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Will the real auteur please stand up!: authorship and product placement in film

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WILL THE REAL AUTEUR PLEASE STAND UP!:
AUTHORSHIP and PRODUCT PLACEMENT in FILM

By

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Bachelor of Arts University of Toronto 2005

A thesis

Presented to Ryerson University and York University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
In the program of
Communication and Culture

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2009

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Margaret M. Mohr

ABSTRACT

Margaret M. Mohr

"Will The Real Auteur Please Stand Up!: Authorship and Product Placement In Film"

Master of Arts, Communication and Culture, Ryerson University, Toronto 2009

This thesis investigates issues of product placement in Hollywood cinema as seen through the lenses of theories of authorship and cultural economy. Feature films, with their captive audiences and finely-tuned marketing machines, may seem like ideal venues for advertisers to present goods to consumers in the form of placed products, yet even here the effects of economic and cultural synergy cannot be guaranteed. The thesis argues that while we live in a commodified environment where the consumer spectacle is woven into the fabric of everyday life, the meanings we derive from mass-produced products is not strictly limited to the interests of corporate capital. By providing a history of product placement in Hollywood cinema and three recent films as case studies, this thesis explores the impact of product placement on the creative agency of writers, directors, designers and audiences. The thesis employs textual analysis to link theoretical issues concerning the commodification of culture and authorial expression.

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my children, Heather, Michelle and Tristan

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Introduction

You sit in a movie theatre eagerly awaiting the next installment in the James Bond franchise wearing the 007 tee-shirt you got through a radio promotion for the film. You've seen the advertisements for it in your local newspaper, in magazines, on digital billboards and in other media. You've entered a contest on-line sponsored by Coke, for a chance to win a "Bond type" weekend getaway. At Burger King, the fast food restaurant you visited just before entering the movie theatre, you lifted the rim of your soft drink to see if you've won any of the Bond merchandise the food chain is giving away. As you settle into your seat in the movie theatre a TELUS advertisement is being shown on the screen followed by a Coke ad and a promotion for the sound track of the Bond film you're about to watch courtesy of SONY music. As the front credits of the film begin to roll, you sigh with relief and think, thank goodness those "commercials" they run at the start of the movie are over and now you can just sit back and watch the film uninterrupted.

The opening sequence begins with a close up of an Omega watch. As the camera pulls back, you see 007 checking the time as he speeds down a winding road in his customized Aston Martin DBS 23, which is being chased by an Alpha Romeo 159. Bond coolly picks up his Sony Ericsson Titanium Silver C902 cell

phone. The camera cuts to a close up of a hand on a bottle of Dom Pérignon being poured into Baccarat crystal glasses. As the shot widens you discover the latest "Bond Girl" dressed in a sexy Gucci outfit. Bond enters the room taking a cigarette from a pack, which he throws on a table where you clearly see he now smokes Rothman's filter cigarettes. Just as he is about to take a sip of champagne offered by the girl, there is a loud explosion and a wall of fire seems to engulf them both. In the first two minutes of the film at least eight recognizable brands have been featured on camera through a process known as product placement.

Product placement in film occurs when familiar, branded merchandise or services are placed within movies. Product placement can serve a dual purpose. It can be used ostensibly to create a sense of verisimilitude, which some film executives and directors believe can make a movie more realistic. This idea of adding reality to movies is used by proponents of product placement as the rationale for its increasing use. It can also be seen as a way of persuasively promoting an array of products to a vast audience. In 2007, product placement in films experienced a 33% growth rate contributing over 3 billion dollars to film production alone, not counting cross promotion and other advertising activity linked to film, which drew in 22 billion dollars overall (Knight 2008, Schiller 2008). Most products are seamlessly embedded into the script as a strategy that blurs the line between marketing and entertainment. Increasingly, product integration, a more aggressive form of product placement in which the product becomes central to

the story line, is becoming a leading trend as witnessed in the *Italian Job* (F. Gary Gray 2003), where the Mini Cooper automobile played a leading role, or Domino's Pizza, which is intrinsic to the plot of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Kevin Monroe 2007).

Stanley Balasubramanian (1994) classifies product placement as a new category of marketing that he refers to as a "hybrid message," combining components of advertising and publicity with the potential to be more persuasive than traditional advertising. The crux of the product placement issue is the increasing difficulty in separating the desire for verisimilitude from that of merely espousing our consumer culture.

Recently, much has been written on the financial advantages of product placement for both the manufacturer and film studio (Solomon and Englis 1994, McCarty 2004, Barnouw 1978, Galician and Boureau 2004). With increasing costs for film production, studios welcome the infusion of cash or product to defray expenses, while in exchange manufacturers of goods are delivered a captive audience who has been defined and targeted as an ideal demographic by the story content of the film (Lehu 2007, Donaton 2004, Kretchmer 2004). In today's Hollywood, many film studios are owned by corporate conglomerates and product placement is integral to the new Hollywood studio system and vertical integration. In 1985, the Australian company, News Corporation, purchased the Hollywood studio Twentieth Century Fox and annexed it to the company's global

media empire of newspapers and television stations. In 1989, Sony Corp, a Japanese manufacturer of communication technology, acquired the film and television company Columbia/Tri-Star from the Coca Cola conglomerate and renamed it Sony Entertainment Group. Also in 1989, the Time/ Warner merger became the first media conglomerate to be comprised of solely American companies. This was done in part to compete with other companies who were amassing global entertainment properties. These conglomerates create opportunities for "in house" or cross promotions. It is almost a given that any Columbia/Tristar film production will feature Sony electronic products prominently displayed on screen.

There has also been extensive research linking product placement to what is known as transformational advertising, which explicitly connects the experience of using a product to a real or desired identity (Packard 1957, Dyer 1996, Galician and Boureau 2004). Transformational advertising works on the principle that the movie audience will relate to a certain social status or an idealized lifestyle depicted in the film. For example, audiences identify with haute couture fashion, a certain make of automobile or other products in the film that are conventionally categorized as elite, glamorous or adventurous and imagine themselves and their desires clearly represented within the film. This strategy is used as a marketing tool that incorporates audience reaction to and recognition of these products.

Aaker and Stayman (1992) as well as Bond and Kirshenbaum (1997) argue that product recognition can be enhanced if linked to a particular celebrity such as George Clooney or Julia Roberts or a certain character such as Spiderman or James Bond. The implication is that if you buy the same product as the movie star or character you too can possess similar attributes and style. Several studies have also been conducted that examine how the use of product placement in films and other forms of popular culture, such as video games and internet broadcasts can carry social messages linked to consumerism and ideas of self-identity. These studies argue that there is a relationship between the endless wave of associations linking product images of well-being to suggestions about status as being the way to happiness and success (Jhally 2006, Berger 2004, McAllister 1996, Rutherford 2000, Wenner 2004).

Most existing academic research regarding product placement in film is centered on enquires which encompass advertising, marketing, sociology, psychology and consumer culture. However, I have found a significant gap in research regarding the tension between issues of authorship rights, which embody the creative process of storytelling within film, and the increasing connection to seemingly corporate influence through the use of product placement in movies. The question of authorship is a long-standing debate in both the production history and theories of cinema. The principles governing the debate concern the artistic positioning of a film and the establishment of a creative artistic status to those who are involved in its production. Although the idea for a particular film may

originate in the mind of one person, its adaptation, execution and final consummation is the result of the collaborative effort of many (Powdermaker 1951).

Directors, writers, actors, production designers, cinematographers, costume designers, set dressers and make up artists all contribute ideas of personal and artistic expression to the filming process. Looking at film authorship as a collaborative practice from the production process begs the question where to place these corporate conglomerates and marketing firms in this artistic process since they too are often listed as co-producers. Is increasing corporate commercial influence through product placement a form of authorship, or does it compromise artistic expression by forcing the films auteurs to work with limited objects on screen or does it actively contribute to it? Does corporate power and influence in the form of product placement dictate moreover the types of films that are currently being produced and the types of stories that are being told? These are the questions that will guide my discussion of the history and theories of product placement and film authorship.

I will provide an investigation for understanding the complex nature of product placement and how it relates to issues of authorship, collaborative practice and agency in contemporary Hollywood cinema.

Chapter One

Product Placement

History of Product Placement

Product placement is not a new phenomenon in cinema. It has been present since the inception of film in the 1890's. Pioneering filmmakers Auguste and Louis Lumière entered into a production and distribution arrangement with Swiss businessman François-Henri Lavanchy-Clark, who was a supplier and promoter for Lever Brothers products. Lavanchy-Clark distributed films for the Lumière brothers and also shot films for them that contained Lever products. *Washing Day* (1896) was filmed with two cases of Lever Brothers soap in front of the washtub facing the camera (Cosandrey and Pastor 1992). While this first documented appearance of product placement appeared in France, it was Thomas Edison who transformed product placement into a business that reduced expenses involved with producing films while at the same time providing promotional exposure to a wide array of businesses. The Edison film, *Streetcar Chivalry* (1905), takes place on a commuter train plastered with posters of Edison manufactured products such as phonographs and light bulbs (Newell, Salmon and Chang 2006). By 1910, advertising shorts were being produced and shown in movie theatres, before the featured film. They were usually less than fifteen minutes in length and a product was always the "star" and central to the plot of these dramas. According to Kerry Seagrave (2004) the advertising shorts were a form of transformational advertising. In one of them, a housewife became

happier and more glamorous because she bought a certain brand of washing machine: in another, the efficiency of an office would increase substantially by using a particular brand of typewriter. Much like the radio and television commercials that followed many years later, these filmed advertisements disguised as entertainment reached a wide and diverse audience.

As the film industry expanded and moved to Hollywood, product placement became the casual, informal practice of set decorators, props masters and wardrobe personnel who approached manufacturers, distributors, or retail outlets for certain products to be used in filming, sometimes in exchange for credit or product exposure. In August of 1929, an editorial appeared in the *New York Times* (Breaking into Movies 1932) exposing the covert way manufacturers were advertising their goods in paid entertainment, specifically motion pictures. It stated that articles were being offered and willingly supplied by manufacturers as props, including high priced automobiles, expensive furniture, and a vast array of food products that were consumed by actors on film. According Charlotte Herzog (1990) movie stars were being approached directly and offered free jewelry and apparel in exchange for wearing the items on camera for their latest roles and in cases where an object was hard to plant in a film, monetary consideration would be offered to the producer or actor for "fitting" the product into the movie. Herzog (1990) also discusses the inclusion of fashion show sequences in feature films beginning in the 1920s. *Roberta* (William A. Seiter 1935), which starred Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers, is one such film. The publicity for these "fashion"

films included articles that appeared in women's publications, fan magazines and newspapers that discussed the clothing worn by the stars on screen. These articles often coincided with the opening of the film. Knock-offs or reproductions of the fashions seen in the cinema were also marketed in tandem with the film's release supporting a dual conduit of commercial exploitation. The practice of featuring fashion shows within a film was still going strong into the 1950's with such films as *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen 1957), starring Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire where the film's fashion show sequences featured the haute couture designs of Givenchy.

From the beginning, automobiles found their way into product placement deals. In the early 1900s, Model T Fords appeared and received screen credit in the films of Mack Sennett (Lehu 2007). Howard Hawks' film, *The Big Sleep* (1946), is one of the first times automobile brands, in this case Packard and Plymouth, became an integral part of the script (Lehu 2007). In films from the 1920s onward, the luxurious *mise-en-scène* of film was translated into desirable commodities aimed at the movie-going audience.

The idea of promotional products in film became so prevalent by the 1930s that studios sent marketers shot by shot script breakdowns indicating promotional opportunities (Galician and Bourdeau 2004). MGM was the first studio to open an office exclusively for product placement in the 1930s (Rothenberg 1991). Charles Eckert (1978) claims that during the 1920s and 1930s American film

production had evolved from a “nickel and dime” business to an entertainment industry with far reaching effects, creating conditions that were ripe for Hollywood to assume a role in the new zeitgeist of consumerism. In a 1930 radio speech, William Hays, the first president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), discussed the responsibility the motion picture industry had in regard to the U.S. economy. He added that more consumer products should be featured in films to heighten their demand — both at home and overseas — which then would create more jobs for Americans in the manufacturing sector (Eckert 1978). To underscore Hays’ remarks, a government study published in 1929 revealed foreign sales of bedroom and bathroom furnishings had increased a hundredfold due to exposure in American made movies. Hollywood films were making America the arbiter of fashion and design by creating a standard of living desired throughout the Western world (Eckert 1978).

While product placement was expanding in the 1920s and 1930s there was some surprising opposition to it. Carl Laemmle, the president of Universal Studios, called advertising in cinema a “prostitution of the screen” (Lehu 2007, Seagrave 2004). While he was primarily attacking the advertising shorts that accompanied feature films, his statement that millions of moviegoers pay for entertainment not advertising, was a call to tone down all types of advertising in the cinema.

Even with the opposition to it product placement continued to grow in the early 1930s through the deepening of the Depression. Perhaps the Depression at least

provided an opportunity to justify the practice; free merchandise could contribute to aiding the financial budgets of the cash strapped studios. In 1931, two of the most powerful studios of the day, MGM and Warner Brothers, created placement deals that revolutionized sales and publicity, which permanently affected the character of films. By March of 1933, MGM signed a \$500,000 contract with Coca-Cola in exchange for blatantly displaying its products on screen. The contract also called for the MGM stable of stars to appear in a variety of print advertisements and promotional tours endorsing Coke (Ekert 1978). This scheme seemed to work to the advantage of all involved. It brought direct revenue to the studios during the Depression, created publicity for the stars and linked the Coca-Cola brand to their admirable attributes. Overall the effect was to create social desires and innuendo to a vulnerable audience. Product placement in the Hollywood studio system of the 1930s forms part of the rationale for the theory set forth by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972) whereby mass culture and communication play a role in the social reproduction and domination of the capitalist society. The film industry can be looked upon as the institutionalization and industrialization of cultural artifacts, linking movie stars and branded products for the ideological purpose of sustaining the economic base needed for capitalism to thrive, which was especially acute during the depression. Practices pioneered in Hollywood during the 1930s cemented this production/consumption cycle by fetishizing products and establishing powerful bonds between the fantasy-generating substance of films and the material objects those films contained (Eckert 1978).

The 1940s brought the "War Years" and the whole tenor of Hollywood films changed. The movie studios turned out training films for the American Armed Forces, along with documentaries. Disguised as entertainment, the feature films of this era were rife with propaganda, which was considered integral to building and maintaining morale both at home and on the front lines (Seagrave 2004).

For example, *They Were Expendable* (1945), a John Ford film starring Robert Montgomery and John Wayne, has similar characteristics to the popular Western film genre that all three were known for, but instead of cowboys who tamed the west, they played sailors on a PT boat in the Pacific defending freedom against the Japanese who attacked Pearl Harbor. *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks 1944), and *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz 1942), were romantic dramas aimed at females whom the studios assumed would be the biggest audience for films during World War II, as many of the men were on the front lines fighting (Doane 1987). *Casablanca* premiered in New York City on November 26, 1942 to coincide with the allied invasion of North Africa and the capture of Casablanca (Casablanca Review 1942). Although it is basically a love story it is full of anti-German sentiment and Allied patriotism. Selling victory over oppression seemed to take center stage over selling products. This is not to say product placement was at a total stand still. In *Mildred Pierce*, (Michael Curtiz 1945), Joan Crawford is seen drinking Jack Daniels whiskey on camera, but overall the use of branded

products in film had definitely toned down from its peak in the 1930s (Seagrave 2004).

As World War II ended, consumer spending power increased, and there was optimism for the growth of product placement in Hollywood, but this did not fully materialize (Seagrave 2004). The advent of television and sponsored programs seemed more attractive to advertisers. Film attendance was also on the decline in this period, dropping by 16.5 million between 1946 and 1948, which was attributed to "free" television at home among other things (Prince 2000, Campbell 1961).

While product placement waned through the 1950s, 60s and 70s, there were still some high profile exceptions, especially in the James Bond movies and Rocky films (Seagrave 2004). During this period, product placement returned to being more of a cottage industry based on exchanging merchandise for a mention in the credits (Elliott 1997). By the 1980s, however, film executives were faced with escalating production costs and a continuing decline in ticket sales. They saw product placement as a means to help finance their diminishing production budgets, especially through promotional tie-ins (Mangiera 1991).

