Studies; they have in common that they study culture, power and meanings. Especially, the British and American Cultural studies⁷ are associated with the study of popular culture. Culture⁸ is often linked to *representation*⁹ for culture can only be understood by the way people make sense of things. And people make sense through ‘shared meanings’. For example, language operates as a representational system by using signs and symbols to express ideas and feelings. In this study, the actor is understood as a system of representations. An actor is a public figure who represents, in the first place, a product and second, culture. The actor is thus a site where product and meaning intersect on the basis of culture¹⁰. My argument is that, if we are interested in meanings, institutions responsible for the production of media products, can only be understood in dynamic relationships with (potential) audiences. Institutions and audiences are interconnected with both each other and the product, which is embodied by the actor. Generally, institutional agencies are studied as producers of products and (potential) audiences are seen as the producers of meanings in relation to the product (the actor). Audiences are called ‘consumers’ of media products but are not often understood as producers of texts as well. However, audiences in general and fans in specific are agencies that produce a wide variety of texts such as art, web sites, fan letters and gossip (see Turner, 1988; Fiske, 1989; Jenkins, 1992). It is what Michel De Certeau (1984) and Henry Jenkins (*Textual Poachers*, 1992, pp. 23-27) call “*poaching*”¹¹, which refers to the ability of media audiences to borrow and inflect media images and products by which they construct and understand their own identity. Crucial to this concept is the continuous process of meaning production. Poachers make meanings based on their own position in society; a position that is not fixed in time and space, and therefore – like Jenkins - I prefer the concept of poaching over Hall’s (During, 1993, pp. 90-103) “Encoding and Decoding”¹² model that is linked to *polysemy*¹³. The latter concept refers to the process of creating a multiplicity of meanings by socially situated audiences in relation to the text. A text opens up different readings which allows socially situated audiences to choose ‘their’ meaning from a text – the choice depends on the social situation or context like class, gender and ethnicity. Preferred readings then refer to the reading that the production sees as the dominant one (which often corresponds to the dominant ideology); though,

audiences can accept this reading, they can negotiate the text or they can oppose it. So, Hall's theory implies that audiences have a stable position from which they make meaning of a text and as a result it seems that meanings are fixed and can be

placed in clearly defined categories. However, Fiske (1987, p. 64) argues that this formation of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings overemphasizes class which is just one social factor, and Jenkins (1992, pp. 33-34) argues that this model implies that audiences have a stable position from which to make sense of a text instead of having a wide variety of possibilities that stem from their situation in society. I show that, like various other scholars such as David Morley, John Fiske, Henry Jenkins and John Hartley, audiences produce a multiplicity of meanings and texts. I argue that on the one hand, media products are promoted and marketed as and through *authorized*¹⁴ texts that official outlets by institutional agencies (for example, movie studios and producers). These authorized texts (e.g. movies, interviews, television shows) are distributed over time and space and serve as entertainment with a view to (potential) audiences. On the other hand, audiences are producers of meanings and some specific types of audiences¹⁵ are producers of texts as well. Fans, for example, produce drawings, fan letters and organize conventions. They are agencies just like the institutions¹⁶. These specific types of audiences produce *unauthorized*¹⁷ texts. I want to focus on these specific types of audiences. The differences between authorized and unauthorized texts ground then in that the former are *public representations*, while the latter are both public, semi-public and private¹⁸. A third mode of production is the actor himself¹⁹. Though, the actor is a complicating factor for first, the actor is a *man* (in terms of race, age, physics, religion, class), he is a *performer* on screen and on stage, he plays a *role* (characters) and he is a *public figure*, a *persona*, a *star* (Dyer, 1979) which lead to his *public identity*. This public identity is bound to an historical moment in time and space and is articulated, it is a given form. Second, the actor is *intertextually* present (in mediated expressions), he is *commodified* in texts, and he *constructs* publics such as fans. Thus, the three modes of production construct a particular identity: a public persona, star and private persona that are based on the actor as a man, a performer and his roles. The public (re-)presentation of the actor is emphasized through various sources such as the internet, magazines, interviews, photographs and merchandise. The word 'actor' refers therefore to both the private person (of the actor) and the public person (of the actor). The 'actor as site' refers explicitly to the productive mode of the actor. However, in most cases, all three meanings are referred to by 'actor' but from the context it will be clear to what mode is addressed²⁰; he interacts thus both with authorized and unauthorized texts, while the texts interact with him as well.

These three modes of production, respectively *institutions*, *audiences* and the *actor*, are interrelated and provide us with a clear insight into the activities of the come about and completion of the popular – which varies from a new piece of design furniture, a Versace cat suit to the creation of a new 'star' – through their discursive and overlapping practices. The latter is very important with regard to *intertextuality*: By analyzing how someone or something becomes popular, I try to overlook

how (future) trends can be traced. Crucial to this process is the understanding of intertextual relationships both within the production of media products and within the reception of these products, but the intertexts – based on the production of tie-ins²¹ - of the products themselves are studied as well. For example, as soon as the *Batman* movies²² premiered, the music by Prince (now known as The Artist) was at the top of the charts, magazines were filled with gossip about the actors, the sales of *Batman* products such as posters, comic books and cereal increased as well. Through all these intertextual relationships profits increased - and more important, audiences were provided with extra-textual information²³ which contributed to a multiplicity of meanings of *Batman*. I argue thus that ‘my face is never was’ by the exploration of intersections of the celebrity who is intertextually (and intratextually) produced and constructed by institutions, audiences and the actor.

The third purpose of this study relates to self-reflexivity and criticism that are mainly expressed through the consequences of being a celebrity and being an academic (see fan section): The production of both authorized and unauthorized texts have led to an assigned personality that the actor (or me²⁴) most likely doesn't have in ‘reality.’ Through different sources we come to the knowledge of public figures. But what and who do you know? People who are active on the internet, who read magazines and who watch movies interpret public figures differently. Who do you ‘know’ when you ‘know things about Keanu?’ Various (media) sources contribute to an understanding of Keanu Reeves (the male, the actor, performer, musician and commodity); however, when a magazine refers to Keanu Reeves, it does not refer to Keanu Reeves the private person. It does not refer to the male who hangs out with his family and friends, the one(s) he loves.... Not only the actor is constructed, I too became ‘constructed’ when, in course of my research, I became object of fan gossip – an issue I will address later in this text from a self-reflexive perspective.

Thus, the actor is elaborated intertextually through both authorized and unauthorized texts. All the pieces of ‘extra information’ - of for example, Keanu Reeves’ private life to ‘understand’ his movies, his stage performances or to listen to him playing bass in the band *Dogstar* – work to extend the (celebrity) discourse between institutional agencies and specific audience groups. It also reinforces economic aspects of the media industry because more money is made out of one product by for example the production of merchandise.

The development of a new approach and the practical construction of the popular – and its cultural and economical consequences - are shown by the case study (and actor) Keanu Reeves²⁵ whose (re-)presentation meets the needs of this study. This thesis asks for an actor who is intertextually well represented and that is what Keanu is. He performs both on stage and in movies, both in commercial and in independent productions. He plays bass in the band *Dogstar*²⁶ - other members include Bret Domrose (vocals, guitar) and Rob Mailhouse (drummer, actor). *Dogstar* has toured in the United States, Europe, Australia and Japan. As a result die-hard fans and other interested audiences can

actually pay and see him/them, which goes for his stage performances as well. Although nowadays, Dogstar attracts both its own audiences and Keanu Reeves' admirers, initially the latter formed the biggest part of Dogstar's audiences. Dogstar has put out two compact discs, *Quattro Formaggi*²⁷ and *Our Little Visionary*, and they are currently recording a new album. Other forms of Keanu-representations can be found in magazines and on the internet²⁸. For instance, Dogstar has an official web site built by Dogstar's management, but there are a lot of other web sites, especially built by fans, and chat rooms that are dedicated to Keanu Reeves as well. Some like his performances, some love his looks, others hate his guts; some refer to him as an Anti-Christ, some think he is a new God, others like to chat in a Keanu related room; sites with names such as *Total Keanu* and *The Society For Keanu Consciousness* speak for themselves. This is also what makes Keanu unique, because other actors like Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt and Johnny Depp are (re-)presented in an entirely different way. For some vague reasons it seems very important, especially in interviews and gossip columns, to describe Keanu's bodily movements and 'noises', instead of writing down what has been said. Read the first abstraction from *Arena* (UK, July/August 1995, p. 56) and the second from *Premiere* (US, September 1997, pp. 65, 67) as two examples:

At our second meeting, I found him slumped in his dimly lit Los Angeles hotel lobby, appearing exhausted and depressed. His look only emphasized his low mood: a three-day beard and hair so grimy it was malleable as sculpting clay. In fact, a thick tuft stuck straight up in the air, as if a tiny missile silo was growing out of his head. Throughout our talk, his spirits rose and fell unpredictably: during one of his darker moments, he slunk off to watch a *Johnny Mnemonic* promotional reel I'd brought along. Five minutes passed, then 15, then 25. Just when I'd written him off as a walk-out, Reeves reappeared, looking refreshed. "Turn on the tape recorder," he urged me, then launched into a lengthy and slightly bewildering monologue about a type of meditation in which he imagines his own death. All this was in sharp contrast to our first meeting, where a silky-haired, smooth-shaven Reeves bounded up in a black motorcycle helmet, fuzzy gray jacket and dirt-creased black jeans with rips that revealed thin white boxer shorts. Hoping to catch the last day's sunshine, he led me through a maze of short halls toward the hotel pool. Suddenly, as we approached a small alleyway darkened from an overgrowth of ivy and trees, he pushed himself in front of me. "Don't go!" he shouted in a mock-Shakespearean tone. "Let me first make sure it is safe." Reeves trotted a few inches up the corridor, then threw back a smile. "It is safe," he declared.

He thinks for a few tortured minutes, reaches out his hand - then pulls it back and shakes his head. [...] EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE [...] He can express himself with fine, terse pungency, but to get there, he - and you, the interrogator - have to wade through thickets of hems and haws, rhetorical asides, agonized self-questioning, self-conscious Letterman-esque *hee-hee*'s.

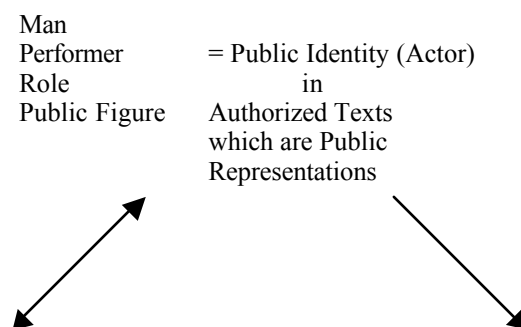
So, lots of sentences dedicated to shaking-Keanu-body parts and giggles can't be retrieved in interviews with the other actors (see also appendix). Issues that are being discussed on the internet vary from harmless conversations about what Keanu's next project will be to rather shocking and daring utterances regarding several body parts, acting capabilities, getting rid of the man and his sexual preferences.

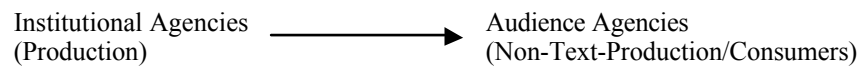
Texts and meanings - true or false - are produced by a wide variety of institutional agencies, receptive agencies and the actor himself. The produced texts and meanings are derived from authorized and unauthorized discourses which overlap and are intertextually situated. In the process of becoming well-

known in the public eye, culture plays an important role. Culture is about a lot of things such as making sense of things, a reflection of social settings, expression of instrumental desires, social relations, differences and shared meanings²⁹. By studying the actor as a cultural construction (or creation) of public representations and therefore as evocation (and generator) of both authorized and unauthorized texts with corresponding meanings, processes working to construct the popular unfold. Thus, it shows how someone or something becomes popular and what it signifies in its cultural context, that is, what the popular means and contributes to society in general and to an individual's life in particular.

The three modes of production show how someone (which I suggest to name *non-specific body*³⁰) becomes a public figure: only in the interaction with both the institutions (production) and audiences (reception). The following two models represent the interrelationship between a popular phenomenon and the three modes of production - I refer to chapter one that develops and explains the models in-depth.

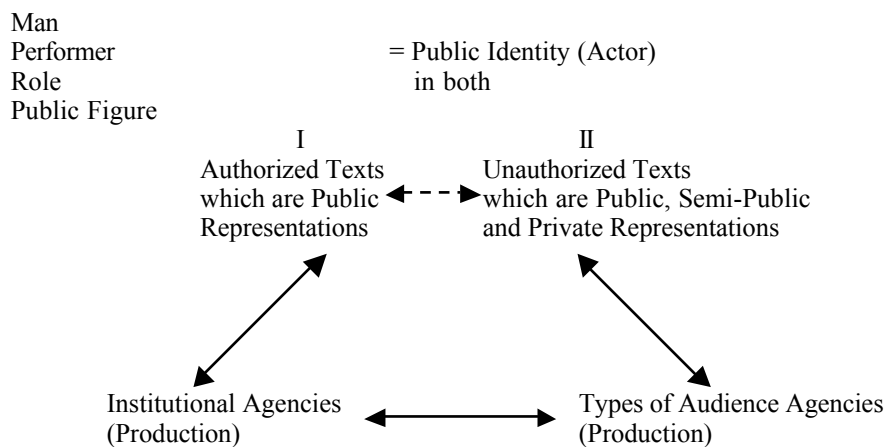
The first model shows the dynamics among institutional agencies, the actor and general types of audiences which have been the topic of most studies. The second figure shows the same dynamics, but with the difference that specific types of audiences not only produce meanings but texts as well. They are not only thought of as 'just consumers' of media products, but they are understood as *textual producers*³¹ of media and culture. The first model shows the production and reception of media texts; for instance, the television series *Miami Vice* (authorized text) can be theorized through various discourses such as pleasure, masculinity and pop music³². Institutional agencies can be studied and analyzed through the production and the show and related to several readings of the series expressed through their meaningfulness (audience agencies). The producers of the series had invented a successful formula to attract both male and female audiences by mixing action and two handsome actors (black and white) by the development and interaction between the TV text (Philip Michael Thomas and Don Johnson) and the official production of the series. Thus, the TV text and the official producers of the series interact to look after the creation of *Miami Vice* with a view to audiences who are (just) producers of meanings (for themselves); meanings that are based on the series and other intertextual media texts such as interviews with the actors and *Crockett's Theme*.





Model 1: Production, Reception and the Production of Meanings

This model doesn't show audiences that are producers of meanings *and* producers of texts. Some time ago Stuart Hall developed a theory "Encoding and Decoding"³³ in which audiences had three positions in relationship to the text, which I discussed earlier in the text. Although, Hall's theory is in some ways superseded, it still underlies the vast majority of audience studies. In this thesis I understand reception as another mode of production. Even within the 'old' model it can be argued that audiences are producers, namely of meanings which are a form of production. Though, in comparison with institutional agencies that produce material texts, meanings float around and are shaped in the viewer's head. However, besides meanings – they are interpretations and therefore much harder to find and to theorize and as a result, they vary a great deal from person to person – texts are produced as well by a lot of people. *Textual producers* range from die-hard fans, haters, critics, artists, gossip and (unauthorized) biographies. Some of these unauthorized texts circulate within a small group of people, but others can be distributed publicly as well. Thus, some *Miami Vice* viewers produce 'slash' stories about Crockett and Tubbs (see chapter six), make drawings, others turn the black sunglasses into a cult and the series have proven to be excellent education material (Fiske, 1987). The following represents the heart of this study and includes the three modes of production (see also chapter one):



Model 2: The Triadic Model of Production

On the basis of this model the key question 'how is a popular media figure³⁴ textually and culturally produced?' is answered throughout this thesis. Six chapters unfold an understanding of this new dimension of audience research, the construction of popular phenomena and to a lesser extent, self-reflexivity. Although, the chapters seem to address separate aspects of the production process, they form in reality a complex system of meaning production. I made the distinctions as clear as possible in order to develop and present the theory. The first chapter sets out the theory and methodology. It discerns three modes of production that lie at the base to study texts as forms of public representations and therefore they function as means of social signification. The chapters two till

five map several productive instruments in the creation of a product. The second and fourth chapter are similar because the former maps the productive instruments of institutional agencies in the creation of a product while the latter focuses on the productive instruments in both the appropriation and creation of a product by several types of audiences. The third and fifth then, deal with textual manifestations of both production modes. The former offers the ones of the institutions, and the latter theorizes textual manifestations of several audiences' types. The final chapter discusses four case studies by theorizing productive intersections - that is, overlapping discourses - of the three production modes. The product, the actor, is here included as well³⁵ however, the reason why I haven't dedicated a chapter to the actor as a mode of production is mainly a private one: This study is not about Keanu Reeves, but about the actor and public representation 'Keanu Reeves'. This opens up a rather complex discourse for the conceptualization of 'actor' refers to multileveled (re-)presentations of Keanu Reeves such as the private person, the actor, the commodity and the idol; 'Keanu Reeves' is a case study and should therefore be understood according those terms.

These four case studies then, offer different degrees of the actor's involvement. The first one refers to 'Keanu's media marriage' to David Geffen, the second builds on the first one and deals with Keanu's love life represented in various media. The third study focuses on the crises at the Dogstar Bulletin Fan Board that started when Bret Domrose (supposedly) posted a message to thank his fans which was followed by a message from Keanu - or maybe not. The fourth study combines several words uttered by Keanu Reeves when he was invited to *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (US, October 1997) to promote the release of *Devil's Advocate*. He discussed the movie, but also some personal memories which are still used by some of his fans. Also, several other 'words' are discussed that are quoted in magazines, on the internet, in TV shows and are used to describe Keanu or used to explain Keanu's enigma. This study ends with a conclusion in which the most valuable concepts are linked to one another and lead to new insights and ideas with regard to the entertainment industry in general and the popular actor and his audiences in specific.

Part One

1

Enigma of the Popular Representation

Enigma of the Popular

Jeans are very popular. Besides the fact that jeans are functional, it is only the precondition of their popularity – it does not explain it. It does not explain the unique ability of jeans to transect almost every social category we can think of: We can not define a jeans wearer by any of the major social category systems – gender, class, race, age, nation, religion, education. You could say they are for youth and the blue collar, but this is semiotic rather than sociological, namely as centers of meaning rather than social categories. (p. 1)³⁶

John Fiske (1989) argues that jeans can function, on the one hand, as a means to hide oneself through homogenization or on the other hand, as a way of the jeans wearer to express something with and through the jeans. Not only jeans are popular and function as a mode of (self-)expression. Hair mascara by *Dior* is popular, leather boots underneath a mini skirt are popular, skating and snowboarding are ‘in’, just like *Chasing Amy*, army pants, *No Doubt*, *The Barenaked Ladies*, *The Offspring* and *Alanis Morissette*. For now, that is. Popularity is unstable and not fixed. What might be defined as ‘popular’ by one person may not be defined as ‘hip’ by someone else. Some people have never heard of some of the music or people I like and vice versa. And what is popular today, may be forgotten tomorrow. Popular tid-bits and famous faces can be studied through the conceptualization of *trends*. A trend is a term that categorizes and identifies things and people which signifies, at a particular time and space, something to a certain someone such as hipness and coolness. Both objects and subjects of ‘high visibility’ bear meanings of social experience, of masculinity and femininity, of unisexuality, of a sense of community and individualization. They are carriers of potential meanings. They are polysemic³⁷. And their popularity shifts over time – we all remember *Abba*, but listening to them is just ‘not done’ anymore. A trend is thus a label that often refers to a movement and is capable of infiltrating individuals’ lives and minds, ends up in closets and on walls.

Major corporations try to capture how trends arise by trying to answer the question ‘who deems something or someone into a ‘hot item’?’ However, this question goes beyond this work for I offer an understanding of the entire process of production and counter-production of media. In my opinion one can only grasp the past, present and future by studying the activities of both corporate institutions, the products and audiences (both ‘active consumers’ and ‘active producers’³⁸) since everything about the future is planted and nurtured by what is happening right now in the present. This thesis describes the activities of several factors that work to generate media products and their meaning potentials; it offers an understanding of social situated human beings and their meaningful

experiences to grasp the society they live in and make sense of³⁹.

The word ‘popular’⁴⁰ has come into use long after historical shapes of popular phenomena presented themselves in society. Raymond Williams (*Keywords*, 1976, pp. 236-238) writes that ‘popular’ origins as a legal and political term and is derived from ‘popularis’ which means ‘belonging to the people’. Thus, ‘popular’ refers to the point of view of the people rather than to power relations. ‘Popular culture’ refers then to on the one hand, culture made by people for themselves and on the other hand, it refers to culture that is identified by others and not by the people themselves – it refers to inferiority and to winning favor; therefore, the meaning of ‘popular’ has become power related⁴¹. Nowadays, actors literally ‘belong to the people’ because they are providers of other people’s entertainment; at the same time their expressions are taken and interpreted by audiences (see Dyer’s *Stars*, 1979).

Central to Cultural Studies theories is that they study processes of making texts and how audiences interact with these texts in order to find out how viewers make meanings; both the meanings ‘encoded’ in the text by its production side and the meanings the text’s audiences ‘decoded’ from the text are taken into account (see Ang, 1982; Radway, 1984; McRobbie, 1991; Morley, 1992). Popular texts are then generally studied in terms of the culture of ideological power⁴², that is, the subordinated and disempowered in relation to the dominant ideology⁴³. It is seen as serving the economic prospects and interests of the dominant forces, but contradictorily, it is made by the subordinated who use the texts in their own interests⁴⁴. Culture is understood as a bearer of signs that express and give way to meanings that are crucial to our social system. The generated meanings of texts produce a social identity among the involved human beings. Since the sense-making process is irrevocable related to agencies of both production and reception, making sense of meanings involves making sense of the involved institutions, or people⁴⁵. In this thesis, the process of producing ‘the popular’, both texts and meanings are emphasized, is studied by the conceptualization of the production processes of the popular⁴⁶. I argue that the enigma of the popular is *constructed*⁴⁷ which is discussed throughout this study by concentrating on the development of a methodological shift in audience research⁴⁸.

In this chapter I provide an understanding of the ways in which popular representations (of the actor) are constructed in texts by institutions, the actor himself and the audiences.

Public Representation: Text, Audiences, Products and Signification

A ‘little story’ (December 8, 1998) to introduce the subject:

“I don’t usually fuck & tell, but in this case I may make an exception. I WAS in Hawaii, but why care what color beanie Keanu was wearing? I will tell you that I hung out at the Big Bus, waiting for Keanu to arrive. He did, and I went up to him, smiled and winked, while wagging my finger, as in ‘come here’. S u r p r i s e d t h a t he actually came, I whispered to him that I am able to power-suck a golf ball through a garden hose. This statement illicited a raised eyebrow from Keanu, but he whispered back to me: “Room xxx, at xxx Hotel”

(I don't want to mention the hotel because we may meet there again). Anyway, I went, and found Keanu alone in the room, lights low and the sweet smell of marijuana in the room. We smoked a couple to loosen up a bit, then almost immediately, Keanu stripped me down and asked if he could insert a wine bottle into my bottom. I didn't want to disappoint him so I said sure, just lube it up a bit. He did, but first he got naked (nice thick pecker on him!) and we got into a 69 position, with him porking me with the bottle. Oh my goodness, the earth actually moved, our unfettered passion getting the better of us! We kissed then, and before I knew it, I was standing in the hallway, naked holding my clothes AND the fucking (stinky) wine bottle! I didn't even get cab fare! I was a bit humiliated, but what the heck, I blew a STAR!"

Studying media audiences is not meaningful in its own right, it becomes only interesting in the broader context of understanding contemporary culture. Audience-related practices are teamed up with non-audience-related practices (being a part of various audienceships is not what people act upon every single day), and only in combination of the two, media audiences make sense. At the same time, media audiences do not make sense when producers of media are not highlighted as well. Without media producers there wouldn't be any media products and without any media products there wouldn't be any media audiences. Without the textual product, without Keanu not wanting to be an actor, without Keanu not being interesting for the movie industry and in the opinion of certain people, the little story *In Hawaii, in a hotel room, butt naked with Keanu, a whip...* wouldn't have been what it appears to be. It is not so interesting to find out who wrote it rather the question why it was written: What does the actor Keanu Reeves signify or mean that this person posted this story on the *Dogstar Fan Bulletin Board*? This story was not without response. Without any exceptions, all posts expressed anger with this particular person and asked the keeper of the Board to "clean up the Board" (which was also given in by earlier posts by certain people who "pretended" to be Keanu, Rob or Bret – see chapter six). This site is owned by Dogstar's representatives at *High Watt Management*; the same day Dogstar's manager Doc Williamson replied by "Boy oh boy the natives are restless on the board lately huh. Not even I am safe... I think it's great how upset people get about stuff don't you guys? [...] That's all for now... play nice!" Apart from the content of this message, it shows an interaction between on the one hand, the authorized productive institutions and on the other hand, the unauthorized productive audiences. It is just one example of possible interactions – I will return to this important opportunity later on – for new technologies such as the internet have made it both easier to interact, more accessible (and faster).

Most studies featuring media audiences agree upon 'audience activity' – audiences can be defined as 'active' by individual interpretations, the social context of the interpretation and against-the-grain attitude towards the text - though not as much in their own right than that they served as a rejection of classical critical theory. Ien Ang (1996, pp. 1-15) criticizes this approach because all these studies function, more or less, as an outlet to criticize the increasing commercialization and commodification of cultural and media industries. Another point of interest is the question what is meant by *active*. 'Active' generally means that viewers or readers make meanings and pleasures from a text (such as movies, magazines or compact discs) in a social situation. Other academics who study active audiences

include John Fiske (understanding of jeans, Madonna and *Miami Vice* and *The A-Team*), Stuart Hall (preferred reading theory and representation), David Morley (viewers of *NationWide*), Janice Radway (readers of romance novels), Angela McRobbie (readers of teen magazines), Dick Hebdige (study of style, especially punks), Ien Ang (viewers of *Dallas*) and Henry Jenkins (fans of *Star Trek* and fan production). They have contributed to the conceptualization of active audiences and social, cultural contexts. Viewers, readers, or audiences in general derive meaning from both the text and their social backgrounds. Although texts are polysemic and audiences are active, audiences are positioned in a spot where they can only *respond* or *react* to a text. Thus, the traditional model of sender, text/message, receiver is still very powerful in the communication process: somebody has to talk, something has to be said, somebody has to listen - in terms of information processing, this means that information has to be generated, transmitted and it has to be understood. Besides the problems that are discussed by William Wresch (*Disconnected: Haves and Have-Nots in the Information Age*, 1996, pp. 7-19) regarding the amount of information that actually is generated, transmitted and understood, problems with concepts of dominant and subordinated positions loom up as well. When 'culture' is studied, meanings and pleasures of our social experiences and interrelations are looked after. Therefore, culture is inherent in the distribution of power within a society for power relations can only be made, (de-)stabilized by the meanings that people make of them. Thus, culture gives way to a struggle for meaning, whereas society gives way to a struggle for power⁴⁹. This thesis doesn't lend itself for a discussion concerning sometimes, in my opinion, superseded theories with regard to domination and subordination, but I do want to emphasize that receptive productive activities can be explained as a matter of a struggle for meaning – as a means to negotiate or oppose the 'preferred' meaning of a text. However, the reader has to keep the following questions in mind that lie at the base of the methodological shift⁵⁰: first, do all (media) texts have a preferred reading?; second, what is meant by it?; third, can we still speak of dominant and subordinated positions since these concepts are unbreakable attached to the notion of capitalism and its organizational structures? - Pierre Bourdieu's study *Distinction* offers an interesting and useful thought for he emphasizes, besides economical value, the importance of symbolic and cultural capital -; fourth, can you still speak and define theories on the basis of capitalist notions that are given way to over the last decades? - various post capitalist and late capitalist studies are already addressing this issue -; fifth, does 'dominant' refer to authorized production only? - is it dominant because it's accessible -; sixth, and therefore, 'responses or reactions' are subordinated - just because respondents aren't 'able' to work in the official industry? -; seventh, how public, semi-public or private needs a product be to be defined as dominant?; and eight, how accessible is dominant and how inaccessible is subordination? These are just a few questions that underly this thesis, though, move beyond the content of this study and therefore must be subjected to further research.

Fiske shows in *Television Culture* (1987) how the dominant ideology is promoted by television through political and cultural interests of several programs. At the same time he explores ways in

which some television programs can serve the interests of subordinated and disempowered groups. Fiske's study and others, unfold an understanding of the semiotic and cultural function of media texts. Audiences are grasped as active producers of meanings and pleasures but at the same time they can only be a response or a reaction to the text as produced by (authorized) institutions. Nevertheless, audiences are not producers of meanings and pleasures alone, they are producers of texts as well. These generated texts have a right on their own. Michel De Certeau denies the possibility that viewers or readers can "write in the margins," but like Henry Jenkins I disagree with that. Jenkins shows in *Textual Poachers* (1992) that fans often blur the distinction between reading and writing activities. Fans do not only read a text, which is 'written' by (official and authorized) producers of media products, they also 'write' texts by practices such as reviewing, gossip or written criticisms. This is a form of rewriting the authorized text but moves beyond simply rewriting and as such becomes a mode of production. Though, a mode that differs from the authorized text that does no longer serve as a source, but more as an inspiration. Before I continue I want to point out that this study and others (Hobson, 1982; Bennett and Woollacott, 1987; Jenkins, 1992; Storm, 1996) focus on *character* fans, while I theorize '*star*' fans (Dyer, 1979; Ehrenreich et al., 1992; Lewis, 1992) . One of the many implications is that character fans seem to have a different perspective on fandom than 'star' fans which results in the production and organization of distinctive texts and fan activities; also, the attitude towards 'outsiders' seems 'more open' on the side of character fans than on the side of 'star' fans. These and other perspectives offer an interesting opportunity to study fan typologies. Jenkins' book is a great example and recommendation with regard to fan productivity that moves beyond responses or reactions to an authorized media text. It can be argued that these texts wouldn't exist without the generation of authorized texts or products by (media) institutions, which indeed is true, but which is detrimental to the value and importance of these practices of *receptive production*. Also, texts produced by audiences have often little or no relation to the product sold in the form of a movie, actor, image or magazine. An example, I received a card that shows a waiving cartoon woman accompanied by the text "Hi! Guess who's pregnant!" When you open the card, it says "Had you goin' for a minute, didn't I?" The person who sent me the card wrote: "Hi! Well Keanu and I thought you should be the first to know! We didn't want you to hear it in the Garden or from everyone in LA! You know how all those "sources" blab everything. Of course, we're going to name this Keanu but we thought we'd name the next after you! Everyone knew about it when they saw Keanu smiling. How do they do that? Typical isn't it. Ha ha! I should tell [...] I'm having Keanu's love child and see where that shows up. Ha ha! Well... ya never know!"

This card deals with gossip activities within a small group of people who are Keanu Reeves' fans. Not only fans discuss or create their idol⁵¹, artists may be inspired by a movie or a gesture and create a work of art. Actors serve often as inspirations for further creative musing both positively and negatively (e.g. hate sites) – chapter five deals with several productive types of audiences.

So far, I have discussed the popular actor as a valuable source for meaning and text production which

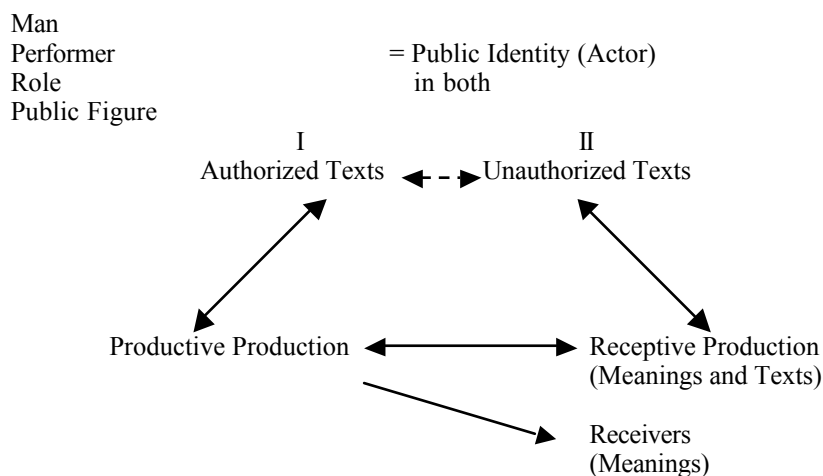
offer an understanding of, among others, culture. The next section discusses the importance of the actor as a motivator for production activities undertaken by several types of audiences and leads to the explanation of my (shift in) theoretical framework.

Productive Production, Receptive Production and the Actor as Site

The concepts of *productive production*, *receptive production* and the *actor as site* provide the theoretical framework of this study: the triadic dimension of production. Productive production refers to the authorized and official production practices of media products or texts by institutions. For instance, official information about the movie *The Matrix* can be found at the Internet Movie Database. This information is ‘official’ or ‘authorized’ because it is provided by the institutions or people who co-operate to produce and make this film a success - that is, producers, distributors, actors, directors, special effects, cinematography, internet production site, publicity and promotion, and the like -; thus, people who work in the media industry. The products that are produced vary from films, merchandise to magazines and cd-roms. Receptive production is a complicated concept because it can refer to many aspects of both reception and production. I want to propose receptive production as a mode of active audienceship: audiences who produce both meanings and texts. And since various studies have focused on meaning production, I emphasize the value of textual production in the process of reception. Especially, I lift out production on the internet, letters sent to magazines and move beyond gossip in terms of solely speech. The types of audiences that are concentrated on are among others fans, haters and artists.

The person of the actor is subjected to several complicating factors for first, the actor is a *man* (in terms of race, age, physics, religion, class), he is a *performer* on screen and on stage, he plays a *role* (characters) and he is a *public figure*, a *persona*, a *star* (see Dyer, 1979) which form his *public identity*. This public identity is bound to an historical moment in time and space and is articulated, it is a given form. Second, the actor is *intertextually* present (in mediated expressions), he is *commodified* in texts, and he *constructs* publics such as fans. Thus, the three modes of production construct a particular identity: public persona, star and private persona that are based on the actor as a man, a performer and his roles. Thus, in contrast to other products (such as a movie) the actor is a human being who is not ‘the actor-guy’ twenty four hours a day. I explained earlier in this work that being an actor is just one of the roles he performs, just like everyone else. Due to the fact that the actor is of flesh and blood, he communicates bits and pieces of his own characteristics to others both in the context of acting and private socializing. This factor enriches but complicates, the intertextual study of meaning production of the popular (public persona). For instance, when *Devil's Advocate* was promoted, the actors Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves and Charlize Theron were assigned. From October till December of 1997 they – alone or in formations of two or three – promoted the film in talk shows, held press conferences, featured in magazines, gossip shows, newspapers, on

posters, and so on. Though, the questions asked stand often apart from the movie itself. Personal questions like “what did you learn from Al Pacino?,” “can you do Al Pacino?,” or “are you dating anyone in particular?”⁵² are at least mentioned once. A funny situation comes about when Keanu graces the *Rosie O’Donnell Show* (October 1997) with his presence. Rosie shows a picture of him when he was young. Suddenly he starts talking about his favorite sweater. Both Rosie and the audience are softened by this story, Keanu looks a bit embarrassed and starts talking about something else. This event has nothing to do with promoting *Devil’s Advocate*, but it shows some genuine moments of Keanu the private person. All these brief momentums (not only in conversations, but also on pictures and the like) contribute to the actor as site. A site for meaning, a site for power. The actor is subjected to transformative instruments, namely both institutions and audiences, according to their own purposes. To understand the actor as site means that the actor is his own agency as well. Thus, although the actor-role is used in the creation of both authorized and unauthorized texts, the actor himself – the person – intervenes with these textual manifestations as well both as an actor and as a private person⁵³ (see chapter six). These three modes of production are represented in the following model (see pages 7-8 as well):



Model 3: Production of Meanings and Texts

The actor intersects with authorized and unauthorized textual manifestations and is therefore a site for meaning and textual production and can be used as a means that functions on the one hand, as a cultural indicator for meaning production and on the other hand, as a social indicator for power. Although, it is very interesting to study the actor as one of the motivators in the process of tracing the come about of trends and popular (re-)presentations in society, the actor serves here as an example. Especially, in bigger Hollywood productions the actor – not the private person – is a construction in order to sell a movie, a play or a magazine. The intervention of the actor is therefore important to study, while the influence of the private person on the completion of textual manifestations is far less valuable since he is not widely known or (re-)presented as the private

person⁵⁴.

From this approach questions arise that are connected with themes such as auteur theory, objectivity and subjectivity, star status and power relations, the capability of cultural transformations caused by one single person (the actor) and the influence of the person of the actor on his public (re-)presentations. I also want to introduce the concepts *authorized resistance* and *authorized acceptance* that lie at the base of this study, but need to be further explored – see conclusion and chapter four as well. Both concepts are ideologically relevant because they are indicators of power relationships. The dynamics between the two concepts express a struggle for textual production, power and meaning. The former can be compared to the concept of inoculation (Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1973; Van der Graaf, 1998, pp. 99-105); by adapting alternative styles or products by authorized corporations ('getting rid of the threat'). The latter refers to the construction of the popular as well, which lies in the simple fact that the product becomes popular. The (potential) audiences consented upon the meaningfulness of the product⁵⁵. Thus, both institutions and audiences have access to power over content and measurement of popularity. They interact and cross over both modes of production. Finally, linked to authorized resistance and acceptance are marketing strategies; the next chapter shows the importance of marketing strategies that are linked to processes of 'popularization'. Marketing serves here two purposes for on the one hand, marketing is used to promote a newly produced item and on the other hand, it can refer to 'picking up' alternative styles (products or trends that are developed or exercised by, yet, a small group of people) and turn them into a (mass) marketing strategy. However, trends have to be studied in the social context. For instance, the 1990s show a strong individualization; the 'masses' are divided into so-called 'special interest groups' (such as 'DIY' and 'Modellers') and have to be understood and approached according to the ever changing, ruling cultural climate. All these ideas, among others, deserve further thought and can even contribute to a shift in a vast majority of academic traditions.

Methodology; A Continuous Life, There is No End

Audience research and (especially Cultural Studies) theory learn that thorough qualitative research should address both textual and audience characteristics, while both texts and audiences should be approached as situated. So far, an evaluation of the findings show that there is no stable entity that can be isolated and identified as 'the media audience'. There is no single subject or object that is unproblematically 'there' to be observed and analyzed. Therefore I positioned the actor - as a textual product that is (re-)presented publically by both institutions and audiences - in the centre of institutions and audiences. The actor⁵⁶ as site offers thus the opportunity to deal with the dynamics of meaning production: products are produced in a particular time and space and mean something to a certain someone. Not all products become popular by mass audiences, but that does not mean that these products don't give way to any expressions of cultural consciousness. Thus, products become

textual when they lead to meanings and pleasures which on their turn can only proceed from and in combination with cultural backgrounds and social contexts of the involved (potential) audiences. A product is only meaningful when 'judged' as e.g. 'relevant', as 'fun', as 'irritating' in relation to someone's background (social signification) in a process of reception.

Two years ago I started looking for specific types of audiences that produce meanings and texts in the creation of the popular actor; they were not hard to find: I used search engines on the internet where I typed in the actor's name; in magazines I started looking for interviews, pictures, letters and the like; I looked for commodities (both actor and his films-related); I started to collect clips on television; contacted fan clubs that I encountered along the way; coincidentally I met people who just knew him from the screen; overheard conversations in public transportation and I collected fan mail. Besides gathering information on the side of receptive production I also approached people who work in the entertainment industry. I had conversations with people who work in the film, publishing and music industry such as agents, producers, directors, actors, advertisers, photographers, editors, managers and distributors. I talked with a writer of an unauthorized biography, a teacher who taught a theoretical course on Keanu Reeves' films, two New York artists and I was invited to attend a couple of *Dogstar* concerts⁵⁷.

All the gathered texts give way to *discourse*; texts are the site of conflict among the three modes of production – institutions, the actor and several types of audiences. At the same time, texts function in the process of making sense of social experiences as well (for they are socially produced). It offers information about contemporary culture. These texts are studied *intertextually*, which means that the public (re-)presentation of the actor (product) is studied over various sources and time. For instance, *Devil's Advocate* is promoted over the internet, advertised in magazines, on bill boards, on television, is sold in the form of a business cardholder, compact disc, is reviewed by lawyers who compare it to 'real life cases', fan mail that was addressed to Keanu Reeves about the movie, and so on. All these textual manifestations refer to one another and contribute to on the one hand, the development of a new theoretical framework on the basis of the construction of the *product-actor-image* and on the other hand, it contributes to an understanding of the ins and outs of meaning and text production in (and in relation to) present-day society.

The next five chapters contain both descriptive and analytical insights into respectively the institutional mode and receptive mode of popular production. Both the activities of the film, publishing and music industry are described and are followed by the production of their textual manifestations (and meanings). After, audience theories are discussed in such ways that they raise more questions than solve any. In its turn the chapter is followed by textual manifestations (and as such goes beyond meaning production) by several groups of audiences as well. Finally, the three modes of production collide in several case studies that concentrate on the actor Keanu Reeves.

Conclusion

The relation between audiences and media figures has been the object of many studies. However, this relationship is often expressed on the basis of identification processes, economics, hysteria and cultural ‘dupes’ and is not often understood as an interactive relationship between authorized institutions of production and audiences as producers of texts. Joke Hermes (1999, pp. 1-3) emphasizes the importance of media figures in her study where she explores the question how media come to have meaning. Meaning production stems from two key sites, namely media production and audience practices. Media production can only be grasped at specific moments in time and space and in her study Hermes shows that media figures provide such instances. I have argued that not only media figures provide instances of meaning production but that they provide instances of textual production as well. Thus, I go beyond the model of sender, product, receiver (active producer of meanings) by shifting the attention towards the production of texts by ‘receivers’: audiences become producers of both meanings and texts.

The interaction in the creation of, what I have called, the enigma of the popular is of a triadic dimension. I have shown that the popular comes about by the production processes of institutions, (types of) audiences and the actor himself⁵⁸. To mark this shift in framework, I have called the first mode productive production, the second, receptive production and the third, the actor as site. Thus, this productive dimension gives way to both a shift in theoretical framework concerning audience research and to the conceptualization of the popular which are both quite useful for theoretical and practical purposes.

A first important remark is the conceptualization of the actor as site⁵⁹. The construction of the actor can be referred to by the concept of *non-specific body* which refers to the production process of the popular: everything or anyone can become a highly popular creature liable to specific conditions of time and place. However, this concept is linked to other methodological developments that go beyond this study and therefore, this concept should be understood according those terms. Nevertheless, the non-specific body is embodied by the actor Keanu Reeves who is theorized through several of his ‘identities’, namely as a *man*, as a *performer*, as a *role/character*, a *commodity* and as a *public figure* that together lead to the actor’s *public identity*. Second, the strength of marketing strategies is to convince audiences ‘to go see that particular movie’. However, this is very problematic for people are reduced to ‘focus groups’, ‘target groups’ or ‘audiences’: audiences will always remain *specific nobodies* for audiences are (demographically) named prior to a (potential) box-office success, which means that audiences are specific in terms of target, focus or research subject, but that they are at the same time ‘nobodies’ since prior to the release of a movie, no one really knows who is going to end up in the cinemas and buying all the advertised commodities. Only after release of the movies, audiences can be named since they actually ended up ‘buying that ticket’.

I briefly introduced the concepts ‘authorized resistance’ and ‘acceptance’ which indicate the process

of the construction of the popular. These concepts embrace the power relations inherent in production and reception activities. Several academics already crossed the 'boundaries' of the structuralists and culturalists and have expressed a genuine interest in cultural processes within the context of politics and economy. For instance, David Morley (1992) offers a very insightful study on cultural consumption in relation to the production of cultural identities, while Anne Jerslev (1992) analyzes 'cult films' as a signifying practice between audience and film in the context of cultural production. Linked to the introduction of authorized resistance and acceptance are questions – related to Cultural Studies - that also need further exploration, such as 'do all (media) texts have a preferred reading?'; what is meant by preferred reading?; does 'dominant' refer to official or authorized production?; and are 'responses or reactions' therefore subordinated?; linked to the last two is the question, how public, semi-public or private needs a product be to be defined as dominant?; and finally, how accessible is dominant and how inaccessible is subordination?

A final remark regarding further exploration is then to continue studies concentrating on production and reception activities in terms of their cultural signification. In chapter four I express my attitude towards the importance to study culture through *differentiation* which represents the *Zeitgeist* of the 1990s: 'individuality' and 'mood'. I suggest to understand the possibilities and opportunities of (sub-)cultures or communities in terms of variety, difference, correspondence, intertextuality, meaning and text production. At the risk of developing a theory of 'relativity', I emphasize that the triadic dimension of production works to interpret culture, is a begin to expand the boundaries of audience research with far-stretching consequences for theory and practice initiated in the next chapters. First is dealt with the institutional mode of production and its textual manifestations (productive production) followed by audience agencies and their textual manifestation (receptive production). The final chapter shows several intersections of the actor as site, productive production and receptive production that explore the construction of the popular (media) figure.

Part Two

2

Mapping Productive Instruments: Institutions

Institutions and Agency

The entertainment industry hasn't change much from its early beginnings: A few studios credited as the 'Majors' and others as the 'Minors' and 'Independents' coupled with mergers and complicated finance structures. Recent years show an even more diffuse landscape. Due to the rise of new forums of entertainment such as extensive cable and multimedia, policies and regulatory rules have changed⁶⁰. The Telecom bill⁶¹ – which was in progress over the last ten years – shows that the media landscape is very complex; it shows businesses that want to take over others and vice versa which encourages further competition. Other changes or shifts can be shown in variations in financial interests and syndication policies which have led to programming ownership by networks. The media landscape is so diffuse that the definitions of for example, what studios and distribution companies are and do, are no longer valid due to conglomerations and cross-ownership⁶². Emerging technologies have, to this day, not quite been able to make a lot of profits (if any) other than repurposing certain rights to new channels of distribution. Nevertheless, they are a factor to be reckoned with since these new forms of technologies distribute media that come into consumers' homes⁶³ differently and therefore consumers have a broad range of choices how they want to access media points.

Due to globalization of media today and their intertextuality, revenues abroad are generated in a variety of media fields. Actors in general and 'stars' in particular, help guarantee the success in the wide ranges of media markets and forms of media. So, motion pictures can generate tremendous economic returns if they are developed and promoted in proper manners.

The entertainment industry questions issues such as profitability, cost containment and evolving ownership patterns. When studying media it is important to focus on media ownership – thus, its organizational structures through *concentration*, *conglomeration*, *horizontal* and *vertical integration* - its for-profit orientation and the impact of advertising. Media moguls Disney, Time Warner and Viacom utilize horizontal and vertical integration strategies to increase efficiency and profits. Crucial to these organizations are promotion and marketing strategies that dominate decision-making processes (see Gitlin, 1985). Various studies deal with the effects of the concentration of media production (see Bagdikian, 1992; Entman, 1989). However, a sociological perspective can't be ignored: It argues that social structures shape and, in turn, are shaped by human behavior. Media are therefore the result of a social process of production that occurs within an institutional framework ('production perspective');

products are a result of a complex production process that, in turn, are shaped by a variety of social structural forces that operate on various levels – some affecting the industry as a whole and some affecting particular actors or groups of people who work within the industry. So, the historically context (time and place) in which the products are generated by institutional agencies must certainly be taken into account.

This chapter deals with the institutional side of media production and answers the question ‘how do institutions produce texts?’ which is discussed on the basis of the social context in which media products and technology are created. I refer to David Croteau’s and William Hoynes’ work *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences* (1997) and John B. Thompson’s *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (1995) for a wide range of perspectives on media, social structures, institutional and individual agency, power and meaning production.

