

‘Please turn your phone on’: Analysing outcomes of second-screen spectatorship using Social Media in the cinema space

Dario Llinares,
University of Brighton, UK

Abstract:

The strand of film studies that engages with the material experience of cinema-going has largely been subordinated to textually focused, Marxist, psychoanalytic and semiotic critical paradigms. Such approaches however, are based on monolithic assumptions regarding how the configuration of spectator, space, and projected image forges a unique and essential cinematic experience: the *dispositif*. In turn, a hegemonic viewing practice – quiet, concentrated, immersed, reverential spectatorship – has been ingrained as a cultural standard through interrelated commercial, cultural and academic forces. Indeed, it arguably remains central to the pedagogic philosophy of university film education. The transformations of the digital age, particularly post web 2.0 social media, is having an unsettling effect on the constitution, status and active role of the film audience. Interactive spectatorship practices such as second-screening, although commonplace during television or online viewing, have largely been kept out of the auditorium. However, the encroachment of communications technologies into the cinema space is occurring, both in terms of illicit, disruptive practices, but also through specifically designed reformations, expansions and reconceptualisations of the apparatus and experiential outcomes of the cinematic. This article outlines the methodological development, pilot screenings and initial findings of a research project entitled *Interactive Spectatorships*, which utilises a second-screen configuration: a live twitter feed of audience comments projected alongside a film as it is screened in real time. The article interrogates participant responses to qualitative and quantitative questioning focused around themes of engagement, immersion, active v passive viewing, communal viewing, and how social media is reconstituting the doing and being of audience practice.

Keywords: Cinema, *Dispositif*, Twitter, Second-Screening, Spectatorship, Audience Research

Introduction: Rejecting the Auditorium?

One of the most salient aspects of studying film at university was the credo that seeing films in the cinema space was integral to one's scholarship. As a student at Sheffield Hallam University, where I studied from 1999-2002, digital projection in lecture theatres and seminar rooms was becoming standard, but the department took pride in the fact that many of the screenings were still shown on film. Screenings and lectures were also regularly held at the local Showroom Cinema, which imbued an even deeper sense that cinema was a cultural, social and embodied experience of which the film text was just one component. The campus library had an extensive VHS and growing DVD library, and because of the ease of access, coupled with a fervent desire to expand my viewing vocabulary, I devoured films on the small screen. But the ethos of the course was summed up by respected film scholar Sylvia Harvey in one of the first statements to our new cohort: 'watching a film on television is like reading a book with some of the pages missing'.

Throughout my academic career, teaching on various film and media studies courses, the prerequisite of auditorium viewing has usually been built into curricula in some way. Academic education in film, both structurally and ideologically, asserts the primacy of a 'cinematic dispositif' – the technological, spatial and social apparatus that creates the unique experience of cinema (Baudry 1975, Deleuze 1992 Bellour 2000, Martin 2011) – as an integral part of film studies pedagogy. Not only is cinema viewing imbued as a philosophical principle on film degrees, and defined as the bedrock of cinema as an art form, commercial entertainment and cultural practice, it serves to affirm a specific mode of disciplined spectatorship: the still, silent, concentrated viewer, cognitively immersed into the film world presented on screen, yet engaged in active spectatorship.

As any film academic would admit, students' engagement with the auditorium experience is an uneven one. Lack of attendance is obviously an issue in all areas of higher education and there are complex factors behind it. However, it would always confound me as somehow a deeper sacrilege when film students would leave after the lecture and not return for the screening. Subsequent seminar discussion, designed to reflect on the film in an in-depth, critical way, can often be rather superficial, indicative of passive engagement (even from those who had seen it). It sometimes seems as though, even in the university context, the cinema environment is conceived as opportunity to escape from the labour of learning. Also, since the mid-2000s, the increasing prevalence of WiFi-enabled devices began to encroach into all higher education spaces. Seeing them appear in the auditorium, albeit still sporadically, pointed towards the social ubiquity we now see and, suggested the cinema space would not be immune. I am not wishing to besmirch all film students here, but the counterintuitive question arose in my mind as to how effective traditional screenings truly are in terms of pedagogic outcomes for contemporary students. Might there be a way to enhance critically active viewing of the film text deploying digital technologies that students use as a matter of course?

In informal discussions with various undergrad cohorts about the issue of screenings, most students intimated the belief that auditorium viewing is the ideal situation in which to

watch a film, yet it isn't deemed essential to their cultural or pedagogic concept of cinema. Indeed, many professed a preference for home and/or mobile viewing, stressing the control of where, when and how they watch, and the more open social communication possibilities (both material and virtual). Some students intimated a relaxed attitude to the use of electronic devices in the auditorium, suggesting their utility for note-taking or looking up information. Many also admitted texting or using social media during the screenings was commonplace. Other students were strident about maintaining the traditional *dispositif*, being highly critical of secondary media use during screenings.

These (albeit anecdotal) responses to initial informal seminar discussions provoked self-reflexive questions as to how the screening, embedded into a pedagogic framework, facilitates learning. Is it possible to ask students who use mobile technologies as an integrated part of their everyday life, to leave that part of themselves at the door and conform to a specific 20th-century mode of spectatorship practice? Perhaps even more fundamentally, could the encroachment of media technology eventually lead to an existential challenge to the traditional cinematic *dispositif*?

Emerging from these broad conceptual questions, this article outlines an audience research project, led by myself, entitled *Interactive Spectatorships*, which utilises an experimental use of social media communication integrated with a film screening in the cinema space. The process centred around a second-screen auditorium configuration, in which a stream of audience comments, relayed through the social media app Twitter, were projected onto an adjacent screen during a film screening. Participants (mostly undergraduate film students) were then invited, using their own devices and a specifically created Hashtag, to engage in a structured discussion of the film as it played in real time. I discuss here the theoretical context, methodology and initial outcomes of three pilot screenings with data from participants collected using a two-step questionnaire. I explore instrumental and conceptual implications of the second-screen apparatus, summarising initial results from quantitative and qualitative data, and interpreting emergent themes: immersion and interactivity, the problematisation of binaries such as engagement versus distraction, activity versus passivity, the notion of auditorium viewing as a shared experience, the blurring of the boundaries between public and private, and the pedagogic implications of a reconfigured cinematic *dispositif*.

