BOOK CHAPTER DRAFT – WORK IN PROGRESS

FORTHCOMING IN ASHGATE RESEARCH COMPANION (FAN CULTURE)

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Abstract

This chapter will give particular attention to the intersection of the notions of drama and ageing in the context of online fandom by examining networked fan practices that center on the actor Keanu Reeves. The results of documented interpersonal exchanges that could be retrieved on (archived) forums and mailing lists, and so forth are used as evidence. The findings yield insight into how drama and the work it does in adult lives is age-related, and a mechanism to maneuver one's own life course and the role of fandom in it. It demonstrates that notions of ageing in these 'drama' instances seem to defend one's position in the community hierarchy rather than being used for self-reflection in one's fandom over time.

Keywords fandom; celebrity; networked fan sites; drama; ageing; life course; interpersonal exchange; performative orientation

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Much Ado About Keanu Reeves: The Drama of Ageing in Online Fandom

"Today is my b-day and I am avoiding ALL drama and conflict and giving myself

the gift of a peaceful day" (UGossip, 2012).

Introduction

In the 1990s I was a film grad student at Utrecht University at a time when the Internet

was still emerging. I had developed an interest in audience research, particularly in

creative and participatory activities such as fan fiction vis-à-vis the production process

involved in filmmaking. Rather than focusing on the interaction between the text and

reception underlying extensive debates about active-passive and homogenous-divergent

perceptions of audiences, I focused on ways content from mass media got produced,

distributed, consumed, appropriated and reshaped, conceptualizing audiences as

'producers' of both meanings and texts (Fiske 1987; Jenkins 1992; Livingstone 1991;

Morley 1992).

In order to investigate these production and consumption dynamics I focused on the

'construction of celebrity culture' with the actor Keanu Reeves serving as a case study.

At that time, Keanu had performed in commercial and independent movies including *Bill*

& Ted's Excellent Adventure, *My Own Private Idaho, Speed and The Devil's Advocate*,

performed in theater (*Hamlet*), toured around the world in a band (*Dogstar*), and was

about to become a mega star with his portrayal of Neo, 'The One' in *The Matrix* movies.

I had set up interviews with 'the industry' including the actor, band members, agents,

managers, directors, talk show hosts, journalists and publicists, as well as with several

fans and I attended a fan convention. While I did not focus on fans or their (online) behavior per se, I became intrigued by how they not only met in real life but also increasingly seemed to flock to the Internet to interpret, assess and appreciate the actor.

Fans tended to meet at concerts or at the side lines of movie premieres, while more adamant fans could attend 'KeanuFest' (1998) which was the only organized gathering in the US and, at that time, organized by a fan-led club called 'Zero Distortion'. Starting out in 1996, KeanuFest was considered to be "a funky experience for all Keanuphiles" and attended by about twenty American and Canadian women (some returning each year) "married and single, ages 25-72, and all shapes and sizes".[1] It provided me with an opportunity to interview and observe female fans – most of which were in their thirties and early forties - preparing lunches and dinners based on things Keanu's characters ate, reading Shakespeare together (based on the actor's declared interest), discussing how the actor was portrayed in the media and what he was like in reality, and so on. KeanuFest seemed to offer its participants an 'atmosphere of trust' in which they could open up and share the influence of Keanu in their lives, offering a sense of validation that some did not receive in their daily lives (van der Graaf 1999).

It is here that I also learned about the most important (often password protected) online sources, particularly, 'The Garden', 'Chateau Ke' and 'JTJ Net' served the needs and interests of various Keanu-fandom communities underpinned by a hierarchy of fan members who 'have access' and those who do not have trusted connections to verify or provide authentic information about the actor (and his family, friends, coworkers, etc.). More strikingly, however, was not so much the sharing and dissection of the actor's sexuality and love life, whereabouts, past and upcoming projects and so forth, but the

'drama' between fans varying from sophisticated mind games like trolling, to arguing, and impersonating each other.

For several years, I was not exempt from such practices. The combination of being a student (conducting fieldwork for the first time) and not a fan of the actor in relation to the 'touchy' subject of being a fan - fandom "is very personal and I would rather not have someone else to read it, especially if Keanu is going to read it one day" (van der Graaf 1999: 58)[2] - did not sit well to establish my credibility and to gain trust from fans (van der Graaf 1999).[3] As a result, from time to time I (and friends, colleagues, etc.) would, especially, online be confronted with unfriendly discussions about myself such as being the 'Anti-Christ' and impersonations which led me to occasionally monitor certain sites.

