On Writing *The Anarchist Cinema*

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The publication of *The Anarchist Cinema* (2019) was the final result of a number of years of research that started as a doctoral thesis before it was adapted into a book. Due to me undertaking a large amount of preparatory work in advance of being accepted onto the PhD programme (and after being turned down by another university), the process of putting together the thesis was rather linear and straightforward, aided by excellent guidance from my supervisor Professor Peter Stanfield, but also because at that time there existed only a very small amount of literature on the meeting of anarchism and film. There was the impactful but very slight pamphlet by Alan Lovell entitled *Anarchist Cinema* (1962); a significant monograph called *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* by Richard Porton (1999), and a then contemporary journal article by Nathan Jun called *Towards an Anarchist Film Theory* (2010).[1] Alongside these publications were only a smattering of other texts that more obliquely discussed the subject, including a collection of non-academic essays edited by Porton (2009).[2] Furthermore, authors did not refer to each other's scholarship, with the only instance being a reference by Porton to Lovell's work.[3] This meant that the area I was to traverse was largely untouched, and I could insert myself into the gaps of the existing research and expose contradictions or areas that had not yet been mapped while developing my own philosophy around the topic.

The Anarchist Cinema was a rewritten and revised version of the thesis that has so far had very little wider impact. There are a number of possible reasons for this; I know now that academic publishers appear

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to be quite adverse to promoting their authors;[4] that the work was priced too high and is not (yet) available in a paperback edition that would make it more visible to the public (signing the contract was a decision I rushed into because, due to job market precarity, I wanted a monograph on my CV as soon as possible); or simply because the subject itself is still very niche, and of only limited interest to a small number of scholars and students.[5]

This special issue of *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* is welcome because it broadens the scope of the connections between anarchism and the cinema and expands the small body of work devoted to the subject. It also affords me the opportunity to introduce new readers to the ideas behind *The Anarchist Cinema* and to re-examine my assumptions and conclusions. This article will operate as a precis for the book and allow me to both restate and update my central concept - that anarchism is a fluctuating historical trend, woven into the development of the art form.[6] In making this claim I elaborate on George Woodcock's metaphor for the insistent power of anarchism, when he wrote that it resembles "water percolating through porous ground…trickling through crevices, disappearing from sight, and then re-emerging where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run."[7] For my study, to look for these metaphoric "cracks" meant looking through the history of cinema for that which might be inconsistent or discontinuous, such as fleeting moments from sometimes obscure films, individual filmmakers or unique productions, amateur and activist films, or in marginal genres or cycles. This meant to search the margins of cinematic culture, alongside identifying absences or discord in the existing literature on the subject. To help identify the incidents or moments from an anarchist cinematic history, I looked to that which displayed, to borrow a phrase from Peter Marshall, an "anarchist sensibility."[8] This could be cinematic material that was explicitly about anarchism as a philosophy or history, or that which was anarchic, meaning in the unruly, chaotic, or rebellious sense of the term.

Cinema's anarchism then, happens in what might appear to be unlikely places, but occurs in all stages of the manufacturing of film, including exhibition and audience reception. These 'places' would,

like the water of Woodcock's metaphor, not be continuous, coherent, or consistent, and would frequently prove to be disrupted, short lived or ephemeral. This typifies both the history of anarchism as a political philosophy and movement, as well as its relationship to cinema. Above all else, my aim with undertaking the original project, both as PhD programme and as a book, was that I wrote to understand the topic, not to be understood. In this regard, my philosophy remains.[9]

The Anarchist Cinema:

My initial task was to centre my analysis by defining and contextualising terms that have, by some, been deemed nebulous: these include anarchic, anarchy, anarchism, to say nothing of related words loaded with ideological baggage or prone to misuse, such as libertarianism (formerly used as a synonym for anarchism and now more identified with an economically laissez-fair tendency in American politics), leftwing, subversive, socialist and/or Marxist and/or communist and so on. I used as my basis for my analysis the variation of the philosophy known as anarchist communism, rather than other variations or tendencies such as individualist anarchist, right wing anarchist, or anarchist capitalism etc. Anarchist communism most closely aligned with the ideas and theories of Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the most prominent originators of modern anarchism, and was therefore a stable basis from which to work around.