Reconceptualising the Cinematic *Dispositif* and Audience Practice in the Digital Age

This project can be situated within various, interrelated disciplines including film studies, media and cultural studies, audience research, digital humanities, pedagogic research, and film philosophy. As a starting point, the introduction of a second-screen is a disruptive act that challenges dominant assumptions regarding the apparatus and social experience of auditorium viewing: the *dispositif*. The concept of the *dispositif* emerged in film studies providing a conduit between apparatus theory, the psychoanalytical, Marxist, semiotic and

structuralist groundings of film theory, and the work of earlier modernist philosophers such as Benjamin, Kracauer and Adorno who grappled what they saw as the dangerous potential for the cinema to be a weapon of social influence.

Jean Louis Baudry's (1975) arguments regarding the 'dispositif' draw upon a Platonic questioning of the link between knowledge and perception. The dispositif is thus defined as a conceptual bridge between a technological apparatus¹ – camera, projector, enclosed space, celluloid film and screen – and resultant creation of the unique, essential cinematic experience. The Cave metaphor is used to suggest that the dispositif creates an illusory subjectivity in which spectators are sublimated to the constructed reality they view on screen. For Baudry, the phenomenological apparatus allied to the assemblage of a logically structured flow of images, creates an interpolative machine immersing the spectator into a pseudo 'reality'. In this sense, there is an affiliation with Foucault's use of the dispositif to understand how heterogeneous elements in the social milieu amalgamate in specific ways to assert regimes of knowledge and power. Cinema exemplifies three dimensions or layers of orientation: architectonic, technological and discursive which 'produces a subjectification effect in the social body, be it an effect of normalisation or deviation, of territorialisation or de territorialisation, of appeasement or intensification' (Parente & de Carvalho 2008, 42).

Arguably driving the re-emergence of the dispositif are digital trends that point towards the conceptual distinction between film, as in a discreet photo-realistic artefact, and cinema, as in a phenomenological experience and social practice. Emerging from this separation are various subsets of inquiry: analysis of the many historical disruptive practices in cinematic spectatorship (Kessler 2006, Natale 2011); conceptualisations of how the cinema-space and gallery-space effect different formal and experiential paradigms (Bellour 2000; Parante and Carvalho 2008), and questions related to the theoretical framework used within film studies to explore the cinematic (Elsaesser 2010 [1993], Martin 2011). Adrian Martin (2011) is instructive in defining how this line of research challenges a hegemonic or all-encompassing understanding of the dispositif: 'each medium (cinema, novel, theatre, art gallery/museum) has its broad dispositif – arising from a mixture of aesthetic properties and social-historical conditions-and each particular work can create its own rules of the game, its own dispositif.'

The very act of placing a second screen in the cinema auditorium or using social media during film spectatorship, constitutes an un/social act that could also be understood as part of a history of non-conformist audience behaviours, practices, and embodiments (Delany 1999; Farmer 2000; Kuhn 2002 Faire & Stubbings 2003; Acland 2003; Weinstock 2007; Llinares and Arnold 2015). In this vein, Vance Kepley's work critiques the conception of the dispositif as a hermetically sealed environment, acting upon the spectator as either powerful manipulator, satisfier of unconscious desires or idealised arena for transcendental immersion. Kepley highlights myriad cinematic experiences that break the 'classic situation of the darkened chamber' asking 'did/do spectators actually sit quietly in the dark?' and arguing that 'practices of film viewing changed over time and from society to society' (Kepley 1996, 363).

Taking account of the embodied spectator, her situation, experience, and subjectivity as an integral part of any configuration and effect of cinema apparatus, is central to the phenomenological strand of film philosophy (Sobchack 1992, Rodowick 2007). The accelerated pace of digital omnipresence in the context of web 2.0 has caused a proliferation of cinematic experiences and practices beyond, and transformative of, the hegemonic dispositif. This, in turn, has instigated discourses of analysis characterised as meta, post, and expanded cinema (Atkinson 2015; Casetti 2015; Moore 2015; Denson & Layda 2016; Gallagher 2016; Hagener et al. 2016). Sarah Atkinson's work on emerging cinemas and engaging audiences outlines a diverse range of cinematic mutations including second-screening, mobile and interactive cinema:

'Second screen' is the relatively new term used to identify instances whereby mobile phones, smartphones, tablets or computers are used in synchronisation and in subordination with a dominant first screen experience. This could include text messages, tweets or posts targeted at a specific hashtag that has been published by a television programme, to view additional scenes on the web, to engage in live chats, both synchronously and asynchronously (Atkinson 2015, 79)

Atkinson defines this second-screening practice under the rubric of 'mobile cinema' suggesting two central strands: firstly, those allowing access to additional footage designed to supplement or enhance the primary production; secondly, those that integrate with the fictional universe in a way that enhances and extends narrative, character or thematic possibilities. Both these strands align with the theoretical lineage of transmedia storytelling and convergence culture forwarded by Jenkins (2008).

The second-screen design of this project, however, proposes a different mode of interactive engagement to the above two strands, one that is more akin to Atkinson's definition of 'socially layered' cinema. These are the 'social engagements' and 'dialogic exchanges' that take place around a central production that has historically been key to the cultural value of cinema but have been amplified by online possibilities. Yet even the examples of socially layered cinema characterised by Atkinson maintain the strict boundary between auditorium and non-auditorium practices. This is exemplified by a growing number of studies that look at social media use during TV viewing and live televised events (Deller 2011; Giglietto and Selva 2014; Auverset and Billings 2015). The design of *Interactive Spectatorships* attempts to employ social media play on the possibilities of this layering of audience engagement, but in doing so disrupt the spatial, temporal and phenomenological boundaries between cinematic viewing, embodied and cognitive activity, and social communication.