Over the years, some fans stayed others went, some new ones came and others went, but the 'drama' stayed, and in which increasingly the topic of ageing has come into play (Harrington and Bielby 2010; Marwick and boyd 2011). Not only the actor (1964) has come of age but his fan base as well, or so it seems; "I wonder if he worries about the fact that his fans are his own age. We have aged with him. […]" (UGossip, 2007).

By focusing on 'drama' within fan exchanges supported by a life course perspective, this chapter will give particular attention to fans who negotiate social positions and ownership over the fan object in Keanu fandom on the Internet. More specifically, it demonstrates that notions of ageing in these 'drama' instances seem to defend one's position in the community hierarchy (rather than being used for self-reflection in one's fandom over time) offering a more rounded understanding of the make-up of drama in fandom in adulthood.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: The first section discusses the roles of

drama and ageing in fandom on the Internet. This is followed by an overview of the methodology. The third section explores the performative orientation of Keanu fandom at the intersection of milestones, coming of age and showing age within fan exchanges. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings demonstrating how drama and the work it does in adult lives is age-related, and a mechanism to maneuver the role of fandom in it.

All the Drama!

Research into Internet cultures in general, and fan communities in particular, has shown the pervasiveness of rich, interpersonal relationships that get formed and maintained online such as in social networks and micro blogs, 'performed' in front of an audience (Donath 2010; Marwick and boyd 2011). More specifically, an increasing interest can be detected to understand fandom in terms of communities based on shared passions and practices played out in networked publics foregrounding social interactions and community (Anderson 2010; Baym 2000; Busse and Gray 2011). Using various online communications including social media, fans can be seen to practice fandom affecting and shaping other fans (Chin and Hills 2008).

Understanding fandom as practice highlights an interdependent relationship between being a new fan and being an insider in the fan community. It draws attention to the ways in which newcomers become new members and learn (preferred) ways of participating, reframing their ways of thinking, interests, shared practices, and identities, and so forth binding the community (Lave and Wenger 1991). This rather linear direction moving from the outskirts towards becoming more embedded in the practices of the

(core) community points to the notion of power associated with certain authority levels that explicitly or tacitly permit or refuse someone's fan status in the community (cf. van der Graaf 2009).

Given this, fandom can be seen to construct and safeguard the community and depends on a multitude of performances. In such a 'performative orientation' (Habermas 1988) fans as communicating participants, meet each other as both 'I' and 'you' attempting to reach a mutual understanding of a situation in fandom (Kattenbelt 2010). 'Signalling one's fandom, or self as fan', however, is not without costs. For example, costs are involved to produce the 'signal' ('production costs'), to make it visible ('efficacy costs'), and produced information can be risky as it can be used in harmful ways ('predation or risk costs') (Donath 2010). Furthermore, research has shown that the anonymity of online communications seems to induce a host of practices such as flirting and flaming, and whether "true or false, it complicates people's professional and personal lives in ways that are difficult to predict" (De Kosnik 2010: 383).

Particularly, interpersonal communication like gossip (extensively examined in, among others, reality television and soap opera research) has been shown to facilitate group cohesiveness among fans in its offer of intimacy and testing and establishing moral norms about persons who are not present (Jenkins 2003; Jones 1980). Gossip functions as a desire to understand and personalize issues, to make them relevant, and it can contribute to the solution of personal issues (Hermes 1995). Gossip has therefore a social use. 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 fan community.

However, while studies on fans have shown that gossip is important to build, relate and dissect relationships among fans and between fans and their 'object of desire', it seems to downplay other binding activities such as those connoted by the term drama (cf. Baym 2000). In particular, research on teenagers has suggested that affordances of social media are being deployed for interpersonal interactions and the role of everyday life 'drama' in it. Marwick and boyd (2011) have put the emic term forward, in the context of teenagers (especially girls), to capture a series of online (reciprocal) practices like gossip, arguing, and name-calling associated with interpersonal conflict and attention seeking on the Internet in general, and social media in particular, and is performed in front of a (potentially) large audience.

They are also quick to point out that teens use the term to distance themselves from adult narratives like bullying, "to refer to an array of different practices - some emotionally devastating, others lightweight and fun – [and so to] attempt to protect themselves from the social and psychological harm involved in accounting both for the pain they feel and the pain they cause others" (Marwick and boyd 2011:18). Drama allows teenagers to "lessen the importance of conflict in their lives, blur the lines between serious and non-serious actions, acknowledge the intrinsic performativity of teen life on networked publics, and – most importantly – "save face" (2011: 4). In this view, the make-up of drama seems also relevant in the examination of the work it can do in a more mature online fan community, and thereby highlighting the 'work' of ageing.