E.T. (Steven Spielberg 1982) is the legendary example of the effect of product placement and is cited as the turning point in branded entertainment strategies for film (Seagrave 2004, Wenner 2004, Brennan and Babin 2004, Siegal 2004,

Turner 2004, Lehu 2007). Reese's Pieces was a little-known candy manufactured by the Hershey Corporation when the company was approached by the producers of *E.T.* The film's backers were looking for legal copyright clearance to use the candy in the film. The Mars Company had already turned down the request by the studio to use their M&M's in the film sequence. Hershey supplied the Reese's Pieces for free. After a modest promotional tie-in linked to the film in which Hershey agreed to promote the film in all its Reese's Pieces advertisements, sales of Reese's Pieces reportedly jumped 65% within one month of the film's release and less than two months later more than 800 theatres, which had never stocked the candy, were ordering it in large amounts due to requests from movie patrons (Seagrave 2004, Wenner 2004, Brennan & Babin 2004, Siegal 2004, Turner 2004, Lehu 2007). Due to the commercial success of *E.T.*, 20th Century Fox became the first major Hollywood studio to offer specific deals to manufacturers to place their products in its films. Fees ran from \$10,000 to \$40,000 for a spot in one of their movies (Shiner 2003). What started out as merely asking for legal permission to use a product had very quickly become a profit generating business arrangement. It is probably no surprise that agencies popped up with the exclusive purpose of negotiating deals to place products in films.

After *E.T.*, there was a huge expansion of product placement in movies. This heightened demand was also fueled by technological developments, particularly in television, which offered its audience increasing opportunities for manipulating

and controlling what they see. VCR's, TiVo, zapping and time-shifting can be viewed as a rebellion against advertising, allowing the viewer to speed through or entirely eliminate commercial messages (Avery and Ferraro 2000). Most television programming did not participate in product placement at this time as it was seen as a potential conflict to offer products within the storyline and then approach a prospective sponsor or advertiser for the program. Cinema with its somewhat captive and passive audience, was a boon to marketers who saw it as the perfect venue for advertising products stealthily placed within the mise-en-scène of the film.

What was once a casual practice has grown into a multi-million dollar enterprise, creating a niche industry of marketers and agencies solely devoted to featuring client's products in movies.¹ Today, products are placed in almost every film from big budget special effects extravaganzas, such as *Transformers*, (Michael Bay 2007/2009) to low budget indie projects, such as *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris 2006). Lining up products to be showcased in films has become almost as important as lining up the star or the director (Seagrave 2004, Galician and Bourdeau 2004, Fuller 1997).

¹ This practice has been extended to the showing of commercials in movie theatres before the start of the featured film. While linked somewhat to the advertising shorts of the early 1900s, these blatant advertisements, which surfaced in the 1980s, add to the atmosphere of consumerism within the cinema experience.

Types of Product Placement

As I have suggested, prior to the 1980s product placement was an informal practice in the film industry usually a result of direct bartering between film personnel such as prop and wardrobe people and manufacturers or advertisers. Starting in the 1930s, a few product brokers appeared and acted as intermediaries between companies, advertisers and movie studios (Seagrave 2004). Today there are myriad product placement agencies whose primary function is to negotiate deals to ensure their client's product receives maximum exposure. Placement brokers are sometimes kept on a retainer by manufacturers and studios. Brokers also mediate the terms and conditions of the placement, which may include where the product appears in which film, how many times and in what context. They also mediate the compensation, which ranges from supplying free product, to paying a fee to the film studio (Seagrave, 2004, Lehu 2007, Donaton 2004).

Although product placement is a growing entity in cinema, not every trademark or brand seen on film is a planned and planted product placement. Films are no longer only shot in the controlled environment of a studio set. Most films are shot partially or entirely on location and there are reasons for doing so: budgetary concerns, script specifications and the desire to add a sense of realism to the film. This inevitably means that products, services or advertisements will be seen though not necessarily intentionally placed by a marketer in the movie. For

example, in *The Terminal* (Steven Spielberg 2004) Tom Hanks' character is stranded in JFK International Airport. As he wanders through the airport terminal, a number of store names and brand logos appear on camera. Parts of the film were shot on location at Mirabel Airport in Montreal and Palmdale Airport in Southern California as well as on a set built in an airport hanger to duplicate these locations.² When stores and corporate logos pre-exist at a location, such as in the Montreal and Palmdale airports, the studio legal department approaches the manufacturers or corporations for permission to use their trademarks and products on camera and in the construction of any sets needed to duplicate the location in a sound studio. The corporation usually requests to see a script to ensure their product is not being shown in an unfavorable light or in a position that might compromise the corporate philosophy for the product. Usually no money is exchanged in this situation, as manufacturers look on it as free advertising and exposure to a global audience.

Product placement in film can thus be broken down into several categories. Products seen visually in the background, such as store names and corporate logos, fall into one category. Products that are mentioned verbally on screen by a character comprise a second category. If the product is mentioned by a character and at the same time is shown being worn or consumed by that character this is considered the most valuable placement of a product in a film. Who handles the

² I know the facts regarding the filming of *The Terminal* from being in the industry and having friends who worked on the production, as well as reading the *CDG Newsletter* from the designer's film union which highlights some information on the design of film locations.

product and in what context can also increase its promotional value. Thus, if used by a recognizable star, such as Brad Pitt or Leonardo DiCaprio, the value of the placement will likely increase (McCarty 2004).

In assessing the impact product placement on an audience Cristel Russell (2002) has conceptualized a three-dimensional construction of product placement in film as screen placement, script placement and plot placement. Screen placement carries the lowest intensity as the product may only appear in the background and be on camera for a few seconds with little direct connection to the plot such as a streetscape that the characters walk through. If a character, especially one played by a well know actor, refers to a product or handles the product, such as Angelina Jolie does in *Lara Croft Tomb Raider:: Cradle of Life* (Jan de Bont 2003), this increases audience recognition of the product. As heroine Lara Croft, her vehicle of choice was the tricked out Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, which became part of the character's persona (Donaton 2004). When a product plays a major role and becomes essential to the plot such as the Mini Cooper automobile in *The Italian Job* (F. Gary Gray 2003), or the General Motors vehicles in *The Transformers* (Michael Bay 2007/2009), this is deemed a high-intensity placement, which commands the largest commitment either financially or in merchandise from the manufacturer and supposedly has the greatest recognition from the audience.

Product image is also considered in film placement. No corporation wants its product to be shown or used in a compromising manner that will defame the company, even if it is handled by a lead actor or celebrity. Such associations as serial killers, alcoholism, brutality or pornography are usually avoided as they could link the brand to a bad image leading to a negative audience impact. If someone is getting hit over the head with a bottle, chances are a generic product with no identifying marks is being used (Wenner 2004). Keeping a product out of a film can thus be as important to a placement broker as trying to get one in (Seagrave 2004, Donaton 2004).

Studio legal departments clear any products or brand names seen on camera regardless of whether they are placed through an agency deal or not. If a particular company has refused its products use on set, or clearance doesn't arrive by the scheduled shooting date, a technique called "greeking" is used. This is a process where a product label or logo is obscured or removed so it is not easily recognizable on camera. In my experience as a costume designer, I have had to remove identifying logos from garments such as the Lacoste alligator or the Ralph Lauren polo pony because clearances could not be obtained. I've also had to have clothing made depicting fictional product names due to copyright clearances not arriving in time for shooting.

The recently acclaimed film, *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), has several examples of what director Danny Boyle has called as "product displacement" (Malvern and

Hoyle 2008). According to Boyle, he asked Mercedes-Benz permission to use their cars in certain scenes that took place in a Mumbai slum. Mercedes-Benz insisted the logos and other identifying marks be removed from their cars in the slum because it thought its brand image would be sullied if associations between slum inhabitants and its luxury cars were shown (Malvern and Hoyle 2008). However, Mercedes was happy for its logo to be used and its cars to be identified in any scenes that took place in front of the "gangster mansion" in an exclusive part of town, or on a car hired by wealthy American tourists. Boyle stated that he particularly wanted to use a Mercedes-Benz because he felt it was the appropriate car for the gangster brother of Jamali Malik (Dev Patel) to be driving, especially through the slums where he came. According to Doyle, the Mercedes would provide a succinct visual means to indicate his triumphant return. In the end the cars were used, but the logos were removed when the Mercedes was driven in the slum location (Malvern and Hoyle 2008).

Joining Mercedes-Benz in refusing brand recognition to *Slumdog Millionaire* was Coca-Cola. There is a scene in the film where children are playing on a rubbish heap in the Mumbai slum and they are offered bottles of Coke to drink. Coke not only refused permission for their name and logo to be used, but demanded the familiar red and white label be painted over. Boyle remarked, "It cost tens of thousands of pounds to paint over those Coke symbols, which are meant to unite the world" (Malvern and Hoyle 2008). The irony of painting over the Coke name is that the bottle has such a distinctive shape, the brand is still clearly

recognizable even without the logo on the label. These two incidents indicate the director's desire to use certain products, which he felt exemplified a character or made a situation more realistic. It also demonstrates the way in which branded products can be a repository of social meaning. The conflict arose between ideology and reality when Boyle was thwarted by Coke and Mercedes-Benz from using their products and trade marks. Boyle's translation and visual representation of the social meaning of the products was contrary to the branding and social context these corporations had developed for their products.

Most companies prefer their products to be seen in upbeat films associated with positive or heroic role models. Much of product placement is not simply getting a product on screen, but also showing the product advantageously. In the case of *Slumdog Millionaire*, there were no recognizable "Hollywood stars" handling the products. The Mumbai slum location was most certainly not the upbeat, transformational ideal that most international corporations wish to be associated with, so even though the director, as author, specifically chose these products, he was not free to include them in his film due to international copyright laws, which give the manufacturer the right to decide how their products are represented and what form the publicity for the products should take.

Unauthorized use of a product can be considered deceptive, meaning it goes against the image and ideology of the brand. This can be deemed as causing significant injury to the reputation of that brand as well as creating a negative

financial impact for it in the market place (UNESCO 2007, US Govt. / copyright 2008).

Mark Crispin Miller (1990) claims that most placed products come across as anti-realistic, arguing that they are ideally displayed in the film in way that does not occur in real life, only in advertising. The label or logo always takes center stage; directly facing the camera it appears almost in isolation as a separate character. In the real world, by contrast, these crucial advertising symbols reach us with none of the same startling clarity and exist instead in the clutter of everyday life. While this may be true, we as consumers have been trained to recognize certain symbols through what Goldman and Papson (1996) refer to as the cluttered landscape of advertising. I argue that most children at an early age can distinguish and identify the "golden arches" of McDonalds from the plethora of fast food establishments lining the road.

While often referred to as stealth advertising, in some cases product placement is anything but subliminal. One of the objectives of product placement within a film is to ensure that a brand is seen as clearly as possible in order to create a relationship with the audience because films themselves circulate as a product in mass culture which contains consumer discourse. The marketing of products in films, be it cigarettes, sunglasses or food items exemplifies an intertextual discourse between film as an art form and film as a venue for the selling of

commodities. This intertextuality is also a means by which producers, marketers and some directors seek to establish that link with viewers or "readers" of a film.

Producers Point of View

The film industry is a business just like any other. Film as an economic system conforms to patterns of profit set by capitalist activity. Producers and studios are in business to yield a return, and to do so they have to create a product that is better than the competitors, for less money. It must also be noted that many studios are owned by multi-national conglomerates that spend considerable time looking at strategic ways to maximize profits and keep production costs down. One of the most cost effective means for doing so is by off-setting expenditures with revenue streams that capitalize on existing synergies (Wenner 2004). There are fewer than ten studios in Hollywood, which release approximately 500 films each year. Combined, they take in an excess of 9.5 billion dollars at the box office. Even though box office returns are constantly rising, there is pressure to increase profit margins, which have remained stagnant in single digits for most studios in recent years (Donaton 2004). However, the box office take is not the only revenue stream for film studios. They also generate earnings from other audio/visual sources such as computer games, DVD's, pay for view television, as well as merchandise licensing through vertical integration of allied companies within their corporate system.

Marco Cucco (2009) argues that these other revenues sometimes do not enhance or generate additional profits directly to the film production budget. Sony, for example, (the parent company of Columbia/Tristar) also owns the PlayStation gaming system. Many of the games developed and marketed for PlayStation are based on films produced and released through Columbia/Tristar, but revenue from these games goes into the PlayStation division, even though the film was directly responsible for the popularity and marketing of the game. Cucco (2009) suggests that it is difficult to calculate the revenue generated by various films because of a general unwillingness on the part of the major studios to provide data about all the earnings from the various revenue streams generated by a specific film. He also argues that profits may not appear until years after the initial release of the film due to its distribution in secondary markets.

In recent years "blockbuster" films have been used as the "tent poles" to support the studios bottom line and gain an edge over the competition. This type of film pulls out all the stops visually and technologically. Special effects such as those in *Ironman* (Jon Favreau 2008), *Indiana Jones* (Steven Spielberg 2008), or *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster 2008), as well as incredibly lush mise-en-scènes in *Sex and the City* (Michael Patrick King 2008) and *Titanic* (James Cameron 1997) have become the norm. The star power of Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Tom Cruise and Angelina Jolie along with directors Spielberg, Lucas and Peter Jackson are used to lure in audiences to purchase tickets. All of this is

what makes a film expensive to execute. Once the film is "in the can" you then have to get the word out to bring the audiences in. Marketing budgets have skyrocketed along with productions costs. In fact, in the last decade the film industry has become focused on marketing as much as production (Donaton 2004). Studio executives and producers have recognized that a way to strengthen their business plans and bottom line is to enlist the marketing savvy of seasoned advertisers, not only for product placement but also in developing cross-promotional deals (Donaton 2004).

From a producer's perspective, product placement is about production issues. When a script calls for cars, the producer probably doesn't care what type of cars, she or he is primarily focused on the cost and how much the cars will add to the budget. If a company comes forward and says they will supply the cars to the film at no cost, it can take hundreds of thousands of dollars off the production budget. If the same automobile company wants to incorporate a tie-in, such as Daimler/Chrysler did with the Jeep Rubicon in the *Lara Croft Tomb Raider* film, the marketing and promotional budget for the film is also extended with no additional cost to producer or studio.

This would seem like a situation where everybody wins. It would be reasonable to assume that many automobile companies may come forward to offer cars, but the products usually have to gel with the aesthetics and character profiles within the screenplay. No matter how much money would be offered for James Bond to

drive a Chrysler mini van, it does not fit in with the established persona and luxurious life style of 007. For the same reason he is never seen drinking a Bud Lite beer or wearing a Timex watch. It is always luxury brands, such as Dom Pérignon champagne and Omega watches that have become synonymous with his character profile; consequently, audiences probably do not recognize these items in Bond films as product placement since they have become inherent to his persona.

Most studios and production companies have departments that liaise with product placement agencies and manufacturers. Within producer Jerry Bruckheimer's organization, David Leener is in charge of product placement.³ He has placed products in such films as *G-Force* (Hoyt Yeatman 2009), *National Treasure* (Jon Turteltaub 2007), and the *CSI* television franchise. Leener states that as soon as the script has been given the "green light," he looks for placement opportunities. He has direct contact with some companies but also deals with established product placement agencies. When asked whether he places products due to pressure from manufacturers, he stated that he looks for moments where products can be merged into a film in a seamless manner. He believes the audience is sophisticated enough to recognize forced or overt product placement, which he argues does nothing for the credibility of the film. He also mentions that sometimes manufactures have products that aren't on the market yet, but want them placed in films to generate hype and help launch

³ David Leener is friend of mine who provided me with some of this information regarding studio placement of products.

advertising campaigns for those products. The products sometimes debut at the same time as the film opens, which creates expanded marketing through cross-promotional opportunities. Nevertheless, Leener suggests that the placed product should look natural and fit into the script requirements.