In the early stages of my PhD there were also terms and expressions being thrown at me in encounters with the burgeoning intellectuals I now found myself meeting far more regularly than I would have liked. One budding scholar pressed me on how exactly I was going to deal with the concept of post-anarchism. My answer to his testing would be the same now as it was then – 'I don"t fucking care about post-anarchism'. I hold much antipathy for the forms of theory on which post-anarchism is built, and so does any non-academic anarchist I have ever spoken to. While this is an anecdote, I hope it goes some way to emphasise my focus and philosophy for the project, where I wanted to stress class over identity as vital for the anarchist

cinema (and society as a whole). I have always maintained that anarchism (of the cinematic or real-life variety) should aim for broad appeal rather than be a tool for intellectual musing.[10]

To help fuse the history of anarchism and cinema I borrowed a strategy from Peter Marshall's hugely important *Demanding the Impossible* (1993), which details a history of the development of anarchist thought. In his comprehensive work, Marshall examines variations of proto-anarchism, from the ancient Greeks and early Christian sects, through to the "classical thinkers"[11] of Kropotkin, Proudhon, and Bakunin, and up to late 20th century individuals such as Noam Chomsky or Murray Bookchin and later traditions such as anarcho-syndicalism, or anarcho-feminism. Marshall's approach allowed these individuals and varieties to settle under the banner of anarchism, despite any contradictions or paradoxes existing between them. Marshall's account of the development of anarchism reveals it is "in a state of flux,"[12] and what connects the traditions is an "anarchist sensibility"[13] or libertarian tendency. Where Marshall links "historical moments" that share "concerns and impulses" with anarchism,[14] I searched for cinema's historical moments that expressed elements of the philosophy or its sensibility, even if these expressions were not explicit or made by self-declared anarchists.

From here, I set about uncovering a basis on which cinema, comprising of all stages of film production, exhibition, and reception can be both anarchic and anarchist. Therefore, from the start of the project the intention was to move beyond only looking at films as individual, generic, or cyclical items of study, towards the ways cinema was organised as a creative and industrial entity, how it is written about in the popular press and academia, as well as how it is consumed by audiences.

My starting position was that cinema originated as an unruly space prone to encouraging subversive behaviour, and that held within it an inherently political component. Cinema had, according to Richard Maltby, and alongside other entertainments such as rock-n'-roll and amusement parks, been a site of "cultural expression"[15] that was subjected to widespread and consistent regulations of the form itself

(in this case censorship), as well as the behaviour and movements of its patrons (who still have to be reminded of how to watch in silence with no phone usage, and who are under persistent surveillance by managers and ushers). The notion of cinema as a space home to noisy and rowdy audiences has been imagined in a number of films including *The Last Dragon* (Michael Shultz, 1985), *Matinee* (Joe Dante, 1993), *Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984), and *Scream 2* (Wes Craven, 1997). This history, recounted in these nostalgic and romanticised movies, has a grounding in historical reality, particularly in the development of early cinema.

Early silent cinema shows, roughly from the late 19th century up to the mid-1910s, were not subject to the same restrictions that later developed, and were different from the more respectable and gentrified cinematic experience that ensued. Instead, they were far noisier affairs, that attracted concern for the way they appealed to predominantly working-class audiences. This dynamic between entertainment and audience originated in the earlier theatrical tradition of the music hall and in vaudeville shows (and perhaps even earlier than that in the form of local fairs and carnivals). Michael Chanan in *The Dream that Kicks* (1980 [1996]) notes how audiences in music halls exhibited a strong sense of class solidarity,[16] even if it lacked any sense of political coherence. Cinema audiences evolved out of these origins, with many early moving picture shows even being exhibited in old music hall theatres. As Lee Grieveson notes in *Policing Cinema* (2004),[17] it was the popularity of cinema to the working classes, to immigrants, and to women, and that they were congregating in the same spaces, that prompted moves to legislate film shows. This legislation included prohibitive and excessive fire regulations that could act as a form of social control, and entrances and exits for working class patrons that were separate from those designated for the middle and upper classes. These moves coincided with attempts at regulating the onscreen content – where anxieties developed over the supposedly unhealthy combination of the unwashed masses sitting together to consume a diet of crude entertainment that refused to illustrate correct moral values or behaviour (itself another hangover of the anxieties around music hall acts), and instead relied on transgressions of social mores and taboos as the core of its appeal.[18]