Francesco Casetti, a central voice in research around the implications of post-cinema, in reaction to the multiple-screen based culture we have entered, proposes a shift in the conceptual thinking around the relationship between spectator, space and screen. He

suggests screens are not analogous to the mirror, a central tenet of film theory, postulating instead that they are more akin to 'a scrapbook or a wall on which excerpts, quotations, pictures and so on, are posted' (2015, 166). Casetti pointedly correlates the function and aesthetics of the social media 'feed' with a discourse of amplified self-presentation and self-reflection brought about by the dynamics contemporary online communication. Furthermore, Casetti reflects on transformations, 'from the screen to the display' and 'from temple to portal', exploring new parameters of spectatorship and audience practice suggesting: 'To see a film is no longer a localised activity, and is no longer a scopic activity. It is doing that leaps beyond the presence of a big screen and which goes beyond the mere opening of one's eyes' (2015, 191). He goes onto remark:

It is interesting to note how the most innovative aspects of the new spectatorship seem to arise from practices developed outside the theatre and outside the strict confines of vision and are instead closer to the new screens that dominate the media landscape: digital television, computer, tablet, mobile phone, and media façade (2015, 191)

Despite being open to and excited by the prospects of a revolution in the ontology of cinema, where spectatorship is as much a doing as a seeing, Casetti still seems to assert a clear separation between what goes on inside and outside the auditorium. I don't read this as either an advocacy for, or rejection of, practices that disrupt traditional auditorium viewing. It is perhaps an indication, despite all the discourses of digital transformation, of the pervasive hegemony of the dominant dispositif.

Within this strand of post-cinematic theorisation, the audience, as a focus of study, is clearly a core concern. Chiming with developments in sociology, media and cultural studies, and emergent fields such as digital sociology and digital humanities, the exploration of new methodological and conceptual frameworks are facilitated and required by the individual and collective possibilities of interactive media spectatorship (Daly 2010, Christie 2012, Auverset & Billings 2016); how such interactivity affects notions narrative and authorship (Cover 2006); the impacts on economic and industrial development of cinema (Turow and Draper 2014); social media use and concepts of self-identity; (Papacharissi 2011, Cover 2015) and the diversification of digital audiences and the use social media as an audience research tool (Harrington et al 2013; Livingstone 2013; Zimmer & Proferes 2014).

Methodology: Configuring the Second-Screening Process

Three pilot screenings took place over consecutive weeks with a different cohort of students each representing the three undergraduate levels. The screenings were held in Falmouth University's School of Film and Television auditorium which seats 120 spectators. The venue and context poses an immediate methodological question: can a screening that takes place in the university environment, and as a formalised part of a film degree, actually be considered indicative of the traditional dispositif? The disjuncture between the commercial

and academic context is both physical/spatial (the seating comes with narrow tables and there is a stage and a lectern), and cognitive (the students may come into the auditorium with different mind-set if they are being compelled to watch a film for educational purposes). Taking a second-screen configuration into a commercial venue presented logistical and economic challenges which were beyond the scope of the project at this stage. Acknowledging this methodological difficulty, open questions focused on initial reactions (positive and negative) to the second-screening process would be the basis data collection, supported with more focused questions around specific viability for film education.

The first two screenings for Levels 1 and 2 were embedded into specific modules and films were chosen that reflected module content and theme, forming part of the scheduled programme. Screening 3 was more in line with a traditional screening in that it took place in the evening and was open to staff, students and the public (i.e. participants attended out of choice). In all three screenings, I took an active role by tweeting questions that were intended to stimulate conversation and debate. One of the central dilemmas concerned whether any academic/critical value would emerge from social media discussion. Leaving the stream of comments to evolve organically (without my input) would perhaps produce a more objective evaluation of audience activity in response to the system. However, with the aim of trying to foster critical discussion related to the themes of the module, I decided that my 'presence' in driving the conversation and posting questions was warranted.

Various methods of data collection were considered. Ideally, using an online survey, integrated into the sessions and accessed through participants' devices, would have been in keeping with the digital focus of project, however, this would have required further technical organisation and funding. Quantitative and qualitative data was therefore collected in the pre-screening questionnaire in order to garner demographic information, a sense of participants' attitudes to auditorium viewing, and the type and frequency of different types of films engagement. After the screening, further quantitative and qualitative data would be required to garner feedback on the entire process. A two-stage paper questionnaire was therefore used with participants anonymously answering questions before and after the screening (see **Appendix 1 & 2**). This method also provided a clear distinction between watching and commenting on the film via Twitter, and providing feedback on the process itself via the paper survey. There was some overlap here, particularly at the beginning of screenings where participants would give an immediate response to the second-screen configuration and its effect on viewing.

Various questions arose with regards to spatial logistics, visual aesthetics and perspectival implications of a second-screen. Indeed, would a publicly viewable second-screen, adjacent to the main cinema screen, be required at all? The participants, in using their own devices to tweet, could simply read the responses individually. However, a large second-screen onto which all participant's Tweeted responses were projected, suggested a greater likelihood of spectators viewing tweeted comments simultaneously and in sync with the film, thus preserving and perhaps even expanding the communal experience. It was

therefore important to understand the best way of configuring the second-screen in relation to the main screen so that viewing and tweeting could be done as seamlessly as possible.