Fandom has generally been associated with 'hysterical' tweens and youngsters, especially girls, that are 'fanatic' about musicians such as 'The Bielievers' of Justin Bieber, or young actors like Robert Pattinson. In particular, attention has been given to

the dynamics of (pre-)adolescence such as in terms of the exploration of one's sexuality and identity through fantasy; and which, at a later stage in life, tends to fade away (albeit, an occasional revisit may be triggered by a reunion tour or so) (Harrington and Bielby 2010; Sandvoss 2005). Also, while issues including identity and transformation (Cavicchi 1998; Stevenson 2009); generational affiliation (Scodari 1998); entering, maintaining and leaving fandoms associated with process (Baym 2000; Hills 2005; Scardaville 2005); and, autobiography (Kuhn 2002) have been well-addressed, less systematic investigation is available about engagement over time, particularly, in the context of fandom in adulthood (Anderson 2010).

Harrington and Bielby (2010) make a case to deploy a life course perspective in their discussion of four age-based issues - that all have been addressed in fan research - that is, fandom and life milestones, changes in the self, age norms within fandom, and changes in the fan object over time. The first one considers the ways our lives evolve by focusing on milestones in life, those moments in time that impact our lives and are guided by a change in direction. In life course theory such changes are explained in terms of age-gradation or so-called 'turning points' such as acquiring a driver's license or retirement, and physiology like menopause. In the context of fan studies, issues involved in changing bodies and identity in adolescence are well-documented, yet not much attention has been given to those associated with ageing, and that tend to be of a diminishing nature (e.g. skin elasticity, hair color) (Jermyn 2012; cf. Bennett 2006).

Also, changes in the self have been examined in fan studies in their focus on the make-up of fan identities over time which seems to have moved between "fans as fundamentally othered (for better and worse) and fans as early adapters and adopters of

particular audience behaviors that have become widespread" (Busse and Gray 2011: 425). Moreover, becoming a fan or abandoning one's 'object of desire' or taking on another, competing roles such as grandparent, can underpin a shift in identity as well as one's position within the fan community (Hills 2005).

Like social norms, age norms define what is considered age (in)appropriate, and this can also change over time. For example, 'forty is the new thirty'. Were women in their forties and fifties a decade a go considered 'old', with series like *Sex and the City*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Cougar Town*, age norms seem to have been re-evaluated and up-graded. However, Harrington and Bielby (2010) have pointed out that age norms do still seem to impact whether fandom gets concealed or revealed in public. Also, the 'fan object' evolves over time (cf. Gorton and Garde-Hansen 2012; Holmlund 2010; McCabe 2012). For example, the *Harry Potter* series show a trajectory of life course development in which the characters transform from children into teenagers, and deal with concomitant life issues, that seemingly intertwine with 'coming of age' trajectories of the audience and its own perception of one's life narrative and identity (cf. Kuhn 2002).

The remainder of this chapter draws on the notion of drama within fan exchanges supported by a life course perspective in the negotiation of one's position and ownership over the fan object so as to yield an expanded understanding of mature online fan engagement with celebrity.[4]

Methodology

By drawing on a single case study of the actor Keanu Reeves, this chapter can be appreciated for its own interest value. In addition, it aims to point to some (theoretical)

aspects larger than the case itself in the examination of the dynamics of drama and the role of ageing in mature fandom on the Internet.

With a career spanning nearly three decades as an on- and off-screen actor, musician, and more recently producer and director, Keanu Reeves has shown his capacity to play and mature into a household name alongside generations of global audiences. His choices (regardless of being personal or of a contractual nature) have been wide and diverse, criticized, ridiculed and praised, and have included hits and misses. While the actor at times has been relatively accessible such as through his performances on stage (a ticket away) and seeming lack of bodyguards, his private life has remained largely that. With no official personal communication channel at hand such as a Facebook page or Twitter account,[5] or seeming interest in an active and outgoing mediatised public life in general and personal life in particular, the circulation and creation of 'Keanu Reeves' as celebrity has mainly moved between mainstream media and user-driven and maintained content, and, over the last decade, facilitated by a plethora of Internet-related locations.