The bringing together of the poor and migrant in temporary solidarity (or at least a commonality of experience), and one that might only have lasted as long as the screening, was thought at the time to be a fostering ground for subversive politics. Both radicals and conservatives were alive to the useful potential of the rabble, even if the audience's energy was seen as being inarticulate or a diversion away from unified political consciousness by the activists of the time. From my perspective, all of this had immense relevance to the discussion of anarchism and film, because it meant that anarchy, both in its politics and its energy, was built into cinema's very foundations, as building, social pastime, and entertainment. That is to say that cinema fostered both anarchy and anarchism, even if, like the variations and traditions Marshall refers to, the terms did not apply or even exist at the time.

While this has its origins in cinema's embryonic stages, its unruly status persisted at least up to the period when I was writing the PhD and the film *Annabelle* (John R. Leonetti, 2014), part of the popular *Conjuring* horror franchise, attracted several accounts of disorderly behaviour by youths in French cinemas.[19] Since publication of the book, I have not kept up with recent developments in this area, but in 2022 I attended the cinema and found myself queueing for popcorn behind a group of young lads all dressed in suits, as they bought tickets for the new *Minions* movie, *The Rise of Gru* (Brad Ableson and Jonathan de Val, 2022). The manager emerged and sternly warned them that there had recently been persistent trouble during screenings of *The Rise of Gru*, with suited male teenagers causing distress to other patrons, particularly children, through their rowdiness and excessive noise, and that if they were to behave in a similar fashion they would be removed from the premises. It was the first I had heard of this brief phenomenon that began on social media, involving teenage boys wearing suits, throwing popcorn and eating bananas in apparent homage to characters from the film.[20] These incidents demonstrate that despite its diminishing cultural impact, cinema still had the power to elicit unruly, group-based behaviour. That *Annabelle* and *Minions: The Rise of Gru* were not especially unruly or unconventional in terms of form and content (one being a middle of the road studio horror movie and the other an animation aimed at families) reveals

that it is cinema and its conditions of exhibition that provokes such behaviour, rather than the films themselves.[21]

These opening chapters established that there is an inherently subversive undercurrent residing in cinema as a cultural form and social space that can have a political dimension in some circumstances, even if it reveals itself in unguided or spontaneous moments (as there is with any communal social activity, from football supporters to the Women's Institute). From here my task was to provide a cogent definition of an "anarchist film", and the one that had been most associated with the term up until that point, and which had appeared in both Lovell's and Porton's research, was *Zéro de Conduite* (Jean Vigo, 1933). This 1933 French film by Jean Vigo is about schoolboys who rebel against an oppressive education system and escape from their school after organising a spectacular dorm room riot. Associations between anarchism and *Zéro de Conduite* among critics and scholars were based on two factors. The first was its combination of form and content. Its narrative of school pupils bristling against educational hierarchies situated the film as anarchist in that it was critical of authority and the state education system, depicting it as stifling children's imagination and stunting human potential. In its playful tone it was regarded as demonstrating "anarchist pedagogy's penchant for fusing an investment in childhood spontaneity with a contingent promotion of social, collective desire".[22] Vigo's celebration of children's creative freedom over authoritarian dogma meant that the film could be used as an exemplar of ideas around what an anarchist education could be, as outlined by thinkers such as Francisco Ferrer, Ivan Illich, and Herbert Read.[23]

The second factor that drew associations between his film and anarchism, was that Vigo himself had a background in anarchist politics, which included his father being a renowned anarchist who died in prison.[24] While I found no problem with including *Zéro de Conduite* as part of my concept of an anarchist cinema based on both its narrative and creative approach, I thought the biographical element of the evidence to be somewhat reductive. While it was true that Vigo's use of form and content aligned with anarchist's philosophy of aesthetics and education quite neatly, would this conclusion have been so readi-

ly considered if its creator was not also associated with anarchism?