The film chosen for the first screening was *Catfish* (Joost & Schulman, 2010). This was core viewing on a module entitled ‘Future Cinema’ and provided ample scope for discussion around themes of online identity and social media communication (thus linking thematically to the second-screening process itself). For this first screening an independent second screen was not used. Instead, the Twitter feed and film were positioned on two adjacent windows on a laptop, which was then projected onto the auditorium screen (see **Figure 1**). The standard Twitter app was used in this first screening with a white background and black/grey lettering. Testing was carried out to try and find the optimum size configuration between screen and Twitter feed and the correct font size so that participants could easily read the comments. Another important consideration was the temporal synchronisation between the film and the tweeted comments. One potential problem was that the number of tweets might scroll through so fast that participants would not be able to follow and adequately watch the film. Also, if the internet connection was slow or intermittent tweets could be delayed or not appear on the feed at all. Pace of scrolling was indeed highlighted as an issue by some respondents, however, there were no connectivity problems in any of the pilot screenings.

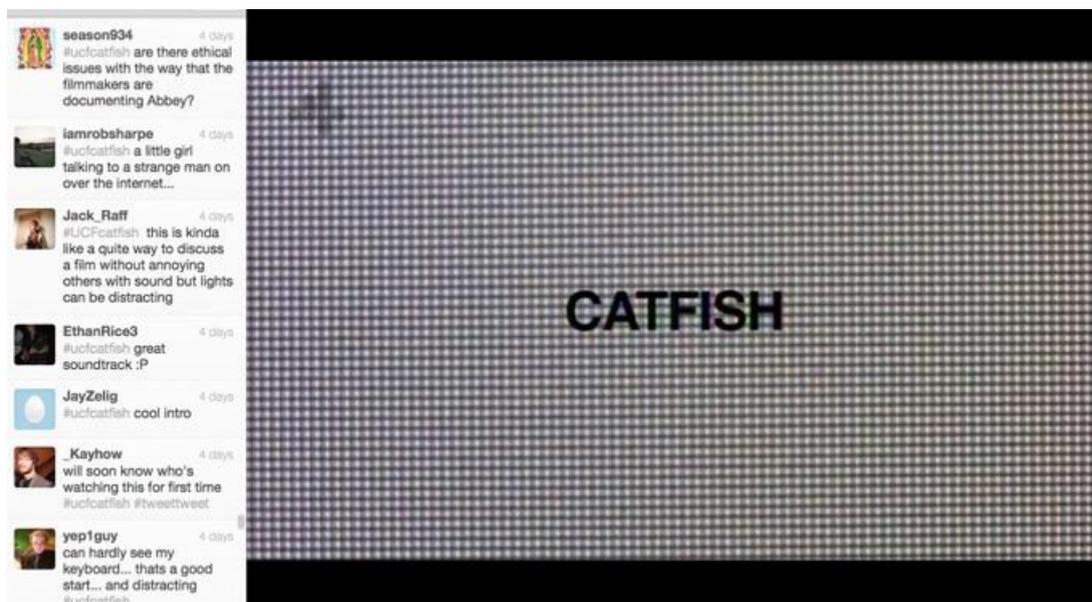


Figure 1: Second screen configuration for screening 1:

Although I asked students to sign up for a Twitter account before the screening (if they didn't already have one) I had to spend time helping students to register. Twitter was not the social media of choice for many of the participants and each screening had to be preceded by a crash course in how the system would work. The use of hashtags was vital as another concern was how to only display comments that were made by participants and cut

out all other extraneous tweets. This was achieved by using a specific hashtag for each screening: (S1) #UCFCatfish (S2 #UCFJackieb (S3 #UCFMoon). Twitter's search function was then set so that only tweets that contained the relevant hashtag would be displayed. This was preferable to using @ handle as it eliminated the problems of which account is following which, and was a more effective way of creating an open discussion forum rather than a two-way conversation.

The second-screening of the pilot series was open to Level 2 students taking modules entitled 'Women and Film', and 'Black Cinema'. The film selected was *Jackie Brown* (Quentin Tarantino, 1997). Apart from the relevant themes, this film was chosen because it is a fiction film (as opposed to *Catfish* which is a documentary), it has a longer running time (2hrs 20mins), and is narratively complex. I wanted to see if this had any impact on the content and frequency of tweets. In this screening, rather than thinking up questions during the screening, I wrote various questions beforehand and stored them on my Twitter account so they could be tweeted instantaneously at the appropriate time in the film.

Feedback from the *Catfish* screening suggested that with the twitter feed and the film on the same screen there were light bleed issues and the laptop menu bar was visible and distracting. Therefore, for the second pilot screening it was decided to project the Twitter feed separately (see **Fig. 2**) using a portable screen and projector connected via HDMI to another laptop. The standard Twitter app was replaced by the Janetter app which facilitated a change to a black background with a white and blue, larger sized font, and better adjustment in the speed of scrolling. The configuration was tested extensively to achieve the optimum positioning and spatial relationship between the main screen and second-screen.

The final screening of the series was open to staff, students and the public, and was held in the evening as a social event rather than being embedded into a specific module. The film chosen was *Moon* (Duncan Jones, 2009), a sci-fi story that is more contemplative and philosophical rather than narrative driven, again offering the potential for a different kind of online discussion. Also, this screening was preceded by a Skype Q&A session with Gavin Rothery who was the Visual Effects Supervisor for the film (See **Fig. 3**).

Gavin also watched the film at his home in London, in tandem with our screening, and answered questions from the audience via Twitter as the screening took place. This provided a kind of filmmaker commentary, thus adding another dimension of interactive viewing. The Twitter streams from each of the screenings were stored using the Storify app so they would be accessible to staff and students at any time in the future:

<https://storify.com/FALCinetweet>. The tweeted comments made during the screenings could then be used as discussion points in later seminars.