This chapter draws on a large set of data that were collected between January 1997 and August 2012. In the period between 1997 and March 1999 data were systematically collected from several online sources, that is, two mailing lists, five forums (e.g. alt.fan.keanu-reeves, KeanuVillage, Imdb, and JTJ.net), and seventeen fan sites (e.g. Chateau Ke, KeanuNet, Club Keanu) (van der Graaf 1999).[6] Some of these sites changed names or ownership, and/or no longer exist. For example, JTJ.net became UGossip. From April 1999 onwards, for reasons outlined earlier, data were collected on an ad hoc basis. This chapter relies, in particular, on alt.fan.keanu-reeves (mailing list), Imdb, UGossip and Topix (forum-based gossip sites), and Whoaisnotme and Keanuweb

(fan sites). On average these sites were frequented every other three months. With these limitations in mind, however, and mixture of primary and secondary methods (van der Graaf 1999), the extensive period of investigation, and existing research that was consulted, I am confident of the findings.[7]

Data used in this chapter take the form of interpersonal exchange between fans that could be publicly retrieved.[8] As consent was only sought for the 1999 study, identifying information was – as much was possible - removed. As a result, citations provided here can only be traced back to the site (and year), and names were removed or anonymized so as to protect the privacy of the authors.[9] In order to collect and analyse the data, where possible, threads were separated - using a script written for this purpose -, by author, date/time stamp, message header and body, facilitating further examination using FileMaker Pro (cf. van der Graaf 2009).

The analysis of interpersonal exchange in the form of messages is an unobtrusive way to investigate human interactions. Yet, continuous awareness and diligence was necessary to allow for informed decisions concerning, among others, credibility, representativeness, and meaning as generally the identity of authors or sources was unknown. The investigated exchanges offered insight into the 'sayings and doings' of fans practicing their Keanu Reeves fandom. The analysis yields insights into "the ways that people organize and forge connections between events and the sense they make of those connections" (Bryman 2004: 412), and therein elements of drama and ageing could be distilled.

In the next section, the main findings are presented.

Practicing fandom

In fanning Keanu Reeves different aspects of the actor are articulated. He 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 1998) shaping his public identity (and second-guessing his private persona) bound to a particular historical moment and locale. Also, the actor is intertextually present (in mediated expressions) and is commodified in texts. Herein lies what fans have at their disposal to work in, negotiate with, and remake as an integral part of 'acting out' their fandom, thereby highlighting a host of interpretive and informative practices associated with a 'performative orientation' in online fan fandom.

Interpretive practices concern the work fans do to make the actor, in his various capacities, personally meaningful by way of referencing from his life world to their own lives. By sharing these interpretations online, fans exchange their worldviews and their own position in it (Baym 2000). For example, in *The Gift* Keanu's character Donnie Barksdale is a violent alcoholic who beats and cheats on his wife. In an interview with Rolling Stone magazine, the actor tells about witnessing an act of violence between a man and woman. This led to a series of messages on the alt.fan.keanu-reeves mailing list (August 2000) blurring the lines between interpreting Keanu's words and his portrayal of Donnie, Donnie's character itself, one's own experiences and social support for those who fell victim to such abuse.

"I bought it before the shit hit the fan and I would buy it a hundred times over, regardless of any controversial content. […] I was just a bit disappointed and

surprised […] What I "heard" was that through acting he was able to feel the power and pleasure that wife abusers experience. That shook me up, because I am accustomed to Keanu showing a more compassionate side...." (08/23/00).

Informative practices relate to the production, consumption and sharing of knowledge such as learning about new movie projects and reposting tweets on the actor's whereabouts in a forum; put jokingly by a fan, "My considered opinion is that it's his duty to keep his private life private and my duty to find out every thing I can,"[10] in which the Internet plays an important role. A Keanu fan of many years, shares her experience on the forum of the fan site Whoaisnotme about adopting the Internet for her fandom:

"My way of following Keanu has changed with the passing of time. I started my fandom in 1991 and for many years all I could do was to wait for his movies in theatres, VHS and TV and for the few interviews and posters that came out in magazines. Then, in 2001, I finally got the Internet access at home and I must say that it totally changed my approach. Since then, I have managed to follow him more 'closely' thanks to websites, blogs, online articles, pictures etc, even though there's a lot of garbage about him as well" (2009).

The Internet may perhaps hold 'a lot of garbage,' it has facilitated interpretive and informative practices among fans to a far greater extent than previously possible. Although, while there are 'secret' locations for which a password needs to be obtained (for reasons such as not to be ridiculed, trolled, or to refrain from legal actions by posting

copy-righted photo materials and so forth), online sites are far-out more public than say, a fan convention, and are catering to networked fans that can be characterized "by their affect and engagement with the source text but also by their engagement with one another" (Busse and Gray 2011: 426).