If the answer was 'no, it wouldn't', and that the filmmaker must be a self-avowed anarchist (or at least be making a film including explicit topics associated with anarchism) then that kills any possibility for an identifiable and comprehensible anarchist cinema stone dead, outside of a very, very small group of creators who had declared themselves to be anarchists. Any discussion of a potential anarchist cinema either in the past, present, or future would depend on this sort of biographical analysis, where the identification of anarchist politics in the world view of the filmmaker becomes both the start and end point for investigation. If the filmmaker must be an anarchist, then the scholar or critic needs to perform no real analysis of their work, and merely needs to be in possession of the relevant personal information. If, however, the answer to my question was 'yes', and that critics and academics would still claim *Zéro de Conduite* as the definitive anarchist film based purely on what was on screen regardless of the biography of its creator, then this opened the possibility for the inclusion of a much wider and deeper range of movies seeping through the cracks in cinematic history, containing themes, narratives, and formal properties infused with a spirit of anarchism.

This enquiry led me towards the British *St Trinian's* series, comprising of *The Belles of St Trinian's* (1954), *Blue Murder at St Trinian's* (1957), *The Pure Hell of St Trinian's* (1960), and *The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery* (1966), all directed by Frank Launder and co-written and produced in collaboration with Sidney Gilliat. These broad comedies are located in the eponymous English boarding school for girls, but unlike the teachers in *Zéro de Conduite*, who attempt to enforce conformity, the St Trinian's staff actively encourage students to develop rebellious and ungovernable qualities, to the extent that they are able to humiliate and outwit the police, military, and any other form of authority in a succession of comedic episodes. This is the focus of the series to such an extent that I argue they more closely illustrate the philosophies behind anarchist pedagogy than the school in Vigo's far more acclaimed work. A crucial part of this anarchist analysis is that the intelligent, violent, and streetwise schoolgirls developed by the teaching staff at St Trinian's are presented not as gifted individuals, but as a collectively educated class.

From here, I shifted the focus to include analysis of the cycle of American women in prison movies made in the early 1970s, including *The Big Doll House* (Jack Hill, 1971), *The Big Bird Cage* (Jack Hill, 1972), *Women in Cages* (Gerado de Leon, 1971), and *Caged Heat* (Jonathan Demme, 1974) among others. Mostly shot in the Philippines, their narratives repeatedly feature a motley assortment of female prisoners from varying racial, class, and political backgrounds (who frequently included a self-declared "revolutionary" imprisoned for crimes against the state), who band together and rebel against, and eventually overthrow and escape from, the corrupt prison system that controls them. This recurrent plotline neatly aligns with Michael Temple's close analysis of the narrative structure of *Zéro de Conduite*, and the respective constructions of both the 'women in prison' films and *Zéro de Conduite* deviate from mainstream convention. Deviations include moments of incoherent form such as out of focus shots or, most notably, the instance in *The Big Bird Cage* when a fire engulfs the screen and burns through the film stock to give the effect of the reel igniting in the projector. Both *St Trinian's* and the women in prison cycle occupy marginal spaces in the history of cinema. The women in prison films have only fitfully been addressed in academic studies devoted to examining cult and exploitation cinema, while the *St Trinian's* series only invites two pages of attention in Bruce Babington's book on Launder and Gilliat (2002),[25] despite arguably being their creators' most famous work.

Both sets of films conform to the same criteria I outline for an "anarchist" film; the targets of their satire are the state and authoritarian institutions, their tone is playful and disruptive, and yet they demonstrate a positive view of humanity, and offer a celebration of the full range of human experience, even if that sometimes manifests in impulsive sexuality or destructive tendencies.[26] They deviate from established norms of what constitutes 'quality' cinema, and defy cinematic conventions of storytelling. They are anti-authoritarian in narrative and spirit.

