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The new spectator : a study of the cognitive experience of spectators with three cinematic platforms

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THE NEW SPECTATOR: A STUDY OF THE COGNITIVE EXPERIENCE OF
SPECTATORS WITH THREE CINEMATIC PLATFORMS

by

Jessica Thom
BFA hons, Ryerson University, 2007

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 & Culture

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2009

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Abstract

Title: The New Spectator: A Study of the Cognitive Experience of Spectators with Three Cinematic Platforms.

Degree and Year of Convocation: Master of Arts, 2009.

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Program: Communication & Culture

University: Ryerson University and York University.

It is necessary, with the revolution from analog to digital platforms, to evaluate the effect these “new media” have on audience’s comprehension of information. The New Spectator examines the varying experiences of audiences with three cinematic platforms: the theatre, online, and mobile media. By testing the experience of seventy -five individuals, watching two short films, the study examines the difference between the cognitive experiences of the spectators. Using an anonymous questionnaire to gain empirical data about the participant's understanding of the films, the study provides evidence of the shift in how the contemporary spectator views a film and their differing apprehensions of the information received from the films.

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1. Introduction

In the final chapter of Abraham Newman and John Zysman's How Revolutionary was the Digital Revolution?, the pair posit that the digital revolution follows Karl Polanyi's Great Transformation as the second great transformation of society (2006). In fact, with this radical change from analog to digital media technology, it would be naïve to assume that there is not also a revolution and restructuring of social relations and cognitive understanding for the users or audience(s) of these technologies. After all, according to Marshall McLuhan, "[...] it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (McLuhan, 1974, p. 9). Emergent technologies require a constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the audience experience to determine the technological effect on textual meaning, knowledge development and communication, and cognitive understanding. Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. MacGregor Wise explain, "It is rather, like an ongoing conversation: a series of regroupings and revisionings, issues considered, questions asked, responses offered, risks taken and directions tried" (Slack and Wise, 2002, p. 141) rather than a polemic thrust of assimilation.

The New Spectator is an empirical study that aims to explore broadly the role of the medium, or in contemporary terms, the media platform, in effecting change in cognitive understanding for the audience viewing cinematic content. As convenient and "innovative" as converging technology is and is becoming, it creates an issue for scholars who must bridge the gap between various disciplines and paradigms to illustrate the developments both within technology and within audiences who, as a result, have become increasingly media literate; and for audiences themselves who are forced to adapt to the

new technologies and the social, intellectual, and comprehensive changes resulting from them.

1.1. Outline and Research Questions

The cognitive, or knowledge-garnering skills of the audience are necessary to understand how people gain new knowledge from media (Anderson, 1980). As media and technology change, people are expected to alter their learning strategies to fit the new platforms. However, comprehension of information is far more complicated and cannot be revolutionized with each new innovation. People do not just learn out of books and increasingly are turning to technological tools to acquire factual information. The cognitive understanding of media is a highly theorized topic, but largely under researched in empirical studies and generally only used in textual analysis rather than technological analysis. As a result, The New Spectator study aims to question:

Q1. What are the cognitive differences in cinematic viewing between a theatrical, online and mobile experience?

Q2: Do age, gender, genre, or previous experience with the media technology effect these differences?

Q3: Are dynamic, auditory or visual content comprehension altered by cognitive differences in viewing on a different platform?

The first question identifies the broad themes of the study and attempts to quantify the theoretical assumptions made in much of the literature about audience studies covered later in this thesis. The second question examines the social issues that could be at work within the different platforms. Question three explores the formal content differences that are predominant in each platform. By answering these questions I will have

discovered, not only the effect of changing popular media platforms, but also the effect contemporary mobile platforms will have on the content of the medium. It is necessary to question these potential repercussions, and in effect consult with the audiences of these media, to review the consequences of the rapidly changing mediasphere on the viewers (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).

While much of the previous work on the subject has been speculative, *The New Spectator* seeks to fill the gaps in research with empirical study of the cognitive effects and variations noted by audiences viewing different cinematic platforms. This study offers a unique viewpoint using three of the most popular viewing platforms rather than focusing on one form of spectatorship. What is the best media platform on which to view an educational lecture for a student? Do new media platforms promote better attention? What is the difference between a passive viewing experience and an active viewing experience in cognitive comprehension of information? Is there a difference between a passive audience member and an interactive user?

These questions were garnered through an analysis of past audience research and the scholarship surrounding contemporary audience studies that is both diverse and persistent in its perpetual repositioning of the audience, medium, and content's respective roles in the audience relation. Consequently, the interdisciplinary nature of audience studies has provided a variety of language use that is both contrastive, and occasionally contradictory; as evidenced in Chapter 2, even the term audience is contested. All the same, audience research can be delineated, following the transition in technology, by the shift from Audience member, to Reader/Viewer, to User. It is important to bear in mind, as noted by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) that, echoing the development and usage

of old and new media, the developments in audience studies are somewhat concurrent rather than sequential.

Chapter 2 will lay out the foundation of these developments in a comprehensive analysis of the role of the Audience through effects research, the uses and gratifications paradigm and structuralism. Chapter 3 follows the same constitution by examining the role of the Reader/Viewer through the encoding/decoding paradigm from the Birmingham school, ethnographic study, and the role of the text. Similarly, Chapter 4 evaluates the role of the more contemporary audience member, the User; by examining post-modernism, technology, human-computer interaction and activity theory.

It is imperative to justify the outline of audience studies as I have set it out: Audience, Reader, User. The outline is not intentionally reductive, nor is it entirely chronological, but most helpful in determining the evolution of audience studies. Williams suggests this progression is attributed to “The change in thinking about media audiences [that has] coincided with the technological advances that have enabled the media to cater [...to] more specialized audiences” (2003, 1). Table 1 is an example from Abercrombie and Longhurst explaining the three versions of audience paradigms they identify in reception studies. While these classifications do not adhere in the same ways to other theorists, it gives a general overview of the themes they identify.

Table 1:

Abercrombie and Longhurst's Differentiation in Audience Study Paradigms (1997, 37).

Audience	Behavioural Individuals (Social Context)	Incorporation/Resistance Socially structured (e.g. by class, gender, race)	Spectacle/Performance Socially constructed and reconstructed especially by spectacle and narcissism
Medium Social Consequence	Stimulus (message) Functions/dysfunctions, propaganda, influence, use, effects	Text Ideological incorporation and resistance	Mediascape(s) Identity formation and reformation in everyday life (sic)

In the same way, Table 2 is a brief synopsis of language used predominantly by each tradition and classified by the Chapter titles used in this thesis. Though there is quite a lot of overlap, and issues with sequencing — which despite Williams inference, falls most particularly with the delineation of theatre, film/television and computer/mobilities technologies — each cluster of language promotes the themes of that section and provides a better understanding and overview of the groupings.

Table 2:

Chapter Groupings and Research Traditions

Chapter 2 Simple Bi Occasional Private Theatre Modern Audience <i>Audience</i>	Chapter 3 Mass Trans Often Public Film/Television Post-Modern Performer <i>Reader</i>	Chapter 4 Diffused Poly Every-day Private Publics Computer/Mobilities Network/Information Analyst/observer <i>User</i>
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Chapter 5 is an account of the various methodologies encountered in the previous audience studies exhibited in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, specifically how they relate to The New Spectator. Chapter 6 is a quantitative account of The New Spectator's results, while the following two chapters analyze said results in their context and discuss them. The

final chapter will corroborate the role of *The New Spectator* within the broader field of audience studies and suggest potential future research building upon its rudiments.

1.2. Limitations and Contributions

Though there is significant scholarship in the realm of audience studies, there is a lack of empirical studies whose methodologies encompass the social, textual and technical aspects of their work (Alasuutari, 1999). In fact, most of the empirical studies are textually based while the theoretical studies choose one aspect of study on which to concentrate. “[...T]here are very few actual studies of audiences/readerships, but the volume of critical work and ‘overviews’ of audience work are legion. Because the audience and its study is so obviously a key element in thinking about media in contemporary societies, scholars have felt obliged to address the topic” (Gray, 1999, p. 25). While various disciplines see these studies as either advantageous or detrimental dependent on their theoretical positioning, most contemporary scholars call for a broader understanding of audience research, grounded in social, cultural, textual, psychological *and* political relations (Alasuutari, 1999; Ang, 1996; Gillespie, 2005). *The New Spectator* begins to examine this by positing a methodology to examine the social and psychological aspects of the cinematic technology and quantify its effects to review the relation between platforms, while establishing a reasonable framework in historical study. One of the clearly problematic issues in creating this framework is synthesizing interdisciplinary historical studies, which use different language to identify the same theories.

It is essential to note that the largest limitation within this study is also its strength. As will be explored in Chapter 5, through the background of audience

methodologies, there is no firm methodology that always works, especially when dealing with contemporary media users who are savvy and particularly literate in their understanding of media. Accordingly, there can be no definite methodology used in a field that is constantly revolutionizing and restructuring itself (McMillan, 2006; Moores, 1996; Potter; 2009; Ross and Nightingale, 2003). It is merely the strongest method to examine the structure of media content, and the differences in media platforms and the information that resides on and in them, within the social relations of users that works. The variety of audience study, and subjectivity of the audience members is always a clear limitation in this kind of study and an impediment in previous, particularly empirical, studies. In the same way, using a small number of subjects can limit the extent of the study. What is necessary to create a solid methodology for audience studies is an understanding that there are a number of variables that effect and affect the user. The sample of participants, as garnered through the snowball effect, is a limited portion of the population, though it is accounted for in creating an understanding of their regular media usage in comparison to the average usage of a Canadian gathered by Statistics Canada.

2. Audience

The etymology of the word audience is traced back to the Latin term *audientia*, meaning to hear. Recently the term audience has taken on many definitions, seemingly with only minor nuances; it appears that for every audience research paper or book, there is a new, if only slightly amended, meaning. According to Marie Gillespie in Media Audiences, “In media studies, the term ‘audience’ usually refers to an assembly of listeners or viewers who come together, if only virtually, through shared consumption of film, television, radio, music or advertising” (Gillespie, 2005, p. 1). Abercrombie and Longhurst suggest that “Audiences are groups of people before whom a performance of one kind or another takes place” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, p. 40). While John Pavlik explains that “In the days of terrestrial broadcast television and radio, and even in the early days of cable, television viewers and radio listeners were typically called the *audience* [...] *Audience* suggests a passive receiver of mediated messages. Something of a marketing term, it reflects the idea that the media are delivering audiences to advertisers [...]” (Pavlik, 2008, p. 56). Even Virginia Nightingale, one of the oft-quoted audience theorists expounds that “[...] the shifty character of ‘audience’ —sometimes defined as an object, sometimes as a relation, but always represented — [is] knowable only through the power of analogies we use to describe it and to generate information about it” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 126).

As is obvious by the previous quotations and the numerous others evident throughout audience studies literature (Alasuutari, 1999; Ang, 1996; Bird, 2003; Butsch, 2008; Gray, 1999; Livingstone, 1998; McQuail, 1997; Miller, 1994; Moores, 1993; Ross and Nightingale, 2004; Ruddock, 2001; Ruddock, 2007; Wilson 2005), the term audience

is ambiguous and better defined in multiple ways than in one linear conceptualization that would prevent and limit understanding of the true role of audience members. What is clear is that the audience is most often a *group* of people, sometimes defined by their social relations, sometimes by their location, sometimes by the medium through which they were watching, listening, or otherwise communicating, and often by what they were watching.

Though audience studies is not a new discipline, in fact there are scholars who have dated it back to the development of civic rhetoric in Ancient Greece, contemporary audience studies comes out of the tradition of mass communications and cultural studies research principally from the 1960's and 1970's (McQuail, 1997). Denis McQuail begins his book Audience Analysis by suggesting that "The word *audience* has long been familiar as the collective term for the "receivers" in the simple sequential model of mass communication process (source, channel, message, receiver, effect) that was deployed by pioneers in the field of media research" (McQuail, 1997, p. 1).

2.1. Effects

Predominantly, but not exclusively, early media audience studies examined the effect of the sender-message-receiver model of communication. The issue with this mode of communication was the impression that the message was a one-way transmission and as a result, the audience viewing the media was passive. This hypodermic model relied on the assumption that all audiences lacked agency and looked to media for cues to the dominant ideology (Alasuutari, 1999; Bird, 2003; Butsch, 2008; Gillespie, 2005; McQuail, 1997; Moores, 1993; Morley, 1992; Nightingale, 1999; Owen, 1999; Ruddock, 2001; Ruddock, 2007; Wilson, 2004; Wilson, 2009). "While intellectuals of the 1950s

constructed the image of a mass of isolated individuals vulnerable to media, empirical researchers constructed an effects paradigm, also based on the solitary individual” (Butsch, 2008, p. 117). A behaviourist view of audiences, “the effects belief in the transparency of communication, where the process simply involves shifting information from sender to receiver, means that the persuasive element of a message is easy to see, as is its success or failure” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 121). Ipso facto, in the effects paradigm, the mass audience lacks subjectivity and all audience members are drones reacting and understanding the same way. David Giles, in Media Psychology explains that:

Most of the experimental work in the 1960s focused on the *negative* effects of media. Typically, a group of undergraduate students was “exposed” in the media laboratory to media material (usually recorded on video) that contained a certain quantity of the undesirable content under investigation —mainly sex and violence. The students then performed some other activity—completing a questionnaire or scale, such as mood inventory, or participating in an experimental manipulation, or working together on a task while under observation (Giles, 2003, p. 19).

Normally the negative material was presented on or from television and the studies were frequently about the effect of the material on children “[...] and on effects on individuals rather than on groups, cultures or institutions. By and large it test[...ed] the idea that exposure to particular media content changes people’s behaviour or beliefs” (Livingstone, 1998, p. 23). The studies tended to alter the form of communication to better understand how to communicate and according to Shaun Moores, effects researchers “[...] confined themselves to immediately observable changes in human behaviour and left the formal structure of media output wholly untheorized” (1993, p. 5).