Film Industry

Speech, of course, is the primal and indispensable medium. It made us human, keeps us human, and in fact defines what human means. [...] But how much more divergence there is in world view among different cultures can be imagined when we consider the great number and variety of tools for conversation that go beyond speech. For although culture is a creation of speech, it is recreated anew by every medium of communication - from painting to hieroglyphs to the alphabet to television. Each medium, like language itself, makes possible a unique mode of discourse by providing a new orientation for thought, for expression, for sensibility. (p. 10)⁶⁴

A brief history of communication: In the sixteenth century knowledge is being spread and made manifest through printing. This is a very important epistemological shift in the organizational structures of the domineering public discourse. Though, the art of printing is being practiced from the eleventh century on in China. The Chinese are able to print with potteries, tin and wooden characters. From the fifteenth century on several attempts are made in Western Europe to develop a usable technique in order to multiply texts through printing mechanisms. The oldest dated print has appeared in 1454 in Mainz and is attributed to Johannes Gutenberg⁶⁵. Through the art of printing prints such as books, newspapers and advertisements are accessible to everyone; by the nineteenth century all the states in the United States existed of cultures based on printing, e.g. spreading the word and knowledge through printed pages. At that time, media are exclusively reserved for the print-culture since there are no radios, movies, television sets yet. Thus, the traditional agora fulfils no longer its task as a public forum in time and space. The public discourse can be expressed through printed forms and channels as well⁶⁶; discourse is no longer oratory.

The eighteenth century is characterized by ideas of *Enlightenment*; ideas in which an attitude based on

rational insights, free of judgments ('enlightened') and rejection of any beliefs in authority are crucial. These ideas are developed by more or less like-minded philosophers and writers in England, France and Germany. In general, the ideals of Enlightenment are characterized by optimistic beliefs in humanity and progression⁶⁷. Rationality is seen as a touchstone for all truths. Rationality is a knowledge-theoretical movement which holds the ratio (and not the experience) for a truthful source of knowledge⁶⁸.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, printed culture leads to a perspective of education and well-beingness, namely, of intellect expressed through objectivity and rationality; reasoning in print form validates the rational use of the human mind since it is being praised for its organizing principles of content. The *Age of Reason* then, collides with the print culture.

Various academic studies focus upon the history of film (or media). Allen and Gomery (1985) discern four approaches: the *aesthetic* film history by e.g. Hugo Münsterberg, Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolph Arnheim, Wolfgang Iser, Christian Metz, André Bazin, Andrew Sarris, H.R. Jauss and Kristin Thompson; *economic* film history which is often divided in three basic sectors, namely production, distribution and exhibition (e.g. Thomas Guback, Michael Conant, Douglas Gomery); *social* film history by e.g. Robert Sklar, Lewis Jacob, Garth Jowett and Marshall McLuhan; and *technological* and *industrial* film history by academics such as Jean-Louis Comolli, Lewis Jacobs, Edward Branigan and Raymond Williams. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell⁶⁹ (1994) and William Luhr (1987) have written comprehensive works on the development and structures of the film industry world-wide which I recommend for those who want to make research into the film industry⁷⁰.

Movies – and media in general - tend to deal with social, political and economical issues that are current in society. Social issues and politics are brought through and by media, which mark a shift in communication structures. In other words, like history has shown, culture has shifted in its developing process in the fields of culture, society, politics and economy, while humanity has changed along. Therefore, it is very important to describe the process of how movies (or media in general) are produced⁷¹. I cannot provide the reader with lengthy descriptions of every single co-worker in this process⁷² – one reason is that some tasks overlap – but I have made my choice based on interviews that I had with several people who take an active part in the film industry. Although, I certainly do not want to pretend that the others who are not presented in this work are of no importance, I do think an understanding of the process will be clear without them.

Production

Jan DeBont started his career in The Netherlands where he studied for director of cinematography. He worked closely together with fellow Dutch-man Paul Verhoeven who both moved to Los Angeles. Nowadays Jan DeBont directs as well and owns a production company, *Blue Tulip Productions* (BTP).

About thirty people work for him, “but when a movie takes off there are about seventy people.” BTP has a deal with Fox (25%) and Universal. These studios have the first choice. But BTP can work with other studios as well. DeBont develops, and the studios (executives) consult – main section, family section, multiple advisor and search file. “You work with all these four companies. All these companies have executives and they follow the entire process, help filmmakers find scripts, find financing. They are connected with the studio on the creative area and are very important.”

DeBont explains that the script is the foundation upon which a film is built. Though, it’s the task of the director to translate the script into images and sound. The director looks after the script – often reworks it or at least, works together on a script with the writer – the cast and crew during preproduction, production and postproduction. The director is usually approached by a producer, “a director has to be found who has the same ideas, but who has done other projects as well – in order to make him more believable and therefore attractive - also with regard to other elements people have to be attracted with a certain view and a name in their field; thus, people who are settled. Settled people with a name are more likely to be able to get a finance round. Like Brian DaPalma, who is always guaranteed to get lots of money even before the process has started. There is always a big circus around those kind of people, so that they could not even make movies anymore of a smaller budget.⁷³” Crucial to the *visibility* of a movie are the actors who are casted late in the process. In general, it takes at least a year to a year and half to develop the project. Actors come in once a detailed budget and board are completed. However, when a ‘star’ is attached to a movie, the budget is not finished in its entirety for his attachment impacts the cost of the film. Steven Spielberg said that 80 percent of the director’s contribution to a film exists of casting the actors. “First the leading actors have to be cast. Generally, there is a meeting where director and lead talk about their respective views in order to find out whether he could be that character. The auditions are at the end of the casting. Most young ‘stars’ think they know it all and have the most problems with audintioning. They feel they don’t have to. The really good actors don’t mind. Sometimes it happens that all the actors come together and then there is no chemistry between them they understand that and do not get the part. Because when the chemistry doesn’t work, the movie does not work.” DeBont directed Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock in *Speed*. “There was a lot of chemistry between them. In general, castings⁷⁴ are a long process and end only just a couple days before the shoot of the movie begins. Extras come in late as well. There are two extra-bookings, namely the ones who have small parts or one liners and they come from the casting director too. You have also an extra-casting agency that is specialized in large groups of people.”

DeBont’s choice to cast Keanu Reeves in *Speed* was under attack for Reeves was not a ‘famous action guy’ yet (like Bruce Willis, Arnold Schwarzenegger or Mel Gibson) and he was still known for his role in the *Bill & Ted* series. DeBont chose Reeves because “he was an actor who wanted to be taken seriously, but wasn’t and his asking price fitted our budget.” Reeves cut his hair in a short buzzcut, took gymnastics classes and gained as such muscles. “But not too much, no giant ones.” The

combination of Reeves and Bullock was an obvious one as well. “They both fitted the characters, and more important they had chemistry.” Although, *Speed* is not about portraying its characters. For DeBont it’s simple, “people don’t need to understand a character’s background to understand the concept.” The main question for DeBont is “how can I make this really exciting?” He likes ‘event-movies’, which are very expensive to make, namely “huge sets and big names, effects and are all over \$100 million.” But “even those kind of movies are no guarantee for a huge success” which was proven by *Speed 2: Cruise Control* and *Twister*. *Speed* was an honest movie and “that’s what films should be and audiences feel that. When excitement and honesty are combined, it’s no guarantee, but the film is more likely to entertain audiences.” A way to test whether a film ‘works’ or not (in every aspect), test screenings are organized. Test screenings exist solely for the director and tell the studio how to promote the movie. The studio allows the director to have test screenings or not. “The audience does not know in advance what movie they are going to watch: For instance, you want to see a film in a theater in Hollywood, you are told that you can see two films for the price of one. They will see the new movie first. This happens at different times and different places in order to get a variety of people in terms of age, et cetera. Audiences get a questionnaire and they have to sit down as well to talk to a couple of people who work on the movie [the questions are “more open” and it’s “about suggestions”]. Though in the end, it really tells the director for example whether a joke works or not, or when people are laughing but it is actually meant to be dramatic you - as a director - did something wrong. However, it still does not mean or guarantee that a film will be a success or not since it does not say anything about the type of audience that are willing to see your movie later on.” To DeBont these screenings are “very effective, but at the same time scary. It really helps, they always show a fresh view on the film which differs basically from that of yourself and the editor.” Both *Speed* and Keanu’s latest movie *The Matrix* by Andy and Larry Wachowski were subjected to test screenings – and they both turned out to be very successful.

Other directors Keanu has worked with include Bernardo Bertolucci (“because of his innocence”), Alfonso Arau (“innocence, grown-up romantic lead and his sensitivity”), Kenneth Branagh (“he has a poetic imagination and clever intelligence”) and Gus Van Sant (“his spontaneity, ‘false eloquence’ and theater experience”).

Talent Agency

Talent agencies pursue a policy to advise, represent and counsel a broad range of creative and artistic talented individuals in all possible elements of the intellectual property market which includes television, publishing, motion pictures, music, news, theater and public affairs. Some agencies provide these activities in a number of other international markets as well. Agencies have had to deal with several changes in business regulations caused by the rise of new forms of entertainment such as new media. On the one hand, policies have changed with regard to both legal and regulatory rules and on

the other hand, there have been changes of a competitive and commercial nature regarding other talent agencies. Nevertheless, agencies don't depend on a specific media platform whether that is a motion picture or an internet advertisement. Talent agencies deal with all of the distributors of media. An agency's task is then to serve its clients: what medium for the client works best, that is the one it's going to be. Thus, if talent agencies want to succeed today, they should reckon the influence and the development of new media technologies for the next couple of years.

The word 'packaging' (see Thompson and Bordwell, 1994, p. 700) is often used in reference to film deals, but the best way to understand the task of a talent agent is that an agent puts together creative elements. "It is a matter of understanding personalities and relationships." The term 'conglomerating' is generally accepted as more proper since an agent takes one or more of his clients, attaches them to a script and director, gets commitments from (hopefully) all and then presents the 'conglomerate' to a studio. Fees are not involved, talent agencies make their money from commissions on their clients. Although, many formed 'conglomerates' do not strictly consist of clients, often non-clients are involved as well whose commission will be paid to the non-clients agent instead of the agent who provided the non-client with the job.

I will discuss *Creative Artists Agency* for Keanu Reeves is represented by them. CAA is one of the most influential agencies next to *International Creative Management* and *William Morris Agency*. Outside the three majors, it is a battlefield for small(er) agencies such as *Endeavour* (launched by four ICM agents) and *Together* (represents writing talent in film and television). More established are *United Talent Agency*. *Agency for the Performing Arts* (APA concentrates on new and television talent), *Susan Smith & Associates*, *Writers and Artists Agency*, *Acme Agency* (commercials) and the *Webb Agency* (that focuses on the creation of 'instant' celebrityhood).

Creative Artists Agency⁷⁵

In 1975, Michael Ovitz and four other William Morris agents⁷⁶ founded Creative Artists Agency (CAA). Although, Michael Ovitz and Ron Meyer have left the CAA in the summer of 1995, CAA is still the leader in the agency business with its tentacles reaching into the new realms of "corporate deal brokering, advertising, interactive and on-line services."⁷⁷

CAA has as collective company structure and is managed by a seven-member management committee which contributes to CAA's competitive drive and its protective attitude towards its clients and one another. CAA focuses on the core business, servicing talent for movies, television and music. It has producer clients throughout the studio system⁷⁸ as well which makes the agency's influence incredible. A spokeswoman for CAA says that "the management team works because it is not about dominant and subordinate positions or a ruling body, but rather it is about a representative group that helps guide the company with the input of everyone" – as a result clients are represented by CAA as such which means that no names are mentioned when a client is represented in the media. The difference with the company lead by Ovitz is that it has become more collegial and the

management activities are more perceptible and public in comparison with times when deals were closed in private and “with very little access to the group⁷⁹.” Ovitz has formed a new agency, *Artists Management Group*, and by luring away CAA top agents⁸⁰ (and their clients) he has caused some upheaval⁸¹ – by insiders referred to as a “declaration of war.”

CAA’s clients stem from several creative backgrounds, that is, directors, writers, actors, performers and composers. On the film side, CAA has had a hand in putting together many of 1997 most profitable films, which prominently feature the agency’s roster of A-list clients such as *Men in Black*, *Lost World: Jurassic Park*, *Air Force One*, *Liar Liar*, *My Best Friend’s Wedding* and *Face/Off*. The philosophy is that ‘less is more’ which means that CAA should not get more attention in the press than its clients⁸².

Kevin Huvane is one of the agents who run and own the Creative Artists Agency. He discussed what ‘agents do’⁸³ and, more specific, what he thinks he can offer his clients⁸⁴.

Huvane describes the task of an agent as “to give his clients as many artistic choices and stuff they relate to and want to do.” Clients have more agents, because this profession is team work. One person is not able to cover all the work, scripts, the studios and so on. They believe in “sharing their minds” with everyone. “Each client has a very different agenda on what they want to do, it is a very individualized process. For someone like Keanu, I am looking for material in which I think Keanu will be interested in. I also look after material about which I am not sure whether Keanu will like it or not, or just to see if it will interest him.” Huvane’s task is then to guide the actor’s career. “For instance, in order for Keanu to keep doing independent movies he has to have a profile within the studio system. That is one of the reasons that he can have an independent movie going.” Huvane tries to create a balance for Keanu which allows him to express himself artistically and which at the same time, “lets him paying his bills.” For a long time people “underestimated who Keanu was.” One of the reasons that Huvane became involved as well, was that he could help to create the image that Keanu wanted to have. It was difficult for him at first, because Reeves was still understood as “his Ted-character,” that is silly and stupid. “Thus a logical step was to approach filmmakers who are respected by everybody. So, roles in films by filmmakers such as Bertolucci, Branagh, Coppola.” Huvane approached them all. “The underlying idea was that if these respectable and artistic directors would hire Keanu it would reflect their taste and contribute to a new understanding of Reeves. However, the *Bill & Ted* series were very popular and gave way to Keanu’s representation, he did not really want to change it, because he thought of it as a role he played. But the thing was that he was type cast as ‘Ted’ or in roles similar to that one. So not as a smart, articulate vocal person. That is why *Devil’s Advocate* is wonderful in which he plays a lawyer. He plays a man and uses words for his living. Reeves succeeds so beautifully with it that more and more people say Keanu is so great in this movie. Also, working with Al Pacino is a great move.” Thus, Huvane tries to put his client in positions in which

he is surrounded by great artists and therefore he is associated with these people which will help him. “Or better, which it already has...”⁸⁵”

Generally, the agency gets scripts from studios and some people send scripts directly. “Some scripts are for Keanu and by some others I mention Keanu’s name. The project he’s working on right now is with the Wachowski brothers (*The Matrix*). Keanu dropped by at the office with Erwin and his other agent. Keanu and the other agent read the script and really liked it and the filmmakers were interesting people. Without *Warner Bros.* it was not a ‘go-movie’, but when they met and Keanu wanted to do the project, it made the movie a ‘go’. Keanu is not in the position anymore that he has to do (traditional)auditions, but he probably would do it when he really wanted to have the part. Deals are only announced until they are closed. During negotiations Keanu is not present, but he will be informed. Of course, during the process he talks to the director about all the creative aspects. He is more bothered by creative control and wants to have preparations. And CAA knows that, so usually he does not disagree. When you do a good job the money will come, so he does not care about the business aspect. And he is right about that.”

“The agent doesn’t have anything to do with the organization of publicity material such as interviews, since it is the task of the publicist. For instance, press-chunks take two days and these two days you have to spend with international journalists which is set up by the studios and the publicist. The talk shows are set up by the publicist, just like magazines. But then you’ll also have to think about what is the best magazine for him: *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone*. This a decision by everybody like Stoff and Reeves and his publicist⁸⁶. But it also depends on the movie he’s done, and how much you want to promote it and whether he’s proud of the movie. The same goes for photo shoots which are set up by the publicist as well.”

However, Keanu tends to shy away from a lot of that kind of stuff. “But with his last movie he wanted to have people as much knowledge on it as possible so he promoted it a great deal. He is proud of it and he knew that if he wants to reach his audience he’s to get out there and do interviews. Merchandise is taken care of by the studios, they take care of posters on bill boards and so on. For *The Matrix* there will be merchandise which is done by the studio. But Keanu has to approve upon every image which is done of him – and he gets paid for it as well.”

“Reeves wants to be thought of as an actor who is able to do everything and he wants to have the opportunity to do everything. And my job is to give him that opportunity. So far Reeves has never really discussed that he wants to come up with own projects. But there are of course people that he wants to work with and I help him to reach those people. And at the same time I look for people that I think Keanu would like to work with like the *Bound* film, and I thought about how Keanu would respond to this: filmmakers who are on the edge.” This deal is successfully closed and led to *The Matrix*, which is released March 31 of 1999 in the United States.

Three Arts Entertainment

Erwin Stoff⁸⁷, together with his partners Molly Madden, Howard Klein and Michael Rottenberg, runs the production company *Three Arts Entertainment*⁸⁸. Stoff discusses his task as a manager, an executive producer and his collaboration with Keanu Reeves.

Stoff describes his task as a manager as someone who “guides career choices, reads scripts.” It is a very similar job as an agent. But he is more focused on Keanu, because “Huvane has many more clients.” Erwin has also more people, “but I’m not as responsible as Huvane is.” The last several movies he has been an executive producer as well, which means that he “makes sure that things are in course in a way that work for Keanu” (such as *Devil’s Advocate*, *The Matrix*, *Feeling Minnesota*). “There is no money involved⁸⁹, only that Reeves’ interests are properly looked after in the way the production comes together, in the way it is cast, in the way the marketing is done and so on.”

Stoff meets with Reeves when – in general – he or Huvane “find something that we think is good. Then we send it to Keanu. Then a conversation takes place whether Keanu likes it or is interested in it or not⁹⁰. Further we enter into negotiations with a studio, financial arrangements are made and the movie starts to move ahead such as people are being cast and so on.” The process takes a while, for instance Reeves committed to *Devil’s Advocate* in July of 1996 and the movie came out in the United States in October of 1997, while it was released in Europe and Asia in January of 1998. The movie took about 13 weeks to shoot, another 13 to 14 for post-production. When the premiere date is set, a publicity strategy has to be planned. Reeves has a publicist, but basically the strategy is lined up by Stoff. The publicist is taking care of publicity on a small scale, while Stoff oversees the whole. However, “it’s really not about selling or marketing Keanu Reeves, but is about selling and marketing the movie.” His latest movie *The Matrix* is accompanied by a merchandise line. “Reeves has a say in that, but generally he lets me dealing with that kind of matters.”

Stoff oversees Reeves’ career in every single detail. He is really careful with regard to Reeves’ image. “Generally, less press creates lots of appetite for the press which gives way to a certain image. Reeves does relatively little to be in the press⁹¹, he sorts of exists by the attributes people give him. He blinds the face of conventional choices, since although he has made mainly commercial movies, he lives his life the way he wants to both as an actor and as a musician. In a lot of ways it has made him controversial. For example, his decision not to make *Speed II* was entirely driven by his dislike of the script. He was vilified by the public.” Stoff has never seen so much against someone based on this. All kinds of reasons for him not wanting to do it, appeared in the media, “like that he wanted to tour with his band, but that just wasn’t true. The public discourse was to be ‘incredibly angry’ with him, which came from an attitude of ‘how dare you not sell out’ and ‘how dare you not cash in’. The funny thing is, is that when the movie came out and did not do well, there was a total opposite attitude.” Reeves has a very different profile or image in the United States than abroad. “A couple

of movies were here hip and popular cultural icons, particularly the *Bill & Ted* series, which – in the United States - have a special specific ring to it. The films were hardly popular abroad which is probably due to different cultural connotations. As a result Reeves was stuck with a certain label, as ‘that guy’. When he did other things as *Dracula*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Little Buddha*, reactions were very negative because his work was referenced to as what he did in *Bill & Ted*. That does not exist in Europe due to different residence and therefore cultural context. He is probably understood overthere as perhaps ‘much more serious’ than in the United States. But his image has changed, especially the last couple of years. And now with *Devil's Advocate* none of the reviews referenced ‘Ted’⁹². So, that is just beginning to go away right now.”

Thus, the task of both the agent and the manager is to look after the career of their clients by counseling their clients, to negotiate on their behalf⁹³ and to protect their interests. However, the difference between an agent and a manager lies in the manager’s more “personal investment” by usually representing only one actor, while an agent has to divide his attention over several actors who are often of the same age. Agents and managers (or entertainment attorneys) are often approached by producers who seek to develop a project. Agents submit the project to a studio on behalf of the producer or an appointment is set up between a producer and a creative development executive of the studio⁹⁴ during which the project can be ‘pitched’. But agents and managers are approached by studios as well that are looking for a director or actor (‘package’ or ‘conglomerate’).

The people who are involved in the negotiating process contribute to on the one hand, the making of a movie as a creative process (and money) and on the other hand, to the construction of the actor as a public figure for he is guided by them in various media (see sections on publishing and music industry as well). The next section focuses on the profession of acting⁹⁵ according to Keanu Reeves.

Actors

Experience the World of Art: Keanu Reeves

“I get scripts by strangers, friends, my manager, my agent, sometimes my manager asks writers to find scripts or I’m approached by directors and producers through my agent and manager or it can be directly which means I find scripts at my door and in my car.”

So far, he has not had developed own projects and “I’m not sure yet whether I want to do this or not.” What he looks for in scripts has changed over the time he has been an actor. “In the beginning when I was 17 I got an agent (an agent saw him in a play and asked him whether he already had an agent or not). That agent submitted me to all kinds of projects: He sent me out to casting directors, which means you just try to get a part at first (usually you do not get the whole script which is opposite to theater where you always get the entire script or piece). My goal is just to work.” At that time he also auditioned for commercials, but only under the condition that he liked the products.

The next step or phase is that “I get scripts and I decide whether I want to audition for it or not (which goes through my agent).” With the exception for “what kinds of scripts I’ve been offered, nothing really has changed that much. You still have to work, you still have to find scripts and stories.”

Sometimes it is “scary” because it is a “head and flow with regard to amount of scripts” he has been offered, which also depends on whether he is working or not. “I get about fourthy scripts a week, but I have no clue how many already have passed through my agent and manager or people that the latter two hire to wind through scripts. Sometimes I feel disconnected with what is ‘out there’ and try through friends or my own “tentacles” to find what is ‘out there’ in order to feel connected again. Right now I work on a part⁹⁶ which my manager has given me and yesterday I got some kind of script, who someone else asked me to read as well as another script.”

So far he has worked with one manager and four agents⁹⁷. He describes the difference between the task of an agent and a manager as the following: “A manager gives you more personal time and personal and investment.” He has been working with Erwin Stoff since the beginning, he was about thirteen or fourteen years old. “A manager is on top of your agent and again is more personal and informal. You always hope to get a manager who is in a way connected to the business and tries to find you a job and as a representative in a way an agent won’t. ’Cause generally agents have more clients, they sometimes have clients who have the same age and therefore conflicts arise for parts. So a manager gives you more attention and an agent is more a representation in the business world. Hopefully it is working.” Since his manager is about ‘more personal time and investment’, he talks to him much more often than to Kevin Huvane.

He auditions all the time, which he does not mind doing. He recently auditioned for [...]. The latter came to Erwin’s offices with the other actor and “we talked about the part and disagreed or had different point of views and he would not want to cast me and I would not have done it.⁹⁸” However, he has not auditioned “in the sense of that I have had to put my name down on a piece of paper to see that I have checked in and auditioned for let’s say Charlie’s boyfriend, that will be about five years’ ago that I have done that.”

Up till now he hasn’t been involved in anything other than acting; he has not done any producing and has not done any work to say “let’s bring in that or this person.” Generally he comes in after the director has been set or the script is set or the finance is set. “No, I have never come into a picture which did not have a director. Never really has had any saying in the process. Sometimes they ask me whether I want to have a say in terms of casting, but I tend not to do that. That is the task of director, it is a director’s film. Hey, if they really want an opinion...well, [...]” but he tries to shy away from that.

Nowadays he can be involved as he wants to be in terms of the script. “It is a collaborative art, but that is only up to a point: then it is an hierarchy and on top it is the director. In theater things are

not changed unless it is improvised or worked on, which is my tradition.” He tends to have it that way. “If a line doesn’t work, it is not because the line doesn’t work, but that I don’t understand the line. That is really bad. And maybe a line is bad, but I try not to make it more comfortable to work by changing lines. Perhaps I should do that. But I’m not a writer, so.” But he usually has scripts that are well-written and done and did not have to change or reworked on. The scripts that have, he has bad experiences with, namely *Chain Reaction*, *Bill & Ted’s Bogus Journey*.

He does have “no idea” what his image is. “When people approach me they like or dislike my performance in a movie. Or ‘I thought this or that about you’. So, it is everywhere and nowhere and now here.” As an actor, he is interested in different genres, styles and characters. He does not want to be a hero. His ambition is to be both a leading man and a character actor. And he also wants to work in Hollywood pictures and independent films. “An artistic ambition.”

When he makes a film he does think of what people might think about the product. “I discuss it with friends and people in general. I have played lots of heroes and innocent people. There is a friction that on the one hand I want to react against that, on the other hand it is a part of myself. So, [...]”

To get rid of the ‘Ted’-image, he wanted to work with people such as Coppola and Bertolucci. “Yeah, that is one reason to have a manager...They do not think for you, but [...]”

As an actor, he has to deal with admirers. “My attitude depends on the day. But don’t expect anything or have any judgments but also not to be stupid about it. When people are screaming and yelling and approach you with a knife, don’t go aaah. But take it as taste-value. Every once in a while I hear or read stuff on the internet: The AntiChrist.” About hate sites he says “maybe they try to change the world.”

His responses with regard to gossip is that in general, he is not aware of stories in the magazines. He only looks at it when somebody tells him to. “Like ‘do you see this’, ‘o my gosh’.” Audiences might, indeed, get influenced by what they read, hear and see, “but he does not think there is just one answer.”

Interviews are set up by a production company that produces the project. They provide an agenda for publicity. “Erwin decides what magazines and so to pick. My publicist will get a list as well and she intermediates between production, Erwin and myself (coordination and facilitates).”

He likes to attend premieres when he likes the movie otherwise he does not like it. The same goes for interviews: He likes *Devil’s Advocate*, so then he does not mind doing interviews. He is fairly private, so he only wants to talk about work. “Especially in America people tend to ask mostly private questions (dating, family, sexual).” Sometimes, during or prior to interviews “we ask people not to ask certain questions, which they know beforehand. Sometimes a third person is present to help mediate. Sometimes people are rude and even if you tell them yourself, it doesn’t work. So it is nice to have someone else to help mediate. It is arranged and basically, it is a privilege, but you can

always ask them to leave. They are usually present at press-conferences.” But he likes “putting up posters” or “going to the town” when he likes a product. In that case, “I’m too happy to promote it and give interviews. ‘Your experience becomes a story’.”

With regard to photo-shoots, he says that the magazine usually has an editorial desire. “They bring clothing and stuff which I find funny; because they want an interview about you and want you to dress up, which I think is funny. But I don’t mind. And also if you do not want anyone to see what you are actually wearing it is easy that they have clothes there.”

So in a way he is constructed, which is “something I have had to come to terms with in a sense. It happens all the time. In an early film, my scene was cut. But also in interviews they edit out of the context or they lie. I do my best and hopefully they get it.”

He does not know how fans ‘know’ about where he is and the like. “It is very odd, to go on a plane and to your hotel and have people meet you there. Very odd. Probably, it is about being connected, about people who have mutual desires or getting organized. When I broke my ankle, they took a picture when I came out of a cab; in general, to me it is not that big of a deal.”

He gets fan mail and when he first started to get it he read it. “It was a novelty and it was great. Lots of requests, personal questions. I got overwhelmed and then there is no way that one person can deal with that. Some actors hire agencies to send these people a picture and autograph. I don’t do that. Some people are insulted by that or do not even want that. And even people who want that, I can’t satisfy them anyways.” If people come to see him on stage “hopefully they like the play and hopefully they like my performances and thanks for coming. Maybe there are not...”

“And if they want to meet me, please, not on purpose. Hopefully it will be a pleasurable encounter, that you won’t be crazy and that I won’t be crazy.”

Ratings

Raymond Kent (*Measuring Media Audiences*, 1994) offers a comprehensive but critical approach of audience measurement in the United Kingdom. He divides media in four categories: television and radio (broadcast media), newspapers, books and magazines (print media), cinema and video and outdoor media such as fixed bill boards and ads on buses (see appendix for *Speed*). These four groups are directed towards a wide variety of receivers in terms of offering information and entertainment. In order to be able to study what is actually happening in a mediated situation between production and reception, research should be concerned with studying ‘watching’, ‘listening’, ‘reading’ and ‘seeing’, which first have to be defined in terms of what is meant by such an activity and how long such an activity takes before it can be referred to as a communicative media act. Studies should also define what approach or method serves the questions at their best (Kent, 1992, pp. 4-6), which is addressed later on.

The request for measuring cinema audiences stems mainly from cinema exhibitors, distributors and

cinema advertising contractors⁹⁹. Richard Chilton and Paul Butler (R. Kent, 1994) deal with these requests by describing different methods to measure cinema audiences¹⁰⁰. The basic ones are, cinema admissions (Cinema Advertising Association), audience composition (National Readership Survey and Target Group Index) – for instance, *The Matrix* initially defined its audiences consisting of young males¹⁰¹ - audience by film (Cinema and Video Industry Audience Research, CAVIAR), qualitative studies (Marplan), film tracking (National Research Group) and analysis of drive time (CAVIAR). Methods for measuring audiences concerning the other categories have been developed as well such as cover and frequency surveys, or media relevant issues such as what and how often people read and whether they are subscribed to a magazine or newspaper. All these methods for audience research are very helpful, but - just as for any model - they are not sufficient¹⁰² and lead – in some cases – to “fanciful methods of evaluation” due to competition among research companies (Pierre Sorlin, 1994, p. 21).

Thus, publishing and broadcasting companies are very interested in media audiences. By audience measurement they try to picture, as accurate as possible, their ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ audiences; audiences that are buying their products. However, these ratings are rather doubtful, because they call into question what ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ audiences are and if such audiences actually exist. Before I address this difficulty, I want to outline the most common approaches¹⁰³ which are generally accepted to provide the ‘right information’ about audiences¹⁰⁴. For instance, Nielsen ratings¹⁰⁵ provide on the one hand, ratings about ‘who watches television’ and on the other hand, ratings about ‘what people are watching’. Ien Ang (1991, 1996) describes the process practiced by Nielsen¹⁰⁶, especially regarding television ratings. However, Nielsen isn’t the only company that rates TV shows, other companies and studies also rate TV shows, movies and their audiences. For example, Entertainment Data, Inc. See Keanu Reeves’ domestic top 10 (*Weekly Variety*, August 5, 1996):

Numbers differ for they depend on the purpose of the research¹⁰⁷. For example, when box office rates are studied, the numbers express the amount of weeks, the amount of screens, the gross over several days, the change percentage from the prior weekend, the average percentage per screen and total gross of the movie (I refer to the appendix for the ratings of Keanu's movies, especially *Devil's Advocate*). See the box office for *The Matrix* (*The Hollywood Reporter*, April 13-19, 1999):

Demographic studies¹⁰⁸ are done as well by companies such as CinemaScore that surveys audiences by "asking moviegoers about their gender, age, how they liked the movie (grade) and their reason for attending the movie." For example, *Devil's Advocate* (*Hollywood Reporter*, October 21, 1997):

Other publishers that provide international and domestic box office information include Screen International (UK, Ireland, Belgium, Nordic countries), Le Film Français (France), Cinetel (Italy),

Mpaa (Netherlands), Kogyo Tsushin (Japan), Motion Picture Distributors Association (Australia), Mpia (Hong Kong), Jounal do Video (Brazil) and Canacine (Mexico City). Other sources are Variety and The Hollywood Reporter.

Forms of Reality in Audience Measurement

Ratings serve thus both a code system and audience measurement studies. The latter are rather complicated since they assume the existence of ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ audiences who are offered media products. The study¹⁰⁹ of conventional audience measurement strategies or companies – like Nielsen (television), Simmons Market Research Bureau (magazines), Arbitron (radio), Mediamark Research Incorporated (MRI) – reveals that the results of these measurements stem from interactions among measurement companies, their clients (namely, media companies and advertisers) and their respondents. Especially, media companies and advertisers are very important for audience statistics; without them, there wouldn’t be any information.

Crucial in terms of methodological approaches is the question ‘what will be subjected to measurement?’ This decision is linked to money and logistics such as programs that are offered, audience responses and characteristics. There are two types of studies that can answer this question (see Peter V. Miller, 1994). On the one hand, there are ‘custom studies’ and on the other hand, there are ‘syndicated studies’. The former are performed on request of a (media) client to focus on its own audience, the latter focuses on audiences of a wide variety of media outlets (like Nielsen). Custom studies are of a greater value when performed on a ‘new’ target group whose behavior is not well-known yet by advertisers and companies or when a new medium is introduced, since audiences are examined in greater detail¹¹⁰. This study offers an image of an audience that is studied on the basis of a company’s specification which results in a ‘made-to-order’ audience. Syndicated studies are performed over multiple media and are sold to more clients. They offer longitudinal information and can therefore be set in the sales of advertising space and time. Syndicated studies also make a lot of money by providing its clients with information regarding repackaging products, spin-off studies, and the like. Syndicated studies are mattered a great deal by proving – there is a lot of money at stake – ‘the truth’ to both clients and respondents¹¹¹. Especially syndicated studies are used to study movie audiences for producers want to know who to target, what to target and how to target their potential audiences. Besides test screenings a huge amount of money is then spent on research to answer the question how to advertise or communicate products (movies, actors and commodities). For instance, the promotional duties of an actor are not ‘random’, he is assigned to be interviewed by particular magazines or television shows for they provide both the actor and therefore the movie with the wanted image, mood or feeling that should attract ‘its audience’. Nevertheless, it isn’t possible to totally predict who actually ends up in the cinema, but at least these studies offer filmmakers a degree of certainty and helps the movie to get a ‘go’.

Both syndicated and custom studies offer ways to study (potential) audiences - and to a greater or lesser extent - at the risk of standardization and too many details. These two studies, among other methods, both claim to reveal true audiences however, the reader has to keep in mind that they are forms of social constructions as well and therefore, audience measurement studies depend on both social beliefs of true and falsehood and on research traditions that change over time and space in order to improve methodologies.

Marketing and Communication

Information and entertainment are brought upon society through various media such as newspapers, magazines, internet and movies. Media and information-providing businesses have a mutual component: audiences. Enormous amounts of money are spent on the development of audience research methods so that businesses can keep in touch with the way people behave and live their lives. Rating studies and marketing studies are closely related, because they both try to 'find audiences' and to address - when they have 'found' them - them in proper ways.

Marketing is a general and systematic method of redefining, backing and promoting a product in view of increasing sales or profits (see Thorelli and Cavusgil, 1990). Modes and methods of research always reflect the context of the time in which they are performed; during the fifties motivational research¹¹² is 'in', while in the nineties, though starting in the late seventies, so-called lifestyle research is the boundless method. Lifestyle research combines demographic and psychological information. Other interesting methods are studies of social and economic change, especially, with regard to women and ethnicity. The importance of presenting accurate and compelling images of particular audiences can best be studied by the question how media present and advertise themselves, i.e. how media are marketed and communicated to their (potential) audiences. *The Commercial Connection: Advertising & the American Mass Media* (Wright, 1979) offers an extensive insight into the past and present of the advertising business in the United States¹¹³.

Marketing research is basically ruled by one key question, namely, how to adapt a marketing strategy to the prevailing market conditions or the market structure. A slight variation in marketing strategy is all what matters between failure and success in the marketplace. Market structures differ from nation to nation. Therefore, a certain marketing approach in the domestic country may not be equally satisfying in the international business climate. International marketing¹¹⁴ is complicated by the interface among nations - such as quotas, currency problems, tariffs and politics - and by differences among market structures for a given product from one country to the next - such as lifestyles, economic development and values. The film industry deals globally with various market structures and as a result, marketing strategies may vary from one nation to the next. For example, *Devil's Advocate* was promoted in the United States and in Europe - United Kingdom, Germany and

France. The latter three countries are the most important foreign markets in comparison to the domestic one. The actors and director were flown to the United Kingdom where press meetings were held. The press gathered from several nations, including The Netherlands (Veronica's *Films & Sterren* with René Mioch) to interview the actors and director of *Devil's Advocate*. Keanu referred to this promotion activity as "putting up posters" or "going to town." However, by comparing the marketing strategy of this movie in the United States, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the first noticeable difference is the proportion of advertising. In The Netherlands *Devil's Advocate* was called attention to by the Dutch entertainment show *Films & Sterren* (Films & Stars), trailers on television and in the cinemas, posters in the bigger cities and in some magazines varying from television guides and youth magazines to newspapers (on the day the film was released). In the United Kingdom similar strategies were developed but on a broader level. Interviews with and gossip about actors appeared in various magazines varying from teen magazines to professional business updated magazines¹¹⁵. On television several English language channels offered interviews with the actors and director, and clips of *Devil's Advocate*, such as MTV's *The Big Picture*, BBC's *Film '98* and NBC's *V.I.P.* The movie was promoted in the United States even bigger¹¹⁶. The film premiered October 16, 1997 but the promotional campaigns had already started two months prior by showing trailers on television and in the movie theaters, in gossip shows cues of the set were discussed (e.g. *E!*), the *Devil's Advocate* web site was put up, more and more articles in magazines appeared about the actors ranging from gossip to interviews, even movie channels broadcast several movies starring Al Pacino or Keanu Reeves, posters and bill boards were put up all over Los Angeles (bus stops, Chinese Mann Theater, busses), and so on. For more detailed¹¹⁷ information I refer to the following chapter which deals with authorized textual manifestations. For further information on marketing and purchasing I refer to Håkan Håkansson's work and also to S.T. Cavusgil who has conceptualized the progression of an industry's involvement in the international market¹¹⁸.

In order to successfully manage a company's international marketing strategy, it is of utmost importance to understand the conditions of the product (and its position in society), its price, the promotion and the distribution channels (various distribution channels such as vertically integrated ones or independent ones). The best approach is the integrative approach which represents both the processes of production and reception. Nowadays, it is common ground for a film to be accompanied by a spectacular launch of merchandise varying from a poster or compact disc to cereal, toys and game boys. For example, November 8 of 1992 *New York Times* announces that *Macy's* opened a *Bram Stoker's Dracula* shop "for the fright stuff... and tickets, too!" See the appendix for this ad and others that promote *Tune In Tomorrow* and *Speed*. New technological developments contribute to a broader launch of the product as well. The internet is often understood in terms of its possibilities and its reach. It has brought additional technologies to attract audiences by bombarding them with tidbits on the internet. For instance, *The Matrix* web site offers a comic book, behind-the-scenes-stories, interviews, photographs of the shoot, an advanced trailer of the movie, plus a screen saver that can

be downloaded. Ten years ago, especially the latter two were very uncommon.

Besides international marketing strategies for developing and selling products, advertising agencies and marketing research companies market ‘services’ as well. *The American Marketing Association* has defined the concept of ‘services’ (1960) as “activities, benefits or satisfactions which are offered for sale, or are provided in connection with the sale of goods.¹¹⁹” The film industry is a combination of both the marketing of (media) products – such as a *Buffalo ’66*, the soundtrack of *Reality Bites*, and stuffed animals of *The Lion King* - and services – such as a film equipment rental office, a talent agency, the several professional guilds and the task of the publicist. For instance, Leslie Klotz, a spokeswoman for *Creative Artists Agency*, explained CAA’s philosophies on marketing their services. CAA’s philosophy is “less is more” which means that “work speaks for itself.” A talent agency should not get more press than its clients, therefore, CAA stands out as a cohesive team or group; four or five agents pro client and no names of agents are mentioned in the press when a deal is closed. Another strategy propagated by CAA is to be “more open” to the press and to increase the percentage of female agents.

Both products and services are marketed and crucial in this process is what is called the ‘marketing mix’. This is the set of controllable elements the organization can use to influence customer responses, that is, price and promotion. The marketing mix is developed by N. Borden¹²⁰ and put in the popular and well-known four ‘P’s’ by E. McCarthy¹²¹: product, place, promotion and price. A marketing strategy is developed on the basis of several elements of the marketing mix that are studied prior to the production of a product. With regard to the production of a film, the process is initiated by product planning, decision of channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising¹²², promotions¹²³, packaging, display and physical handling¹²⁴. Twentieth Century Fox set up promotional possibilities for *Chain Reaction* (1996). Fox’ exhibitor services department advises in-theatre promotional activities¹²⁵:

Keanu Reeves is one of the hottest young actors on screen today. Create a “Shrine” to him in your lobby that

will be sure to attract a lot of female patrons. Use blown up photos from a SPEED of CHAIN REACTION press kit to put on display as well as photos or one-sheets from other movies he has starred in.

- Decorate your theatre to look like the inside of a lab, complete with signs that read “top secret,” “danger,” “poison” and “restricted entry only.” Spread plastic or glass beakers around and fill them with colored water and dry ice.
- Have your staff dress up like scientists dressed in white coats, with goggles, pen and notebook, thick glasses and various shiny silver instruments overflowing their pockets. [...]
- Expand the theme of the film by having a contest in your lobby, in which amateur inventors can display their creations. Judge the inventions in the categories of: most beneficial or useful to humans, easiest to operate and the invention most likely to be patented. [...]
- Have a trivia contest through a local radio station or newspaper with questions about the careers of Morgan Freeman and Keanu Reeves.

Not only production elements are studied but consumers, or better, audiences’ buying behavior as well¹²⁶. Key factors are frequency of visiting a cinema, renting videos, buying habits, living habits,

buying power, environment and motivation; all this provides us with an idea of our potential audiences and at the same time, it offers information about how to approach ‘target audiences’. It’s similar to the descriptions of for instance the *Nielsen* ratings. Nowadays it is not uncommon for the advertising of a potential box office hit to outgrow the budget of the movie shoot¹²⁷. Therefore, the (potential) success of movie is often measured on the basis of test screenings (which includes an advanced press screening of *The Matrix* where co-producer Joel Silver was present). For example, *The Matrix* premiered March 31st 1999, but had its ‘first’ screening early January of 1999 in New York where it was ranked very highly¹²⁸. At the same time *The Matrix* trailer aired on television during the Super Bowl which attracts millions of viewers. The goal was to release this film before the *Stars Wars* film, so that it would attract more audiences than it would probably attract when it was released after the outcome of the *Stars Wars* movie. *The Matrix* is also accompanied by a launch of an extensive merchandise line which varies from little puppets based on the characters in the movie, game boys and the like¹²⁹. Marketing media are thus often accompanied by commodities. Eileen Meehan (1991) studied the commercial intertext of the *Batman* films:

Batman took the United States by storm in the spring and summer of 1989. Tee shirts, posters, keychains, jewelry, buttons, books, watches, magazines, trading cards, audiotaped books, videogames, records, cups, and numerous other items flooded malls across the United States with images of Batman, his new logo, and his old enemy the Joker¹³⁰.

Her study shows that the creation of the commercial success of *Batman* is due to the launch of tie-ins. When a movie deal is closed – depending on the nature of the film – the production of commodities can be tied-in. For instance, the *Bill & Ted* series are accompanied by gameboys, cereal, little dolls and the like. These products, on the one hand, contribute to the promotion (and popularization) of the movie and on the other hand, they increase the profitable potential of the movie. Not only movies are tied-in; for instance, during concerts T-shirts, shawls, posters, keychains, lighters, stickers and the like can be bought or sometimes magazines are used to promote upcoming movies (flyers, posters, buttons) or other products such as lipsticks, tanning lotion and scarfs – though, these are less tie-ins than that they are promotional activities. John Fiske (1987, pp. 254-264) argues that these commodities – besides that they indicate the industry’s economical context – exchange and circulate meanings, pleasures and social identities. Thus, tie-ins look after various texts (products) that circulate in society and can be bought. As such, tie-ins provide people with ‘extra’ information about the movie or actor. They work by increasing both profits and meaning production (and texts); by covering at least the economical and cultural domein of society, tie-ins are studied by various disciplines ranging from political economists to popular culturalists. So, advertisements only work when prior to the campaign a strategy has been set out in order to reach the ‘right’ people¹³¹ or to ‘detect’ people (often called ‘the underground’) who, without knowing, are the founders of a hype or trend¹³². The former methods are studied by businesses such as *Axiom Research Group*¹³³, *Ogilvy & Mather*¹³⁴, while the latter is studied by e.g. *Sputnik*¹³⁵.

Media do no longer serve leisure-time alone, but they have become economic dynamics and indicators of society as well. Which is just described through the way market research companies function. These types of practices call some (social) issues into question. For example, the last decade is marked by an increase in – especially among young girls - anorexics and boulimics. It is said that these two diseases are marketed – although, not purposely – through images of skinny (super)models in magazines that are read by young women. Another hip thing to do is to wear clogs or to wear plateau shoes (like *The Spice Girls*). The latter are not too healthy as well (we probably all remember Naomi Campbell falling down at the Catwalk while showing Vivienne Westwood’s ridiculous high shoes). Keith White writes:

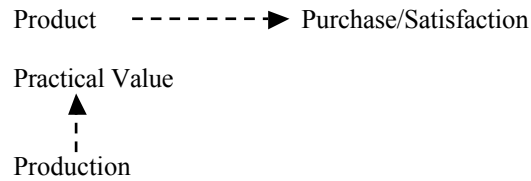
I want to be a *Details* man. I had recognized my need for bee-stung lips, carefully unkempt hair, a washboard stomach, baggy Versace suits, tattoos – you get the picture. I wanted to pal around with other young sophisticated dressed just as rakishly as I, chatting about the latest trend in alternative music and last week’s party with Drew, Ethan, Uma and Keanu. (p. 62)¹³⁶

Indeed, the latest ‘in’ for men. Due to many different larger or smaller communities in our societies, people have to be addressed in different ways and in order to find out who is ‘out there’, research strategies are developed in behalf of (entertainment) industries to sell their products in a proper way. However, audiences or customers cannot be neglected since it is always up to them to turn a product into a success. It doesn’t matter how good an advertising campaign is if people don’t like what they see or get, they will tell others (and vice versa). Therefore, the factor of mouth-to-mouth is often more successful than a huge bill board. For instance, a friend of mine does not like sports and did not watch the Super Bowl. As a result he did not see *The Matrix* trailer, but apparently he had missed some intriguing scenes, because some friends called him the next day to discuss Reeves’ upcoming movie (an actor they usually make fun of) and the test screenings. My friend actually started searching the internet and is now determined to watch *The Matrix* as soon as it is released. Gossip and oral culture are thus very important for the success of a marketing structure, but they function as a social ‘event’ as well (Fiske, 1987, p. 78) which is dealt with later on.

A product – from its beginning to its end – is accompanied by two values, namely a practical and a symbolic value. The practical value refers to the labor process or entertainment, while the symbolic value is emphasized at the side of the audiences (for instance, a fan’s relief to learn that “I’m not the only one”). Thus, the model or process for commercial marketing shows that a product is produced with a practical value – which may or may not be obvious - but which gains a symbolic value in the production process as well. The purchase of the product then, leads (in most cases) to satisfaction.

Marketing

↓
Symbolic Value



*Model 4: Commercial Marketing*¹³⁷

To promote media such as movies or magazines, similar strategies are used. For the promotion of Hollywood films, usually actors are (strategically) put in a media plan to promote the movie intertextually. The actor becomes the product or text that leads to the motivation to buy a ticket or a cd-rom, to watch a movie or to read a magazine; at the same time, the text satisfies the audiences, readers or customers – though, satisfaction can also stem from the individual’s production activities, which are discussed in the chapters four and five.