While money is the main of producers, it would be inaccurate to state that it is the only reason they may use product placement. Once again there is the argument that product placement brings a sense of reality to a film. After all, we live in a “branded” world where our senses are bombarded with products and slogans everyday. This commercial discourse provides the filter through which we come to understand the world that surrounds us (Jhally 2006). Many film producers argue that in order to be accepted by the audience, the fiction needs points of reference with reality, even futuristic or fantasy films. The Steven Spielberg film, *Minority Report* (2002), takes place in the year 2054, yet the brands Pepsi, Burger King, Gap and Nokia, among others, are used. The 2054 *mise-en-scène* is not easily recognizable so any sense of familiarity comes from the branded products, which become a reference point for the audience that the action is taking place on earth and not on some alien planet. This idea is to convey the connection between the here and now and the there and then. Spielberg has stated that familiar brands can also enable the audience to believe this type of future may not be as distant as they might have thought, creating a tension between the audience and storyline which can enhance the film-going experience for the viewer (Lehu 2007). However, it must be noted that one of the

most successful futuristic film franchises, *Star Wars*, was shot with not one bit of product placement in any of the films. This is not to say that creator and director, George Lucas did not employ commercial sponsorship. The strategy used by *Star Wars* was to link his film(s) to cross-promotions with clothing manufacturers, fast food and beverage companies and toy makers. This expanded the marketing budget, which enhanced the publicity for the films at no extra cost to the producer or studio. This also increased awareness of the film to a larger, much expanded audience.

Producers are always looking for new ways to garner sources of revenue to launch films from the development stage into actual production and then into profit margins. Alliances with manufacturers and marketers in many ways make sense. There is no accurate measure as to how effective product placement is on audiences' buying habits or whether individuals actually consume more due to seeing products in films (Babin and Carter 1996, Gupta and Lord 1998).

However, the practice of product placement seems to be growing with a more sophisticated approach, targeting certain products to be included in a specific type film. Scott Donaton (2004) has named this a union of Madison and Vine, referring to the Madison Avenue of advertising legend and Vine Street, which is at the center of Hollywood. While the concept of merging entertainment and advertising seems simple enough, both parties have different needs and agendas. Certain marketers, not content with just supplying "product" now want more input into the creative aspects of filmmaking and many producers and

studios find no problem with this (Donaton 2004). Nevertheless, it does bring into the picture questions of creative control and authorship that many writers, directors, actors and designers feel is the essence of filmmaking. There are concerns that films will be written to showcase products instead of telling engrossing stories, or that only films which support copious amounts of product placements will get produced. This raises questions of creative control and authorship and whose agency will be influential in telling the story, which I will address in subsequent chapters.

Marketers and Advertisers Point of View

Advertising focuses on the consumer and the connection that can be created between a product and the public. In marketing, ideas, concepts and images are not just brands and corporate image but emotional capital. Madison Avenue interprets brand values to connect with consumers through the elements of popular culture. Hollywood determines what that culture is by defining what is hip, relevant and interesting. By combining the two, advertisers believe a unique film experience can be delivered to the consumer and a profitable consumer will be delivered to the advertiser (Donaton 2004).

In the 1940s, market research as a concept was invented. It studied the hidden and overt desires of consumers, which led to an awareness that many of the products purchased relied on psychological associations of gratification with the

ultimate desire to enhance one's image (Eckert 1978, Packard 1957). Since the inception of film, Hollywood has fetishized products as desired commodities by placing them within *mise-en-scène*, becoming a major force in the capitalist culture industry.

But many things have changed since film's beginning and even since the first market research. Living in a commodified environment where commercial clutter is everywhere means that advertisers constantly look for ways to be seen and heard above the din as traditional means of advertising have become devalued. While the ability exists for consumers to zap TV commercials, their cost is continually rising, both in production outlay and the buying of broadcast time. For example, an ad broadcast during the Superbowl can cost in the neighborhood of several million dollars for a thirty second spot (Smith 2009).

Placing product in a film can benefit a corporation's bottom line in a number of ways. In the atmosphere of a movie theatre, the audience is passive and controlled. When products are handled on screen by a celebrity this can be interpreted as an endorsement. The cost of placing a product in a movie is relatively low, usually just supplying the product or paying a minimal fee compared to the cost of producing an ad featuring the product. Once in a film, there is no additional cost, unlike television in which you have to purchase "air time" on an ongoing basis and pay actors each time the ad runs. The run of a feature film has the potential to reach far more people than an "on air"

commercial and can also have a global reach, as most films are planned to include international distribution. The film is eventually released in DVD format, extending the life of the placed product even further.

Product placement in a film also encourages merchandise tie-ins that can support a multi-million dollar advertising campaign. Promotional tie-ins are partnerships developed to promote films and products linked to films. The most common tie-in is between film studios and fast food or beverage companies (Lubbers and Adams 2004). In 1999, PepsiCo inked a 1.25 billion dollar deal with Lucasfilm in connection with the *Star Wars* sequels, not for product placement within the film, only for promotional tie-ins with Pepsi products (Miller, End of Story 2000). When a Disney film ties-in with a fast food chain such as McDonald's or Burger King, the millions of daily customers that pass through the doors are also being exposed to the film through signage, logos on cups and other special offerings (Donaton 2004). Promotional tie-ins create heightened awareness of the movie and can increase box office revenue as well as support the consumption of corporate brands.

Merchandising is also used by marketers in connection with branded entertainment. Merchandising involves creating and licensing products such as action figures, toys and clothing, which are based on a movie or a character within a movie. The Walt Disney Corporation is the king when it comes to merchandising. Warner Brothers, which produces the *Harry Potter* films, also

owns the merchandising rights estimated to pull in approximately 1 billion dollars on top of the film's gross box office sales (Lubbers and Adams 2004).

Entertainment, marketing and advertising have always been allied in some manner, but the practice of product placement in films is no longer just about putting a product in a film; to a marketer, it is about expanding consumerism and creating future brands (Soter 1992).

Another advantage of product placement for manufacturers and marketers is the ability to promote products whose advertisements have been banned or controlled in other mass media, particularly the "sin" products such as alcohol and tobacco. Cigarettes and alcohol have always been used in cinema to define a character or create a certain ambience. The negative debate to include sin products in films is that it glamorizes usage because can be seen as a signifier for being cool, hip or sophisticated, depending on a character's context (something commercials projected when they were allowed to advertise these products on television and in magazines previously).

In 1989, a challenge regarding the use of product placement in film, especially tobacco products, was launched in the U.S. Congress by Representative Tom Luken (D - Ohio). He questioned whether or not product placement constituted paid advertisement and if Federal Laws were being broken by the display of cigarettes on film. Luken noted that cigarette advertisements were no longer permitted on television; however people were still shown smoking within the

storyline of a program (Colford 1989). At the same time, a public interest and lobby group, Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), petitioned the Federal Communication Committee (FCC) to investigate whether product placement in movies was deceptive advertising. Barry Lynn, speaking for the American Civil Liberties union argued that Luken and the CSPI were stretching what constitutes advertising. He also stated that banning cigarettes from films would "intrude on the recognized artistic freedom of motion picture producers" (Seagrave 2004). While much debate and furor ensued, as of this writing no legislation has been introduced to ban cigarettes from films and no changes to current product placement practices has occurred (Seagrave 2004, Donaton 2004).

The use of product placement has always been argued to enhance the sense of reality in a film, however, Mark Crispin Miller (1990 Hollywood) alleges that this reality is a constructed one in much the same way that commercials are constructed to project a product that can enhance beauty, power or goodness. I would argue that while film is a "constructed reality," it reflects the existing reality relaying all the social, cultural and moral ideas that are prevalent in a given society at a certain period in history including the use of branded goods. Film, may succeed however, in keeping specific images and ideologies in circulation, which may contribute to embedding them deeper into the psyche of the audience.

Chapter Two

Theories of Authorship

In order to explore the relationship between product placement and authorship, which is the focus of this thesis, we will need to define what constitutes an author. The principle of authorship in film has generated innumerable theories throughout the years. It began as a discourse to engage the age-old ideology of artist and masterpiece in order to position film as a high art, elevating it above mere popular entertainment.

During the silent film era, Béla Balázs, looked at film as a new language and new way of expression. Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin investigated cinema as an art form, not just as a recording of events. They saw the director as expressing artistic choice and form through the technical apparatus of the camera, combining various shots and angles into a montage and sequence of personal articulation resulting in a great new artistic statement (Eisenstein 2004, Pudovkin 2004).

The auteur theory proper, which helped consolidate issues of authorship in the cinema, emerged around 1948 in post World War II France. Alexandre Astruc's essay, *Le Caméra-Style* put forth a film director's creative ability and authorial hand to translate his passion and ideas, comparing cinema to great literature or art. Later, André Bazin argued that authorship was personality, paying attention to the specific construction of *mise-en-scène*, using the logic that directors are

handed a script and to the extent that they intervene in the process contributes to the director's authorial statement and creative source of meaning (Staiger 2003). François Truffaut defined a true film auteur as one who brings something genuinely personal to the film and transforms the material into an expression of his [sic] own personality (Buscombe 1973).

These theories were founded in Europe outside the Hollywood studio environment; however, Andrew Sarris claimed that the idea of director as auteur also worked within the studio system. He established a set of criteria upon which he determined the worth of a Hollywood director based on his or her creative agency. Coincidentally this became a means to assess all films against a prestige paradigm (Gerstner 2003). Film critic Pauline Kael (1963) challenged Sarris' ideas. She noticed the limitations of his overly schematic and director-centric approach to filmmaking. She also remarked that his theory reduced all films to the status of art, which is clearly not the case. Peter Wollen, for example, sees the film director as a conductor of a musical composition who "marks" the performance with his or her own "accent." This transforms the material into an expression of personality (Staiger 2003). Ed Buscombe's theory shifted the emphasis of authorship to a textural, theoretical analysis of the spectator in relationship to the text/film (Gerstner 2003). Barthes (1977) also recognizes the reader/audience as an active participant in producing meaning and therefore can be seen as having agency in the construction of authorship.

Post-structural strategies have eroded the traditionally established place of the author and thus analyzing film authorship has undergone significant and important re-thinking (Gerstner 2003). Jerome Christensen (2008) challenges the model of film authorship as not being the work or vision of a single individual genius, but the Hollywood studio system itself. He sees film as an expression of corporate art with the film production defining the intended identity of the studio, which then uses this identity as a marketing strategy. For example, the Walt Disney Studio is known for producing a certain type of film that is family-oriented. No matter who is directing the film, it will be nuanced to the Disney Studio's identification with family entertainment, which is leveraged in the marketing of the studio product. Bruce Kawin (2008) also challenges the idea of sole authorship in film. He recognizes that the production of a film is a collaboration of the talents of many people; however, there must be someone — in the form of the director — who has the ultimate responsibility for approving and guiding the work of others.

Arguably, in a collaborative situation someone has to see that in the final production everything is meshed into a cohesive statement and usually the director's vision is the one followed, but this not always the case. Famed Hollywood director, Howard Hawks wrote and directed the film *Fig Leaves* (1926) for MGM. The costumes were designed by Gilbert Adrian. Much like the costumes in *Sex and the City* (Michael Patrick King 2008) the clothing in *Fig Leaves* is a major character in the film. The fashion show sequences are the only scenes shot in color, which was expensive and technically difficult to do at the

time. Hawks gave no explanation for this and suggested he had little control over the situation (Allen 1990). This is because no matter which director costume designer Adrian worked with, everything he designed had his signature style. He also was one of a handful of Hollywood designers who influenced fashion trends and styles in the market place, and it is safe to say that many women chose to attend the films he had designed just to see the clothes. Because of this it was understood that Adrian called all the shots when it came to filming the fashion show sequences and thus competed with (or complemented, depending on your perspective) Hawks' vision in controlling the mise-en-scène. This is a case of auteur-director meets auteur-designer (Allen 1990). Edith Head was another famous auteur-designer who often overruled the sensibilities of the director during the "golden age of Hollywood" and most recently this can be said of Hollywood designer, Patricia Field. The names of several costume designers have been used to market the films they design and have become household names. With the recent *Sex and the City* film, Patricia Field's name was promoted above the directors. Most people know that she designed the costumes for the film, as the publicity for the movie was largely centered on the costumes and the clothing worn by the three leading ladies. However, most people will not be able to recall the name of the director, Michael Patrick King. In any film that Field designs, her name is used to promote the film and this name carries with it a certain signification: the guarantee that there will be fabulous, designer clothing worn and fashion will be at the center of the mise-en-scène.

The function of authorship can also serve as a means of classification. Foucault (2007) discusses four concepts of what he labeled the author/function. The name of a certain author creates a designation; this designation permits categorizing which can be useful for critical appraisal and capitalist profit-making; this categorizing can be used further to produce status in our culture; and finally, the categorization confers meaning on the text/film. A Spielberg, Lucas or Hitchcock film carries a certain connotation. In today's cinema climate, a film carrying the name of Spielberg is enough to command big returns at the box office. There is also a certain status and cultural currency attached to a Spielberg film, which is why it is much easier for him to get his ideas and films produced than someone else. It is this commercial status that becomes a chief function of the auteur in present day filmmaking (Crofts 2000).

It is not only a director who can claim authorship under Foucault's rubric, however. The name of Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Meryl Streep or Cate Blanchett can also create a designation for a film, as well as shape the critical appraisal, which in turn can command status in our culture that generates profit. Actors, for the most part, are the creators or auteur of their characters. It is impossible for a director to dictate every shading of an actor's performance. Indeed, some actors are cast precisely for their ability to craft interesting and meaningful characters from the written word or because they already have an established persona that can enhance a film. The status of auteur can also apply to scriptwriters. They are certainly the "author" of the written script and concept upon which the actors build

their characters and the director the movie. Cinematographers use their artistic eye in the lighting and framing of the shots, contributing to the visual impact of the film as well as an interpretation of the script.

In the early years of film's status as an academic discipline, auteur criticism served as an aesthetic principle on which to base the art form. It had widespread appeal because of its compatibility with literary models, which were already widely understood (Carringer 2001).

Collaborative Practice in Film

Claims of authorship of a film seem to fall into opposing sides. At one side are the auteur theorists who stipulate that an individual contribution denotes sole authorship, and the other side film practitioners claim a multiple worker culture with several people making creative decisions in the course of the production. More recently, the author of a film has been replaced by the idea of *authors* of a film, in recognition of the collaborative nature of filmmaking (Carringer 2001).

Peter Wollen suggests that the director acts as a music conductor organizing the many players needed to make the symphony cohesive and able to interpret written notes on the page to be heard as one blended sound (Becker 1974). Having worked in Hollywood, I know the film system is less romantic than Wollen suggests. It was developed to produce a detailed division of labor within its

attendant power structure, created through hierarchies of authority and control. In the production end, this division of labor can be divided into two categories. The first category contains those with skills that can be represented as "artistic," requiring the special gift or sensibility of the artist. The second classification is skilled craftspeople who are necessary to carry out the ideas of the artist for the fulfillment of the production. This is similar to the 12th century hierarchical framework of artist, journeyman and apprentice. The hierarchy of film production is validated and witnessed in the credits. The front-end or opening credits usually contain personnel who are considered to be the artists or collaborative authors. This includes the producer, director, writer, production designer, editor, costume designer, music supervisor and the lead actors. The back-end or closing credits, contain the skilled craftspeople and support staff needed to carry out the plans of the artist, such as the key grip, best boy, gaffers, make-up and hair personnel right down to the caterers and transportation drivers. It is this network of people working together that creates the movie product.

Bruce Kawin (2008) remarks that many people make creative decisions at various levels of authority in the production of film. He gives the example of the writer, director and other professionals who work together to realize the finished product. I would like to expand on this idea somewhat by suggesting that there are various triads or spheres within a production where the collaborative creative process is realized. As a costume designer, I work with the director and actors. Sometimes directors will come to me with clear and definitive ideas on the

appearance of the characters and sometimes they will look to me for guidance and inspiration. Actors may also have some sense of the style they want their character to have, which may not coincide with how the director has interpreted the part. It then becomes my challenge to put all the different creative ideas together and come up with a design that helps the actor fit into the skin of the character while at the same time meets the director's over all vision for the film while still satisfying my own design aesthetic. I also work with the production designer and the director of photography (DOP), in sorting and selecting colors, textures and the overall visual appearance of how the costumes will photograph on camera. Costume designers for the most part also oversee make-up and hair stylists but this too is a collaborative practice to achieve a cohesive look for a character.

The director, production designer and DOP collaborate to set the mood of the mise-en-scène through lighting, sets, camera angles and the composition of shots that later an editor, working with the director and producer, will then splice together into a logical sequence in which the visual narrative unfolds. The post-production creative mix also includes the addition of background music, Foley or sound effects artists and graphic artists who design the credit sequences and film logo. The richness of the film experience can be ascribed to the shared vision of its makers. Thus the concept of author needs to be conceived as a range of determinants.