Effects research, though often associated with the rise of mass media studies in the 1960’s, is also frequently identified with the Payne Fund Studies, a series of studies in the nineteen-thirties that were not scientifically rigorous but which also studied the effect

of films on children (Dewdney and Ride, 2006; Miller, 1994). These 'new' media demanded to be studied as audiences reacted dramatically. Tom Gunning recalls the audience of the first public film screening: "The terrorized spectator of the Grand Café [who] still stalks the imagination of film theorists who envision audiences submitting passively to an all-dominating apparatus, hypnotized and transfixed by its illusionist power" (1994; p. 115). However, these early studies are delineated into two methodologies, effects, which was generally more ambiguous and study the cause (media) and effect (audience), and audience composition, which would be closer to the Gallup polls, which aimed for a non-personal, scientific explanation of audience members and has little research or discussion in most current audience studies as it is disregarded for both its lack of social consideration and impossibly scientific categorization (Skylar, 1999, p.84; Ohmer, 1999).

2.2. Uses and Gratifications

The effects paradigm was criticized for its determinism and the stipulation of passivity in viewers. Consequentially, it was redeveloped by Blumler and Katz (1974) into the more humanistic uses and gratifications paradigm, which allowed the audience a certain degree of activism. Essentially the paradigm is modeled on the understanding that the audience searches out media to fulfill a need and is gratified upon finding it.

According to Nightingale:

The 'uses and gratifications' model insisted that social utility is a necessity precondition for mass communication [...] Audiences, therefore, are active users of media messages by definition. The uses and gratifications model was important for a second reason — it reversed the sender-message-receiver communication hierarchy by insisting that the exploration, in their own terms, of audience orientation is an essential precursor for 'value' judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication (1999, p. 8).

However, the 'uses and gratifications' model, as a member of the effects tradition, was criticized for its continued individualization of the audience members and its emphasis on needs and functions of the audience, and the assumptions on which these concepts rest rather than focusing on the socio-political context of the media and its usage (Machor, 2001). It is extremely problematic to believe that media use begins with a problem and subsequently solves that problem (McLuhan, 1964; Alasuutari, 1999).

The uses and gratifications approach is more functionalist than the effects paradigm as it considers the uses of the media rather than just the effects (McQuail, 1997; Abercrombie and Longhurst; 1998). "This approach applied psychological models to show that individual audience members responded to the media to fulfill personal needs in a way that often differed from the producers' purposes" (Machor, 2001, p. 204). Yet the paradigm still considered audiences as groups with shared reactions and collective properties, which is problematic when the audience is seen as a phenomenon instead of a relation (Nightingale, 1999, p. 146-147). The uses and gratifications paradigm was subsequently challenged by European structuralism.

2.3. Structuralism

Structuralism was designed in parallel with the work, most particularly, of Althusser, Adorno, Horkheimer and the rest of the Frankfurt School and, in terms of audience studies, was generally situated in European cultural studies (Butsch, 2007; Wilson, 2004; Wilson, 2009; Gray, 1999; Owen, 1999). "Structuralists argue the content of the media is organized in particular patterns that position audiences and determine the meanings people take. This process of interpellation is the primary means by which capitalism and the dominant class won acquiesce for their ideology" (Williams, 2003, p.

192). Wilson likens the behaviourist response to structural content as they both rely on the content alone to determine the stimulus-response (Wilson, 2004, p. 7). This form of structuralism considers the audience as sponges, absorbing information from their specific social locations, rather than active participants in creating or inferring meaning from the media. It ignores information the audience may already have to inform their position as viewers, and suggests, instead that the media is the primary informatory tool in the relationship between viewer and viewed (Wilson, 2009, p. 10-17).

In film studies this form of structuralism was also referred to as apparatus theory in which the camera positions the subject and informs their viewing place, and was articulated on the pages of the journal *Screen*. According to Judith Mayne in "Paradoxes of Spectatorship", "[...] responses to apparatus theory are founded on a gap between [the] ideal subject postulated by the apparatus and the spectator, who is always in an imperfect relation to the idea" (1994, p. 157). The resulting spectator is always lacking and always problematic. "The structural approach is theoretically important because it can help to show the relation between the media system and individual media use" (McQuail, 1997, p. 17) but is troublesome because it assumes, like the effects paradigm, that the audience has no agency. "Both assume a fairly stable, fixed, one-way, top-down model of agent and object, with a spectator still locked into a programme of representation defined romantically and mechanistically according to the agenda of the filmmaker or the institution: an active viewer is still one positioned to be so by the textual constructs" (Mayne, 1994, p. 159). No apparatus or structure can function in the same ideal ways that structuralists implied in their theories (Wilson, 2009).

3. Reader

“At first the inadequacy of the [effects/hypodermic] model was compensated for with more and more complex sender-message-receiver models – ‘noise’, ‘channels’, cultural difference, all sorts of ‘interferences’ and boundaries were added” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 7). The resulting form of audience studies moved beyond the effects tradition and is most often referred to as reception analysis or the cultural tradition in which the audience is reinterpreted as readers of media. The outcome of this form of analysis is two-fold, first it implies that there is a text to read and second it implies a more fully active participant. Andy Ruddock explains that “[...] the shift from the analysis of what texts *do* to the audience to what texts *mean* to them is often outlined as the fundamental difference between mass-communication research and cultural studies” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 116).

There is a significant difference in the role of the Audience between the effects tradition and the Reader tradition, most obviously the passive/active dichotomy. The Reader is no longer a delinquent in the process of meaning maker but an active member in assembling understanding (Hall, 1974; Gillespie, 2005; Williams, 2003; Wilson, 2009). In “The Socratic and Platonic Basis of Cognitivism”, Dreyfus even refers to these members as knowledge engineers, developing skilled behaviour for reading messages at the same levels as they do other actions: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency and expert (2008). While the effects tradition would imagine these as ideal audiences, the reader tradition instead looks at them as learning and contributing members of audiences — and as Elizabeth Bird remarks: “Studying active audiences is fun” (Bird, 2005, p. 169). And this paradox of active and passive is something still

struggled with by contemporary researchers, as evidenced by the 2005 “Overview of the Time Use of Canadians” social survey conducted by Statistics Canada. Their categorizations for leisure activities are defined by “Television, reading and other passive leisure”, “Sports, movies and other entertainment events”, and “Active leisure” (2005).

3.1. Encoding/Decoding

A large portion of the reader-response tradition is associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) and in particular Stuart Hall in the 1970's. “[...] Hall (1980) argued that the effects tradition had substantially misrepresented the social nature of the mass media by ignoring subjective aspects of human experience” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 118). As a result, Hall developed the seminal, and he argues polemic, Encoding/Decoding model of communication and audience analysis in which the author or sender of the message inherently codes the message with cultural or ideological semiotics, and it is the responsibility of the audience to interpret and decode the message. According to Hall: “Before this message can have an ‘effect’ (however defined), or satisfy a ‘need’ or be put to a ‘use’, it must first be perceived as a meaningful discourse and meaningfully decoded. It is this set of de-coded meanings which ‘have an effect’, influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex, perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences” (Hall, 1974: 3). In Rethinking the Media Audience, Pertti Alasuutari even refers to this as the first generation of reception research (1999); while Mayne calls it “negotiation” (1994) and Abercrombie and Longhurst reference it as “incorporation/resistance” (1999). “Hall’s model offered a way beyond the current uses and gratifications approach by insisting that audiences share certain frameworks of understanding and interpretation. Reading is not

simply the lonely uses and gratifications individual; it is shared” (Gray, 1999, p. 27).

Mayne is particular to point out that the encoding/decoding model is “[...] peculiar insofar as the activity/passivity of the apparatus model appears to be reversed in favor of an active reader/viewer and a relatively stable, if not completely passive, text” (1994; p.172).

The criticisms of encoding/decoding reside primarily in the kinds of decodings that Hall posits: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional (Hall, 1974). Critics argue that Hall relies too freely on the moment of decoding and that readers cannot be easily divided into the three kinds of decodings easily (Ruddock, 2001; Williams, 2003; Wilson, 2004; Nightingale, 1999). Despite these denunciations, “the encoding/decoding model is a vital moment in audience research since it ties together a number of themes within discussion of interpretative social science, ideology, semiotics and, crucially, how these ideas influence the approach we take to media audiences” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 123).

3.2. Ethnography

Tony Wilson refers to the development of the reader paradigm as the empirical turn for good reason (2004). Hall’s model led to the development of several groundbreaking, now classic and commonly cited empirical studies including: Brundson and Morley’s The Nationwide Audience, Ang’s Watching Dallas, Radway’s Reading the Romance, and Buckingham’s EastEnders (Gray, 1999). The creation of the encoding/decoding form of analysis, and these resulting empirical studies, swiftly initiated the audience ethnography paradigm.

Alasuutari refers to this as the second generation of audience studies, and to the new, contemporary research generation as constructionist, a return to true ethnography

(1999). However, this model is more a form of methodology used to garner information about how audiences appropriate meaning from media, and less a paradigm of the kind of analysis (Potter, 2009). It implies a researcher who studies the nature and context of the audience and their sociology while living within that same situation. “The major attraction that ethnography held for audience researchers is that it offered a means to overcome the artificiality of mass communication research since it is based on naturally occurring data” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 128). It is heralded by Bird (2005), Ang (1999; 2001) and Radway (2001) as the best way of analyzing audiences as it allows for a contextualization of social position: “To be sure, one of the important contributions made by ethnographic studies of reception is exactly the ‘signing’, ‘reading’ and ‘symbolizing’ — the documenting, the putting into tangible discourse — of the fragmented, invisible, marginal tactics by which media audiences symbolically appropriate a world not their own” (Ang, 1999, p. 140). Nevertheless, the ethnographic form is often criticized as falling short for not taking into account the diffusion of the researcher in the same media context as the research subject; media ethnography as autoethnography. In a way the criticized ethnographer looks at their subjects in the same way that the subjects look at their media content, as a removed form of reality. All the same, “The ethnographer [...] conceptualizes media audiencehood as lived experience and approaches his or her object with very different sorts of interests[...] they have greater potential for engaging with the production of meaning in everyday life” (Moores, 1993, p. 5).

3.3. Text

3.3.1. Genre

With the decline of the effects tradition in favour of audiences as active readers, “understanding audience through indicators of consumption and direct effects became intolerable as the urgency of questions of interpretation pushed the quantitative measures aside” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 1). Consequently, the role of the text, or content of the media, in addition to the social situation of the reader in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, race and sexual identity, became increasingly important and dominant in the analysis of audience. Most importantly, genre became a form for audiences to have preexisting knowledge of the type of text expected. “As applied to artistic works, a genre is a type, class or category of presentation that shares distinctive and easily identifiable features[...] a genre can be identified by its own distinctive patterns in premise, plot, structure, character, worldview, style, and conventions” (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 3). Genre analysis, along with psychoanalysis, developed from the journal *Screen* during the 1970’s and suggested that readers were able to anticipate narrative content based on previous experience with the type of textual content and allow people to tap into their affective responses and emotions (Ang, 1996; Bird, 2005; Livingstone, 1998). In addition, “A genre is not confined to one medium[...] Every medium is defined by unique characteristics, which have an impact on how it can best present information[...] The effective media communicator is able to take full advantage of the unique properties of the medium, using the “language” of that medium to reach the intended audience” (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 16-17). Accordingly, both text and context allow for the audience to cognitively read the message.

3.3.2. Gender

Gender was another form that changed the reading of content. In addition to the feminist gaze as described below, David Morley explains that the role of the technology within domestic spheres gendered the technology itself. Specifically examining the television, he explains that it is a technology that bridges the domestic (re. private) sphere and, as it resides within the home and is a passive viewing experience, is inherently feminine. Morley describes active technologies such as the computer or video games as male (1992). Ann Gray agrees with Morley and extends his argument by explaining that the mass audience in general is seen as passive and therefore feminine (1999).

Morley is particularly concerned about the role of the family within the domestic sphere as it is infiltrated by media. He explains that “[...] this family itself is seen as increasingly fragmented internally — the ‘multi-active cellular family’ whose home is a ‘multi-purpose activity centre’ for the increasingly separate lifestyles of the individuals within it” (Morley, 1992, p. 221).

The form of domestic viewing also conceptualizes the form of private/public viewing. While Morley genders this polarity, other theorists examine it as a boundary for which media can traverse (Ibid.). “What distinguishes media objects from many other domestic artefacts is their capacity to join the private world of the home with larger public worlds beyond the front door. Raymond Williams (1974) expresses it well when he says that broadcasting has helped to constitute a form of ‘mobile privatization’” (Moores, 1993, p. 9). This role of technology is only ballooning with the digital revolution, to be discussed in the next chapter and as a result changing the roles of gender, both in representations of content and in technological use.

3.3.3. Feminism and Psychoanalysis

While feminism and psychoanalysis are not imperative to The New Spectator study and beyond the scope of this particular study, it would be remiss to not mention their effect on reading content at this juncture of audience studies. Following an evident turn away from the technology and the individual to the way the text or content is read, and by association the viewer who is reading it, there was a rise in the psychology and social effects on and of the reader. As explained by Wilson, “The cognitive processes constituting someone’s response to a text occur within conceptual horizons of understanding accruing by virtue of that person’s class, ethnic, gender, generational and [...] often religious experience” (2004, p. 13). The notion of the self is central to the content of media and artistic communication (Dewdney and Ride, 2006, p. 283). Ang suggests: “A more thoroughly *cultural* approach to reception, however, would not stop at this pseudo-intimate moment of the text/audience encounter, but address the differentiated meanings and significance of specific reception patterns in articulating more general cultural negotiations and contestations” (Ang, 1999, p. 137). As a result, the use of feminism and psychoanalysis became popular to read the types of content, especially genre readings, and comment on their effect of empowerment or constraint for the readers (Radway, 2001; Ang, 1999). The use of these theories was and is predominant in media, genre readings of television, feminist critiques of gendered filmic gazes, psychoanalytic analyses of characters, viewers, and authors still abound when reading a text in its totality.