Publishing Industry

The publishing industry consists of a wide range of written material ranging from newspapers, literary books, teen magazines, fan zines to specialized magazines and poetry booklets. Studies have been done on several sub-genres such as weeklies, gossip magazines, feminist magazines, romance novels, teen magazines and fan zines. Joke Hermes (1995) has studied popular women’s magazines in terms of their everyday use which she related to reception analyses and polysemic content of the magazines; Angela McRobbie (1991) related feminism and youth culture by studying teen magazines; Janice Radway’s (1984) work deals with the household consumption of romantic fiction and the context of everyday life; Nancy Henry (1972) discusses the problematic of women’s magazines and the advertisement business; Chris Welles (1975) has studied the interrelationship of a magazine’s popularity (circulation) and the amount of money offered by ad agencies; and Henry Jenkins (1992) gives way to an understanding of *Star Trek* fans on the basis of fan production, including fan zines. These studies have in common that the magazines are studied in relation to their readership and placed in the context of everyday life. As a result they offer an understanding why certain magazines are read by certain people, divided into classification schemes (age, gender, social class, et cetera). For this study I went¹³⁸ to several bookstores where I stayed for several hours. I flipped through a wide variety of magazines, especially the ones where it was likely to read information about people in the public eye. Thus, magazines and informational papers ranging from ‘glossies’, teen magazines, specialized magazines (movies, computers and guitars) to gossip magazines, fan zines and pornographic magazines¹³⁹. Each magazine develops its own formula by offering its readers something unique. The latter needs to be studied in depth, since it can be argued that – besides similarities based on characteristics of magazines in general such as the look of the front cover, sorts of advertisements and marketing campaigns – for instance, glossies and specialized movie magazines

have inherited characteristics from gossip magazines and vice versa. For instance, *Vogue* features new clothing collections and design(er) trends; *Look* can be advised with the latest ‘haves and have-nots’ of clothes; *Movieline* and *Preview* bring the ins and outs of the latest movies and interesting new people in the world of the cinema, while *Hello!* surprises its readers each week with what happened in the lives of the rich and famous. However, specialized magazines such as *Movieline*, *Preview*, *Premiere* and *Cinema* all have a few pages dedicated to gossip which varies from who is going to do what new project to who is married to whom or who cheats on his or her beloved one(s). Glossies also show an increased interest in celebrities by putting them on the cover – like Susan Sarandon, Demi More, Gwyneth Paltrow, Claire Danes, Jewel, Mariah Carey – or invite them as a one-time-chief-editor of this month’s issue. These magazines feature pages on celebrity’s looks, news on the latest movies to see, concerts to visit or a report on the list of invites at certain parties as well (especially, *In Style*). These photographs are usually accompanied by descriptions suggesting more than they show. Gossip magazines express an increased interest in interviewing people about serious matters as well and at least two pages are reserved for fashion - often referred to as ‘does and don’ts’ based on photographs taken of the rich and famous attending premieres, parties and at charity institutions. Thus, various genres are propagated in magazines, but some features have tendencies to overlap other (sub-) genres. However, the way a magazine is put together and marketed does not vary much from one type of magazine to another. I have had interviews with glossy and number one fashion magazine *Vogue* (New York), with the popular movie magazine *Movieline* (Los Angeles), with England’s number one ‘young woman’ magazine *Cosmopolitan*¹⁴⁰ (London), gossip magazine *Hello!* (London) and the Dutch magazine *Nieuwe Yes*¹⁴¹ (Hoofddorp) which targets young girls in the age from sixteen to twenty-one. The following are extracts from the interviews and provide the reader with an insight into the come about of a magazine.

In general, material for features is gathered via producers, agencies and managers who keep the magazines informed about their clients’ professional activities by sending information about them through press releases, telephone calls and sometimes the editor involved in that area, arranges to set up a meeting with these representatives. For instance, *Vogue* solicits information about upcoming films, for example, “from publicists¹⁴² working on the film to see if they might make good material for a feature or a review.” Thus, sometimes agents, managers and the like approach *Vogue* for an interview and sometimes they are approached by the magazine; *Cosmopolitan* is often approached by an agent – usually one year prior to the out-coming project – “and then we have to decide whether it is going to make a good and interesting story for our readers or not”; *Movieline* generally doesn’t deal with producers, managers and agencies – “unless it is absolutely necessary” – for stories are set up through movie publicists or personal publicists. “With some stars the relationship is more ‘personal’, such as with Sharon Stone, Madeleine Stowe and Drew Barrymore.” *Movieline* offers a story to a publicist for one of their clients and “they usually try to make the story longer or more

prominent in the issue.” If a compromise is reached, the actor appears in the issue. Thus, in general *Movieline* approaches the celebrities for features. In the case of the smaller “Hype” section in front of the magazine, sometimes studio or personal publicists pitch the magazine for those stories so their clients appear in the magazine when their movies are released in the theaters. *Hello!* sometimes approaches a celebrity when there is a news story to tell. But the magazine also receives ideas for interviews from various freelance writers and photographers world-wide. Occasionally celebrities contact *Hello!* themselves to ask whether the magazine is interested in featuring them or not. Not only features appear in magazines, usually several pages are dedicated to rumors. *Hello!* is a gossip magazine, but they do have a specific policy on what is correct and what isn’t:

Any interview where an interviewee may make disparaging remarks about somebody or is involved in any legal case is of course approved by our lawyers. We do our utmost to check the truth of any story but as we are a magazine and not a newspaper – in other words, we come out much later than a newspaper story – by the time we go to press, we would normally know if a story is true or not. Where photographers are commissioned by us to shoot a celebrity, they are briefed by us as to the kinds of shot we want – these would vary depending on the subject matter, such as whether it was the birth of a baby, a wedding, a party, et cetera. Each story needs different requirements. As with reporters, we have a circle of top photographers who know our style very well. We may, in very special cases, allow an interviewee to see the copy we will be publishing but this is to ensure factual accuracy. They never have photograph approval.¹⁴³

Movieline only places rumors “when it’s stated as such.” The magazine handles a very strict fact checking process. “If something is printed as fact, it has been backed up by two reliable sources.” Sources include reputable books, magazines, newspapers and online publications. “The internet is used everyday and is an invaluable source.” *Movieline* does never send a copy of a story to an actor for approval. All interviews are recorded on tape and are used to back up anything what has been said. *Nieuwe Yes* handles the rule that interviews should be “open” and thus should be reproduced as such, “which means that when an interviewee is not very nice or rude this will end up in the magazine.¹⁴⁴” Which differs from *Hello!*, “the magazine does not write its own opinion about actors, but only questions and answers are printed, most celebrities are happy to appear in the magazine.”

Vogue is not a gossip magazine so “rumors are not placed on anybody.” When the decision has been made to feature an actor in an interview that is “because the readers might be interested in him or her because, for example, they have just appeared in a well-received film and people are talking about the performance.” All articles are fact-checked by *Vogue*’s research department before publication. The author documents his facts when he submits the article and these facts are double-checked by the research department. However, *Vogue* does not send a draft to the interviewee. *Vogue* uses sources that include the interviewee himself, whoever else that is quoted in the article and other available information that is written about the personality, is read as background material. Relevant sources for *Nieuwe Yes* are foreign magazines, especially American and British magazines. Sometimes the internet is used as a source, but it is thought of as rather digressive. For instance, “the information on Cameron Diaz and Matt Dillon brought up nothing new. Rumors are not checked for foreign celebrities, but they are checked for Dutch public persons because that is more sensitive.”

Finally, all magazines receive lots of responses¹⁴⁵. See for instance letters that responded to *The Matrix* review in *Entertainment Weekly* (April 30, 1999):

Keanu Reeves gets a lot of flak for being a bad actor, but in *The Matrix* he really shines. The special effects were killer and so was the plot. [...] (Nadine)

Lisa Schwarzbaum's review of *The Matrix* missed the point. She seemed primarily interested in demonstrating that Keanu Reeves is not Laurence Olivier. What she did not mention is that the movie is incredible adrenaline rush. I have become supremely bored with shoot-'em-up, special-effects-filled, mega-budget schlock. *The Matrix*, though, has brought new life to the sci-fi genre. The special effects were beyond belief and the plot engaging. Most simply, the goose bumps I felt told me one thing: This movie rocks! (Mitch)

I usually agree with your movie reviews, but your review of *The Matrix* was way off the mark. It failed to see the film for what it is: a unique, exciting, intelligent, well-scripted piece of science fiction. Maybe the *Matrix* has her. (Mike)

As a working professional in the film industry, as well as an avid moviegoer, I have one thing to say" *The Matrix* offered the most fun I've had at a film in years. For once I could put aside my own indulgent pastime of picking apart a film (mainly out of boredom) and get lost in a world created with much love, a great sci-fi story line, hard work, and a massive dollop of derring-do creativity. Everything about this film satisfies the guiltiest of pleasures, even among the jaded. In short, a history lesson for all critics: A lot of you thought *Blade Runner* sucked, too. (Michael)

In the wake of such moronic Hollywood offerings as *Armageddon*, at last we have a sci-fi whose plot makes us think. Hoaky cybermysticism and Keanu aside, *The Matrix*'s solid, high-concept story never takes itself too seriously, nor does it compromise its integrity for the sake of its incredible, genre-blending action sequences. This is the best time I've had at the movies in quite a while, and isn't that what it's all about? (Victor)

Other magazines such as *Vogue* get responses as well "which are read very carefully and some are published in the letters column and they also appear in a monthly report for the editors. Mail is not kept longer for more than three months and is not shown to anyone else than the interviewee." *Movieline* handles the same policy like *Vogue*. *Hello!* gets a lot of responses from its readers as well about what they like and don't like about stories that feature in the magazine. "And all letters are replied to personally." More and more letters from readers appear in columns or, as in some cases, are responded to personally, which indicate a direct interaction between institutions and individuals (see Sabal, 1992). I return to this dynamic and the possibilities of the internet (especially, e-mail and message boards) to point out communicative actions between authorized and unauthorized textual producers.

Music Industry¹⁴⁶

Grossberg (Gelder and Thornton, 1997, pp. 477-493) contextualizes the role of music by 'affective alliance' which is "an organization of concrete material practices and events, cultural forms and social experience which both opens up and structures the space of our affective investments in the world." Thus, it's a collection of social, material and cultural practices are used by human beings in order to

identify themselves with those practices. Music is therefore not only about music and lyrics but about economy, technology, images, social relations, media practices and so on, as well. As such music gives way to various (sub-)cultures¹⁴⁷. Music is then about the creation of a ‘gab’ between ‘them’ (masses) and ‘us’. Grossberg argues that “the rupture is accomplished through the production of ‘affective alliances’ which disrupt the hegemonic control of desire and pleasure.” However, through processes of ‘ex-’ and ‘incorporation’ the gab is (temporarily) closed. By differences in marketing strategies both independent and commercial record labels contribute to the popularisation of various music streams. Thornton (1995) discerns three types of media: *mass media* such as national newspapers, radio and TV; *micro media* such as flyers, mailing-lists, sign-up lists, posters and fan zines that derive from subcultures; and, *niche media* such as style and music magazines which “don’t just cover subcultures, they help construct them.” This distinction is useful for it shows how most labels approach their ‘crowds’. Nowadays it is a trend among A&R¹⁴⁸ scouts to be as young as the bands they represent and almost everyone has some sort of background in the music business to fall back on, such as playing in bands themselves¹⁴⁹. A reason for this, is that these scouts fit in the current music scene where they are likely to find new talent, fans and where they can sell it to the public. Flyers, local radio shows, mouth-to-mouth advertisements, sign-up lists (to get free stuff and updates about bands) and friends, labels work the (potential) ‘crowds’ are very important in this process. This is referred to as the micro media approach by which Thornton means “an array of media, from the most rudimentary of print forms to the latest in digital interactive technologies, are the low circulating, narrowly targeted micro-media which have the most credibility amongst clubbers and are most instrumental to their congregating on a nightly basis.” However, other strategies include record stores; for instance, there are so-called *priority stores*, *ultra cool stores* and *cool stores*. The first ones, have the entire catalogue of a record label, the second ones have a large part of a label in their stores (‘the bigger name bands’) and the last category are stores such as Virgin Mega Store and Free Record Shop that are generally interested in successful commercial bands. Micro media then contribute to the popularisation of bands and are a (in-)valuable factor in (direct) marketing strategies. Niche media are the consumer magazines (Thornton, 1995) and work to “categorize social groups, arrange sounds, itemize attire and label everything. They baptize scenes and generate the self-consciousness required to maintain cultural distinctions. They give definition to vague cultural formations [...] they don’t just discover subcultures, they help construct them.” Thus, niche media are responsible for the formation and labelling of subcultures which is an important economical factor. By causing a commotion (‘moral panic’) such as shocking front covers, the band is made into a success. When record labels and various media cooperate commercial and subcultural successes are to be gained. Record labels make a lot of money out of (new) bands due to a trend set in the 1980s (‘concentration practices’): Major companies own multiple record labels and maintain connected with smaller and independent record labels. They are also strongly connected with other branches such as the film industry. For example, Warner Bros. assigned Maverick Records to produce *The Matrix* soundtrack.

Artists included are Ministry, Marilyn Manson, The Prodigy, Rob Zombie and the Deftones. The soundtrack is advertised on the internet at the 'Official Sounstrack Site'. Thus, the integrative approach means that when a band is 'discovered' and are ready to sign a deal (new bands are bind with so-called 'deal memos'¹⁵⁰) a producer is being discussed. Depending on the name of the producer¹⁵¹ money has to be paid for by the band. The label pays often a large advance, and works together with a publishing company who approaches the band's manager and agent to discuss merchandise¹⁵². Especially, the major record companies¹⁵³ rule a policy of 'openess' which means that these majors control large-scale, distribution and publicity channels. Think about the production of music videos and filming bands such as *Instrument: Ten Years With the Band Fugazi*, or *The Beatles* and *The Sex Pistols*. Nevertheless, when a band is signed to a major label, the band can make an average of \$1000 or \$2000 a night which means that they can tour soon for about five weeks. It will pay for solid support, such as a good crew, tour bus and excellent equipment. "It makes the band feel more comfortable and so they will play better." Total costs¹⁵⁴:

Advance: \$250.000
 Manager's cut: \$37.500
 Legal fees: \$10.000

Total recording budget: \$150.000
 Total video budget: \$30.000
 Album artwork and promotional shoot: \$7.000
 Band fund: \$15.000
 Tour expense (5 weeks): \$50.875

Tour gross income: \$50.000
 Agent's cut: \$7.500
 Manager's cut: \$7.500

Merchandise advance: \$20.000
 Manager's cut: \$3.000
 Lawyer's fee: \$1.000
 Publishing advance: \$20.000
 Manager's cut: \$3.000
 Lawyer's fee: \$1.000

Record sales: 250.000 (plus retail) makes \$351.000
 Less advance: \$250.000
 Producer's points (about 3%): \$40.000
 Promotional budget: \$25.000
 (Buyout from previous label: \$50.000)
 Net royalty: -\$14.000
 Record company income: \$710.000

After a little bit of calculation, this figure shows that the record company makes a lot of money out of the band (\$710.000), next the producer (\$90.000), manager, the studio, agent, lawyer and finally the band members' net income is \$4,031.25. This is not too optimistic. Dogstar¹⁵⁵ - who promoted its music by *Quattro Formaggi* (enhanced) - had to deal with another factor of 'bad luck': Their label, ZOO Entertainment, went bankrupt. When it was bought up by another company, there were some

“insuperable differences” between Dogstar and the new creative staff members. Dogstar left and was stuck with an about-to-be-released album *Our Little Visionary*. It never reached the stores. Nevertheless, Dogstar has toured across several borders, has had the tour bus, sold the caps and T-shirts, has a fan club and an official web site. Currently, they are recording their new album and hopefully they have better luck this time...

Conclusion

In this chapter I've discussed the official institutions of the entertainment industry. First, it offers an historical and technological introduction on the rise of the media business¹⁵⁶. In *Social Graduation Hymn Tribute: On the Dialects Of Conflict and Consensus Layers Between the Production and Reception of a Specific Media Text* (1998) I applied a dialectal and historical approach to theorize conflict relations (Cultural Studies) and consensus relations (Critical Theory). Both institutions and individual agencies are dealt with on the basis of cultural and political discourses. It underlies this study in that the former focuses on the early beginnings of the communication structures, technological developments and the entertainment industry while this research concentrates on the entertainment industry at the turn of this century.

Second, I've shown that institutional agencies – production companies, talent agencies, actors, rating, marketing and communication corporations, publishing and music industries - are responsible for the production of media products which is discussed in the next chapter. Each section is illustrated by descriptions and information that stem from the practice for I've had conversations with people stemming from the entertainment business and whose experiences have determined a great deal of the structure of this thesis. Each individual provides a layer of the business and all together provide a genuine insight into the activity and come about of both the film, publishing and music industry.

Thus, I have chosen to focus on those entertainment institutions that I think are most visible to everyone outside the industry in order to describe how they produce (popular) texts. Generally, people are familiar with the words 'studio', 'talent agency', 'producer', 'management', 'actor', 'rating' (ratings open up questions concerning quantitative and qualitative research methods, accuracy and representation difficulties) and 'marketing' (which leads to questions regarding strategies, selection, target possibilities and competition); I explained these branches by focusing on the question 'how do institutions produce (popular) texts?'

Especially, Erwin Stoff told me not to forget that “we are not selling or marketing Reeves, but we are selling and marketing the movie” which helped me not to forget the ‘big picture’ of this study. I want to remark that although the actor is nothing more than a hand to theorize audience research and the come about of the popular public figure, this topic is far from being perfect due to the simple fact that there are so many more factors in the come about of the popular that research becomes very

extensive and complex¹⁵⁷.

3

Authorized Discourse: Textual Manifestations of Institutional Agencies.

The proper thing is to crucify me, nail me to the cross, and show no pity! Crucify me, judge, but pity me as you do it! I will go to meet my punishment, for I thirst not for pleasure, but for sufferings and tears.¹⁵⁸

McQuail (1997, p. 90) writes that “certain forms of media use [and media production] have a distinctly public character, both in the sense of ‘taking place’ outside the home and also in having a wide significance as a shared response to public performances and to public events.¹⁵⁹” Thus, the term public can refer to content, location and degree of shared experience. In the last chapter I discussed several branches of the media industry that produce and circulate popular texts. These texts are very significant for they are (mass) produced, widely spread in society and therefore easy accessible. Texts are not only publicly available but they contribute to the production and representation of the actor as well. Within media studies texts are understood as ‘open’ which means that viewers are able to negotiate a variety of meanings (Van der Graaf, 1997). Different interpretations derive from socially situated human beings; thus, the social life environment or context is an important factor in the process of meaning production. The multiplicity of meaning production does not only arise from a single text, but ‘making meaning’ is defined by both the social life environment and the intertext¹⁶⁰. This chapter explores what texts¹⁶¹ are produced by institutions. Thus I deal with authorized texts such as movies, official internet site, the band Dogstar and television shows to promote movies, interviews and gossip in magazines, and merchandise. As such, these texts are produced by institutional agencies and are the productive modes of authorized production. The appendix shows Mitroff’s and Bennis’ (1989) model of ‘*the structure of the celebrity manufacturing industry*’¹⁶². The model represents the structure of the entertainment industry on the basis of the construction of the celebrity. It shows all authorized institutional agencies – some of them are discussed in chapter two - that operate in the public sphere in the production (and construction) of texts¹⁶³. The next sections deal with various authorized texts, produced by the media manufacturing industry whereby I focus on the actor’s latest movies *Devil’s Advocate* and *The Matrix*. Not only the movies *an sich* are discussed, but their marketing structures, their merchandise and movie-related sites on internet are dealt with as well.

Movies: *Devil’s Advocate*¹⁶⁴ and *The Matrix*¹⁶⁵

Devil’s Advocate was advertised by several taglines, including¹⁶⁶:

The newest attorney at the world’s most powerful law firm has never lost a case. But he’s about to lose his

soul.

Evil has its winning ways.

Speak of the devil.

It tells the story about ‘the newest attorney’ Kevin Lomax (Reeves) who is recruited by a high-power New York firm. Lomax and his wife Mary Ann (Theron) move to New York. Soon the former Gainesville criminal lawyer becomes the protege of John Milton (Pacino), ‘speak of the devil’. Milton “takes an unusual, almost paternal interest” in Lomax and offers him a high-profile murder case. But ‘he is about to lose his soul’; Lomax’s spends all his time at the office which leaves his wife with little to do but decorating their apartment and shopping with the wives of his partners. Soon Mary Ann’s spiral goes down when some unnerving hallucinations torture her soul. From that moment on, ‘evil’ shows ‘its winning ways’. Or not?

The movie¹⁶⁷ opened in the United States October 17, 1997, while it opened in the United Kingdom (and some other European countries) January 16, 1998. Its budget was \$57m(US) and in its opening weekend, October 19 1997, it made \$12.17m (US) over 2,161 screens. In the United Kingdom *Devil’s Advocate* grossed in the opening weekend, January 18 1998, £1.3m. I refer to the appendix for further information on *Devil’s Advocate* (production notes – see also interviews in chapter two for production information in general - articles and reviews). The film was promoted by trailers on television and in the cinema, through posters all over town e.g. bill boards and at bus stops, at video releases and the like. The same goes for *The Matrix*, which is promoted by the taglines¹⁶⁸:

Reality is a thing of the past

What is The Matrix?

In 1999, The Matrix has you

Reeves plays Thomas ‘Neo’ Anderson. When Anderson starts experiencing flashbacks about being wired against his will into a silicon system – ‘reality is a dream of the past’ - he realizes that his life has been a computerized dream. And when it transpires that he is living in a virtual reality environment inside a world-wide digital matrix – ‘in 1999, The Matrix has you’ - Anderson joins the resistance movement – ‘what is The Matrix?’ - to free himself and mankind from an existence of brainwashing. He teams up with Trinity (Moss) and Morpheus (Fishburne), leader of the gang, “taking on the overlords behind their world.” For further information on *The Matrix* I refer to the appendix (production notes, articles and reviews). Not only *Devil’s Advocate* was accompanied by various commodities, *The Matrix* line is even bigger; besides the regulars such as poster and music, it has little kung-fu puppets and the like as well. It is similar to the commodities of the ‘Bill & Ted’ series which included cereal, puppets, nintendo’s, ‘air guitars’, and the like. Other examples of movies that are promoted ‘big’ are *Batman*, *The Lion King* and *Jurassic Park*. An ‘extra’ is given away in the weekend of March 19 to 21st: 500.000 copies of a special 16-page Matrix comic book¹⁶⁹

are handed out for free at 2025 cinemas, located throughout North America. On March 19 of 1999, the press releases names of celebrities¹⁷⁰ that will attend the world premiere of *The Matrix* (March 24, 1999). The premiere takes place at Mann's Village Theater in Westwood, California; the times are reported as well, "arrivals from 6.30 PM and the screening starts at 7.30 PM."¹⁷¹ As a result, interested people can wait outside for the arrivals.

Graeme Turner (1988, p. 5) has noticed this phenomenon and writes that the role of the feature film has changed since its early beginnings. Nowadays movies are rarely presented to its audiences as a single product or commodity. "It incorporates its commodities into the purchase of the ticket' by selling stuffed animals, dolls, T-shirts, compact discs and the like. The film industry is no longer self-contained but has spread its tentacles all over culture." During the release and promotion of *Devil's Advocate* the actors 'were everywhere' both in real time and in the 'diegetic' world of television and they 'lived in magazines'. Thus, as researchers we must be aware of both textual and 'extra-textual' factors in audiences' understanding of movies. Studies by Morley (1980) and Bennet and Woollacott (1987) show the inter-relationship between textual and 'extra-textual' factors. Thus, in the latter's work *Bond and Beyond* the shift in meaning production of the phenomenon of James Bond is described over time and analyzed in relation to the social and cultural context. Other useful references are Goodell's book *Independent Feature Film Production* (1982, rev. 1998) on film production, history and criticism.

Television: *Devil's Advocate*

A friend of mine likes to watch *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and in a weird mood she convinced me that we had to send Jay Leno a letter. Three weeks later we got a call and an invitation for the show. When I arrived in Los Angeles, I contacted Leno's personal assistant and October 16 of 1997 I had a front seat at the show. In the meantime I got some information about the taping of the show and found out who was invited that afternoon...Guess who was invited to promote *Devil's Advocate*? Indeed, 'my' alive and kicking case study.

Guests are usually invited by the show or the show is approached by a manager or publicist who hopes to get his client a promotional gig. Guest are picked up by the show's limo service and are paid about \$200, but which generally is donated to charity. Questions are spoken on before the actual interview takes place. *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* is a live show, but is not broadcast at the same time it is taped. There is a time slot of about two hours. Before the taping starts, the audiences are warmed up by the floor manager who also practices with people at the front row, to shake Leno's hand – which included me. Before the show Leno speaks with his audiences as well, pictures can be taken and the handshake is practiced another time. Just like the applause and 'the cheer on demand'. The taping of the show takes approximately ninety minutes, which includes time for commercials as well plus some taping of 'extra' material such as applause, different introductions for the show (since it is

broadcast differently over the nation) and scenes that have to be shot another time.

The guests of this show were Rowan Atkinson who promoted *Mr. Bean in America*, Keanu Reeves who promoted *Devil's Advocate* and Aaron Neville who promoted his new album. This show is elaborated in a case study in chapter six.

Keanu did not only grace *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* with his presence but *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* (October 15, 1997) as well and he could be listened to on October 23, 1997 at Chicago's radio *Rock 98* where he discussed— in five minutes - success and ambition versus moral conflict, seeing the completed film for the first time, how he picks a project, how to tell if a director has what it takes to make a good movie, the preparation for a role, and *The Matrix* is mentioned as his following project¹⁷².

Clips of *Devil's Advocate* and interviews with the actors could also be watched on a daily basis on various television channels and programs. What was striking as well, was how many and how often movies were broadcast in which Keanu performed: *A Walk in the Clouds*, *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Chain Reaction*, *Permanent Record* and *Youngblood* (HBO and Cinemax) to mention a few - Al Pacino's *Scent of a Woman*, *Frankie and Johnny*, *City Hall* and *Donnie Brasco* were shown almost daily as well. Keanu's textual representations did not stick to showing his movies, but Paula Abdul's video clip of 'Rush Rush' in which Keanu appears, was shown as well ('top ten of hot lip clips' at VH1¹⁷³) and *Blockbuster Video* offered discounts for several movies starring Pacino and Reeves¹⁷⁴. Gossip shows and channels carried extensive items on Keanu and Charlize in terms of who they were dating (each other?), their clothing habits, the premiere of *Devil's Advocate*, rumors of fights and struggles between Pacino and Reeves during the shoot of the movie and a report of Pacino getting a star at 'The Hollywood Walk of Fame'.

The actors are not only broadcast, they can be watched in 'real life' as well. For example, when Pacino got a star Reeves was present as well as the arrival of the actors at the premiere of *Devil's Advocate*. A designer-friend of mine made the remark that "Reeves looked rather scruffy at the premiere in contrast with his character's suits' which was 'so ridiculous" to her that it made her disbelief Reeves' character. Nevertheless, whether her comments are right or not, is not the question, but it is rather far-stretching since it does matter (at least) a bit. I started looking at some promotion material over Reeves' career and his clothing style (unconsciously) does say a lot about Reeves as a private person and about his attitude towards his movies. Besides this, his personal style does contribute to meaning production and reception!

Internet: Authorized Web Sites

Warner Bros. put up a web site for *Devil's Advocate*¹⁷⁵ which provides the interested user with the information about the United States openings date, information about the cast, the story outline,

information about the completion of production in terms of location, effects, director's statement and production status, accompanied by pictures. The page reproduces quotations of Dante's *Inferno* and is also linked to Dante's *Inferno*, to what *Inferno* means in Italian, to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to a timeline of the life of John Milton and the Holy Bible. Other links refer to lawyers and related magazines, namely the *Rules of Professional Conduct Governing Lawyers*, *The Lawyer* (UK publication), *Law World*, *The House of Representatives Internet Law Library* and *Canonical List of Lawyer Jokes*. Not only studios put information on the internet regarding upcoming releases, TV channels and magazines put information on their sites as well. For instance, *E! Online*'s web site offers information about *Devil's Advocate*, which is linked to Warner Bros.' site and Moviefinder where the user can check out where and when the movie is playing and get himself a ticket. The information that I retrieved from *E! Online*'s site is a short summary of the narrative, video clips (quick time, real video), information about the cast is linked to *E! Online*'s actor site ("Star Board"). The site on Keanu Reeves gives information about where and when he was born and other 'facts' about his background and upbringing, his filmography – all his movies are linked to other sites about these movies and corresponding tid-bits – and latest gossip stories ("Awful Truth"). Other sites where information can be found vary from the Internet Movie Data base, The Motion Picture Guide, Cinemedia to Movieline, American Film Institute, UCLA Film and Television Archive, Dolby Lab News and The Hollywood Reporter. Thus, not only a movie is promoted by the studio and related corporations, reviews, commodities and the like contribute to the publicity of the movie as well and which can be found on sites such as databases, organizations, libraries, archives, technology (like 'Johnny Mnemonic – Going 3D'), film history and criticism, meta guides, cinema periodicals and journals, magazines, newspapers, video and laser disc sites. All these sites are authorized sites because their creators work in the media industry one way or another. These institutions publicly carry out information or produce knowledge that is held for 'official' and is therefore recognized and valued as such. This means that the movie's discourse offers an intertextual understanding of both the marketing process of media products and the construction of the public person, or put in other words, the actor is assumed to represent certain temporary characteristics¹⁷⁶ which are acted upon by institutions through authorized textual manifestations such as the internet, commodities and compact discs.

The internet is one of the most important tools ever employed in the practice of public relations. However, the internet has not been used or developed as such a tool yet. So far the internet has mainly served as an additional publishing (and broadcasting) instrument where information and material, relatively cheap, can be retrieved and explored. Shel Holtz (*Public Relations on the Net*, 1999) argues that the internet conditions have to improve before the net can be used in its optima forma. First, more people have to become online¹⁷⁷, the world-wide web has to become easy accessible and simple to use, it has to become faster and information should be 'already there' on the

site. Often you have to call the company for further information. For instance, looking up the Warner Bros. site at altavista gives way to over 30.000 sites with looney tunes, fan pages and the like, it takes a while before the user has found the official indexed site by Warner Bros. Another promising possibility of the internet is to enter into a dialogue with (potential) audiences. Campaigns are often limited to bring products upon society – a one-way communication structure¹⁷⁸ - but there are a lot of individuals ‘out there’ who desperately want to provide producers with feedback (of any kind). The official *Dogstar* web site has embraced this possibility by a messageboard. It is an excellent option for two important reasons. It offers interested audiences to post what they like or don’t like about *Dogstar*, which varies from concert reviews to “fucking one of the guys.” At the same time, this possibility provides people with a ‘sense of community’ or a ‘feeling of solidarity’ – to know that ‘you are not alone’. This sense of community is very important within the fan community. The (im-)possibilities of the Dogstar Bulletin Fan Board is dealt with in a case study in chapter six; for now, it is a very important aspect for it blurs the boundaries between the ‘officials’ and audiences for they can engage in an interactive discussion about the band and its music - this calls into question the division into a public, semi-public and private sphere for ‘messages’ can be posted on the board and can be read by the band (which has severe psychological consequences as well).

Often, fans – especially, fans over the age of 40 – feel lonely and ashamed just by being a fan. Ien Ang’s book on *Dallas* viewers (*Watching Dallas*, 1985) shows this aspect of shame and guilt. A large amount of respondents who ‘loved *Dallas*’ indicate that people in their direct environment don’t understand why they are attracted to something as ‘vulgar’ as *Dallas*. The sole fact that Ang’s respondents refer to other people’s opinions, refers to the importance of the environment people live in and act upon, that is, society. The context of culture provides fans with the ability to rationalize their attraction, but which is often accompanied by an apologetic tone to weaken their ‘addiction’. A message board then functions as a convergence of interested participants of *Dogstar*. A woman told me that she was “relieved that she was not alone and crazy, because there are others who are in love with Bret’s voice as well.” Second, a message board (and newsgroups as well) can be monitored by *Dogstar* representatives who can partake in discussions and respond to certain requests. And above all, they can increase their knowledge concerning what people want or expect from the band or management; to be customer- or receiver-driven. Another example is *Studio-i Chat* where celebrities chat with other internet users. On February 9, 1999 at 10:00pm ET and 7:00 PT, users could chat live with Rod Stewart and in that same month politicians of the Dutch party PvdA chatted with students in order to promote and attract more people to their updated web site¹⁷⁹. How much more feedback do we want?

Newsgroups and discussiongroups become more influential communities every day. Organizations just start to discover the value of newsgroups with regard to (potential) customers and their needs. Messages in newsgroups are read by thousands of users and as Holtz has studied, “it unquestionably

influences their opinion about the computer manufacturer [example¹⁸⁰].” However, both Kevin Huvane (CAA) and Erwin Stoff (TAE) explained that they are not really interested in monitoring fan sites or newsgroups. The same opinion goes for fan mail. Sometimes it is opened but never replied¹⁸¹ - Robert Sabal (1992) published an article on television executives who speak about fan letters sent to the networks, which is quite interesting. Monitoring consumers or audiences makes a lot of people nervous. Not only users of such groups or web owners, but people who work in the public relations business as well. The volume of material ‘floating’ around on the net is dazzling¹⁸². Monitoring media is made easier through a clipping service that scans newspapers and magazines for reference to an organization. There are three main companies active on the web that have taken over the traditional clipping service: E-watch, M3 and The Delahaye Group. These companies track down newsgroups for you, participate in them, organize virtual discussion forums and study search engines and useful meta tags. Reporters use the internet as well as a source for new material or to write articles about any topic¹⁸³.

In 1998, more than half of daily newspaper reporters went online every day (up from 34 percent in 1997); 54 percent reported that they used the Internet “continuously.” Another 29 percent used the Internet at least weekly (an increase of 34 percent in 1997). They used the internet primarily for research. Two-thirds of the print media used the Internet to research articles and as a source of reference material. [...] Reporters also used Internet-based e-mail as a means of corresponding with sources *after* initial contact was made and the identity and the credibility of the source established. (p. 116)¹⁸⁴

The internet is a valuable source that contributes to the intertextuality of textual manifestations. The web site of *The Matrix* (Warner Bros.) was put on the internet by November of 1998, which indicates an early start of the marketing strategy since at that time the release date was not certain yet¹⁸⁵. This site, built and owned by Warner Bros., initiated the movie’s announcement by a ‘teaser’. Now it has the film’s trailer, comics, background information and the like, which can be downloaded to someone’s personal computer or it is ‘set free’ on another web site¹⁸⁶ - examples of unauthorized textual manifestations in the form of web sites are further discussed in chapter five.

Magazines: Interviews, Reviews and *Devil’s Advocate*

Magazines are subjected to various studies, especially from the feminist perspective. Generally women’s magazines are theorized¹⁸⁷: Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*, 1963) has written a rather classical text on the function of women’s magazines to keep women within their homes, Gaye Tuchman (*Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, 1978) understands the role of women as passive and depends on the man; textual analyses have been done by Linda Steiner (1991), Jacqueline Blix (1992) and Jutta Röser (1992); while studies by Janice Winship (*Inside Women’s Magazines*, 1987), Ros Ballaster et al. (*Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Women’s Magazine*, 1991) and Joke Hermes (*Reading Women’s Magazines*, 1995) focuses on readers’ experiences as well. The last three studies are very important since they offer how magazines

become meaningful in everyday life and what ‘meaning’ signifies in the context of social life. Chapter six offers an elaborated case study in which a gossip item is being dealt with on the basis of magazines and the interaction with readers (or audiences).

For this research I went to bookstores¹⁸⁸ where I spent several hours flipping through various magazines to study the ways Keanu is represented in various interviews, gossip columns and reviews. Therefore, I collected material that varied from gossip, interviews to photo shoots featuring Keanu Reeves. I didn’t only focus on the content and layout of ‘Keanu representations’, but I also looked at the wide variety of magazines he appeared in and how often he was featured (which turned out to be related to the release of a new movie or a Dogstar tour).

A brief summary that characterizes the ways in which Keanu¹⁸⁹ is (re-)presented in interviews: first, quotations or abstracts from one interview or magazine are quoted in another one which leads to ‘mistakes’ and mis-interpretations or representations. For example, a Dutch teen magazine *Hitkrant* (August 1998) writes that Keanu’s astrological sign is ‘Leo’ and on the basis of this information an entire analysis of the Leo is provided by and as outcome ‘what Keanu is supposed to be like’. This false information is later quoted in another Dutch magazine *BreakOut!* Such a small mistake can have serious consequences¹⁹⁰. Second, besides gossip magazines, it is interesting to see in which magazines interviews are printed. Like Huvane has said, the choice for an interview depends on the type of magazine and the movie (in relation to its expected audiences); thus, which magazines are found most suitable to promote the movie or the actor. Third, the approach and content of an interview are represented in similar ways in various magazines. Finally, Keanu Reeves is ‘unique’ in the sense that he is generally represented in terms of his behavior and gestures instead of his words. Next follows the representation of Keanu Reeves in *Premiere* (September 1997, US, and October 1997, UK) which is a movie magazine and appears in several translated versions; Keanu Reeves is interviewed by James Kaplan about *Devil’s Advocate*¹⁹¹. The interview is an example of how interviews are done in general - some characteristics:

A description of the surroundings and conditions for the interview:

“The cool, Spanish-tiled lounge of the [...] isn’t the worst place for a game of chess in L.A. afternoon: Nobody bothers you, even if you’re Keanu Reeves, and the staff, hushed and superb, has a way of materializing with picturesque food at just the right moment. Not that Reeves is interested in food [...]. He is chain-smoking his way through a pack of American Spirits (“I bummed them off a friend— she gave me some supplies”), burning each cigarette down to a barely holdable butt.”

A description of what the person is wearing:

“For a movie star, Reeves has a surprisingly neutral presence. He doesn’t suck all the air out of a room; he hangs back and ponders the options. In his scuffed hiking boots, wrinkled black jeans, black V-neck sweater, and dark gray T-shirt, he might be your brother, home from college for the weekend, or the painter from down the hall, over for a friendly game.”

What the interviewee is doing at the moment:

“He thinks for a few tortured minutes, reaches out his hand – then pulls it back and shakes his head. After a while, he puts his hand out again and moves a pawn. [...] “The game drives me *mad*,” Reeves says. “To unwind, I, you know, *battle* with my computer. That sounds crazy. Unwinding playing chess.”

Short familial background information:

“[Alice] Cooper remembers “a cute little black-haired kid” who used to hang out for hours on end at the recording studio. [...] After splitting from Reeves’s Hawaiian-Chinese dad by the time their son was two, his English mother – who made stage costumes for entertainers – was briefly married to [...]. “He loved sports, loved to play hockey.” [...] It was an intelligence he applied not to school but to acting, which [...] he gravitated to early. “I kind of made the choice when I was around fifteen,” he says. “My mom was, like, ‘An actor?’ But then she said, ‘Whatever you want, it’s okay.’”

Some - supposedly - ‘special’ topics or issues in his life:

“Reeves could easily have passed on the low paycheck, not to mention a picture rife with drugs and homosexuality. [...] Turning down *Speed II: Cruise Control*. [...] and especially after River Phoenix’s drug-related death, in 1993.”

The reporters perspective on the person or interview:

“It’s fun spending time with Keanu Reeves. He’s witty, he’s sweet, he’s genuinely curious and curiously genuine.”

And the ‘actual’¹⁹² interview about a theme, which is here his at that time, current movie *Devil’s Advocate*:

“And then coming to work with him – I mean, I was just really looking forward to it. There were moments where, especially if I didn’t feel comfortable in the scene yet, I would just go, ‘Wow, I’m letting you down. It’s not happening.’ Especially early on in the picture, there was some of that. But then after a while, I think we were good together.” I mention the rumor that Pacino was annoyed at Reeves for fluffing lines. “Yeah, there was one scene that was just really hard for me,” he says. “I think it was when I first meet [Milton]. That might have been the night that my ear was ringing.” Pause. Big smile.”

Devil’s Advocate is also advertised in *Penthouse* (UK, February 1998). The article/interview imitates similar characteristics of the interview in *Premiere*. Some of his films are articulated as ‘pre’ and ‘post’ *Speed*, some as ‘better’ and others as ‘worse’. Though, this article is more profound in terms of dealing with the movie in-depth.

The influence of magazines is shown a few years prior to *Devil’s Advocate*, when another interesting interview (by Michael Shnayerson) appears in *Vanity Fair* in August of 1995. The main question is “Offscreen, just who is Keanu?” It is just a month before the release of *A Walk in the Clouds* but does not really deal with that movie. A few lines from this article/interview are quoted later on over and over again: “I’m Mickey Mouse. They don’t know who’s inside the suit, says Reeves about his fans.” This line appears in a lot of articles and interviews¹⁹³. It’s is what Reeves also says in NBC Europe’s show *V.I.P.* (which is presented by Christina Skepper) that aired January 8, 1998 - Reeves was in December of 1997 in Europe to promote *Devil’s Advocate*. The interview in *Vanity Fair* also

discusses the issue of Keanu's supposed marriage to David Geffen. Reeves' reply was "I've never met the man." In *V.I.P.* Reeves jokes about him being a homosexual: "Well, they still haven't divorced me from David Geffen yet, so I am bigamous now," this as an answer to whether he was married to a certain woman¹⁹⁴; these were just a few examples on how Keanu Reeves is presented in the media, especially by quotations in magazines (and television; see chapter six)¹⁹⁵.

Movie reviews are similar to the structure of interviews. Here is an example of a *Devil's Advocate* review (*Im Auftrag des Teufels*) in *Cinema* (Germany, February 1998)¹⁹⁶, first a short introduction:

Was soll ein Teufel in der Hölle? Der Blick auf die 5th Avenue ist doch viel schöner! Um seine Mission zu erfüllen, tauscht er den Dreizack mit dem Gesetzbuch. Der Teufel trägt Armani-Anzüge und spendet regelmäßig Geld für die Krebshilfe. Seine Hölle liegt nicht unter der Erde, er überblickt sie viel besser von seinem New Yorker Penthouse. Seinen satanischen Krieg führt er mit Vertragsklauseln und Konferenzschaltungen, und wenn er mal vergißt, wie genau die sieben Todsünden lauten: halb so wild – Hauptsache, er verliert den Dow Jones nicht aus dem Blick. [...]

Then, a short introduction of the characters:

Für diese Aufgabe hat sich der Teufel, der für die meisten Menschen John Milton (Al Pacino) heißt, den idealistischen Provinzanwalt Kevin Lomax (Keanu Reeves) ausgesucht. Milton holt Lomax in die große Stadt und verspricht ihm und seiner schönen Frau May Ann (Charlize Theron) ein Leben in Luxus. Daß er dafür die gesamte Menschheit in die Verdammnis stoßen soll, erzählt er ihm nicht. [...]

This is followed by a summary of the plot and a value judgement:

Hackford weiß, daß er einen Teil seines Publikums enttäuscht. Seine Kulissen sehen manchmal aus wie moderne Variationen alter Gemälde von Hieronymus Bosch, seine Dialoge sind zynische Gedankenspiele über Geld und Gottlosigkeit. Und wenn er seinen Teufel Sinatra Songs singen, sich mit Huren vergnügen und Gott mit erstklassigen One-linern lästern läßt – dann werden all diejenigen den Kauf der Eintrittskarte bereuen, welche konventionellen Grusel erwarten. Aber für alle anderen sind die prachtvollen Auftritte von Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves, [...], eine Lehrstunde auf unsere teuflische Gesellschaft.

The two-page review is accompanied by pictures of several scenes from the movie. This review is similar to other reviews, both European and American. An abstract from *Premiere* (FR, February 1998):

L'Associé du diable.

Diable d'avocat. Gainesville, Floride: Kevin Lomax est un jeune avocat qui n'a jamais perdu un seul de ses procès. Après avoir réussi à faire acquitter un pédophile avéré, il est contracté par le directeur d'un grand cabinet à New York. Aveuglé par l'ambition, Lomax accepte et se pique au jeu de défendre des crapules de plus en plus indéfendables. Plus il réussit, plus sa jeune épouse dépérit. [...]

This is followed by a brief plot outline, accompanied by photographs and a (taste) value judgement as well:

Ça commence comme une histoire à succès, très précisément documentée sur le milieu et les méthodes des avocats; [...] Il pourra toujours se rattraper aux branches avec les prestations d'Al Pacino (qui en fait toujours des tonnes, mais, cette fois, c'est justifié) et de Keanu Reeves, solide et consistant, dans son meilleur rôle depuis longtemps.

Most interviews are published without any comments from the interviewee, because the latter does

not get to read it. Therefore, false information is spread every single day and influences the audiences' perspectives on or opinions about a certain someone (see chapter six). Notwithstanding the gossip columns which take care of juicy details of dating perils, pregnancies, adultery, drug and alcohol abuse and the like¹⁹⁷. Thus, Johnny Depp read that he was caught swimming naked in Madonna's pool and was making out with her; Keanu found out that he was married to a man (even some people left messages on his machine to congratulate him) or that he is a 'drug addict' or dating a 'certain woman' (turns out to be his sister); and Tom Cruise's marriage to Nicole Kidman is based on convenience because he is gay and she wants to be "up-graded" as an actress, it also explains the reason why they have adopted their two children¹⁹⁸.

Merchandise

Around the turn of the century Shakespeare films used to be very popular. Uricchio and Pearson (*Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films*, 1993, p. 66) write that "Shakespeare had emerged as a primary component in the consensus-building efforts of institutions of cultural reproduction." Since these early Shakespeare films (1908 to 1913) are very short and quite difficult to understand Uricchio and Pearson theorize how Shakespeare could have been such a phenomenon. They give five reasons, but one towers out the others, that is for this thesis anyway. At that time a huge cultural circulation of Shakespearean texts was noticeable within the broader cultural context. Shakespeare was used to build consensus among the (new) American citizens (ranging from schools to advertising), New York cultural authorities mandated Shakespeare, postcards, statuary, calendars, stereographs and card plays all gave way to Shakespearean quotations and characters.

Now, at the turn of a new century the cultural (re-)production of texts has not changed that much. It may not have the same function anymore as hundred years ago, but cultural commodities are still produced by institutional agencies and individuals. Movies are accompanied by enormous lines of commodities. All films are accompanied by the launch of compact discs, posters, post cards, flyers and others, T-shirts, hats, baseball caps, pens, key chains, calendars (often the actor), photographs (often the actor), stuffed animals, dolls, games boys, laser discs, cd-roms, telephone cards, stamps, map for visiting-cards and so on (see last chapter and appendix).

Not only movies are packaged with commodities, the actor is generally represented in commodity-form as well. Just stroll over Hollywood Boulevard: candid pictures, movie pictures, autographs, calendars, mugs and other images can be bought. Commodities are also offered on the internet, in several specialized magazines, by certain people such as Jim Roup who sells 'Keanu-photographs' (see Eileen Meehan (1991) wrote a very insightful political-economical article on the commodification of the *Batman* movies and Alan Tomlinson (1990) related the consumer culture to the 'aura' of the commodity).

The commodification of both media products and celebrities make for success. However, besides

economical factors commodities contribute to the popularization of a product or person. Commodities are a result of cultural production and perception, of time and place. Indeed, when placed and studied in a cultural context it contributes to an understanding of society: the *Zeitgeist* and the *popular*.

Music: *Dogstar*

Coldness of the earth
 Communications dazzling from underneath societal dirt
 I wandered through your inner veins
 Uttered all these unbearable and inexpressible dreams

Solitude is my experience for life
 It feeds the pit – my dualistic drive

Your soul lasts forever
 Mine will float through time – ever

Silence justifies my spirit and peace
 You are the one that feels at ease
 Sorrowful as I am through decades of time
 Everlasting individual excessiveness, both yours and mine

All what remains
 Are unlighted flames¹⁹⁹

In November of 1997 I met a former Dogstar manager, who took me to my first Dogstar concert in Redondo Beach. The place was not packed but the audience seemed to have a great time. People were dancing and singing along. The audience consisted of a mixed crowd of males and females of thirty-somethings. According to articles in magazines the band used to attract mainly females, ages ranging from girls in their early-teens to older women (the oldest is said to be 74-years old). Reviews used to ‘review’ the crowd and Reeves’ clothing styles, nowadays the music is being reviewed and even praised. I refer to the appendix on Dogstar for a collection of reviews and articles.