However, there are factors that contradict the sort of "anarchist" analysis I am engaging in. The *St Trinian's* series are 'cosy' films that tend to be played on Sunday afternoons on British television and

are unlikely to inspire anyone to read Bakunin, while the women in prison films are sold on their 'sexploitation' content and include other disreputable subject matter that might be subversive, but which is also antithetical to most anarchists.[27] And both are made in the explicitly commercial (arguably capitalist) contexts that underpins most film production.

Perhaps this aspect encapsulates the crucial point of the thesis, that films can be part of the Anarchist Cinema, even if they contain content which would not be endorsed by anarchist theory. To illustrate this point with an extreme example, right at the very beginning of the book and thesis I mention *Dr No*, the first James Bond film (Terence Young, 1962). My point was less to do with the film itself than with the histrionic contemporary review by Richard Whitehall in *Films and Filming*, where he writes;

> *Dr No* is the headiest box-office concoction of sex and sadism ever brewed in a British studio […] just as Mike Hammer was the softening up for James Bond, so James Bond is the softening up for…what? A fascist cinema uncorrupted by moral scruples? The riot, of a completely anarchist cinema?[28]

Dr No is clearly not an anarchist film by the way I have defined the term; it contains neither unruly formal elements or a critique of political or social structures. (It does contain a couple of jump cuts, but they are not used to draw attention to its construction in, say, the Godardian or Brechtian method.) But Whitehall's reaction to *Dr No* can in a small way educate us on a part of anarchist history. In this case it reveals anarchism's status in the mid twentieth century as a maligned political philosophy, viewed by some to be as dangerous and depraved as fascism. That the terms "anarchist" and "fascist" are used almost interchangeably also tells us that it was at that time a hugely misunderstood philosophy.

Embracing these whirling contradictions and allowing them to be a part of a conversation around what an anarchist cinema might mean becomes an important psychological hurdle to overcome. But

it is necessary when looking at such an array of material comprising of diverse films, filmmakers, epochs, and national contexts. Doing so pushed me to re-contemplate the spatial origins of cinema and consider the possibilities for bringing the threads together under one roof through the idea of festivals or events. This way, the discussion and dialectical aspect of anarchist cinema could be embraced too – a hypothetical festival would be a way of marrying inconsistent and contradictory films from varying contexts without looking for smooth transitions or consistency between them, as one might expect from a single individual film. The communal aspect of the festival is where the anarchism begins to take place.

As with the rest of the thesis, the process was not one of imagining a fictional future, but of uncovering and revisiting the radical and anarchic moments from the past. My concluding chapters returned to moments and periods of time when the concept of cinema had been reconceptualised. Notably, the use of cinema during the upheaval of May 1968 in France was focused on politicising ways of viewing as being a core component of radical cinema culture. This would include an "extension of film education"[29] so that spectators, as well as technicians, could be trained in understanding the artform, as well as expanding out from traditional theatres to include screenings in factories and other workplaces, schools and colleges, and other community hubs. The aim, according to Sylvia Harvey, was to create a "new sort of relationship between audience and spectacle."[30] This was to be achieved by making the audience question the value of the space in which they watched films, as well as reinvigorating the idea that film could be pedagogical alongside being merely to entertain.

Again, that this tendency was not restricted just to that moment in Paris in May 1968 tells us that it is an inherent quality residing within cinema. In New York in the post war period from 1947-1963 Amos Vogel curated a weekly screening series called Cinema 16 that presented mostly underground and avant-garde movies to a club comprised of private fee-paying members that included Marlon Brando and other high-profile figures within the arts. Cinema 16 was curated to reflect Vogel's radical politics[31] in a manner that was deliberately confrontational.[32] Despite the fame of some of the clientele, Vogel was

committed to maintaining a suitably anarchic programme, comprised of filmic "collisions"[33] where the eclectic mix of films would create clashes provoking the audience to question cinema's "social and political implications"[34] in a manner that Scott MacDonald claims resembled the dialectical montage of Eisenstein.