Movie making is such an imaginative art, it demands not only individuality and creativity from each worker, but also cooperation from the people needed to produce the film (Staiger 1995). This would include producers, studios, backers and bankers who provide the funding. In certain films, product placement marketers and corporations could be considered falling into the category of those needed to help finance the film. Where it gets dicey in terms of authorship is when marketers and corporations want to dictate how and where their product gets shown on screen, which may include re-writes to scripts that can impinge on the writer's authorial intent. It can also affect the director's vision by forcing him or her to include products that may not accurately portray a character or situation.

Mitchell Kanner, the founder of Integrated Entertainment Partners, a company that matches products to scripts, has stated that Hollywood and advertising agencies should work more closely together as each could fill the gaps in the others business plan (Donaton 2004). Marc Schumuger, the vice chairman of Universal Studios, has suggested that studios need to work with brands and marketers to form a deeper partnership that could include contributing funds to script development in an effort to co-create projects, with marketers taking an ownership position in the films (Donaton 2004). Originally, product placement came from opportunities that were already in the script, but this concept of corporations and a marketers being included in the creative process shifts the locus of authorship considerably and creates the *danger* that script content could

be developed with advertisers' needs coming first and foremost. Lawrence Wenner (2004) has argued that this structure of involving marketers and manufacturers in the development of scripts harms artistic rights by focusing more on commercialism and he suggests that such influences on creative integrity need to be more carefully guarded. When directors, writers, or any creative personnel are pressured into using specific products, the rights of the artist and the creative climate may be impinged on. Some producers may argue that in the collaborative process of filmmaking there is a place for marketers and manufacturers to participate creatively by offering input and ideas and that this would not necessarily encroach upon creative agency, particularly that of the director and writer. Such thinking may lead to the re-establishing of the film hierarchy. As previously stated film can be deemed a collaborative practice, but there still has to be one person responsible for putting all the ideas together to form a cohesive film. This is usually the director. Yet in the micro politics of film production, if money is the language of power for a certain project, marketers and manufacturers could assume the position of control as they contribute funds towards the production and jockey their products into positions of optimum exposure. Foucault (1979) has remarked that the holders of power/knowledge control the agendas of debate and discourse and enjoy ideological power as well as physical and legal power. In any case, the lines of power are always shifting within Hollywood film production depending on the circumstances and the players involved in any particular film and thus the idea of authorship is constantly being reconceived.

The question of authorship in a mass-mediated, multiple worker environment begs the question who is the *prime mover* or *auteur*, in producing the ideas, look and narrative of the film and what portions can be traced to whose authored agency. But these ideas are not new to the auteur theory or studies of authorship; it is only that the twists and turns are a bit different when we consider this from the perspective of product placement. While product placement is present in most films made, it sometimes can be difficult to identify just by watching, whether the products shown were deliberate choices of the director, writer and other creative personnel or whether they ended up in the movie through a deal between a marketing agency and producer in which the script was changed and creative choices made in order to accommodate specific commercial commodities. As I have suggested, there are many possibilities that exist in the inclusion of product placement and issues of authorship, yet most films fit somewhere in the middle. I will now explore three examples from this range in chapters three, four and five. These films will be my case studies for exploring the variety of means by which authority is conveyed in the cinema.

Methodology

Textual Analysis and Case Studies of Authorship

The method behind this research seeks to provide an explanation of the case study selection as the site of analysis. Images of product placement in three Hollywood films will provide the physical example of product placement. How they are manipulated by characters and in what narrative context they occur, will add nuance to the textual analysis performed in the individual chapters on the films. I will argue that each of the films provides a unique entry point into the discussion of product placement that challenges Jhally, Wenner and Crispin Miller's notion that product placement works against the narrative of a film and is at the sole discretion of marketers and producers. These critics argue that breaking into the story just to make a sale, has shifted creative authority out of the hands of filmmakers into the quantitative control of advertisers and corporate CEO's.

The relationship of the case study films to theories of authorship and product placement will be clarified through textual analysis. This will also enhance the flexibility of my approach. I will use these theories to expand the idea of negotiated meanings that textual "authors" engage in whether they are corporate sponsors, directors, writers, costumer designers, or audience members themselves. The case studies of these three films will also reflect different kinds

of authorship arrangements that provide an understanding of the complicated issues arising from product placement and corporate involvement in film production. The central question being looked at within the case studies will be: what is the primary motivation behind utilizing the branded products within the film and how does this operate within the film narrative? The case studies will also examine what, if any, cultural significance the product may hold and how this knowledge may resonant with the intended audience for the film.

The textual analysis will be grounded in theory derived from Roland Barthes' (1973) famous essay, "Textual Analysis of a Tale by Poe." This essay provides a framework for exploring narrative strategies and the plurality of meaning within the films. Barthes states that textual analysis does not attempt to describe the structure of the work, for structure shifts from reader to reader, but rather how the text "explodes and scatters" rendering multiple readings (262). Following Barthes' approach (263), I have "segmented" the text focusing on product placement and authorship to examine the signification that placed products can generate within a film and have extended this to hypothesize how they may operate outside the film, but within the codes and culture of society itself.

I have limited my reading to three films since these fit the criteria for case studies by providing examples drawn from real life experiences (Yin 1984, 23), namely, the fact that I am a costume designer in the Hollywood system, as well as an educated filmgoer living in a postmodern world where the line between consumer

society and art is increasingly blurred. These case studies will provide me with the opportunity to examine in detail a representative group of films, which in their own individual ways do not conform to Sut Jhally, Lawrence Wenner and Marc Crispin Miller's ideas that product placement is at the sole discretion of corporations and is, effectively, one big commercial used to market products. I have chosen this sample group of films for the express purpose of challenging the afore-mentioned theorists. The sample is drawn from the corpus of films I have viewed and in some cases have worked on. If this sampling is any indication, the readings of other films may also suggest different ways of looking at product placement that are not in keeping with the attitude conveyed by Jhally, Wenner and Crispin Miller that branded products in films are merely corporate insertions. My findings suggest that we may need a new method of dealing with branded products in film and I am offering one such possible approach herein.

Each of the films selected is exemplary of the authority of different creative agents in the film industry's spectrum of collaborative practices. A close textual analysis of these images in context will test my hypothesis that firstly, the Hollywood film industry is not monolithic and a variety of creative agents intervene into the production and dissemination of ideas about placed products in a specific narrative context; secondly, that consumer society is replete with advertising images and that consumer-citizens are adept at negotiating such images beyond their crass commercial meanings.

The film *On The Line* (Bross 2001) highlights corporate imposition of products. The Reebok Corporation provided funds for the film to be produced and thus became a partner on the production team at the creative level. The film attempts to formulate a balance between artistic intents and the commercial requirements and expectations of Reebok. It also places emphasis on the role that celebrity (in the form of N'Sync band members) play in product placement. In this case, product placement articulates a metastructure in which established symbols and signs produce attitudinal shades of meaning, which are interpreted and recognized by the targeted teen audience.

Austin Powers in Goldmember (Roach 2002) examines calculated post-modern intervention by creative auteur, Mike Meyers at a variety of levels of production. *Goldmember* illustrates how a distinct system of codes reliant on consumer products and cultural knowledge operates within the relationship of meaning to the audience. What this example presents is the uncertainty of meaning. The film self-reflexively acknowledges the intervention of a creative agent, but this is one that is not above consumer society. Instead, this creative agency ("Mike Myers") seems to relish in the polysemic meaning of consumer culture, both its excesses and contradictions.

Juno (Reitman 2007), an independent low budget film, taps into the already established use of products for the meaning they have within consuming teen culture. Writer Diablo Cody depicts how teens interact with commodities on the

most fundamental level and how these branded goods can carry a greater depth of meaning than the actual product itself would seem to indicate. She is also subtly delivering a critique on the importance society places on these consumer goods in determining identity and social status.

Chapter Four

On The Line Analysis

On the Line (Eric Bross, 2001) is an interesting study in product placement, agency and authorship. The film was used to promote and expand the popularity of Lance Bass and Joey Fatone from the then popular band *N'Sync*. The target audience for the film was primarily girls between the ages of twelve and nineteen, which was the demographic of the fan base for *N'Sync*. Of the ten million dollar budget, the shoe manufacturer Reebok contributed two million dollars plus product and promotion.⁴

On The Line is a romantic comedy starring Bass, Fatone and Emmanuelle Chriqui, with Eric Bross in his first time at the helm of a movie for a major studio. The film was written by Eric Anderson and Paul Stanton based on their short film also entitled *On The Line*. Miramax produced the film when the company was still owned by Harvey and Bob Weinstein. The company Tapestry was also one of the producing partners and is best known for movies designed for a female, teen audience. Tapestry has primarily created films for the Olsen twins, Mary Kate and Ashley, and is thus familiar with the market demographic *On the Line* would be aiming for.

Lance Bass plays Kevin, an advertising layout artist who meets and connects with a girl, Abbey (Chriqui), whom he sits next to on the elevated transit system

⁴ I was the costume designer on this production and had access to this information.

in Chicago. He is too shy to ask her name or get her phone number, which he immediately regrets. In order to find her, Kevin, plasters the whole city of Chicago with flyers describing the train meeting with his phone number asking her to call. In the process, the local newspapers pick up the story and Kevin becomes Chicago's poster boy for lost love and romance as well as the object of affection for many women. Things get complicated, however, when his best friend, Rod (Fatone) and two other pals, Eric (G.Q.) and Randy (James Bulliard) decide to help Kevin find his love. In the process, they discover a way to score dates for themselves from the many women who begin to call Kevin saying they are the girl he met on the train. The subplot revolves around Kevin working on a Reebok advertising campaign at his ad agency.

The Reebok contribution of money and promotional consideration in this film's production is comparable to the monetary and promotional placement of other Hollywood studio films such as the Jeep Rubicon in the *Lara Croft* movies, mentioned in Chapter One, the Givenchy fashions promoted in *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, 1957), or the General Motors vehicles in the *Transformers* (Michael Bay, 2007, 2009).

As the costume designer on the film, I was dealing with accommodating two major commodities, the Reebok label, but also the *N'Sync* brand and the personalities that had been manufactured by Lou Perlman for Lance Bass and Joey Fatone to promote the band's sound and image. Lance had been conceived

as the shy boy next door. While Joey was designed to be a bit more edgy, he was still non-threatening as the hip kid with the "garage band" geared to be marketed to a teen audience. Just as personalities are used in advertising to define a brand such as the rugged Marlboro man or the young, hip Mac guy in the Apple computer commercials, the branding of band members tends to create personality images that are conjured up by the record label or music producer and used in marketing strategies to attract a particular audience. In neo-Marxists terms, the celebrity sign of N'Sync is pure exchange value cleaved from use value, which articulates the brand as a commodity. N'Sync's celebrity status is a simultaneous embodiment of media construction, audience construction and the band members themselves. All these are critical components in promoting consumer culture among teens. When the Reebok brand is teamed with the N'Sync brand, a type of synergy is created.

Judith Williamson (1978) calls this synergy a metastructure where meaning is not just decided within one structure or another but combined to create a third structure with enhanced meaning. Reebok had wanted to expand its label to the female teen market. By placing its product in a movie starring two members from one of the hottest rock bands at the time, Reebok was establishing a clear link to a desired media celebrity with a positive social identification. This created a communication about the Reebok product that employed established symbols and signs, in the form of Lance and Joey, which could be accepted and recognized by the targeted audience. This not only inflated the sign value of the

Reebok shoe, but also put the product into a cultural space where it became what Barthes (1972) refers to as a second order signifier. This occurs when the denotative meaning of the sign is made to stand for the value system of the culture or person using it. It then produces attitudinal or elevated shades of meaning. The agency of N'Sync was extrapolated from teen culture to support an identity with established audience appeal and their meaning was displayed to support the Reebok product.

The limitations imposed on me as the costume designer meant that the characters of Kevin and Rod had to be designed within the creative parameters of their N'Sync brand and image as opposed to what might be originally dictated by the script. For a costume designer, the ultimate opportunity for creative authorship lies in designing clothing that reflects the character presented in the screenplay. Many well-known actors such as Meryl Streep, Cate Blanchette and Johnny Depp, want to change their appearance, style and personality for each new role they play and use costumes to help visually project and define different character traits. However, in the tradition of Hollywood this is not always the case. Marilyn Monroe was the brand "Marilyn Monroe" no matter which role she played and this is what the audiences came to see. For example, *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder 1959) is set in the 1920s and for the most part the costumes Monroe wore in the film were not historically accurate for the era. The female clothing of the 1920s was constructed to flatten the chest and present a boy like stick figure. The version of Monroe's 1920s costumes enhanced her breasts and

hour-glass shape — all considered part of her marketable assets that contributed to the Marilyn Monroe mystique. This mystique was inseparable from the era of the 1950s, which gave us the female “bombshells” and “sex kittens” such as Jayne Mansfield, Kim Novak and Bridget Bardot. In the case of Monroe, the strong image of the actress herself and the depiction of the sex appeal of the era, overrode the accurate historical depiction of the costumes.

While the corporate marketing image of N'Sync put some limitations on expanding the character through the use of wardrobe, the screenplay was written to accommodate this and the character of Kevin was pretty much scripted as the nice boy next door in keeping with Lance's N'Sync image. I could employ a little more costume creativity with Joey's character, Rod, who fronted a funky band that was inclined to play in local bars. A minor script rewrite also made Reebok the focus of the ad campaign that Kevin works on at the advertising company he is employed at. However, this rewrite did not compromise the writers' intent of locating some of the scenes in an advertising agency and did not alter the original plot of the film. It is Kevin's work at the ad agency that inspires him to publicize his situation and distribute flyers in hope of locating the girl he met on the train.

While it could be argued that a generic or made up product instead of Reebok could be substituted in Kevin's ad campaign this actually may create more of an intrusion within the storytelling. Putting a fictitious product in a film, which is

attempting to be viewed as part of a real or plausible story, undoubtedly may draw more attention to a generic product and away from other components of the narrative. Goldman and Papson (1996) argue that in today's world, teens are searching for the "authentic" in movies, music, literature and the clothing they consume. This type of authenticity imbues a set of values that situate the product within the social and cultural landscape of the teen audience. Today's consumer-savvy teens may reject a whole film laced with generic products because they don't have "street credibility". This "street cred" is valuable because it is a means by which teens validate themselves and serves as an affirmation of their consumer choices. If a film is targeting youth, then you need to speak to them in their language and on their terms. Products in film can play a large role in creating and affirming this idea of "street cred".

While Reebok was the major supplier of product, there were other products placed in *On the Line* as well. Verizon, Kellogg's cereals, Pepsi and Apple computers all appear. The Chicago Cubs Baseball Organization also supplied goods and services. Several scenes were shot at Wrigley Field and featured Cub's baseball players on the field during a game as Kevin and Rod converse in the stadium. The script also established that one of Kevin's friends, Eric, would be an avid Cubs fan and sell peanuts at the stadium during home games. While Cubs management supplied copious amounts of clothing with the Cubs logo and trademark, there was no stipulation attached as to who had to wear it or how many times the clothing had to appear on camera, which provided more creative

input and choice for the designer. Since the character Eric worked at Wrigley Field, it was agreed between the director and designer that he would wear the Cubs signature clothing throughout the film. The props and wardrobe that were supplied by Reebok, however, came with a request that they be connected to the character Kevin and as many other lead characters as reasonable.

The N'Sync persona could easily be transformed to Kevin's working attire at the ad agency, which consisted of colored dress shirts, retro 50s ties and tailored leather jackets. The agency is also the locus of the Reebok placement. It was scripted that verbally the Reebok name would be uttered every time there was a cut to the ad agency. One of the first scenes at the agency takes place in a boardroom with Reebok corporate executives. It is here we learn that Reebok is launching a new line of shoes for teen girls and, with much fanfare, are shown close up product shots of the different styles of footwear. In reality, Reebok was launching a new line of shoes aimed at the teenage market that would coincide with the release of the film. A cut to Kevin's office cubicle reveals his creative "Reebok ad factory." His desk is piled with Reebok shoes, which he frequently picks up and refers to in the course of developing the ad campaign. At one point there is a close up of two feet, each wearing a different shoe from the Reebok teen line. As the camera pulls back, we see it is Kevin who has the shoes on as he begins to break dance. This creates the metastructure, that Williams refers to; it transfers meanings and values necessary to generate a commodity sign, which is intensified by the "star" power of an N'Sync member, in the form of Kevin,

wearing the shoes. This image constructs a commodity currency for which it is required that we take disconnected signifiers (in this case, Kevin plus girl's Reebok shoes) into an equation that re-combines them to create a new equivalency and steers the interpretation of the image to the desired outcome and market.