In the media bands with actors, singers who turn to acting and models who write books or want to act are often ridiculed. Dogstar is not an exception, especially with two actors in it. Often reporters are more interested in the actors’ careers and motivations to perform on stage than in the actual band and music. As a result the band is, more often than not, advertised on the basis of the face and name of the band’s bass player. Even in 1997 in Redondo Beach, a sign outside said “Tonight Keanu Reeves in Dogstar.” This absolutely doesn’t justify the band’s musical capabilities which they have shown at almost every continent: United States, Europe, Australia, Japan. So far, the band has recorded two compact discs in 1996, respectively *Quattro Formaggi* (which is an enhanced music CD in both the US and Japan²⁰⁰) and *Our Little Visionary*; they are currently recording a new album. The first compact disc is accompanied by a merchandise list: T-shirts, sweaters, caps, posters and stickers can be ordered at the fan club (see appendix). When joining the fan club an ‘official membership

certificate with each of the band members' signatures' plus a free baseball cap and two free stickers are received and quarterly the fan gets 'the Dogstar newsletter'. The enhanced version provides the user with songs, clips and images of some of their tours to various cities. Although, the band has worked hard to promote itself, it has had some difficulties along the way such as bankruptcy of their first record label – as a result their two compact discs were not distributed to record stores. However, the band appeared in several radio and television shows like *The Howard Stern Show*, *David Letterman*, advertised guitar strings, appeared in the movie *Me & Will* (1998) and own an official *Dogstar* web site. As a result the band is promoted intertextually over various media. Since the band is cast by three members who are all known for other activities as well (such as former bands and lyrics of front man Bret Domrose and the acting skills of Rob Mailhouse and Keanu Reeves), the band is promoted on the basis of 'extra-curricular' activities – such as visiting cancer patients (1998), participating in *Wildlife* and benefit song for Kosovo – as well.

In 1997 *Oasis'* album *Be Here Now* was enriched with Johnny Depp's²⁰¹ slide guitar skills on *Fade-In Out* which sprung from friends-jamming-together, but which was used to advertise this album. Just like promoting milk - actors and models with milky moustaches – or Jon Bon Jovi²⁰² who advertised clothing manufactured by Gianni Versace (see appendix), Johnny Depp modelling clothes for Hennes & Mauritz (see appendix) or actors that promote movies. Thus, being active and represented over several media forms means the *discourse* is extended. As a result audiences make meanings based on various sources which makes or breaks a personality, image or band. For instance, it's rather difficult to meet a screen actor, because he can only be watched projected on a screen while band members or stage actors can be watched 'live'. When actors start playing in bands as well, it becomes much easier for audiences to see them: just buy a ticket! This practice leads to both advantages and disadvantages. First, the enlarged intertextuality can be used as a marketing strategy for both movies, merchandise and the band's music. Second, physical intervention with (potential) audiences can cause harm, especially when an already well-known persona mingles with the crowd. Third, audiences in general come with certain expectations, but in practice, I noticed that especially Dogstar audiences cherish specific desires with regard to 'their' band. See the appendix for some 'survival tips' for fans, made by fans (which are at the same time an indicator for the band). Although one of the tips says 'not to have expectations', people especially fans, do have expectations and do get disappointed or angry when those expectations are not fulfilled. In a lot of cases this is expressed on the internet, which will be dealt with in a case study in chapter six. A common but illegal practice at concerts is to bring tape recorders and cameras to take pictures or tape the entire show²⁰³. I have seen material that only shows Keanu Reeves playing bass from chest and up for over one hour or material that shows people waiting after a concert to get an autograph. It is striking that some people instead of wanting to let Dogstar products being signed, bring movie posters and publicity stills – and not to forget, popular body parts that are 'dressed' to be signed. All these products and promotional activities are put into circulation and are literally and figurative met by audiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed several textual manifestations produced by institutional agencies. These texts – on the basis of Keanu Reeves - are bearers or provokers of meanings and pleasures. Above all they are *intertextual*; the actor is a mediated person²⁰⁴ who is intertextually produced by movies, television, magazines, internet, music and merchandise. Thus, the actor is constructed by texts produced by institutional agencies such as directors (characters), publicists (interviews), agents (looking for scripts) and himself (choice²⁰⁵). I tried to emphasize that, besides a text's economical value, texts are cultural indicators for culture is defined as the generator and circulator of texts and meanings within society. Thus, textual manifestations as culture indicate constant processes of production and reproduction and are as such an important factor in social structures. The (re-)production of media products discussed in this chapter provoke meanings that are intertextually circulated. This activity has to be understood as a process or a set of practices. Thus, the actor Keanu Reeves is represented in such ways that he functions as a cultural agent that bears and circulates meanings, expressed through the concept of *discourse* which refers to all forms of language or to a system of social representations and practices that produce and circulate a coherent set of meanings about Keanu Reeves. Thus, like Michel Foucault, I understand the production of knowledge and meanings through discourse. Therefore, texts need to be situated within a *discursive formation* for - Foucault (1977, 1978) has shown in his books on punishment, madness and sexuality - nothing has meaning outside discourses. Thus, madness is not meaningful outside its context or discourses about madness like statements and personifications such as 'the hysterical woman' or 'madman'. Hall (1997, p. 45) writes that "subjects like 'madness', 'punishment' and 'sexuality' only exist meaningfully *within* the discourses about them." Thus, to study the construction of the popular actor is not meaningful outside discourses such as acting, celebrityhood, fandom, the process of filmmaking and marketing, love and hate. The discursive formation of 'Keanu Reeves' is then expressed through the triadic model of production: So far I have discussed the *authorized* production mode – especially, the importance of marketing structures, the publicists, the agent and manager in the process of (self-)promotion through the wide variety of media, which lead to creation of public representations of the actor - in relation to several authorized textual manifestations. The next two chapters then deal with the other mode of production: audiences as textual producers of texts such as books, gossip, reviews, merchandise, fan zines and art. The final chapter offers a few elaborated case studies in which the three modes of production come together and are analyzed in a discursive formation. Knowledge and meaning production on the basis of various (inter-)texts in which the actor is (re-)presented, lead to the production of both the 'enigma of the popular' and contemporary culture.

Mapping Productive Instruments: Audiences

People and Agency

He was BEAT – the root, the soul of Beatific. What was he knowing? He tried all in his power to tell me what he was knowing, and they envied that about me, my position at his side, defending him and drinking him in as they once tried to do. Then they looked at me. What was I, a stranger, doing on the West Coast this fair night? I recoiled from that thought. (p. 195)²⁰⁶

Audiences are often studied as consumers and producers of meaning (of media products) and not so much as producers of both meanings and texts. People are productive agents in the process of media consumption. ‘Agency’ means that people are responsible for and determine their own decisions such as going to a cinema, buying a magazine, wearing a bikini or to be alone or not. There are as many choices as there are products and human beings which complicates audience research. This chapter deals with the question ‘what is an audience anyway?’ from the perspective that audiences are agencies and producers of texts.

Audiences can only be ‘found’ in a mediated form, therefore, mediations have to be studied to unravel what audiences are and what they contribute to the existence of popular (and public) representations of the actor. A nice thought, but it is mere an utopia. The difficulty is that there is no such ‘thing’ as ‘audience(s)’ (see Ang, 1991; Hartley, 1992; Cruz and Lewis, 1994; Nightingale, 1996). Shaun Moores (*Interpreting Audiences: Ethnography of Media*, 1993) observes that there is no stable identity that can be isolated and be identified as ‘the audience’. There is no single object that is ‘there’, ready to be observed and analyzed. As a result audiences²⁰⁷ are often created depending on the type of research: for instance²⁰⁸, effects researchers understand audiences as beneficiaries or victims of media (the effect model), market researchers understand them as actively participants/consumers and decision makers in buying offered products²⁰⁹ (the marketplace model), economist understand audiences as ‘coin of exchange’ (the commodity model), while critical theorists interpret mass media and their audiences generally as ‘low’ and finally, postmodernists see audiences as people refusing meanings or struggling to find meanings so that they are able to give meaning to their environment.

This chapter understands audiences as agents, as *textual producers* which I explained throughout this study. However, this methodological shift calls still into question the conceptualization of ‘audiences’. How can you justify – as an academic – your selection of audiences? What are the most compelling ways of thinking about audiences? What do changes in infrastructures mean for public opinion?²¹⁰ How diverse should and can audiences be? These questions among others, determine audience research. Like John Hartley (1992) I don’t want to turn media audiences in to an organized entity for that is something they are not, but in order to study audiences it seems inevitable. Some researchers use a method of putting an ad in a magazine (Ang, *Watching*

Dallas, 1985), some use companies who make the selection for them (Hermes, *Reading Women's Magazines*, 1995) and others call people randomly. The following section deals with several types of audiences in order to develop a more elaborated and appropriate object of study. Nevertheless, in my opinion the 'ultimate' research method has not been developed yet. My approach is then to seek people that are (more or less) 'there'. In the next chapter these possibilities are discussed. Before I continue I want to mention a few terrific audience studies which the reader should take notice of²¹¹: *The Audience and its Landscape* (1996) attempts to develop new ways to perform audience research just like *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (1991), *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception* (1994) and *Studying Audiences: The Shock of the Real* (1996). Morely's study (*Nationwide*, 1992) offers an insight into the relation and structure of text-message-program regarding possibilities for meaning production with relation to the social background of the reader-recipient-viewer, while Livingstone (1991) discusses the role of the viewer in "retelling" romantic drama.

The Problem with 'Audiences'

The word *audience* has long been familiar as the collective term for the "receivers" in the simple sequential model of the mass communication process (source, channel, message, receiver, effect) that was deployed by pioneers in the field of media research [...]. There is an established discourse in which "audience" simply refers to the readers of, viewers of, listeners to one or other media channel or of this or that type of content or performance. It also designates one branch of the subject matter in the study of mass communication and one main field of empirical research. It is a term that is understood by media practitioners and theorists alike and it has entered into everyday usage, recognized by media users as an unambiguous description of themselves. (p. 1)²¹²

Quite rightly Dennis McQuail (1997, p. 1, 25-26) notices that the usage of the word *audience* beyond everyday usage is extremely complicated and is characterized by various connotations depending on the theoretical framework. Mainly, audiences can be defined and studied as types of *people*, through types of *involved media* and *channels*, through types of *content*, through *time* and *place*. For instance, due to fast changes in both (global) society and technology members of a society become more and more diversified. James Anderson (1989) developed an elaborate study which discerns two general categories of audiences that are, on their turn, divided into more specific types of audiences. The two general classes are on the one hand, formal and on the other hand, empirical audiences²¹³. Formal audiences then, consist of two types of audiences, i.e. the encoded and the analytic audience, while empirical audiences consist of seven types, i.e. transcendent-empirical, aggregate, surrogate, situated, strategic, engaged and emergent audiences²¹⁴. These classifications certainly offer an elaboration regarding the usage of the word 'audience', but they don't embrace all (im-)possibilities. For example, internet technological usage and characteristics require different approaches and attitudes towards internet audiences. Although, the internet is in some ways similar

to other communication forms and information devices, it differs in that the internet has incorporated other communicative forms as well (text, photographs, video and sound extracts can be sent and received). Therefore, internet audiences are both situated and emergent but ask for new classification schemes as well. New media technologies question whether new media go hand in hand with ‘new’ audiences. Thus, do new media address ‘new’ audiences? Or do new media cause a shift in ‘old’ audiences? Or do new media fit within the more traditional categories. Another difficulty with the conceptualization of audience is the question whether it should refer to *methodological strategies* or *goals of research* such as sales, measuring actual potential of advertising, choice behavior and opportunities. Thus, the word *audience*²¹⁵ refers to or is referred to in terms of public, target, participant, spectator, medium, and what all these words have in common is that they express a category with general or specific characteristics in order to identify and construct an ever-floating (otherwise, unknown) social entity²¹⁶ (see Cowell, 1984).

The dichotomy of audience typologies is thus not absolute or ideal and its boundaries cross-over one another. Feasible though, is to study both classifications. I have sought to study both *real* people and so-called *fictitious* people. Real people are individuals of flesh and blood whom I had one-to-one interviews with, fictitious people are individuals who I have never met but I happened to gather information about - i.e. letters written in magazines, web sites and posts on the internet and fan mail – by no means they are fictional in the sense that they are made up and non-existent. The next section deals with texts that are produced by several audience types, not only fans, haters, stalkers or ‘regulars’, but by artists and the like as well.

Producers of Unauthorized Texts

The triadic mode of production theorizes audiences as *unauthorized textual producers*²¹⁷. Producers of meanings and texts are producers of culture for (un-)authorized meanings and texts are culturally reproduced as processes of social signification. Meanings and texts are inherent in a society in search of ‘meaningfulness’. The conceptualization of Gramsci’s *hegemony* - pivotal within the Cultural Studies tradition – explains this process. Terry Eagleton (1991, p. 112) points out that hegemony means “the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates, though Gramsci occasionally uses the term to cover both consent and coercion together.” Thus, hegemony can’t be reduced to ideology rather it includes not only various ideological aspects but cultural, political and economical elements as well. Although, Gramsci’s use of the term hegemony is ambivalent²¹⁸, it is linked to media studies as well. *Hegemony* then, stands for:

A cultural and ideological means whereby the dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the ‘spontaneous consent’ of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups. [...] Gramsci uses the

concept of hegemony to describe the various modes of social control available to the dominant social group. (p. 165-166)²¹⁹

This explanation leads to an understanding of a society where subordinate groups accept and take over the values and norms of the dominant. Roland Barthes (Fiske, 1987, pp. 42-44) has made a point with relation to this form of discursive power through the idea of ‘*exnomination*’²²⁰. Discursive power proceeds from the viewpoint that the domination running society, has the power to shape the world through class differences (hidden power). Dominated forces don’t present themselves as such for, through a general accepted common sense, they are held for reality - taken-for-granted. The process of exnomination represents then the only possibility to achieve the emblem of common sense and taken-for-grantedness. It hides the political origin and as a consequence derivations such as gender and class are not subjected to discourse; the subordinated make sense of their world through the viewpoints and organizations of the dominance. The latter works through ‘*inoculation*’ processes as well, which refers to the process of adapting aspects of the subordinated in the dominant ideology in order to make them less dangerous²²¹.

Although *hegemony* was developed as a means to understand the struggles of power relations, it was adapted by Cultural Studies theorists to explain audiences, making meaning and representations through ‘a struggle for meaning’. Thus, an ideological struggle between dominant groups (who are responsible for the production of media products and content) and subordinated groups (the ‘consumers’, the ‘producers of meanings’ and ‘poachers’). Although, many studies have appeared that theorize audiences no longer as subordinated groups, I want to add that, in my opinion, it is rather doubtful to theorize the popularity of television shows as a means of ideological power. It is more valuable to understand and theorize society through *cultural variety and difference*. Bourdieu (*La Distinction*, 1979) argues that social capital, economic capital and cultural capital differ from person to person. But which does not mean that the ‘have’ and ‘have-nots’ of a certain ‘capital’ are estimated as more important: these are the end of the 1990s, there are so many (sub-)cultures and differences among them, therefore, we must not study ‘the preferred (sub-)culture’, on the contrary we must theorize and appreciate the possibilities and opportunities of (sub-)cultures and (sub-)communities in terms of *variety, difference, correspondence, intertextuality, meaning, and text production* – a trend already set in various academic disciplines.

Culture is a dynamic and multi-textured entity, requiring ‘thick description’, not a set of fixed characters which are used to distinguish the normal from the abnormal. [...] Culture is understood as a material and collective expression of social life. [...] On this model cultural change becomes a complex interaction between contradictory elements which generate change in uneven ways and simultaneously reproduce and innovate patterns. (p. 11)²²²

It is very striking to see that one person in the figure of an actor is able to address simultaneously various cultures and contributes to ‘making meaning and texts’ as a means of cultural signification. In the process, the representations of the actor often become hyperreal and hypersexual which is

dealt with in the next section.

In the theorization of producers of unauthorized texts, an important distinction has to be made: On the one hand, fans, haters and stalkers produce texts and on the other hand artists, writers of unauthorized biographies and the like produce texts. Especially the latter aren't audiences in the traditional sense of the word. They don't attend conventions, see every movie or buy all the gossip magazines. But they do produce texts that are based on or inspired by authorized texts. In chapter five, three sections respectively show a journalist who wrote a biography, several artists inspired by Reeves and an artist/teacher who developed a theoretical course on the films of Keanu Reeves. Nevertheless, the first category of textual producers are fans who are often ridiculed and feared for their fanaticism. They are often misunderstood as the 'Other', which is defined as 'crazy', 'not normal' and 'pathetic' (see Jenson and Grossberg in Lewis, 1992). Being defined as the 'Other' means that you presume on deviant behavior, exercise inappropriate ways of conduct and suffer from low self-esteem²²³. Also, fans are often described as a response to the star system and not from their own perspective, as socially and culturally individuals with their own lives (see Jenkins, 1992). From the institutional side of media production, fans are in general seen as "a pain in the ass," "not important," "not making movies for them," "we look for audiences and that includes fans as well, we do not understand them as an entity on their own."²²⁴ Fans²²⁵ are often criticized for their openly and excessively expressed love for an actor, director or film. Fans are obsessed and simple-minded and differ therefore from people who 'appreciate' art of literature, or better high culture²²⁶ (see Storm, 1996). Another 'characteristic' is that (most) fans get organized²²⁷ – usually initiated by the most active core of fans - in fan communities and take part in fan activities²²⁸. Activities include e.g. gaining knowledge about everything there is to know about ways of communicating within the community – in which I was a total disaster, which probably had everything to do with being a non-fan – gathering information about the idolized figure and look at it over and over again, becoming interactive with institutions of authorized texts and being active on the internet and producing texts (fan art; see next chapter)²²⁹.

Other 'easier-to-find' audiences are haters and stalkers. Haters are very active on the internet and can easily be found through search engines. In general, they are not organized in hate or attack communities – perhaps it is still too early for that – but they often post messages to let others know what they think and feel about 'a certain someone' (see Holtz, 1999). I still haven't figured out why people when they really dislike someone, are so fascinated by that person to even dedicate a (hate) site to him or her. An interesting suggestion for further research. Stalkers are 'there', but not easy accessible. They are usually isolated figures who don't mingle with fans²³⁰. A stalker harasses his or her idolized figure – sometimes without the stalker's knowledge or intention that he or she is doing so – but there is abundant proof of stalking experiences, e.g. Jodie Foster, Selena and more recently, Steven Spielberg²³¹ and Brad Pitt.

Not only fans are thus inspired by an actor by using and producing his image socially, other people have different motivations to produce and contribute to textual manifestations of public figures as well²³². What all these people have in common is that they are – to use Jenkins (1992, p. 24) term - “*textual poachers*.” Poaching refers to active reading practices by readers, listeners and viewers of authorized texts. They are more than consumers of the texts offered by official institutions of media. Michel De Certeau’s explanation of “poaching” leads to a continuous struggle for meaning over (authorized) texts – between writers (institutions) and readers (audiences)²³³. For fans and the like, their productive activities go beyond consumptive activities. Fiske used “*productivity*” to differentiate them from ‘common active audiences’²³⁴. Poaching indicates economic and social differences between institutions and audiences for poaching refers to audiences more as travellers than as writers. Thus, for instance, fans ‘travel’ or use lines from a movie or actor and appropriate them according to their own meaning(s) - a funny story:

A woman approaches Keanu after a Dogstar concert and hands him a fake ear that resembles Dr. Spock’s ear²³⁵. He stares at it and does not know what to do with it. The woman is confused, but explains that “he is always talking about ‘lefties’”. He still does not have a clue. Then, she tells him that because he always stands on the right side of stage and – due to that fact - Bret always has to sing and look to left ears (of the audience). Finally, it drops and Keanu tries on the ear.

This incident shows that a sentence uttered by Dogstar has a life on its own. This usually happens when one interview serves as ‘research material’ for reporters and is quoted in magazines and on the internet, read by many, many people²³⁶.

Poaching is an interesting and useful concept²³⁷, but it doesn’t emphasize enough the importance of productive activities by audiences; that they are more than ‘travellers’. Michel De Certeau (1984, p. 174) describes poachers as travellers who “move accross lands belonging to someone else.” In my opinion, people don’t only use authorized texts as a basis to continue production, but they produce, independently from authorized producers or texts; texts that are culturally meaningful²³⁸. Texts produced by the latter offer an understanding of society, on an everyday basis as well as it answers the question what holds people’s attention²³⁹ or entertains them?²⁴⁰ Like De Certeau and Jenkins, I understand therefore audiences as ‘nomads’. Audiences are never ‘there’ or ‘anywhere’, they are always on the outlook for new things to buy, for new movies to watch, for new musical influences and the combination of the old and the new.

Audiences in general, are hard ‘to find’ – producers of meanings²⁴¹ - it becomes much easier when looking for producers of unauthorized texts – the *receptive production* of texts; thus, producers of both meanings and texts. The consequences of these production activities can be theorized by ‘hyperreality’ and ‘hypersexuality’.

Hyperreality and Hypersexuality

Who do you know when you know Keanu?

Who do you know when you know Shenja?
 “Sometimes you think you know, but then again, you don’t”

Baudrillard’s concept ‘the hyperreal’ refers to an image, a song, an ad that becomes more ‘real’ than ‘reality’²⁴². Not the real person that corresponds with the image leads to the experience, but only the image itself does (see Rodaway, 1995). It includes both ‘reality’ and its representations or the imaginary which, in the end, becomes more powerful than the sum of its components. Most people are aware of the fact that an actor plays a role, but when they run into him they seem to forget that. A popular soap opera in The Netherlands is called *Goede Tijden, Slechte Tijden* (‘Good Times, Bad Times’) and the actors are hailed by their characters’ names. Hypersexuality refers to a sexuality that is more than real; sexuality is magnified and accelerated. Sexuality is to a greater or lesser extent, important in film narratives. Each genre, besides romance, represents some sort of romantic interest on the side of its characters. A lot of studies focus on femininity and the ‘gaze’ – see Laura Mulvey (1975, 1981) and Tessa DeLauretis (1994) and Mary Ann Doane (1982). Women are viewed as ‘objects’ – to be looked at - while the male lead serves as ‘subject’. Although, interesting parts are still unequally divided for actresses and actors, the latter become more and more objectified²⁴³ as well. Masculine sexuality becomes ‘hyper’. Male actors become the female equivalent of ‘bimbo’, i.e. the ‘*himbo*’. The *himbo* signifies big chests and small brains which have become a popular combination for men in the early 1990s. Male model Lucky Vanous shot to stardom in 1994 when he removed his shirt in front of an admiring crowd of female office workers in a Diet Coke commercial. Other (temporarily) *himbos* are Fabio who poses for the covers of romance novels, David Hasselhoff in *Baywatch* and Keanu as Jack Traven in *Speed*.

Actors are represented intertextually which contributes to their status of becoming ‘hyperreal’ and ‘hypersexual’. Both authorized and unauthorized texts lead to a ‘hyper’ presentation of an actor. The actor becomes in Baudrillard’s (*Simulations*, 1983) words a *simulation*. A simulation differs from a representation in that the latter starts from the principle that a sign (the actor as a public figure and as an intertextual form) and the real (the actor as a private person) are equivalent, while the former starts from the utopia of this principle of equivalence. Thus, an image can reflect a basic reality (the actor), it can mask and pervert a basic reality, it can mask the absence of that basic reality and it can bear no relation to any reality. The latter opens the way to simulation. The actor is not a simulation because he will always resemble himself bodily as a private human being. However, the actor can become ‘distorted’ in such ways that he becomes a simulation, thus, the actor as a public figure is not equivalent to the actor as a private person. In general, both institutions and audiences will never have the opportunity to compare the public figure and the private person – if any person – and therefore, all textual manifestations contribute to both representation and simulation of the popular person of the actor. The representations of the actor structure someone’s environment which substitutes its own temporality for the ‘real time’ of the representations and therefore, of processes of cultural signification.

The concepts of hyperreality and hypersexuality call into question issues such as performance and reality, vanishing identity, sincerity and authenticity. Important issues that I will return to in the final conclusion.

Conclusion

A brief illustration of a successful attempt on the side of (internet) fans to ‘rescue western series’²⁴⁴:

The Magnificent Seven can be found at the intersection of the Old West and the new frontier the internet. The CBS series, loosely based on the 1960 movie of the same name, is riding again in part because of viewers who lobbied the network on its behalf. This time it was the mouse, not the gun, that won the Western. [...] It’s impossible to judge the impact (of the campaign) on CBS’ decision to return the show, but from the fans’ point of view it gave us a tremendous feeling of accomplishment, [...].

The fans ‘rescued’ the television series when it fell a prey to dropping ratings. They placed an ad in the trade paper *Daily Variety* (May 1998). It said “Wanted: The Magnificent Seven. Return Winning Show to Viewers.” The advertisement costed about \$1000 but was paid for by at least 100 fans “from across the nation who had linked up via the internet. They and many others already had flooded CBS with e-mail requests for the show’s survival.²⁴⁵” This is just one example where audiences are heard, although more often than not, audiences do have the feeling that they are ‘forgotten about’. Although, their production activities can lead to e.g. the creation of the hyperreal, hypersexual and simulation of the popular. In this chapter I also discussed the difficulties regarding the conceptualization of ‘audiences’. Within various academic traditions audiences have been studied but which differ in approach and focus. For instance, effects researchers study effects (sender-receiver model), view the audience as passive individuals and study popular culture; the Frankfurt School followers study alienation processes, passive audiences (sender-receiver model), focus on groups and high culture; the supporters of the Uses and Gratifications study motivations and differences in terms of needs of audiences; the Cultural Studies followers focus on active audiences, the context and popular culture (with its bases in structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism, critical Marxism and postmodernism); and political economists then view its audiences as passive, focus on the economical structure and put the text in the economical context²⁴⁶. In this thesis I understand all three modes of production, respectively institutional agencies, actor as site and audience agencies as *textual producers*: in the chapters two en three I offered the authorized site of production, while this and the next chapter deal with the unauthorized mode of production – several audience agencies as *textual producers*. These texts can be based on an authorized text, but as it will turn out, unauthorized textual manifestations can also be generated independently from the official representations of the actor (see Jenkins, 1992) or become ‘manipulated’ in such ways it forms a different context and should be studied under these newly produced conditions.

5

Unauthorized Discourse: Textual Manifestations of Several Types of Audiences

I don't want you and I don't need you. Don't bother to resist, I'll beat you. It's not your fault that you're always wrong. The weak ones are there to justify the strong. The beautiful people, the beautiful people. It's all relative to the size of your steeple.²⁴⁷

So far I have discussed the textual production of the popular media figure by institutions and the production mode of several types of audiences. This chapter deals with to the production of texts²⁴⁸ by individual agencies representing the methodological shift in audience research. These texts are used and produced within the private sphere. The private sphere refers to meaning production, individual experiences of media products and to the production of (private) products such as writing a poem and making a drawing (McQuail, 1997, p. 91). However, some texts intersect and overlap the (semi-) public sphere²⁴⁹. For instance, someone who idolizes Reeves and founds a fan club (which eventually can lead to the public sphere), or an artist/teacher who teaches a course on the films of Keanu Reeves but experiences that his semi-public course gets its own life and, as a result, gets many reactions from all over the world. Another example, Keanu appeared in *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (October 1997) to promote *Devil's Advocate* which was set up as a public event. However, during the show Keanu talked about private matters such as his "dinky," "going to the dry-cleaning service" and "eating Snicker's bars." These utterances led to an understanding of both the actor's private sphere and penetrate private spheres of several viewers (see chapter six). As a result, this appearance in the public sphere intersects with both the private sphere of the actor and several viewers and becomes even semi-public, when a fan changed her e-mail signature into "Snickers."

The following sections deal with several textual manifestations such as gossip, fan mail, the fan organization, merchandise, art and education.

Gossip

Gossip has a bad reputation. It is considered a typical women's pastime and is often taken to be highly malicious talk about persons who are not present. (p. 119)²⁵⁰

Gossip is a form of lingual communication that can be verbal and written. Gossip is understood as a means that binds people together (see Geraghty, 1981; Hartley and O'Regan, 1987). It builds interactive relationships among people, and between people and the gossipee. Gossip doesn't mean that people (especially women) are incapable discerning fact from fiction, on the contrary, gossip functions as a desire to understand and personalize issues – to make them relevant – gossip topics can contribute to the solution of personal issues (see Tulloch and Moran, 1986). Gossip has therefore a social use. On every mode of social organizations such as at home, in night clubs, at school and at work, people talk. Meanings and pleasures stemming from gossip are pivotal in the construction of

social relations and in the understanding of social positions and identities within a community. It is a very interesting question to study why audiences like to gossip. Jones (1980) discerns four main types of (feminine) gossip, respectively, house-talk, scandal, bitching and chatting²⁵¹ that are presented in the examples below as well. She also concludes that gossip is often not about the content but about processes of developing and increasing relationships of intimacy. I experienced the ‘relationships of intimacy’ among Keanu Reeves fans when someone addressed my visit at a fan club event.

Anybody that knocks Keanu in any way I want nothing to with. Keanu has brought me nothing but joy and happiness. If I had been there I prob would have thrown her in the ocean. Why don't those people give it up. Like some one posted “if a person is empty inside they try and fill it up by knocking some one else.” And what a great target Keanu is. If they can make him look bad, some one that is overflowing with talent, charisma, good looks, tenderness and a giving nature, boy they have done something (in their eyes). Ok down girl down! I guess I am a bottom line person. What was her bottom line? To cause pain and trouble. What is Keanu's bottom line? To bring pleasure and happiness. End of story²⁵².

This is one example among many (see fan organization as well). The next examples are related to Keanu's haircut or the lack of a haircut, mid 1998. Here are some reactions posted at a Keanu-related web site, ‘The Garden’:

August 7, 1998

Randon reactions to a photo I could not be ready for... I know he didn't want them to take it. But he let them. I want to hug the guy. Will his eyebrow grow back in straight this time? [...]

August 7, 1998

Keanu bald is not a pic I wanted to see first thing before breakfast...what he won't do for the sake of art. But now he looks “GAG” like Grandpa Keanu.... What an eye opener... or should I say stomach opener “gag gag” sorry Keanu, I still love ya though

In response to these posts:

August 8, 1998

You know, I let this go, but the more I thought about it the more ticked I got! Here's a person, who from reports has worked near four days straight to finish a project, then gets on a plane 14+ hours for the states. Charters another plane to fly to North Dakota to keep a scheduled commitment, then appears before a crowd to give a fantastic performance according to reports... and the best you can do is give a Ted Casablanca-type reponse of how his looks affect *you*

He could have said forget it, and stayed put in Sydney till his appearance was back to normal, but he's ok with the image...it's a part of his work. And he kept his word to the Minot event... pretty dedicated I'd say!

If I've offended you I'm sorry, but your comments irritated me.

August 8, 1998

Okay folks, how long will it be before the picture from Sydney (or Minot) hits the tabs? Anyone want to guess about their interpretation [...]? My guess is they'll say 1) he did it because he is such a weird person, or 2) he did it so that he can become a big time rock star (like all those other bald rock stars), or 3) he did it because he's into some kind of weird sexual cult that Ted Casablanca can't go into detail about. (I'm kidding, folks, I'm kidding)

August 8, 1998

Nah.... They'll say he's going for the part of Uncle Fester in the new Addams Family movie! Or "Death" in

"Bill and Ted: 2000?"

On a practical basis, since it's the job of eyebrows to keep sweat out of one's eyes, I'm wondering how he fared under the concert lights. [...]

August 8, 1998

Keanu does not appear to be vain about his looks. As I recall, he talked with some people (children?) who had the same form of cancer his sister had. I'm sure he knows how people, and young people especially, feel when they lose their hair to chemotherapy. I think his lack of interest in how he looks and his willingness to participate as normal in his planned activities sends a clear message to those who have no control over loss of hair. [...]

August 9, 1998

[...] My husband and son both tried the brush cut look this year and I have to tell you, from a mother's perspective, I loved it! It reminded me of my son as a very young infant with his "peach fuzz" and after his new cut, I couldn't stop kissing/cuddling his head (sure death for any 8-year-old boy but I was discreet and didn't do it in public). My hubby commented that I "petted" him a lot but it felt really neat so I couldn't help myself. [...]

This was just the beginning of the circulation about the lack of a haircut. Soon, it was picked up by tabloids who opted reasons such as *The Matrix*, drugs, AIDS, cancer and anorexia. Some people were really concerned and wanted to "meet with his mother" in order to set up a plan to help and "save Keanu."²⁵³ Other gossip topics include for instance, the question whether a certain person is befriended with Reeves or not (see appendix), who he is dating, his health, movie projects and Dogstar concerts²⁵⁴. Textual gossip is interwoven with verbal gossip; they can often be interchanged. For instance, during the shooting of *The Matrix* 'insiders' linked Reeves to his female co-star. Its official circulation started when they both were at a party. Pictures appeared in several newspapers and circulated on the internet. However, on the 'other side', some fans picked it up as well 'via via...' and discussed whether it was true or not and if they would still like Reeves if he would get married one day; nevertheless it was soon denied by a 'Reeves insider' who stated in a newsgroup that "nothing about that rumor is true [...]." It gets more complicated because another 'insider' mentioned in a private conversation that he would not be surprised if Reeves and his co-star would like each other, "but I can't say anything more." This gossip and its 'outcomes' went back and forth both in the tabloids, on the internet and in privately held conversations. Thus, the rumor started at both sides and 'lived' in the margins for a while. At a Dogstar show in Los Angeles (1998) the rumor was blazed up again when someone "saw her dancing and having a good time; Keanu looked really happy, she makes him happy."²⁵⁵ This person talked initially to a couple of friends about her LA trip, including these words, and about two weeks later it was posted on the internet and became semi-public again. This makes gossip a great example for it shows the overlapping public, semi-public and private discourses. Thus, both authorized²⁵⁶ magazines such as *Hello!*, *National Enquirer* and gossip shows such as *E!* and unauthorized gossip practices such as newsletters, zines, email, sites, newsgroups, 'script writing' contribute to the rise, circulation and fall of a public person (see Jenkins, 1992; Hermes, 1995).

Gossip – besides its function as a source of power in the female discourse, that is, the ability to transform public issues into issues of personal interest or significance²⁵⁷ - is active at all modes of production and together, authorized and unauthorized gossip are powerful and can sheer or hurt people.

The final chapter offers a case study that focuses on the circulation of ‘information’ or ‘gossip’ regarding both the participants of gossip and meaning/text production and the dealing of the subject with the gossip.

Fan Mail

Several fan letters addressed to Keanu Reeves are enclosed in the appendix²⁵⁸. They are written between July 1997 and July 1998 and stem from all over the world. Although, I’m not aware of academic fan mail studies, it isn’t my purpose to offer analyses and theory concerning the private content of the letters for that goes beyond the intention of this study. Nevertheless, the content and layout show some striking resemblances which lend themselves for further research.

I have studied 52 letters addressed to Keanu Reeves and 14 letters that were addressed to Bret Domrose and Rob Mailhouse. An important remark is that the concept of ‘fan mail’ isn’t the proper term for not all letters are written by fans. Probably 65 to 75 percent of the letters are written by fans, but other letters show content that express the need to share a life story, money requests and fulfilling someone’s last wish, school assignments and hatred. Fan letters range from simple admiration to marriage proposals, while others express the joy someone has experienced during the actor’s film(s) and want to thank the actor or wish him a happy birthday or Merry Christmas. The Dogstar letters indicate several ambitious aspirations: poems, film scripts, lyrics, a demo and the like are sent to the band in the hope ‘they will do something with it’. Besides ambitious letters, others resemble the content of Reeves’ mail such as sexual fantasies, pleasure and joy, anger – especially, when this is ‘letter number seven’ and the author never got a response – and love.

The studied letters in the appendix offer some interesting aspects that should be subjected to further exploration. For instance, they show differences in terms of theme, intention or purpose of letter, use of language and origin of language (some letters are written in e.g. German, Italian, Spanish) handwriting/typology, layout/decoration, size, self-made art/presents/pictures, and the like. Other categories are the author’s background – such as age, gender and marital status - address – not everyone puts down her or his address – country and mode of reception/audience membership or background. All these categories can be analyzed and contribute to a cultural and textual study after meaning and textual production from the receivers’ side. It also offers an insight into the phenomenon of fandom and fan culture, which are dealt with in the next section.

Just like gossip, fan letters belong to the private discourse for the letter is not spread publicly and is directed towards one person; however, with the exception of published letters such as the letters in

this study that ‘turn’ the letters into the semi-public sphere of textual production.

It is a common thought that fans are active in the margins (see Lewis, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Storm, 1996); they often found a fan organization or community which is often a slow progress and is initiated by one or two individuals who get organized. The fan community is a great example for it shows the triadic interaction among the private, semi-public and public sphere. Fan clubs are often semi-public, that is, they exist but are not emphasized upon by society. There is abundant proof that these groups can become subjected to public discourses. For instance, when a popular soap opera is taken off the air (*Dallas*, *Melrose Place*) or when a boy band splits up (*New Kids on the Block*, *Take That*), a horde of fans mount the public platform when sending letters to the networks does not serve their goal (see Liebes and Katz, 1990; Brower, 1992). This site between fans and institutions however, should be further studied; especially, in terms of textual production. The next section deals then, from a self-reflexive perspective, with a Keanu Reeves fan club based in Vermont (US) in order to explore the fan community and its textual production activities.

Fan Club

There are a couple of fan clubs that honor the actor Keanu Reeves. The first name that loomed up in *Movieline* was *Zero Distortion*, based in Vermont (US). I contacted the president of this fan club who was very understanding of my research and invited me to a “*KeanuFest*.” I had no idea what that meant, but since I was in New York anyway I decided to go to meet with ‘real time’ fans, that is, other fans than those who are presented at various web sites on the internet or the ones who write fan mail and letters to magazines.

KeanuFest ’98 was held in Cape May (New Jersey) from June 21 to 27, 1998. I stayed for three days²⁵⁹, and met 15 women. My situation²⁶⁰ can be compared to Ellen Seiter’s who wrote an article about her “troubling interview” (1990). Seiter offers a comprehensive discussion about the politics of audience studies and the self-reflexive researcher. She writes that “cultural studies must focus on the differences in class and cultural capital which typify the relationship between the academic and the subject of audience studies (p. 61).” She studied television soap operas and interviewed several people who watched soap operas. Her article is interesting for it, among other topics, focuses on the interviewees’ reactions to the (academic) interviewers and the power differential between the interviewees and the (academic) interviewers in terms of class. Although, her approach distracts the attention from the emphasis of fans as producers of unauthorized texts, I want to include my experience of being an academic researcher who had a hard time dealing with several fans. Seiter writes that the “interview made me personally uncomfortable, because of my age and my gender, and because of my status as an academic (p. 62).” She continues by referring to the ‘touchy’ subject of watching television which can be compared to the ‘touchy’ subject of being a Keanu Reeves fan. The combination of my presence at KeanuFest as an academic, not a fan, several years younger and as a

foreigner contributed to a disturbing situation, which I will briefly address and which leads to a discussion about methodology – but which goes beyond the content of this study.

My position as a researcher

When Henry Jenkins (*Star Trek*) and Martine Storm (*Pulp Fiction*) studied fans, they both identified themselves as fans. When I started out I hardly knew anything about Keanu Reeves as an actor²⁶¹. At KeanuFest I wanted to talk²⁶² to the fans about their fascination for the actor and their production activities. However, the fans felt very uneasy to do so. As one woman explained “it is very personal and I would rather not have someone else to read it, especially if Keanu is going to read it one day.” Another woman explained that in 1995 a woman came in the fan community and pretended she was a fan. She turned out to be a reporter who wrote a story about Keanu Reeves fans (see appendix); therefore, I wasn’t to be trusted which was also related to my appearance, age and class. Especially, my finances were being questioned that I paid for all my travelling and other expenses and my relationship with anyone related to the actor. Several women asked me questions about Keanu such as “why does he cut his pants?” This question and others put me in an awkward position: first, suggesting that I know the actor I would never answer any questions for privacy reasons; second, if I would answer a less personal question and it didn’t fit their answers, it collided with my position as an academic. As someone explained to me “you have access to them [Keanu, his agent, manager, Dogstar] so you know these things, plus you study them so you ask them these sorts of questions, because those are the questions we would ask.” It was my position ‘to know’. At the same time, my knowledge was feared or reacted against²⁶³, because to some people, academic knowledge is highly estimated or seen as the ‘truth’. So, my position was to ‘know’ and ‘correct their explanations of and feelings about’ Keanu²⁶⁴. The consequence of this ‘troubled’ experience is that it questions our position as an academic researcher and raises methodological questions. For instance, I gathered a lot of interesting material about fans and fandom, however, material that isn’t particularly related to the subject of this study but questions – in this case ‘my’ – audience research.

Some correspondence afterwards²⁶⁵

Well, few people I know can swoop into a group and make the impact you did this week at KeanuFest. We were still talking about it when we had our dead-dog party on Friday night.

I was not the only one who felt a bit disillusioned, since the author of this letter writes:

I feel in an awkward position. As co-organizer of KeanuFest, I feel a responsibility to both you and the participants. However, since I had no contact with you prior to the Fest, I feel it is [...] domain to represent Kfest when contacting you. [...]

The author gives me some ‘insights’ into the situation at *KeanuFest*:

First, on hindsight, I think the whole issue of credibility could have been more effectively dealt with [...]

But since we are all new at this type of thing, who knew? I also feel that there are some people who will make up their minds that magical things don't happen, that fate and destiny don't impact on our lives, [...]. Second, I want you to know that many participants were skeptical by the end of the week, or maybe the proper word is "confused." I think this surprised [...] because she trusts you and believes in you wholeheartedly.

As a result:

What I am trying to say here is this: there is a lot of resistance to participating in your study from this group. [...] Finally, I wanted you to know that I appreciated your honesty and openness with us.

Another participant writes:

[...] they were really rude to you. Two things come to mind – well, OK three – 1) you are young, pretty, very intelligent and doing exactly what you want with your life (and you seem to know what you want to do with your life) and they might MIGHT find that threatening [...]

Someone else writes:

I left Keanu Fest early because of all the rampant paranoia and back bitching that was going on. They are convinced you're some sinister agent out to do some expose' on them personally or some ridiculous drivel. [...] They were suspicious of how you were able to do all this travelling. Who was paying for it etc, etc. I asked them if they were so worried why didn't they ask you these things themselves and they gave the lame answer that you left too soon.

Another participant's²⁶⁶ interpretation can be found in the appendix for the letter is quite long, but explains, from a very personal perspective, what it means to be a fan as well²⁶⁷. It is similar to stories by other fans and studies by academics such as Lisa A. Lewis, Ien Ang, Camille Bacon-Smith, Henry Jenkins, Stephen Hinerman and Lawrence Grossberg - nevertheless, academics cannot seem to come to an unequivocal definition of the concept. This letter and other letters and emails²⁶⁸ I received from fans (even from people that I have never met, but who threatened me anyway) contribute to signifying processes of fandom. Fans write, from their own cultural context, how and why they have become a fan and what it means to them and their environment. This is of great academic value since, as I wrote earlier, the literature on fandom as a social and cultural phenomenon is relatively sparse and what has been written, views the fan as a product of or response to the star system. The methodology of studying letters²⁶⁹ is developed by Ien Ang who analyzed letters written by people who 'loved' *Dallas*. She noticed that these letters addressed the author's environment in terms of feelings of 'embarrassment' and 'shame' towards friends, colleagues and the like²⁷⁰ (see also Jenson, 1992) both the letters and the newsletter on fandom in the appendix, express such content. Therefore Ang can be used as a hand in order to theorize these letters and their signification concerning fandom. The following section deals briefly with the fan community *an sich*.

The fan community

Fan cultures are communities that arise in the margins of society (Storm, 1996), but with similar organizational structures. One person or a small group of people rule the top of the hierarchy and inform everyone at the bottom-end. There are also people who 'have knowledge', which means that

they have the latest ‘ins and outs’ on the actor such as where he is, who he sleeps with and what he bought last Tuesday at *Farmer’s Market*. As Keanu suggested himself “it is probably about getting organized.” The internet is a medium which has had a great influence in the development of information processing-technologies. Some sites are valued as more ‘valid’ and ‘true’ than others, chat rooms are frequently visited, there are several newsgroups and a site where you need a password in order to get access to it. An advantage for so-called ‘sources’ is that fans are connected with fans, ‘friends’ or people Keanu works or hangs out with, that provide the latest information and gossip. People who have proven to be most accurate on the latest topics, are highly estimated. As a result they get ‘the power’ (“*Big Names*”) over others (“*Less Knowledgeables*”) and land at the top of the hierarchy (see Marsh et al., 1997). It is like being a celebrity within the small community: everyone knows you and want to talk to you privately. There are also ‘rules’, for instance a young girl (‘Neo’, 19 years old) was posting in *Keanuvillage* a message that Keanu was not getting enough mail. Someone replies that “she does not understand the discussion. We do not really talk about Keanu anymore.²⁷¹” It started out as people who talk about the actor, but when they got to know one another (that is, virtual) they talked about kids, dying hair and so on. “There are also people surfing the net that pretend they are Keanu or know Keanu and they are being ‘thrown out’ the chat room.²⁷²”

So far, I have discussed the troubled position of the academic by describing my experiences and findings during *KeanuFest*, all that is left are some examples of activities that were organized during the event. The first one is “Keanu Chat,” the second “Pictures on the Wall,” third, “Keanuology” and finally some pictures taken during the event which can be found in the appendix. It offers productive activities by fans. Fiske (1989) has referred to fans as *excessive* readers for “being a fan involves active, enthusiastic, partisan, participatory engagement with the text.” He continues his argument by saying that fans are producers of their own texts; “such texts may be the walls of teenagers’ bedrooms, the way they dress,” however productivity often goes beyond the authorized texts (see Hebdige, 1979; Jenkins, 1988). Fiske argues that productivity is typical to subordinated groups “who have no or limited access to the means of producing cultural resources” and exactly this is what I call into question: Fans and other producers of unauthorized texts should not be theorized as subordinated groups for reasons that I have given way to in chapter one and four.

The next section discusses the productivity of internet users in the construction of the popular actor.

Fan Sites, Hate Sites, Chat Rooms and Message Boards

The web sites that are studied are frequently²⁷³ ‘visited’ in the period from June 1997 to January 1999. There is a site which is called ‘The Keanu Reeves Ring of Fire’ and connects over 30

homepages. “The Ring of Fire joins cool Keanu sites from around the world” such as ‘Indi’s Cool Page AKA Keanu Reeves’, ‘Keanu Reeves Rainbow Page’, ‘Valerie the Vamp’s Web Lair’, ‘KeanuMania’, ‘The Dancing Tiki KEANU Worship Page’, ‘Donna’s Keanu Reeves Page!’, ‘The Keanu Forever Homepage’, ‘Lily’s Brad and Keanu Page’, ‘The Wacky World of Keanu Reeves’, ‘Keanu International’ (which is from the UK fan club), ‘Karen’s Hollywood Dreams, Featuring the Most Excellent Keanu Reeves’, ‘Why Be Normal?: Keanu Reeves’, ‘Dogstar Tour ‘97 – Charlotte, NC’, ‘Shirley’s Ravishing Reeves Review’, ‘The tunnel that leads to the Devil’s Advocate homepage’, ‘Keanu Reeves Unofficial Site’, ‘Cloudwalker’s Keanu Heaven’, ‘Emily’s Keanu Corner’, ‘The little path that leads to Norwegian Wood’, ‘ALL KEANU’, ‘Reeves Drive’, ‘HeAtHeR’s PaGe of KEANU & stuff...’, ‘Babygirl’s Funky Dreamland’, ‘Keanu Reeves Pic of the Day Club’, ‘Picture Club Instant Replays’, ‘Keanurama’, ‘Chateau Ke’, ‘The Galaxy of Keanu Reeves’, ‘KeanuNet’, ‘Keanu Pictures’, and ‘John Jendro’s Keanu Page’.