Vogel went on to write an influential book called *Film as a Subversive Art* (1972) which was a cornerstone text for my thesis due to the ways it outlined how films could be subversive through defying various national conventions or by going against artistic, social, or political orthodoxy of the context in which they were made.[35] Cinema 16 is a moment in the history of anarchism's relationship to film, even if, like much of the rest of the work I examined, it didn't declare itself to be so.

Because there is no permanent anarchist society, there can be no permanent anarchist cinema, and so one should welcome the temporary nature of anarchist cinematic events. Therefore, George Woodcock's water metaphor was to again prove relevant and necessary, and where the "cracks and crevices" imagery he invokes allows for, borrowing my own words, an "impermanent, disruptive part of [a] broader anarchist film culture."[36] Something can only be disruptive, after all, if it is impermanent.

The creation of temporary festival spaces to reinvigorate the social and cultural nature of cinema is therefore integral to the creation of an Anarchist Cinema. This would bring disparate films together, including fiction and documentary, and feature both amateur and professional productions. It would involve uncomfortable clashes, and generate discussion on relevance of inclusion, which might involve questioning my ideas or the possibility of an anarchist cinema at all. This way, it would act as a critique of cinema as much as it does of society, and offer a way of producing cinema comparable to the way that anarchist theory offers a way of imagining society and interpersonal relationships. The Anarchist Cinema should also critique the failings and drawbacks of anarchist theory, as well as evaluate its own assumptions and relevance.

Current Thoughts on Anarchism and Film

Since publication of the book, I have seldom thought about the topic and drifted into other areas of research as well as becoming more involved in the production of my own films. But on consideration, one (relatively) recent example of an "anarchist" film is the British poetic documentary *Arcadia* (Paul Wright, 2017). Director Paul Wright uses the national archives of the British Film Institute to compile a montage account of the "British people's shifting – and contradictory – relationship to the land."[37] *Arcadia* is compiled mostly out of non-fiction productions documenting British rural customs that span the twentieth century, featuring wartime propaganda, instructional and amateur films, and avant-garde shorts. It also combines moments from fiction films such as *Anchoress* (Chris Newby, 1993), *Requiem for a Village* (David Gladwell, 1975), and *Alice in Wonderland* (Cecil Hepworth and Percy Stow, 1903) to engage a wide scope of cinema's possibilities.

From the whispered statement of "the truth lay in the soil" the film weaves a story of the British people that existed as a pre-modern utopia, one that is wild and occasionally violent, but unfettered by any centralised or imposed authority beyond local custom. The montage intertwines these archaic local traditions, fusing them together, as well as overlapping and replaying them and drawing connections, so that the finale concoction resembles a phantasmagoria of Morris dancers, field ploughing contests, raves, Shrove Tuesday football games, Stonehenge worship, and May Day carnivals.

Included among the montage is Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo's *Winstanley* (1975), a black and white portrait of Gerrard Winstanley, the English 17th century proto-anarchist and founder of the Diggers. Winstanley's famous words, "the earth shall be a common treasury for all," from his pamphlet entitled *The New Law of Righteousness*, and spoken by actor Miles Halliwell, is heard as a refrain during *Arcadia*, cementing a thread of anarchist sentiment running through the picture. Of course, what Wright concocts in *Arcadia* is 'a' story, rather than 'the' story, of Britain. It is striking how the various controlling institutions of the nation – monarchy, parliament, and the security

forces – are almost completely absent from the procession of images. When we do see the occasional residue of their influence on British life and culture, such as in the moment in *Winstanley* where the Digger's commune at St Georges Hill is destroyed by parliament troops, it is depicted as a source of conflict and opposition to the state. Other material, such as toffs engaging in a fox hunt, or images of industrial destruction of land, is depicted as being in opposition to the idyll of British local folk custom. The film is about how people have used the land to both live off and build cultures. In this, the practical and the purely aesthetic coincide, such as in footage of Scottish matriarchs turning the physical labour of washing clothes into a session of play, song, and spectacle. Wright then subsequently multiplies the dimension of the spectacle by manipulating material from the archive into new contexts, with different music and a new contemporary score by Adrian Utley and Will Gregory of the bands Portishead and Goldfrapp respectively.