4. User

However, the Reader paradigm has come under criticism for its reading of text, rather than context. “We learn to act and to think of ourselves as audiences in certain contexts and situations — these always possess a textual dimension which eclipses the mechanical or operational functions of the medium. From a research perspective, ‘audience’ is always context- and text-bound” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 147). Alasuutari insists that we must move beyond the individual readings of messages and focus on the discourse of the different media, as a result, both the nature of audience studies, and the development of new and convergent or ‘new media’ technologies has once again adapted the role of the audience (1999). Sonia Livingstone explains this position by, again, redefining the term audience:

We do not know how to describe the audience for new media. ‘Audience’ fits the activities of listening and watching. New information and communication technologies open up more active and diverse modes of engagement with media —playing, surfing, searching, chatting, and downloading. So, rather than each new medium replacing what went before, in practice we find an accumulation of modes of ‘audiencing’ as we add listening to reading, viewing to listening, surfing to viewing, and so on. [...] We could say ‘users’—media users, users of the internet — but this is rather individualistic and instrumental, losing the idea of a collectivity which is central to ‘the audience’ (1998, p. 44-45).

Yet, the new media User *is* individualistic and that does not imply that they have lost the community aspect inherent in audiencing. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, individual Internet users have more friends and a greater social life than non-Internet users, implying that they have more of a community than non-media audiences, despite the lack or diminished socialized audiencing (Veenhof, 2005); even the adaptation of the term audience into a verb implies that it has a new activity. “Chaffee suggested that most new communication technologies, with the exception of the telephone, have advanced the

art of mass communication. However, he indicated that the latest batch of new technologies seems to be shifting the balance toward interpersonal communication rather than promoting individualization, a kind of privatized public” (McMillan, 2006, p. 206). Inevitably, the contemporary media Audience has transitioned into Users, and contemporary media scholarship is, in a large sense, usability theory (Wilson, 2009).

Abercrombie and Longhurst view this era as the spectacle/performance paradigm (1998; p.37). While performance is a word that is used in a variety of different ways throughout audience study, the media user seems to particularly embody the performer, especially as they adapt into users and creators of their own content.

4.1. Post-modernism

A central foundation for this evolution of user audiences is post-modernism and the philosophical and ideological questioning of meaning invoked by post-modernism. “Concerns over the ability of ethnographic and other methods to deliver on key research questions were inflamed by a social theory questioning the very nature of truth and our ability to know it” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 149). Post-modernism is a totalizing theory that implies fragmentation of identity and audiences, and a revolution in ways of thinking about “making sense”. It led to a social, economic, political and identity revolution (Jameson, 1997; Dewdney and Ride, 2006). As Murray describes post-modernity: “It was the age of the put-on, an ironic age in which even the most exuberant expressions had a bitter aftertaste, and much of the most ambitious work possessed a cold derisive quality, a sense that everything had been said before and that it was all lies” (Murray, 2008, p. 8). This demand to question truth led to a return to the self and further individualization of the audience.

As Ruddock explains: "Identity is less about the self than it is about the relation between the self and other people. It is therefore tied to communication" (Ruddock, 2001, p. 160) and signified through post-modern media. The resulting audience is splintered and reflected in the convergence of media, the interdisciplinary understanding of audience study through psychology, computer science, cultural studies, communication studies, humanities and the individual media development fields, as well as the mobility and further individualization of media technology. "All of these accounts point out that the post-modern condition is, in part, a consequence of the application of information technologies, and that one of its key characteristics is the experience of excessive information, or information overload" (Dewdney and Ride, 2005, p. 298)

Another key part of postmodernism, alluded to above, is the contracting of space and time through the networked and mobile society. "For the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (McLuhan, 1974, p. 8). Take for example mobilities, which are the fastest spreading technology in history. According to Gruber, the number of mobile subscribers increased by fifty percent annually in the 1990's (2005, p. 1). "There are already one billion internet users. Also, since 2001 there are world-wide more mobile phones than landlines" (Urry, 2007, p. 5). Even the production, and distribution of the content and information for mobile technologies has created its own industry. Mobile technology has arguably, been created to be used in in-between spaces, for example, the place between work and home. The resulting definition of place has taken on a new meaning that is more spatial than fixed and the line between the public and the private has been blurred by the transition of the mobile devices fluidly between the two arenas (Kellerman, 2006).

Though geographically, the rise of mobilities coincides with the concept of one mass society, ideologically mobilities and contemporary networked society only fragment and individualize the user more (Kotkin, 2000). In fact, Newman and Zysman hypothesize that: “Given the differing ways governments have dealt with the various challenges posed by this digital transformation, several distinct information societies will no doubt emerge” (1998, p. 410). The resulting mediasphere will be networked, and connected but ideologically fractured (Ang, 1996; Williams, 2003, McLuhan, 1974).

4.2. Technology

Media technology is imperative to the understanding of messages in communications and a central tenet in the creation, history and maintenance of audience and audience studies; it is the form for the content. “[...P]eople often speak of a new world, a new society, a new phase of history, being created — “brought about” — by this or that new technology: the steam-engine, the automobile, the atomic bomb” (Williams, 2003, p. 291), and new media technology is no different in the way it is changing social relations. In Media in the Digital Age, John Pavlik explains that:

The qualities of the delivery medium influence what is possible in terms of how the audience interacts with the medium, the nature of emerging business models, and the regulatory frameworks that govern media. [...] the digitization of delivery media represents a fundamental shift from the analog system in which different media were delivered via different technologies, some having very little to do with the content or nature of the medium [...] almost all aspects of media transformation in the digital age are dependent in large part on the delivery media (Pavlik, 2005; p. 10-11).

So in many ways, “[...] the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium —that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 7). Though this may be

extrapolated as technologically determinist, as is frequent for McLuhan's theories, the evolution of audience studies follows the evolution of technology from push communications, to pull communications; from static screens to mobile information communication technologies (ICT's) (Bermejo, 2007). "Several areas of theory and research coexist under the umbrella of social shaping of technology, but they all share a basic theoretical commitment: that technological determinism is an inadequate description or explanation of technological innovation and development or of social change more generally" (Lievrouw, 2006, p. 248). Actually, in many cases it is impossible to delineate different forms of media from each other as a result (Grusin and Bolter, 2000). "New technologies are incorporated into people's lives, merging with their old manner of doing things; in the process, these new technologies are producing, whether by design or by accident, new ways of achieving goals, new forms of association, and new expectations" (Brynin and Kraut, 2003, p. 8).

Hence, new technologies have changed the way audiences are viewed and what and how audiences view—as it happens, audiences rarely just view anymore. McLuhan references this concept in his discourse regarding hot and cool mediums:

There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV. A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in "high definition." High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, "high definition". A cartoon is "low definition," simply because very little visual information is provided. [...] Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience. Naturally, therefore, a hot medium like radio has very different effects on the user from a cool medium like the telephone (1974, p. 23).

Therefore, the theatrical movie is a hot medium, while the computer and mobile devices are cool; though the computer does allow the user to choose whether to do more than one

thing at once, the mobile device demands it. "But it is necessary to understand the power and thrust of technologies to isolate the senses and thus to hypnotize society. The formula for hypnosis is "one sense at a time." And new technology possesses the power to hypnotize because it isolates the sense. [...] Every new technology thus diminishes sense interplay and consciousness, precisely in the new area of novelty where a kind of identification of viewer and object occurs" (McLuhan, 1962, p. 272). Nevertheless, the new media user is forced to participate with the media rather than just view and read the viewed information, they must now operate, read, decode, occasionally create, and often interpret (Miller, 1994; Lievrouw, 2006). The user must see the total situation not just "[...] a single level of information [...]" (McLuhan, 1974, p. 26).

With the rise of convergence, the user is also often asked to operate multiple forms of media at the same time through one device. More media means more convergence and more use of media technologies by users. Take for example mobile phone, "The number of video phones in United States went from one million in 2005 to 20 million in 2007. It is expected to top 250 million worldwide by 2010" (Pavlik, 2005, p. 70-71). Just as technology is converging, the role of the audience from the theorist's point of view and both the understanding of, and by, the audience is converging. "It is therefore important to examine the dimension in which a growing number of technologies of social interaction come into play because the sense of each of these different technologies depends not only on their suitability for a particular kind of user and a particular type of exchange but also on the position of alternative each e vis-à-vis others in a technological landscape that has become increasingly crowded and varied" (Licoppe and Smoreda, 2006, p. 296). Converged technology is invested with the conception of

being more than just media but a tool for the user. As a communication, entertainment, information, and frequently work tool, the technology is defined as a new medium that is represented by its uses and carries its own meaning (Dewdney and Ride, 2005).

Despite this increase in technologies, people are still using older technologies. In “Are Internet Users Tuning Out Traditional Media?”, a study for Statistics Canada, Veenhof explains that: “[Internet users...] were more likely than non-users to use a much older technology. The notion of ‘media multiplexity’ suggests that people who communicate frequently use multiple media to do so, and that individuals who spend considerable amounts of time using one technology are likely to also spend considerable time using another” (Veenhof, 2008, p. 12). However, “[...] although some users embrace mobile and online video, they do so with certain expectations and concerns about the quality of the experience as it compares to more traditional media, digital or analog” (Pavlik, 2008, p. 70). In the same way that viewers have expectations about genre themes in content, new media users have expectations about quality of both textual content and form.

As the role of technology changes, so too does the expected role of the audience. According to Bermejo, “[...] the very idea of the ‘audience’, as well as its study within the field of communication, continues to be very much conditioned by television. Even in recent works produced within the field of audience studies, one perceives a tendency to look more at the past than at the present or the future” (Bermejo, 2007, 18). Ergo, the history of audiences, as shown, is imbedded in mass media, particularly television, and generally still understood that way. In fact, as stated in the introduction, a large majority

of contemporary media scholarship calls for a new paradigm for audience studies and remarks on the necessity of a new media paradigm to analyze audience convergence.

4.3. Human Computer Interaction

As scholarship moves forward in developing this new convergence paradigm and positioning it in practice and social context, it is necessary to examine activity theory and Human Computer Interaction (HCI) as potential options to solve this dilemma. “An activity is a form of doing directed on an object, and activities are distinguished from each other according to their objects. Transforming the object into an outcome motivates the existence of an activity” (Kuutti, 1996, p. 27). However, the outcome and the motive can change in the process of the activity which creates a disjuncture between intention, expectation, the intuitiveness of the media platform, and the users understanding of the content in a fluid stream of information. Rather, a ripple effect of understanding is created that allows the user to jump between topics, views, and objects (Anderson, 1980; Brynin and Kraut, 2003; Gulliver, 2006).

Most of the research in this area has been done in the audiences understanding of content or satisfaction of content dependent on quality of the source (Gulliver, 2006), as well as the understanding of user-interface design (McMillan, 2006; Nardi, 1996; Rasmussen, 2003). Kuutti is particularly concerned that research in this vein is not ahead of or near to analyzing contemporary practical technology; he suggests that activity theory and HCI could ground contemporary technology and help the construction of future media platforms. However, HCI and activity theory, though they use psychology, are not formally accepted paradigms within cultural studies as they are too computer

science oriented. As a result, Kuutti proposes the necessity of the human factor as an autonomous negotiator that has the capacity of agency (Kuutti, 1996).

For users, this agency most often takes the form of interactivity. “The argument that interactivity puts the viewer in a new position of choice and active participation in the face of a digital work of art, rests upon the assumption that previous forms of art experiences involved a form of looking and seeing that was passive and non-participatory” (Dewdney and Ride, 2005, p. 293) as outlined through the role of the audience. However, according to McMillan, “The most important characteristics [of new media] seem to be interactive features, perceived interactivity, and interactive exchange” (McMillan, 2006, p. 207). McMillan goes on to identify three forms of interactivity: human-to-human interaction, human-to-document interaction and human-to-system interaction (2006), in which human-to-document interaction would be most relevant to dealing with a textual reading in a cinematic context, and human-to-system interaction would be the most relevant in dealing with new media technology.

The grounding of these interactions within a context is important (McLuhan, 1974; Owen, 1999; Rasmussen, 2003). “[Actions...] are impossible to understand without that context. The solution offered by activity theory is that a minimal meaningful context for individual actions must be included in the basic unit of analysis [...] An individual can and usually does participate in several activities simultaneously” (Kuutti, 1996, p. 26). Consequently their attention is divided and fragmented into numerous activities in which cognitive psychologists suggest there is a limit for understanding (Potter, 2009).

“Activity theory is a powerful and clarifying descriptive tool rather than a strongly predictive theory [...] Activity theory incorporates strong notions of intentionality, history, mediation, collaboration and development in constructing consciousness” (Nardi, 1996, p. 7). Just like new media, it is grounded in practice and use, which is why it is often overlooked by cultural studies as too much of a scientific methodology rather than a cultural paradigm (Ibid.).

5. Summation

As previously stated throughout this background information, over the last decade, scholars have begun calling for a new form of audience research. This new paradigm must examine the audience as new spectators and, work to restructure the Audience, Reader, and User paradigms discussed; just as technology is converging, the kind of spectatorship is also converging. Consequently this new spectatorship must act as a hybrid of Audience, Reader and User studies. It must examine the quantifiable aspects of Audience studies to determine the reliability and verifiability of data; it must examine the textual content and determine what the audience is Reading and it must analyze the context to determine both how and why the spectator Uses and comprehends the way they do. It is only when this new paradigm has taken shape that scholars can consciously examine the data and move audience studies into the fourth generation of reception studies. This new paradigm will focus its research on a social, technical, textual and political analysis and will examine the new spectator as a converged role of creator, user, reader and audience member of new media.