Responses and Initial Interpretations

The quantitative results of the research showing demographic breakdown and responses to pre and post-screening questions can be viewed in full in Appendix 4 and 5. In summary



Figure 2: Second screen configuration for *Jackie Brown* screening



Figure 3: *Moon* screening with interactive filmmaker commentary.

however, Screening One's participants numbered 38, Screening Two had 22 participants, and Screening Three had 28. In Screenings One and Two, all participants were university students, and all bar one were in the 18-25 age bracket. In Screening Three, the majority of participants were students (13) but staff (8) and members of the public (5) also attended. Screening One skewed slightly male whereas Screening Two skewed slightly female. Screening Three was 2/3 to 1/3 male to female. In terms of devices used, in all three screenings smartphones were the most popular followed by laptops with only very few participants using tablets. Screening Three had the most number of participants who did not tweet (9) but still completed the questionnaire. Pre-screening questions were designed to garner information about participants' attitudes to cinema-going and their own

spectatorship practice. All participants in Screenings One and Two felt screenings were vital or important to their learning experience on the film degree; most participants felt that screenings and seminars linked very well or well, and most participants characterised themselves as active or engaged spectators. The most cited reasons for not attending screenings was 'having seen the film before,' 'the cinema was uncomfortable' and/or 'they prefer home viewing'. The post-screening questionnaire gave the opportunity to offer the qualitative responses to the experience (which I detail below). The quantitative post-screening questions asked about participants' overall thoughts on the validity of this system as a teaching methodology; the second option (agree) was the most popular answer here.

In Screening Three, the questionnaire was adjusted slightly to ask more broad questions about cinema-going and social media use. Results reflected a trend of infrequent cinema-going; expense and lack of time were the two main reasons cited for this. All participants characterised themselves as either engaged or active spectators. When asked about social media use, Facebook and Twitter were overwhelmingly the most popular. The post-screening quantitative questions again slightly changed from Screenings One and Two, asking about attitudes to social media use in film screenings and social media use in education more broadly. Overwhelmingly respondents gave positive answers to these questions, which actually ran counter to the qualitative responses, being largely circumspect and critical.

One of the primary themes to emerge in the qualitative responses to all three screenings was a dichotomy between distraction versus immersion:

S1 (28) It was easy to get distracted making it difficult to get fully immersed in the film.

S1 (32) Did get distracted by other things on the ipad, sometimes tweets happen too quickly to read.

S3 (125) Distracting at the beginning when I should have been concentrating on understanding the premise of the film.

Although distraction was a highly prevalent discourse this was conceptualised in various ways by respondents. The first response above is an example of comments suggesting the action of tweeting prevented the kind of cognitive immersion that asserted by the hegemonic dispositif. The second response alludes to both the array of distractions available when using a smart device, and the speed of the tweets on the public feed, both of which were anticipated as an issue. The third comment here relates specifically to the narrative flow. Within Screening Two particularly, the rate of tweeting did change in response to the narrative of the film. At times of exposition the rate reduced, but at more contemplative and transitional moments, the tweeting increased. At the beginning of each screening, there was a large flow of tweets perhaps reflective of the novelty/excitement of the experiment.

In future screenings, a systematic analysis of the timings of tweets in relation the film could be employed to understand more accurately the flow of responses.

Responses also reflected the different effects that this system could have depending on whether the spectator had seen the film before, therefore, being less bound by the necessity to pay close attention to the narrative.

S3(121) Having never seen *Moon* before it was very distracting, but after the initial novelty of the tweeting hype calmed down I got used to it, it became easier to do both. I'd imagine this would be easier if it is a film you'd seen before.

This comment reflected many responses that suggested, at the beginning, the process seemed extremely counterintuitive, but many participants got used to it as the screening progressed:

S1 (35) Distracted me momentarily while commenting but the screen next to the film was clear and it was easy to switch

S2 (58) Initially it was hard to focus on tweeting, reading tweets on projector, reading tweets on device and watching film, however, okay eventually.

The discourse of distraction was also related to the fact of the second screen and the impact that had on viewer's attention:

S2 (72) Sometimes distracting, I found myself looking at the twitter feed more than the screen.

Such reactions reassert that sense that the cinematic dispositif is fundamentally interrelated to an experience of concentrated viewing. But with many of the participants suggesting they got used to the second-screen process after a period of time, this points to the notion that our internalisation of a 'normal' cinema viewing practice has been instilled by the complex socially-constructed historical discourses, rather than an essentialist ontology imbued through the cinema experience.

Counter to the distraction discourse many respondents claimed the second-screening imbued better focus and engagement:

S2 (55) I think it aids engagement with the film and allows you to respond on the spot to anything you wish to say about the film/narrative – anything.

S2(56) The two screens enabled better focus on the film. The Twitter feed provided further knowledge for the context of the film which made it more enjoyable and critical.

Comments such as this point to how the second-screen configuration, and the action of tweeting itself, forces a reappraisal of the dichotomy between active and passive spectatorship. This kind of question has of course been at the heart of audience research and usually refers the subjective interpretation of the ideological intentions and effects of a film text. However, in the digital age, particularly with second-screening a normalised part of home/online viewing, the parameters of defining 'active' and 'passive' spectatorship arguably requires some re-evaluation. Various participants reflected on how comments on the Twitter feed provoked them to both think critically and reflect on oppositional viewpoints:

S1(10) It was really interesting viewing people's view and opinions on the film. Which made me engage more with the film to try and find their view and either agree or disagree with it.

S2 (56) The two screens enabled better focus on the film. The Twitter feed provided further knowledge for the context of the film which made it more enjoyable and critical.

This notion of a conversation/debate with various perspectives and ideas, worked through on screen and in sync with the film, was one of the most pedagogically useful outcomes. Many students did seem actively engaged and motivated through the system as a critical process of thought. People did share information — looked things up and added links to their tweets, deepening the possibilities of interactivity. Many said they came out with a fuller knowledge and understanding.