As discussed in Chapter One, there is more acknowledgement and impact if a recognized personality is shown wearing the product as it can be seen as an endorsement of that product. The scene of Kevin wearing the shoes was not the choice of the director. However, the development of the ad campaign at the agency was the only place in the storyline that reasonably would make sense for the shoes to be worn by someone other than a teen girl. The director chose to shoot the sequence without dialogue and edit it as a montage representing Kevin's creative thought process as he tries to come up with an advertising concept for the shoes. The background music for the segment is a recognizable N'Sync song, which was on the film soundtrack CD. Thus the process of commodification through product placement engages the text and reader in a constellation of elements that includes character/star and subject matter/ product whose elements further form a promotional network.

Films for the most part are shot out of sequence. Thus the first scene appearing on the screen in the finished film is not necessarily the first scene filmed when production begins. The editing process in post-production is where the film is

pieced together to follow the plot of the script. With *On the Line* all the scenes in the advertising agency were shot first and there was some concern from Reebok as how to link Kevin to the Reebok product outside the office environment. In the ad agency he was restricted to the regulation "office attire" which gave little occasion to incorporate sportswear. After reviewing the script I saw an opportunity to integrate the Reebok product as seamlessly as possible in the scene of an outdoor game of "barbeque ball" played between the four friends. Reebok athletic shoes were worn, and three of the main characters, including Kevin, wore Reebok outerwear. Eric wore his character's signature Chicago Cubs gear. The choice of branded clothes used in the scene was selected from a vast array of garments provided by Reebok. Even though the authorial choice was limited to one brand, there was enough variety of products provided by Reebok that the scene did not look contrived as a product placement opportunity and each actor could be dressed as his established character. Designer choices included keeping the Reebok name or logo as inconspicuous as possible so the scene didn't look like a Reebok commercial. The challenge for authorship and creativity comes from how and where you use the product placement to fit in with the overall scheme and the look of the character in the context of the film. It can be just as much an art form to work within the constraints of knowing where and when to use branded merchandise; to exert your authorial vision to benefit the film.

The Reebok Corporation nevertheless did make some independent wardrobe choices. In a lengthy scene in Kevin's apartment the four friends are shown watching an MTV sequence featuring Ritchie Sambora, of the rock band Bon Jovi. Kevin is wearing a blue t-shirt with huge red lettering across the front boldly proclaiming the Reebok name which is as prominent as his face in close ups and can be plainly read in wide shots. In the same scene, the character Eric is out of his signature Chicago Cubs gear and also wears a Reebok t-shirt from the then new "retro line" in which the Reebok branding is buried in the graphic design of the shirt and is not easily detected, which perhaps saves the scene from becoming too contrived as a placement vehicle. The signifiers for the product are nonetheless plentiful. MTV has a certain hip coolness factor as does Bon Jovi. By association, Kevin watching Bon Jovi in a Reebok shirt can be interpreted as exemplary of what "cool hip people" do. Kevin is also Lance Bass of N'Sync, so the sign value is then doubled. The dialogue in the scene centers on Kevin locating this ordinary girl he met on the train, playing to the ordinary girls who are the bulk of the N'Sync fan base. All these symbols contribute to creating social indicators of identity, which the targeted film audience can relate to, and moves the Reebok product into the circulation of images in the cultural space of teens.

In a scene towards the end of the movie, Abbey, the girl Kevin met on the train and is trying to locate, is riding on the same train line thinking about Kevin. She is wearing a Reebok shirt peaking out from under her denim jacket. This placement was a corporate request to establish a link between Abbey, the object

of Kevin's desire and the desirable commodity: Reebok. The denim jacket over the Reebok shirt was the choice of the designer and suggests her creative agency. She determined it was necessary to keep the scene grounded in reality. It was a cold day on location in Chicago, everyone else on the train was wearing a jacket; for Abbey not to wear one and have on just a Reebok shirt would be discordant. She had been established in a denim jacket in several scenes and for her to switch to a Reebok jacket for this scene, which had been suggested by the company, would be out of character. The denim jacket softened the overt placement and maintained the integrity of the character and the agency of the designer.

Not all the placed products in *On The Line* were the impetus of prior deals between the producer and marketing executives. The Chicago Cubs baseball club was written in the original screenplay. The ball club was approached by the producers for clearance to use the Cub's trademark and the Wrigley Field site for filming. In a conversation between the director, writers and designer it was decided that this product could be used to authenticate the location of the story, which for economic reasons was shot in several cities besides Chicago including New York and Toronto. The Chicago Cubs also provided a common thread in the story in which to link the characters. When Kevin first meets Abbey on the train their conversation establishes they are both Cub fans providing one means for their attraction. Later that day when Kevin meets up with his friends and tells them about Abbey, Eric is wearing a Cubs baseball cap. When Kevin and Rod

attend a game at Wrigley Field, the crowd surrounding them is peppered with branded Cubs merchandise; however, Kevin is seen in his Reebok jacket. The film cuts to a scene in Abbey's apartment, which shows her watching the game in a Cubs baseball cap. Nathan (Jerry Stiller), Kevin's confidant and ally at the ad agency, is also established as a Cubs fan in the original script. When convalescing from a heart attack he is seen in a bathrobe and Cub's baseball cap. Kevin visits him in the nursing home and the conversation turns to how he met his wife at a Cubs game, which then becomes the impetus for Kevin to earnestly look for the girl he met on the train. This use of this product placement, created by the writers and carried out by the director, enjoys a genuine symbiotic integration within the film's storyline and seems to occur naturally. Even though the Chicago Cubs brand received as much screen time as Reebok, the placement benefits from the fact that most audiences will not associate a sports team as a product in the same way they would a consumer good such as food or clothing.

The one product that stands out as a contrived placement in the film is the various Kellogg's cereals that are shown in the kitchen of Kevin and Eric's apartment. In a breakfast sequence, the Froot Loops package on top of the refrigerator is turned to face the camera. The box of Frosted Flakes on the kitchen table is also angled to face the camera, which seems a little awkward and is prominent in the shot. Rod (Fatone) enters the scene and pours some Frosted Flakes into a bowl and places the box back on the kitchen table with the name

once again facing the camera. While commanding a prominent space in the frame this too seems a bit awkward. Throughout the scene, whenever there is a cut to Rod, the Kellogg's logo at the top of the box appears in the lower left hand corner of the shot, however, this may have been a conscious choice of the director. The close-up of Rod could have easily been framed to eliminate the packaging. At this point in the scene, the product has had ample screen time and this increased the sign value simply by having Rod pouring it into a bowl and eating. There was no need to further emphasize the product as it was not needed to move the story forward or provide additional information intrinsic to the plot. It's not clear whose idea it was to feature the Kellogg's box.

The use of product placement also intervened in other aspects of the film. Director Eric Bross comments on the DVD of *On The Line* that one of his favorite scenes in the film is between the characters of Brady (Dan Montgomery) and Julie (Amanda Foreman), which takes place in a bed. The scene was rewritten and re-shot at a breakfast table because it was felt that the location could jeopardize the targeted P.G. rating for the film. Classification of films influences the demographic, and in this film as with many others, the targeted audience is key to the product placement strategies. The request to rework the scene could have come from the producer or the prominent product placement partners, but clearly it was based on the economic and business end of movie making and not on artistic expression or choices. Even if the original writers and director are given the chance to alter the scene, it still can be a compromise on their original

vision and creative agency, which is always overseen by the corporate body.

This circumstance of production effectively says, 'you can be creative but within these parameters.' While creative agents may intervene into the production of a film, this is a matter of degree and these interventions can also fulfill the mandate of corporate sponsors.

Film classification ratings obviously influence which types of products might be used in a film. In today's market if the targeted audience is teenagers, producers aim for a G, PG, or PG13 rating. To obtain those ratings, certain standards have to be met which usually include no smoking or overt drinking of alcoholic beverages and no explicit nudity shown on camera. Although in *On The Line* several scenes take place in a neighborhood bar where Rod's band plays, there is no overt alcoholic consumption or cigarette smoking visible on camera. The beer bottles at the tables are in soft focus and turned away from the camera so no brand is recognizable. There is one Michelob neon sign in the background and some other beer signage over the bar, which came with the rented location, but they are not featured in any way or shown in a close up. In a film targeted for another audience and rating this would be the perfect opportunity for the placement of "sin" products such as alcohol and cigarette brands. In *On The Line* the typical *mise-en-scène* of a smoky dive gives way to an ambience more akin to an after school teen hangout. The original script was written for a bar and though the authors' original location was not changed, the atmosphere created a

more neutral environment than the conventional Hollywood depiction of a bar location. This was an effort by the producer to preserve the targeted P.G. rating.

There is also a nightclub scene in which Al Green is the featured performer. The small round tables with candles on combined with low lighting give all the visual indicators associated with a nightclub, but again no one is smoking and while there are glasses on tables with liquid in them no branded alcoholic beverages are seen being served. This segment emphasizes the compromises that occur in the making of most films. The night club could have easily been changed to a concert hall for the Al Green show, but the writers had wanted a more intimate venue in order to create tension in the story involving the physical closeness of Kevin and Abbey, who are at the same location, but just miss bumping into each other and thus are still unable to make a connection. All the traditional signifiers of a night club atmosphere are missing, such as cigarettes and branded alcohol which are said to lend a realism to the film, however, the scenes played out in the *On the Line* night club leave no doubt to the location, which is clearly indicated by the setting, costumes and lighting alone.

Alcohol and cigarettes were not placed in the scene for reasons other than the P.G. rating. It was to protect the N'Sync brand. It would seem incongruous to the band's clean-cut image if they were seen hanging out in a club smoking and drinking alcohol. The protection of a brand image therefore not only applies to products, but can extend to "personalities" and stars. Many actresses won't do

nude scenes. Instead they use body doubles and often let the public know it was a body double. The whole industry of stunt performers also centers around brand image. Many scripts include action sequences created by the writer that may prove risky or too physically demanding for the starring actor to handle. The stunt double is used to protect the star from harm both physically and reputation wise while not compromising the authorial intent of the writer.

On the Line is a romantic comedy shot in the Hollywood tradition of that genre. It tells a story of success, desire, love, happiness and fulfillment; similar to what advertising and commercials tend to do. I am not suggesting that *On the Line* is a long format commercial, for surely it is not. What the film does, however, is provide an interesting case study of the Madison and Vine concept; the merging of the advertising and film industries. It is conceivable that the contribution from Reebok and the Chicago Cubs — not to mention N'Sync — made it possible for this film to advance to the production stage. This created a collaborative partnership where Reebok, due to its monetary contribution, became part of the creative team similar to that of a producer. Like a producer, they have some creative input in the artistic process of making the film. For the most part, the Reebok products, as well as many other placed brands, were integrated into the original script so the intention of the writers in telling their story is not compromised. The Reebok ad campaign is one of several sub-plots that ran throughout the film and was not the main focus of the story. The Reebok product itself had nothing to do with the hero and heroine finally being re-united. The

products weren't even used in defining any of the lead characters. In the relationship between popular appeal (as gauged by commercial success), and artistic intention (as judged by storytelling), *On the Line* tried to create a balance between the two. The director controlled how the shots were to be executed and the "creative" personnel who design the sets, props and wardrobe still had their artistic input.

While it was the intention of Reebok to use the film as a platform to launch a new shoe, they were well aware of the credibility issues their target audience might have if this was done too overtly. The product placement was important to Reebok, but so was the storyline, thus creating a mutually beneficial balance between Madison and Vine. It should not be overlooked, moreover, that the merging of Madison and Vine in this production offered exposure to a young director, emerging script writers and actors, as well as providing employment to the hundreds of people who worked on the film in various capacities. The experience of gaining a studio film credit on your résumé cannot be measured in tangible terms, but can advance you forward in the Hollywood game where everyone is a commodity.

Chapter Five

GOLDMEMBER

As producer, star and one of the writers of *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (hereafter referred to as *Goldmember*), Mike Myers is one of the few people in the film industry who has achieved a high level of creative control. *Goldmember* (Roach 2002) is the third in the Austin Powers trilogy (*International Man of Mystery*, (Roach 1997), *The Spy who Shagged Me* (Roach 1999) and, like the others, it is a spoof on the espionage genre of film made popular by the *James Bond* and *The Mission Impossible* film franchises. *Goldmember* thrives on double entendre. While sending up popular culture, especially 1960s British pop culture, it is also critical of consumer culture. Myers' film is an example of postmodernism in film where the commodity fetish is fully integrated into aesthetic production (Jameson 1984). He uses styles of the past as a particular type of nostalgia. Myers does not attempt to re-capture or re-present the "real" past, but offers fragments from a history steeped in myth and stereotypes. The character Austin Powers, which is developed over the trilogy, is constructed to overtly reveal the connection between popular and consumer cultures and relies heavily on parody and pastiche to send this message.

The script intentionally places branded products within the context of the film narrative, but not in the conventional seamless way currently associated with product placement as previously argued. The title itself has social and sexual

associations, but it also speaks to a long-standing advertising scheme of the American Express Company, where you become a “member” of the American Express “club” which indicates your status as an elite class of consumer. Your excessive spending habits qualify you for a “gold” or “platinum” card (American Express 2009). *Goldmember* is also a character’s name and refers to his solid gold phallus, which is also the “key” to carrying out his evil plan to control the earth.

Myers has a history of integrating branded products into his written scripts going back to *Wayne’s World* (Penelope Spheeris 1992). It is safe to assume that he, along with fellow writer, Michael McCullers, wrote the script first and then the studio applied for clearances from the companies and products mentioned. Many of the products used in *Goldmember* have a long association with Myers. His films are quite successful in turning a profit and appeal to a broad spectrum of viewers. This might be a reason why many companies seem happy to jump on board his production bandwagon, even though their products are mocked on screen which is normally the antithesis of the product placement ideal. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, Reebok provided funds for the purpose of placing their products, but also as a means to get the film produced. This provided Reebok with the power to have some creative input on how their product would be used and represented on camera. *Goldmember* by contrast, was a studio production with a budget of \$63,000,000 (BoxOffice mojo 2008). It was produced by New Line Cinema, which is a subsidiary of the giant

entertainment conglomerate AOL/Time Warner. Due to the financial success of the first two Austin Powers films, production money was probably easily obtained from the studio via the parent company, leaving any products mentioned to the sole discretion and creative agency of Mike Myers and Michael McCullers as the authors of the screenplay. It should be noted that *Goldmember* is an original screenplay and although it satirizes a genre of movie, it is not based on an existing novel or drama, but is a creation of the writers and authors Mike Myers and Michael McCullers as were the previous two Austin Powers films.

As a spoof of the spy genre, *Goldmember* relies on the audience to be very familiar with the genre's conventions and to draw meaning from their own reserve of film-going experiences, as well as common knowledge of popular discourse. The "in-joke" references are meant to validate specialized knowledge of spy genre film goers and popular culture enthusiasts in which advertising and brand recognition play a huge role.

Mimicking the James Bond format, the opening credits are shown over an action sequence involving Austin's (Mike Meyers) Jaguar XK8 convertible emblazoned with the British Union Jack and a BMW motorcycle driven by Dixie Normous (Gwyneth Paltrow), dressed in the requisite sexy leather outfit of a "Bond Girl." Cameos by Tom Cruise, Kevin Spacey, Danny DeVito, Britney Spears and Quincy Jones also appear in the film's opening. Even Steven Spielberg, who

plays himself, has a brief dialogue with Powers that references the idea of the quintessential auteur filmmaker.

The film then moves to a wide shot of the iconic Hollywood sign. As the camera moves in, the sub title, "Dr. Evil's Hollywood Lair" flashes across the bottom of the screen. The name, "Dr. Evil," conjures up an image of a morally bad or injurious person. The James Bond films were the first to use names such as Dr. No for the hero's antagonist. The implication in *Goldmember* is that an evil and corrupt organization is trying to take control of Hollywood movie production, using the cinema's appeal to control the minds of movie audiences and eventually the entire population. This is similar to the ideas expressed by Vance Packard (1957) discussing the subliminal seduction of the population through media manipulation used particularly in advertising. Myers is also playing on the outspoken views of some critics who believe product placement in film as a powerful medium is, in effect, an evil brain-washing technique devised to encourage the consumption of certain goods and services in a stealth manner. The parodic opening sequence introduces the satiric quality of the film and is both a playful and serious critique of the Hollywood movie industry.