These sites can be characterized by a 'performative orientation' towards the organizational dynamics of online fandom, perhaps arguably, associated with "the increasing significance of performance in contemporary culture and society" (Kattenbelt 2010: 30; see also "performative society" in Kershaw (2003) and "experience economy" in Pine and Gilmore (1999). A performative orientation - established through engagement with 'the object of desire' - draws attention to a more affective perception and a reflexive orientation toward one's own subjectivity and position within the fan community as well as towards the other fans that are fulfilling the role of audience (cf. Kattenbelt 2010).

In examining interpersonal exchanges of Keanu Reeves' fans over time, drama is a frequently used term or recurring theme in the 'performative orientation of fandom'; or, put aptly by a fan on the Whoaisnotme forum, "There has been civil war in Keanu fandom […]. This fandom has always been full of politics, possibly more so than others. People have left because of it" (2009). Let's take a closer look at drama within fan exchanges in networked, particularly adult, Keanu fandom. For this purpose the elements of drama are presented by following four age-based discussions, respectively life milestones, changes in the self, age norms and changes in the fan object over time (Harrington and Bielby 2010).

Finding Keanu Reeves

> "My life changed. […] after the third viewing [*Speed*], I finally admitted to myself
> that I couldn't take my eyes off the main character, Jack Traven. […] I discovered
> the Internet where there is a whole Keanu Reeves World waiting to be unfold by
> fans like me. […] Since then, to paraphrase Anthony Quinn as Don Pedro Sr., in *A
> Walk in the Clouds*: I am an orphan no longer" (van der Graaf 1999: 59).

'Finding fandom' signals an important turning point in a fan's life – i.e. thinking about
life 'before and after becoming a fan' (Hills 2005) –, experienced in terms of a
transformation of the (sense of) self impacting one's daily life, and one's life course more
generally (Harrington and Bielby 2010). Issues of identity, in particular those at the
intersection of fan and sexual identity (or, orientation), are prevalent in adult Keanu
fandom. For example, there are those who seek attention by making their sexual fantasies
about the actor explicit, or alternatively, seek to upgrade their (social) status by asserting
they have had sex with the actor (cf. van der Graaf 1999). Especially, the latter
guarantees upheaval in the community, but also considering oneself as Keanu's soul mate
or speculating about the actor's sexual orientation can count on some serious 'drama'
varying from gossiping, to arguing, and name-calling (e.g. 'Ardith' - a long term fan, said
to be a 50+ woman with a 'gay agenda' - becomes 'Ardick').

Over the years there have been numerous fans who 'found Keanu' – through his
work or in real-life – a turning point that made them deem him their soul mate, and over
time, several screen names can be seen to repeatedly pop up. For example, there is
'Cloud' who, for nearly a decade, frequently replies (in-one-go) to earlier posts often

using song lyrics, and signing off her message in a variation of 'showering Keanu, her silent soul mate, with much love and affection'. Every now and then, her posts are good for a mixture of exchanges between fans ranging from 'reaching out', 'showing age', 'joking', 'bitching', 'gossiping', and 'entertainment'. These elements of drama are presented in the following thread on the forum-based gossip site UGossip (2012):

> "Cloud if he hasn't found you in all these years […]. Get a grip. He isn't coming. You have been posting for years and even if Keanu doesn't come here I believe he knows people that do. Move on before you lose any more years."

In response to this post another fan writes,

> "Talking to the deaf."

To which yet another fan responds with a joke,

> "[…] I can tell Cloud would never try computer dating."

Then conflict seems to unravel between fans about Cloud. The exchange presented here involves excerpts from four different fans in response to each other, marked by poster 1 to 4.

> "Cloud is […] stunted emotionally. I wonder if her sibling is the same or if she has

boyfriends and friends. Cloud wouldn't be able to stand the Real Keanu who smokes drinks and has sex before marriage" (poster 1)

"Oh and you're better then now huh? You obsess over Keanu like a surfing troll" (poster 2).

"Not me hon. I come here while working to give myself a break from a demanding job. I have been married forever it seems so sorry I leave the Keanu obsessing to the sick soulmate wannabees" (poster 1).

"[…] My God, You take this stupidass board and act as if you know the 'everything' about a person like some shrink. Don't you know this board is nothing but games being played out by certain people for their enjoyment. They get off on seeing you unfold on people. That's all I see that come from Clouds posts. Is snapping on someones stupid silly posts you get all upset over. As if you know them. Cloud could be the best scammer on this board and you are buying it hook line and sinker" (poster 3).

"What's sick is a married woman who is at work posting keanu content and obsessing over him. cloud is single with no attachments. You on the other hand are not. Is this how you piss away your hours at work? here? You're being paid to work not play. So stop bitching about other people" (poster 4).