S1 (20) People were talking about theories I hadn't thought of. Overall it was useful and fun. Like having a seminar at the same time.

Some respondents even said they preferred it to traditional screenings:

S1 (11) It made it more interesting, you could see what others were thinking. At times it distracted from the film. I still preferred it though!

The number of respondents who suggested that they preferred second-screening to convention viewing was small, and no respondents suggested that this could somehow replace the hegemonic dispositif.

There were, of course, a range of critical responses that were linked to the second-screening configuration and/or the depth and relevance of the online debate:

S1 (33) I think it worked only because of how relevant the topic of social media was. I don't think it would work for most films.

S2 (60) It was very distracting. It was hard to engage with the film with all the twitter activity, so it was hard to say anything useful with regards to the film

In all three screenings there were, as anticipated, a great number of jokey, superficial and irrelevant tweets. This was most prevalent in Screening One, where the participants were all first-year students. The questions tweeted by myself were mostly ignored or answered by a small number of the participants in quite basic terms. Some of the respondents did mention this directly:

S1 (1) Some of the tweets were a bit silly and broke concentration.

S2 (51) Distracting. People focused on trying to be funny.

One could posit contributing factors to this issue: Level 1 students lacking the critical knowledge/vocabulary of film at this point in their studies; the specific makeup and/or group dynamics of this cohort. I would argue the overriding problem relates to general social media use (particularly by young people) and the difficulties of adapting it effectively for critical purposes within higher education. However, Level 2 and 3 students showed much more engagement with the questions directly related to the film. There was more evidence of interaction between participants, with comments and reactions to tweets rather than single statements about the film or answers to my questions.

Pointedly however, some participants just ignored the tweeting altogether:

S1(6) After a little bit I pretty much forgot about it and just watched the film as usual. I didn't have much to say at the start and then was too into the film to think about tweeting

S1(10) I got distracted after a while and I wasn't really using it anyway so I started ignoring it.

One could surmise from these comments that even with the second screen it is possible to just watch the film in a traditional manner. It also points to the fact that it is problematic to assume that young people are invested in, or use social media in the same way.

Furthermore, within any configuration of apparatus, one can never fully legislate or control

what people will do. There were also comments that the second-screening helped create the conditions of silent, concentrated spectatorship:

S1 (7) People stopped talking and eating!

S1 (32) No one talked throughout which they normally do. Meant more thinking took place, socially and about the screening. Good to get other people's views on the film.

These comments suggest that certain audience members dislike disruptive behaviour and poor etiquette that occurs in regular university screenings. With the second-screening impelling audience members to engage directly with the film in a specific way, the other distractions, such as taking and eating, were lessened.

One of the most interesting discourses to emerge from the questionnaire feedback was a paradoxical attitude towards the dichotomy between public and private spheres. This undoubtedly emerged from the visibility of the Twitter stream in the communal space of the auditorium and pointed towards how social media disrupts many of the formal conventions around what we say and do in a public forum:

S2 (62) I was worried about what to write because everyone could see it.

S2 (50) It was interesting to see other people's interpretation live. Would be better if the tweets were anonymous.

These responses suggest a real anxiety around the public knowledge that what they had tweeted would be ascribed to the author in some consequential way. Having the Twitter feed projected onto a big screen, for the other participants to see as a group, added a weight of significance to what was posted. These two responses, on the one hand, are completely counter intuitive to the very notion of a social media as a public forum for thoughts to be expressed. On the other hand, they reflect how the perception of online anonymity has a profound social and psychological effect on the individual. Even with the full knowledge that those engaging with one's social media output know who is tweeting, the highly individualised practice of social media communication effectively de-couples what someone tweets from their subjective self. It is almost as though thought or opinion put onto social media becomes detached from the person who originated it in their own mind. This might account for the both the banality and hostility of much social media discourse; people feel free from the consequences of materialising thoughts in a communal space, that ordinarily they would keep to themselves. The second-screen thus had the effect of re-coupling respondents to comments that they were making. So, if one wrote something stupid, something funny, something smart, that immediately reflected something about that person.

In Screening 3 the contribution of Gavin Rothery – *Moon's* Visual Effects Supervisor – certainly added a new dimension of interactivity to the screening. The participants were almost universally positive about this:

S3 (114) This week allowed for more outside participation – with tweets from actual filmmakers. Shed lots of light on the film with information first hand.

S3 (120) It was pretty cool to have people who were involved in the film to tweet about it. Also, there are now tons of comments to read back through and start deeper discussion.

S3 (113) Insight from filmmakers absolutely incredible. Ability to collectively engage. The liveness more engaging than intro + Q&A.

The experience of having Rothery's input via Twitter, created what could be described as a live director commentary. Further to this, Screening 3 also had something akin to a public forum, where anyone on the internet, and outside the space of the cinema might start participating. This was made starkly apparent when Duncan Jones, *Moon's* director, became involved in the Twitter discussion completely out of the blue. This reflected the multiple layers of engagement that is made possible by social media.

However, Screening 3 also featured the most overt criticism:

S3 (100) There was not much of a constructive commentary. Very chatty, very anecdotal. I would not recommend it for teaching. I could not concentrate.

S3 (103) No immersion in film. Distracting. Self-congratulatory and self-important comments. Showing off. Gave the plot away to those who hadn't seen it. Just like listening to the inane chatter of people behind you who should be watching the film instead of talking. Disempowering for those without Twitter. Hated it. Many people looking at laptops and not the screen.

Pointedly, both these comments were from lecturers rather than students, both of whom did not actually tweet during the screening (they both answered 'none' to the question: 'which device did you use to tweet?'). Clearly, valid critical points are being made here as to the viability of this second-screening process. It is instructive, however, that respondents in Screening Three were the most critical of all and they were less likely to participate by using Twitter even though they were fully aware of the process. One might draw a tentative conclusion that disruptive rearrangements, such as second-screening, would be more likely to be rejected offhand by those with a stake in the hegemony of the dispositif.