6. Methodology

Though the previous overview certainly gives a framework to the various methodologies evident in audience studies—survey, interview, ethnography, etc—it also indicates that there is no working methodology on which to execute contemporary audience studies. Quantitative analysis suggests that there is a certain scientific truth to its findings (Mayne, 1994). However, “Quantitative surveys, which limit possible responses to the confines of multiple choice questions, may be able to do things such as gauge the depth of the factual knowledge that people have on a particular issue, but they are of little use, orthodoxy tells us, in inquiring into the semiotic process of meaning construction” (Ruddock, 2001, p.15). In the same way, qualitative analysis, is often too textually bound and theoretically problematic (Ang, 1999). In any event, “The things that we see in the media, and in the effects on the audience, depend on the position we adopt before we even begin our research. All researchers approach their topic armed with a set of assumptions and tools which influence the nature of the things they see” (Ruddock, 2001, p. 22). It is, therefore, imperative to ethically bound research that it positions itself in a framework of understanding from a social, technological and textual context.

The New Spectator aims to do just that, by combining an interpretive audience reading with a structural element to determine the cognitive changes viewers experience through different media platforms. It used seventy-five participants garnered through the social snowball effect. Each participant was contacted via email or word of mouth of the study and informed of their participation and their role within the study by an informed consent contract they signed and returned to me.

The subjects all viewed the same two short films. Twenty-five participants attended a screening of the films in a theatre. Twenty-five participants had one week to watch the films at an online URL. The last twenty-five participants watched the films on iPod Touches, provided by me to the subjects for one week for the purpose of this study. Following the screening in the theatre, the participants completed a survey instrument (Appendix 1). They returned exactly one week later and completed the same instrument in order to account for retention loss and neutralize the effects retention could have had on the online and mobile participants. The online participants had one week to watch the short film as many times as they wished, at any time during that week. The mobile participants were given short tutorials on the use of the iPod Touch and encouraged to use them in locations they would normally view them, whether that be home, work, in transit, or other. Following the end of the week, the online and mobile participants met with me individually and completed the same survey instrument as the theatrical participants. The timeline of one week was used for multiple reasons: in order to have time to complete the study, in order for the subjects to have time to become comfortable with the media platform if they were unfamiliar, and in order for the subjects to use the media platforms as they would normal media.

The three platforms were chosen to be representative of the major cinematic viewing platforms in contemporary culture. They also generally represent the three strains of audience study tradition outlined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (theatre: audience, online: reader, mobile: user). Though television, rather DVD, VHS or Blu-ray, could be considered to be a fourth viewing platform, there is much evidence that the online screen and television screen are synonymous for viewers of media (Bermejo, 2007; Brynin and

Kraut 2003; Gillespie, 2005). In addition, there is evidence that internet users are using the social aspects of television over the internet in similar ways to traditional television. For instance, posting comments on message boards, chatrooms, or over instant messenger rather than discussing with a family member who may be in the same physical room (Veenhof, 2001). Ergo, the internet was used to stand in. All subjects were encouraged to use the media platforms as they would for other media viewing. The theatre screening was scheduled for a specific time, at a specific place, and all subjects had to attend for that given appointment. Concession was served and the theatre used was reminiscent of a regular cinema theatre, despite being a university lecture hall. The lights were darkened, the seats were all padded, attached in rows and facing in one direction towards the screen. The sound system and screen were also both cinematic in quality. The online participants were given a URL and asked to watch the films at any point within the week, in any location as long as the computer used had sound and an internet connection. The video player was designed to be the same size as the You-Tube video player, and the site on which they were played was designed to be as neutral as possible (Appendix 2). Any issues, for example: screen size, buffering time, quality of sound or visual, server or internet signal loss, were considered part of the media platform and accounted for by open ended questions in the survey instrument. The mobile participants were given an iPod Touch and all of the elements included when purchased: iPod, headphones, USB cord, USB-AC power adapter, and the Apple instructions. Following a brief tutorial for those subjects who were not already iPod Touch users, they were able to watch the films at any time, in any location, over the week before returning the iPod at which time they completed their survey questionnaires.

The survey instrument questioned the participants on several different levels: A. demographic, B. previous viewing behaviour, C. experience with the media platform, and D. comprehensive questions about the films that included questions from the audio, visual and dynamic media of the films. The demographic portion of the instrument provided social information about age, sex, educational background and occupation. Section B questioned participants on their history of media behaviour in an attempt to gain an understanding of their media literacy level. Section C asked participants about their experience with the specific media platform they used for this study allowing several open-ended questions about issues they had with the platform, and whether they felt the media platform hindered or enhanced their experience with the aim to understand whether or not their frustrations with new media effected their understanding of the content. The last section was multiple choice comprehension questions that tested the subjects on factual content found in the films. The answers to the questions were garnered through either auditory, visual or dynamic means. The questions did not require any inferences or deductions, and only tested the subjects' comprehension of the factual information provided by the films. Following the completion of the survey brief, informal interviews occurred to allow me to disseminate the research for the participants, respond to questions about the films and the study, and to ask question about the experience.

The films used were two short, fifteen-minute films that had never been seen by the participants to prevent issues that may have arisen due to multiple viewings and retention. Both films were award-winning with high production quality and upon correspondence with the subjects were only referred to as Film A and Film B. Film A

was a comedy about a couple who discover that they are characters within a story.

Through a series of hi-jinks that result in the story and set literally falling apart, they confront their writer and determine their destiny (Appendix 3). Film B was an emotional drama about a twenty-something woman who represses the memory of her father's death, which occurred during her tenth birthday party. Throughout the film she proceeds to recreate the birthday party in an attempt to understand how she became disillusioned and unaffected by the world around her, forcing her to deal with her emotions and finally confront her past demons (Appendix 4). It was imperative to choose two films of very different genres in order to judge the effect the content may have had on the understanding of the platform.

7. Quantitative Results and Analysis

The following section presents the data corpus and the quantitative analysis of the data found through the study. There were seventy-seven participants broken into three groups: mobile, online and theatre, as evidenced by Table 3.

Table 3:
Summary of Sample

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Number of Subjects</u>
Mobile	26
Online	26
Theatre	25
Total	77

Table 4 presents the total sample based on demographic data, age, sex and platform on which they participated in the study.

Table 4:
Demographic Information of Sample

Platform	Age	Sex	Number of Subjects
Mobile	18-25	F	6
		M	6
	26-35	F	1
		M	1
	36-45	F	1
		M	1
	46-55	F	1
		M	1
	56-65	F	4
		M	4
Online	18-25	F	10
		M	4
	26-35	F	2
		M	2
	36-45	F	2
		M	0
	46-55	F	3
		M	3
	56-65	F	0
		M	0
Theatre	18-25	F	1
		M	3
	26-35	F	4
		M	11
	36-45	F	2
		M	0
	46-55	F	2
		M	1
	56-65	F	1
		M	1
Total:	18-25	F	17
		M	13
	26-35	F	7
		M	14
	36-45	F	5
		M	1
	46-55	F	6
		M	5
	56-65	F	5
		M	5

As seen in Tables 3 and 4, in total, the participants included: 40 women, and 37 men between the ages of 18 and 65 from Toronto, Canada. The majority of participants were between 18-25, followed by a good number of the participants being between 26-35 years of age. The subjects were surveyed in the winter of 2009.

The subjects were questioned on their average time spent using various media per month or week dependent on the media they used, as seen in the following table. Also included in Table 5 is the average number of Stationary and Mobile Media devices owned by the subjects.

Table 5
Regular Media Use and Attendance by Study Participants

Platform	Age	Movie Attendance (average per Month)	Hours of TV (average per week)	Hours of internet usage (average per week)	Hours of mp3 usage (average per week)	Average Number of Stationary Media Owned *	Average Number of Mobile Media Owned **
Mobile	18-25	1.92	11.92	13.85	10.69	4.15	4.85
	26-35	1.5	5.5	14.5	10.5	6	5
	36-45	2	13	18	3	4	3
	46-55	0	8	3	0	4	2
	56-65	0.88	15	9.25	3.62	4.25	3
Online	18-25	1.71	8.57	12.43	6.14	4.71	4.29
	26-35	0.25	5.5	11.25	6.75	5.25	4.25
	36-45	0.50	3	3	0	4	2.50
	46-55	0.67	12.17	7.17	3.5	5.67	3.33
	56-65	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theatre	18-25	1.38	16.38	13.75	6	5.50	4.38
	26-35	0.74	7.48	14.87	10.1	4.03	4.03
	36-45	0.67	10	3	0	4	4
	46-55	1.25	14.5	1.5	1.5	3	2
	56-65	1	17	9	0	4.17	3.17

*Stationary Media include: TV, VCR, DVD Player, Stationary Gaming Device (X-box, PS3, Wii, etc.), desktop computer, Home Theatre, Blu-Ray or HD-DVD Player.

** Mobile Media include: laptop, smart-phone/PDA, cell-phone, portable gaming device (PSP, Gameboy etc.), portable DVD player, mp3 player.

As seen in Table 5, the subjects surveyed watched an average of 1 movie a month in a theatre, 10.57 hours of television a week, spent 23.84 hours on the internet a week, and 4.41 hours using an mp3 player per week. A direct parallel between this data and the general Canadian population cannot be completed as the data units do not correlate, however according to the General Social Survey on Time Use, conducted by Statistics Canada in 2005, the average Canadian spends 2.1 hours per day "Watching Television", and 0.2 hours per day with "Sports, movies and other entertainment events" (2005).

Time on the internet or using other media was not included in this survey. However, in the Canadian Internet Use Survey, 15.8% of the population used the internet to watch television and 12.6% used the internet to watch movies (Statistics Canada, 2007). This increase in the use of the internet for watching traditional media over the last four years, accounts for the lessening of the number of hours spent both watching television and movies.

While there are clearly defined differences between age ranges and the purposes for which they use the internet, they mimic the same declines noted in this study for ages and genders; most evidently the decline of both media use and media ownership during the 36-45 age range. In addition, the following charts (1 and 2) indicate that generally all of the participants owned and used similar media in their everyday lives, indicating that the participant groups across the three platforms share normalized regular media usage. Overall, they owned and used more stationary media than mobile media.

Chart 1:

Number of Stationary Media Owned and Used by Subjects

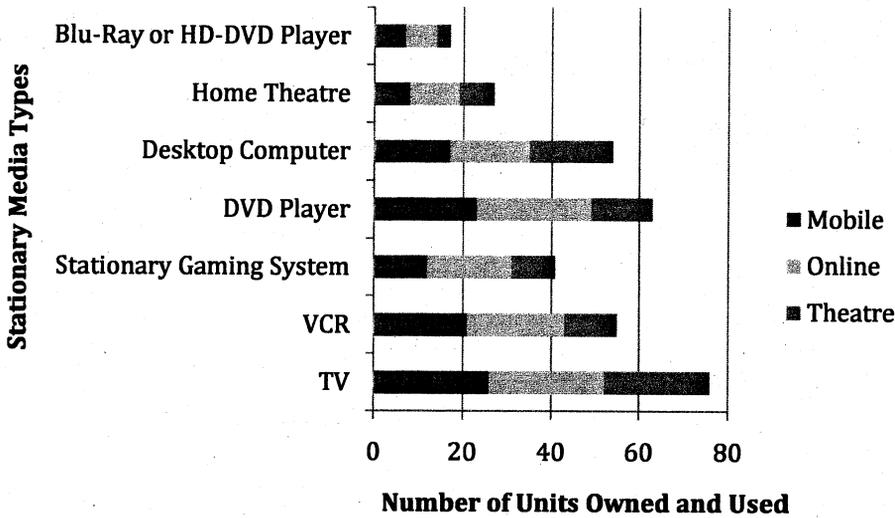


Chart 1 details the number of units of stationary media platforms owned and used by the sample. Stationary Media include: TV, VCR, DVD Player, Stationary Gaming Device (X-box, PS3, Wii, etc.), desktop computer, Home Theatre, Blu-Ray or HD-DVD Player.

Chart 2:

Number of Mobile Media Owned and Used by Sample

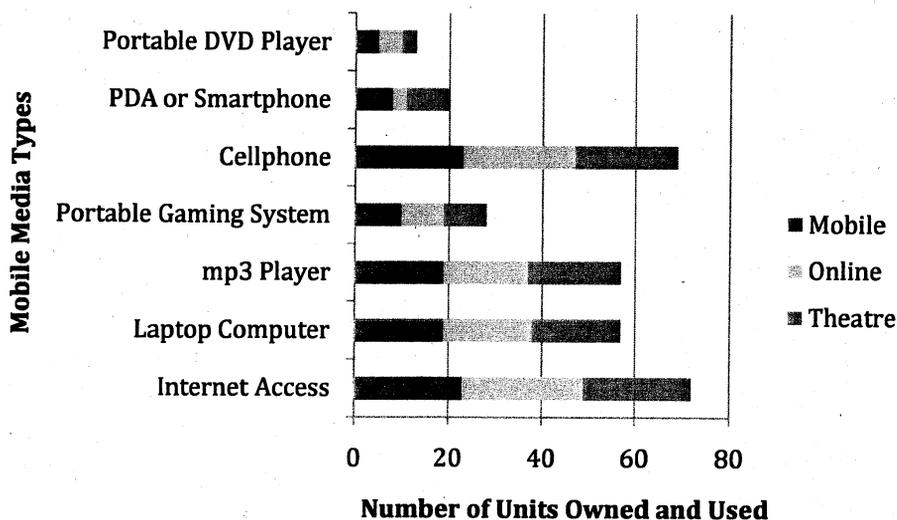


Chart 2 details the number of units of mobile media owned and used by the sample.

Mobile Media include: laptop, smart-phone/PDA, cell-phone, portable gaming device (PSP, Gameboy etc.), portable DVD player, mp3 player, and Internet access.

Charts 1 and 2, while elucidating the regular media ownership and usage of all participants, also indicates the technologies most used, namely television, internet access, cellphone and DVD players, with over 65% of subjects owning and using these technologies.