The interpersonal conflict gets (temporarily) resolved, when another poster dismisses the arguments, "This could of been easily avoided. Just scroll by Clouds posts next time."

Also, in Keanu fandom references and reflections on physiological changes and implications of the self can be detected. In particular, about those associated with ageing such as grey hair, "I have a ton of grey/silver hair, and I LOVE it. I think it looks cool and wouldn't mind being all silver" (alt.fan.keanu-reeves, 2000), and menopause, **"hot flushes, the change that old women get"** (UGossip, 2012). Overall, fans tend to (self-) reference to their own age in both positive and negative terms such as represented by the following two posts:

"[…] All the parts still work, and despite the gravitational pull, almost everything is still in place. The brain is still nineteen. I'm still that person" (alt.fan.keanu-reeves, 2000).

"I don't date anymore. Guys my age are going out with women in their late 20's early 30's. It's pointless to. […] I'm no hot chic and my cuteness is going away with age. I'm just have a mid life crisis" (UGossip, 2012).

Physiology in general, and age-related changes in particular, are also frequently used to practicing drama among online Keanu fans in name-calling each other 'granny', 'menopausal biatch', 'old hag', 'old wrinkled up titty', 'spinster' and so forth. Moreover, in 'drama-hood' allusions to one's adulthood can be detected. For example, about intimacy - e.g. 'she is a 40-year old virgin' -, isolation - e.g. 'she has no friends' -, and

employment - e.g. 'she can't pay her own bills'. Also, references to the lack of maturity can be seen such as, 'grow the fck up', 'she sounds like a wounded three year old when she gets feedback' or 'it's like jr high cooties and these are 40 year old women'. Thus, adulthood and ageing associated with life course seem to play an important role in the drama within fan exchanges.

Keanu in contention

"I have been having some doubts about going to KeanuFest and my fascination with Keanu because of my age and position in life. I've wondered what my family and friends would think of me if they knew about this very private side of me. […]" (van der Graaf 1999: 48).

Fandom and the fan identity are not stable. Coming of 'age', Keanu fans can be seen to doubt their fandom such as in terms of appropriateness. More mature fans seem to be easy targets for 'witty attacks' and gossip which may suggest a way for other fans to maneuver their own Keanu fandom. In addition, 'competing priorities' can give way to change. For example, taking care of one's elderly sick parent can underpin a cyclical interest in the actor (cf. Hills 2005). More importantly, the fan exchanges studied for this chapter can frequently be seen to a repositioning of themselves or their place in the hierarchy of the fan community by their ability to recount the history of Keanu fandom and apprehending the younger generation (albeit in age or length of fandom, though the latter seems to be more the case); often accompanied by jokingly dealing with their own ageing.

"I've been a Ke fan long enough that I used to be a Gardener. You younger guys, have you ever heard of the Garden of Keanadu? No? It's the stuff of legends even to the few who *have* heard of it. I was a Gardener. I'm ancient. Moss and lichen grow on me" (Whoaisnotme, 2011).

Another way to repositioning oneself is to set up and run a Keanu Website.[11] For example, Whoaisnotme.net was set up "In Defense of Keanu Reeves" against Keanu-bashers.[12] Yet, competing priorities often seem to lead to a (temporary) shift in fan activity (oftentimes, resulting in some kind of drama for those who lacking their 'Keanu-fix'), "Over the past couple months or so I've been having a job and earning money like a good adult person […]" (Whoaisnotme, 2011).

Clubkreeves.com (formerly known as Clubkeanu.com) is ran by woman who, years ago, made the move from fan to Webmaster. Her site is among the few that have been considered as the 'go-to' place for reliable information. She is said to have an 'in' with Keanu's team (or, perhaps, "an assistant of an assistant") for which she is both admired and condemned; providing her with a certain social status versus being tought of as an attention-seeker or show-off. To belong to her clique of trusted fans ('Ckers') means a vestment in a high(er) rank in Keanu fandom; "[She] lives a mutual admiration society. She loves what she does and the people who benefit from her work are thankful and supportive. Her money, her board, her rules. It may sting when she uses her velvet hammer, but that's life.:)" (Topix, 2009).

However, the combination of her password protected, paid-for and moderated site (and, the webmaster's seemingly waning interest in the actor) has engendered

(reoccurring) drama in front of a large audience as it tends to be played out on other forums such as Topix (2009):

> "[…] I havent commented anything rude about Keanu […] and they removed me because of that! I mean how silly could that be, must be run by some old sad spinster that thinking Keanu Reeves would appreciate their hardwork for keeping all the comments very sweet and sugary. Well they can F*** off! Lucky I never paid for the service, unlike some stalkers in there, who actually paying to get more candid photos of Keanu!" (poster 1).