The above comments are also pointed in their criticism of the system as being disempowering and exclusionary. One of the hopes for the project was that it might allow

students who struggle to contribute in seminar situations, an easier way to enter into discussion. No students in the survey commented that they felt excluded by the system, but this could be an issue if students felt they were being forced onto social media, or if the conversation turned personal. Again, this relates to the wider problems of using social media to try and foster constructive academic discourse when that is not seen as its primary purpose.

Some respondents ruminated on how the second screen system might work for different audiences/films:

S3 (108) I wonder if this is more suited to this critique? Would, say, 'Stalker' respond so well? But the would subtitles inhibit? So, say 'Chinatown'?

S3 (125) Interesting observations – Gavin's input was particularly good. Be interested to see what the differences in tweets would be between film student audience/more general audience.

Clearly, the choice of film in each screening had an impact on the comments made and the overall type of debate. It is obvious that attempting an interactive second-screen process with a subtitled film would add another layer of complexity and distraction that could prove too overbearing. Furthermore, questions as to how this system might work outside of the structured context of a university degree, with an audience made up of general film-goers in a commercial cinema, is a valid one. This would be the most obvious next step in deploying the methodology to gain further insights into the possibilities and implications of digital disruption of the classic 'cinematic dispositif'.

Conclusion

From the outset, this project induced high-levels of anxiety related to my internal feeling that it may be committing some form of sacrilege. The disciplinary power of the traditional cinematic configuration and practice of spectatorship – the hegemonic dispositif – is ingrained into my own subjectivity as to what cinema is and should be. Furthermore, the notion of questioning the place of the traditional screening in the structure of film education is another degree of blasphemy. The hostility of many film academics when I have presented this project at conferences attests to second-screening in the auditorium as a polemical/disruptive act, especially when deliberately introducing a social media app such as Twitter in order to reconceptualise the mechanics of spectatorship. Even when discussing this experiment within very the specific parameters of a sociological/audience research project, the disciplinary discourse of the dispositif is highly prevalent. Student participant's reactions, whether positive or negative, tended to be based on a clear perception of what they thought cinematic spectatorship should be. Many of the respondents, although they suggested that they preferred home-viewing because of the agency it allowed, including incorporating different forms of media in their spectatorship process (i.e. media stacking),

still regarded the auditorium as a specialised space that necessitated the quiet, concentrated viewing assumed as the norm.

Certainly, there are a range methodological issues that emerged during the process as well as possibilities for further development. For example, spectatorial configuration is actually triple-screening rather than merely second-screening (with the device used being the third screen) which raises questions about how to design a better communal experience that integrates the hardware and software of social media communication. Furthermore, in future iterations a systematic method of coding participant comments could facilitate useful correlations between quantitative and qualitative data. One has also to consider the fundamental viability of using this approach in any kind of wider context. Would it even be feasible to try this in a commercial venue, and if the answer is no then can it really tell us anything about the nature of the dispositif and any potential positive disruption offered by digital communications technology?

Another question relates to the use of Twitter and the effects of conducting this experiment online. In terms of the public/private debate, using a system of interaction that is self-contained and not linked to the internet may have a very different effect when one considers anxieties around self-identity on social media. I have had discussions with software designers regarding a bespoke app that would be tailored specifically for self-contained interactive experience, but could also be used online if required, with comments overlaid onto the main screen, rather than an adjacent second screen. This kind of design can already be seen with the example of 'bullet screenings' in Japanese and Chinese cinemas (Coonan 2014) and apps such as MuVChat.

Clearly, distraction versus engagement was the underlying discourse that emerged. There are two distinct strands of activity with regards to disruption in the auditorium space. First, is a disruption that comes from behaviours and actions that are antithetical to the viewing experience. Examples of this include having the back of your chair kicked, eating, drinking, talking, and, of course, texting or using an electronic device that breaks engagement. However, there is a mode of disruption that is prevalent and arguably has been throughout the history of cinema, which looks to engage, challenge and redefine the very notion of what it means to be a spectator and what constitutes spectatorship. In this vein, disruption is fundamentally integrated into the experience and is provocative of new discourses regarding the ontology and epistemology of the cinematic. For some, of course, there is no difference between these two, but it is important to understand that the ethos of this project is grounded in the potential of digital technologies to produce the latter.

The effect of social networking on pedagogic practice, particularly within broad areas of film and media, is clearly an evolving area of inquiry. The potential of adapting social media platforms has both positive and negative outcomes. Clearly the superficiality of the tweeted comments was one of the main issues that arose from the pilot screenings. Certainly, my own interventions in leading/guiding the online discussion were necessary to make this process academically useful. Furthermore, responses suggest its viability and usefulness is more overt when interrogating the specific themes of audience practice,

student engagement, social media use, and non-normative spectatorship practices. I would not suggest this system could be summarily used for all film screenings on a university course (not to mention in a commercial context). However, participants' responses suggest the process did help students understand and reflect on their own critical engagement with the specific films screened, and also with the broader question of how to conceptualise cinema spectatorship in the digital age.

Biographical note:

Dr Dario Llinares is Principal Lecturer in Contemporary Screen Media at the University of Brighton. He has published work on a range of topics including the Astronaut in American Culture, British Prison Film, the Cinema as Time Machine, and Podcasting as Academic Practice. His current research focuses on the status and practice of cinema-going in the digital age. He is also the co-founder and co-host of the popular *Cinematologists Podcast* and is editing a collection of interdisciplinary research on the podcast medium entitled *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media* due for publication in early 2018.

Contact: D.Llinares@brighton.ac.uk.

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Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for screenings 1 and 2

PART A – Please fill in before the screening. Respondent number: _____

Interactive Spectatorship Screening Date: _____

How important are screenings to your learning experience on Film?