All these sites – and many, many more – are dedicated to Keanu Reeves. They are made by fans for fans. Although, some distinctions have to be made. First, the sites can be categorized according to their content; second, a distinction can be made in terms of the function or aim of the site; and third, sites can be divided into personal and semi-public ones. Characteristics of homepages are a (nick) name, interests, pictures, sound clips, feedback possibility, message boards and links. Fan pages don’t differ much from non-fan pages, only in the dedication of the site to someone or something they admire. Pictures, clips, links, stories, magazine content, ‘TV alert’ and postings are about and for the idolized figure. A distinction can be made between personal or private sites and semi-public ones. Although, the internet is accessible for anyone not all sites and subjects fall under the user’s interest and will therefore never be purposely visited by the user²⁷⁴. However, some sites can only be visited and partaken in by a password such as the Keanu-related site *The Garden*. Thus, although the internet is a public medium, it is not always acted upon in such ways. At the same time, some personal sites can be discerned in terms of their ‘privacy’, for their content solely serves the owner’s interests and desires²⁷⁵. Private pages can be explained as ‘for one’s own enjoyment or pleasure’. Barthes (*The Pleasure of the Text*, 1975) explains the twofold notion of pleasure²⁷⁶ by using the concepts of *plaisir* and *jouissance*. These two types of pleasure are produced in the reading of the text, but it can also be argued that pleasure derives from the production of one’s own personal text. The former type of pleasure refers to culture, it’s a pleasure that’s essentially cultural confirming and therefore it provides a sense of identity as well (see also Hermes, 1999). *Jouissance* gives way to bodily pleasure, which is experienced through sensuality. It is generated by physical signifiers of the text. In this case, for instance a photograph of Keanu Reeves or a sound clip of his voice is put on someone’s site and is mold in or given way to in a process of receptive production. The body of the text is, as Fiske puts it, “responded to by the body of the reader.²⁷⁷” The status of a fan cannot and may not solely be explained through the articulation of bodily pleasures, namely in terms of sex (appeal) or appearance. But more often than not, looks underlie – for the most part – why someone is (dis)liked²⁷⁸. Not only

pleasure is derived from the creation of one's own personal site, various personal sites have another function as well. These sites are called semi-public for they, besides fulfil the creator's own desire or pleasure, offer information with a view to other users who are interested in the actor. The site does not only express that someone likes an actor, but it also encourages to address issues such as 'why do we like Keanu?', 'do we still like him when he gets married or when he turns out to be gay after all?'²⁷⁹.

Information put on the sites is derived from (short) stories that appear in magazines, other web sites, on television and the like. Also personal pictures taken of the actor on the streets in LA or at a Dogstar show are put on the net, accompanied by a description of the situation or 'review' of what he was like (often in relation to what they think he was like) or a review of the concert and who was there as well – which includes fellow fans, potential girlfriend(s) and what she was doing during the concert²⁸⁰.

Not only homepages contribute to the construction and idolization of the actor, message boards, newsgroups and chat rooms function in similar ways. A virtual message board functions as site or as an outlet where people can put up messages about the actor or anything else that keeps them busy. Newsgroups function in a similar way, it is accessibly to everyone when the user subscribes to a newsgroup and can visit the group as often as is preferred and read the various articles that are posted to this newsgroup or post himself an article in reply to one of the articles in the group. A chat room is a virtual space where the visitor can drop lines (and read the last ones) immediately and have 'live' conversations with instant reply²⁸¹ (see also Holtz, 1999).

The internet is also a very powerful tool in the condemnation of media figures. Not all web sites, rooms or groups express an attitude towards fandom or idolizing people. Often, they function as an outlet for hatred and criticism²⁸². For instance, in the period between August 1996 and September 1998, messages were posted about Keanu "being gay" ("homosexuality is bad"), *Keanu Reeves.... A phenomenal?? Yukes!* which can be found in the appendix. I have enclosed a copy of a site that is called *Mr. T vs. Keanu Reeves*. It is an 'against the grain' product that spun from a creative mind. The pictures show the actors Mr. T (*The A-Team*) and Keanu Reeves; the former 'kicks the latter's butt' by throwing him 'in a place where no one will ever see him again'. As a result Mr. T 'steals' Reeves' parts in movies that Reeves 'wanted so badly'. This is not as much an example of hate or attack site, but it is actually a (cynical) joke that makes fun of both Mr. T and Keanu Reeves in a non-serious manner. Some of the other examples express a quality value of the acting skills of the actor, which rather 'attack' the actor than that they are forms of hate. Only a few express pure 'hatred' towards the actor. Especially, the one where Keanu is hated because he is born in Beirut and therefore "he must be a child rapist" grounds in racism²⁸³.

Web sites dedicated to celebrities on the internet display characteristics *resembling* everyday life fan

communities and can be studied as such, thus according to Cultural Studies methods regarding the interaction between the situated text and the situated reader or user - external context, temporal structure, group purposes and participants characteristics of newsgroups, chat rooms, owners of sites and the like (see Storm, 1996; Holtz 1999); these sites display also characteristics *distinct* from everyday life fan communities such as forms of expression, identity, relationships and behavioral norms (see Storm, 1996; Holtz, 1999). The latter method is internet-specific, but audience research can be conducted by a so-called ‘computer-mediated observation method’. Which is initiated by monitoring certain groups and sites that are active on the internet. The latter raises ethical questions in terms of methodology for internet studies that should be studied precisely, but so far no such studies have been done. However, certain characteristics of the internet don’t (generally) contribute to ‘openness’ and ‘honesty’; for instance, people often use ‘secret names’ and behave in such ways they would never dare in real life which increases unreliability of subjects and outcomes of study. Other difficulties that troubles audience research on the internet are losing track of a coherent topic of discussion and losing valuable information and sources due to ‘cleaning out’ message boards, expired links, measurement of reliability of a site or offered information and ‘finding audiences’. The internet is a valuable source for information and can become of great importance in the study of audiences, but first several studies have to be undertaken before this medium can become an important tool in audience research and a show case for the production of both authorized and unauthorized textual manifestations.

The next section focuses on unauthorized commodities that can be ordered on the internet, in stores and the like – though, the authorized institutions don’t see a penny.

Unofficial Commodities

Several Keanu-related commodities are sold in stores, on the internet or simply by ‘insiders’. These products are not authorized, for they aren’t produced by studios, or people Keanu works with. However, people make money out of these Keanu-content commodities and therefore, these products are expressions of productivity in the form of textual manifestations. Some of these products are available in big stocks while others in singled pieces only. For example²⁸⁴, several books are dedicated to Keanu Reeves or mention his name but which never received Keanu’s or his representatives’ cooperation. These products contribute to the ‘extension’ of the intertextuality of the actor and need to be studied as such, namely as textual manifestations of unauthorized productivity by (general) audiences. Several biographies have been written about Keanu Reeves: David Bassom’s *Keanu Reeves: An Illustrated Story* (UK, 1996), Chris Nickson’s *Keanu Reeves: Everything you ever Wanted to Know about Keanu* (US, 1996), Brian J. Robb’s *Keanu Reeves: An Excellent Adventure* (UK, 1997) and Sheila Johnston’s *Keanu* (UK, 1996). Johnston²⁸⁵ explains why she wrote this biography, “I was approached by my publisher to write a book on Keanu - just after *Speed*.” She was familiar with

Keanu's films and especially liked *My Own Private Idaho*. Johnston met him during a press conference for *Much Ado About Nothing*. The information in her book indicates an 'interwoven' approach of several sources of information from both the 'authorized' (directors, crew members, interviews various magazines, libraries. For instance, some things she had to leave out, for instance, "the lawyers of the publishing company did not want to have things in it with regard to Keanu's drug use, that he was (or still is) addicted to heroine. And not too much on the gay issue") and 'unauthorized' side ('friends', stepfather, people who had Keanu-encounters. For instance, she got several responses "but less than ten." She has also done an interview with Sylvie McCann from *Zero Distortion*, which is published in the fan clubs monthly newsletter²⁸⁶).

Other books that mention or are about Keanu include Penny Stempel's *They Died Too Young: River Phoenix* (UK, 1995), Corel Amdende's *Hollywood Confidential: An Inside Look at the Public Careers and Private Lives of the Hollywood's Rich and Famous* (US, 1997), Greg Gorman's *Inside Life* (US, 1997), George Seminara's *Mug Shots: Celebrities Under Arrest* (US, 1996), *Keanu Reeves Tear-Out Photobook* (1994), *Keanu Reeves* (Japan), *Keanu Reeves, Christian Slater, Johnny Depp* (Japan), *Keanu Reeves & 7 Rebels* (Japan), *Movie Star Now II (male)* (Japan), Bronwen Burke's *Who's Hot: Keanu Reeves* (US, 1992) and Karen Hardy's and Kevin Koffler's *The New Breed* (US, 1988). There is also a magazine called *Biography: Hollywood's Hottest Hunks* (US, 1997) which include Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas, Keanu Reeves and George Clooney as well. And again, fans or 'people who have a special interest in the actor' contribute to the collection of information – Sylvia McCann shows some of her Keanu material and "fact-checked our Keanu section and gave it the thumbs up, which is high praise coming from the woman who knows everything you ever wanted to know about Keanu." Finally, a beginning film director writes Bret Domrose a letter (1998) for she wants to use one *Dogstar's* songs:

About a year ago, I wrote you a letter and mentioned wanting to use the song "The History Light" in a short film of mine. Sleep turned out to be a pivotal issue in the film and the song would be perfect, so I'm still interested in using it. Enclosed is the script for the short and some information about myself and the crew. If you like the idea and using the song is a possibility, please let me know. [...]

Last year I spent some time in the United Kingdom where – in a shop in a back alley - I found several unofficial Keanu Reeves commodities such as a non-copyrighted key chain, a mug that barely resembled Keanu, scary stickers and an unauthorized calendar (printed in Italy). So, not all products are produced by fans, although, their products are often innovative. I met a girl who sells – "just to pay for the materials" - Keanu Reeves 'wall paper' but which is in fact a poster designed by her; a woman who 'draws Keanu Reeves' was approached by an anonymous person to sell a drawing on Reeves' sister; a man who takes photographs ("snap-shots") of the actor and sells them over the internet to fans and other interested people; a man who designs Keanu-related birthday cards that can be bought over the internet ("just to for material" as well); video tapes can be bought over the internet as well with 'Keanu walking around in LA', 'Keanu knocks on a door', 'Keanu drives the

car’, ‘Keanu at a Dogstar concert’ – and that when it is prohibited to tape the show or take photographs - ‘Keanu before and after the concert’, and so on. Indeed, stalking tapes; and a Los Angeles fortune-teller shows you on a ‘special card’ (\$5) that you are going to meet and marry Keanu Reeves within five years. Well, that is nice, isn’t it?! At least you may keep that ‘special card’ with his - beautifully handwritten – name on it.

Art

In 1937 Piet Mondrian²⁸⁷ wrote that the future would no longer bring paintings on walls, but paintings would live in realized art. Domestic life would have become art. Human beings would live in art. Mondrian’s imagination has become reality. Pieces of art, ranging from paintings, computer graphics to sculptures, can be bought ‘outside’ the world of art: T-shirts, post cards, bed sheets, toilet paper, pens, and the like are (replicated) art images. Images also stem from the entertainment world that reach out to almost every element of domestic life through magazines, television and computers. Although, the controversy continues whether popular culture can be considered art works - the struggle between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art (see Adorno, 1991; Horkheimer, 1973) - here I define art as a means of a creative mind or personality and can therefore range from writing, painting to acting, directing and singing.

Keith Mayerson is a well-known artist who has incorporated Keanu Reeves in some of his works. Mayerson made a collection of small drawings which are called ‘*Pinocchio the Big Fag*’ (around 1992 or 1993), and Keanu Reeves resembles, in this little universe, the image of reflection of Pinocchio²⁸⁸. The style is done as a 19th century illustration. Mayerson made a book as well, together with Dennis Cooper, which is called ‘*Horror Hospital Unplugged: Graphic Novel*’²⁸⁹. This graphic novel (comic strip) is about a rock ‘n’ roll band and Keanu appears in it as well.

The use of computer graphics has caused a true revolution. A portrait of a celebrity is multiplied and produced in different colors, for instance Tom Cruise and Marilyn Monroe. Recently, Robert Silvers created a photo-mosaic of princess Diana²⁹⁰. It exists of eight hundred ‘pieces of flowers’. It is reprinted on posters that are sold²⁹¹. These are just a few examples of works of art. Although, art is often difficult to find, the internet offers modes of artistic productivity as well. I found several ‘coloring books’ with Keanu-images, songs, poetry, stories, drawings, paintings, interactive games offered by both fans and non-fans (such as by Ahmet Gorgun who made a drawing of *Chain Reaction*) which can be found in the appendix²⁹². For instance, the web site *KeanuVille* sells ‘funny’ products: ‘the Keanuville Magic Goggles’ with which you can see Keanu naked, ‘the Keanuville “naked Keanu” Light Switches’ which is, indeed, a light switch with a half-naked Keanu on it, or ‘Keanu’s Ketchup Chunky Style’. All these products can be ordered and one can join the ‘Keanuteers’ who have their own song, accompanied by some instructions (“Tune of the Mickey Mouse Club Song²⁹³”).

Other items – that I am aware of - that are self-made and exchanged or sold are decorated mugs, tote-

bags, pictures, T-shirts, self-composed films, a computer adapted picture and sketch where Keanu's face was split into one Asian and one more British counterpart, zines, door-mat, picture frames, a decorated ventilator, posters, pictograms, crossword puzzles, a calendar with aphorisms and jewelry. A friend of mine told me that a computer engineer has developed a computer game where you can kick Keanu, which he plays with his colleagues during lunch breaks. I wrote in the last section that illegal tapes are made, which – despite stalking tendencies – are a form of art as well: seeing only Keanu's torso for about 45 minutes at a Dogstar show 'with editorial interruptions'. Thus, just short pieces of songs with the same Keanu image. It also shows edited scenes of Keanu hanging out in LA, stepping in and out his car, his mother, friends and the like accompanied by comments (and sometimes Dogstar music). On the internet are also a couple of interactive games, such as "KeanuLand" where the participant has to answer questions, gets fragments and moves along the game. I don't know how it ends for I fail to answer most questions.

Education

In a spring course of 1994 Stephen Prina²⁹⁴ taught a course at *The Art Center College of Design* (see appendix for course outline). There were about fifteen students with a maximum of twenty students. The semester on Reeves was a fourteen-week class. And the students had to write a research paper (10-12 pages) in which they could focus on anything, but he urged them to respond to something which was dealt with in the class (a film, writings, et cetera). This course "the films of Keanu Reeves" is subjected to both a semi-public²⁹⁵ and public discourse which is explained during the conversation I had with Stephen Prina who explained that the course was set up as every other regular course – "because it was just a regular course" – however "this class became a highly public one" for it attracted attention nationwide and even abroad.

In 1990 Prina started thinking if there was a way to do a course on contemporary film. "And I thought about the film *River's Edge*. But I didn't want to 'do' my own favorite films. I was kinda following Keanu's movies for a while and I thought they had something quite distinct about them²⁹⁶. Which was not replicated by someone like River Phoenix or Johnny Depp, although they may be considered as better actors, it is not that I am interested in acting capabilities of the actor." The course was an interchange of Foucault and teen magazines, Barthes, and so on²⁹⁷ "and Keanu was used as a hand." Guest speakers were invited who stemmed from both the entertainment business and the world of art²⁹⁸.

The last day of the course included a journalist and a photographer of *People's Magazine*, a full TV-crew of *City TV* in Toronto and *MTV news*. They outnumbered the students in the class. "One of the students was really prepared for them, she wore her baby-blue leather motor cycle jacket, her punk-rocker tee-shirt. And her first question was "Steve, why are all these people here. They were not

there when we talked about ... and his films are way more complicated to see?" Of course, this did not make it on *MTV*. But what made it to *MTV* was Keith Mayerson who didn't follow this course." Prina never expected that the course would get much of attention. "*NY Magazine* was doing a special on Hollywood and a friend of me knows someone at this magazine. She is in the film industry and they contacted each other (she works now at *Fox*). She called this person (editor) and that person wanted to talk with me. So, I was in a little column 'talk of the town'. Every journalist in the United States - and probably abroad as well - reads this magazine, but I did not know that. So, I got calls from everywhere. And when someone in Los Angeles wrote about it, it was probably picked up by the associated press such as Toronto, Sydney, South-Africa, London, and so on."

He also got "so many fan letters; I received a fan letter which was very beautiful. It was handwritten on recycled stationary paper (light green and was framed with images of a forest). The class laughed, but I thought it was beautiful. It was from a female dedicated fan and wanted to know what the reading list was for this class. She had included her own list, and I could perfectly understand that a course on Keanu Reeves could have used this list. But none of them were on my reading list."

Prina was also invited at a panel discussion in New York at the school for Visual Art ("about the stupidity of art or something, but in a positive way"). "This was probably two years after the course." Due to all the attention Prina has a huge file on this course and "I have in mind to write a book about all this."²⁹⁹

Conclusion

The texts that I have discussed in this chapter are produced by people who don't work within the boundaries of the entertainment industry. However, these texts are equally important as texts produced by institutions in the construction of the popular actor. I have chosen not to analyze content and meaning production for I believe that it attempts to close down the producing activities by some people³⁰⁰. Various studies focus on television series and other popular texts to theorize the interaction between text and audiences³⁰¹, for instance, Ang (1985) studied viewers of *Dallas* and their meaning production and attitude towards the series; Buckingham (*Public Secrets: Eastenders and Its Audience*, 1987) approached *Eastenders* and its viewers by analyzing content and meaning production, while Hermes (1999) has sought to answer the question "how are media figures important for identity construction?" by studying underlying discursive mechanisms of meaning production on the basis of representations of media figures and audiences. In this study however, the questions are not 'what meanings do audiences produce?' and 'why do audiences produce texts (or like an actor)?' rather 'how do audiences produce texts (or like an actor)?' and 'what texts do audiences produce?' which go beyond meaning production alone for they shift the attention towards the production of and interaction between texts independent of the purpose of these texts (see also Fiske, 1987, pp. 183-187). This chapter acknowledges the value of *receptive production* which signifies a new perspective

in audience research, an ideological shift in theoretical framework to study popular culture, the construction of media figures and meaning production on the basis of *discursive formations* of textual manifestations, and finally it open new ways to explore and expand marketing and advertising strategies.

Thus, the creation of popular phenomena – people or products – comes about by both institutions and individual (audience) agencies and both modes of textual production need to be studied and analyzed in relation to their specific (discursive) contexts. The final chapter combines the three modes of production, respectively *productive production*, *receptive production* and *actor as site* which together represent the complex cultural production of the popular media figure.

6

Intersections: The Construction of the Popular in Overlapping Discourses

In this final chapter the three modes of production meet in four elaborated case studies. The first one deals with the extensive rumor that the actor Keanu Reeves was married to media mogul David Geffen. The study gives way to the creation or production of the rumor³⁰², its circulation within authorized and unauthorized discourses, its responses and its aftermath. The second study builds on the ‘marriage rage’ by describing the human interest in celebrities’ private lives, which is theorized by the concept ‘fantasy’. The third study focuses on fans who were confused by several messages posted on the Dogstar Fan Bulletin Board. The final section puts the intertextual aspect of the creation of the popular – the media figure or the actor - in the forefront. It concentrates on things Keanu has said in interviews, TV shows and films. The four studies build on one another for the first one is based on a rumor which became ‘common knowledge’ (especially featured in newspapers and magazines), the second emphasizes the importance of culturally produced gossip and its task of fulfilling needs³⁰³; the third section then directs the attention of general publics and their meaning and text production towards specific types of audiences – the fans, and explains the impact of the feasible opportunity to actually interact with the actor and his management through electronic message systems. Although all studies show the triadic dimension of popular production in various situations, the last study in particular shows the textual production and circulation (intertext) of quotations among institutions, the actor and very specific audiences. It studies the actor as a signifying process based on the way how some of his words intersect with other people’s backgrounds, and as an instrument of meaning and text production – the actor offers an understanding of contemporary culture. Thus, the study of successful meaning and textual production indicates the enigma of the popular for it leads to the opportunity to increase the predictability of potential audiences, to turn the ‘specific nobodies’ into ‘specific somebodies’, by improving audience studies and marketing strategies.

Married To Whom?

They say we live in a mansion, wearing clothes that he bought. While shopping at Barney’s where we almost got caught. I drive his Mercedes and ignore all the ladies. I want to be faithful but I don’t think I can, cuz, I never met the man³⁰⁴

These lyrics sketch the rather ridiculous but extensive aftermath of the ‘secret marriage’ between Keanu Reeves and David Geffen. This is not the first story that is spread by media³⁰⁵, similar rumors featured in the

media such as ‘Richard Gere and gerbils’ and ‘Rod Stewart and a pint of sperm’. Here follows the ‘Reeves and Geffen’ tale.

On August 30, 1994 the *Daily Mirror* (UK) reports that Keanu Reeves and David Geffen were spotted “painting the town red at parties and going on wild shopping sprees.” Geffen was said to have spent \$12,000 on clothes for Keanu at Barneys in Beverly Hills where they were “giggling like schoolboys as they tried on mounds of \$500 shirts.” Then, on December 14, 1994 *Voici* (F) reports “the first gay marriage in the history of show business.” The article describes what the two men were wearing at their wedding closed by a rabbi in a Los Angeles restaurant. Further the article winds up an attendants’ list including Steven Spielberg, Elizabeth Taylor and Claudia Schiffer who were entertained by “a twelve-musicians band till 2 A.M.” Six days later *Daily Mail* (UK) reports that Reeves thinks it is a joke and that a “magazine must have been misled by someone.” The 27th of December *The Hollywood Reporter* (US) mentions the supposed marriage in a blind item. The next report in *The Vancouver Sun* (CA, January 14, 1995) links Keanu to a ballet dancer from the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Seven days later *The Boston Herald* reports that “both parties have officially denied the nuptial rumors, but sources close to Geffen swear it’s true.” Keanu is at that time performing *Hamlet* on stage in Winnipeg thus a new rumor did not stay out much longer when *USA Today* (January 24, US) reports that David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg pay Reeves with a visit in Canada – especially with a view to stories that describe Reeves “fooling around” with a ballet dancer. On the 27th of March Geffen states that he never “met or laid eyes on” Keanu Reeves (US, *Time*). But the story continues. April 4, 1995 the *San Diego Union-Tribune* (US) makes fun of the marriage, while in May *Toronto Star* reports that Reeves is “in deep denial” about his marriage “while Geffen, who visits him in Canada, sent him a limo.” In July of 1995 Keanu finally ‘comes out’ in gay magazine *Out* (US) where he “sets the record straight.” Tim Allis asks Reeves about ‘being sexy’:

Boring or not, he has captured the imagination of women and men alike. Does he mind being thought of as sexy? Reeves just laughs. But does it get in the way of being taken seriously? “I don’t know, I don’t know,” he says. “I mean, it’s cool. Sometimes that’s cool. Yeah, sure. There are worse things.” And when he shows up on the top of, say, *Playgirl*’s sexiest start list? “That’s another world, the world of magazines,” he says. “That’s something that kind of exists on a newsstand rack – it’s out there.”

Allis continues by referring to the marriage-rumor, which has evolved by that time: The marriage has now taken place in a “ceremony on a beach in Mexico.”

Reminded that some gay men think he’s sexy, Reeves laughs again, maybe a little embarrassed. “That’s cool,” he says. “That’s cool.” Of course he has heard last winter’s rumor, which buzzed well beyond the hyperexcitable beehives of Los Angeles and New York, that he and music and film producer David Geffen were married in a secret ceremony on a beach in Mexico, followed by Reeves’ mad shopping spree through Barneys on Geffen’s charge card. “Oh, yes!” he says. “Oh, yes. I first heard it when I was in Winnipeg, on my answering machine. My friend Claire called. She said, ‘I heard you got married, congratulations.’” At this, Reeves’ laughter turns to a surprising kind heehee, versus ha-ha, as if the story fills him with childlike pleasure. Rather than being frustrated by the uberrumor – which of course says more about those spreading
i t t h a n i t d o e s about

Reeves or Geffen – Reeves says he found it silly. He joked to his manager, “I guess I should return the c l o t h e s . ” [...]

The interview ends with the question why Keanu is appealing to gay and straight audiences³⁰⁶ which Reeves replies to by “it’s all multileveled – about why someone enjoys a certain actor or actress’ work. It’s entertainment, it’s escapism, it’s sexual, it’s political, it’s social, it’s human, it’s nature. It’s physical and it’s the films, it’s all of that together.” Indeed, Keanu has just summarized the underlying concept of this thesis by explaining that the production of meanings stem from a combination of factors (see also Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Hall, 1980; Morley, 1992; Turner, 1988).

I am then interested in the question how this rumor came about and how it was circulated. Although, the rumor is given birth to in August of 1994³⁰⁷ it’s still addressed one year later (August of 1995) when Keanu is interviewed for *Vanity Fair* (UK) about *A Walk in the Clouds*. Michael Shnayerson writes:

It was while he was in Winnipeg, Keanu says, that he first heard the rumor that had originated in Italian and Spanish newspapers, then spread to all of LA and New York: not only was he gay but he had even entered into a secret marriage with producer David Geffen. [...] “It’s so ridiculous, I find it funny.” [...] (Geffen says) “It’s a phenomenon: people *make things up*. I even had a friend say his trainer said he was *at the wedding*. You think I could keep something like that *secret*? [...] Speculation about Keanu’s sexuality goes back at least five years, when a reporter from *Interview* asked him directly if he was gay. Keanu denied it, adding, rather sweetly, “But ya never know.” Some of the talk seems inspired by the observation that Keanu has had no high-visibility romances with women. “Wouldn’t it be useful,” I suggest, “to shoot the rumors down cold?” Keanu is taken aback. “Well, I mean, there’s nothing wrong with being gay, so to deny it is to make a judgment. And why make a big deal of it? If someone doesn’t want to hire me because they think I’m gay, well, then I have to deal with it, I guess. Or if people were picketing a theater. But otherwise, it’s just gossip, isn’t it?”

The reference to *Interview* (September 1990 by Dennis Cooper) came up as well in my conversation with Stephen Prina who said that Cooper made the question up for the latter found a sentence taken from the film *Parenthood* very homophobic. In the original interview it is brought like this:

Are you gay or what? Come on, make it official. “No. (long pause) But ya never know.”

The line Keanu’s character pronounced in *Parenthood* was “they’ll let any butt-reaming asshole be a father these days, which seems to imply that ‘father’ is some kind of godlike state, and ‘butt-reaming asshole’, i.e. gay male, isn’t” and Reeves replied by “oh, that is homophobic. It’s weird.” The question is thus based on the linkage between Keanu as a *man*, Keanu as a *performer*, his *roles* and being a *public figure*. For being a man with no apparent love life or ex-girlfriends or wives cheering up the media, for being a high maintenance performer on screen and on stage in combination with the roles Keanu sometimes has portrayed in his movies lead to speculations about the actor’s sexuality. Especially in the Hollywood tradition ‘being a homosexual’ causes some difficulty³⁰⁸ (see also Dyer, 1993; Smelik, 1995; Weiss, 1991). Keanu also represents physical characteristics that make him attractive as an actor. For instance, he adjusts his body to the character he is portraying³⁰⁹ and as such his body gives way to speculations as well (see also Dyer, 1982; De Kuyper, 1993). Being

constructed as a media figure, in this case especially by institutions and spread through authorized texts, looks after the rumor crossing the oceans another time and spreads out all over Europe. In *Max* (Germany, September 1995):

In Kanada erreichten ihn schließlich auch die gerüchte, die gerade in Hollywood über ihn grassierten. "Herzensbrecher Keanu Reeves ist schwul" prangte in großen Lettern von den Titelseiten der Klatschpresse. Was im pruden Amerika soviel heißt wie: Unser kleiner Liebling hat sich politisch unkorrekt verhalten – eine schwere Rüge. [...] Der schöne Filmstar: "Ich bin nicht schwul, und es gibt auch keinen Ballettänzer." [...] Keanu beteuert zwar, hetero zu sein, aber: "Letzten Endes ist es doch völlig egal, wen man liebt." Er jedenfalls findet, daß Frauen wunderbare Geschöpfe sind, und denkt aus lauter Verzweiflung über diesen ganzen Rummel schon mal öffentlich über Kinder nach.

The rumor has float around for quite some time now and its body has changed as well. During the shoot of *A Walk in the Clouds* it was said that Reeves was a bad kisser and that he had to learn "how to kiss in front of cameras" from a video tape. Which fuelled again the rumor that he was gay. But the opinion changed again when Keanu's ex co-stars discussed in several teen magazines Keanu's kissing skills, which were "excellent." By October of 1996 Keanu is linked to someone else, a woman this time. They are spotted buying a Porsche. Soon they were said to be 'smoorverliefd' (*Hitkrant*, October 5, 1996 (NL) 'madly in love'), 'samenwonen' ('living together') and 'verloofd' ('engaged'). This rumor continued in 1997 (*More*, January 1997(UK):

This is the same Manhattan star spot where Keanu Reeves was seen all over girlie chum Amanda DeCadenet. According to a source, the saucy pair were getting so heated that they had to be asked to carry on their canoodlings elsewhere. Keanu us currently in New York to shoot his latest flick, *The Devil's Advocate*, and his reportedly driving his co-star, Al Pacino, bonkers. [...]

One week later the same magazine reports in its gossip column that the two are getting engaged.

Amanda DeCadenet's critics – of which there are many – may claim the girl has limited talents but you can't deny she has the skill of trapping hunky men down to a fine art. After dumping John Taylor, she's been seen all around Hollywood with Tinseltown's most reclusive and eligible bachelor Keanu Reeves. Latest word is the pair are to get engaged once her divorce from Taylor is final.

Early February of 1997 the media reported the relationship to be 'on the rocks'. And Keanu is then labelled 'homosexual' again motivated by the rumor that he is to star opposite Jennifer Aniston in *The Object of My Affection* as the gay friend. Nevertheless, various authorized texts 'changed their minds again': in July Keanu is married again, but now to Amanda who the media had split up in February. The rumor is heated by Amanda wearing a ring at the premiere of her film *Fall* and by introducing Keanu's mother as "my mother-in-law." However, the British gossip magazine *Hello!* publishes an interview with Amanda (August 2, 1997) in which she denies the marriage, but "I'm very close to Keanu. [...] Actually I can understand how the wedding thing could have come about, but I'm amazed anybody would have noticed. We've just had the premiere of *Fall*, and I was wearing a wedding ring because I'm currently playing a married woman in the film I'm working on and I hadn't taken it off. The wedding rumors originally started after someone had seen a picture of him wearing a ring when he was shooting *Devil's Advocate*, where he plays a married man. And, although that was

months ago, it seems someone decided to put it all together and make us a happy couple.” A year later (July of 1998, *Hello!*), they are linked again:

Are you involved with anyone at the moment? “I hate this question! Of course I still see Keanu but, as he’s in Australia [shooting *The Matrix*] for eight months, it’s a little difficult right now. But we stay closely in touch. Keanu doesn’t like to discuss his private life and I have to honor that. Just asking me about it puts me in a difficult position. I’m just keen to let whatever happens, happen. I’m not holding onto any one idea or person, I’m just letting my life unfold naturally.

Several authorized texts have thus married Keanu to both a man and a woman (and never divorced him). However, the gossip didn’t only appear in the public media sphere. The examples have shown that actually some ‘friends’ congratulated Keanu on his newly-wed status. Thus, the rumor was produced by institutional agencies (in magazines) and circulated in newspapers, the internet (e.g. *E!*, *Cybersleaze*), interviews – it is still mentioned when introducing Reeves³¹⁰ – it was addressed by both Geffen and Reeves (Huvane, Stoff, Reeves and his publicist discussed the issue and they felt it was the best way to address it in a non-mainstream magazine *Out*), artists (e.g. Keith Mayerson, see the art-section in chapter five), and people in general³¹¹. In December of 1998 a reporter asked me whether Keanu is gay or not and in February of 1999 I had dinner with several guests at *The International Film Festival Rotterdam* where a New York-based producer said “oh, he is gay.” The rumor is also added fuel to by unauthorized texts; fans for example, are preoccupied with his (love) life as well:

His accident – I didn’t know the extent of injuries. And I was concerned with the “gay” rumor because I thought it would affect his ability to get a variety of scripts.

Or,

I’ve been concerned about Keanu’s health and safety after his accidents and his neck surgery. I am annoyed by stupid gossip, but I don’t ever watch tabloid TV shows, so I don’t hear too much gossip. I also never read or buy tabloids and very rarely entertainment magazines.

The rumor can’t only be found in written texts, but is verbally spread as well. For instance during the ‘marriage rage’ “someone knows someone who knows the LA decorator who redid the house where the wedding took place,” or “a manicurist says that one of her clients did Geffen and Reeves’ hair-do for their Hawaiian wedding” (note, that they now got married in Hawaii) and Geffen himself met someone whose trainer swears he attended the wedding. In September of 1998 Dogstar had a gig at *The House of Blues* (LA) where a few fans got ‘upstairs’ and reported later in private emails that they had seen “Keanu kissing another man.” Some experiences are transformed into other stories but also stories are written down about fantasies that concentrate on the actor and his characters. Jenkins (1992, pp. 185-222) discusses fan-writing that gives way to homoerotic and bisexual love between captain Kirk and dr. Spock (e.g. *The Cosmic Fuck* series). He uses the term *slash* to refer to “the convention of employing a stroke or ‘slash’ to signify a same-sex relationship between two characters and specifies a genre of fan stories positing homoerotic affairs between series protagonists.³¹²” Not only stories are written about the characters in *Star Trek*, but include also *Miami*

Vice and *Starsky and Hutch*. However, 'slash' includes movie protagonist as well for *My Own Private Idaho*'s Mike and Scott are subjected to homoerotic stories as well (see also appendix). For instance:

"Fuck me Scott...I want to feel you deep inside me," Mike groaned, clearly unaccustomed to being fucked, but wanting to savor every moment of this union. Scott slowly withdrew his dick, almost to the flared edge of its head, then slid home, driven crazy by the impossible tightness that surrounded him. Again and again he drove in and out of Mike's butt, feeling his buddy alternately clench and release the muscles of his asshole, milking his cock as it slid in and out. Mike's cock was hard again, victim of the relentless pounding his prostate was taking as Scott's cock nudged it again and again. Pre-cum drooled from Mike's dick, pumping it as he fucked.³¹³

This fragment is based on the campfire scene where Mike tells Scott that he loves him. Since the characters are male prostitutes and befriended the unauthorized stories are not difficult to explain. Although, slash can resemble pornography (see Stoltenberg, 1989; Weaver, 1991) but it differs from pornography by the explanation of sexual activities from the characters' pasts, presents and futures (Jenkins, 1992, p. 190). Stories reached the tabloids during the shoot of *My Own Private Idaho* about drug use and homosexual affairs between cast and crew members³¹⁴. It was also not a secret that Reeves and Phoenix were best buddies so the reference to Reeves being gay (or bisexual) became more powerful. This example shows that *characters* and *actors (stars)* have become one by linking characteristics of both roles (Scott and Mike) and the actors (Keanu and River). This also lies at the base of the production of the popular actor for viewers are moved by certain performances and develop various activities to interact and appropriate the character and the actor (see page 14). Thus, both the characters and the actors are constructed by authorized and unauthorized texts – they produce, interact, take over and spread information – that, in this case, seem to relate (or confuse) the characters and actors in the process of the textual production of the homosexual and married actor. These examples of both authorized and unauthorized discourses and their interaction show the triadic mode of the production of a rather evasive rumor³¹⁵. One text led to another, the item was addressed by someone else who put it in a magazine, another on the internet, and so on. The circulation of authorized and unauthorized texts over various media resembles an electrical shunt where one wire is connected to and fed by others³¹⁶: The production of the rumor that contributes to the intertextual construction of the media figure.

Keanu's Women in Progress: Fighting Over Keanu

I have chosen to continue to theorize Keanu's 'love life in the media' which grounds in on the one hand, the preoccupation with celebrities' love lives by media and people– e.g. in interviews, in gossip columns, in TV shows, message boards, discussing Dogstar concerts the question 'who is he dating' looms up which make 'Keanu's women' part and product of discourse - and on the other hand, the last months of 1998 and early 1999 show an increased interest in Keanu's dating status. The appendix puts up with examples of the impact of a celebrity's love life: The production of Keanu's love perils

in both authorized and unauthorized discourses which include the internet, tabloids and entertainment TV. Richard deCordova (1990), who has studied the emergence of the 'star system', argues that the 'star system' is regulated by the *type* of knowledge produced about the actor. On the basis of a shift in the discourse on acting, the rise of the picture personality passed into the creation of the star. The latter meant an articulation of both the professional (public) and private life; the private life became subjected to the discourse as well. This shift meant an increase in knowledge about the actor and expressed an increase in textual production activities by institutions; Leo Lowenthal (1961) describes this process by "the actor becomes an idol of consumption." The actor's life was and still is elaborated in the newspapers, fan magazines and commodities and give way to 'fantasies'. The fascination with famous faces is thus linked to knowledge production about the public and private life of the actor. The level of knowledge about the actor and questioning the actor's identity – whether a rumor is 'true' or 'false' – are therefore part of discourses on sexuality³¹⁷. Thus, Keanu's hobbies, his love life, what he likes to eat become subjected to knowledge production and fascination produced by both institutional and audience agencies. The discourse on Keanu and his love life is thus produced and circulated in society in the shape of texts. These texts are derived from newspapers, magazines, TV shows, official web sites, snap shots and other 'Keanu' commodifications, Keanu encounters, fan organization and so on, which all display a proliferation of and preoccupation with images of celebrities.

Referring to the last section, the impact of seeing or reading about the love life of a famous person evokes lots of interests. Like Stephen Hinerman (in *The Adoring Audience*, 1992), I theorize this common human interest in celebrities' private lives through the concept 'fantasy' that comes about by the production of authorized and unauthorized texts. Freudian³¹⁸ and Lacanian³¹⁹ theories have conceptualized 'fantasy' and use the 'oral stage' as an idealized example of the Pre-Oedipal. The oral stage leads to the longing for pleasure-for-pleasure's sake which is understood as the beginning of the erotic. The child experiences a lack for its desires and needs are no longer fulfilled. It learns the difference between 'I' and 'Others'. Lacan argues that the experience of the lack becomes the foundation for the child's entrance into the social world – it moves from the Imaginary into the Symbolic (also known as the 'mirror stage'). In order to adapt itself the child learns that it should act according to mechanisms of prohibition, and as a consequence the child experiences that the world doesn't offer total satisfaction, thus it's always subjected to feelings of absence. This always present repressed desire - longing for satisfaction, or for a unified identity of the self - is filled by the fantasy. A fantasy promises full satisfaction of the experienced lack and provides man with total understanding of the world. Thus, when fantasy functions to fill the lack of the Other, it leads to the creation of man as both a social being and a generator of meanings³²⁰. Hinerman (1992, p. 115) writes that "fantasies are, then, one way humans have to negotiate a troubling situation. They bridge the gap that is created when desire is prohibited but the longing for full satisfaction is still there.

Fantasies allow us to ‘close the distance’ between what we need or want and what we can have. When the unconscious desires and the ego prohibits, throwing open questions of identity and the self, fantasies step into the breach.” The production and circulation of various authorized and unauthorized texts (public figures) are thus signs of repressed desires and are part of society³²¹ – they are a part of growing up (though, some people never outgrow this phase). The popular actor serves here the fantasy: the actor’s performances (star fans), his characters (character fans) or other aspects of the actor’s life (such as his love life) give rise to his viewers’ fantasies³²². The fantasy or the general (produced) interest in the lives of the rich and famous lead to the construction of the actor’s love life in authorized and unauthorized texts and is linked to the function of the movie actor *an sich*. Benjamin (1973) and Metz (1980) have conceptualized the movie actor (Kattenbelt, *Theater en Film in het Perspectief van Vergelijking* 1996, pp. 41-45). Benjamin understands the actor as a projection on a screen as such he is stripped of his *aura* while Metz understands the ‘absence of the movie actor’ as another aspect of the characteristic of film, “signifiant imaginaire³²³” which is responded to by the star system that exploits the actor by constructing and circulating a produced personality that resembles the person of the actor³²⁴. Thus, the actor is able to serve the fantasy because he is constructed and is stripped of his ‘aura’. The actor³²⁵ is then constructed in the process of meaning and text production by both institutions and audience agencies³²⁶.

The discourse on Keanu’s sex life, represented in the appendix, shows thus the interaction (or exchange of information) between institutions and audiences. I have shown that ‘gossip-expert’ Ted Casablanca (*E!* and *Tea with Ted*), chats with other users. People can ask questions or chat about anything Hollywood-related with Ted. Information is exchanged and put on *E!*’s web site. The examples show that all questions are ‘date-related’. This information is picked up by other people who put other Keanu-information varying from articles, magazines to TV shows (including audio waves) on their sites as well. In several chat rooms then, ‘news items’ are discussed and result in various responses and attitudes towards Keanu³²⁷ and his dates. The represented responses are just a few examples to show the interest in the actor’s love life. Being single or married is the most important reference to popular actors for it serves the fantasy.

In the process of ‘keeping the fantasy alive’ the production mode leads to the dynamics of secrecy and confession, closeness and openness, concealment and revelation. Not only Ted Casablanca interacts with individuals on the internet, for instance Dogstar’s management interacts with Dogstar ‘fans’ as well (see next section). Also, letter columns in magazines and (e-mail) online contribute to dynamic relationships among producers of texts in the construction of the media figure. The actor contributes to this dynamical interaction as well. For instance in interviews, by replying³²⁸ “I am single,” “I am a lonely wolf,” “I am not seeing anyone in particular if that’s what you’re asking” or “I am a fairly private person and would rather not talk about those things.” And when he attends a premiere by himself or with a woman, speculations – that vary from what he is wearing to whether

she is wearing an engagement ring - are aroused. Thus, the actor's role is a complex double-edged one. First, Reeves as a private person performs other private roles (character) that are set free in the public sphere. Second, Reeves as a private person enters the public sphere as himself – the private person. The discourse is then a very complicated one and is theorized by Oudart's reality effect and effect of the real³²⁹.

The actor 'lives in textual manifestations' produced by both institutions and audiences, who - especially the last decade due to technological developments - interact with each other; though, the actor contributes to the discourse as well by his entrance into the public sphere (see Aumont, 1990) and by portraying various roles - both in his profession of acting and as a private human being. Instead of the actor fitting the lack or desire, audiences are 'fooled' by the production of textual manifestations fuelled by the actor's love life: The actor is wrapped up in secrecy and revelation by mixing the private human being with the private male, who performs a role and enters as such the public sphere. This is exactly why actors serve the imagination and why some people get upset when they step out of their text (or fantasy³³⁰) beyond their control - by hanging out with and dating other private individuals outside the modes of textual production - which is explored on the basis of textual production activities by both institutions (e.g. management and actor) and audiences in the next section.

Is He Or Isn't He? Keanu Posts A Message On Dogstar's Message Board

In October of 1998 the peace on the Dogstar Fan Bulletin Board is disturbed when both Bret and Keanu (supposedly) posted a message:

October 23, 1998

Thanks to all that express an interest in our happy little band. It's really great and fun to come online for my first time and see this. We're working very hard to deal with making changes in personnel. The band is still very close to all the wonderful people we have worked with in the past and feel very lucky to have such support from everyone. Thanks again. You've all made me realize how bad I suck as typing. Bret Domrose

Response 1: You're not only a very talented guy. You're a very classy guy too! Thanks for the thanks!

Response 2: Thank *you* ... for all of the great times!

Response 3: You've given an unexpected surprise to Dogstar fans (whoa!). Bret, you really entertained the crowd at the Sound Factory in Charlotte during the 1997 Dogstar tour. Excellent playing!

These are just 3 posts out of over 25 follow ups from active messengers on the bulletin board. However, on October 28, 1998 things start getting shaky when 'Keanu' writes a post "thanks for your support guys":

Hey

Just wanted to say thanx for your support! You are great! You did not believe the stupid, money loving media trash about this drug junk and that is great. Yes I do read your emails whenever I have time, which is not often. Right now we are getting ready for Japan and looking forward to it.

Later
Keanu

This message leads to over 40 follow ups and takes over other Dogstar and Keanu-related web sites and newsgroups. The main question that is addressed is then “to be or not to be Keanu.” This message and its consequences are critically theorized by the production of both authorized and unauthorized texts.

The messages express a general tendency to thank Keanu, but soon passed into critical acclaims in terms of truth and sincerity; thus, the messages question whether he actually posted the message or not. The ‘virtual’ textual interaction between Keanu and (Dogstar) fans then addresses several issues³³¹ – beyond the question who posted this message - that I have examined. First, the content of the authorized texts by Bret and Keanu ideologically position both themselves as performers and their readers of the message board as audiences. Second, the produced texts – which are printed in the appendix - give way to ‘speech acts’ that address social norms and values such as trust, accusations and credibility issues, fandom, sincerity and authenticity.

The musicians’ messages serve a broader ideological and economical dimension for they assume certain roles, they represent specific values and affect consumption (Sorlin, 1994, p. 21): The internet is a medium that enables direct communication between institutions and individuals or, in this example, between performers and fans. The content of the produced texts is expressed through language. Both the use of the internet and language represent the reproduction of ideology in people (see Fiske, 1987; Kaplan, 1988). Robert Allen (1987, p. 118) describes this process by the distinction between a cinematic mode of address and a rhetorical mode of viewer engagement. The latter refers to the internet as well for it “simulates the face-to-face encounter by directly addressing the viewer and, what is more important, acknowledging both the performer’s role as addresser and the viewer’s role as addressee.” Bret’s and Keanu’s words activate a communication transaction in which the roles of the readers are assumed. The examples show that most active users agreed to play the role of viewer and some others didn’t accept this role³³². The difference with Allen’s conceptualization is that the internet is an interactive medium whereas television is not – not in the sense that both producers and viewers have access to the same channels to bring a message across – nevertheless, both producers of authorized (musicians) and unauthorized texts (users of the bulletin board) assume the other party’s position or role which is expressed in several examples in the appendix. At the same time, the posts represent specific values such as ‘gratitude’ and an attitude towards media, but they also look after the economical dimension by causing a commotion. For instance, if the posts are real and become a regularity which means that the musicians become more and more accessible (great publicity), Dogstar is more likely to attract a bigger audience – so far, musicians are not easy accessible and such an interaction will cry up Dogstar’s image.

Thus, certain identities are assumed and acted upon and as such fans (audiences) are constituted as social subjects. Apparently, some respondents felt addressed which resulted in ‘thank you messages’

however, others expressed ‘unease’ with the posts. Not as much that they felt ‘misrepresented’ but rather that they felt the posts were ‘false’ (not posted by signatures). Misrepresentation is linked to feelings of forgery for content of messages question the authors of the posts based on the analysis of Keanu’s words, and if forgery is the case, people feel misrepresented as ‘being fools’. The question ‘to be or not to be Keanu’ has led to an increase in textual production in the exchange of e-mails, posting messages not only among fans, but among fans and Dogstar’s management as well. The engaged discourse in authorized and unauthorized texts question the underlying idea that media figures directly communicate with their audiences or fans³³³. This can be studied by Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action (1981). The theory is based on the analysis of contemporary situations within society and science³³⁴. According to the theory of communicative action, human beings act according to social standards, in the togetherness of acting they strive after shared comprehension or consensus which they can lay claim to in terms of truthfulness, rightness and (personal) sincerity. However, Habermas argues that nowadays throughout the progression of the cultural climate mankind attaches more and more importance to validity claims of truthfulness. As a result, the claims of rightness and sincerity are (more or less) rejected³³⁵. Language is understood as pivotal in the explanation of society for human beings can only express and coordinate (act) themselves through language in order to obtain shared consensus with relation to values and sincerity claims. Thus, Habermas’ theory understands society by the conceptualization of ‘lifeworld’ and as such it offers a (shared) identity. In my own work (1998) I explained that Habermas’ communicative action no longer refers to verbal speech acts but includes all other forms of language as well in order to reach consensus³³⁶ (Thompson, 1995, pp. 69-75). Language enables on the one hand, actions that are traditional and in that sense accepted as shared consensus and on the other hand, actions that are false, invalid and not sincere. In this study the validity claims are questioned by various individuals. The content of Keanu’s message is discussed according to claims of truthfulness, rightness and sincerity and has led to the production of various (intertextual) unauthorized texts:

October 28, 1998

Response 1: Possibility 1 – it WAS Keanu, and we believe it WAS him [...]. Possibility 2 – It was NOT Keanu while we believe it WAS him [...]. Possibility 3 – It was NOT Keanu and we believe it was NOT him [...]. Possibility 4: It really truly WAS Keanu, but we suspiciously believe it was NOT [...] so I WILL BELIEVE IT WAS HIM [...] Rock them out of their recession and end the economic crisis... Yes, Dogstar’s music can save the World!

Response 2: Who are you? I don’t think you’re Keanu. From what I heard, Keanu doesn’t have a computer, never had time to answer fan mails, and doesn’t give a damn about those stupid tabloids. You must be either Dogs Star’s manager or the owner of this message board! Don’t fool me!

Response 3: ok... ok... call me a sceptic here-lol... not saying it isn’t him – but shikes it really doesn’t sound like him... [...]