Once inside Dr. Evil's lair, we meet his right hand man, Number 2 (Robert Wagner). Number 2 and Number 1 are references to the scatological humor of children and may be an indicator of the way Dr. Evil treats his assistant. Number 2 informs Evil that he has found a way to make huge sums of legitimate money

by opening up a Hollywood talent agency. As Number 2 walks towards Evil, the camera follows him and in the background the logos of ICM, CAA and William Morris appear, which are the top talent agencies in Hollywood. These agencies represent some of the best talent in the film business which includes actors, directors, writers, etc. but they also broker or package deals which sometimes include product placement.

The double meaning of talent agencies linked to power, control and product placement is not accessible to all viewers. In order to tap into those levels of meaning in the film, one has to know the codes and signs of the entertainment industry to grasp these in-jokes. Myers' reference to these "power brokers" and consumerism will probably not register with the average film audience because many are not that familiar with the visual or verbal cues to these recognizable brands and logos of the talent agencies. This illustrates a distinct subsystem of codes that operate within the context of this film. The code or sign is only capable of being transferred or even recognized if it has meaning for the viewer in the first place.

This sequence aimed at film industry insiders and those in the know creates a type of elitism that is used in marketing. Bourdieu (1984) calls it cultural capital: knowledge that is accumulated through upbringing or education, which confers social status. Cultural capital is critical to the communication of social position through symbolic consumption. Starbucks is a prime example of a corporation

that uses cultural capital as a marketing tool. The invention of “Starbucks speech”; the distinct method of ordering a coffee at Starbucks is used to reflect social positioning in terms of economic and cultural capital. By knowing the terms grande, skim, macchiato and latte when you order, Starbucks lures you into thinking you are now in the know as part of an elite consumer culture, similar to American Express and the “gold card”. However, practically everyone knows the Starbucks way of ordering. The inflated price of the coffee can also make consumers think they are buying the best tasting coffee, grown in a politically correct manner, which also reflects Starbucks marketing of cultural capital.

In *Goldmember*, Number 2 is given a Starbucks coffee by his new assistant. Starbucks has had a long relationship with the Austin Powers film franchise. It played a defining role in the plot of *The Spy Who Shagged Me*, which was the previous Austin Powers adventure. In that film, Dr. Evil awakens from a cryogenic nap to discover that Number 2 has brought fantastic wealth to the Evil empire by investing in the stock of a small, unknown coffee company called Starbucks. The Starbucks investment has become so profitable that it facilitates Dr. Evil in bankrolling a giant moon laser capable of destroying cities with a flick of a switch. This enables Evil to gain world domination from his secret headquarters atop the Space Needle in Seattle, the city that in reality is where the corporate headquarters of Starbucks resides.

Starbucks is in on the joke of the possible link between Dr. Evil's plan to capture world domination and Starbucks seeming mentality to conquer the world of lattes and coffee, possibly annihilating a few independent coffee shops in the process. George Murphy, a spokesman for Starbucks, has stated the company thought the movie treated the size and identity of the company in a humorous way. He also remarked that Starbucks is always aligned with Dr. Evil's assistant, Number 2, because he always tries to pursue legitimate business opportunities (Wheat, 1999). This is a case of the advertiser winking back at the audience, letting the viewer know the company is laughing at itself, but at the same time it is still getting in its advertising pitch. Starbucks knows how product placement works. The core of advertising through product placement is not really pushing the product itself, but rather the product's social and cultural relationship to the audience.

In *Goldmember*, Number 2 extends the link with the company established in the previous Austin Powers films. Number 2 is the only one drinking Starbucks in the boardroom defining him as a true loyal customer. As he sets the container on the boardroom table it stands alone, with its logo as iconic as the Hollywood sign. Starbucks does not pay for product placement in the Austin Powers films; the company merely offers merchandise and provides permission to use their logo (Wheat 1999). The scenes that include Starbucks' products provide continuity, acting as a thread connecting the three Austin Powers movies. This also a method used in marketing. The creation of sequels and prequels in film plays on

“brand familiarity” and the concept of a pre-sold identity. The Austin Powers’ characters and subject matter of the films is already known and proven in the marketplace which almost guarantees financial success at the box office (Cucco 2009).

Heineken beer is another product prominently featured and written into all the Austin Powers films. In *Goldmember*, it can be seen in the fridge in Power’s Tokyo hotel room, as well as in the hands of several guests at the party in his penthouse where it is offered to him by Harajuku clad twins. As he sits down on the edge of a bed with the twins, the bottle cap pops off and the foam from the beer shoots out the top of the bottle suggesting a male orgasm. Metaphor is frequently used in connection with product placement in the Austin Powers trilogy. In this scene Myers, as author, uses the product to describe the mindset of the character while linking it to a physiological function, but there is another insinuation with the Heineken brand that is not so obvious. Heineken was first used in the James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997 Roger Spottiswoode), where the company contributed 6 million U.S. towards the placement (Khermouch and Stanley 1999). Myers, in spoofing James Bond, wrote the scene in *Goldmember*, which not only featured the same beer as Bond drinks, but also makes an additional association to the sexual prowess of the super spy, which is part of the Bond persona that Powers imitates.

Brand manager for Heineken, Hunter Smith, states that Mike Meyers himself wrote Heineken into the Austin Powers scripts, and the story included enough sophisticated humor to be compatible with the prestige beer (Khermouch and Stanley 1999). Smith also noted that Austin Powers's films are a fun property and provides Heineken a chance to laugh at itself, while at the same time be more relevant to the 21 to 34 target market (Khermouch and Stanley 1999). Heineken not only contributed product, they also launched a huge cross-promotional campaign before the film's release to build hype as well as another advertising campaign while the film was screened in theatres. These were intended to build on the momentum of the advanced publicity which added value to both the product and the film (Khermouch and Stanley 1999).

Like Starbucks and Heineken, Taco Bell and Pepsi have been used in all the Austin Powers films as well as being involved in huge cross-promotional campaigns before and after the film's release. These promotions using the *Goldmember* characters created advanced advertising for the film and continued for the first few weeks of its screening (Yeah Baby 2002). A Taco Bell bag and Pepsi cup are prominent and receive a lot of close up camera time in the jail cell of Dr Evil. The scene can be looked at as a satire of the whole product placement industry as the Taco Bell and Pepsi trademarks are boldly presented in an uncluttered frame.

Taco Bell's vice president of media services, entertainment and licensing, Debbie Myers (no relation), has stated that the zany humor of Austin Powers matches the fun, fresh, left of center personality of Taco Bell which used the slogan, "think outside the bun" in one of its promotions (Howard 2002). Even though Taco Bell was featured being brought to a convicted felon in prison, the company seemed happy to be included in the script. Debbie Myers is once again quoted as saying the even though Dr. Evil is in prison, he wants Taco Bell brought to him, which the chain thinks is pretty cool (Howard 2002). This is a nod to brand loyalty similar to Number 2 always drinking Starbucks. Taco Bell is said to be the preferred fast food of gangs and rap performers, particularly in the Los Angeles area (Reinhold 1988). Taco Bell even tried to use convicted felon and rap singer, 50 Cent in the company's "value menu" campaign where 79, 89 and 99 cent menu items were being offered. They challenged 50 Cent to change his name to 79, 89 or 99 Cent, and "think outside the bun" (Maul 2008). While not really transformational advertising in the conventional sense, a "bad boy" can sell products. There is something edgy and fascinating about the rebel taking a stance against society and making his own rules. James Dean, Marlon Brandon and more recently Christian Bale have started their acting careers projecting this type of image. In current teen culture, the bad boy rap singer holds a lot of cultural cachet, which Mike Meyers seems to understand and Taco Bell wants to be associated with. *Goldmember* provides the company that association, but in a humorous way. Taco Bell also got a boost in the form of added value when Katie

Couric, who plays a jail guard in the prison scene, had Taco Bell on the set during her interview with Mike Myers to promote the film (Howard 2002).

The big production number in the prison set to "It's a Hard Knock Life" from the musical *Annie* (John Huston 1982) carries the gangsta/rapper culture even further. As Dr. Evil and Mini Me rap, they cite the attributes and accessories associated with gang members, hip hop and rap musicians. With the mention of a Cadillac Escalade SUV, Dr. Evil's clone, Mini Me (Verne Troyer) holds up a huge gold Cadillac logo. It's worth noting that Austin's time machine in the film is a customized 1975 Cadillac Fleetwood Eldorado which he refers to as a "pimp mobile" and Beyonce Knowles, who plays Foxy Cleopatra in the film, records for Cadillac Records. The song also refers to consumer culture in a variety of ways such as, buying bling on EBay, Blackberries, Motorola phones and having MTV come to my "crib". In one segment of the production number, Dr. Evil and Mini Me appear with bandanas wearing clothing by Enyce with its company logo prominent. This clothing line is favored by rappers and hip hop artists. The company is currently owned by P. Diddy, aka Sean Coombs, whose image and commercial empire is built around the rapper, hip hop, and urban outlaw ideal.

To some extent the whole production number relies on the power of spectacle and sign systems operating in the open to address the idea of how branded merchandise can create information grounded in social context. Goldman and Papson (1996) argue that borrowed speech, usage, gesture or style is based on

the tacit acknowledgement that subcultures are the source of authentic and desirable signs. In the rap number, certain goods are used as an outward expression connected to a particular social group. The cultural emphasis on consuming, owning and wearing signs provides people with real social indicators of identity (Goldman and Papson 1996). This display of material goods can also be used as a method of stereotyping which brings different expectations and interpretive strategies to bear on the question of meaning, once again depending on the social conditioning and experience of audience members. Advertising also plays a role in transmitting ideologies that perpetuate exploitive social relations through a view that encourages the audience to interpret reality in certain ways. Consumer goods are fetishized objects. We sometimes purchase these goods, not because we need them or because they are useful and helpful to our existence, but because they are valuable signs within our culture. Myers, through the *Goldmember* prison sequence uses consumer goods to project associations, fantasies and values through the adaptation of a subculture style and image that has captured a certain segment of the popular imagination.

The use of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team, while promoting a brand is also a commodity, which refers to the author personally but plays on fantasy and desire as well. In writing in the scenes referring to the Maple Leafs, Myers pays homage to his native country, Canada, his hometown Toronto, and his childhood hockey team. The scene in which the Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup is perhaps the greatest tongue in cheek fantasy and desire of the author's

screenplay. He asserts himself within the narrative in a personal way but also gives a nod to those in the know about his diehard fan status.

The movie has several other product placements including AOL, the parent company of New Line Cinema, which produced the film. The establishing shot of Tokyo is a skyline infused with neon signs spelling out Sharp, Nikon, Hennessey and Coca Cola, mixed in with a few signs using Japanese characters, which are unreadable to a non-Japanese audience. It is unclear what, if anything, these Japanese neon signs might say. Here the author seems to be satirizing the concept proposed by Lawrence Wenner (2004) that product placement shines forth in a scene in not the same way it is represented in real life. We can recognize only those products, in the form of names and logos, that the author wishes us to recognize, which are the same ones whose written codes and symbols we understand and connect to consumer goods. Myers could also be making a statement about Western consumer culture, which appears to be permeating all other cultures. Even though the scene takes place in Tokyo, the logos and names of the western conglomerates are in western characters, creating cultural capital based on western style consumerism.

In another scene, Myers turns the tables and uses Japanese culture to extend the point about multi-national consumerism. The scene takes place at a party in Austin Power's penthouse, where he encounters the previously mentioned Japanese twins Fook Mi and Fook Yu. Members of the audience need to be

acquainted with the Harajuku style, which is worn by a specific subculture of Japanese teenagers, in order to make the link between the twins and the "Hello Kitty" products being lampooned. Hello Kitty products are the brainchild of the Japanese company Sanrio. They are sold internationally, and seem to be omnipresent. The product line includes everything from clothing to stationery, waffle makers, stuffed animals, bath towels, jewelry and sporting goods. Sanrio releases new Hello Kitty items each month and there is usually a rush to buy them due to marketing schemes and a cult following that has developed worldwide (Ko 2000). Brian McVeigh (2000) suggests that Hello Kitty is a celebration of the childlike. There is a certain naivety and innocence associated with the products even when worn by women, although the targeted demographic is young girls. The Harajuku teens have picked up on the clothing and made it trendy and camp for that age group. McVeigh (2000) also suggests Hello Kitty products are indicative of individuals who have fallen prey to the power of consumer society and marketing. In order to stay trendy, hip and cool consumers have become hypersensitized to the whims of fashion fads which change rapidly.

Myers plays on all these associations of the Hello Kitty products. Fook Mi and Fook Yu are dressed exactly the same in a childlike manner. The backpacks they carry have the Hello Kitty character on them along with their names. The twins' appearance suggests the idea of a mass market where we all begin to look alike trying to be hip, cool and belong to a desired group. It is the same consumer

logic as the gangsta rap clothing worn in the prison scene. When Austin makes a sexual comment about Fook Mi's name, she looks at him with wide-eyed virtue and naively does not pick up on the joke evoking the outward look of innocence associated with the Hello Kitty products. Myers is also playing on the stereotypical male fantasy of twins as a ménage à trois, where even their names, Fook Mi and Fook Yu carry an availability yet unwillingness to participate simultaneously.

In another scene, Dr. Evil talks about a tractor beam which he has named Preparation H. First you have to know Preparation H is a consumer product and then what Preparation H is used for in order to get the joke. The audience is given clues when Dr. Evil says it feels good on the whole, but unless you are aware that Preparation H is a hemorrhoid cream, you might miss the product placement because there is no visual image such as a package or product being consumed by a character to guide you. The joke relies on the homonym whole and hole. The same can be said for a reference to Viagra when Austin's father Nigel, (Michael Caine) states, "I took a Viagra. It got stuck in my throat and I've had a stiff neck for hours" mimicking the style of a goofy vaudeville comedy routine while still getting a plug in for the product.

Myers has also written in the Austin Mini automobile as the ultimate vehicle for Austin's super spy father, Nigel. Like Austin's Jaguar (Shaguar) in the opening sequence, it is decorated with the Union Jack. This is another pun on the James

Bond films where 007 drives an Aston Martin. This post modernism pastiche evokes a reverence for the icons of the past, while playing them in the present (Jameson 1984).

In his films, Myers can be considered the author, not only for physical crafting the character of Austin Powers, but also for creating the text and including the cultural, narrative, representative and cinematic codes which might be brought into operation within his films. His work betrays a tacit agreement between the film text and the spectator, who share knowledge of the larger social context of the images he depicts which require a certain level of cultural knowledge in order to connect with the product placement. Meyers reformulates the consumer dialogue to suit his own authored purpose, not necessarily reflecting the intended message of any product, but reconstituting it to form his own message. His personal style of humor has cultural resonance but also becomes a way to address the non-objectivity of consumer culture. His use of product placement in popular cinema becomes this means to an end.

Chapter Six

JUNO

Juno (Reitman 2007) was billed as an independently made film, shot in Vancouver, Canada over a 30-day period with a budget of \$6.5 million (IMDb. 2009). It went on to win best feature at the Independent Spirit Awards, as well as an Academy Award for writer, Diablo Cody. The relatively low budget film grossed over \$31 million worldwide (BoxOffice mojo. 2009).

Historically a film was considered an “independent” if it was produced outside the studio system with financing coming from individual backers or corporate investors. This has sometimes provided a “reason” to use product placement. Limited shooting schedules, tight time lines and minimal distribution guarantees are all features of an “independent” film. These films are often viewed as cutting edge: sometimes experimental in technique as well as controversial in subject matter. Festivals such as Sundance or Telluride evolved as a place for independent filmmakers to showcase their movies, in many cases with hopes of getting a distribution deal with one of the major Hollywood studios.