1. Vital 2. Important 3. Unimportant 4. Pointless

Why might you choose not to attend screenings?

1. Prefer home viewing 2. Seen the film before 3. Not interested in film
4. People talking/eating in cinema 5. Cinema is uncomfortable 6. Other reason

Comments: _____

How well do film screenings and seminar discussions interlink?

1. Very well 2. Well 3. Not well 4. Not at All

Comments: _____

How would you generally assess yourself as a film watcher?

1. Critical 2. Engaged 3. Passive 4. Ambivalent

Comments: _____

What social networking tools do you use regularly:

- 1: Twitter 2: Facebook 3: Google+ 4: Linkedin 5. Bebo
6. Reddit 7. Pinterest 8 Other: _____

Course and level: _____

Age: 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55-65 65+

Gender: _____

I understand that the information I provide will remain anonymous and I give permission for it to be used for purely research purposes.

I agree

PART B – Please fill in after the screening

Which technology did you use to tweet?:

Laptop: _____ Tablet: _____ Smartphone: _____ None: _____

In what ways did the twitter interactivity have a positive effect on the screening?

In what ways did the twitter interactivity have a negative effect on the screening?

Social Media has the potential to enhance critical spectatorship of film:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree

Social Media has the potential to be used as an educational tool:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for Screening 3

PART A – Please fill in before the screening Respondent number: _____

Interactive Spectatorship Screening Date: _____

How often do you go to the cinema?

1. Less than once a month 2. About once a month 3. About once a fortnight
4. About once a week 5. 2-3 times a week 6. More than 3 times a week.

Why might you choose not to attend a film at the cinema?

1. Prefer home viewing 2. Too expensive 3. Poor programming
4. Disturbances in the cinema (eating/talking) 5. Lack of time 6. Other reason

Comments:

How would you generally assess yourself as a film watcher?

1. Critical 2. Engaged 3. Passive 4. Ambivalent

Comments:

What social networking tools do you use regularly:

- 1: Twitter 2: Facebook 3: Google+ 4: Linkedin 5. Bebo
6. Reddit 7. Pinterest 8 Other: _____

Are you staff? (specify department/course): _____

Are you a student? (specify course & level): _____

- Age:** 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55-65 65+

Gender: _____

I understand that the information I provide will remain anonymous and I give permission for it to be used for _____ purely research purposes.

I agree

PART B – Please fill in after the screening

Which technology did you use to tweet?:

Laptop: _____ Tablet: _____ Smartphone: _____ None: _____

In what ways did the twitter interactivity have a positive effect on the screening?

In what ways did the twitter interactivity have a negative effect on the screening?

Social Media has the potential to enhance critical spectatorship of film:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 3. Strongly disagree

Social Media has the potential to be used as an educational tool:

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 3. Strongly disagree

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 4: Quantitative data for screenings 1 and 2

Participants Screening 1: 38						Participants Screening 2: 22					
Pre-screening questions											
How vital are screenings to your learning experience on film (the Film Degree Course)?											
Vital		Important				Unimportant		Pointless			
20	13	18	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Why might you choose not to attend screenings?											
Prefer home viewing		Seen the film before		Not interested in the film		People Talking/Eating		Cinema is uncomfortable		Other reason	
9	7	19	19	4	0	5	1	12	4	5	3
How well do film screenings and seminar discussions interlink?											
Very well		Well				Not well		Not at all			
8	6	30	16	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0
How would you assess yourself as a film watcher?											
Critical		Engaged				Passive		Ambivalent			
4	6	30	15	2	3	4	0	4	0	0	0
Level of study											
1				2				3			
37	4	0	19	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age											
18-25		26-35		35-45		46-55		55-56		65+	
38	22	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender											
Male				Female				Other			
21	10	17	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Post-Screening Questions											
Device used											
Laptop		Tablet		Smartphone				None			
11	7	4	1	20	13	3	2	3	0	2	2
Screening 1&2: If interactive screenings were embedded in film modules that would encourage student attendance and interaction.											
Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Not Sure/No Answer			
5	7	22	14	5	2	2	0	2	0	2	0
I think twitter comments from the screening would be relevant in subsequent seminar discussions.											

Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Sure/ no answer	
6	5	27	15	4	2	1	0	2	0

Appendix 5: Quantitative data for screening 3

Participants Screening 3: 28									
Pre-screening questions									
How often do you go to the cinema?									
Less than once a month	About once a month	About once a fortnight	About once a week	2/3 times a week	+3 times a week				
13	4	10	0	0	0				
Why might you choose not to attend the cinema?									
Prefer home viewing	Too expensive	Poor programming	Disturbances: Talking/Eating	Lack of time	Other reason				
3	15	8	8	12	1				
How would you assess yourself as a film watcher?									
Critical	Engaged	Passive	Ambivalent						
11	20	0	0						
What social networking tools do you use regularly?									
Twitter	Facebook	Google+	Linkedin	Bebo	Reddit	Pinterest	Other	None	
18	23	2	6	0	0	4	3	2	
Level of study									
1	2	3	Post-grad	Staff	Public				
3	7	3	0	8	5				
Age									
18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55-56	65+				
15	1	3	1	1	0				
Gender									
Male	Female	Other							
18	10	0							
Post-Screening Questions									
Device used									
Laptop	Tablet	Smartphone	None						
8	2	9	9						
Social media has the potential to enhance critical spectatorship of film.									
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not Sure/No Answer					
7	17	2	1	1					

Social media has the potential to be used as an educational tool.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure/ no answer
16	12	0	0	0

Note:

¹ Bryukhovetska (2010) points out there is no specific translation of Baudry's intended meaning of 'dispositif' with terms 'apparatus', 'device', 'mechanism', 'arrangement' and 'situation' often inadequately substituted.