Response 4: [...] For some reason the “money loving media” phrase doesn’t sound like him. Nor do I picture him saying “thanx”, I expect a clear “thank you” instead. Although, I could be wrong.

Response 5: [...] I am constantly reminding that “I don’t know the man”. Well, we don’t. None of us does. Whether we’ve met him or not, we don’t KNOW him. So, how can we really judge if ‘it sounds like him’?

Response 6: O.K. It’s me with my hazy memory again – did not ADC say in interviews that she and Keanu used to e-mail each other?

Response 7: All right, fess up. Who ELSE is sneaking Keanu into the real world?? [...]

Response7: [...] I have a vague memory of some interviewer describing him sitting at a laptop on a film set [...] How does the bulletin board work in terms of how the names etc are annotated. Is it up to the poster how they are described and whether their e mail ady is shown? Does everything go through management first to prevent bad language etc? I have no strong feelings either way – other than the “thanx” and “later” struck me as a bit odd – on reflection it’s maybe a bit casual for Keanu (certainly compared to his speaking style in interviews) and maybe a tad juvenile for a 34 year old – but hey could just be the way he writes! PS. As others have said, who cares, if it was him it was a sweet thing to do, if not, it was harmless.

The messages express their concern with the possibility that the post is a lie. Flanagan(1992, p. 128) argues that telling a lie is part of what is called ‘conscious inessentialism’, which means that “any intelligent activity (i) performed in any cognitive domain (d), even if we do (i) consciously, (i) can in principle be done nonconsciously.” Lying assumes then a conscious intention to mislead others. Producing lies in texts go beyond ‘misleading’ for thinking in words and telling the truth involves consciousness. The discourse shows the respondent’s signifying ability in terms of systematic arguments and intertextual references. However, as one respondent writes, the relationship to Keanu is illusory and the judgments and structuring processes are therefore based on other texts (both authorized and unauthorized) and other signifying forms. These reactions and others turn from communicative action to discursive criticism (Van der Graaf, 1998, p. 85). The latter brings on a situation whereby the participants break away from coercive action and pressures to experience in order to act via arguments³³⁷. The discourse is extended to Dogstar’s management as well. Someone emailed the management with the question “whether Keanu posted this message or not”; Doc Williamson replied by “I don’t believe it was Keanu.” Then, someone else replies by posing the following question “Now how do we know this is *really* Doc? ;-).”

It is not the first time that Doc mingled with interactive users. Questions regarding upcoming tours, ‘cleaning the message board’ with a view to ‘unwanted imposters, pictures and the like are answered as well (see chapter one, section two). Not only Bret and Keanu are settled as imposters but other ‘message posters’ lie as well such as “in Hawaii, in a hotel room, butt naked with Keanu, a whip...” which was received in anger. Responses varied from “You go. Amen. Keanu is a nice man that doesn’t deserve to be talked about like trash” to “what a joke!! We were with Keanu at ‘Hard Rock Cafe’ [...] we were also given FREE DOGSTAR TICKETS to his concert at ‘World Cafe’ where later we had a private party with his family from Hawaii [...]. He rented a small blue van [...]” and “a Hawaiian ‘bus’ tour!?! Give me a break...[...].” The band’s manager replied by indicating the ‘restlessness’ on the board and wrote that everyone should “play nice.” However, the anxiety continues and leads to a controversial forum about what can and can’t be posted about personal information regarding media figures: “please don’t excuse yourself by thinking that you’re not responsible for what sick minded people do with information. If we provide information that specifies relationships, names, places or habits then we’re guilty of enabling that sick persons behavior.” The last drop is an unauthorized questionnaire posted on the Dogstar Bulletin Board which was answered on December 28, 1998 (see appendix) - the message board has been shut down ever since.

Thus, the interaction between authorized and unauthorized texts shows the problem of ‘authenticity’ and ‘sincerity’ regarding a person’s identity (who posts a message³³⁸) which is not uncommon (see the conclusion of this chapter). Despite the fact of possible imposters, this study indicates different modes of fandom (or audiencehood) and their cultural dealings with the production of texts. The interactive dynamics both between musician/actor and audiences, management and audiences and among audiences themselves, indicate rather complex modes of textual production. It shows that the production of meaning is structured according to the triadic mode of production: management (institution), the actor/musicians and respondents (audiences). However, the context is important as well – but remains invisible here – which is provided by the discourse on issues such as ‘morality’ (“did your mom never teach you...”) and ‘authenticity’ that both express pleasure, hope and frustration in the activity of discussing ‘Keanu’s message’. Cohen and Robbins (1979) argue that the specific popularity of a genre (related to youth cultures) among a specific subculture can be indicated to the “extent that it *fits* with the forms of cultural competence available to this group.³³⁹” This concept of ‘fit’ or ‘intersection’ can be applied to the explanation of diversified contents of produced texts as well (see Jhally, 1994). The production of meanings and texts in the semi-public sphere of the internet and the private sphere of private e-mails, instant messages and phone calls, indicate different ‘fits’ (and interests) among audiences. Therefore, the concepts show that such interactions among institutions, actor/product and audiences are multileveled due to political, economical and social contexts, and as a result must be subjected to further study.

Hide, When Keanu Talks...

If I was to remember everything that I have said in my life in order to understand what people are talking about when they are talking to me, well, I would have a problem. When you are a public figure and your words are printed, broadcast and circulated, you certainly can’t recall what you have said during various interviews and other conversations; especially, when the words are taken out of the context and are quoted over and over again or become someone’s ‘motto’. Some remarkable Keanu-quotations from interviews that I gathered from several people - five call themselves a fan and three consider themselves ‘reporters of the scoop’:

“... I was just being. So I think that inability to express my thoughts about feelings and being unable to categorize and put things in context was amusing, especially for journalists. So they made fun of the monkey.”

“I’m pseudo-quasi famous. I’m not really around. I’m around. Yeah.”

“I’m a meathead. I can’t help it, man. You’ve got smart people and you’ve got dumb people.”

“I’m sorry, man. My existence is just not very noble or sublime.”

“I’ve never played stupid to keep someone distant. I don’t play stupid.”

“I’m Mickey Mouse. They don’t know who’s inside the suit.”

The latter is also cited by Christina Skepper in *V.I.P. (NBC Europe, January 8, 1998)* when Skepper asks Keanu if he gets recognized a lot. Keanu answers that he said that once to explain that he gets recognized but that “they don’t know me.” People have anticipations or expectations about the actor based on various texts they have come across. Together these assumptions lead to what Goffman (1963, pp. 1-40) calls ‘virtual social identity’ which generally differs from the ‘actual social identity’³⁴⁰. The media figure comes about, like I wrote before, by being a *male*, a *performer*, his portrayal of *roles*, being a *public figure* and by being *commodified* (see Dyer, 1979). Together they lead to the construction of the public identity - based on assumptions that stem from authorized texts produced by institutions and the actor and from unauthorized texts - about who Keanu really is. Keanu contributes to his own construction for instance, by the roles he chooses, by his clothing style and by the things he says in public such as in interviews and at concerts. By saying that he is Micky Mouse he acknowledges that he is somebody else and that he experiences a discrepancy between who he is and how others see him (see Mitroff and Bennis, 1989). For instance³⁴¹, during a private birthday party some people got in. My friend and I were laughing when a girl approached us and asked if she could borrow our pen. Next she tried, in every possible way, to get Keanu’s attention which was rather difficult for he was standing on a chair showing a new scar. It was a weird situation when the girl finally had the guts to ask him for an autograph. Keanu was a bit surprised since he was ‘out of his public role’ and hanging out with his friends but he pulled himself together and signed whatever anyway.

In her study on *Dallas* viewers Ang (1982, p. 106) concludes that pleasure stems from recognition of themes that *fit* or *intersect* with the (imagination or) lives of the viewers. *Dallas* symbolizes a particular attitude that people use in their everyday lives. As such, *Dallas* functions not as an escape or compensation for everyday life rather it’s a dimension of it. Thus, “only by the way of the imagination, which is always subjective, the ‘objective reality’ is dealt with.” This means that ‘(dis)liking Keanu’ is only meaningful when the context in the study is included. However, the context is largely motivated by meaning production and is subjected to various academic studies, I have some examples concerning ‘liking Keanu’ included as well, based on Keanu’s utterances, followed by several consequences of meaning production by various audience agencies resulting in unauthorized production activities of texts; nevertheless, in this final I focus less on the production of unauthorized texts than that I focus on the ‘actor as site’. Quotations are then very important in the process of circulating representations of Keanu Reeves. He once said “when I don’t feel free and can’t do what I want I just react. I go against it” which, among other utterances, opened up certain meanings about the actor. A woman told me that it is very important to her to know that “Keanu does what he wants to do.” It teaches her how to appreciate her own feelings and what she really wants to get out of life. She has an abusive husband, but “Keanu’s attitude towards life³⁴² helps me to appreciate life” and to

“get out there to find a job so that I can get a divorce and take care of myself.” Other women³⁴³ have expressed feelings of suppression or feelings of imprisonment as well. They interpret Keanu’s performances and lifestyle according to their own desires and needs. Some things they read, click with their own situation in everyday life. So, their construction of Keanu *fits* or *intersects* with their own needs and can be shown in the production of both meanings (see Radway, 1984 ; Morley, 1992) and texts (see Jenkins, 1988). The latter is shown in two examples of things Keanu (or his characters) said in authorized texts, respectively movies and interviews; some things are taken, reproduced and given way to in the production of new texts independent of the original context. *The Society for Keanu Consciousness* is a web site dedicated to ‘Keanu revelations’. They “believe that the blockbuster actor Keanu Reeves is in fact this century’s premier symbol of enlightenment and peace! Keanumandu, the Virtual Temple of the SKC, is an attempt to spread the word about this startling revelation.” This is followed by an introduction – “By following the Tao of No (or the No Way) and the teachings of Keanu’s cinematic incarnations, we can reach karmic equilibrium, achieve world harmony, and produce a new cosmic age of peace and enlightenment” - and by a line taken from *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure*– “Ah, here it is, So-crates... ‘The only true wisdom is in knowing that you know nothing.’ That’s us, dude!” This site resembles the introduction of *Little Buddha* in its description of the history of ‘Keanumandu’:

One thousand years ago, in a tiny Nepalese village, a tiny group of monks huddled anxiously around a tiny shaman from whose deep trance would issue the identity of their newly reincarnated lama. But an additional revelation shone into that early morning so far away: The shaman told the little band of holy ascetics that one day a child would be born in Beirut, who would unite in his lineage both east and west, and whose image would be miraculously multiplied by light onto walls of thousands of temples world-wide. This boy child would bring enlightenment to millions. As the trance was broken, a final clue fluttered from the exhausted seer’s lips: “Cool Breeze...”³⁴⁴

Another example stems from a fan who decided to write me about her fandom (see appendix for her letter). She made her decision on the basis of something she had read: “Keanu once said, ‘it’s better to regret something you have done, than something you haven’t done’.” She included several fan letters she wrote to Keanu and pictures of her office (she shares with her husband) and living room that are covered with Keanu-images. She also writes stories about Keanu and “shares them with very close friends.” Thus, the idol provides audiences such as fans with a means of identity construction (see Hermes, 1999) on the basis of authorized and unauthorized texts. Meaning and text production are therefore closely related³⁴⁵.

However, not only fans use quotations to produce meanings and texts. The last chapter offered the production of unauthorized texts and commodities by audience agencies such as artists and authors. The latter have different motives to produce texts which are less based in meaning production than creative or economical interests in the production of texts. Thus, the concepts *fit* and *intersection* refer not to the producer’s everyday life surroundings rather they refer to cultural and economical interests or capital (see Bourdieu, 1979) of the producers. For instance, Keith Mayerson’s *Pinocchio*

the Big Fag deals with the discourse on homosexuality expressed through a representation of Keanu. Chris Nickson and Sheila Johnston picked their material for their Keanu biographies from various sources and often use quotations to introduce a new theme. Thus, institutions – through production of movies, magazines, web sites, promotion and advertising campaigns – the actor – through various texts – and several audience types – through zines, books, art, slash, web sites and media alerts – interact in the construction of the popular public figure. Meanings and texts are produced, textually distributed and reproduced over time and space³⁴⁶.

Keanu functions thus as the motivator of the sentences, but he isn't responsible for the circulation of 'quotations'. His words are interpreted, reproduced and circulated as 'quotations' by institutions and audiences. Like I have shown, the impact differs from person to person. Audience members in general, will have heard of "Kino," "oh - he is gay," "uh-I'm-Ted-called," artists are inspired by a character, a quotation or image and fans are involved in an ambivalent relationship with the actor as a public and private person.

A brief 'study' of the consequences when Keanu speaks out-loud in public. In 1994 Keanu promoted *Speed* and was invited to appear in *The Bed and Breakfast Show* (UK) with Paula Yates. She asked him whether he was seeing someone special or not. He dismissed the matter in a few words by saying "all women are angels." In 1997 he was promoting *Devil's Advocate* in *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Rosie elicits Keanu from some memories from his childhood. They talk about his favorite sweater which functioned as his "binky." During a conversation with Jay Leno the 'binky' is mentioned again: "I had a binky. You know a shmushma – that blanket that we've all had when we're kids." The audience is 'oohhing'. Other personal tid-bits are revealed as well:

Jay Leno: No matter how much money or success I make, I can't pay 9.99 for that snicker's bar in the mini bar. You know, I would walk through snow – I can't bring myself to do it. Can you do that? Have you overcome that?

Keanu Reeves: There are some days that you've to have a snicker's bar.

And,

Keanu Reeves: As a kid I fell asleep with my hands over the side [of the bed, so that nothing could grab me]

Such moments of 'enlightenment' are of tremendous importance for the interpretation of Keanu Reeves. Field Belenky et al. (1986, p. 113) has called this 'connected knowing' where knowledge stems from experience. Thus, public figures embody, through textual constructions, different aspects of daily life that lead to understanding and experience (see Hermes, 1995); for example³⁴⁷, "I saw him [Keanu] pulling away when someone grabbed his shoulder but as soon as he saw it was a woman he smiled. I recognize that. He must have been beaten up really bad as a young kid. I don't want my son to beat the shit out of his wife or his kids, I want him to be like Keanu. He would never hurt a woman, because he is very sensitive. He has been through a lot which made him soften up, gentle and sweet.

Just look at the role he portrayed such as in *Parenthood*, *The Prince of Pennsylvania* and *Permanent Record*. He plays these characters as his own personal catharsis, to deal with his absent father.” Some ‘gaps’ – lacking information about the private life – are ‘filled’ by fans. For example, during one of the chats at *KeanuFest* someone made copies of an article about Attention Deficit Disorders (see appendix); she suggested that Keanu is suffering from ADD, based on the article’s characteristics. Someone else opted that “I wouldn’t be surprised since I’m sure his mom used drugs during the pregnancy. I mean, Beirut in the 60s.”

The combination of his performances, ‘life in the magazines, internet, TV or in the public arena’ contribute to the intertextual creation of various Keanu-interpretations (meanings) and representations (texts). Graeme Turner (1988, pp. 103-109), like Dyer (1982) writes that actors have a cultural function. Thus, actors are a ‘sign’ since they have a signifying function based on their intertextuality. In combination with the cultural context, these factors determine whether a film and audiences find each other or not; and as a result, whether a movie will be a success or not or whether something or someone has the potential to become a success or not (see Sorlin, 1994). Hermes (1999, p. 5) writes that “seeing media figures as real and as part of our everyday cultural and emotional experience is part and parcel of how media texts come to have meanings.” The effect of a real-life-talking-actor can both work with and counter the authorized mode of meaning and textual production or work with or counter the unauthorized mode. For example, Johnny Depp expressed that when he is “less satisfied” with his movie “I care less, I mean regarding promotional activities³⁴⁸ or when I meet someone somewhere, and have a nice conversation two days later, it ends up in a tabloid column. And your picture is taken when you want to hit someone with a piece of wood [...]” Nothing has to happen and everything has happened on the platform where authorized and unauthorized modes of production meet the actor in both public and private discourses. Indeed, it won’t surprise me when Shakespeare is cited by fans or teachers quote Keanu to encourage teenagers to read Shakespeare and Jack Kerouac. Or that some people sign their e-mail messages with “Snickers,” “ADC,” “Neo Thomas” or “Keanu” for that matter and that people design brief paper based on Keanu quotations and computer games to “study life” (*The Matrix*) or that people write stories and create art to address (their own) homosexuality, broken families and beat life.

Conclusion: Reality, Authenticity and Person of the Actor

Do you fall in love with the Artist or with the Person?

In this chapter I presented four case studies that combine the three modes of production, namely *productive production*, *receptive production* and the *actor as site*. The studies focus on the production and circulation of rumors or gossip that are accompanied by questioning *reality* and *authenticity* claims. Mitroff and Bennis (1989, p. 120) write that “some sense of mystery is always necessary to

the successful creation of celebrities and their appeal to the masses. All art and artists constantly flirt on the borderline between heightening mystery and reducing it.” Realism has been a long-time subject of academic studies, especially within media studies. There are three principal approaches to the problematic of realism that are concerned with how truths and notions of reality are established in society: the mediation thesis³⁴⁹, Marxism³⁵⁰ and structuralism³⁵¹. Like David Bordwell (1985) I have shown that texts unilaterally determine readings and open up competing versions of truth that ground in the production of both authorized and unauthorized texts such as respectively gossip columns, newspapers, interviews, message boards, slash, biographies, graphics and quotations. In these examples, ‘truth’ is interwoven with the problem of ‘authenticity’³⁵²: ‘is he or isn’t he?’. The discourse surrounding the authenticity problem can be studied by linking the intertext of public and private discourses of meaning and text production with three reality domains, developed by Jürgen Habermas (1981), regarding the claims of truthfulness, rightness and sincerity³⁵³. These three validity claims are linked to the notion of ‘intertextuality’ (Van der Graaf, 1998) which is shown by the intersection of authorized and unauthorized texts that deal with Keanu’s public representations such as his love life and his own representation on the Dogstar message board. By introducing Habermas in this study I wanted to show that both institutional agencies and audience agencies must be studied on a reciprocal basis in order to understand how popular figures are consented upon in the production of ‘real’ authorized and ‘real’ unauthorized texts.

Thus, the construction of Keanu consists of a public identity created by authorized and unauthorized texts – that often come about and deal with reality and authenticity issues - based on assumptions about Keanu being a *man*, *performer*, playing a *role*, being *commodified* and being a *public figure*. The texts are produced, circulated and re-present Keanu in various ways. Thus, I presented the production of rumors, gossip and ‘quotations’ to show how first, meanings are produced and second, how texts are produced. It shows that the interest in celebrities exceeds the boundaries of public images or representations spread by the media. New texts are generated that are meaning- and powerful in themselves. However, besides studying textual production activities, one has to question the motivation why audiences feel the need or desire to act they way they do; this ‘area’ is the *fit* or *intersection* (see Cohen and Robbins, 1979) – where cultural phenomena and individual agencies clash (or, there where individuals are producers of new cultural phenomena). The outcomes of such studies serve two goals: On the one hand, they open up an extra dimension of audience research³⁵⁴ and as a result, an understanding of cultural production; second, they offer a global insight into the practical activities of the entertainment industry. When combined they lead to the opportunity to study contemporary culture and its fast-forwarding ‘dive into tomorrow’ – and as a result, an improvement of the predictability of the popular becomes reality.

Conclusion

Reconsidering Textual Producers

There's nothing worse than someone who considers himself a serious actor, because an actor is essentially a liar. I definitely wouldn't call myself a film star. I'm much more 'in the trenches' than glittery!³⁵⁵

"It's really not about selling Keanu, but about selling movies," said Erwin Stoff. It's about selling movies through Keanu: "I want to do a good film, the kind of film I'd like to see. I mean, if you're going to sit in the dark for two hours and come out feeling ripped off, you're going to hate the movie and the actors. I'd like to make movies people want to see, but which I want to see as well. If people want to rap about my movies, I'm very glad, and if they don't it can hurt. But if someone comes out of one of my pictures and goes, 'who cares?', that's bad."³⁵⁶ This study is not about Keanu Reeves or "Private Keanu," but it shows 'that people do care'. I wanted to show the way people care – a way that goes beyond meaning production, star and fan studies – through the *visibility* of the actor (see Croteau and Hoynes, 1997). Therefore I focused on the textual construction (and reception) of the actor as one of the main marketing tools of the media industry³⁵⁷ studied on the basis of the question 'how is the popular media figure textually and culturally produced?' The answer leads to the production of the actor as a man, performer, character, commodity and public or media figure. Together they represent the actor's public identity³⁵⁸ which is bound to time and space and articulated in texts. The actor is as such intertextually (re-)presented. The actor's 'visibility' then asks for a reconsideration of the mode of popular production. Thus, instead of focusing on meaning production based on the interaction between a text (the actor) and audiences, *textual production* is theorized from the perspective that institutions, audiences and the actor interact as textual producers in the come about of the popular³⁵⁹ - especially, I sought to reconceptualize the actor as site (see Dyer, 1979 and 1998; Fiske, 1987; DeCordova, 1990; Gledhill, 1991) and audiences as producers of meanings and texts (see Cruz and Lewis, 1994; Nightingale, 1996). First, I studied the mechanics of several branches of the media industry such as the roles played by agents, managers, producers, directors, rating systems, marketing strategies and other activities that construct and maintain the actor's appeal as well as organize audiences (and profits³⁶⁰) in order to answer the questions 'how do entertainment institutions produce texts?' and 'what texts do institutions produce?' (*productive production*). Second, I explained how audiences produce texts and what texts they produce (*receptive production*). The former questions then refer to the production of media products by institutional authorities and their textual manifestations (such as movies, magazines, merchandise) while the latter refer to productional activities undertaken by people with specific interests in the production of texts (see Jenkins, 1992). The *actor as site*³⁶¹ is the third dimension of production and interacts with the other two modes. The final chapter discusses four case studies that show overlapping discourses of the

three modes of production – productive productions, receptive production and actor as site – based on the (constructed) public identity of the actor. Thus, through the conceptualization of discourse and popular culture the actor becomes ‘visible’ as a textual product.

The production of the popular is of a *triadic* dimension. The triadic model of production implicates a shift in theoretical framework for the integrative approach³⁶² of production draws the attention away from audiences as active producers of meanings³⁶³ to audiences as producers of texts. Although, audiences³⁶⁴ are already studied as producers of texts, less attention is directed towards the cultural implication of textual production. Thus, audiences-as-textual-producers are often grasped as ‘marginal producers of culture’; as a result, their texts are often marked ‘less powerful’ than for instance an authorized product like the movie *The Matrix*.

Thus, the triadic model of production offers both a shift in theoretical framework concerning audience research³⁶⁵ – such as a different perspective on power relations that rule ideas in social theories and media studies - and to the (re-)conceptualization of the popular – also contemporary culture³⁶⁶ and the opportunity to analyze and predict the come about of trends - which are both useful for theoretical and practical purposes such as new ways to explore and expand marketing strategies. In the last chapter I showed that the modes of production contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of meaning and text production in the making (construction) of the popular non-specific body (the actor) which I theorized through the concept of *fit* or *intersection*³⁶⁷ (see Cohen and Robbins, 1979). By studying possible *fits* or *intersections* – there where institutions, cultural phenomena and individual agencies clash and texts are produced – the construction and success of the popular can be indicated and further theorized; however, before that time, their possibilities need to be further explored.

The inquiry into textual production is not unproblematic³⁶⁸. Several concepts and ideas that I introduced lead on the one hand, to various problems and on the other hand, to suggestions for further research. A first problem relates to the person of the actor. For instance, does ‘actor’ refer to textual manifestations because he acts in movies, is represented in interviews or on the internet? In my opinion, it’s in this case better to speak of ‘*image*’ because ‘actor’ refers to a human being whose job it is ‘to pretend to be someone else’ (see Goffman, 1959 and 1963; Dyer, 1979). Other questions arise when performing the same study on actresses. For instance, not only the amount of produced texts may differ but content, motivation and types of audiences may differ as well. Not only gender differences offer variations in outcomes, ethnicity and age influence differences in research results as well. However, I doubt that major variations occur when studied within one country³⁶⁹. Cross-cultural research increases variations due to political and social differences among citizens. Nevertheless, further research has to be done before further suggestions can be made. The concept ‘audience’ (chapter four) seems still not be univocally interpreted both in terms of ‘what audience(s) are’, ‘what they do’

and ‘how to study them’ – especially new technologies ask for new approaches to study audiences (chapter five). Therefore, I chose to study audiences that are ‘already there’. An advantage is that I didn’t need to categorize them as fans, artists, writers of letters for they already labelled themselves as such; an disadvantage however, is that the, in this thesis, discussed audiences can block the view of other types of audiences that are textual producers as well. Therefore, further study is recommended. Audience research calls into question the aspect of *self-reflexivity* as well. I showed my ‘troubled’ experiences with ‘star’ fans which questions our position as academic researchers and raises methodological questions as well (see Seiter, 1990).

Linked to the first remark, is the question whether the actor can be grasped as a construction. I explained throughout this thesis that the actor consists of several ‘identities’ that shape the actor’s public identity which complicates the interactive mode of production for several ‘multileveled identities’³⁷⁰ of the actor interact with institutions and audiences (chapter one). I haven’t addressed this quite grey area of the person of the actor because of the actor’s privacy and the reason that he serves as a hand in the construction of public figures and therefore should be understood as such³⁷¹. Nevertheless, the construction of the actor is also linked to authenticity problems discussed in the final chapter: The discrepancy between *performance* and *reality* becomes very obvious in this discourse and raises questions regarding ‘what is considered as real?’³⁷². The postmodernists argue that both the real and the fake are constructed. Thus, is film a construction? Is the actor a construction? Does the actor perform a role? Or is acting ‘for real’? (especially when you are a *Method* actor). The postmodern conflict then expresses this problem of the real and performance (see Baudrillard, 1988; Hebdige, 1986; Lyotard, 1986). So, when postmodernists argue that everything is performance, someone’s *identity* is based on performances as well³⁷³ which means that images are isolated from original texts and contexts, and lose their previous associations. Fiske (1987, p. 254) describes postmodernism then as that it “emphasizes the fragmentary nature of images, their resistance to sense, the way that images are more imperative than the real and have displaced it in our experience.” I have shown that the actor (public figure) is constructed by both institutions and audiences which results in the postmodern perspective that the actor is fragmented. Thus, on the one hand, he is constructed by various texts and on the other hand, these various texts are fragmented and decontextualized as well (see Wollen, 1986). This thesis has proven that realism, authenticity and identity are useful concepts to theorize public figures (Dyer, 1979; Mitroff and Bennis, 1989) but still need to be further explored. These problematic concepts clear – together with the triadic model of production – the way for my introduced concepts³⁷⁴ ‘*authorized*’ and ‘*unauthorized*’ which call into question issues of authority, power, domination and subordination. I argued to understand ‘authorized’ as ‘everything produced by entertainment institutions that make money out of the production’ such as movies accompanied by merchandise and photos made during interviews. In this study unauthorized texts refer to ‘everything produced by people outside the institutions that do not make money out of these produced texts’. However, it doesn’t mean that financial elements are not involved: there

is only no direct link to various entertainment branches that are related to the actor – thus, although the author of an unofficial biography falls under the unauthorized mode of production money is made out of e.g. book sales (and pays e.g. the publisher, the author, the author's agent). The distinction between 'authorized' and 'unauthorized' is tricky: Basically, I made the distinction between 'authorized' and 'unauthorized' on the basis of a 'direct' or 'indirect' (money and motives) link to the producers of the entertainment industry which came about by interviews I had with people stemming from both sides of production. Though at times this distinction is rather diffuse and at those moments, it can be argued that an activity of production falls under 'official' or 'unofficial' textual production or vice versa. Nevertheless I did do my best to motivate my choices through the conceptualization of private, semi-public and private discourses; the final word about this complex situation has not been written yet. These concepts of authorized and unauthorized production activities are also linked to the briefly introduced concepts of 'authorized resistance' and 'authorized acceptance' which indicate the process of textual production by institutions, (types of) audiences and the actor as site. They shift the attention away from power relations to cultural variety and difference (chapter three). Productive production, receptive production³⁷⁵ and the actor as site lead to the textual construction of the popular and offer a study of diversity instead of power relations. I have shown that popular phenomena – whether people or products – can be designed or derive from various (sub-)communities which draw the attention away from 'domination' and 'subordination' or 'marginality' to an interactive platform of textual production.

I have shown that all modes of production consist of *textual producers* and as such, they are responsible for the generation of the popular text, the *himbo*, the fantasy, hatred and the simulation. A public person who is no longer self-evident: identities are vanishing³⁷⁶. Vanishing identities complicate audience research as well. For instance, the technological development of media and increasing globalization processes contribute to the decontextualization of both people and institutions. I argued that, preferably, they should be studied in their everyday life context, however globalization through media expansion complicates the study of cultural contextual factors (see McLuhan, 1964; Storm, 1996; Holtz, 1999). The internet offers a new dimension to study internet-specific research material and authorized and unauthorized (inter-)actions between institutions and audiences; for instance, between Dogstar's management and fans. Thus, complicating factors include the loss of credibility regarding temporal and spatial dimensions and unreliable 'identities' of subjects (e.g. name, age, nationality, gender, sexual preferences). Other questions arise regarding audiences (internet communities versus everyday life communities), meaning and text production (chapter four), the use of and the (im-) possibilities of the internet (such as agony sites, chapter five) and the consequences for 'high' and 'low' art, which all have to be subjected to further research (see Storm, 1996; Holtz, 1999).

I wanted to show that the construction of the popular comes about not only in the production and

marketing of texts by institutions, but by audiences as well. Audiences who bring about the popular in their production of meanings and texts. Instead of being active readers, viewers, poachers who proof that ‘everyone knows a different Keanu to whom he signifies different things’, textual producers not only ‘travel’, ‘rework’ but ‘create’, ‘produce’ and design the popular in texts as well. The question that remains is then, who is ‘Keanu’ when he is both constructed and ripped off previous associations? When meanings and texts are produced that only slightly resemble the actor? The answer for now, is that Keanu signifies the popular and provides – in textual interactions among the textual producers, respectively institutions, audiences and himself - the world with a sense of (financial) identity in “an unstable world suffering from social anxiety [*The Matrix*].” Just like Rev. Joel Crouse described ‘Neo’ in *The Matrix*, “I’m not just seeing Keanu Reeves. I’m seeing battered women saying no to being battered, gay and lesbian persons saying no to being persecuted and the poor and the oppressed saying no to oppression.³⁷⁷” Or as a fan wrote ‘Shenja brings nothing but trouble and pain and Keanu brings nothing but pleasure and happiness’. So, now you know.

Before and After

Yes I think it's getting better for the two of us
Yes I think it's getting better in the worst way
I refuse to be afraid of almost anyone
Afraid of all the things they do
Or the words that they say
Let's live the way we want to live
And hope they go away³⁷⁸

I almost thought that it would last forever, but it didn't. I almost thought that you irritated me, but you didn't. I almost thought that I would hurt you, but I didn't. I almost thought that I would drown, but I didn't. I almost thought that I would fly away, but I didn't. I had fun. I want to get away. Far behind – never gonna forget, so lot to live for. Thanks my 'virtual' friend.

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Notes

- ¹ I found out that this man contacted Mr. Casablanca.
- ² They both have been subjected to a life in front of the media and therefore, they are (or have been) the topic of public opinion. Bill Clinton was accused of perjury which was shown through his sexual adventures with mistresses. Lady Di was chased by the paparazzi because of her marriage to Prince Charles which turned out to be not so happy after all. The story goes that after their separation, Lady Di was chased into death by paparazzi who followed her in order to take the 'winning shot' of her new and happy love life.
- ³ Becoming well-known in the public sphere is often linked to the person's 'sex appeal'. However, it is more likely that someone's popularity is based on more than his appeal or sexuality alone. For instance, the deed of investigating the truth of his identity (or pleasure; see chapter six) through discursive and overlapping practices of both authorized and unauthorized texts, can cause this interest in a celebrity's life (which is always situated in the context of someone's public and private life).
- ⁴ Products such as movies and magazines are referred to as *texts* when they are received and interpreted by people.
- ⁵ The actor is here a rather confusing term for it refers to both the private person (of the actor) and the public person (of the actor). The 'actor as site' refers explicitly to the productive mode of the actor. However, all three meanings are referred to by 'actor' but from the context it will be clear to which mode actually is referred. I don't want to make a very obvious difference for the 'actor' is a human being after all who represents several roles (assigned or not).
- ⁶ Cultural Studies, an interdisciplinary field, emerged in the US, Australia and Canada, however at the Birmingham University's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) it was most influential and notable. I refer to Graeme Turner's *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1992) and Simon During's *The Cultural Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Culture has been studied from a historical perspective, for example, by the Annales school of historiography; from an anthropological perspective such as by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz; or from a sociological perspective by e.g. Pierre Bourdieu - objects of study are examinations of everyday life of the ordinary and sometimes not so ordinary citizen. Finally, Cultural Studies is studied within literary studies and other forms of criticism as well, like the Frankfurt School and studies by E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams.
- ⁷ For instance, German and some of the Dutch Cultural Studies followers are interested in high versus low art. However, not only Cultural Studies study popular culture, e.g. political economists as well.
- ⁸ Williams, R., *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), p. 90.
 "The concept of culture is a very complex one; throughout history it has had many connotations, "(i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, from Herder and Klemm; [...] (and) (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: **culture** is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film."
- ⁹ Hall, S. (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Milton

Keynes:

The Open University, 1997), pp. 1-11, 15-63.

¹⁰ By studying how various modes of media production function I focus on the discourses and intertexts

of the actor: In general, people watch movies or buy magazines because the actors or famous faces that appear in it. I want to theorize how someone (or something) becomes popular and the actor makes for an interesting hand in this process: On the one hand, the actor is used in advertising campaigns to promote movies (graced with a wide variety of related commodities) - although actors are first of all cast for their acting skills and other artistic motives, they also need to carry the weight of expensive production costs. Put in other words, the movie or play has to (at least) play even the costs and, favorably, make profit. Thus, the actor is often the excuse in the marketing strategies and becomes a graduated scale for (box office) success which makes him an interesting subject of study as well – and on the other hand, actors perform roles in their career that differ from one another and influence meaning and text production. Therefore, it is crucial to study the actor in all his dynamics.

¹¹ Jenkins, H., *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 23-27.

¹² Graaf, S., van der, *Societal Graduation Hymn Tribute: On the Dialectics of Conflict and Consensus Layers Between the Production and Reception of a Specific Media Text* (Utrecht, 1998), pp. 102-105. Also, Hall, S., “Encoding, decoding” in: Doring, S. (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (Routledge: New York, 1993), pp. 90-103.

¹³ Polysemy is an ideological concept and refers to the ‘openness’ of texts which means that different

readings can be explored. However, it is no longer a common practice to understand audience activity through three possible readings. Therefore, I want to focus on a text’s ‘openness’ and direct the ideological consequences to the background.

¹⁴ By *authorized* I refer to ‘everything produced by entertainment institutions that make money out of the production’. Movies accompanied by merchandise, photos made during interviews and the like are authorized texts.

¹⁵ Anderson, J.A., *Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Elaboration of Audiences* (Washington D.C.:

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1989). Anderson discerns two classes of audiences: formal and empirical audiences. Formal audiences are constructed in the discourse and practices of practitioners in the art and industry of textual production, textual analysis, and so on. It’s divided into groups, namely the encoded and analytic audience. Empirical audiences admit to the question of whether real audiences can be constituted which meet the descriptions generated (but these people do not have to be real people!). It consists of five types of audiences. The first is the aggregated audience, the situated audience, the strategic audience, the engaged audience and the fifth is the emergent audience.

¹⁶ By *institution* is meant “any organized element of a society; emphasized are corporative structures”

(R. Williams, 1976). By *agency* is meant “intended and unintended human behavior.” Croteau and Hoynes (1997) suggest to study three types of relationships: 1) relations between institutions; 2) relations within institutions; and 3) relations between institutions and individuals. These relations must be studied in the context of society. With this in mind, I support my own but similar, perspective.

¹⁷ *Unauthorized* texts then refer to ‘everything produced by people outside the institutions that don’t

make money out of these produced texts’. This doesn’t mean that financial elements are not involved, only that there is no direct link to the entertainment business such as a studio or the actor. Thus, a biography written by someone who was not consented to do so by the

subject of the book, belongs to the unauthorized category, though the author and the publishing industry earn money.

In chapter two I have included both the film, publishing and music industry. Together they form (in this study) the entertainment industry. The distinction between ‘authorized’ and ‘unauthorized’ is therefore a tricky one: for instance, a tabloid magazine writes ‘news’ about public figures and these figures are not paid a penny – as a result they could fall under the ‘unauthorized’ mode of production. However, I have not chosen to do so for in my opinion, tabloids repeat their actions over and over again (about the same people that only shift over time) while magazines – like I have shown – interact with other institutional agencies. Authors of unofficial biographies however, can interview affiliated people but money won’t go that way (only when authors are sued!). Basically, I made the distinction between ‘authorized’ and ‘unauthorized’ on the basis of a ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ (money and motives) link to the producers of the entertainment industry which came about by interviews I had with people stemming from both sides of production. Though, I have to admit that the distinction is, at times, rather diffuse nevertheless I tried to explain my choices to my best knowledge (expressed in private, semi-public and private discourses).

18 ‘Public’ refers to both ‘taking place’ outside the home and to having a wide significance as a shared

response to public performances and to public events (thus content, location and degree of shared experience). ‘Private’ refers to meaning production, individual experiences of media products and to the (private) production of products such as writing a poem and art. Both spheres intersect in the semi-public sphere for example, when someone founds a fan club. See also chapter three and five.

19 The ‘actor’ is understood as masculine for my case study, Keanu Reeves, is of the male gender. Richard deCordova (1990) writes about the coming about of the ‘star’. In 1913 and 1914, the film

industry shows a significant change in knowledge production concerning the actor which ultimately led to the *star*. Initially actors were no more than picture personalities, defined by a discourse that restricted knowledge only to the acting skills of the actor. But this changed with the emergence of the star: the outside escapades became the subject of discourse (positive and negative). The actors’ private lives were grasped as a site of knowledge and truth. Series of narratives appeared in order to show the private lives of the actors and led to a more positive image of the theaters in general as well.

20 I don’t want to make a very obvious difference for the ‘actor’ is a human being after all who repre-

sents several roles (attributed or not).

21 Logically, marketing is very important to promote a product. For example, fashion that you can buy

in stores is being ‘sold’ in magazines, through models, public figures, et cetera. Designers are able to burst into public consciousness and change the world by the way people dress in one season. They just need to create a name, often through an established label with an advertising budget that allows them to hire the most attractive people and to underline the look by the introduction of home furnishings. In the 1990s, it is about selling an attitude which is marketed through individuality. Fortunately, people don’t buy everything that is promoted. Thus, some products or some persons become very popular whereas others do not, which again, depends on the context of society.

22 Pearson, R. & Uricchio, W., *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches* (New York: Rout-

ledge, 1991).

23 Knowledge outside the diegetic world of the *Batman* movies.

24 Read the fan section about my experiences with fans who imputed me with personality traits that are

not mine. It’s dealt with from a self-reflexive perspective.

25 See the appendix for Keanu Reeves’ filmography.

26 See appendix for Dogstar-related information.
 27 Which is sold in the United States and Japan as a cd-rom.
 28 In general, Keanu can be found in magazines or other gossip related columns when a new film
 is re-
 leased or when Dogstar has a gig somewhere.
 29 Mukerji, C. & Schudson, M. (eds.), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*
 in
Cultural Studies (Los Angeles: University Of California Press, 1991), pp. 21, 33-35.
 30 This concept is subjected to further exploration that go beyond this study.
 31 Textual producers include institutions and the actor as well for both audiences, institutions and
 the
 actor produce texts. Nevertheless, I prefer that, for now, textual producers especially refer
 to audiences, because I believe that this term as such is not proper enough to include all three
 productive modes later on.
 32 Fiske, J., *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 255-264.
 33 Hall, S., "Encoding, decoding" in: During, S., *The Cultural Studies Reader* (New York:
 Routledge,
 1993).
 34 Media figure refers to both the actor and to his public representations.
 35 The actor is a human being after all and can't be controlled by the other production modes;
 for in-
 stance, he can express himself in such ways that are disliked by both institutions and
 audiences, but none the less, these expressions become subjected to (authorized and
 unauthorized) discourses as well and therefore, they may not be neglected.
 36 Fiske, J., *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) Orig. 1989.
 37 *Polysemy* refers to the process of the creation of a multiplicity of meanings by socially
 situated au-
 diences; these meanings are given way to by the text (which varies from a movie, a picture
 frame to a character in a book or actor). Thus, a text opens up different readings and as such
 socially situated audiences choose 'their' meaning from the text depending on their social
 situation or context (like class, gender and ethnicity).
 38 By 'active consumers' I refer to those audiences who actively 'consume' and make meaning
 of texts.
 Audiences are understood in the more traditional terms (see introduction), while 'active
 producers' refer to audiences who produce meanings *and* texts (like fans, artists and teachers).
 39 It offers a genuine insight into processes of social signification.
 40 'Popular' originates in around and about C15.
 41 Nevertheless, popularity is as old as the human race and it is not only used to refer to positive
 cha-
 racteristics alone. Often (side-)effects of being well-known in the public arena, rear frequently
 their heads. For example, being asked for autographs while you are taking a leak, giving an
 opinion on social or political issues or being sued all the time because people assume you have
 a lot of money. It gets even worse when you are the president of the United States: Jodie Foster
 suffered from a mad fan who wanted to shoot the US president to show her how much he loved
 her and (especially in the 1990s) Bill Clinton had to confess every single sexual detail he has
 performed on and with Monica Lewinsky (and vice versa) just to proof he didn't commit
 perjury. Other 'effects' of being popular can be shown through Lady Di's death which was
 basically caused by paparazzi. The South-American singer Selena was murdered by the president
 of her fan club and recently Steven Spielberg won a lawsuit which freed him from a dangerous
 stalker.
 42 Mukerji, C. & Schudson, M. (eds.), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*
 in
Cultural Studies (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1991).
 Strinati, D., *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

- ⁴³ Power and ideological struggles are inherent in studies about popular phenomena. However, I have some difficulty with the word 'struggle' which is of a semantic nature; it refers to a producer making a text and different members of the audience sort it out. I prefer to refer to this process by 'meaning production' or 'reappropriation'.
- ⁴⁴ Lull, J., *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 6-43.
Thompson, J.B., *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990), pp. 28-121.
- ⁴⁵ Fiske, J., *Reading the Popular* (London: Routledge, 1994) First edition, 1989, p. 1-5.
- ⁴⁶ I have some problems or difficulties with the traditional results of a lot of studies performed by followers of several academic traditions. Although I consider myself as a student who has been taught according to (mainly) thinking patterns of Cultural Studies I disagree with some of these thoughts as well. To mention a few: the relevancy of (still) studying and understanding popular (or media) texts as expressions of capitalist societies; and, the theorization of mainly "pleasure," in my studies it seems that a lot of fans do not perceive their idol as pleasure, but more as a burden or fear (which is not necessary due to embarrassment - see I. Ang's work - or jealousy). Since this is not the focus of this thesis and I do not want to shift the attention away from its topic, I have chosen to - more or less - neglect the influences of power and ideology for now.
- ⁴⁷ I want to emphasize that popular people can't be held for, interchanged or solely understood in terms of their popular 'alter ego'. Thus, the art of acting leads to the actor's performance of double roles. First, acting means that a role or a character is 'expressed' - the actor is getting paid to 'pretend to be someone else' - second, the actor performs other roles as well and some of these roles are a result of his physical being-ness. Thus, besides presenting a role of an actor, he is or can be a male, a friend, a son, a musician, a brother and a celebrity. Depending on the context, one of the roles is more appropriate; hanging out with his family he is less likely to perform his actor-role. Of course, we all have or adapt appropriated social roles (see E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life*, US, 1959). Some of my social roles are being a daughter, a sister, a friend or a teacher and according to the situation such as being at my parents' house, hanging out with one of my friends or travelling around the world, I will act and behave differently according to these roles. Especially, public figures have to deal with roles that are assigned to them - roles they do not necessarily pick for themselves. These roles can be created, among other things, by glossy pictures that accompany an interview, gossip stories, the ambiance of an act-de-presence or in an individual's mind. At the same time, the (active) reader of these articles, pictures, movies, and the internet is assigned to a role as well like a fashion-judge or a fan. Therefore, public figures doing their jobs, are often confronted with 'new' social roles, especially the role of a celebrity, but which - in fact - is based on 'life in a magazine'.
- ⁴⁸ However, this study of the construction of the popular raises more questions than answers regarding first of all, whether the popular is constructed; second, if it is constructed, how it is constructed and how this process of interrelationships functions; third, what the concept of popularity means to business cultures, to people in general and audiences in specific; and fourth, what it means to the popular figure him- or herself.
- ⁴⁹ See books by John Fiske, Graeme Turner, Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu.
- ⁵⁰ However, these questions go beyond the content of this study but are very important and are therefore recommended for further study.
- ⁵¹ The idol is often created into a 'new person' that has nothing to do with first, the actor himself and

second, with public representations most people (would) know him from.
 52 Extracts from *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (October 1997), *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*
 (October
 53 ber 1997) and *V.I.P.* (January 1998).
 The actor as a private person remains private in this thesis. Occasionally I will offer some
 instances
 54 that mix the private person with other roles (in relation to texts and actor-role).
 When the actor is presented as a private person, it's the illusion that he is like his
 representation.
 55 If audiences don't like a product, they won't buy it, even if advertisements are as attractive
 as pos-
 sible.
 56 Although, the actor is pivotal in this study - I had conversations with several actors about
 what it
 means to be an actor in films and on stage - I won't focus on any personal or private thoughts
 or feelings towards both the institutional and reception side of the media industry.
 57 I have to admit the latter was just for my own entertainment.
 58 However, the popular text (the actor) itself is understood as a force of cultural production as
 well for
 it interacts with both institutions and audiences. See chapter six.
 59 It leads to the study of concepts such as auteur theory, objectivity and subjectivity, star status
 and
 power relations.
 60 I refer to *Talent agencies* as well.
 61 The Telecommunications Act of 1996 passed the Congress. The Act represents the rewrite
 of United
 States communications laws (reform of FCC policy). It dramatically changed the ground rules
 for competition and regulation in most sectors of the communication industry such as
 telephone services, cable TV and broadcasting. I refer to *Blumenfeld & Cohen – Technology*
LawGroup for more information (e-mail: info@technologylaw.com).
 62 There are no longer media companies that are specialized in one particular branch. They are invol-
 ved in five or six areas whether it is software, radio stations, publishing or theme parks.
 63 Through personal computers, phone lines or cables or wireless.
 64 Fiske, J., *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991) Orig. 1989.
 65 Johannes Gutenberg (between 1394 and 1399-1468), a German goldsmith and printer, is one
 of the
 possible inventors of the art of printing. Another possible inventor is Laurens Jansz. Coster
 from Haarlem (The Netherlands), who worked with loose characters as well. Books that are
 printed until 1500 are called incunabula, and the ones that are printed between 1500 and
 1540 are called post-incunabula. Incunabula are very similar in terms of letter type, illustration
 and classification to handwriting at that time; in the first half of the sixteenth century books
 became mass products and at the same time printers developed their own (and recognizable)
 printing style. In the nineteenth century new printing techniques were invented and further
 developed which resulted in the end of that century in the mechanical reproduction of
 printed matters.
 66 Read Neil Postman's study (1986) on "The Typographic Mind," in which he describes how
 the print-
 ed word influenced spoken language. This is a starting-point on how media offer the way
 people perceive their environment.
 67 Enlightenment starts in England via important enlightened figures as Bacon, Hobbes, Locke
 and later
 Hume and Shaftesbury. It had its culminating point in France in works by Voltaire, Diderot,
 Montesquieu, D'Alembert, Condillac and Helvétius Turgot. It is in France where a critical and
 summarized overview appeared on the status and position of all knowledge in *Encyclopédie*.

In Germany the movement started in writings by philosophers as Thomasius and Wolff who focused on the optimistic rationality of Leibniz, but it ended here with works of Kant, Lessing and Wieland.