The final portion of the survey, questioned subjects on their comprehension of the factual content in the films viewed. The questions asked everything from the colour of a character's dress to the content of the dialogue being used. The questions were multiple choice and marked right or wrong. There were nine questions about each film. Film A was a comedy and Film B was a drama. Tables 6 and 7 indicate the responses to these questions by percentage correct. Table 6 shows the correct answers for Film A and Table 7 indicates the responses for Film B. They are shown by platform on which they were viewed and further broken down by age, and the type of question being asked, audio, visual or dynamic comprehension.

Table 6:

Number of Answers Correct to Questionnaire by Percentage in Film A

Platform	Age	Audio Questions in Film A	Visual Questions in Film A	Dynamic Questions in Film A	Total Questions Correct
Mobile	18-25	93	75	95	85%
	26-35	25	63	100	67%
	36-45	100	100	100	100%
	46-55	100	75	100	89%
	56-65	69	75	79	75%
Total		79	75	90	81%
Online	18-25	97	88	98	93%
	26-35	100	88	100	94%
	36-45	100	88	100	94%
	46-55	84	83	100	89%
	56-65	0	0	0	N/A
Total		94	87	90	92%
Theatre	18-25	100	98	100	99%
	26-35	89	95	97	95%
	36-45	100	100	100	100%
	46-55	100	94	100	97%
	56-65	88	75	83	77%
Total		92	94	97	94%

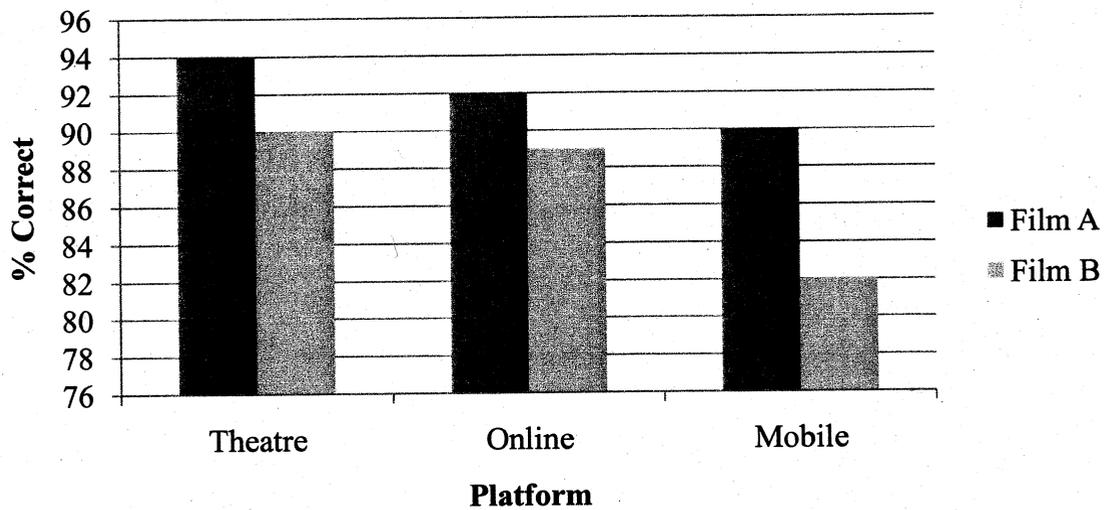
Table 7:

Number of Answers Correct to Questionnaire by Percentage in Film B

Platform	Age	Audio Questions in Film B	Visual Questions in Film B	Dynamic Questions in Film B	Total Questions Correct
Mobile	18-25	73	91	81	85%
	26-35	50	90	100	83%
	36-45	100	100	100	100%
	46-55	50	100	50	78%
	56-65	82	78	82	82%
	Total	73	86	83	82%
Online	18-25	86	93	86	90%
	26-35	88	100	100	97%
	36-45	100	80	75	83%
	46-55	75	86	85	89%
	56-65	0	0	0	N/A
	Total	85	92	87	89%
Theatre	18-25	94	98	100	97%
	26-35	87	97	92	94%
	36-45	84	100	67	89%
	46-55	88	100	100	97%
	56-65	50	45	25	75%
	Total	85	93	87	90%

Tables 6 and 7 account for the total percentage of correct comprehensive questions by age, and platform between the two films. The subject responses to the questions of the first film, the comedy, have a total result difference of 13%, but the subjects scored higher overall on the questions. The second film, the drama, has a total result difference of only 8%, but the subjects, overall, scored lower. This difference can be seen more plainly in Chart 3.

Chart 3
Total Correct Questions



It is obvious to see the difference between both the platforms as well as the correct answers based on genre. Statistically, as will be seen in Table 9, there is no significance to the results based on genre, however, an analysis of the total percentages between the two films, as seen in Chart 3, suggests that with a higher number of participants that may change.

In order to account for potential retention issues from the mobile and online subjects having a full week to watch the films, the theatre subjects returned exactly one week following their viewing of the films and completed the survey again. Table 8 shows a dependent variables t-test on both of their responses.

Table 8:
Theatre Dependent Variables t-Test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Film A	Answers Immediately after viewing	8.72	25	0.542	0.108
	Answers one week after viewing	8.28	25	1.339	0.268
Film B	Answers immediately after viewing	8.12	25	1.666	0.333
	Answers one week after viewing	8.08	25	1.631	0.326

Paired Samples Correlation			
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	25	0.572	0.003
Pair 2	25	0.778	0.000

Paired Differences									
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
						Upper	T		
Pair 1	Film A answers	0.440	1.121	0.224	-0.023	0.903	1.963	24	0.061
Pair 2	Film B answers	0.40	1.098	0.220	-0.413	0.493	0.182	24	0.857

There was no statistical difference between the answers from the theatre participants between the first week, directly after they viewed the films, and the second week ($r=0.572$, $p > .05$). As a result only their initial responses were used in the remaining tests.

In order to avoid losing significance by confounding the data between genre and platform, the number of correct responses for each film were restructured and transposed into individual cases, and an Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Table 9 is the results of

the ANOVA conducted on both the platform and the genre's effects on the subject's responses to the comprehensive questions on the survey.

Table 9:
Univariate ANOVA: The Effect of Platform and Genre on All Cognitive Responses

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	F	sig.
Corrected Model	39.279	5	4.755	.000
Intercept	9771.326	1	5915.047	.000
Platform	33.371	2	10.102	.000
Genre	2.684	1	1.625	0.204
Platform and Genre	3.306	2	1.001	0.370
Error	244.488	148		
Total	10044.000	154		
Corrected Total	283.766	153		

a. R-Squared = 0.138 (Adjusted R-Squared = 0.109)

Fisher LSD Post-Hoc

Platform	Platform	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mobile	Online	-0.83	0.252	0.001	-1.33	-0.33
	Theatre	-1.09	0.255	0.000	-1.60	-0.59
Online	Mobile	-0.83	0.252	0.001	0.33	1.33
	Theatre	-0.27	0.255	0.297	-0.77	0.24
Theatre	Mobile	1.09	0.255	0.000	0.59	1.60
	Online	0.27	0.255	0.297	-0.24	0.77

Table 9 informs the main study question. It was found that there *is* a cognitive difference between information received by platform ($p < .05$). In a post-hoc analysis (Table 9) statistical significance was found between theatrical and mobile ($p = 0.000$, $p < .05$) and online and mobile ($p = 0.001$, $p < .05$) and finally no significance, was found between online and theatrical ($p = 0.297$, $p > .05$). It was also found that the effect of genre, as previously mentioned, is not statistically significant ($p=0.204$, $p > .05$). In addition, the combination of platform and genre on comprehension is also not significant ($p=0.370$, $p > .05$).

In order to inform the third study question, three Univariate ANOVA's were conducted on only the Audio, Visual and Dynamic question responses and genre of the films. Tables 10, 11 and 12 respectfully illustrate these statistical tests and the Fisher LSD Post-Hoc Analyses also conducted.

Table 10:

Univariate ANOVA: The Effect of Platform and Genre on Aural Answers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Corrected Model	3.580	5	0.716	2.372	0.042
Intercept	446.251	1	446.251	1478.182	0.000
Platform	2.606	2	1.303	4.316	0.015
Genre	0.935	1	0.935	3.098	0.080
Platform and Genre	0.039	2	0.019	0.064	0.938
Error	44.680	148	0.302		
Total	494.000	154			
Corrected Total	48.260	153			

Fisher LSD Post-Hoc: Audio

Platform	Platform	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mobile	Online	-0.27	0.108	0.014	-0.48	-0.06
	Theatre	-1.28	0.109	0.011	-0.50	-0.07
Online	Mobile	0.27	0.108	0.014	0.06	0.48
	Theatre	-0.01	0.109	0.916	-0.23	0.20
Theatre	Mobile	0.28	0.109	0.011	0.07	0.50
	Online	0.01	0.109	0.916	-0.20	0.23

In Table 10 it was found that platform is statistically significant to comprehension of audio information ($p = 0.015$, $p < .05$). However, genre was not found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.080$, $p > .05$). In the post-hoc analyses, it was found that the difference between mobile and theatre responses was most significant ($p = 0.011$, $p < .05$), between mobile and online it was still significant ($p = 0.014$, $p < .05$), and the difference between online and theatrical was not significant ($p = 0.916$, $p > .05$).

Table 11:
Univariate ANOVA: The Effect of Platform and Genre on Visual Answers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Corrected Model	55.372	5	11.074	18.739	0.000
Intercept	2427.693	1	2427.603	4107.706	0.000
Platform	8.968	2	4.484	7.587	0.001
Genre	44.423	1	44.423	75.168	0.000
Platform and Genre	1.670	2	0.835	1.413	0.247
Error	87.466	148	0.591		
Total	2567.000	154			
Corrected Total	142.838	153			

Fisher LSD Post-Hoc: Video

Platform	Platform	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mobile	Online	-0.37	0.151	0.017	-0.66	-0.07
	Theatre	-0.59	0.152	0.000	-0.89	-0.29
Online	Mobile	0.37	0.151	0.017	0.07	0.66
	Theatre	-0.22	0.152	0.149	-0.52	0.08
Theatre	Mobile	0.59	0.152	0.000	0.29	0.89
	Online	0.22	0.152	0.149	-0.08	0.52

In Table 11 it was found that both platform ($p=0.001$, $p < .05$) and genre ($p=0.000$, $p < .05$) are statistically significant to the comprehension of visual information. In the post-hoc analyses it was found that, like the audio information, the difference between comprehension on mobile and theatrical was most dramatically significant ($p=0.000$, $p < .05$), between mobile and online it was still significant ($p=0.017$, $p < .05$), and the difference between online and theatrical was not significant ($p=0.149$, $p > .05$).

Table 12:
Univariate ANOVA: The Effect of Platform and Genre on Dynamic Answers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Corrected Model	54.200	5	10.840	47.103	0.000
Intercept	814.200	1	814.200	3537.921	0.000
Platform	1.268	2	0.634	2.755	0.067
Genre	52.662	1	52.662	228.829	0.000
Platform and Genre	0.334	2	0.167	0.726	0.486
Error	34.060	148	0.230		
Total	902.000	154			
Corrected Total	88.260	153			

Fisher LSD Post-Hoc: Dynamic

Platform	Platform	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mobile	Online	-0.17	0.094	0.068	-0.36	-0.01
	Theatre	-0.21	0.095	0.031	-0.39	-0.02
Online	Mobile	0.17	0.094	0.068	0.01	0.36
	Theatre	-0.03	0.095	0.722	-0.22	0.15
Theatre	Mobile	0.21	0.095	0.031	0.02	0.39
	Online	0.03	0.095	0.722	-0.11	0.22

Table 12 found that genre was statistically significant in the comprehension of dynamic information ($p=0.000$, $p < .05$), however, platform was not significant ($p=0.067$, $p > .05$). In the post hoc analyses, unlike audio and visual comprehension, only the difference between mobile and theatrical was deemed significant ($p=0.031$, $p < .05$), while mobile and online ($p=0.068$, $p > .05$), and online and theatrical ($p=0.722$, $p > .05$) were not significant.

Interestingly enough, we see that while the comprehension of audio media is effected by the platform, the reading of visual media is effected by both platform and genre, and the understanding of dynamic material is effected by genre alone. Through the post-hoc analyses it becomes clear that there is an obvious difference in the way the platforms deal with the information. All three kinds of media — audio, visual and

dynamic— specify a varying distinction between the viewing platforms, with the divergence between mobile and theatre being the greatest, online and mobile being the middle ground, and online and theatre being the least.

Finally an analysis was done on the effect of platform, age, gender and genre on the cognitive responses of the subjects through an Univariate ANOVA.

Table 13:
Univariate ANOVA: The Effect of Platform, Age, Gender, and Genre on the Cognitive Responses

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Intercept	4058.214	1	4058.214	330.057	0.002
Genre	4.136	1	4.136	1.534	0.259
Platform	5.989	2	-	-	-
Age	28.266	5	5.653	2.975	0.434
Gender	8.651	1	-	-	-
Genre and Platform	5.588	2	2.794	2.367	0.230
Genre and Age	12.009	5	2.402	1.893	0.249
Genre and Gender	0.519	1	-	-	-
Platform and Age	19.786	7	2.827	0.059	0.702
Platform and gender	0.915	2	0.457	0.168	0.853
Age and Gender	2.761	3	0.920	0.344	0.797
Genre and Platform and Age	11.930	7	1.704	3.116	0.077
Genre and Platform and Gender	0.112	2	0.56	0.109	0.898
Genre and age and gender	0.395	3	0.123	0.233	0.871
Platform, age and gender	13.172	4	3.293	7.310	0.040
Genre, Platform, Age and Gender	1.802	4	0.450	0.297	0.879

Table 13 evaluates the effect of genre, platform, age and gender on the results of the comprehensive portion of the survey. Though it indicates that there is a statistically significant effect between platform, age and gender on the results of the questionnaire ($p=0.040$, $p < .05$), these results are inconclusive due to the small number of participants

surveyed. In addition, any other combination of age, gender, genre or platform was deemed insignificant.