Arcadia works as an addendum to my book because it is infused with a love of cinema and for the possibilities in filmmaking. Its portmanteau structure means it is unavoidably inconsistent. It is composed out of fragments, made for and from different filmic contexts, and so resembles the sort of combination of programming that might prove a feature of an anarchist film festival. It emphasises class over individual identity, with the films being originally funded and created to educate, to unite people, to entertain, and to document what were then little seen communities. It mixes amateur and professional productions, black and white with colour, and combines both filmstock with video. Wright offers a poetic and utopian vision of Britain, where a visual and aural solidarity emerges through the montage and use of score. *Arcadia* is a work that understands the subjects that are relevant to a study of anarchism – class, community, the link to space and its importance in fostering solidarity, while also understanding the significance of form – of films within a film, of editing, of flickering images and configurations of light, of violence to make a point, and how archive material can be used in different contexts to foster new associations. *Arcadia* uses its imagery to be both cohesive and to demonstrate contradictory ideas.

It is an anarchist film and part of the anarchistic cinematic tradition, as are the films from which it is comprised. But do the filmmakers, be they Paul Wright or the creators of the original films from the archive, think so? I doubt it. But within the context of my thesis, that is immaterial, because via this very article the film has contributed to a discussion of what an anarchist cinema might be. *Arcadia* is a work of anarchist cinema because any discussion and debate about its inclusion, including this article being published alongside other essays on related topics, means it *is* a part of the Anarchist Cinema by definition. Any disagreement on this merely continues the discourse, meaning it becomes part of the Anarchist Cinema as I have defined it.

Final Considerations:

I hope, through the PhD thesis and book, plus any talks I have given at conferences, made the point that an Anarchist Cinema cannot be just about antagonising enemies, whether they be cinematic enemies such as Hollywood studios or political enemies. Firstly, such antagonism leads nowhere once burnt out. And secondly, such antagonism tends to be built on hate or violence. Dehumanising or humiliating an opponent can be just as destructive as physical violence, and is an entirely negative use of energy.

In this approach I am influenced by the Catholic theologian Thomas Merton, and his words on "non-violence." The aim of non-violence,

> . . . is not then simply to "prevail" or to prove that he is right and the adversary wrong, or to make the adversary give in and yield what is demanded of him. Nor should the nonviolent resister be content to prove *himself* that *he* is virtuous and right, and that his hands and heart are pure even though the adversary's [*sic*] be evil and defiled. Still less should he seek for himself the psychological gratification of upsetting the adversary's conscience and perhaps driving him to an act of bad faith and refusal of the truth. We know

> that our unconscious motive may, at times, make our nonviolence a form of moral aggression and even a subtle provocation designed (without our awareness) to bring out the evil we hope to find in our adversary, and thus to justify ourselves in our eye and in the eyes of "decent people."[38]

Merton believed that nonviolence should not be used to punish, as a tool of attack, or as a form of "psychological aggression" to triumph or achieve power over another.[39] The purpose of an anarchist cinema should not be to prove anarchists correct by seeking to assert moral superiority over the opposition, be it those emerging from Hollywood or any other form of middle of the road cinema, or even any other forces of society. It should not be about advertising a social and political purity. Instead, it should, to borrow again from Merton, aim to turn "adversary into collaborator by winning him over."[40]

The anarchist cinema has to be creative and constructive. It should avoid continual deconstruction of the "wrong" sort of films. It should not demand purity of thought and deed in the films it analyses or includes or produces. To do so would be both impossible and undesirable, and the enforcement of such deeds and thoughts is unbecoming of an anarchist in the libertarian tradition of the philosophy. The field of anarchist cinema should build, rather than tear down, and scholars should explore their subject with a love of the art of film and its history, even when that history has failed to live up to anarchism's utopian ideals. We should be open to the possibilities of cinema to move us, to delight us, to inspire us. Without this, there is no chance of winning people over. If this isn't the aim, then there is no point in a junction between anarchism and cinema at all.