This post generated a thread of over 400 messages in which numerous fans voiced their opinion. Again, 'ageing' is used by fans to negotiate position and ownership within the community. Note how the in the post above 'old sad spinster' is used to refer to the Web mistress and how this gets referenced and played out in the same thread by the word 'cat' (poster 3) so as to imply ageing.

> "[…] if [she] does not allow gossip, why does she buy the pictures from the paparazzi? Keanu acts as if he hates the paps, so it seems a kind of like a conflict, am I wrong? I don't go to her site. She isn't the type of person I would want to associate with" (poster 2).

"And then you go on to say that you don't frequent her site. You're so full of shit your eyes are brown. Personally, I have frequented her site. She confirms need to know stuff with Stoff. Don't you have a cat to tend to?" (poster 3).

Showing age

"[…] is it true? Bill & Ted's 3?" > Hey […]. -Script done? Check. -We love it? Check. -Green light? Working on it!" (@alxwinter, 03/06/12).

More than twenty years have passed since the hugely popular *Bill and Ted* movies and recently there are talks that the franchise may be picked up again. Topic of online gossip is whether the characters may or may not have matured, yet, for Keanu and co-star Alex Winter fifty is around the corner. In Keanu fandom Keanu's age/ing has not gone unnoticed either. As a topic of conversation (e.g. grey hair, receding hairline and botox), it can roughly be traced back to the early 2000s.

"Aging gracefully? He's too young to be aging gracefully! That expression is for people MUCH older than him! He's HOT! He's a babe! Geez, he's ONLY in his 30s! Paul Newman is aging gracefully!" (alt.fan.keanu-reeves, 2003).

Some fans are adamant to '(non)age Keanu.' For example, they post photos of a 'young' and 'old' actor for comparison so as to proof their statement that he does or does not look older, or they search for 'age appropriate' actresses that they deem suitable for his new movie projects. Also, fans can be seen to revel in practices such as play-fights concerning

Keanu's (non)ageing. For example, by telling other fans on Keanu's supposed 'vampireship', or by ironically joking about his skin elasticity ('sagging skin') in reference to the actor's mediatised critique of having only one facial expression – e.g. 'the secret to eternal life is to never, ever show facial expression'.

The 'showing age' of the actor is intertwined with that of many of his fans. For example, when recalling Keanu's earlier movies fans ponder 'how time passes so quickly' (cf. Sandvoss 2005). Also, reflecting on Keanu's trajectory in life may make fans think about their own ageing, "Wait, I'm fifty this year, Keanu is two years younger than me so NOOOOOO, he's not ALMOST 50. […] you don't say that in latter years" (Imdb, 2012). Against this diachronic backdrop, the fans seem to be along for the ride.

Conclusion

"Some girl [Shenja] who supposedly wrote some sort of thesis on Keanu. She is made out to be some kind of anti-Christ" (alt.fan.keanu-reeves, 2000).

If there is one thing that Keanu Reeves and I may have in common, it is that we both have been called 'Anti-Christ' in online Keanu fandom.[13] In hindsight, my 1999 study was a turning point in my life. At the age of twenty-one I was lucky to open doors in Hollywood that remained closed for many others which I did not realize at that time. I also did not realize that the work I did to 'deconstruct Keanu' would be, to say the least, very messy and confusing at times, and impact various people (including myself) along the way for which I did not have the understanding or capacity to effectively deal with.

But surely, fandom in general, and Keanu fandom in particular, has a lot to offer

(cf. Jenkins 1992). It is a work-in-progress where goals, appearance, and usage, and so forth are amplified and alternated. A dynamic of 'give and take' among constellations of participating members in the fan network that demonstrates an interdependent relationship between (different) fans involved in the 'work of celebrity' which is simultaneously structured and emergent, top-down and bottom-up, centralized and dispersed, commercial and non-commercial. In other words, the architecture of online Keanu fandom suggests a complex intersection of designed and emergent practices of drama within interpersonal exchanges, attracting fans with different interests, skills, and knowledge levels which results in different kinds of performative orientation.