While touted as an independent film, *Juno* (2007) was in fact produced and financed by Fox Searchlight, a branch of Twentieth Century Fox Studios that deals with low budget, edgy films, often by relatively new directors and screenwriters. The positioning of a film under the Fox Searchlight banner is also

a marketing ploy. It creates the *aura* that the film is independent and edgy, whether it is or not, while in fact the film is produced by the larger studio conglomerate. These films are usually aimed at a more avant-garde, artsy demographic than the mainstream movies and blockbuster films of the parent studio. So although *Juno* was touted as an independent film, it was packaged similarly to any studio film, whereby Fox acquired the script first and then hired Jason Reitman, who had previously directed *Thank You for Smoking* (2005), for Fox. That film had garnered critical acclaim as well commercial success for the studio (Marcks 2008). This was the first screenplay for Diablo Cody who started out as a blogger documenting her days as a stripper (IMDb. 2008).

Unlike Mike Myers, neither Diablo Cody nor Jason Reitman have auteur status in Hollywood, but according to Cody's interview on the *Juno* DVD, her screenplay wasn't changed or compromised by the executives at Fox and was filmed as written, which included mentioning certain products that commonly circulate among North American teens.

The story unfolds over four seasons in Minnesota, tracking the events after 16 year old, Juno MacGuff (Ellen Page), discovers she's pregnant after having sex for the first time with her best friend Paulie Bleeker (Michael Cera). She decides not to have an abortion and enlists the aid of her girlfriend Leah (Olivia Thirlby) to help her tell her parents about the pregnancy and find the perfect couple to adopt the baby. The girls look in the local Penny Saver paper and select want-to-be

parents, Mark and Vanessa Loring (Jason Bateman and Jennifer Garner), who project themselves as the perfect upscale yuppie couple. As the film evolves, however, Juno discovers cracks in the flawless picture they present. The film fits into the "coming of age" genre, as we see Juno taking control of her life by making decisions that will affect her future and those she cares about.

As previously argued, many movies employ product placement to create a sense of reality. It has been suggested that made up products can be distracting or ground a film in a world that doesn't exist (Lehu 2007). *Juno* is an intriguing study in product placement because it juxtaposes recognizable, branded products with fictitious ones, which complement each other in this particular film creating a blend between the real and fantasy.

The film opens with Juno walking through town drinking from a huge 2.5 liter jug of Sunny Delight, commonly known as Sunny D. She ends up at the local variety store and announces "I just drank my weight in Sunny D" indicating she had to use the store washroom. Sunny D is a drink popular with teens and the ads feature children and adolescents enjoying the product. These advertisements also state that it is full of vitamins and minerals and it is marketed as an alternative beverage to soft drinks, even though the nutritional label indicates that it has almost as much sugar. It would probably be the beverage a pseudo health-minded teen would choose to drink swayed by all the vitamin and mineral claims in its advertisements, as well; its appearance mimics orange juice.

As discussed in Chapter One, the pinnacle of product placement marketing is to have the lead actress not only mention the product, but also be handling it. In *Juno*, Ellen Page both mentions and drinks Sunny D for approximately five minutes of screen time. However, at first this did not seem to impress Blue Ash Beverages, the parent company of Sunny Delight. The producers of *Juno* approached Blue Ash three times before convincing them to let their product be used in the film (Fasig 2008). When the Blue Ash Beverage Company finally came around, they didn't pay a cent for the placement, they just gave permission for it to be used on screen (Fasig 2008). Bill Cyr, the CEO for the Sunny Delight division of Blue Ash remarked that the exposure raised the profile of the beverage and created a higher level of brand awareness, but he never mentioned if it led to increased sales in the market place (Fasig 2008). It is hard to know the reason for the company's hesitation at first to be part of the film. Perhaps it was the subject matter. Teen pregnancy is always controversial and while Sunny D is specifically marketed to a teen demographic, an association with a pregnant teen gulping the drink could be read in a negative way, suggesting that the company condones teen pregnancy.

Writer Diablo Cody establishes the Sunny D connection as a way of creating audience identification with Juno. While the character is likable, there is a quirkiness and cleverness inherent in her personality that is not typical of mainstream teens. Even though she is pregnant, she is still dealing with issues

that are commonplace in teen life such as acceptance by peers, fitting into the high school social strata, and male/female relationships. Along with her clothing choices, which help construct her outward appearance, the products that Juno consumes have an immediate defining aspect as to who this character is. If she was swilling a bottle of wine or drinking Perrier, it would create a different signification for her and she may not be the sympathetic, likable teen character the author wanted her perceived as in this film.

The scene in the variety store shows a number of recognizable branded products in the background, which makes sense in a store of this type. Juno goes to the aisle where the over-the-counter pregnancy test kits are and grabs a non-descript fictitious pregnancy test kit, which is on the shelf next to a real brand, First Response. The made up test kit is called Teen Wave. The package has large graphics with easy-to-read bold lettering, compared to the First Response package with no graphic and small, difficult-to-read lettering. When Juno retreats to the store washroom to use the test kit and opens the box, there is just the testing stick; no inner wrapping of cellophane, no instructions, just something that is easily removed from the box ready to use. This eliminates the "dead" camera time it would take to unwrap. While obviously the manufacturer of First Response gave permission for the use of their product on camera, the decision was made for Juno to use a fictitious brand. The Teen Wave box is graphically bold and the name alone implies it is specifically meant for teens, while other test kits are not explicitly aimed at this audience. The seemingly cut-rate, generic product works

in getting the message across efficiently in as few beats as possible. There is also the possibility that First Response gave permission for the product for to be seen on the shelf only and not tied to the debate of unwanted teen pregnancies. The print and television advertisements for First Response usually show a happily married couple using the product to see if their “dream” of having a child has come true, which of course is different from Juno’s reason for using such a product.

Before she exits the store, Juno grabs a bag of red licorice rope candy, which also uses a fictitious product name. Jason Reitman on the DVD commentary states the prop department created the licorice rope because there was no licorice product long enough to make into a noose, which Juno forms with the candy in a joking attempt to hang herself once she discovers she is pregnant. Of course this literally creates a bit of gallows humor, but the prop also falls under the truth in advertising concept. You cannot show an existing product larger in quantity or shape or looking different than it actually is according to the Federal Trade Commission (Federal Trade Commission 2008). Reitman wanted a really long licorice rope to create the visual joke and by inventing a name and product that isn’t real, he skirts issues of misrepresentation.

Another fictional product featured at various points in the film is the slushy drink Slurp and Swallow. As Juno and Leah are searching for perspective parents for the baby in the Penny Saver, the Slurp and Swallow slushies they have been

drinking stain their mouths blue. When morning sickness occurs, Juno has a Slurp and Swallow in her hand as she vomits, with her blue colored mouth, into stepmother Bren's treasured hall urn. She is also carrying a Slurp and Swallow and has a blue mouth during an altercation with Bren (Allison Janey) who is telling her not to become too friendly with the adopting parents, especially Mark, because he is married and there are boundaries that should be placed on their relationship due to the circumstances. Juno adamantly disagrees as she deliberately argues back with her blue lips.

The slushy is a concoction sold by neighborhood mom and pop shops, as well as several large companies including Dairy Queen and 7-11, which have stores throughout the U.S. and Canada. It is cheap to buy and is marketed to a teen demographic who are the main consumers of the drink (slushpuppie 2009). In the DVD commentary Jason Reitman stated he made up the brand of Slurp and Swallow instead of going with one connected to a large corporation but he never clarifies why. Perhaps this was one of those incidents where it was faster and easier to make up a product name. The slushy is never directly mentioned by the characters, nor is it ever seen actually being consumed on camera, just its trace in the form of the blue residue on Juno's mouth as she holds the cup in her hand. The drink works as a point of reference that juxtaposes the young, immature girl who still wants to live in a "teen world" with the grown up situation of being pregnant. The blue residue from the slushy "marks" her as an adolescent. Reitman places the blue slushy drink in scenes where Juno is forced to deal with

her predicament head-on in an adult way: morning sickness; finding the right adoptive parents for her baby; and her confused attraction to Mark Loring who is adopting her child. The blue slushy reinforces her status as a teen because it is part of that consumer culture and not viewed as a "grown-up" or sophisticated drink. The slushy drink is marketed under many different brands and in all sorts of venues so it is not a brand name that defines Juno's particular situation. Rather it is the ubiquity of the generic crushed ice concoction staining the tongue and mouth, and its connection to teen culture that is important in establishing a facet of her identity.

Likewise, when Juno goes to Mark's house with the ultrasound picture of the baby, it is relevant to use the real and distinct product, SoBe beverages, which define the atmosphere of Vanessa and Mark's lifestyle. He states he is drinking a "ginseng cooler" to which Juno replies, "rich people and your herb-infused juices." He then opens the fridge and pulls out a SoBe infused juice and gives it to Juno. It has the same orange color as the Sunny D drink she quaffs at the start of the film, but the brand, SoBe (South Beach Beverage Company), is marketed to an upscale adult demographic much like Starbucks coffee mentioned in Chapter Four. The target consumer for SoBe drinks see themselves as active, politically correct, health conscious and inclined to use vitamins and supplements in their daily health routines (Hansen 1999). When Juno sips the SoBe product, it is almost as though she is getting a "taste" of Marc and Vanessa's domain. The drink is the conduit that brings her into this yuppie, adult world. The SoBe brand

is important for establishing this connection. If it were any other orange-coloured drink it might be confused with Sunny D or orange juice, which is something Juno already consumes in her teen world. The line about rich people and their infused juices would thus make less of an impact. The SoBe drink situates Juno in an atmosphere she is neither familiar with nor comfortable in.

The two Lexus cars in the Loring driveway also say something about Mark and Vanessa's lifestyle through their consumer choices. In contrast, Juno drives around in a Toyota Previa, which hasn't been manufactured since 1997 (Toyota 2008). Although both cars are part of the Toyota family, the status of the different brands reflects the lifestyle of the different characters. The Lexus seems sleek, new and impersonal which makes separating the one Mark drives from the one Vanessa uses impossible. In contrast, the Previa mini-van Juno drives is a bit worn and faded, but sports a bright red racing stripe giving it some individuality beyond the assembly line. Furthermore, the inside is cluttered and untidy; it is loaded stuff similar to Juno's bedroom, which visually announces her persona.

Marc and Vanessa have achieved a certain socio-economic status, which is also demonstrated through the high-end products they purchase and consume, such as the Lexus cars, the BabyBjorn products Jennifer has strewn neatly about the living room, the home Pilates machine, Mark's collection of Gibson Les Paul guitars and even the face creams and cosmetics in the bathroom. These luxury

brands are also supposed to be (or are at least marketed as) the “best”. Lexus is considered to be one of the safest cars on the road. Baby Bjorn advertises that its baby products to be well-constructed, safe and durable. SoBe infused juices claim to be healthier and better for you than regular juice. It is through the association with these consumer products that Diablo Cody conveys specific ideas about the Loring. Vanessa especially will buy these expensive products, not for their intrinsic value but as objects of conspicuous consumption and the messages they transmitted to other socially significant people. Juno, likewise, wants her baby to be placed in the best, safest home with parents that can provide well for her child and this feeling is confirmed by the choice of high-end consumer products visible throughout the Loring house. While Cody is using consumer goods to define the Loring, she is also subtly delivering a critique on the importance society places on these goods in determining who we are and the state of our fulfillment. As the storyline unfolds, we learn the successful, happy façade the couple presents — indicated in part by the products they consume — isn't quite an accurate picture of their life.

Through his conversations with Juno it becomes clear that Mark feels trapped in his adult consumer paradise and longs to recapture his quickly fading youth signified by making music with a band and composing rock songs instead of jingles for commercials, which is what he does to earn a living. Though he seems like he wants to escape his present consumer lifestyle, his dialogue with Juno tells us that in fact he wants to trade it in for another type of consumer lifestyle;

one he considers much more youthful and "cooler". He wants to live in a downtown loft, buy CD's, go to concerts and play his collection of expensive Les Paul guitars at whim. While he yearns to forego the responsibilities of an adult, he still wants certain material things that only an adult paycheck can afford. If as Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) argues that the only way we can know who we are is by observing what possessions we have, Mark's possessions indicate he still holds onto his youthful dream of being a rock star. He does not identify with his expensive cars or lavish yuppie home, but rather the guitars, music and movies he fell in love with 15 years ago. In many ways he, like Juno, is straddling two worlds: the one he is currently living in, which includes the pending responsibility of parenthood and that he is reluctant to face, and the one he wants to return to with the freedom and dreams of youth. It is this commonality that cements their friendship for awhile. Diablo Cody establishes the connection between these worlds through the ubiquity of consumer objects and products. Mark sees himself mirrored though the common adolescent music and movies he shares with Juno.

In contrast to the Loring's home, Juno's bedroom is an amalgamation of rock band and music posters plastered on the walls along with teen style keepsakes. The band and movie posters on the bedrooms of Juno and Leah were cleared through the legal department of Fox Studio, according to director Jason Reitman, who also explains they were carefully chosen by himself, Diablo Cody, the writer and the production designer Steve Saklit (*Juno* DVD Commentary). Reitman goes on to remark that he wanted both Juno's and Leah's bedrooms to look real

and also provide a sense of these girls' identities. Juno's room can best be described as hipster retro-cool, signified by the posters of alternative bands and musicians, mostly from the 1970's. The decoration of her room coupled with her appearance gives her an independent outsider identity, which confirms to the audience her trouble fitting in with most of the students at school. This type of protagonist is often favored and identified in "coming of age" films such as *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch 1986), *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes 1985), and *St. Elmo's Fire* (Joel Schumacher 1985), or even the Harry Potter film franchise.

Leah's room is a bit more girly, as is her wardrobe; for example, she seems to be constantly wearing Uggs, the current must-have fashion trend of teen girls. She is also seen in a cheerleader uniform, which in itself is usually a signifier in the cinema for a popular, pretty student. The walls of her room are a mural of cutouts of older men — both famous and obscure — that she is attracted to. This fetish is played out several times in the film as she is always seen chatting and flirting with older male teachers indicating her father figure obsession while also consolidating her "little girl" image.

By looking at the bedrooms and wardrobes of the two girls, the visual clues, enhanced by branded goods indicate they are the antithesis of each other, but they seem to have a real bond and friendship. Again, Diablo Cody is making a statement about consumer choices, outward appearance and stereotyping similar to the critique of the Lorings. Even though these girls make different

consumer choices, these choices don't necessarily reflect on the bond that goes beyond outward appearances. The juxtaposition of their different styles adds an ideological depth to each girl's personality and their friendship.

There is one prop in Juno's bedroom that was not a placed product, but because it appeared in the film it became an in-demand item. The powerful selling ability of goods on screen is sometimes unintended. In many cases, people watching movies want to dress like the stars, have the same watch as the stars and sit on the same style sofa they see on camera, none of which has been put in the movie to sell. The "hamburger phone", which Juno uses to call Leah on and report her pregnancy, is the personal property of writer Diablo Cody, which she included in her screenplay (Moses 2008). Cody mentions as a teen she talked to her high school boyfriend for hours on that same phone and felt it added to the quirkiness of Juno (Moses 2008). Although not a deliberately placed product, the demand for the item increased 75% on E-bay after the film was released according to E-bay spokesperson Daniel Feiler (Moses 2008). Paul de Carvalho, a manager at Fox Searchlight films in Australia, said the studio bought 100 "hamburger phones" for use as a promotional giveaway to selected people as an identifiable symbol of the film (Moses 2008).

This clearly demonstrates how difficult it is to predict the impact of "product placement" on an audience. It is impossible to know which products, if any, will make enough of an impression on an audience that they will go and purchase

them based solely on their appearance in one film. There was no brand name attached on the "hamburger phone." You could only find them on E-bay when the *Juno* film was released (Moses 2008). It was placed in the script and in the film by the writer to define a character in an almost autobiographical way with Cody recalling an item she felt was hip and cool in her teen years. For some unknown reason that style of phone resonated with a portion of the audience. It was the agency of the writer who crafted the phone to have meaning within the narrative of the film without any intention of marketing a product but the audience decided its consumer value. Barthes (1977) suggestion of authorship readily accepts the reader (audience), as an active participant in creating meaning for the text. In the case of the "hamburger phone" it was the position the audience took in interpreting the sign within the *mise-en-scène* that decided its meaning and this significance was carried to the marketplace.