Notes

1 Alan Lovell, *Anarchist Cinema* (London: Peace News, 1962); Richard Porton, *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* (London: Verso, 1999); and Nathan Jun, "Towards an anarchist film theory," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, 1:1 (2010): 139-61.
2 Richard Porton, ed., *Arena One: On Anarchist Cinema* (Oakland, CA: PM Press and Christie Books, 2009).
3 Porton, *Film*, 204.
4 This is an observation based on my experience and that of many other academics I have talked to, and appears common to a number of publishers, in the UK at least.
5 Of course, the further possibility is that the book might not be very good – I'll leave that for readers to decide.
6 I will be using the phrase "anarchist cinema" in a number of ways – the lower case "anarchist cinema" when referring to it as an abstract concept; when using the definite article as "Anarchist Cinema" in reference to it as an entity I have invented, and which is mostly unrealised; and as *The Anarchist Cinema* when referring to my book or the PhD thesis of the same name that it is based on.
7 George Woodcock, *Anarchism* (London: Penguin Ltd., 1962 [1970]), 15.
8 Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), xi.
9 As this is only a short article, I am not able to include all the minutiae of the book's ideas or subject threads. For example, missing in this piece is reference to the use of film by anarchists during the Spanish Civil War. The relevance of this period to the overall topic is dealt with in more detail in the book.
10 That I am writing about this within academia might be a paradox.
11 Marshall, 189.
12 James Newton, *The Anarchist Cinema* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2019), 11.
13 Marshall, xi.
14 Newton, 140.
15 Richard Maltby, "The production code and the Hays office", in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise*, *1930-1939*, ed. T. Balio (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993), 41.
16 Michael Chanan, *The Dream that Kicks* (London: Routledge, 1980 [1996]), 155.
17 Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
18 On the transgressive tendencies of early cinema, see Tom Gunning,

"The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle*, 8, 3/4 (1986): 63-70. This is essential reading for the topic.
19 Ben Child, "I predict a riot: French Cinemas axe Annabelle screenings after unrest," *The Guardian* (16 October 2014): n.p., accessed 16 September 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/oct/16/horror-film-annabelle-withdrawn-french-cinemas..
20 Lottie Kilraine, "Cinemas ban teens in suits after Minions: The Rise of Gru TikTok trend," *Standard.co.uk* (5 July 2022), accessed 10 August 2023, https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/minions-the-rise-of-gru-suits-banned-tik-tok-trend-universal-pictures-odeon-b1010166.html.
21 Good on those lads, though since I wasn't at the pictures to see *Minions*, and therefore wouldn't have had to put up with their behaviour, that's easy for me to say.
22 Porton, *Film*, 196.
23 Newton, 50.
24 Jean Vigo's father was Miguel Almereyda, who died at 34 in Fresnes prison.
25 Bruce Babington, *Launder and Gilliat*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
26 Newton, 78.
27 I've discussed the complexity of the "subversiveness" in the cycle in detail. See James Newton, "Rethinking Representation, Race and Rape in the 1970s Women in Prison Movie" in *Shocking Cinema of the 70s*, ed. Mendik and Petley, (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 71-88.
28 Richard Whitehall, "Dr No review," *Films and Filming*, 9:2, November 1962, n.p.
29 Sylvia Harvey, *May 68 and Film Culture* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 24.
30 Harvey, 25.
31 Raymond J. Haberski, *Freedom to Offend: How New York Remade Movie Culture* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 111.
32 Haberski, 104.
33 Scott MacDonald, "Cinema 16: Towards a history of the film society" *Wide Angle*, 19:1 (1997): 17.
34 MacDonald, 18.
35 Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1972).
36 Newton, 135.
37 (BFI, 2018) BFI (2018), *Arcadia*, https://www2.bfi.org.uk/whats-on/bfi-film-releases/arcadia. Accessed 22 June 2023.

38 Thomas Merton, “Blessed are the Meek: The Christian Roots of Non-Violence” in *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. W. H. Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1966), 249.
39 Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 178.
40 Merton, 1968, 178.