8. Discussion

The results of the study, in response to the first research question —What are the cognitive differences in cinematic viewing between a theatrical, online and mobile experience? — indicate that there is a cognitive difference in the information garnered through the three cinematic platforms. The comprehension of messages within the films is different dependent on the media platform on which they are watched. This result is certainly not surprising, as it is alluded to in most of the theoretical scholarship on audience studies, but has never been empirically proven and was, for the most part, disregarded as too technologically determinist. Rather, this study does not prove that the technology is the determining factor in understanding the media, but a factor in the larger scheme of knowledge creation.

The environments of all three media are drastically different and certainly act as contributing elements to the general cognition of the information. The theatrical screening allows for a precise viewing in a social environment for which the audience already harbours expectations for retention. As a social experience, it is an event which focuses attention in one direction and on one element. The online viewing, like television viewing within the reader/viewer tradition, maintains both passive and active elements. The audience is able to adjust their viewing to fit their time frame and fast forward, pause or rewind to review portions. Their attention does not need to be as focused as a theatrical audience because they have the power to replay, or to do multiple things at once; for example: respond to email, answer the phone, or leave the room and come back to rewind as various subjects of this study did. Mobile participants hold the most amount of power as they literally hold the media in the palm of their hands. Not only can they

replay the films at will, they can also replay them anywhere they deem fit — from bedrooms to subways, work to coffee shops as subjects of this study did — even if the environment they decide upon is chaotic or distracting. However, their attention is not nearly as focused as theatrical or online audiences. As postmodern spectators, their viewing is fragmented by the environments around them, their ability to multi-task, and the convergence of the actual media platform that can allow them to answer phone calls, emails or instant messages, while mid-film, on the same platform. Several subject participants remarked that the media platform on which they viewed the films hindered their experience simply because it was not their platform of choice: whether too loud in the theatre, or not liking the snacks provided; having issues with their internet service providers (ISPs) or the website server in playing the films online; or in disliking the amount of attention they felt they had to give the films and being unfamiliar with the mobile platforms.

The technologies themselves are also a factor. Theatrical screens, though large, are also a distancing tool; the audience is allowed a certain amount of safety from the actions on screen. However, online platforms allow audiences to bridge the gap between public and private and invite the media, most often, into their homes. As previously noted in 3.3.2, this is increasingly problematic as the computer is a masculinized machine that is disturbing the domestic, or feminine, sphere. It causes increased issues in the fragmentations of space within contemporary society, particularly as it represents an infinite cyberspace that is neither public, nor private. Mobile technologies also act as transitioning tools of public and private, or public and domestic, spheres. Their screen sizes are significantly smaller than a theatre, the user is physically attached to the

platform via headphones and has to hold the device. In addition, they are for individual use.

The difference in screen size proved to be an important factor for the study subjects. In post-study interviews, many of the subjects referenced a scene in Film B in which the character is making money cake, wrapped coins that are placed in batter to be cooked into cake and received as “prizes” for the cakes consumers. All subjects who identified this scene were mobile subjects, and quite concerned that the character was attempting to poison her party guests, as they were not able to discern the difference between pills and coins on their smaller screens. As is quite obvious this is an extraordinary plot difference and changed the way many of the subjects understood the story.

The individualization of the media usability was another element frequently mentioned by study subjects. While the theatrical experience is, as mentioned, an event—in fact several of the theatrical subjects made the screening an event by going out to dinner with their friends following the viewing—the online and mobile experiences are significantly more solitary. Few subjects viewed the online films with others, and none of the mobile participants viewed them with anyone, despite not being told to view them alone.

The post-hoc analyses also provide valuable information in the variance between the platforms. As noted above, the difference between mobile and theatrical platforms was the most radical, followed by online and mobile, and finally little difference between the comprehension of messages from online and theatre. The most obvious reasoning behind this breach in comprehension is the environmental, technological and social

relations shaping the use of these media platforms. As outlined, the mobile and theatrical platforms are most different in all three of these influences.

The second research question of the study asks if age, gender, genre, or previous experience with the media technology effect these differences. Though the total number of participants is too small to definitively remark on the effect of age and gender on the viewing comprehension of the study subjects, it is interesting to note, that despite the decline in time spent viewing and using media during middle age, the comprehensive question answers did not decline, and overall the difference in gender is not significant. In addition, the previous behaviour with media technology of participants also does not appear to be significant in this study, most likely having to do with all of the participants being from a media saturated city. While many of the younger subjects were more adept at negotiating the iPod Touches —many of them owned them for themselves—the older subjects, though not familiar with the platforms, caught on quite quickly to the technology. In informal, post-study interviews, it became clear that while the younger subjects used the platforms for only the study, the older participants embraced the technology and used the other applications that came loaded on the iPods, particularly the internet browser.

Though age, gender, and previous media behaviour are not clearly significant in this study, the genre of the films has proven to be an effect. Film A and Film B are immensely different in themes, visuals, genres, and messages. Film B is far more ambiguous in its ending and notably more emotional. An overwhelming number of subjects mentioned these facts in the post-study interviews, there were even participants who refused to complete the section of the survey regarding Film B. It is clear from the

variances in the percentage of correct responses to the films—Film A received far more correct answers than Film B—that Film A was watched differently from Film B. This imbalance between scores may have been due to the assumed order of watching, Film A and Film B were only ever called Film A and Film B across all three platforms and while they were viewed in that order in the theatre, the online and mobile participants were given the option on which to watch first and may not have followed the natural progression of A to B. Though, I suspect that this has more to do with the actual content as logically, viewers tend to remember things they have just watched (Film B) rather than the previous information (Film A); and this is obviously not the case as subjects scored higher on the first film. Despite there being no statistical significance to the variances of these genres, and definitively no significance in the combination of platform and genre, I feel with a larger number of study subjects, the significance of genre on the comprehension of viewers would become more clear, unfortunately that is beyond the scope of this particular study.

Media platforms send messages in many different ways. The third research question of the study, Are dynamic, auditory or visual content comprehension altered by cognitive differences in viewing on a different platform?, reviews this concept, most notably present in Human-Computer Interaction theory scholarship. Statistically the auditory information was affected by the platform, the visual information was affected by both the platform and the genre, and the dynamic information was only affected by the genre. In the vein of McLuhan's sensory isolation in new technologies, the media platforms used all have technical aspects that lend themselves to certain facets over others in the receipt of information: while the theatre platform is dominant in auditory and

visual information; the online platform has a greatly reduced screen size and the aural abilities depend on the users computer technology; and the mobile platform is obviously more dominant to the auditory information as both the screen size and the affect of being attached to the technology by headphones increases that effect.

It is obvious that the platform would be an effect in the reception of auditory and visual information, it is, after all, the source of that information. However, it does not correlate that the dynamic information would only be affected by genre. Consequently, the results for the third research question are inconclusive. Though it is logical that different kinds of information would be altered dependent on the type of platform on which they are consumed, this study does not prove this concept. I suspect, with an enhanced and lengthier survey instrument, in addition with a usability study from future research it would be evident that different kinds of information are affected in different ways dependent on the platform on which they are viewed/consumed.

9. Conclusion

The New Spectator study demonstrates that there is a cognitive difference in the way information is received and understood by subjects using different cinematic platforms. Of the three media platforms — mobile, online and theatrical — we learn that mobile media is most significantly contrastive from theatrical, followed by online media and mobile media being quite dissimilar, and finally online and theatrical being relatively homogenous in how information is disseminated. Even in the propagation of audio, visual or dynamic information, the same pattern of comprehension is followed: theatrical subjects comprehend more cinematic information than online or mobile subjects, and mobile viewers comprehend the least. With the social, technological, and textual changes of roughly the last century, as noted through the evolution from Audience to Reader to User, the knowledge that information is not dealt with in the same way, by the same platform, should be of particular interest for the future of knowledge creation and all studies of communication.

The New Spectator proves that the way people understand, and the method through which they garner this understanding, is changing. Cognition, like media, is converging and, echoing postmodernism, it is fragmenting the spectator's understanding of information. As determined in this study, past and current research concentrates on the qualitative aspects of texts, rather than amalgamating empirical evidence with qualitative analysis to inform, and validate research about audiences. It is clear from this study that audiences have the ability to comprehend and read a text, but their level of comprehension fluctuates depending on the way they interact with the information. As a result, in addition to knowing what information the audiences are viewing, we need to

know how these new technologies are changing the way we understand information, because the ways we understand are not enhanced by new technologies. As evidenced by this study, and suggested by the User paradigm of research, mobilities fragment the comprehension and impede the cognition of information, consequently, it is necessary to determine what audiences are capable of, not just what users can innovate within future technologies. Forthcoming scholarship needs to examine these technological trends to evaluate both the effect and physical affect in the user's cognition, as well as the effect of different kinds of information (educational, news, violent, comic, etc.) not just filmic entertainment. Researchers need to examine whether or not future cinematic content should be adapted or developed in different ways for various platforms and, most particularly, we need to analyze the convergence of cognition in the same way, and to a greater extent than the convergence of electronic media.

The New Spectator has proven that there is a cognitive difference in the way filmic information is read and the way a spectator's comprehension of information is affected by technology. The way a User comprehends is different than the way an Audience sees or a Reader interprets. The platform on which one views is a significant contributor to the level of comprehension. While that information might seem logical to the media user, it has never been demonstrated in an empirical study such as this one. By grounding the study in a historical context of abandoned scientific effects studies, textual and contextual readings, and digital user technologies, it has informed the study in a social, technological and textual awareness that is necessary as our levels of understanding and our need for information grow. As Virginia Nightingale has explained, "What we previously called 'audience research' now extends beyond both the

traditional paradigms and reception into studies of cultural participation and the processes of inter-culturalism and inter-communalism” (Nightingale, 1999, p. 145).

It is, therefore, problematic to realize through this study’s results, that while technology is at the User stage of comprehension, scholarship is still grounded in the textual Reader/Viewer stage, and though contemporary spectators are required to be Audience members, media Readers *and* technology Users, it is plain to see that they are suffering from cognition convergence which is not allowing comprehension. Our intellectual capacity of the knowledge necessary to navigate in this information age is not up to par. It is for this reason that contemporary audiences cannot be called audiences, readers or users, they can only be called spectators. The new spectator is interactive with media; they are the audience, the reader, the user, quite frequently the creator of content and they are the spectators we need to be study to determine the future of information comprehension within this transformative society.

10. Appendices

1. Survey Instrument:

The New Spectator Questionnaire

Date: _____

I. Demographics

i. Age: _____

ii. Sex (circle one): M F

iii. Ethnicity (circle one):

Caucasian

Black or African Canadian

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

Middle Eastern

Other (please specify): _____

iv. Highest Level of Education Completed (circle one):

Elementary School

Secondary School

College Diploma

Undergraduate Degree

Graduate Degree

v. Where did you watch these films (please list all locations):

vi. Did you find the environment(s) you watched the films in distracting? Why or Why not? For example: Was there too much noise/jostling/movement/people/etc?

vii. Did you feel the media you watched the films on (circle one):
hindered *enhanced* *did not effect*
your experience of the films. If hindered or enhanced please explain:

IV. Textual questions

Please choose the most suitable answer for the following questions (circle one).

FILM A:

i. What is the title of film A?

- a) Smokestack
- b) a small thing
- c) a Small Smokestack
- d) A Smokey Thing

ii. What is the main character's name?

- a) Elena
- b) Margaret
- c) Smokestack
- d) Danny

iii. How do the character's commit suicide?

- a) Jumping off a bridge.
- b) Drowning in a bathtub.
- c) Electrocution.
- d) Poison.

iv. Who is the older visitor?

- a) The main character's dad
- b) The leading lady's father
- c) The Writer
- d) The Poet.

v. What colour is the female lead's dress?

- a) Blue.
- b) Brown
- c) Orange
- d) Red

vi. What colour are the two rooms in which the story takes place?

- a) red and yellow
- b) brown and red
- c) green and brown
- d) yellow and green.

vii. What character is displayed on the wall?

- a) a frog
- b) a pirate
- c) a rabbit
- d) a chimpanzee

viii. With what instrument does the main character try to kill the other lead?

- a) a knife

- b) a boat
- c) a letter opener
- d) a rope

ix. What is the secret ingredient in the pasta?

- a) love
- b) TLC
- c) bones
- d) a special recipe

x. liked Film A: yes no indifferent

FILM B:

xi. What is the title of film B?

- a) Smokestack
- b) a small thing
- c) a Small Smokestack
- d) A Smokey Thing

xii. What is the main character's name?

- a) Elena
- b) Margaret
- c) Smokestack
- d) Danny

xiii. What event is the main character recreating?

- a) a birthday party
- b) an anniversary
- c) a bat mitzvah
- d) a homecoming

xiv. Who wears the plaid jacket?

- a) Danny
- b) Smokestack
- c) The lead character's father

d) The lead character's boyfriend

xv. What colour is the main character's hair?

- a) brown
- b) black
- c) blonde
- d) strawberry blonde

xvi. Which of the following is a gift the main character receives?

- a) a swan lamp
- b) a plaid coat
- c) a camera
- d) a tape recorder

xvii. What kind of dessert is served?

- a) Chocolate cupcakes
- b) apple pie
- c) chocolate cake
- d) cookies

xviii. What is the main character's significant other's name?