⁶⁸ In the seventeenth century Rationalism flourished through the work of Descartes, Spinoza and Leib-

niz. These philosophers grasped rationality as a metaphysical system in order to explain the world, based on the assumption that even the world, outside rational processes of thinking, was organized according to the rules of logic and maths. Nowadays, rationality is held for a methodological point of view, that is, science should exclusively work through reasoning and not through irrational processes.

⁶⁹ Before World War I, American film companies concentrated mainly on the increase of the domestic

film market, France controlled the foreign markets. The period from 1905 till 1912 shows a 'coming to terms' with the new medium and leads to an increase in theaters – Nickelodeon boom – that led to the establishment of several businesses that are still known today: Warner brothers, Carl Leammle (*Universal*), Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Marcus Loew, Adolph Zukor and William Fox. This period forms also the basis of the struggle between the established companies and new ones which are referred to as the independent ones. The 1910s then, lead to the Hollywood studio system; due to vertical integrated activities and 'block booking' studios gain more and more power. It is a period where the feature film develops, the star system arises, companies move to Hollywood (from the East coast), social pressures increase, the value of censorship is highly esteemed and the Americans take over the world film markets after the mid-1915s. The film industry made so much money that it was able to base its costs on both domestic and foreign markets. It also led to the establishment of the *Motion Picture Association of America* (1922) – and in 1945 its international counterpart the Motion Picture Association (MPA). The late 1910s and 1920s show an increase in alternative film styles like French and German Impressionism, Soviet Montage and experimental and abstract styles such as Surrealism and Dadaism. The late 1920s show a successful break-through by the introduction of sound movies which affect both economical profits and film style. In the thirties the United States suffer a severe 'Depression' which is palpable in the film industry, but the beginning of World War II contributes to the recovery. The film industry has changed due to the introduction of sound and the Depression. Some companies went bankrupt, some are taken over and others merge. The industry counts in those years eight big studios, namely *Paramount*, *Loew's/MGM*, *20th Century Fox*, *Warner Bros.*, *RKO*, *Universal*, *Columbia* and *United Artists*. Besides the 'Majors', there are also 'Minors' (*The Independents*) which took care after smaller and 'extra' films and were interested in more prestigious films as well. The 1960s and 1970s are dominated by the Vietnam war, war-related and other social issues. Late 1970s show an increase in blockbusters generated by new 'movie brats' like Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. The studios lose some of their power to independent production companies. Although the former still controlled both domestic and foreign distribution sales of American films, the latter developed more and more projects and packages (consists of script, director and actor). The concept of 'deal' – like 'overall deal' and 'development deal' - became very important. All participants of a package should be satisfied and therefore negotiations were stretched 'until forever' by executives, agents and others involved in the process. Film budgets increase over this period as well, but with the estimation of profits of sequels and merchandise (including videos), ticket sales and all the other sales seem to be able to cover all expenses. The 1980s and 1990s don't show a great discrepancy to earlier decades. Movie budgets still increase, but a very important difference in the mid-1980s, is the domination of the media industry by television and VCR. The latter is responsible for first-run movies not to be watched in a theater but on rented cassettes at home. Many people create movie-libraries as well and tape movies form television. Incredible losses of money have led to circumstances that production opportunities are to be looked for in a low-risk marketplace, that is, 70mm blockbusters and cable television (see Thompson and Bordwell, 1994).

- 70 For more information about early cinema practices I refer to studies by Tom Gunning (1990), Charles Musser (1990), Kristin Thompson (1985), Mirjam Hansen (1991).
- 71 *Premiere: The Movie Magazine*, July 1998 offers two interesting articles on the film industry: “Blue-print For a Blockbuster: Armageddon” by Gregg Kilday and “Flirting With Disaster: New Line Cinema” by John Connolly.
- 72 See for important terminology and definitions (IMDb) the appendix.
- 73 DeBont says that “this has caused the increase of expenses dramatically. The effect is that only two out of ten movies have a chance of breaking even their costs. Which has a malicious effect on the film industry. Nowadays, five to ten new films come out every week so perhaps if there would be an audience for it, they might not come due to the fact they simply cannot see all the movies.” A success is measured by the openings data and weekends (see appendix for box office success of movies in which Keanu Reeves performs).
- 74 There are roughly three casting categories: principal players (major speaking parts), secondary play-ers (non-major speaking parts) and extras.
- 75 For further information on CAA, I refer to *Back Stage*, September 27, 1991; *Daily Variety*, March 14, 1990; *People*, July 23, 1990; *LA Magazine*, January 1991; *Daily Variety*, June 10, 1993; *LA Magazine*, January-August 1995; *LA Times*, April 21, 1995; *Daily Variety*, February 22, 1995; *Los Angeles Magazine*, June 1995; *LA Times*, August 23, 1995, August 24, 1995, September-December 1995, October 24, 1995; *Daily Variety*, November 7, 1995; *Wall Street*, August 15, 1995, November 7, 1995; *Financial Times*, August 25, 1995; *LA Times*, January 19, 1996, October 25, 1996; *Daily Variety*, March 31, 1997; *IMDb News*, January 21-March 1, 1999 (Online)
- 76 Ron Meyer, Bill Haber, Rowland Perkins and Mike Rosenfeld Sr.
- 77 CAA does have a contract with Intel (computer chips). Also, CAA has a new media lab which allows special cameras and using computers to enhance cinematic image which is very interesting. In 1993 commercial agent Stephen Carbone (ICM) started working at CAA to put top directors and actors in such wide-ranging advertising fields as television commercials, tour support, interactive media and advertising-supported productions. See for other information I refer to *Variety*, July 21 1993, pp. 9-10; *Variety*, September 6 1993, p. 5; *Hollywood Reporter*, May 3 1993, p. 4; *Variety*, September 28 1995, pp. 19-20; and *Variety*, January 8 1996, p. 1. Other projects reported about are: (1994) CAA and Bell Atlantic Corp., Nynex Corp. and Pacific Telesis Group were close to sign a pact that aims to create a network to deliver video programming into the homes of phone customers (*Newsweek*, June 27 1994; *Wall Street Journal*, August 15 1994; and *Daily Variety*, November 7 1994). In 1996 CAA was betting on the Internet as the next mass entertainment medium. Note: Talent agencies are legally blocked from ownership of television networks or film studios. But the Internet is a new frontier where no such rules apply (yet – 1996). In December 1996 CAA and Intel Corporation – the largest computer chip maker - announced the opening of the CAA/Intel Media Lab, a new multimedia facility intended to further the creation of cutting-edge digital entertainment for home personal computers. For further information: <http://www.caa.com> and <http://www.intel.com>
- 78 Ron Howard & Brian Grazer’s Imagine Entertainment
 Danny De Vito & Michael Shamberg’s Jersey Films (Universal)
 ImageMovers (Dreamworks)
 Jerry Bruckheimer and the Kennedy Marshall Co. (Disney)
 Tom Cruise & Paula Wagner’s C-W Prods. (Paramount)

Michael Douglas (Paramount)
 79 With regard to both one another and to the press (Ovitz made it very clear to never talk to the press).
 See *Variety*, October 6-12 1997, pp. 66-69.
 80 For instance, Michael Menchel is now working for Ovitz, and with Menchel his clients went along including Robin Williams, Dennis Hopper, John McTiernan and Joe Johnson.
 81 More information on this “declaration of war” can be retrieved at *Daily Variety* issues of December 1998 till March 1999, various newspapers such as *Washington Post*, *LA Times* and at the internet movie database.
 82 CAA-clients include Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, Keanu Reeves, Ethan Hawke, Demi Moore, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and Barry Levinson.
 83 Some interesting topics: Huvane wants to work with the most talented people. CAA represents Keanu, besides Huvane there are other people who do things for him that he does not even know about. [...] An artist-agent relationship is a very complex one. “Because one has to have a personal understanding with one another. It is not a business, although there is business involved. It is about representing someone and that person really has to understand what you want to do and agrees with you.” [...] “Taking on a new client, you look for whether you like his work and if you believe in this person. Keanu already had a career and other people believed in him as well. It is about a feeling about who you want to work with, then you see a couple of interviews and I thought that Keanu was a real smart guy and that was the reason that he wanted to work with him.”
 84 Keanu has been a client since the Kenneth Branagh movie and “is a great client to work for” according to Huvane. Although, Reeves was signed by Todd Smith, Huvane became more and more involved with him because Reeves’ manager is a very good friend of his.
 85 “There is no set Keanu Reeves-movie that is what makes him such a great case study. The spectrum is gigantic, diverse and dynamic; it varies from independent to big studio movies.” Huvane always thought of his client as a “great actor who was misunderstood,” which “pissed me off.” Erwin Stoff thought the same way and “Keanu was really smart about it as well.”
 86 Keanu is represented by PMK’s Leslee Dart. PMK is one of the most influential public relations agencies dealing with (big name) actors. PMK is founded in 1971 by Pat Kingsley and Lois Smith (Pickwick Public Relations) and merged in 1980 to become PMK which is nowadays co-owned by Pat Kingsley, Lois Smith and Leslee Dart. However, PMK is recently sold to McCann-Erickson World-Group with clients such as Anheuser Busch, Coca-Cola and General Motors.
 87 Stoff himself has a Doctorate in dramatic art and theater (studied at the University of Washington).
 88 Further information about Erwin Stoff see ‘Stoff – Produttore’ at www.altavista.com
 89 Stoff told me that “there was no money involved” however, that’s very unusual for executive producers do get a fee. However, this might be a specific case since Stoff is Reeves’ manager (or Stoff didn’t want to mention it).
 90 Not only Huvane and Stoff find suitable scripts. For example, Stoff finds articles in newspapers serve as a basis for the development of scripts and Reeves also asks him “to find something like this or that or call him or her.”
 91 Stoff keeps himself updated on what is written about his client in the magazines, sometimes even on the internet. He has noticed as well that Reeves is treated differently in magazines than his

92 contemporaries in terms of describing Reeves' behavior during interviews instead of what he
 is saying. Fan mail is not read, but thrown away. Stoff remembers that a course was taught on
 contemporary culture in which Reeves was used as a hand. He thought it is a smart move since
 students are more motivated when dealing with contemporary 'icons' (see chapter five).
 Stoff also stresses that "you can't change an image by going out and say 'I am not Ted'. Only
 by ta-
 king on different parts. What is linked to this, and what makes Keanu interesting, is that he
 consciously and conscientiously does not want to put anything out in those wires. It is about
 to work and let it all work back. Which is of course never really the way it happens, because
 every choice in your life brings a change. [...] In the end Reeves gave an interview in a big
 gay-magazine (*OUT*), which was a very smart move of dealing with it." Reeves, Erwin and
 Kevin discussed the issue and found that the best way of dealing with it was to do a statement
 but not in a mainstream gay presentation (see chapter six).
 93 The agent's task is to negotiate the best deal possible which is generally based on the last deal
 nego-
 tiated for that client ("quote"). However, when a part is able to launch the actor's career into
 a new path, the possibility is taken into account when negotiating the deal.
 94 Studios have different 'pitching ideas', namely some want to be involved in the packaging
 process
 while others want producers to bring in their own elements that might be useful to the studio.
 Studios have different relationships with different actors and directors, so, an actor can have
 a deal with a certain studio and is therefore limited to particular working policies. Keanu
 Reeves had a deal with *Twentieth Century Fox*.
 95 Actors are represented by Screen Actors Guild. A brief history of SAG's task. In the late 1920s
 and
 early 1930s, SAG started out of clandestine meetings of a group of character actors at a
 private men's club. These meetings had to be a secret because several studios hated the idea
 of an union that looked after their actors. The goal of this union for motion picture
 performers was to correct the abuses heaped upon free-lance players and to negotiate a square
 deal with fair wages and working conditions for all performers. Later also campaigns were set
 up with regard to (gender) discrimination, color stereotyping and misrepresentations, research
 after and education about AIDS.
 Every actor who wants to work in the entertainment industry needs to be a SAG member.
 However, the actor won't get his first job without being a member and he can't become a
 member when he hasn't had a job yet... SAG is just one of multiple organizations that look
 after the well being of people who work in the entertainment industry. For instance, there is
 the Director's Guild of America and the Writers Guild of America. All organizations are
 directly connected with like-minded businesses of the industry and also with keep themselves
 informed regarding the entertainment business in general. As a result laws and policies have
 been developed that look after an honest business structure. For example, SAG Regulations
 (1939) prohibit agents from producing and studio executives from having a financial interest
 in talent agencies.
 96 The part that he was working on was *The Matrix*, which started filming in March 1998.
 97 Two in Canada and two in the United States.
 98 April 1999: Keanu is interested in both Peter Jackson's *The Lord Of The Rings* and Bryan
 Singer's
The X Men, both as yet unmade and the subject of intense (even ludicrous) speculation. "I'm
 petitioning to play Strider [in *Lord*]. I'd love to work with the director [NZer Jackson, of
 Heavenly Creatures and *The Frighteners*], but I'm not sure if it's going to go ahead. I hope
 I can. As for *The X Men* - I'd love to do it, and I met with Bryan [of *The Usual Suspects* and
Apt Pupil fame], but I'm not really sure if I'm the right one for it. I mean, I love *The X Men*
 comics, but the older comics, the classic ones. I don't think I'm going to be right. I'd like to
 - you know when you read something when you're a kid and you think, 'I want to do that!!!'.
 But I'm not sure I can."

- ⁹⁹ Chilton, R. & Butler, P., *Measuring Cinema Audiences* (Raymond Kent, 1994), p. 177.
¹⁰⁰ Research methods can vary from being experimental, survey research, content analysis, qualitative and to the Q-sort-method. Read: Den Boer, D., Bouwman, H., Frissen, V. & Houben, M., *Methodologie en Statistiek voor Communicatie-Onderzoek* (Houten: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, 1994).
¹⁰¹ See *Box Office Guru*, April 11, 1999:

“While originally connecting with its target audience of young males, *The Matrix* has now reached out and captured moviegoers of all ages according to Dan Fellman, distribution chief of Warners. *The Matrix* is benefiting from strong word-of-mouth and exhibitors are already seeing repeat business for this event film, said Fellman who also confirmed that producer Joel Silver and directors Andy and Larry Wachowski have discussed a storyline for a possible sequel.”

Or in *LA Times*, April 16, 1999 by Richard Natale:

“Box office: The film quickly established itself by appealing to all four major groups of viewers.” The progression of “Matrix” from hit movie to pop-culture event happened almost overnight and is a rare instance of a film that moves quickly from a younger to an older audience. “It’s becoming a ‘dream’ movie,” says the film’s producer Joel Silver, “a four-quadrant movie [older and younger, male and female]. That’s the Holy Grail, a movie that gets everybody. We all try for that and sometimes end up with nobody.” The phenomenon is similar to last year’s “There’s Something About Mary”—though “Matrix” moved up the demographic ladder even faster. By its second week, the film was attracting older filmgoers and women, not the usual audience for sci-fi action. “Matrix’s” stylized look, cutting-edge effects and virtual-reality musings turned out to have more crossover appeal than anyone thought—the proverbial right movie at the right time. The Wachowski Brothers’ hip sci-fi/martial-arts effects-laden film immediately struck at its core of young males around the age of 25, says Warner Bros. distribution chief Dan Fellman. Having captured its primary target, the studio was prepared for a successful run. Expectations rose as “Matrix” quickly moved beyond young males. The film debuted on the Wednesday before Easter weekend to \$4.8 million, and then repeated that number on Thursday. There was always the chance that by Friday grosses would start to level out since young males are usually the first in line to see a movie. On Friday, though, the film more than doubled its opening-day take, indicating that young males were already talking the movie up. By the end of its first week, “Matrix” had grossed \$45 million and Fellman was braced for a 35% to 40% drop, which is average even for hit action movies, particularly following a holiday weekend. But second-weekend grosses fell only 19%. Fellman says he was getting reports of repeat business, a sure sign that a film has become a must-see; remember “Titanic”? “There were stories of college-age males showing up at the film wearing long black leather coats [which are sported by several of “Matrix’s” central characters],” Fellman said. Silver meanwhile was getting calls from older male friends who confessed to having seen the film twice already in its first two weeks. Women liked it too. Opening numbers had already been strong gender-wise for an action film—55% male and 45% female. By Week 2 it was edging toward 50/50, according to Warner Bros. Adults, fed by word of mouth, reviews and stories in the press, were showing up and, especially on weekends, bringing their kids under 17, who require a parent to gain admission. (Of course, like “Mary,” young teens often buy tickets for PG films and then sneak into R-rated ones.) “The reviews and feature stories koshed the movie for adults,” says Fellman. As a result “Matrix” is tracking as good or better than “Liar, Liar,” the Jim Carrey comedy that opened to similar business two years ago. “Liar, Liar” ended up with nearly \$180 million. After the first weekend, “Matrix” looked to be a \$125-million movie. “Matrix” ended its second full week at \$77 million, indicating that \$150 million is almost certain, with \$175 million or more a real possibility. “Matrix” has a relatively open field through May 19, when the tsunami known as “Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace” hits the U.S. shores.

- ¹⁰² Especially in an age where fast progression and developments of technological origin create new media forms. As a result potential audiences are spread over more media. Audiences get fragmented, not only due to technical developments and innovative forces, but due to globalization processes as well which complicates audience research.

- ¹⁰³ Another example is *Opinion Research Corporation International*. The Opinion Research Corporation International (ORC) offers expertise in the field of public opinion research. An example of one of their research methods is *Caravan* which is a telephone survey (in the form of random-digital-dialing (RDD)). Industries and issues that are researched on a regular basis include advertising, media, entertainment, public relations, health and beauty, consumer services and political issues. Consumer services are specialized in researching consumer markets (e.g. utilities, leisure, transport) and offer both ad-hoc and continuous research. Important issues are competitive dynamics and positioning, marketing segmentation and targeting, development of new products and services and finally, consumer satisfaction and retention. Another area of interest is image research. In order to sell products, corporations have to know what consumers need and value, what they want from the corporations and what they think of them. ORC helps to develop and manage images that lead to a strengthening of one's position in the marketplace and to a communications strategy that builds consideration and trust.
- ¹⁰⁴ The word rating also refers to a (voluntary) rating system which exists of codes that provide audiences, especially parents, with a set of guidelines regarding the content of films. Such as G for General Audiences where all ages are admitted, M for Mature Audiences where parental guidance is suggested but all ages are admitted, R for Restricted where children under the age of sixteen would not be admitted without an accompanying parent or adult guardian, X for no one under seventeen years of age. This rating system provides parental guidelines instead the (dis-)approval of movies by the film industry itself. Later M changed into GP for General Audiences with Parental Guidance suggested and then into PG for Parental Guidance Suggested. In 1984 the PG-category was split into on the one hand, PG and on the other hand, PG-13 which referred to a more intense content. In 1990 ratings are accompanied by short explanations about a movie's content as well which can be found at the theaters, reviews and listings. Another revision is that X changed into NC-17 which means that no one under seventeen years old is admitted. The ratings filled the gap after giving up the Hays Production Code. These codes are trademarked and therefore can be used only by those who submit their films for rating.
- Advertising and trailers must be submitted to the *Advertising Administration* for approval prior to its release to the public sphere. Not only motion pictures are submitted, but other aspects as well such as print ads, press books, radio and television spots, videocassette packaging and theatrical and home video trailers. Each trailer provides information regarding the audience for which the trailer is approved and the rating of the motion picture that is being advertised.
- ¹⁰⁵ See also www.itashiki.com/nielsen.htm
- ¹⁰⁶ Ang describes Nielsen (in combination with Nielsen's web site) by: 'What people are watching?' is studied by the use of a sample over 4000 households which provides the company with information concerning the number of television sets; metering equipment on television sets, VCR's and cable boxes (and satellite dishes) are installed. Besides the programs and shows that are being watched Nielsen also studies 'who are watching?'. Audience measurement takes place on the basis of meters that are installed in sample households nationwide.
- ¹⁰⁷ See also Ang, I., *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991) regarding rating courses (including qualitative ratings).
- ¹⁰⁸ Other studies are done as well, but the ones I mentioned are the most relevant ones for this study. See also Mankiewicz, F. & Swerdlow, J., "Ratings" in: *Remote Control: Television and the Manipulation of American Life* (New York: Times Books, 1978).
- ¹⁰⁹ Methodological references include Beville (1985), Webster and Lichty (1991), and Wimmer & Dominick (1991).

- 110 E.g. audience simulation for a new magazine.
- 111 Miller, P.V., "Made-To-Order and Standardized Audiences: Forms of Reality in Audience Measurement."
- 112 Motivational research locates subconscious reasons behind buying impulses through in-depth inter-views with representatives of American consumers like the ordinary housewife. It is based on Freudian psychology.
- 113 See also books with regard to advertising businesses such as D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles which was established in November 1985 by the merger of the Benton & Bowles (B&B) and D'Arcy-MacManus Masius (D-MM) advertising agencies (<http://www.dmbb.com>).
- 114 The concept 'international marketing' has experienced a progression from the production-oriented idea and the customer-directed approach to the 'ecologic view'. The ecologic perspective understands the firm, the marketing strategy and the marketing environment as an open interacting system. The environment - that is society or culture - is emphasized as a constant flux and the firm's task is to react, interact and pro-act in order to survive. Thus, a company tries to meet its objectives in a certain place and time and the latter two regulate marketing strategies that suit the environment better and are therefore more workable than others. There is no single profitable or best solution for any situation and therefore coexisting strategies work simultaneously in a defined market situation. Hans Thorelli's *International Marketing: An Ecologic View* (revised, orig. 1980) offers a detailed perspective on ecologic international marketing in terms of company characteristics, the structure of the environment and the interactive processes of international marketing strategies.
- 115 However, the reader has to keep in mind the ratio of magazines among various nations. For example, The Netherlands has far less teen magazines than the United Kingdom. I do not know an exact percentage, but an approximately percentage of 35 less teen magazines in The Netherlands than in the United Kingdom.
- 116 The world is basically divided into three great market regions, Japan, Europe and the United States (called the Triad countries). These three regions rule the multinational business, even with regard to the film industry.
- 117 Societies are driven by two forces, namely on the one hand competition, and on the other hand, co-operation. An example is the (more or less) recent split from former *Creative Artists Agency* front-man Michael Ovitz and his attitude towards the CAA right now. Ovitz has founded a new management company, *Artists Management Group*, and wanted to cooperate with CAA but since January 1999 Ovitz has tried to get agents from CAA to work for him and some of CAA's clients as well.
- 118 Cavusgil also presents a market-oriented clustering approach in order to make sense of global markets (in terms of specific features of each market). These clusters are based on factors such as age, education, urbanization and women's status in society. Five clusters are discerned globally: dependent, seeker, climber, luxury and leisure, and rocking chair societies. Not only studies on the markets and their structures are done, but on segments of the industries as well.
- 119 American Marketing Association: Committee on Definitions, '*Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Marketing Terms*' (1960).
- 120 Borden, N.H., "The Concept of the Marketing Mix" in: Schwartz, G. *Science in Marketing* (Chicago: J. Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 386-97.
- 121 McCarthy, E.J., *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1978), 6th ed.

- 122 Advertising relates to the policies and procedures regarding the amount to spend, the desired product image (and corporate/actor's image), and the mix advertising to the trade business and customers or audiences.
- 123 Promotions relate to the special selling plans or devices directed at or through the trade and the form or appearance of these devices for customer promotions (and trade promotions).
- 124 Physical handling refers to warehousing, transportation and inventories.
- 125 Provided by Twentieth Century Fox Exhibitor Services Department.
- 126 Other important topics are for instance, trade behavior and competitive businesses.
- 127 But in general, the amount of money spent on the advertising campaign is about 25 to 30% of the total budget - for the smaller movies (\$20 million) it is about 10 to 15% of the total budget.
- 128 *The Matrix* received approximately 75% 'very good' to 'excellent' ranking. Around 85% really enjoyed the special effects (rough cut, not all special effects had been completed yet). For more information: <http://www.warnerbros.com>
- 129 Due to earlier release date of *The Matrix* promotional activities (including merchandise) are largely skipped (some take place after the release) for the movie is a straight hit.
- 130 Meehan, E., "Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!: The Political Economy of a Commercial Intertext" in: Pearson, R. & Uricchio, W. (eds.), *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 47.
- 131 See <http://www.focusgroups.com> for more information on marketing research services; also <http://www.nipo.nl>, and Brand Futures Group and MediaLab.
- 132 An example of the latter is provided by Janett Nichol who designs sports wear for *NIKE*; she is inspired by street cultures. For instance, Harlem (New York) serves as a source for new designs which are derived from the boys who play basketball or the people that hang out and around Washington Square. Not only advice stems from youth, sports men like Michael Jordan proof to provide useful information that suits the company as well. Jordan for example, wanted sports gear that had long sleeves, but asked for bigger pockets since his hands are pretty big as well Other important ways to find out what sells well and what does not, is to stroll down shops where sports wear is sold. Just by walking in and see what is sold a lot, tells a lot about what is popular.
- 133 *Axiom Research Company* (ARC) "is a full-service market research, public opinion polling and strategic consulting business which provides its clients – both private and public sector organizations - with focus groups, surveys and strategic planning services." See <http://www.arc.com>
- 134 *Ogilvy & Mather* focuses on the markets of Asia Pacific. Marketing methods that can be accessed through them include Strategic direct marketing (for cost-effective customer communications, like direct mailings), Database marketing (laying out a database regarding customer information), Loyalty marketing, Telemarketing and Interactive marketing (internet).
- 135 *Sputnik* is a network of individuals who track the trends. It is an innovative market research firm that examines today's alternative youth cultures for clues to tomorrow's mainstream trends and markets. *Sputnik* is founded by Janine Lopiano-Misdorn and Joanne DeLuca. Through *Mindtrends*, they report emerging movements among youth communities and interpret these movements into opportunities for marketing, new product development, brand management

and advertising. In order to reach the people that hang out and around “the underground” or “the fringe,” reporters from Sputnik enter a circle of people. These young reporters find progressive thinkers and doers and communicate with them. Often, one of the reporters already belongs to a certain circle or culture. They have video cameras and tape conversations held in the group’s used language or slang. Sputnik tries to learn and understand mind-sets behind the rise of a popular phenomenon or trend.

Sputnik provides information to clients like Reebok International, PepsiCo., Levi-Strauss, Shiseido International and National Football League Properties.

¹³⁶ White, K., “Burn Down the House of Commons in Your Brand New Shoes” in: *Commodify Your Dissent* (New York: The Baffler Literary Magazine, 1997).

¹³⁷ Maarek, P.J., *Political Marketing and Communication* (Paris: LITEC, 1992).

¹³⁸ Once a week.

¹³⁹ Copies stem from countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Nether-

lands, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Mexico, Peru, Canada, Australia and Japan, and titles include *MovieLine, Hello!, Cosmopolitan, Premiere, Variety, Big!, Vogue, B, Company, Marie Claire, Privé, Story, Viva, Nieuwe Yes, Hitkrant, New Woman, Skrien, Empire, People, Globe, National Enquirer, Allure, Max, Vanity Fair, Penthouse, Strictly, Attitude, Details, Vandidas, XXL and Bravo.*

¹⁴⁰ For more than 25 years *Cosmopolitan* has been the number one in the category ‘Young Woman’. Its

‘ideal’ reader is described as a woman, age 29, who stems from the AB top class. She can be described in terms of money, job, flat, probably boyfriend, couple of times on vacation, car and independent. Statistics show that *Cosmopolitan* is read among young women between eighteen and 37 years old. *Cosmopolitan* sells about 460.000 copies (pro month) and has about 2.5 million readers which means that each copy is read by five people. The magazine has 220.000 non-male subscribers, but research has turned out that *Cosmopolitan’s* readers consist of twenty-one percent males. The company consists of six departments, namely, fashion, pictures-editor, art department (graphics), features, beauty and advertising. The magazine itself is promoted through corporate communications, that also takes care after the public relations for all magazines at the National Magazine House, such as *Company, Good Housekeeping, She, Harper’s & Queens* and *Zest.*

¹⁴¹ *Yes’* target group consists of women between age seventeen and twenty nine with a readership core

between age nineteen and twenty four. Most female readers have a boyfriend, lots of girlfriends, live at their parents’ house, have a job on the side-line and are honest and open; the magazine they want must be sincere and authentic. *Nieuwe Yes* “speaks its readers language, knows its readers insecurities and reaches them free choice solutions.” It has 67.169 subscribers (1998), sells 58.362 copies and it has also more readers pro copy. The magazine can be described in terms of fashion, beauty, emotion, human interest, culinary, education and profession, tourism and shopping. “Show” is a heading that gives way to up-to-date information about “everything and everyone who is active” in the world of entertainment.

¹⁴² Nowadays, magazines maintain a strange relation with publicists: Various magazines feature cele-

brities on their covers or in the magazines and as an attendant circumstance the celebrity’s publicist wants to have all-over control. Thus, the publicist decides which photographer to use and a convenient studio for the celebrity. On top of that the publicist wants to use, a to him or her, familiar stylist and wants the right to approve the photos. Another possibility for the magazine, is to buy stock photos of a celebrity (from an agency) but which goes through a publicist as well who often does not approve of those photos either. A final option is to buy still photos (or handouts) directly from the publicist, however an extravagant amount of money is charged to publish such photos.

Although magazines have to pay for the photo shoot to get done, publicists generally dictate

the hair, wardrobe and makeup. Photographers often get paid less than the stylists and they are asked to give up their copyright to the taken photographs (or buyout). After the sale the publicist and the celebrity determine the distribution of the photos. The image that appears in magazines – but in other media forms as well – is generally created and constructed after the ‘preferred image’ of a celebrity. And indeed contributes to the anonymity of the actor as a private person but gives way to the creation of the public identity of the non-specific person!

¹⁴³ Letter sent to me, by Maggi Koumi, Chief-in-Editor *Hello!* (February 1998).

¹⁴⁴ The question that arises is how far the interviewee’s personality can be reproduced based on the si-

tuation of an interview and on a time slot of five minutes and up? The situation is always viewed from two perspectives. Interviewees often claim that words have been put out of the context in ways that are misleading or that “stupid” questions are being asked. The interviewer complains about an interviewee who does not say much or seems bored, even irritated. But as far as this study has shown the press and film industry are interdependent; they need each other because magazines need to fill their pages and bring its readers updated information while the film industry needs to advertise upcoming movies through interviews with starring actors, directors and so on.

¹⁴⁵ *Vanity Fair* (October 1995) received letters from people who read the issue with Keanu Reeves on

the cover. See appendix for these letters. Another example can be found in *Village Voice* (September 12, 1995) from someone who responds to Amy Taubin’s review of *A Walk in the Clouds*. See appendix as well.

¹⁴⁶ References to the activities and effects of music, see Mitroff, I. & Bennis, W., *The Unreality Industry*

(1989, pp. 56-58), Kaplan, E.A., “Whose Imaginary? The Televisual Apparatus, the Female Body and Textual Strategies in Select Rock Videos on MTV” (1988, pp. 132-155) and Crisell, A., “Radio Signs” (1986, pp. 45-56).

¹⁴⁷ Dekker, F., *In Hoeverre Draagt de Platenmaatschappij Epitaph bij aan de Popularisatie van de Subcultuur Punk?* (1999).

¹⁴⁸ ‘A&R’ stands for ‘Artists and Repertoire’.

¹⁴⁹ For instance, Al Smith, former soundman of CBGB is now A&R representative and Lyle Preslar, former guitarist for Minor Threat.

¹⁵⁰ These memos are of a binding status and binds a band until a contract is signed – and there is no time

limit. Since a memo is legal, a band cannot sign a contract with another label or put out its own material before the agreement is untied.

¹⁵¹ The producer usually brings in his ‘own technicians’.

¹⁵² Just like any other manager who works in the entertainment industry he is paid 15% (on commission

basis whereas an agent generally earns 10% and both can make more off their clients by separate deals and contracts).

¹⁵³ There is still some space left for independent producers who are attracted on a project basis, in order

to maintain directly connected with ‘what is out there’ in the various music scenes via micro and niche media. Despite high market concentration policies, the open system continues the promotion of diversity and innovative tendencies within the industry which serves a major’s goal after increasing profits and control.

¹⁵⁴ Albin, Steve, “The Problem with Music” in: Frank, T. & Weiland, M., (eds.) *Commodify Your Dis-*

sent (New York: The Baffler Literary Magazine, Inc., 1997).

¹⁵⁵ See appendix for various articles and reviews of Dogstar.

¹⁵⁶ I refer to David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson's comprehensive book (1994) on film history, also
 the book by William Luhr (1987) offers an international approach of world cinema since 1945.

¹⁵⁷ Another reason is that various people don't want to cooperate for they are afraid of providing to many
 'answers' and lose their jobs.

¹⁵⁸ Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

¹⁵⁹ McQuail, D., *Audience Analysis* (Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 90.

¹⁶⁰ The intertext consists of three types of texts, respectively primary, secondary and tertiary texts (Fiske,
 1987).

¹⁶¹ Primary texts are original texts that are being viewed or read and whereabouts knowledge is formed,
 based along the lines of genre, character and content. Secondary texts are those texts that exist 'between' the viewer or reader and the primary text such as criticism and publicity material.

¹⁶² "The Structure of the Celebrity Manufacturing Industry" in: Mitroff, I. & Bennis, W., *The Unreality Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 107.

¹⁶³ The model also shows that the activity of 'making' and 'promoting' media figures is complicated and

requires cooperation of various industries for it to operate (see note 163, 1989, p. 106).

¹⁶⁴ *Production information Devil's Advocate* (1997)

Directed: Taylor Hackford

Writing credits: Andrew Neiderman (novel) and Jonathan Lemkin

Genre: drama, horror, thriller

Tagline: The newest attorney at the world's most powerful law firm has never lost a case.

But he's about to lose his soul (one of more taglines)

Cast overview, first billed only:

Keanu Reeves	Kevin Lomax
Al Pacino	John Milton
Charlize Theron	Mary Ann Lomax
Jeffrey Jones	Eddie Barzoon
Judith Ivey	Mrs. Lomax
Connie Nielsen	Christabella
Craig T. Nelson	Alexander Cullen
Tamara Tunie	Jackie Heath
Ruben Santiago-Hudson	Leamon Heath
Debra Monk	Pam Garrety
Vyto Ruginis	Weaver
Laura Harrington	Melissa Black
Pamela Gray	Diana Barzoon
George Wyner	Meisel
Christopher Bauer	Gettys

MPAA: Rated R for sexuality, nudity, violence and language

Runtime: USA: 144/ UK: 145/ Hungary: 140/ Norway: 145

Country: USA

Language: English

Color: Color (Technicolor)

Sound Mix: DTS/ Dolby Digital/ SDDS

Certification: USA: R/ UK: 18/ Brazil: 14/ Finland: K-16/ France: -12/ Germany: 16(bw)/

Mexico: C/ Australia: R/ New Zealand: R18/ Norway: 15/ Portugal: M/16/ Spain: 18/

Sweden: 15/ Netherlands: 16/ Belgium: KT

Awards: Saturn Award in the category Best Horror Film (Academy of Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Films, 1998); nominated for the Blockbuster Entertainment Award in the category of Favorite Supporting Actress – drama Charlize Theron (1998) and nominated at the MTV Movie Award in the category of Best Villain, Al Pacino (1998).

Release Dates:

USA	17 October 1997
Canada	17 October 1997
Poland	7 November 1997
Hong Kong	4 December 1997
Singapore	11 December 1997
South Korea	20 December 1997
Mexico	25 December 1997
Finland	26 December 1997
Brazil	1 January 1998
New Zealand	1 January 1998
Venezuela	1 January 1998
Argentina	1 January 1998
Sweden	2 January 1998
Ireland	9 January 1998 (premiere)
Thailand	9 January 1998
Denmark	9 January 1998
Spain	12 January 1998
France	14 January 1998
Netherlands	15 January 1998
Ireland	16 January 1998
UK	16 January 1998
Iceland	16 January 1998
Switzerland	16 January 1998 (German speaking region)
Germany	22 January 1998
Israel	23 January 1998
Portugal	23 January 1998
Norway	24 January 1998
Estonia	13 February 1998
Hungary	19 February 1998
Slovakia	26 February 1998
Bulgaria	27 February 1998
Greece	6 March 1998
Japan	18 April 1998

Business Information:

Budget: \$57m (USA)
 Distributor: Warner Brothers
 Opening Weekend:
 \$12.17m (USA, 19 October 1997), 2,161 screens
 £1.3m (UK, 18 January 1998), 259 screens
 Gross (US):
 \$60.984m (15 February 1998)
 \$60.899m (8 February 1998)
 \$60.725m (1 February 1998)
 \$60.349m (25 January 1998)

\$59.845m (19 January 1998)
 \$59.112m (11 January 1998)
 \$59.068m (4 January 1998)
 \$58.973m (28 December 1997)
 \$58.798m (21 December 1997)
 \$58.317m (14 December 1997)
 \$57.347m (7 December 1997)
 \$56.067m (30 November 1997)
 \$53.712m (23 November 1997)
 \$50.524m (16 November 1997)
 \$44.981m (9 November 1997)
 \$37.282m (2 November 1997)
 \$26.636m (26 October 1997)
 \$12.17m (19 October 1997)

Weekly Gross (Europe):

DEM 468,635 (Germany, 22 February 1998), 193 screens
 DEM 644,517 (Germany, 15 February 1998), 226 screens
 £90.046 (UK, 1 March 1998), 87 screens
 £163.659 (UK, 22 February 1998), 130 screens
 £230.967 (UK, 15 February 1998), 146 screens
 £415.773 (UK, 8 February 1998), 219 screens
 £618.233 (UK, 1 February 1998), 257 screens
 £723.072 (UK, 25 January 1998), 260 screens
 £1.3m (UK, 18 January 1998), 259 screens

Admissions (Europe):

669,409 (France, 27 January 1998)
 393,335 (France, opening week)
 683,565 (Germany, 23 February 1998)
 625,355 (Germany, 16 February 1998)
 539,311 (Germany, 9 February 1998)
 398,503 (Germany, 2 February 1998)
 199,761 (Germany, 26 January 1998, opening week)
 868,759 (Turkey)

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Production information The Matrix (1999)

Directed: Andy and Larry Wachowski

Writing credits: Andy and Larry Wachowski

Genre: action, sci-fi

Tagline: Reality is a thing of the past

Credited cast overview:

Keanu Reeves	Thomas "Neo" Anderson
Julian Arahanga	Apoc
Marcus Chong	Tank
Matt Doran	Mouse
Laurence Fishburne	Morpheus
Paul Goddard	Agent Brown
Belinda McClory	Switch
Carrie-Anne Moss	Trinity
Joe Pantoliano	Cypher
Robert Taylor	Agent Jones
Hugo Weaving	Agent Smith

Country: USA
Language: English

Release dates:

United States	31 March 1999
Australia	8 April 1999
New Zealand	8 April 1999
Singapore	22 April 1999
Brazil	21 May 1999
Thailand	21 May 1999
The Netherlands	10 June 1999
Germany	17 June 1999
UK	18 June 1999
Denmark	25 June 1999
Iceland	25 June 1999
Estonia	16 July 1999
Slovakia	5 August 1999

Business information:

Budget: \$63m
Distributors: Warner Brothers
Special Effects: Mass. Illusions, LLC
Opening Weekend:
\$27.788m (USA, 4 April 1999), 2849 screens
Gross:
\$117.082m (USA, 25 April 1999)
\$98.946 (USA, 18 April 1999)
\$73.31m (USA, 11 April 1999)
\$37.352m (USA, 4 April 1999)
Weekly Gross:
\$12.642m (USA, 25 April 1999)
\$17.941m (USA, 18 April 1999)
\$22.563m (USA, 11 April 1999), 2903 screens
\$27.788m (USA, 4 April 1999) 2849 screens

¹⁶⁶ Taglines derived from posters, flyers and Imdb.

¹⁶⁷ Box office is derived from Imdb.

¹⁶⁸ Other taglines are: On April 2nd, the Fight for the Future Begins; Unfortunately, no one can be told

what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself; The future will not be user friendly; and, The Future isn't user friendly... [Australian poster]. They stem from posters, flyers and Imdb.

¹⁶⁹ Comic artists include Geof Darrow (*Darke Horse's Rusty the Boy Robot & the Big Guy*), Paul Chad-

wick (*Concrete*) and previews of upcoming work that will appear on the official Matrix web site are Michael Kaluta, Ted McKerver, Steve Skroce and Aron Weisenfeld.

¹⁷⁰ From the cast and crew Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving and Joe Pantoliano, Andy

and Larry Wachowski (writers and directors), Joel Silver (producer), Bruce Berman (executive producer) and the bands that appear on the soundtrack are Rage Against the Machine and the Deftones. Industry guests include Neve Campbell, George Clooney, Matthew Perry, Wil Smith, Ice Cube, Chris O'Donnell and Wesley Snipes.

¹⁷¹ *Entertainment Biz*, March 19, 1999.

¹⁷² Thanks, Barbara Sherman.

¹⁷³ Keanu did some commercials as well, but that was earlier on in his career (except for the

Japanese

commercials) and are not shown on television anymore, but are sometimes shown during TV interviews. Thus, commercials and clips from stage performances definitely contribute to the intertext and therefore, meaning and textual production.

¹⁷⁴ I haven't included any information about video releases for it's rather extensive, though very important. Therefore, it must be subjected to further study.

¹⁷⁵ *Devil's Advocate* site can be found at <http://www.movies.wb.com/devils/main.html>

¹⁷⁶ A before 'empty' public signifier becomes an identity and can result in an image.

¹⁷⁷ About 20% of the US population is online (less people are online in other countries).

¹⁷⁸ Although one-way communication structures are often overruled by specific audiences such as fans,

stalkers and artists who call on the discussion with 'invisible people' behind the production of for example, a television series.

¹⁷⁹ PvdA's web site is at www.pvda.nl

¹⁸⁰ Holtz gives an example of someone who posted a message in a newsgroup about a computer model

that needed to be fixed but the technician never showed up. The model and firm are mentioned.

¹⁸¹ Some actors hire people to answer their fan mail by sending fans a standard package with photograph

and autograph. In this particular case, they have chosen not to answer mail, because some people might be offended by a standard package since often people do not ask for such materials. Often people write a very personal letter, ask for money and the like. It is too much for one person to carry such content. I have read various letters and I agree with this perspective. However, I suggested when

no letters or less letters are received, it probably indicates that the actor's popularity is reduced or affected by something and when this is not desired, letters should be read to improve strategies.

¹⁸² Some figures derived from the search engine www.altavista.com: Keanu Reeves 15900 (at Yahoo

only 23, while typing in 'Keanu naked' 132058 can be found...), Dogstar 119735, Leonardo Di Caprio 4469, Spice Girls 120861, Johnny Depp 14175, Tom Cruise 28580, Brad Pitt 22733, Howard Stern 112241, David Bowie 36067, Winona Ryder 20273, Julia Roberts 30950, Pamela Anderson 127890, Susan Sarandon 7111, Kim Basinger 11509, Julliete Lewis 865085, Cameron Diaz 13255, Naomi Campbell 12862, Madonna 1,371,420, Tom Hanks 27141, Mel Gibson 24568, Sharon Stone 22904, Kate Moss 6686, Heather Locklear 6583, Cindy Crawford 92316 and Vincent Gallo 1475. These sites vary from magazine and film production companies to fan sites and sites where the subject-to-be-retrieved-'s name is mentioned or refer to other 'Keanu's', 'naked', 'Lewis' – and are therefore rather doubtful representations.

¹⁸³ It is good to know that (newspaper) reporters are online, but it doesn't necessarily contribute to more

accurate (and confirmed) information.

¹⁸⁴ Holtz, S., *Public Relations on the Net: Winning Strategies to Inform and Influence the Media, the*

Investment Community, the Government, the Public, and More! (New York: AMACOM, 1999).

¹⁸⁵ *The Matrix* release date was set sometime during Spring or Summer 1999. But was released March

31, 1999 (US).

¹⁸⁶ The consequence is that copyrighted and trademarked material are not legitimately used, which is a

criminal offense. Some film companies – such as *Paramount Studios* and the *Fox Network* -

are aggressive in attacking and threatening such sites where sound and film clips are shown from a movie. This struggle has two sites: On the one hand, it is good and free promotion for a film, but on the other hand, owners of sites can take an image and transform it in such a manner, it gets an entire different meaning. The latter is what upsets marketers of scrupulous planned campaigns. *Mattel* does not like to see Barbie as an SM-party queen, butt-naked and handcuffed in a cage.

¹⁸⁷ Although various studies concentrate on women's magazines, actors are not only (re-)presented in

women's magazines. For instance, public figures feature in specialized magazines as well such as movie-related, cigar-related, guitar-related and sexual-tinted. I also have to remark that there are 'glossies' for men as well, like *Man*, *Attitude*, *Details* and *Loaded*. Further reading: Wright, J.W. (ed.), *The Commercial Connection: Advertising and the American Mass Media* (New York: Delta Book, 1979).

¹⁸⁸ I know where to go in LA - thank you Keanu Reeves.

¹⁸⁹ The enumeration represents general characteristics, and are therefore not 'Keanu specific'.

¹⁹⁰ A small publication in Italy had a tremendous impact on the world: "Keanu is married to a man" (1995). I explain the construction of this major gossip topic in chapter six.

¹⁹¹ In the French version another interview appeared by Gérard Delorme as well.

¹⁹² I wrote 'actual' because texts of interviews often only partially refer to the actual interview that took

place. That is, often only sentences that are 'catchy' serve as a 'lead' or are used out of the context. The reader will never know what really has been said or the reasons why something has been said in a particular way.

¹⁹³ Interviews and articles about public figures don't necessarily take place, that is, often an interview

is not an interview in the official sense: interviews are often performed by a few people (who work for prominent magazines) and published in a magazine and the latter are quoted – and therefore often 'mis-quoted' - by others. That's how one out-of-place sentence can become a huge rumor such as Richard Gere having sex with gerbils.

¹⁹⁴ Although, this is a European show it seems that the American press (media) is far more interested

in personal questions (according to Johnny Depp and Brad Pitt) than the European press. Structural resemblances and differences between European and American articles and reviews should be studied. Since it contributes to cultural differences in the formation and interpretation of the construction (and marketing) of a public figure.

¹⁹⁵ Interviews and press-chunks are usually set up by a publicist whose task it is to promote his or her

clients as suitable as possible. In the process meetings are set up and appointments are made with reporters both freelance and non-freelance. Sometimes reporters approach a manager, agent or publicist to request an interview with someone, but more often they are approached by publicists. Especially when new products have to be sold through advertisements. Interviews can be one-to-one, table-conversations or press-conferences. If the interviewee wants to, he or she can be accompanied by his or her publicist or manager who can help in times of inappropriate questions. Some people demand that certain questions can not be asked. For instance, Bruce Willis and Demi Moore were going through a divorce, while Willis had to promote *Armageddon*. The divorce was not a subject for the film's promotion.

¹⁹⁶ For more reviews and articles on the *Devil's Advocate* I refer to the appendix.

¹⁹⁷ When you ask gossip columnists about their 'sources', they cannot mention anyone or anything;

however, it turns out that some individuals – who might be befriended with a public figure – actual call them to give them the 'inside scoop' on a certain someone - sometimes they get money, sometimes they do not – or via-via information is received, but hardly ever checked.

¹⁹⁸ Conversations with Mr. M. from *The Lava Lounge* and Johnny Depp.

¹⁹⁹ Printed by permission, December 1997 By: private.