Orange Tic Tacs were another product written into the script by Diablo Cody, which also carry autobiographical resonance. In an interview she mentions that she dated a guy in high school who loved orange Tic Tacs and always had them on hand (Carroll 2007). Similar to Juno's blue slushy drink, Paulie Bleeker, Juno's boyfriend, pops a Tic Tac at defining moments in the film. They seem to be an obsession that helps him ease the awkward or anxious moments in his life. When he is about to have sex for the first time with Juno he pops one in his mouth. In chemistry lab when he sees Juno for the first time after she tells him she is pregnant he takes a Tic Tac; likewise when Juno talks about the adoptive

parents she has found for their baby. He also puts one in his mouth just before he tells Juno he is taking another girl to the prom. The Tic Tacs are a visual clue to Bleeker's psychological state, when he pops one in his mouth he is usually under duress and feeling anxious. The orange Tic Tacs are also the instrument by which Juno demonstrates her love for Bleeker. While she can't find the right words to tell him how she feels face-to-face, she stuffs his mailbox to overflowing with orange Tic Tacs, a gesture he understands and appreciates.

Tic Tacs are manufactured by an Italian company, Ferrero. They gave permission for their product to be used but I could not find any cross-promotional tie-in to link the product to the film, nor did they even try to cash in when the film was nominated for several Academy Awards. The company's web site has a page devoted to Tic Tac appearances on television and in the films, but doesn't mention *Juno* (TicTacs 2008). This is an example of a company that did not seek out opportunities to have their product used in a film nor did they take commercial advantage of the fact that their product was in the film by setting up a cross-promotional activity. The orange Tic Tacs were tied into the plot, consumed on camera by one of the lead actors, mentioned several times, yet remained what writer Diablo Cody intended, a defining character trait evolving into a plot point within the storyline, rather than a product placement.

There are many more products mentioned or shown in this film including Dr. Pepper lip smacker balm, which Juno puts on when she goes to visit Mark. Also

notable are Coca-Cola from the school cafeteria, Taco Bell and a Sound Garden t-shirt, just to mention a few well-placed products. The meshing of real and fictitious products within *Juno* is not overt and happens seamlessly. Teen culture today is arguably manufactured by mass media. Teens have a way of communicating in shorthand sparked by the use iPods, cell phones, text messaging, twitter and the internet where language and communication seem more flexible. In part, teens are communicating by creating new words and syntax through a vocabulary that often includes branded products, whose name is used to denote a certain manner of behavior or identification understood within this social context. In this type of social practice, the commodities decidedly carry a much greater depth of meaning than the actual product itself.

Where Diablo Cody excels in her writing, is the totally integrated manner that she depicts teens interacting in a commercialized world. Cody has Juno and friends surrounded with and expressing themselves through today's overwhelming consumer products. These pop cultural references reflect with accuracy the tone and tenor of our daily lives. The commodity world interacts with the human world at the most fundamental level. There are advertising messages on everything from the busses we ride to the packages of food we purchase in the store to the information we cull from the internet. Advertising and product recognition has taken up more and more space in our culture as we become both socialized and corporatized simultaneously. Our simplest communication uses brand names as metonyms for the product itself, such as Scotch Tape, Kleenex or Band Aids.

Cody shares these cultural paradigms of narration and representation with the audience in the sub-system of codes we are all familiar with.

Marc Crispin Miller (1990) and Sut Jhally (2006) state that product placement is anti-narrative and works against a movie's story, abruptly stopping the flow, breaking into the story just to make a sale. Commercial discourse is part of the environment in which we live and affects the way in which we learn to think. It is the lens through which we come to understand and interact with the world around us. Crispin Miller and Jhally do not take into account the more subtle ways that product placement in film can operate. The products in *Juno* work in tandem with the narrative creating a smooth, uninterrupted flow of sequence and meaning. Both the real and fictitious brands primarily serve to advance the film's dramatic development and are used in the fleshing out of characters, developing a theme and drawing on associations and identifications that add depth and meaning to the film for the viewer. Cody inserts product placement into her artistic vehicle in a way that structures its meaning to members of the consuming public not necessarily as mini-advertisements to sell merchandise.

Crispin Miller also suggests there is a fundamental shift in power within the movie industry which has transferred creative authority out of the hands of filmmakers and into the purely quantitative universe of advertisers and corporate CEO's (Miller 1990). This attitude doesn't account for the entire scope of filmmaking. The agency and creative control in any film is a process of negotiation with each

party having its own agenda and some power to wield. It seems to be in the low budget "independent" type of film where creative authority is encouraged and exercised. *Juno* is a film where the creative control rests with the writer, director and other creative personnel involved in the film making process, not advertisers and corporate CEO's, although they reaped the capital benefits when the film became a commercial success.

Discussion

Making movies, while considered by some to be an art form is also a manufacturing business; perhaps this is why it is commonly called the film industry or the dream factory. Like most industries it is competitive and survives by making a profit, some of which is funneled into the manufacturing of more products. It is also subject to rising manufacturing costs, which creates a tension between artistic measures and profit-making interests. There are dominant players that control nearly the entire marketplace. These are the major Hollywood studios, who themselves are part of corporate conglomerates. While films made by studios often take advantage of their vertically integrated system of products, equipment and distribution, as I have earlier argued, there are other films being made outside the studio system where product placement may be essential to getting the film made. In both cases placed products may add an important layer of realism to the produced film. Moreover, this realism is not inert; it has the potential to critically comment on consumer culture as integral to the concept of reality and identity, such as the films *Goldmember* and *Juno* do to varying degrees and different methods, as I have discussed.

Films are made under a vast array of production arrangements. For example, many documentary films are made through corporate sponsorship. While this is not a direct product placement, when money is provided a production credit that names a major company is often expected. This practice has raised the spectre

of objectivity in documentary practice for how can a film (or television show) claim to present issues objectively when that information is seen as tainted by sponsorship. The practice of sponsorship presents problems of veracity and questions ranging from whether some favoritism towards the position of the sponsor (or its invisible subsidiary corporations) was expressed to whether the film is an extended advertisement for the sponsor are common.

Product placement in fiction films does not necessarily lead to bad storytelling or compromising of the intent and voice of the author, be it director, writer, or designer. The placing of Reese's Pieces in *E.T.* (S. Spielberg 1982) did not jeopardize the film, nor did it alter the meaning of the narrative and it could be argued moreover that it created a poignant moment within the film. The orange Tic Tacs stuffed in a mailbox in *Juno* (Reitman 2007), speaks volumes about the relationship between Juno and Bleeker without a word being uttered. The act represents a turning point in the narrative, which moves the story forward to a new chapter. Metaphor in film often employs branded, recognizable products. This suggests that the everyday objects in our lives — whether these are branded products or something else— have great personal meaning and cultural resonance.

How products are used in a film is of paramount significance. There has been much criticism in academic circles and the news media about whether film scripts are being controlled by corporate interests and saturated with product placement

at their whim (Jhally 2006, Wenner 2004, Miller 1990). While on the surface this may appear to be true, upon further investigation this thesis has found that determining agency and meaning is not as straightforward as these theories propose. Products can be seen as a symbolic intermediary between the audience and the creative author constructing a framework for understanding.

In May 2008, Derrick Chetty (2008) wrote a blurb for the *Toronto Star* on the *Sex and the City* and indicated that the movie, among other things, was nothing more than high-end international fashion show with all its designer labels and product placement. An article in *Entertainment Weekly* (Sex and the City Fashions 2008) that same week contained an interview with Patricia Field, the costume designer for the film. She revealed it was she alone who decided the choice of clothing. Field remarked that she was inundated with offers from designers and manufacturers to use their products, but was careful and discriminating in which garments she selected. Field went on to state that each of the four lead characters has a distinct personality that resonates in their appearance. When considering the look of each character in the film, she herself approached certain designers and manufacturers for items she felt best expressed her vision of the characters. Even though the film had a substantial budget, it wasn't enough to include the various designer labels that the writers had specified in the script, which was based on a novel that also named distinct brands in its pages.

The movie, like the TV series it evolved from, had an ongoing theme of consumerism, outward appearance, over-indulgence and clothing fetishes. *Sex in the City* is a saga of the life of thirty-something, successful women in New York City, often depicting the commodity saturated environment that is currently at hand. The film illustrates and sometimes critiques shopping as a substitute for what might be missing from one's life; a placebo to cure all its ills and woes. The film is actually a commentary on contemporary society relaying the age-old message: money or material things can't buy happiness.

Foucault (2007), has argued the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society, as well as to "authorize" power within these discourses. *Sex and the City* does just that. The movie was true to the original authored intent of the Candace Bushnell novel yet the costumes were designed solely through the creative agency of Patricia Field. With this definition of authorship, the author is conceptualized as a free agent, with the message a direct expression of the author's ideas and influence. However, as Stuart Hall (1993) has famously pointed out the relationship between the encoded and decoded "messages" are inexact. Meanings are apt to be generated on both sides of the equation that not all readers or producers may grasp. This is similar to Barthes' (1977) theory that the reader constructs meaning in the text. Some individuals, such as Derrick Chetty, may have decoded *Sex and the City* by a means that is grounded in the prevailing social conditions, which proposes that commercialism overrides artistic intent in popular

cinema. By doing so, he does not acknowledge Patricia Field's agency and may be missing another possible viewpoint of the movie, which is contrary to his understanding or decoding. He wrongly assumed that the designer products were placed in the film by advertisers or corporations in an attempt to market merchandise. He didn't take into account that these luxury goods were purposely chosen by Field as part of her authorial vision actively employed as a means to define character personalities and materialize the intent of the writer, Candace Bushnell. Chetty missed the *intended message* if these authors, which was the opposite of his decoded message. His negotiated reading, as with all readings, employs selective perception and explains meaning in retrospect.

The concern that scripts may or may not get produced depending on the opportunities to place product in the yet-to-be-made film also extends the notion that manufacturers and marketers will work with studios to develop scripts which specifically highlight their products. In this case, it would be logical to assume that economic issues would tend to outweigh artistic endeavors (Lehu 2007, Donaton 2004, Wenner 2004). It would also be naïve to say this does not happen, but the film industry is both competitive and collaborative with the monetary and artistic stakes so high. Everyone involved wants to present an engrossing and engaging story to capture an audience, not necessarily to focus on the selling of consumer products. Many of the recent top grossing movies, such as *Batman: The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan 2008), *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton 2008) and *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* (David Yates 2009)

had limited or no product placement (IMDb 2009). *Batman* had a budget of over 180 million dollars (IMDb 2008). Investors and studios seem to be willing to back movies they believe will be financially successful, without reliance on funds from marketers wanting to “push product.” While cross-promotion occurred with these films after market, it did not interfere with the actual movie or storyline and can be regarded as an extension of the film’s publicity and promotion rather than an intrusion on the storytelling. Furthermore, we cannot foresee how these products — actions figures, for example — will be interacted with by those who consume them. They may be re-imagined and interpreted by the children who play with them along lines that are oppositional to the already contested meaning of the film.

Critics also suggest that fewer costume and period stories will be made because they present diminished opportunities to place products (Lehu 2007, Donaton 2004, Wenner 2004). One of the most critically acclaimed movies, which has accumulated the highest box office revenues of any film to date, was the “period” drama, *Titanic* (James Cameron 1997) (Box Office Mojo.com). Recently, *The Changeling* (Clint Eastwood 2008), *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (Michael Apted 2008), *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Gore Verbinsk 2007), *Sweeney Todd* (Tim Burton 2007), and *Atonement* (Joe Wright 2007) were all costumed, period films with no visible product placement. This is not to say marketing dollars were not used to promote them. *Pirates* and *Narnia*, both Disney productions, had copious cross-promotions, including toys, clothing lines, and

food, but the actual films featured no overt product placement and commercial clutter.

As of this writing, Quentin Tarantino's film, *Inglorious Basterds* has wrapped production with a budget rumored to be in the 84.6 million U.S. dollar range (IMDb. 2009). The story is set in France during World War II. There was little to no opportunity to infuse the movie with current branded products, and yet, this period film has been financed.

As writer, director and one of the producers of the project, Tarantino is seen as an auteur and his reputation to tell quirky and innovative stories is enough to secure funds without holding out the hat to marketers and profferers of branded products. Brad Pitt and Mike Myers are leading actors in the film. They too can be considered auteurs. Their names attached to a film are enough to create advanced buzz and insure positive box office results, which also aids in the funding process. To engage in dialogue that suggests fewer period movies will be produced because they afford little opportunity for product placement leaves the impression that Hollywood films are up for grabs to the highest corporate bidder, which at minimum is misleadingly simplistic.

Consumer Culture and Product Placement

There are more circumstances than film productions where product placement is clearly evident. When viewing most sporting events, the stadiums and arenas are

usually plastered with advertising. Naming rights for venues such as The Rogers Centre the Air Canada Centre or the Panasonic Theatre are the norm.

Professional athletes wear attire with a product name or logo prominently visible, which indicates corporate sponsors. While watching the Olympics one can't help but notice the endorsements on athletic equipment and sports uniforms where logos are clearly visible.

Magazines, especially for fashion or lifestyle, are almost entirely comprised of product placements. It is easy to recognize the paid advertisements, however, the fashion editorial pages, although viewed through an artistic lens, are nothing more than placed merchandise being featured.

Television programs such as *Fashion File*, while preferring to be seen as informative and perhaps ironically associated with the genre of news reporting, can also be regarded as a total product placement show. They are really a media vehicle for exposing and marketing the latest clothing designs and designers from across the globe. In terms of controlling product placement or acknowledging it, could be a difficult task to separate what exactly is news and what is product placement.

When Avril Lavigne performed on *Saturday Night Live* in January of 2003, she wore an old t-shirt of her own with a bold Home Hardware logo and the name of her Ontario hometown, Napanee, on the front of the garment. The use of that tee

shirt was addressed in the media as much as her singing voice. (*Saturday Night Live Archive* 2008).

Similar to the “hamburger phone” in *Juno*, people wanted a copy of that T- shirt even though it was several years old. Because Avril Lavigne is considered hip, cool and popular, the old tee-shirt took on new meaning beyond its capacity of advertising a hardware store, demonstrating that the overall culture of consumption is difficult to avoid.

Conclusion

What constitutes advertising in a movie is ambiguous. Product placement enters into film from many different avenues, not just marketers and advertisers as previous literature suggests. By approaching the question from a position of authorship, I've shown that branded goods within a film are not necessarily a big commercial to push products, but can be employed as succinct cultural shorthand for the audience, as consumers, to grasp meaning.

The fault line in the product placement question is the connection between the artist's vision and the means at their disposal to realize that vision. The corporate funding for *On The Line* was instrumental in getting that movie produced. While Reebok had quite a lot of influence in where their merchandise was placed, they also wanted the film to ring true with teen audiences and participated as part of the creative team as opposed to dictating creative choices.

In *Goldmember*, the consumer message is parodied and the pastiche of film and other cultural references relies on knowledge of popular culture. Myers, as writer, was selective in the brands *he* chose to be included in the film, which suited his purpose to reformulate the consumer dialogue.

With *Juno*, writer Diablo Cody depicts how we interact with commodities at the most basic level in our everyday lives. It was her creative agency that chose what products she thought would best define characters and build a dialogue based on real life teen culture. Both *Juno* and *Goldmember* demonstrate how branded goods in film can carry meaning far beyond the actual product.

Art and commercialism have always been strange partners in a curious dance. From a purist's perspective, the very idea of product placement carries with it a sense of violation because it is often thought the decision to insert a branded product into a movie is motivated by marketing and corporate needs and not a creative one. The three film case studies, using authorship as a theoretical basis provide evidence that this is not always the case.

The marketing of products in movies certainly exemplifies a relation between intertextuality and aesthetic commodification. In the union of cinema and advertising, through product placement, the artistic subject often formulates its own consumer dialogue to integrate this "metalanguage" into the story content, in order to ring true. When most people watch a film they come to experience the film as their own. The primary focus of the viewer, for the most part, is to comprehend the story. What the viewer does with the information projected in a film — including product placement— depends on the implication of the information for the understanding of all aspects of the film as well as the viewer's own cultural knowledge and history.

Product placement has been involved in movie making since its inception dating back to Thomas Edison and the Lumière Brothers, and in all probability will continue to be a thread in the movie-making fabric. Product placement and artistic expression in film may always remain in a struggle for the authority to define the balance between commercial and artistic relevance. Part of that balance in the world we inhabit is, on the one hand, linked with a desire for verisimilitude, which rightly or wrongly also includes consumer culture. On the other hand, the creative process of storytelling and the artistic status of the films creative, collective authors should not be overwhelmed by the commodification of the film-going experience.

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