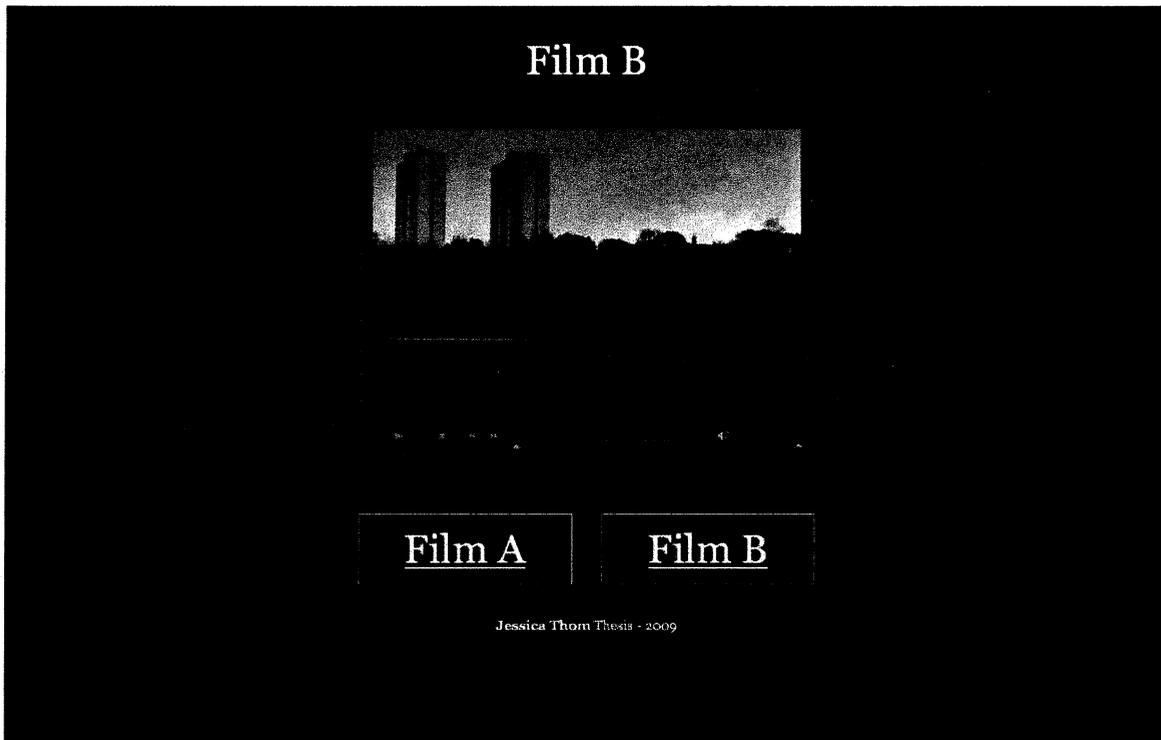
- a) Smokestack
- b) Ben
- c) Danny
- d) Michael

xivx. What animal haunts the main character's dreams?

- a) rabbits
- b) elephants
- c) lions
- d) swans

xv. I liked Film B: yes no indifferent

2. Image of Online Film Website



3. Script From Film A

"Smokestack"

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FADE IN:

LIMBO

Out of the shadows steps the WRITER: a weathered old man. He motions, and four walls rise up around him, forming an empty room. He begins to walk around.

Two PARTY GUESTS slide past him. A couch with two guests slides into position, as does a bookshelf and wall paintings. He heads into the dining room where a table and three more guests slide in. Looking somewhat satisfied, the old man vanishes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The house is full of many party guests talking, drinking, and partaking n debauchery. SMOKESTACK approaches ELENA.

SMOKESTACK

Hello.

ELENA

Hi.

SMOKESTACK

I'm Smokestack.

ELENA

You're what?

SMOKESTACK

Um...my name's Smokestack.

ELENA

Oh. Oh! Hi. Smokestack, sorry. That really is one of the weirdest Names of all time.

SMOKESTACK

Thanks.

ELENA

This is your party right?
I'm Elena.

The two shake hands and smile.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Smokestack and Elena are eating pasta at the dinner table.

ELENA

This is pretty good.

SMOKESTACK

Thank you. The secret ingredient is love...or maybe pasta, I forget.

ELENA

I never would have taken you for a chef. You're full of surprises.

SMOKESTACK

And bones. I'm also full of bones.

ELENA

(laughs)

You know what we should do? We should-

She stops abruptly and freezes on the spot.

SMOKESTACK

We should...what? Play scrabble?
Join a Russian circus?

He looks more closely at her. The writer appears behind him.

WRITER

Oh God. This isn't working.

Smokestack spins around, frightened.

SMOKESTACK

Um...who the hell are you?

WRITER

I'm your god.

SMOKESTACK

Right. Get out of here before I call the cops.

WRITER

How do you plan to call the cops without a phone?

Smokestack gives him a weird look then runs out of the room. The writer moves into the living room and sits on the couch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The writer flicks his hands and the lights turn on. A glass of bourbon on the rocks slides into his hands. Smokestack returns.

SMOKESTACK

What did you do with my phone?
Are you some type of phone thief?

WRITER

Christ. Why did I make you such a smartass, but without eh smart? Listen, idiot. I'm your creator. Everything you are and everything you do is directly because of me.

SMOKESTACK

You're a psychopath!

WRITER

Calm. Down.

Smokestack calms down.

SMOKESTACK

Wow. I feel...quite calm. How did you do that?

WRITER

You don't get it. You're a fictional character, in my story. I'm your writer. I can make you act like a duck.

SMOKESTACK

Quack quack.

WRITER

I can make you do cartwheels.

Smokestack does a cartwheel.

WRITER

I can erase you from existence, and bring you back again.

Smokestack disappears, then reappears.

WRITER

I can do whatever I want to you, because I am real, and you are not. So, do you get it, or do I need to demonstrate that point any further? Because it's really pretty fun.

Smokestack considers this.

SMOKESTACK

No. No I think I get it.

WRITER

Good.

Smokestack moves over to Elena and waves his hand in front of her face. She remains motionless.

SMOKESTACK

What'd you do to her?

WRITER

Don't worry about it. I need you to do something for me.

SMOKESTACK

Sure thing.

WRITER

Kill her.

SMOKESTACK

What!? Why?

WRITER

The story isn't working, and she's the reason why. I tried to add a love interest, but it's feeling too shallow.

SMOKESTACK

It doesn't feel shallow to me.

WRITER

Of course not. It seems romantic to you. To the rest of the world, it's...well...cheesy.

Smokestack moves back to the living room.

SMOKESTACK

Well...I don't want to kill her!
And...aren't you controlling me?
Why don't you just do it?

WRITER

It's complicated. I've accidentally made you too realistic. You're not doing everything I want you to. It's never really happened before, but there's not much I can do about it now.

SMOKESTACK

Right...Why not just rewrite the story without her?

WRITER

I'm like her father. I can't just scrap her. I want to keep her in the story, but she needs to die. A good dramatic death will really touch the hearts of the audience.

SMOKESTACK

But then they'll hate me!

WRITER

Don't worry. I'll work in a redemption for you later on...probably.

SMOKESTACK

But I can't just kill an innocent person.

WRITER

She's not a person, she's a character. And if you don't do it, then I'll have no choice but to scrap the entire story. I don't think you want that.

SMOKESTACK

But- -

WRITER

Just do it.

The writer vanishes, and Elena is unfrozen.

ELENA

- go see that new movie with ...wha, where'd you go?

Smokestack is looking rather pale.

SMOKESTACK

Um, oh I just had to...(grabs a model boat) ... clean my boat.

ELENA

I see...

Smokestack laughs awkwardly, then returns to the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Smokestack sits down at the table.

ELENA

So I was wondering if -

Smokestack immediately gets up again.

SMOKESTACK

Excuse me one moment.

ELENA

Oh...kay?

Smokestack leaves the dining room. Elena continues eating her food. Then Smokestack reappears, sneaking behind Elena with the small model boat in his hand.

He holds the boat above Elena's head, ready to smash it down but he hesitates.

ELENA

Are you trying to smash my head in with that little boat?

SMOKESTACK

What makes you say that?

ELENA

(turns around)

The fact that you are clearly trying to smash my head in with that little boat.

Smokestack returns to his seat at the table.

SMOKESTACK

I can see why you'd think that. But what would you think if I told you that...god...told me I had to kill you, or he'd destroy the universe.

ELENA

I'd think it a poor move on a first date.

SMOKESTACK

I see.

Smokestack leaves the dining room. The wallpaper suddenly rips. Scraps of paper gush out.

ELENA

What the hell!?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elena comes in. Paper strands are coming out of the walls. Paper scraps fall from the ceiling.

ELENA

What's going on?

SMOKESTACK

I told you. If I don't kill you,
the universe will end.

ELENA

I'm still not sure if you're joking or
not.

SMOKESTACK

It's just that... (moves closer) I
really like you Elena, and you
know what? Screw it. I'd rather
witness the end of the world with
you, than go on living alone.

The two kiss passionately.

SMOKESTACK

We're fictional, you know?

ELENA

I know.

SMOKESTACK

You know? What do you mean you
know?

ELENA

I figured it out.

SMOKESTACK

It was that love speech I just
gave, wasn't it?

SMOKESTACK

(laughs)

Goddammit.

ELENA

So, um, what happens now?

SMOKESTACK

I don't know. The writer told me
he'd scrap the story if I didn't
kill you.

ELENA

That's not very nice of him. Why
didn't he just do it himself?

Smokestack rolls his eyes and shrugs. More deep ripping

sounds are heard. The paper strands increase in size and volume. Paper scraps fall more consistently from the ceiling.

ELENA

Well, listen, it it'll save the story, you might as well kill me. We're not accomplishing anything by letting him destroy it.

SMOKESTACK

No. I'm gonna call his bluff.

ELENA

What?

SMOKESTACK

I don't think he actually wants to wreck this story...he's just using it as a threat.

ELENA

So what do we do?

SMOKESTACK

Kill ourselves.

ELENA

...Is there a plan B, by any chance?

SMOKESTACK

This'll work. If he cares at all about the story, then he won't let us do it.

ELENA

And if he doesn't care?

SMOKESTACK

Do you really want to be a character with an ingrate of a writer?

ELENA

Alright. Let's do it.

Smokestack drags in a bathtub full of water and bubble bath.

ELENA

You put bubble bath in it?

SMOKESTACK

What? I like bubble bath.

Elena rolls her eyes. Smokestack grabs an old radio.

The two get in the bathtub. Smokestack turns on the radio, only static is heard. The walls are practically covered in paper. Paper scraps rain down violently from the ceiling, and burst through holes in the walls.

ELENA

Smokestack?

SMOKESTACK

Yes, Elena?

ELENA

What happens when the story ends?

SMOKESTACK

I imagine everything just...fades out.

ELENA

What happens to us?

SMOKESTACK

I really don't know.

He holds the radio over the tub.

SMOKESTACK

(calling out)

Well, writer, if you care at all about us, then don't let me drop this. If you don't care...then I'm sorry we weren't better characters.

He pauses for a moment, cringes, and finally drops the radio in the tub. There is a blinding flash of light. When it dies down, Smokestack and Elena have disappeared. The entire room turns to paper and disappears.

LIMBO

Smokestack and Elena appear in complete blackness, alive and dry. The writer is sitting on the couch, slowly clapping, with a big grin on his face.

WRITER

Nice.

SMOKESTACK

You!?

ELENA

Who's he?

SMOKESTACK

The writer.

ELENA

You!?

WRITER

Well, that all was exciting.
Suicide, eh? I have to say I didn't
see that one coming.

ELENA

You've got a lot of nerve showing
up like this.

WRITER

Okay, I have been a bit of an asshole.
I'll make it up to you. I need an
ending, and I'm going to let you two
decide on what it should be.

SMOKESTACK

But the story was destroyed.

WRITER

You know, in the end, I kinda like
the way it turned out. But perhaps
our tastes are different. Anyway,
an ending is required. Anything
you want.

Smokestack and Elena look at each other.

SMOKESTACK

You are writing us. You know what
we want.

WRITER

That, huh? Yeah...I guess it could
work. Consider it done.

SMOKESTACK

Can I ask you one more thing,
before it happens?

WRITER

Sure?

SMOKESTACK

This has been bugging me. Why the
hell is my name Smokestack?

WRITER

Would you rather be named John?

SMOKESTACK

Not really.

WRITER

There you go.

Smokestack smirks. The writer motions with his hands.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The house is full of many party guests talking, drinking, and partaking in debauchery. Smokestack approaches Elena.

SMOKESTACK

Hello.

ELENA

Hi.

SMOKESTACK

I'm Smokestack.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

4. Script from Film B

"a small thing"

Adam Garnet Jones

©Adam Garnet Jones 2008

EXT. OUTDOOR TRACK - DAY

Margaret, 25, sweet-faced, looks straight ahead. She jogs around the track, ignoring the rich fall colours of the trees and grass around her.

INT. MARGARET'S KITCHEN -NIGHT

Danny, 26, skinny, stands in front of Margaret, who fidgets on a high stool. Danny's face crumples.

DANNY

I love you.

Margaret smiles, wan.

MARGARET

(uncomfortable, kind)

Thank you.

Danny's mouth twitches. Margaret sits on her hands.

EXT. CENTRAL TECH - DAY

Margaret runs. Her breath steams in the morning air.

INT. MARGARET'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Danny takes a deep breath. His pinched shoulders rise and hold there.

DANNY

I'm finished, Margaret. I'm done.

Danny moves away from her. Margaret starts to move off the stool, then reseats herself. She looks at Danny.

MARGARET

I love you...

DANNY

No...you don't.

Margaret squints, concentrating.

Margaret

Yes I do. I'm pretty sure you're wrong. I know I do. You're...really wonderful.

EXT. OUTDOOR TRACK - DAY

Margaret picks up speed as she rounds a corner of the track.

INT. MARGARET'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

DANNY

I can't do this anymore. There's
this...

Danny punches his fist into the palm of his hand. Margaret
flinches. He begins to cry.

MARGARET

I know.

DANNY

I talk. Your mind is somewhere
else. We have sex... and you're
this... empty thing.

Danny turns to leave. Margaret opens her mouth, then closes
it again. Danny turns back.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Do you even know what's happening?

MARGARET

I'm not empty.

Danny slams the door. Margaret's eyes slowly search the
room, confused and alone.

EXT. OUTDOOR TRACK -- DAY

Margaret slows down a little, breathing hard.

INT. NATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Margaret sits alone in a large reception area. The phone
rings. She looks at the flashing red light, and ignores it.
A solid woman in white pumps approaches her.