- 200 It's interesting that the front cover of this record is different for the European and American version,
 201 which is probably due to the fact that the European version is not enhanced.
 201 Johnny Depp plays guitar and bass in the band *P* as well (Gibby Haynes, vocals; Bill Carter, guitar
 and bass; and Sal Jenco, percussion). *P* recorded an album in 1995, which has the same name as the band.
 202 Ask some Australian Bon Jovi fans who Dogstar are, because they will know since the band opened
 the Australian Bon Jovi tour. The lead singer of Bon Jovi models designer clothes and acts as well.
 203 Certain people showed me some self-made tapes from several *Dogstar* shows. One tape shows me
 leaving the Redondo Beach show, which was really shocking to me. Since these tapes are sold over the internet. Although I was assured no money was made with the tapes, they are taped illegally. Other material – shot before and after shows, mainly outside clubs and therefore legal - violates privacy rights. Laws should put an end to taping certain events or situations.
 204 Reijn, W., “De Mens als Merknaam”, in: *BN/De Stem*, 13 March 1999
 Reijn writes about “the human being as a brandname.” Artists, reporters and sportsmen use their name to make money. They do commercials and the like. This decade's motto is then money and fame means power. In 1998 it meant that Michael Jordan ‘won’ in terms of income, how often he/his name appeared on TV or radio or in the tabloids. Jerry Seinfeld earned the most money, Leonardo DiCaprio ‘won’ the amount of magazine covers, soccer player Ronaldo ‘won’ on the internet, while Monica Lewinsky ‘won’ in terms of press and TV.
 205 For more information on the importance of casting, characters and intertextuality (primary, secondary
 and tertiary texts – which are discussed in chapter three), read John Fiske's *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 8-9, 108-127.
 206 Kerouac, J., *On the Road* (New York: Penguin Group, 1955)
 207 Croteau and Hoynes (1997) describe three possible ways of audience activity: first, audiences inter-
 pret media texts individually; second, texts can be interpreted collectively; and third, they can lead to collective political action. Meanings are not fixed and are determined by its audiences ('agency').
 208 Some examples of the study of the activities and effects of media on society: the hypermodernic
 needle model (or silver bullet) – “information is directly injected in audiences' veins” - mass society theory (post WWII) – “homogenization of society”, the minimal effects model – media do not change people - agenda setting – “media do not change the way people think but rather the topics”, and so on. For further information, see Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences* (London: Pine Forge Press, 1997).
 209 Webster, J. & Phalen, P., “Victim, Consumer, or Commodity?: Audience Models in Communication
 Policy” in: Curran, J. & Gurevitch, M. (eds.), *Mass Media & Society* (1991).
 210 Herbst, S. & Beniger, J., “The Changing Infrastructure of Public Opinion” in: Curran, J. & Gurevitch,
 M. (eds.), *Mass Media & Society* (1991).
 211 I also refer to these books since they are crucial to understand my background for this study.
 212 McQuail, D., *Audience Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).
 213 Formal audiences are constructed both in discourse and by individuals who practice content produc-
 tion, analysis, et cetera, empirical audiences are connected with the question whether ‘real audiences’ exist since empirical audiences require some prior definitions before they can be

- put to use. They are not necessarily populated by real people. Perhaps empirical audiences are prior to any kind of research or study 'empty'.
- 214 Encoded audience refers to an audience that is written to or encoded in mediated products; analytic audience refers to the foundation for the prior assumption of critical analysis. Transcendent-empirical audience is linked to the principle of equivalent units; aggregate audience refer to 'real' respondents who fulfil the requirements of the research; the term of surrogate audiences refers to experimental studies (often about universal human characteristics); the situated audience deals with historic individuals who are described in specific media situations of everyday life; strategic audiences are related to interpretive practices and strategies; finally, emergent audiences are audiences who do not interact with media, but opportunistic they gain knowledge anyway. I refer to Anderson, J., "The Pragmatics of Audience in Research and Theory" in: *The Audience and its Landscape* (1996) and Anderson, J., *Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Elaboration of Audiences* (Washington D.C.: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1989).
- 215 The underlying thought is that media and their content are created by audiences and create audiences.
- 216 Audience preferences expressed in everyday life practices create media and their content, that is, media respond or meet particular needs of groups of people. A new trend shows an increase in the popularity of country and western music accompanied by line-dancing. The Dutch commercial TV-channel *Veronica* has leapt into this by broadcasting a program called "Veronica Western Experience." But media also create audiences by, for instance, the launch of a new soap opera, a new channel, rock band or magazine.
- 217 However, I believe that producers of meanings should be included in the study of producers of meanings and texts, the length of this work doesn't offer enough space to do so.
- 218 Gramsci's hegemony is about subordination, but in terms of *consensus*, that is, the government of a society represents both force and consent which should be balanced; desirable, force should originate from consent and the latter should be based on public opinion (majority) such as 'newspapers and associations'. He attaches hegemony to *leadership*. Leadership is crucial to the functioning of society and it differs from domination in that the former has not access of power yet, while the latter functions through exercising its power via a process of subjugation. Leadership is free from coercion in its focus on intellect and morality. The same goes for Gramsci's distinction between an elite that tries to manage consent over subordinate groups, the latter form a *counter-hegemony* through (amongst the subordinated are) intellectuals who Gramsci describes as 'organic intellectuals' who attempt to construct a 'historical bloc'. Which means that these organic intellectuals come together to form one group with counter-hegemonic ideas and values against the domination. This is not free from criticism with respect to Gramsci's own argument that domineering groups are never able to absolutely absorb and incorporate the subordinated and as a consequence the latter are unable to become entirely independent of the hegemony. Thus, an alternative society remains rooted in the dominant one. The remaining question is then to what degree it is possible to undo Marxist theory of economic and deterministic factors; indeed, Gramsci is often accused of being too culturalistic.
- See, Gramsci, A., "Selection from Prison Notebooks" (trans. Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith) (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971) in: Storey, J., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994); see, Gramsci, A., *Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991). Orig. 1985; see, Graaf, S. van der, *Social Graduation Hymn Tribute* (March 1998).
- 219 Strinati, D., *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- 220 Barthes, R., *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973).
- 221 Inoculation can be linked to my concept of *authorized resistance*, which refers to on the one

hand,

‘adapting alternative styles by the institutional agencies ‘in order to make them less dangerous’ (which is ideological), and on the other hand, it refers to ‘adapting and producing alternative styles by individual agencies’. It is linked to *authorized acceptance* which means both institutions and individuals consent upon the meaningfulness of a product or person. However, the word ‘authorized’ should not be understood in terms of domination and subordination; on the contrary, audiences are equally powerful as the institutional agencies in terms of being producers of meanings and texts; thus, as producers of culture!

222 Westwood, S. & Bhachu, P., *Enterprising Women: Ethnicity, Economy and Gender Relations*
(Lon- don: Routledge, 1988)

223 Interesting articles can be found in the book by Lisa Lewis (*The Adoring Audience, Fan Culture and Popular Media*) on the concept of fandom. Other academics focus on fan activities and organization like Henry Jenkins (*Textual Poachers*) and Camille Bacon-Smith (*Enterprising Women, Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*). Texts show that theorists have a hard time defining fans.

224 These sentences derive from some conversations I had with people who work in the film industry in

Los Angeles. They asked me not to mention their names, but they stem from branches such as studios, talent agencies and actors.

225 Needless to say, is that there are fans and fans: some are isolated figures and others identify them-

selves with hysterical crowds. But most fans simply enjoy being a fan.

226 See Joli Jenson’s work on *aficionados* of high standard literature.

227 Getting organized is crucial for it means ‘they are not alone’. Fans can exchange thoughts, ideas and

desires. Though, being a fan reaches further than ‘just being a fan’. Often it turns out that they have more in common than the idolized figure alone. As a result, fans meet new friends and eventually ‘forget’ their idol. I remember that I was surfing the internet and entered a chat room dedicated to Keanu. The minute that I could read some of the lines people had dropped, I noticed no one discussed the actor. The conversations were about getting a new hair color and boyfriend troubles. When I – not so subtle – asked why no one talked about the actor, I was ignored for the rest of the time and had to log off.

228 I attended *KeanuFest’98* in June 1998 – just for a couple of days, to see what being a fan means and what fans do.

229 See Henry Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers* (1992).

230 Fans can be fearful, because they are often with a bunch of them. Some of them scream, some cry,

some are quiet and just stare at their idol and others approach their idol and just want to chat or ask for an autograph. Sometimes a fan crosses the line and becomes a stalker.

231 I have had my own share with fans who harassed me instead of their idol (not that I want to encourage

them to do so) due to this research. Instead of fantasizing about and constructing the actor, I became a construction: a hyperreality.

232 Motivations vary from feelings such as love, anger, doubt, to inspiration, interest, assignment and

‘good educational material’. Even this thesis contributes to the intertext of the actor. My motivation

derives from the motivation that the actor serves the needs and demands of this specific study. However, there are many other good examples as well, actresses Susan Sarandon, Julliette Lewis, Cher, singer/actress Courtney Love might be suitable as well. I initiated my search for a ‘case study’ about three years ago and started with big name actors and soon

- Keanu turned out to be most suitable for this study and therefore, I did not continue the search.
- ²³³ De Certeau, M., *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1984).
- ²³⁴ Fiske, J., *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 62-127. Orig. 1987.
- ²³⁵ Dr. Spock is a character from the *Star Trek* series.
- ²³⁶ This process of cultural appropriation through poaching is then characterized by marginality and so-
- cial weakness. Because these forms of unauthorized textual production remain and circulate generally within the domain in which it is produced; it isn't (re-)presented by producers of authorized texts that are brought upon society. There is just little or no access to the official cultural producers and therefore, production of texts.
- ²³⁷ It emphasizes the process and fluidity of making meaning and interpretation (see Jenkins, 1992).
- ²³⁸ It can be argued that productive activities by audiences such as fans, are still based on or inspired by
- authorized products. However, in this study I wish to focus on the fact that texts (and meanings) are being produced and the importance of these production activities should, in my opinion, not be understood in terms of 'subordination'; the reasons for this argument however go beyond this study, but will be explored in a later study.
- ²³⁹ The fact that audiences are producers of their own texts does not mean that they misinterpret the me-
- dia product; it is the question whether one can speak of a true or false interpretation. Followers of the Cultural Studies tradition will point to Stuart Hall's 'preferred reading theory' (Encoding/Decoding, 1980), but I refer to earlier hesitations regarding some important issues; especially, with regard to domination and subordination.
- ²⁴⁰ This with a view to trend watching and marketing strategies.
- ²⁴¹ I will focus on the latter category, read the introduction why I have chosen to do so.
- ²⁴² See also John Fiske's *Television Culture* (1987) and *Media Matters* (1994), Van der Graaf, S., *MTV*
- *The Real World Miami* (Utrecht, 1997) and studies by Baudrillard.
- ²⁴³ De Kuijper, E., *De Verbeelding van het Mannelijk Lichaam: Naakt en Gekleed in Hollywood, 1933-*
- 1955* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1993).
- ²⁴⁴ "Internet Fans Rescue Western Series" at: *My News*, January 29, 1999.
- ²⁴⁵ The spokesperson for the fans was thanked by CBS by offering her an extra's part in a January epi-
- sode.
- ²⁴⁶ See for example, Eileen Meehan's article "Holy Commodity Festish Batman!: The Political Economy
- of a Commercial Intertext" in: Uricchio, W. & Pearson, R. (eds.), *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 47-65.
- ²⁴⁷ Marilyn Manson, "The Beautiful People" (*Antichrist Superstar*, 1996)
- ²⁴⁸ These texts are often referred to as tertiary texts - that are created by its viewers or readers on the ba-
- sis of both primary and secondary texts - such as fan mail and gossip.
- ²⁴⁹ Public and private discourses of both authorized and unauthorized textual manifestations cross-
- over
- in the semi-public sphere, often initiated by private persons who work in the margins of both the public (such as gossip columnists) and private spheres (such as friends, fans and artists).
- ²⁵⁰ Hermes, J., *Reading Women's Magazines* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).
- ²⁵¹ Jones, D., "Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture" in: *Women's Studies International Quarterly*,
- vol. 3, pp. 193-198.

- House-talk refers to discussing practical matters about domestic life; scandal is linked to judgemental attitudes towards moral issues; bitching expresses anger and frustration regarding women's positions; and chatting functions as a process to acquire intimate relationships with other people.
- 252 October 8, 1998.
- 253 *Cybersleaze*, August 8, 1998; "Stepping in to Save Keanu" in: *New Weekly*, October 1998; *Data-lounge*, October 12, 1998.
- 254 People, especially fans, exchange all sorts of information, domestic information as well as information about when a film is broadcast ("Media Alerts"), what the actor's upcoming projects are (accompanied by detailed information about the cast, crew, location, et cetera) and where he was seen ("He was drinking with Marilyn Manson" or "He was in Club ... and suddenly he shouted 'The Matrix' April 2nd").
- 255 This person doesn't want to be named.
- 256 I haven't included a section on gossip in the chapters on authorized institutions and their textual mani-
festations because I believe that, besides the mass production and circulation of gossip magazines, gossip is more relevant on the side of people in general and audiences in specific both verbally and in textual form. Speech is inherent in the human species and therefore, I decided to theorize gossip in this chapter since the other chapters focus more on the practices of institutions. Nevertheless, people gossip both within production and reception activities, but it is – for this study anyway – more relevant and visible to focus upon the latter.
- 257 Gossip is understood from a 'phallogocentric' perspective, namely, gossip is a feminine activity as opposed to 'serious male talk'. From this perspective, gossip allows women to discuss their roles and experiences of subordination in society. Gossip means making topics of public concern into issues of personal significance. Within Marxist and Feminist theories, these forms of expressions are therefore interpreted as the opportunity for women to speak their minds without becoming a threat in the male dominated society.
- 258 I have tried to copy layout and grammar of 17 letters addressed to Keanu Reeves.
- 259 I stayed in a room called 'Devil's Cape' based on *Devil's Advocate*.
- 260 I arrived at the fan club unprepared. Two reasons come to my defense for my 'unpreparedness', respectively, it was never my intention to interview fans for this study because initially the research was about audiences in general, and secondly, even if I would have had any idea about what it means to be a fan, I could never have been prepared, simply because I am not a Keanu Reeves fan. These two motivations have contributed to a very complex situation of 'truths and lies', 'honesty and dishonesty', 'hospitality and hostility' both within the group and – more important – 'the group against me', the outsider.
- 261 The first time we met he mentioned something about 'Ted', I had no clue what he was talking about.
Later it turned out to be a character he played in the Bill & Ted series, however, I still did not get it, because I had never heard of those movies... I only knew he had been in *My Own Private Idaho*, *Little Buddha* and *Speed*.
- 262 I made a questionnaire which was filled out by five women. Although the latter filled it out and handed it to me, they did not feel at ease doing so, but they gave it anyway which I really appreciate.
- 263 In a way my presence can be compared to me representing Keanu for I was 'officially' writing about 'Keanu', which meant that I was the closest thing in 'meeting Keanu', however, at the same time they 'hated my guts'. I became a 'non-specific body' because a 'Shenja' was created that I am not. By the end of November 1998 I decided to let it all pass: I found out that it doesn't

matter what you say, when people have ‘let loose’ the wildest stories about a ‘foreign girl who is a sad puppy’ and ‘all she tells are lies’; I learned it the hard way, namely that by addressing gossip about yourself you – more or less – agree with the gossip. As a result, more ‘wild stories’ arise and to deny it, just doesn’t work. It is better to let it all go and not to get involved in any written controversy however, it is painful and it hurts but “they do not know you and anyone who believes them, do not know you either.”

264 they People gossiped about me: Fiske described the function of gossiping in binding viewers when

gossip about a television series (or an actor). It indicates an active relationship between the viewer and the gossiped subject. Gossiping provides these women with a social identity and feelings of power because it is ‘outside man’s control’. Therefore, gossip is generally grasped as ‘denigrated’. Gossip means that these women are producers of meanings and constructions of representations of people (in the public eye). For example, no one asked me whether I was “legitimate” or not (a publication on fans made them suspicious) - they needed a some sort of confirmation, they wondered where I got my financial support from and, maybe I had even fooled around with ‘important’ people - issues that I was not aware of during those three days.

265 Personal correspondence.

266 See also appendix.

267 See also the fan club’s newsletter that addresses ‘fandom’ (appendix).

268 I received my own ‘fan mail’ sent by fans attending *KeanuFest* and from Keanu Reeves and *Dogstar*

fans that I have never met, but who are in contact with the people who were at the convention and so on. I have received 53 letters, 6 post cards, over 500 emails and some presents (anonymous).

269 placing I studied letters in magazines as well – that is, as far as I encountered them - but instead of

an ad I read letters sent to magazines that were published in columns. An example (*Televizier*, (Dutch TVguide), August 29-September 1998):

“Keanu Reeves ten voeten uit”

Hierbij een reactie op de brief die laatst in ‘TeleFaxPost’ stond (Televizier nr. 28) onder het kopje ‘Keanu Reeves is een kanjer’. Ik heb een aanvulling op de informatie die jullie al gaven. De band waarin Keanu speelt, Dogstar, trad in 1996 op in de Melkweg in Amsterdam. De band heeft een fan club en 2 cd’s uitgebracht: ‘Quattro Formaggi’ en ‘Our Little Visionary’. De werktitel van Keanu’s nieuwste film is ‘Matrix’. Keanu heeft verschillende fan clubs, waaronder de volgende in Engeland:

Keanu Reeves Fannetwork
26 Aldersmead Road
Northfield, Birmingham B31 3JG
Engeland
Het fan clubblad heet ‘Total Keanu’

Another letter published in *Movieline* (June 1997):

“Kicking Casper”

So clueless up-and-comer Casper Van Dien says Keanu Reeves gets too many breaks, and he has no idea what Keanu has and doesn’t understand the Keanu mystique (Hype, March 1997). Well, baby, apparently it’s something you’ll never have, along with any class.

Cheryl
Albuquerque, NM

Other letters vary from criticisms and appraisals in clothing-style magazines, interviews in movie magazines, ads to promote a Keanu fan club or ads where people want to exchange

- Keanu-related materials.
- ²⁷⁰ In general, ‘it is not done’ being a fan, especially when you have outgrown your teens. When I arrived at KeanuFest, it was the first thing I noticed: no young girls in their teens – I was the youngest by far.
- ²⁷¹ This person doesn’t want to be named.
- ²⁷² The fans also encounter individuals who exercise activities that resemble ‘stalking’ such as a woman who takes pictures all the time (she only visions Keanu from behind her camera and sticks around him in a white van with tinted glass), [...] (who wants autographs all the time) and [...] (from Australia).
- ²⁷³ Once in every two weeks.
- ²⁷⁴ Not everyone is ‘active’ on the internet either.
- ²⁷⁵ For instance, “Welcome to my site – I am 16 years’ old and love Brad Pitt. This is my room.”
- ²⁷⁶ Pleasure cannot be found in the text itself, but only in its conjuncture with the reader or producer of the text.
- ²⁷⁷ Read Fiske, J., *Television Culture* (New York: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1987), pp. 227-230. Other interesting analyses are offered by Laura Mulvey (1975) on masculine pleasure of mainstream cinema in terms of *plaisir*.
- ²⁷⁸ Various studies have been done on looks and facial traits. For instance, similarities between facial characteristics of criminals (lower forehead, low implanted ears).
- ²⁷⁹ A lot of sites also address other issues like recent earthquakes, heavy storms, missing persons and the war in Kosovo.
- ²⁸⁰ All sites state that they are unofficial and have no relation ‘whatsoever’ with the actor; although, some users doubt that, which results in ‘secretive and mysterious sources’. “When a certain person confirms or denies a rumor it must (not) be true.” For instance, this appeared November 17, 1998:

Who is Katelijne and can I get the audio tapes from her? [...] Katelijne is someone who has connections. I don’t know exactly what they are, but she does know what she’s talking about – she’s proven that ten times over by having accurate information before it ever becomes public knowledge.

Even I was involved. Without my knowledge all sorts of gossip was stirred up about who I supposedly am and what I was believed to have said. At one point, it all got so ridiculous that I almost decided to write this thesis about the construction of Shenja instead of Keanu Reeves. Fortunately, people did not address ‘me’ publicly but only privately. One person felt sorry for me and send me copies of all privately sent emails and as a result I could not sleep anymore. Dr. Eva Warth told me she suffered from similar harassment when she studied soap opera fans as soon as they found out she had talked with the soap actors. November 7, 1998 Katelijne wrote:

That certain foreign young woman is a very sad puppy indeed. I know many believe her as she throws around facts and figures impressively. It isn’t difficult for a beautiful young woman to get just close enough to the “inner circle” to glean enough information to make herself appear credible.

Almost everything she is saying about K is dead wrong. :) If you want to ask questions, I will answer what I can.

Well, there almost went my research and friendship with certain people. It is very scary when you are becoming an ‘object of negativity’, created by people you have never met. Thus, to become a subject of conversation and lead to stories for one’s own pleasure. After the ‘evaporation’ of my anger and frustration, an advantage was all that was left; namely how it feels to become ‘empty’ or ‘non-specific’. I was constructed as a certain person, that is not me – and could have been anyone - and therefore the best thing I could do was not to address it and get out of the(ir) picture.

281 Some people are ‘flamed’ which means that when they are not partaking in ‘netiquette’ they are re-
removed from the room or mailing list. Netiquette is based on abusive use of language, racism and the like – often stated in ‘house rules’.

282 What I find very interesting about ‘attack sites’ is the simple fact that people dedicate time to express
hatred or their dislike about a person they, generally, do not even know. Some utterances are made in newsgroups, but others develop even web sites just to let everyone know about their dislike. These sites look often very professionally designed, so, it takes time to build such a web site. Therefore, the question ‘why building a web site about someone you do not like?’ raises and cannot be solved by just one answer. However, it seems to be strongly motivated by a small line between ‘being a fan’ and ‘being a hater’. ‘Love’ and ‘hate’ are closely connected. Hate does not always stem from love though. It can also be developed on the basis of jealousy, frustration and the like. Psychological studies addressing the development of hate and anger help to understand this phenomenon.

283 Not many books study audiences in relation to their productive expressions of love and hate, and on
audiences in relation to receptive production and its effects on cultural production and consumption. Questions that discuss the pro’s and contra’s of the use and function of the internet in the creation of a useful intertext as a means of theorizing audiences – although, not all audiences are active users of the internet – and their productive skills, now and in the future, is therefore strongly suggested.

284 Also, pornographic movies imitate celebrity’s films *Johnny Penile Extender*, *Bill & Ted’s Sexual Adventure*, *My Own Private Garden* or Johnny Depp’s *Edward’s Penishands*.

285 The closest-related person she talked to was Keanu’s stepfather. She approached old friends and
several directors. His agent and manager were not interested. Johnston did not want to talk to Keanu himself, because she thought she would become less objective as a writer. The book is sold to several countries in Europe, the United States and will be sold to Japan. So far (as of February 1998), she has sold a couple of thousand copies, “which is not bad” and now the book is going to be revised and updated.

286 See the appendix: *Zero Distortion*. Chris Nickson is also approached for an interview about his book
by Sarah Bewley ‘who is interested in Reeves’; the interview can be found at the web site *Keanunet*.

287 Mondrian, P., “Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art” (“Figurative Art and Nonfigurative Art”) in: Chip,
H.B. (ed), *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 349-
362.

288 At one point Keanu resembles a Christ figure.

289 This book can still be ordered and is about \$20 (<http://www.Amazon.com>).

290 A photo-mosaic is also made from Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands.

291 The proceeds go to the Shinanouk hospital in Cambodia.

292 All fan stories and poems that I have read express an almost humble desire to meet their idol, if he

only let them talk to him for a couple of minutes or just take a profound look at them because then – as each content shows - he will know that they are the ‘women of his dreams’ (or ‘men’).

²⁹³ “Start out with “bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum”... and hold your hands up on your head like

you have big mouse ears.

Come along and ding his dong

And make a great big mess

KEA

NUR

EE

VES

Keanu Reeves

Keanu Reeves

Forever he

Will bring us to our knees

Hey, hey, hey,

He’s the one we’re dreamin’ of

We’re nuts we must confess

KEA

NUR

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

Esssssssssssssss

Now wave and yell “See you real soon!!!!”

²⁹⁴ Stephen Prina is an artist and teacher. As an undergraduate he studied painting and music composition. Graduate (post-studio): he covered everything what was not traditional painting or sculpture.

²⁹⁵ Education is a part of the public sphere. However, this particular course was unique for it was taught ones (at one college, with 15 students about Keanu Reeves) and can therefore be referred to as being semi-public, but it was turned into a highly public discourse when it attracted attention nationwide (and even abroad).

²⁹⁶ Prina continues that he has had so many arguments about this, “you would not believe. Especially

in this city.” His response is that “Reeves delivers a very distinctive performance instead of acting.” Therefore, Prina thinks *Devil’s Advocate* is in those terms a little bit of a disappointment since Keanu is becoming a better method actor. “*The Last Time I Committed Suicide* is not a great film, but Keanu’s performance is really good in it (debut of this director). It is based on a letter, so it is very limited in dialogue. Keanu’s performance is a little bit over the top, gained weight, giving advice to Neal Cassidy in terms of ‘Do you want to become like me (alcoholic, Kerouac)?’. And he does that pretty convincing.”

²⁹⁷ Background information taken from our conversation: Prina’s reasons for offering a course on ‘the

films of Keanu Reeves’ ground in dissatisfaction: “In the early 80s students took courses on classical narrative film in Hollywood film and Russian Art Film, but no one was offering classes on the European Avant Garde. So I did that (as a spectator regarding providing students with the material but let them free with it) and then not in the sense that this is a better way of making films than the Hollywood ones, but more in the sense of a supplement (such as Godard, Bresson, Ackerman, Warhol and structuralist American Avant Garde). It was a fun class.” However, at one point, he decided not to do that for a while, because he did not want to be known for “that guy who only shows films from the 1960s and 1970s.” Prina

wanted to look at these films with younger spectators to see how they would respond to some of his ideas about Reeves' ways of exposure, "which is often not total at all ('aesthetics of resonance'), seems like there is an opaque through which you cannot see or move and how that would effect the reading of the film." Prina was inspired by Dennis Cooper who has written a book on a serial murderer who is in prison, and who makes little puppets to reenact the murders. And Prina connected this to the way in which he looked at Keanu's films.

298

My

Keith Mayerson and Erwin Stoff were invited as guest speakers. "There was discussion about

Own Private Idaho, and Stoff said that if Reeves hadn't said yes, the film probably would not have been made. Because River Phoenix was enough of a box-office draw to get the film being made. Keanu's role was much more difficult than River's (Shakespearean). The camp fire scene is one of the most tender scenes in contemporary cinema. Stoff talked about how he was being criticized by other managers, that he was mishandling Reeves' career. Keanu was offered Woody Harrelson's part in *White Man Can't Jump*, but turned it down. At that point Harrelson was making more money than Keanu. One of the students asked how much Keanu was earning. Stoff answered that he could not tell (integrity). Then the students replied, "so, we have to call Harrelson's manager? Stoff laughed, probably because he would never get such a question during a meeting since there is too much power at stake. Stoff also talked about that he had been a university professor. And he was glad that Keanu was not the departure of this course." Keith Mayerson is a New York artist who included Keanu in several works of art.

299

it into

"It was really funny and at one point it kinda took over my life." Indeed, Stephen Prina made

the *Harper's* index.

300

the pro-

Also, this study is less about indicating possible interactions between texts and audiences in the process of meaning production than that it provides both the 'traditional' processes of production and reception. However, the latter mode is extended with its own production force and the actor is viewed as the third production mode in that he or she is often set in the advertising campaign for media products. Besides that, it is not my intention to learn how Keanu Reeves is understood or what he signifies in society, he is used as a hand that indicates signification processes of the popular.

301

Janet Staiger's article *Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of "The Silence of the Lambs"* (1993) offers a critical and cultural study of meaning production of the movie *The Silence of the Lambs*. Staiger moves beyond text-centered analyses by taking the view that a text does not have any immanent meanings, readers and their interpretations are bound to their backgrounds and readings or interpretations are not unified due to the discursive historical context. Thus, when one wants to study a particular interpretation one has to consider the particular context of both the interpreter and text as well. So, Staiger notes that *The Silence of the Lambs* evoked three propositions:

1) that whether Jonathan Demme had intended to create a homophobic film, the character of the serial murderer attributes associated with stereotypes of gay men; 2) that in time of paranoia over AIDS and increased violence directed towards gays in the United States, even suggesting connections between homosexuals and serial murderers was irresponsible; but that the character of Clarice Starling played by Jodie Foster was a positive image of a woman working in a patriarchal society and, thus, empowering for women viewers.

Later on, Jodie Foster was outed by the media. It is a similar situation when Keanu was outed by the media based on his performance in an early stage play, the movie *My Own Private Idaho*, his lack of women at his side and his looks.

302

under-

Everything unfold in this case study is based on information in magazines and must therefore understood as such.

303 On the one hand, it fulfils a human interest in increasing knowledge as a matter of entertainment, on

the other hand, it fulfils a special fan interest (in newspapers, magazines and the internet).

304 These lyrics are taken from a site with 'Forgotten Lyrics'. It says: "Well, here are songs you won't

find on Dogstar's *Our Little Visionary* album. It's understanding that for some reason the other band members balked at some of the lyrics.... Go figure!" (probably 'ChateauKe').

305 How the marriage rumor really started is difficult to say since it might have started in England, or as

other magazines state in Spain or Italy. Someone mentioned that Geffen was dating a man who looked like Keanu and "that's how the rumor must have started." Nevertheless, it is a fact that by 1995 the media married Keanu to Geffen. Thus, the rumor could have started in written texts or verbally.

306 The interview continues:

"So even as he willingly embraces gay fans, we have to wonder, does gay mean anything to Reeves? Does he have any use for the words straight, gay, bisexual? Are these ideas – realities – he respects? "Yeah I do," he says. "I do indeed – I guess. I mean, it seems to be sometimes a battleground for people, it seems to be some people's lives sometimes. And it is and it isn't." [...] It's put to him, in the spirit of this straight-themes issue of *Out*: What would be the best thing about being straight, aside from the sex? "Straight? I guess I can't even look at it like that," he says. "You mean what would I say to someone who's gay about what's the best thing about being straight?" Right. "Ha, ha, ha!" – his laughter explodes. "But wouldn't whatever that thing is be the best thing for being gay as well? There are no lines. I mean it's humans, man. I mean... what would I say? ..." Then he thinks of something. "We can go to different bathrooms in a restaurant!" And there you have it – the reason Reeves is not just another in a long line of macho washbucklers who, try as they may, just don't get it. Reeves is a modern man. He gets it."

307 Though rumors of Keanu being gay go back to as early as his career (based on a stage performance

in a gay-play *Wolfboy* and *My Own Private Idaho*) and is fuelled by lack of a high-profile love life in the media.

308 Another important aspect is that heterosexuality dominates the public discourse in general and the

Hollywood films in specific. Therefore, it is interesting to see that homosexuality which is usually referred to as a private discourse, becomes part of a worldwide public discourse. Recommendation for further study.

309 For instance, in *Little Buddha* Reeves is very skinny, while in *Speed* his body is very muscular.

310 The rumor got so out of control, that it could affect Reeves' career. In all interviews the question was

not necessarily asked but it was mentioned as an 'introduction'. There are two references for Keanu Reeves, "wasn't he in *Speed*?" or "he is gay." Most people are not bothered by this rumor and would not care whether he was gay or not, but for fans it is a pitfall filled with uncertainties. Not only the question whether he is gay or not, but if he is dating as well. Some fans said that when he gets married they "probably would no longer be a fan, or if it turns out that he would be gay after all."

311 See earlier note.

312 Slash gives way to an ideological understanding of homo and lesbian sexual relationships as a react-

ion to (often hetero)sexual representations in media.

313 Taken from *My Own Private Fantasy* by "Seamus Cody" (Stephen Basile).

314 A censored interview called *The Unholy (and unlikely) Redemption of Keanu Reeves* which a re-

porter sent to a certain someone who published it on the internet. This is (supposed to be) an original interview between the reporter and Keanu Reeves but was stopped from being published by Keanu's representatives (July 1995). On the question why he did *My Own Private*

³¹⁵ *Idaho* he (supposedly) answered: "I was being Shakespearean you fucking lowbrow cock. Gus [Van Sant, director] fucked me in the editing room, I'm telling you." For instance, this was posted on September 10, 1998:

suppress When I hear the questions of whether actor Keanu Reeves is "gay", it is difficult for me to

my laughter. Anyone who cannot immediately identify Reeves as a homosexual is to be chided for their ignorance or guffawed at for their naivete. Reeves, in his posture, presence and even in his choice of career openly displays himself to be a homosexual. You may ask why he seems so realistic as he romances a beautiful woman in any number of Hollywood films, but the answer is hardly difficult to supply. It is an established fact that to protect themselves from society's scorn, the homosexual must often portray himself as a heterosexual, often pushing the charade to the point of engaging in sexual situations with females, though it may revolt him, and he may have to supply himself with fantasy images of others of his own gender merely to complete the act. Further, it has long been a proven fact that nearly all males in the acting profession are effeminate "nancy boys." Astonishingly, Reeves has actively flaunted his affection for his own gender by actually taking roles as homosexuals, but notice that for every instance in which he allows himself this luxury of "being himself", he must play several roles as a straight character to maintain his illusion! In this observation, it's not difficult to see Reeves as a tragic figure, either born (his father is an alcoholic felon) or swept into a lifestyle that goes against nature, jumping at these too-few opportunities to publicly engage in the behavior he yearns to be free to enact without shame. Reeves' portraying of homosexual characters is a clear cry for acceptance, as no straight male, no matter how badly he needed a career opportunity, would accept such a repulsive part.

Reeves' personal life provides us with unlimited clues as to his sexuality, and all of them point to the gay lifestyle as well. His choice of clothing and adherence to fashion is an obvious characteristic of a "queer" individual, as is his nonchalance in being seen in the company of other famous homosexuals. He may seem alongside beautiful women as well, but the die has already been cast, and it is common knowledge that exceptionally attractive women prefer the homosexual man as a casual companion, as he is non-threatening and shares many of their interests (colorful, flamboyant clothing, make-up, saccharine films) that a true man would have a difficult time even feigning attentiveness to. Mr. Reeves' refusal to state publicly his sexual preference is the final nail in the coffin of his so-called manhood. Would any heterosexual man deny any chance to publicly and proudly cheer his appreciation for his God-given masculinity and ability to win the admiration of and power over the weaker sex? I should think not. Reeves is not only an obvious homosexual, he is also a coward, as many of his kind sadly are.

- Ian

³¹⁶ The actor who was subjected to gossip addressed the issue (in agreement with his agent, manager and

publicist), though various media were involved in keeping the rumor alive, and people (including audiences) were or still are reading it and talking about it. Keith Mayerson was inspired by Keanu and created *Pinocchio the Big Fag*. And, if even acquaintances congratulate you, something must be 'out there'.

³¹⁷ Foucault, M., *De Wil tot Weten: Geschiedenis van de Seksualiteit* (1976).

³¹⁸ Freud, S., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Bantam Books, 1928).

³¹⁹ Lacan, J., *Ecrits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

³²⁰ For further information on the aspects of fantasy I recommend Hinerman, S., "I'll Be Here With You:

Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis", in: Lewis, L., *The Adoring Audience* (New York: Routledge, 1992) and work by Jacques-Alain Miller, Stephen Heath and Laura Mulvey.

³²¹ Fantasies are evoked by an individual who is bound in its cultural formation; as a result, the mechanism of prohibition, upbringing, and the like may differ and as such, fantasies are indicators of culture.

³²² Texts are produced and lead to the production of the media figure as *social phenomenon*, *image* and

sign (Dyer, 1979) for Keanu is both a representation of a person and a real person, he portrays an image in the media (e.g. success, marriage, consumption patterns) and his performances are signs (e.g. characters, authorship). The texts reproduced in the appendix show the diffuse construction of the media figure by the interaction of produced (inter-)texts. Thus, all texts are representations of the actor existing of codes and conventions and as such the actor-as-re-presentation does not refer to the 'real' Keanu, but to other representations or texts (see also Dyer, 1993). Thus, media figures have a public image or identity that is produced by both institutions and audience agencies.

See also Boulding (*The Image*, 1956) and Goffman, E., *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1963) with regard to 'virtual social identity' and 'actual social identity'.

323 The actor has missed the 'rendez-vous' (Christian Metz, 1977) with his public by his absence during projection on screen. This contributes to the idea that the actor is 'empty', he has become a non-specific body and comes only alive in the media discourse.

324 I refer to Richard deCordova's *Picture Personalities* (1990) that deals with the emergence of the star system in America by theorizing the aspects of 'what makes someone' a star.

325 The actor's public identity comes about by the interaction between producers of texts and the texts

themselves. Hermes (1999) theorizes identity construction from a media and cultural studies (sociological) perspective for "psychological theories of catharsis [...] or identification [...] from such a perspective are not much help in our media-saturated world today nor are theories of mass hysteria. Such approaches presume a direct link between individuals and media (persons) that does not give 'culture', or the discursive layer between individuals and their surroundings its due." She understands popular media figures "as nodes in the discursive meaning-producing machine that culture is."

326 The 'absence of the actor' leads therefore to both a *reality effect*, which is based on analogy, and to

an *effect of the real*, which is based on spectators' beliefs (Oudart, 1971) produced by authorized and unauthorized texts that contribute – in this example - to the construction of the popular media figure. The effect of the real is here understood as the audiences 'judgement' on the basis of the reality effect to refer to Keanu Reeves the media figure as real. The media figure is believed to be real for his produced textual representations can be found in various mediated discourses. The reality effect is here understood as the analogy between Keanu Reeves the private person and Keanu Reeves the media figure.

327 Since I am studying the come about of the popular with Keanu Reeves as a hand, I noticed that several

people have turned me into the 'melting pot' of Keanu gossip. Somehow I just happen to hear or see his name at least once a week: a lot of people feel the need to keep me updated... It's not that I don't appreciate it, but I don't want it either – at least not for the rest of my life.

328 Taken from *The Bed & Breakfast Show* (UK, 1994 with Paula Yates).

329 See earlier note.

330 Read Judith Mayne's "Paradoxes of Spectatorship" in: Williams, L. (ed.), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

331 The sole possibility of interaction with the actor leads to uncertainties, jealousy and impoliteness. In

this case, some were astonished by the possibility that their idol could have taken the time to sit down and write them a message. When reading the responses, it is clear that some interpret his message as a personal note of 'thank you'. My experiences with fans show that it is very scary to them when the idol gets too close. Thus, when the opportunity is finally there to approach the man, they are afraid to do so – which can be explained by fear of

desillusion, shame of being stigmatized as a fan or excuses such as “he seems in a bad mood.” Thus, when suddenly a message is being posted by the actor/musician, people might not be ready yet to deal with closing the distance.

³³² Althusser (1971) describes this process by the terms *interpellation* and *hailing*. The underlying thought is that language is part of social relations and in communicative actions among people these social relationships are reproduced. The content of Bret’s and Keanu’s messages ‘interpellate’ or ‘hail’ their audiences by addressing them as audiences or fans.

³³³ See for ideological consequences Eagleton, T., *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991).

³³⁴ For instance, Marxist theories of class are no longer sufficient to explain problems and crises in society we know today.

³³⁵ Society therefore, conforms to ‘efficiency for the institutions develop themselves independent of one another.

³³⁶ Largely due to technological developments such as the internet (e-mail, chat rooms).

³³⁷ All participants in the ‘ideal speech situation’ are guided by the motivation of the best argument and which is accepted upon by all participants. One speaks of ‘discursive rationality’ for all actors have equal chances and are capable of one’s own expressions and actions through reasonable arguments.

³³⁸ In the last section (appendix) I included a post on September 30 of 1998 where someone posted “I’m the mysterious red-head... eat your hearts out,” which indicates this problem as well.

³³⁹ Morley, D., *Television Audiences & Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 128.

³⁴⁰ Actual social identity refers to someone’s characteristics and attributes that can be proven.

³⁴¹ Some people that ‘hang around’ the actor or his friends presume on this ‘fact’ by name-dropping in bars (just loud enough so that everyone attending can overhear a ‘private conversation’), telling ‘funny’ stories about him and ‘protecting’ him by calling each other names.

³⁴² She based her meanings on authorized texts such as interviews, movie characters and so on, but also talking to other people (fans) helped her to “find out who he really is” (i.e. what he means to her).

³⁴³ I noticed that it is often hard to tell why someone really was carried away or moved by a movie or book. When you ask someone (not necessarily a fan) why he or she likes Keanu, answers vary from “nice attitude,” “because I do” to “his work is very soulful, deep and wide-ranging, and addresses really big important questions in life. He seems to be a person with strong values that are quite counter-cultural in the best sense, as evidenced by his choice of roles. [...] He seems like a thoughtful, compassionate person deeply concerned with doing good and honest work” and “he appears to have it all, everything we think causes success and happiness: talent, fame, wealth, good looks, health and youth. And yet he doesn’t respond to those things the way I expected. He receives an enormous amount of criticism and demands, and yet he responds to it like a gentleman, or better, no response at all. [...] He is willing to risk his security. He fails, and then fails better next time. Very admirable. His successes don’t go to his head.” At *KeanuFest* women described him with adjectives such as “compassionate,” “honest,” “fun,” “charismatic,” “complex,” “sensual,” “multifaced,” “expressive,” “mysterious” and “enigma.” The stories that represent expressions of feelings and sharing ‘Keanu’s enigma’ indicate that ‘Keanu’ intersects with their backgrounds. What they have memorized of various texts (the intertext) have led to the construction of a personalized Keanu who means something in their own private sphere, but which is acted upon in the outside world of the public sphere as well – like I have shown in the chapters four and five.

³⁴⁴ The latter sentence refers to another often quoted sentence in various media, namely “Keanu means

a cool breeze over the mountains” – in many languages such as “kall bris över bergen” (Swedish) – and is pronounced in Dutch as “Ki-ja-noe.”

345 The reconceptualization of audiences in terms of the shift from meaning production to text production must therefore be understood rather as an extension than as a change!

346 Meaning production is here double edged for an interview is a textual manifestation that opens up meanings as soon as it is read and interpreted by readers. However, since quotations are distributed textually as well, meaning is already presented in the interview however, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it is *fits* readers. Though, when something is quoted several times, readers will pick up on that.

347 This person doesn’t want to be named.

348 Sometimes actors show ‘reluctant’ behavior and language.

349 Mediation thesis understands cinema as mediation between reality and spectator. Thus, realism is constructed, but makes a film look realistic.

350 The Marxist approach to realism is one of offering a meta-language from which realism can be judged as true or false.

351 Structuralists argue that media/film produce the effect of a reality (film naturalizes reality) by surpressing its own construction. They focus on studying the construction process.

352 Authenticity is studied by the reproductive capacity of media as well (see Thompson’s *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (1995), pp. 21-23).

353 See, Graaf, S., van der, *Social Graduation Hymn Tribute: On the Dialectics of Conflict and Con-sensus Layers Between the Production and Reception of a Specific Media Text* (1998).

354 Besides meaning production and textual production, I want to introduce the methodological shift in terms of theorizing the means of textual production by emphasizing that audiences are producers of culture as well (like institutions) and to credit them as equally powerful as official text producers.

355 Johnny Depp (1999).

356 *Rip It Up*, April 1999 by Cybernetic Dog.

357 Especially the Hollywood industry advertises and distributes its products through its actors.

358 His public identity is derived from several sources such as the roles he has performed, interviews, ‘snap shots’ and his bodily characteristics.

359 Marketing strategies and audience research are still far from being perfect; however, within the limits of the corporative world, marketing and audiences (customers or clients) are still grasped as the most important parts of the business for their money potential. Studying both institutions and individual agencies then contributes to the improvement of marketing procedures to promote the ‘non-specific body’ to ‘specific somebodies’. While, like I opted earlier, the latter so far remain specific nobodies, for they are directed towards uncertain identities since it is hard to predict who is actually going to end up in a cinema, buying a magazine or a certain dress.

260 Various branches within each industry occupy different rules in the decision-making process; especially commercial media industries are on the outlook for economic successes which lead to the development of specific strategies to increase a product’s potential profitability. However, there is no success-formula that guarantees a box-office hit. In general, the actors are operated as the dominant force to attract audiences. A reason for this is that actors are ‘visible’ and therefore seem to dominate the media by producing box-office successes; success

is depends on existing ‘stars’ and at the same time, on the creation of new faces. An industry friend formulated it like “box-office hits make money, stars make money and therefore they are combined in order to have the best cards to win the competition.”

361 Although I understand the actor as site I haven’t included any of his productional means that go be-

yond the profession of acting. The reason is that the actor is both a public and private individual and as such he enters the public discourse. For reasons of privacy and reasons that go beyond the interest of this study, I only stated that the actor as a private human being interferes with both institutions and audiences; therefore, he is a productive mode on his own. However, his intentions, needs and desires are excluded from this research and are largely linked to ideas that the actor and his productive powers are a part of his role but that do not necessarily overlap or intersect with his private interests and with his public identity in the public discourse.

362 I also advocate the integrative approach for it studies institutions, audiences and the actor as triadic

modes of popular production: they are interdependent - products won’t be made or sold without potential consumers.

363 Cultural Studies understand audiences as active individuals, they study the context and are mainly

preoccupied with popular culture; they are concerned with the generation and circulation of meanings. Meaning production can only be grasped in the cultural context of social experiences. This approach has several advantages regarding other studies on media influences and audience research. First, the influence of media are seen as less powerful for audiences produce meanings as well; second, texts are open to different readings (polysemic); third, differences in meaning production derive from the social positions of the audiences; and fourth, the context of the (everyday) social life situation is studied as well. Although, Cultural Studies approaches have several disadvantages as well, such as the definition of ‘audience(s)’, ‘do you speak of audience or audiences?’, ‘what do they share?’ versus potentiality of homogenization and the object of study placed in the everyday context might, at the same time, obscure boundaries between the two as well (see Turner, 1992; Storm, 1996).

364 Especially fans.

365 Throughout this work I commented on this, in my opinion, rather traditional approach.

366 See Miller (1977/8) with regard to ‘suture’. Especially media are helpful since they form the bridge between the private sphere of individuals and their relationship with the public sphere. Therefore, I included the distinction among public, semi-public and private sphere and discourse in order to indicate the differences among types of knowledge, the mode of production and the consequences for the creation of the popular.

367 The ‘fit’ or ‘intersection’ is there where the three modes overlap, for instance, there where real life

issues by audiences are linked to the actor’s background, which is based on the idea of *similarity*. Or it might lead to a *desire* or *need*. Nevertheless, it is the site where the person becomes public (and popular). An important suggestion for further research. See also Hinerman (Lewis, 1992) with regard to ‘fit’.

368 For now, it is thus important to make differentiations in terms of bodily characteristics such as age,

gender and ethnicity, social characteristics such as class, occupation, media accessibility and individual characteristics such as motivation, choice and experience. Which goes for corporative structures as well: Industries are studied in terms of organizational structures – ownership and control - goals, marketing strategies, communicative actions regarding its clients or customers – consumption and access - and the context of everyday life practices – cultural empirialism - are taken into account as well (bound to limits of time and space). This distinction is purely theoretical, but when studied in combination they show the underlying motives of production activities by corporations and individuals.

369 I think that the biggest differences can be indicated between actors and actresses for male and

female

audiences behave and motivate their actions differently. Further research is recommended.

³⁷⁰ Some are constructed, others are the actor's own.

³⁷¹ Although, I am aware of several motivations 'why the actor behaves and acts the way he does', I feel

it's inappropriate to go beyond the function of the actor as a case study. Therefore, I argued every (inter-)action on the actor's side from a public perspective (such as TV shows and interviews).

³⁷² In the 60s 'Direct Cinema' became very popular which resulted in films that were as 'authentic' and

'natural' as possible; actors were often replaced by common people. Filmmakers tried to capture or to access reality. That is what the entertainment industry still tries to pretend today by producing celebrities that should speak or play with the publics' imaginations. People on the outlook for meaning. Meaning they produce themselves or by the generation of their own texts.

³⁷³ The humanist tradition studies *identity* in terms of *authenticity*.

³⁷⁴ To be further explored for concepts go beyond content of this thesis. However, they are related to my

methodological shift.

³⁷⁵ Another difficulty is the term '*receptive production*' which refers to the 'production' of meanings

and texts and financial interests can be both involved and uninvolved. The question raises then whether you can speak of 'production' when no money is involved. I understand therefore production as a concept that involves money, but that also refers to concepts such as pleasure and desire. See for example Roland Barthes, John Fiske, Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall, Henry Jenkins and Graeme Turner.

³⁷⁶ For example, when one compares 'stars' in film, TV or theater one notices that they differ in terms

of identity, namely, screen actors are represented through the gap between actor and character, while TV stars are presented as unified outside the TV context and on stage the actor is addressed without reference to his characters (as a public representation).

³⁷⁷ "Spiritualism Turns Matrix into Cult Fare" in: *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 17, 1999 by Bob Harvey.

³⁷⁸ Everclear, "White Men in Black Suits" (*So Much For the Afterglow*, 1997).