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a deeper understanding of the blending together of social dynamics in fan exchanges and age-related structure as a significant aspect of fandom in adulthood which, to date, has received little attention. It has been designed to improve our understanding of how fans share knowledge and ideas relevant to their fan practices and experiences in their life course. By mapping out elements of drama in interpersonal exchanges guided by the way life course was used in negotiating social position and ownership, online fandom among maturing fans was explored (Harrington and Bielby 2010). The interplay between these elements pointed to the operationalization of drama and the work it does in adult lives (Marwick and boyd 2011). The findings have demonstrated that the content of much of the drama in Keanu fandom is age-related, and a mechanism to maneuver or position the actor's and one's own ageing. It confirms findings by Marwick and boyd (2011) that drama is, at minimum, bi-directional (in contrast to bullying), can involve joking, performative play-fights, etc. (in contrast to relational aggression), and the 'dramatist' and 'dramatee' are

both – albeit virtually - present (in contrast to gossiping). Furthermore, drama does not equal conflict per se.

Moreover, this 'performative orientation' seems to be indicative of a coordination process of transient-like fan conditions. More specifically, what seems to be at stake is a processual understanding of the ways in which fan expectations and enactments offer a continuous and negotiated way to coordinate the fan exchanges and which seem to yield an understanding of (sustained) engagement and progression over time. Here, the relationship between performance structure and practice can yield insight into processes by which heterogeneous knowledge sources, activity levels and conflicting interests associated with practicing drama, can coordinate fandom within the community. This view also puts forward an understanding of the ways more experienced fans teach new fans (preferred) ways of fanning, reframing their ways of thinking, interests, and shared practices.

Interestingly, in contrast to the use of the term drama – in all its harsh and more light-hearted meanings and forms - by teens to distance themselves from adult practices, adults seem to use the term to distance themselves from youthful practices (associated with age norms) on the one hand, and their own ageing process on the other hand. Drama in its performative orientation offers a means to (self-)reference and (self-)reflect on one's life course and social position among fans by blurring the boundaries between the meaning of different practices such as actual conflict versus poking fun.

In considering these findings, a comparative approach could further examine age-related structures in different fandoms such as related to the experience of fandom over time in relation to the adoption of ICTs, and a life course perspective could yield insight

into the make-up of drama and the dynamics of celebrity-fan interactions on the Internet over time, so as to offer a more rounded understanding of the realities of life.

Acknowledgments

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[1] See http://www.angelfire.com/ms/feelingminnesota/news.html (accessed 6 July 2012).

[2] All names and identifying information have been changed (or removed) to protect the privacy of authors.

[3] For example, my credibility was tested by fans who posed questions about the actor; such as "Why does he cut his pants?" One fan explained "you have access to them 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" (KeanuFest participant, 06/23/98). It was my position 'to know'. At the same time, my knowledge was feared or reacted against, because academic knowledge could be seen as the 'truth', and which would clash with their explanations of and feelings about the actor (cf. Seiter 1990). Moreover, some of the fans had opened up to a reporter thought to be another fan. They felt betrayed and ridiculed when an article appeared (Bakulski, L. (1995), 'Keanu fever: On the road with fans who would die for Keanu Reeves,' in: *Boston Phoenix*). This experience complicated my acceptance as well as, confusion over consent regarding some obtained data (which, as a result, was never used and destroyed) and the degree of access I had to the actor.

[4] Adulthood can be divided in young, middle and older adulthood, respectively, roughly 18 to 35, 35 to 65, and 65+ (Harrington and Bielby 2010).

[5] The actor has no personal social media account, however, his production company and some other of his ventures recently do have, for example, a Twitter account.

[6] In addition to these online sources the 1999 study combined semi-structured interviews with people employed in the entertainment industry, semi-structured interviews and participatory observation at a fan convention and observations at three concerts, one movie premiere, and The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and document sources including fan mail, drawings, poems, and magazines.

[7] Another possible weakness of this study is that the actual age of most fans is unknown. However, as the analysis pointed to an interest in age-related topics in interpersonal exchange which tended to express references to middle and old age, it is assumed that many fans who participated in observed practices are, at minimum, young adults (18 to 35). Also, there are more online locations to practice Keanu fandom than examined for this study. It is possible therefore that in publically accessible sites elements of 'drama' may be more present than in those that are password-protected, or subscription-based.

[8] If content was no longer available at the original location, the Internet Archive 'Wayback Machine' was used. See http://web.archive.org/

[9] See for a discussion on Internet research ethics http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf and elsewhere in this book.

[10] See http://www.whoaisnotme.net/forumhistory.php?userid=1 (accessed 28 June 2012).

[11] For example, KeanuWeb (1994-2008) reportedly had 60,000 members, Club-Keanu about 2,000 registered users and about 40 core members, Whoaisnotme about 20 core members and about 100 people who drop by (Whoaisnotme, 2009).

[12] See http://www.whoaisnotme.net/mvs.htm (accessed 3 June 2012).

[13] See http://www.reocities.com/Hollywood/6608/keanu.html (accessed 7 July 2012).