OFFICE WOMAN

Hi Margaret, can you file these?
She hands a folder to Margaret, who fumbles and drops it.

OFFICE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Sorry Marg. Your hair looks nice
today.

Margaret smiles and tucks a strand behind her ear as she
collects the papers.

MARGARET

Thanks. It's... dirty.

OFFICE WOMAN

Oh.

MARGARET

Hey, can I ask you something?

The woman opens her mouth to object.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Um... Do I seem empty to you?

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM

A man with a metal detector stands at the sidewalk outside Margaret's living room window, looking for metal. The machine beeps and he gets down on his hands and knees, poking through the grass with a pen-knife. He pulls a key out of the ground, looks up at Margaret, and smiles. Margaret lifts her hand to give a little wave. She looks at the post-it notes in her hand, and back to the old man. A growing realization passes over her face...

DETECTOR MAN

Sometimes you have to dig.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM

The phone rings on the other end of the line as Margaret cradles the receiver. An answering machine picks up. Margaret scribbles words on a pad of post-it notes while listening to the message.

DANNY

(v.o)

Noam Chomsky once said that "If we choose, we can live in a world of comforting illusion." I'm working on that. Leave me a message.

Margaret furrows her brow, placing her sticky notes in a line on the wall.

MARGARET

Hey Danny. I know you don't want to talk to me, but I just wanted to let you know that I took your advice. I've got to... sort myself out. But I think I've got a system going, so that's good. Also, I was wondering if you want to be friends now or if it's too soon. I wasn't sure. Okay. Give me a call. Bye.

Margaret hangs up the phone and stares at the papers on the

wall. Below the sticky note labelled 'system' are three other notes in a line: Photos. People. Birthday. Margaret takes a step back from the wall, and examines her work from a distance, arms akimbo.

INT. MARGARET'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Margaret's fourth grade photo stares back at her from the page of her photo album. Margaret flips through pictures of her tenth birthday party. Girls in party dresses, smiling faces, and a young version of herself, sitting at the head of a table behind a lamp with a bow on it. The lamp is shaped like a swan, with a pink shade sprouting out of its back.

Margaret presses her fingers to her eyelids. Her eyes swim with murky colour and moving grain, like looking at an enlarged photograph.

A record begins to softly play a kazoo rendition of "Teddy Bears' Picnic." The sound gets louder.

INT. BASEMENT (DREAM) - DAY

The record can be heard at full volume. A birthday party is in progress. Three nearly identical girls stand in a line wearing purple sweatsuits and elephant masks. A 60 year old woman, ARVELLA, in a red plaid flannel jacket, stands hunched over a birthday cake, with a defibrillator in her hands. She jams the pads of the device into the cake. The cake is covered with small purple flowers. Forget-me-nots. Young Margaret holds a large knife in her hands, staring at the cake, terrified.

A man's voice comes out of Arvella's mouth.

ARVELLA
c'mon... c'mon!

The little girls lift small bouquets of purple flowers in their fists. The elephant masks are expressionless. The music stops.

INT. MARGARET'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Margaret's eyes snap open in the hard morning light. Margaret, wrapped in a bathrobe, stubs her toe on the photo album. A purple-sparkled child's address book slips out of the cover. Inside the album, rows of girls' names are scrawled in a careful hand.

INT. NATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS -- DAY

The large reception area appears to be empty. A small sign reads "back in 5 Minutes." The cord from the phone at reception has been pulled to its limit, and disappears under the reception desk. Margaret huddles under the desk, cradling the telephone receiver.

MRS. STEWART

Hello. You have reached the Stewart family. We're not available to take your call, but if you leave your name, number, and the time you called, we'll be happy to give you a call back as soon as we can.

The voicemail beeps. Margaret takes a quick deep breath.

MARGARET

Hi there Mrs. Stewart, it's Margaret, Cassie's friend from down the street? I'm just calling because I'd like to invite her to my birthday party next week on October 15th...

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARGARET

(v.o)

I'm inviting a bunch of kids from the neighborhood over, so if you could pass the message along to Brenda, that'd be great.

Margaret stands in front of the growing nest of notes on the wall. A number of photographs are taped up. One of them has a note on it that reads: Swan from...?

Margaret looks at the photo through the thick bottom of a water glass, pressing her eye socket into the rim. The image becomes a mass of coloured grain.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Margaret walks along the street, glances at the purple address book, then continues looking at the house numbers. She stops in front of a tidy brick house.

She pulls an envelope from her purse, walks to the house, and places the invitation in front of the door. The invitation reads "you are invited!"

EXT. BATHURST ST. BRIDGE - DAY

Margaret walks over the bridge, struggling with an enormous bunch of purple balloons.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Margaret walks by the Detector man, who is waving the instrument over someone's lawn. She fingers a large roll of paper that she has tucked under one arm. Two more rolls stick out of Margaret's backpack, dwarfing her. Margaret smiles.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Margaret opens her black day planner to the first page. Only two names are listed in the address section: Danny and Auntie Arvella.

Margaret dials a number, then unrolls the package of paper against the wall, while cradling the cell phone against her shoulder. Only the edge of the paper is visible.

ARVELLA

Hello?

Margaret stops mid-breath.

MARGARET

Oh, you're there.

Margaret puts a tack into the large paper on the wall.

ARVELLA

Margaret?

MARGARET

Yep, it's me.

Margaret chews the inside of her cheek, and slumps down on the floor.

MARGARET

I um, wanted to invite you to my birthday party...

The walls surrounding her are covered by larger-than-life sized blow-ups of childhood photos: Margaret and two smiling girls in front of an elephant. Two girls with crowns of purple flowers. Largest of all is an image of Margaret and the swan lamp. Margaret shuts her eyes. The record of "Teddy-Bears' Picnic" begins again.

INT. BASEMENT (DREAM) -- DAY

Red plaid covers everything in the basement. Red plaid table. Red plaid walls. Red plaid salt and pepper shakers. Three identically dressed girls in elephant masks, purple sweatsuits and ballet slippers sit in a circle on the floor

with young Margaret laying on the floor in the middle of them.

The girls play pass-the-parcel with the defibrillator. When the music stops, one of the girls lifts the pads of the defibrillator, and presses them against Margaret's head. A squealing sound begins as the machine charges up. Behind the girls, Arvella puts a piece of the red plaid cake on a plate. She speaks in a man's voice.

ARVELLA

Who wants caaaaaaaaake!?

The defibrillator squeals. Young Margaret's eyes go wide. The defibrillator makes a BAM! noise.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Margaret tapes up a piece of paper beside one of the photographs. The paper reads: Do you remember who gave me this for my birthday? Which birthday was it? Write the answer down and win a prize!

INT. MARGARET'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Margaret pours batter into cupcake tins and plops quarters, wrapped in foil, into each puddle of batter.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Margaret tapes a little sign beside an audio cassette recorder, which reads: Record your favorite memory on tape!

MARGARET

Hi. This is a message for Brittney
- she probably doesn't live there
anymore, but...

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Margaret places a plate of cupcakes on a table that sits heavy with elaborate party snacks.

MARGARET

... so hopefully I'll see you at
seven. Call if you need
directions. Bye.

Margaret hangs up the phone, and looks at the blown up photograph of the girls and the swan lamp looming on the other wall.

Margaret slumps on the sofa in the corner. A band of light slowly makes its way across a massive picture of Margaret, passing over one grainy, enlarged eye.

Margaret shuts her eyes.
The balloons are starting to sag a little. The cuckoo clock sounds ten times.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A shadowy figure moves out of the darkness, and reaches for Margaret's face. As Margaret's eyes clear, the features are recognizable as Arvella.

ARVELLA

Hey there, sleepy-girl.

MARGARET

Okay. Hi.

ARVELLA

It's alright, you just relax.
Arvella's here.

Arvella walks around the room, taking in the photos on the wall, the table of treats, and the notes on the walls.

MARGARET

Nobody's here...

Arvella gestures softly for her to be quiet. She walks past the photo of the girls with flowers in their hair.

Arvella reads the sign, then writes something on the paper beside the photograph.

ARVELLA

This was from the summertime at the farm. I made you and Cassie those outfits. You wore them right out.

Arvella stands in front of the next photograph, the one of the girls and elephants.

ARVELLA

This was with you and Erin at the zoo. What a mess. You got into my makeup and thought I didn't know.

When Arvella gets to the picture of Margaret at her birthday party, she stops. The TV is placed near the photograph.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

Mmmmmmm... I brought something that belongs with this...

Arvella slides a tape into the VHS deck, then sits down on the sofa beside Margaret. There's a stack of albums on the coffee-table in front of her. She picks one up and flicks on a standing lamp beside her. Margaret is distracted by the images that appear on the video screen.

When Arvella opens the cover, there are pages of photographs with sticky notes beside them. A question has been written on each note. Arvella runs her hand over the notes, and looks up at Margaret.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Margaret tenses presses her lips together in a tight line. She leans over and rests her head on Arvella's shoulder.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

Do you remember that summer when you were sixteen?

Arvella sees the tape recorder and the note on the table: "Record your favorite memory on tape!" Arvella picks it up.

MARGARET

I don't know if I...

ARVELLA

Shhhhh... we're recording a memory.

Arvella starts the tape recorder.

ARVELLA

Now that birthday, Your father had been up in the Sault with work, and he had just come back that afternoon for your party. You were turning... eleven, I think?

Margaret stares at the tiny wheels of the tape-recorder. It becomes difficult to hear Arvella over the turning of the tape. Pieces of her story drift in and out.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

Anyways, you had already opened your presents, and all the kids were down in the basement horsing around...

Margaret shuts her eyes. The low sound of a knife grinds on a block. The blur of colour and film grain fill her vision.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

... so I told him he should have a couple of bites...

Margaret opens her eyes, but does not look at Arvella. Sounds of the television creep in. Margaret is drawn in to the video of herself at a ballet class. Margaret searches the images. The television sounds get louder.

The new sound overwhelms some of Arvella's story. Pieces of the story are lost.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

But... before ... he just slid ...

Arvella gazes into the darkness of the room, lost in her memories. Margaret watches the screen. With the other noises getting clearer, Arvella sounds far away. The girls on the screen are taking off their practice shoes.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...and I couldn't help... ...hope
that girl stays...

Young Margaret grins at the camera. Her Father passes the camera to Arvella. Margaret flies into his red plaid arms and plants kisses on his neck.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...when the ambulance had... ...I
remember seeing you...

The sound from the video takes over, obscuring most of Arvella's story. The image on the TV switches to a birthday party with girls in masks.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...on top of him and his shirt...
that they do... like "Bam!...
Bam!...

On the video, Arvella slices cake. A camera flashes.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...so much like a rock...

Margaret, her mouth full of cake, sticks her tongue out for the camera. Other girls run to the camera with cake in their mouths. The camera flashes.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...You watched him there ...And
your face... all the way to the...

Margaret opens a present. She unwraps a unicorn sweater. The girls sing a song.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

...When they told you... alone!?!...

Margaret unwraps a lamp that looks like a swan. Arvella takes a sip of tea, then looks at Margaret.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

Anyways, you don't look hard like that anymore. Just scared, like the rest of us.

Arvella looks away, wipes her face. Margaret's eyes stay on the TV.

INT. MARGARET'S LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Light streams in over the mess left from the party. The photographs are up on the walls, and the food is still out, but the balloons have floated to the floor. Margaret is curled up on the couch, still in her dress, barely awake. An answering machine breaks the silence.

DANNY

Hi Margaret. It's Danny. Sorry I didn't come last night.

Margaret takes the tape out of the tape recorder, and looks at it.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I was... I don't know if it's good for me to see you, but I thought I should call... I don't know. Bye.

EXT. OUTDOOR TRACK -- DAY

Margaret stretches with a walkman at her waist, and headphones on. She sees the detector man with the metal detector on the other side of the fence. Margaret turns away, presses play on the deck, and begins to run. The hiss of the empty tape can be heard over the headphones.

Arvella's voice comes through the headphones, clear, but competing with the sounds of traffic from around the track. Margaret's face is stony.

ARVELLA

Now that birthday, Your father had been up in the Sault with work, and he had just come back that afternoon for your party. You were turning... eleven, I think?

Margaret presses the headphones deeper into her ear, and some of the outside noises drop away.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

Anyways, you had already opened your presents, and all the kids were down in the basement horsing around. What a racket you could make if you wanted to! Jack was hungry, so I told him he should have a couple of bites before going downstairs to see you. He knew you'd be dragging him all over the house, showing off your new things as soon as he went down there. And it's a good thing he didn't, because just before he took his first bite, he said he had a pain. I looked up, and then he just slid right down off the chair. He kept doing this thing with one hand, kind of... clutching. And I couldn't help thinking, god I hope those kids stay downstairs.

The only sound now is the warm voice of Arvella, feet on the track, and Margaret's wet breathing.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

And then... I don't know... I don't remember calling the ambulance, and I don't know what happened to the rest of the kids, but I remember seeing you. In the doorway. Jack was on the floor, with an attendant on top of him and his shirt open, doing whatever it is that they do. It made this noise like "Bam!... Bam!" And you just stiffened up. I've never seen a girl look so much like a rock.

Margaret's face starts to change, loosen, as she runs.

ARVELLA (CONT'D)

You watched him there, took it all in, and you stayed hard like that all the way to the hospital. And then when they told you he was dead, I heard you screaming from the other room - "where is he!? Is he alone!?" Over and over. "Is he alone?!" Awful. Anyways, you

don't look hard like that anymore.
Just scared, like the rest of us.

A tear runs down Margaret's face, surprising her.

MARGARET

Is that it?

ARVELLA

What?

MARGARET

Was that supposed to help?

Margaret slows down to a walk. She fights to keep it in, but she can't stop crying. She crouches down on the track, hugging her knees. All Margaret can hear is the electric crackle of a tape with nothing recorded on it. From above, the track is a closed loop. Margaret picks herself up and walks off the track.

THE END.

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